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From occupational choice to career crafting

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Introduction

A career is defined as the sequence of work experiences that evolve over the individual's life course (Arthur et al., 1989) and, obviously, is highly subjective and complex, unique to each individual, and dynamic over time (Khapova and Arthur, 2011). As outlined later in this book (see Chapter 15 on career patterns), research on career dynamics has often focused on career stages that were interpreted to occur in parallel with adult development or life stages (e.g., Dalton et al., 1977; Hall, 1976; Nicholson and West, 1989; Super, 1957). In this traditional view, occupational choice was almost exclusively concerned with the preparation stage of career development (Super, 1957) and was conceived as a single event usually occurring in adolescence or in one's early twenties, which was then enacted for the rest of one's career, assuming a linear career path and stable future performance.

Yet in the contemporary career context, it is generally acknowledged that there is no such thing as one idealized career path characterized by a set of predictable transitions all workers go through at specific points in their life. The increasingly pluriform working population requires us to move away from thinking in fixed categories regarding career peaks, career success, retirement age, and so forth. Employees may have totally different ideas on and answers to career-related questions such as: "What are my own criteria for a successful career? How can I achieve such career success?" (cf. Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015). That is to say, the idea of "one-life-one-career" (Sarason, 1977) is changing towards a focus on adapting one's career identity and continuously acquiring new knowledge and skills throughout the lifespan, leading to much more complex and idiosyncratic career patterns, thereby making the individual employee the central actor.

In line with this development, the focus in the scholarly literature has shifted from the selection of an (occupational degree which would lead to an) occupation towards a broader and less fixed perspective on career choice, being a recurring issue throughout the lifespan. Moreover, the types of choices individuals need to make in the contemporary career context are not restricted to the *kind of occupation* they choose originally, but also to which *type of organization* to join, to the *type of employment* (e.g., independent contractor, employee, or temporary agency

worker), the *form of employment* (working full-time or part-time), and the *continuity of employment* (e.g., temporarily interrupting one's career to take care for children or relatives).

Based on the above, we argue that there is a need for a broader view on career choices that does justice to the dynamics and complexity that individual employees encounter throughout their life course. In this chapter, we therefore broaden our focus on occupational choice and introduce the notion of career crafting which refers to an *individual's proactive behaviors aimed at optimizing career outcomes through improving person-career fit.* It entails individuals constantly reflecting on and being mindful about their career aspirations and motivation (Hall, 2002), and making choices that can impact both short-term (e.g., employability, work engagement, and performance) and long-term success (e.g., objective and subjective career success) (Hall, 2002). Hence, this perspective on career crafting recognizes that individual needs and contextual demands are dynamic and affect person-career fit at any given time and is more reflective of the reality of today's rapidly changing career context. Therefore, career crafting is a key individual behavior for safeguarding the sustainability of one's career over time. The latter may be defined as "the sequence of an individual's different career experiences, reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, crossing several social spaces, and characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual" (Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015: 7).

Inherent to the notion of sustainable careers is that individuals continuously affect their career potential (i.e., their employability; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden et al., 2009) through the opportunities they encounter, the choices they make, and the learning cycles they go through. The individual's career potential, in turn, affects subsequent career opportunities and its sustainability over time. In other words, through career crafting "career-competent employees" who are weighing up carefully the pros and cons of certain choices, and who strive for fulfilling present career needs without compromising future ones, are expected to be better able to protect and foster the sustainability of their career (Akkermans and Tims, 2017).

We discern three factors that are closely associated with crafting sustainable careers across the life course, and which are prominent in contemporary views on careers, namely (1) employability, (2) adaptability, and (3) career competencies. First, *employability* is important for individuals in order to acquire and retain work that is in line with their career needs, and as such it determines the options that individuals have for realizing their desired career choices over time. This requires a broader set of knowledge and skills than only those related to keeping one's expertise up to date. Employees need to adjust their focus on "what are the right competencies?" on an ongoing basis, and should develop competencies that enable them to be proactive and flexible, to handle ambiguity, and to manage multiple tasks simultaneously. Second, *adaptability* is important for flexibly meeting changing demands in one's field of work or personal life throughout the career. Third, *career competencies* play a critical role for realizing workers' employability, as they reflect an attitude in which adaptability and continuous learning and development skills are key to successful career choices over time.

In the next section, we will describe how career research has evolved from a focus on the choice of an occupational field to the ongoing choice of a career that reflects a "contract with the self" (Hall, 2002). Subsequently, we will elaborate on the meaning of employability and its relevance for understanding career choice from the viewpoint of sustainable careers, followed by sections on career adaptability and on career competencies. In addition, we will address the role of organizations in affecting sustainability of career choices through their career management practices. We will conclude this chapter with implications and suggestions for future research on "career crafting" as the "new occupational choice."

From occupational choice to career crafting: a historical perspective

In the last decades, the concept of lifetime employment has been gradually replaced by the notion of lifelong employability (Forrier and Sels, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007; Van der Heijden et al., 2009), thereby bringing lifelong learning and the career choices an employee has to make throughout the lifespan to the forefront. This means that workers need to be highly adaptable (Sullivan et al., 1998) and concerned with the continuity of their careers (Savickas, 2005). In this sense, the increasing emphasis on lifelong employability instead of employment security goes in parallel with the view of occupational choice as a recurring issue throughout one's career.

The evolution of occupational choice: 1960s through 1980s

The use of the term "employability" in both scientific and professional publications goes back to the 1950s, when employability was supposed to be an important determinant for securing a job, in particular, to make sure that one had paid work in the (near) future (Feintuch, 1955). This was consistent with the view on occupational choice as selecting an occupation – or a college major that would lead to an occupation – that provided prospects for long-term secure employment and a steady career path (Ginzberg, 1972). Consistent with this, scholars in the field of occupational choice were concerned with measuring individuals' vocational interests and matching these with suitable occupations, ultimately aiming to enhance the compatibility between the person and the occupation, such as the Strong Interest Inventory, initially published in 1943 (see Hall, 2002 for an elaborate discussion of how research on career choice has evolved over the past decades).

In the 1960s and 1970s, authors in the employability domain did not deal with the mobility of employees within the internal or external labor markets. Instead, they mainly dealt with the problems of unemployed persons and the difficulties they encountered in accessing the labor market, and with staying employed. Once on the payroll of a working organization, the opportunity to stay employed was rather high, given the dominant culture of lifetime employment (Magnum, 1976; Orr, 1973). In the literature on occupational choice, this is reflected in a focus on the factors affecting job choices and success in the 1970s (Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978), eventually followed by a focus on individual careers within the organizational system, and on matching individual and organizational needs in the 1980s (see for example Edgar Schein's career anchor model (Schein, 1978) and John Holland's vocational interest framework (Holland, 1985)). This development reflected the changing view that occupational choice implied the choice for a certain career path that could be pursued in a predictable and linear fashion, most often within the context of one single organization.

What united the views on employability and occupational choice until the 1980s was their concern with developing human capital – requiring the necessary skills and knowledge needed for a given occupational field, and hence for a career path – and guiding people towards a successful transition into employment. The latter was then subsequently presumed to result in employment security and, depending on the path taken, predictable and steady career progress. This was for instance reflected in employability measures that were aimed at full employment, with interventions at a national level (Feintuch, 1955; Forrier and Sels, 2003; Orr, 1973). The collective care of the government was primarily meant to help unemployed citizens to find a job and was largely focused at job market entry. As such, occupational choice

concerned a relatively transparent and simple phenomenon (Ginzberg, 1972; Ginzberg et al., 1951; see also Thijssen et al., 2008: 170).

The evolution of occupational choice: 1980s through 2000s

Since the 1980s, organizations started to embrace the principles of the so-called flexible firm (Atkinson, 1984), making a distinction between core (permanent), periphery or temporary, and external workers (free agents). Core workers required relatively high wages to be retained, and management was more eager to invest in their future employability. On the contrary, the opportunities for training and development and other kinds of employment benefits were worse for the secondary segment (i.e., the periphery or so-called temporary workers who were 'just' needed for fluctuations in staffing demands; Barley and Kunda, 2006; O'Mahony and Bechky, 2006; see also Thijssen et al., 2008: 170). This implied that a growing group of workers was laid off, urging them to reconsider their initial occupational choice, and it also meant that some occupations provided more secure employment prospects than others. Practices such as outplacement, emerging in the 1990s, can be seen as an expressed concern of employers and the government to support the employability of laid-off workers. From a career perspective, these fit within a gradually shifting perspective on occupational choice, from a one-off decision occurring at the start of one's career to a dynamic process with multiple career choices in which not only workers' knowledge and skills (i.e., occupational expertise), but also their job search competencies became increasingly relevant. Moreover, in the career literature this gradually led to attention moving away from matching individual and organizational needs and organizationally driven career systems towards the individual as the central actor in careers, hereby building on Super's idea (1957, 1990) that a career is an ongoing, unfolding synthesis of the person's self-concept and the external realities of the work environment driven by the person through a series of choices and decisions. Already in 1976, Hall had speculated that the increasing number of changes in working organizations would lead to the dominance of another type of career (i.e., the so-called protean career), which is shaped more by the individual than by the organization and which may be redirected from time to time to meet personal needs (Hall, 1976).

In the same vein, the boundaryless career concept was introduced referring to the independence from traditional organizational principles (Arthur, 1994, 2014). What these so-called new career concepts have in common is their emphasis on flexibility, networking, marketable skills, and continuous learning (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006) as predictors of career success. Along with this development, we observe a growing field of research on employability and the importance of a broad set of employability-enhancing competencies (Forrier and Sels, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006).

The evolution of occupational choice: current careers as learning cycles

Contemporary career research elaborates on new career concepts in order to do justice to the evolution in competencies that are needed to stay employable. The combination of the ever-increasing speed in developments (e.g., new production concepts and new technology), expanded globalization, and increased demands for productivity, creativity, and flexibility urges employees to continuously update their knowledge and skills (Berntson et al., 2006; Nazar and Van der Heijden, 2012; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006) after formal education and initial occupational choice. In addition, they need to be mindful of their (changing) career

interests and needs. This requires more from them than only keeping their occupational expertise up to date. More and more, it is proclaimed that individuals need to be able and willing to adapt to continuously changing circumstances, which requires a broader set of career competencies and career behaviors (Akkermans et al., 2013b).

Indeed, in contrast to the traditional view of employability as an individual's chances for getting and staying employed (see Section 10.2.1), current definitions of employability refer to "the capacity of continuously fulfilling, acquiring or creating work through the optimal use of competences" (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006: 453), "the chance for employment on the internal or external labor market" (Forrier and Sels, 2003: 106), or "a form of work-specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunities" (Fugate et al., 2004). These definitions all imply a permanent acquisition and fulfillment of employment within or outside the current organization, and with regard to future prospects (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). Protecting one's lifelong employability requires individuals to manage the balance between their current performance in order to safeguard one's current position, and the need for learning and further career development, aimed at increasing one's future employability (Froehlich et al., 2014, 2015).

To conclude, the transition from the traditional perspective of occupational choice to the current emphasis on career crafting, wherein the individual has to proactively manage his/her person-career fit, is grounded in the principle of careers as continuous learning cycles rather than predictable and linear trajectories. Continuous learning and adaptation are at the core of the notion of careers as learning cycles (Hall, 1976, 2002), which reflect the idea that careers consist of continuous and conscious ways of exploring possible alternative ways of being. These learning cycles can take place within or across jobs, organizations, or occupations and they can be driven by (1) changes in the career context and (2) changes in the person.

Elaborating on this, first, careers will be increasingly driven by the changing skill demands of the specific fields in which a person works, as the life cycle of technologies and products has drastically shortened over the past decades. Obviously, this has implications for a person's learning cycle within a job (Gubler et al., 2014; Hall, 2002; Waters et al., 2015), which in turn affects the time it takes for individuals to grow and remain able to perform at the level of mastery in a job. Seen from this perspective, the key issue determining a learning cycle is not the employee's chronological age but his/her *career age*, where perhaps five years in a given occupational specialty may be midlife for that professional area or only the early career for another area (Hall, 2002). Think for instance of the time it requires a person to develop towards the level of mastery in performing a job as a call center agent, a management consultant, a specialized medical job (e.g., a heart surgeon) or a researcher doing clinical research on developing a new drug to fight a complex disease in a pharmaceutical company. These jobs all imply a different learning curve, where the time for reaching the level of mastery will be longer than for more complex jobs. Moreover, no matter what the typical length of a learning cycle for a job might be, when the competencies needed for successful performance change due to altered technologies, innovations, or new ways of working (e.g., Van der Heijden et al., 2015), the person will need to adapt and engage in a new learning cycle in order to develop and master the necessary competencies for staying employable within that job. When jobs or occupations disappear, individuals will need to reconsider their existing knowledge and skills to develop new competencies in view of sustained employment.

Second, individuals' personal career needs will be important in affecting their learning cycles. Given the dynamic nature of careers and the many interlinkages with individuals' broader life course, their personal needs, career ambitions and interests might change over the course of the career, as reflected by concepts such as the 'kaleidoscope career' (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005).

This might trigger individuals to renew their competencies in order to gain sustained career engagement (Kim et al., 2014). Individual factors such as ambition and need for challenge but also a person's future work self are thereby important motivational forces for engaging in new learning cycles (e.g., Strauss et al., 2012; Taber and Blankemeyer, 2015).

As such, careers consist of a succession of mini-stages or short-cycle learning stages of exploration-trial-mastery-exit over the span of a person's work life (Mirvis and Hall, 1994), reflecting a view on occupational choice as recurring throughout the career. Many career patterns are possible, depending on the nature of the job or industry a person is working in, as well as on his/her personal needs and circumstances. For careers to remain sustainable over time, individuals will need the meta-skills of adaptability and identity (Hall, 2002; Savickas, 1997) in order to be aware of and to act upon the changing needs of their employment as well as their personal life context and changing personal needs. In this view, the notion of career maturity central in Super's (1990) lifespan, life-space approach to career development obtains a new meaning. Career maturity, or the person's readiness to make good career and private life-related decisions at a given point in his or her life, might imply changing occupations or making radically different career choices or developing new competencies in order to stay employable in one's current job. Persons grow in career maturity as they learn how to cope with changing demands stemming from the context or their personal needs, thereby developing their personal identity, which, in turn, may function as a form of personal competency facilitating subsequent career choices (Hall, 2002).

Based upon the historical overview of occupational choice given above, and our reasoning that the current era is characterized by continuous learning cycles, we argue that the key to having a successful career today lies in career crafting. Below, we will further elaborate on this notion.

Career crafting for career success

Managing one's employability in light of career sustainability, and engaging in career learning cycles imply that individuals need to take ownership of their career, and proactively manage their career success. Earlier research on career self-management (e.g., DeVos et al., 2009; King, 2004) has provided some clear direction in this regard, in terms of specific behaviors, such as networking, boundary management, and self-promotion, as hallmarks of managing one's career. In addition, recent research on *job crafting* (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001) has clearly demonstrated that proactively adapting one's job to one's preferences is an effective way to enhance employee well-being (Tims et al., 2014) and performance (Tims et al., 2015). Besides enhancing work-related well-being and job performance, job crafting – in tandem with career competencies – is also related to subjective career success (Akkermans and Tims, 2017). Until now, however, the literatures on proactive work and career behaviors have mostly been developed in isolation (cf. Hall and Las Heras, 2010).

This isolation is surprising given that the concepts of proactive work and career behaviors share many common elements, as both (1) emphasize the importance of proactivity, (2) argue that the individual is the central actor in work and careers, and (3) have the underlying assumption that work and careers are becoming much more integrated in the sense that a career is basically enacted in the work one does on a daily basis, rather than being some future state. Indeed, being proactive and becoming an agent of one's own work (i.e., from a short-term perspective) and career (i.e., from a long-term perspective) is key to surviving in today's dynamic labor market. In essence, this implies that individuals are constantly managing the mini-careers as theorized in the learning cycles that we discussed earlier. Therefore, we would argue that – although it is evident that major career transitions such as the school-to-work transition (e.g., Akkermans

et al., 2015b) are important hallmarks of one's career development – careers should no longer exclusively be defined in terms of a one-off transition into working life, or even as several major transition moments. Rather, individuals should employ a proactive attitude in which lifelong learning and employability are key pillars and in which both more minor activities in one's work and career and major transitions form part of the career development process. In sum, we argue that *career crafting* is 'the new occupational choice'.

As stated earlier in this chapter, career crafting can be considered as actual proactive behavior aimed to optimize career outcomes through improving person-career fit. It entails individuals actively crafting their careers over time by reflecting on and being mindful about their career aspirations and motivation and by making choices that can impact both short-term (e.g., work engagement and performance) and long-term success (e.g., objective and subjective career success). Hence, this perspective on career crafting recognizes that individual needs and contextual demands are dynamic and that they can affect person-career fit at any given time. An important distinction with related constructs such as career adaptability and career competencies (see the next section for more details) is that career crafting is about actual proactive behavior, whereas the other concepts are personal resources and competencies. We will argue below that being adaptable and career competent are key ingredients for crafting one's career, but that proactive behavior is an essential ingredient as well. As an example of proactive career crafting behavior, we refer to an individual taking the initiative to expand his/her professional network and to actively explore opportunities for further development.

Key ingredients for career crafting: adaptability and career competencies

The rise of career adaptability research

One important resource for taking responsibility and developing throughout one's career is the construct of career adaptability. In his seminal work, Savickas (1997:254) defined career adaptability as "the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by the changes in work and work conditions." Following from this definition, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) characterized career adaptability resources as self-regulation capacities that individuals can draw on when facing unfamiliar and complex problems related to vocational tasks and occupational transitions. Accordingly, career adaptability is often considered as a personal resource that is closely related to psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2006).

Savickas and Porfeli (2012) argued that career adaptability consists of four different self-regulation strategies (or psychosocial resources), that can be helpful during various career transitions. First, *career concern* is about looking ahead and planning for one's future. Second, *career control* relates to using self-control, discipline, and persistence to become responsible for shaping one's career. Third, *career curiosity* refers to information-seeking activities that enable an individual to think about different possible selves. Finally, *career confidence* is about being confident enough to undertake activities that help to pursue career goals and overcome obstacles. Although they comprise different strategies, these four career adaptability resources are closely related and form the aggregate construct of career adaptability (Savickas and Porfeli, 2012).

Research thus far has clearly supported the relevance of career adaptability in contemporary career development and success. For example, Zacher (2014) performed an empirical study among 1,723 Australian employees and demonstrated that career adaptability predicted subjective career success, over and above the Big Five personality traits and core self-evaluations.

Furthermore, career adaptability has been shown to positively relate to academic achievement (Negru-Subtirica and Pop, 2016), career satisfaction (Chan and Mai, 2015), well-being (Hirschi, 2009), employment status (Guan et al., 2013), personality traits (e.g., Big Five), attitudes (e.g., commitment), behavior (e.g., career exploration), performance (Rudolph et al., 2017), and reemployment quality (Koen et al., 2010), and negatively to turnover intentions (Chan and Mai, 2015). In sum, when considering the need for individuals to proactively craft their career, career adaptability seems an important foundation for being a proactive agent of one's career and becoming employable.

The rise of career competency research

Over the past two decades, a wide array of empirical studies have been performed that focused on knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to self-manage one's career and to remain employable throughout the life course. For example, based on the groundbreaking work on boundaryless careers by DeFillippi and Arthur (1994), several studies have examined *career capital* in the form of "knowing why," "knowing whom," and "knowing how" competencies (e.g., Eby et al., 2003; Fleisher et al., 2014), arguing that individuals need to learn what really matters to them, who can help them in their career, and how they can actually shape their career paths.

Similarly, research on the protean career and career orientation has, as mentioned above, focused on the *meta-competencies* of "adaptability" and "identity" (e.g., Hall and Mirvis, 1995; Waters et al., 2015), and centers around individuals shaping a career that gets the best out of themselves and that creates an optimal "person-career fit." This can be achieved by being adaptable (i.e., open to changes and being the active agent) and finding a clear career identity (i.e., knowing who you are and what you strive for). Both the boundaryless and protean career perspectives have been dominant in the scholarly literature on career development over the past two decades. The main takeaway messages from these two perspectives are that individuals need to (1) take responsibility for managing their own careers and (2) need to make sure that they continue to learn and develop throughout those careers.

An integrated framework of career competencies

Recently, Akkermans et al. (2013a) reviewed and integrated the literature on career-related competencies and presented an integrative framework of career competencies that individuals should master in order to realize their career needs, that is based upon the existing paradigms of the boundaryless career (i.e., career capital), protean career (i.e., career meta-competencies), career self-management, and the human capital perspective. They defined career competencies as "knowledge, skills, and abilities central to career development, which can be influenced and developed by the individual" (ibid.: 246), and their framework consists of three categories of career competencies, which each contain two specific competencies. *Reflective career competencies* refer to creating a long-term awareness of oneself and to matching these reflections on motivation and qualities to one's career development. First, reflection on motivation means reflecting on values, passions, and motivations with regard to one's career (e.g., "I know what is important to me in my career"). Second, reflection on qualities refers to reflecting on strengths, shortcomings, and skills, and about how to match those to one's career development (e.g., "I am aware of my talents in my work"). *Communicative career competencies* focus on being able to effectively communicate with significant others in order to achieve career success. First, networking is having a strong awareness of one's network as well as being able to expand it for career-related purposes (e.g., "I know how to ask for advice from people in my network"). Second, self-profiling

means being able to present one's competencies to the internal and external labor market (e.g., "I can clearly show others what my strengths are in my work"). *Behavioral career competencies* are about being able to proactively take action regarding one's career development by exploration and control. First, work exploration refers to actively exploring career-related opportunities in the internal and external labor market (e.g., "I know how to search for development in my area of work") and second, career control is about being able to actively influence learning and work processes by setting goals and striving to fulfill those goals (e.g., "I can make clear career plans"). Akkermans and colleagues (2013a) provided preliminary evidence of the reliability and validity of their integrative framework by showing that it has good factorial, discriminant, and incremental validity. In addition, subsequent studies have shown that career competencies are positively related to perceived employability (Akkermans et al., 2015a), informal learning (Preenen et al., 2015), job resources and work engagement (Akkermans et al., 2013b; Tims and Akkermans, 2017), employee health and job satisfaction (Plomp et al., 2016), job crafting behav- iors (i.e., changes that employees make to balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs; Tims et al., 2012), and career success (Akkermans and Tims, 2017). The main conclusion is that mastering these career competencies will enable individuals to thrive both in their current job (e.g., becoming engaged and crafting one's job) and in their career as a whole (e.g., becoming employable and successful). Thus if we reflect on our statement that nowadays occupational choice is a series of continuous choices in which individuals need to maintain and enhance their career sustainability, career competencies would be a crucial way to achieve this goal in terms of finding one's career identity and becoming adaptable, as well as to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to make conscious career choices throughout one's lifespan.

What about the organization? (Re)contextualizing the new career

Although the focus of this chapter lies on the individual, the topic of career crafting cannot be considered whilst disregarding the context within which career crafting takes place. The trend towards individual agency has brought the organization somewhat to the background, with notions like the boundaryless career emphasizing more the unfolding of careers over different organizations rather than within an organization. However, the role of organizations for individual careers should not be underestimated, just like the role of individual careers for organizations should not be underestimated. A career that is sustainable implies a balance between individual and organizational needs, and hence enhances continuity not only for the individual but also for the organization (Valcour, 2015; Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015).

After all, by the career choices they make, individuals impact organizations and these choices can have implications for important organizational challenges, such as attraction, performance, and retention (De Vos and Cambré, 2016). Yet at the same time, organizations affect the careers of individuals. That is, employees working in organizations that provide ample opportunities for learning, support employees in developing career competencies, stretch employees in staying employable, and engage in career conversations about employees' current position in the learning cycle of their job and their view on the future are just a few examples of how organizations can facilitate the career choices of employees in view of sustainable careers (e.g., Clarke, 2013; Lips-Wiersma and Hall, 2007; Segers and Inceoglu, 2012).

Moreover, the increasing awareness of the impact of the organizational context, the person's broader life context, and the societal context when studying careers highlight the role and interconnectedness of multiple actors (see also Baruch, 2015; De Lange et al., 2015). Otherwise

stated, both employees' as well as employers' efforts and activities should be carefully aligned in order to come up with sustainable career management practices. To realize this, Valcour (2015) distinguished four important characteristics of contemporary organizational career management: (1) alignment of work with the individual's strengths, interests, and values; (2) ongoing learning and renewal; (3) security via employability; and (4) work-life fit over the life course. These practices can help organizations in realizing four core objectives: (1) maximum yield on human capital value; (2) continuous updating of organizational competencies; (3) stability via adaptability; and (4) organizational commitment and retention. Thus, the crafting of sustainable careers within organizations occurs at the *intersection between individuals and organizations*, and in case of a collaborative partnership has advantageous outcomes for both parties (De Vos and Cambré, 2016).

It also implies moving away from a focus on fixed career ladders, upward promotion and organizationally driven succession planning to more flexible career approaches, building on coaching and providing opportunities for employees to craft their own career path in line with organizational needs (Segers and Inceoglu, 2012).

What's next? From occupational choice to career crafting

The central idea brought forward in this chapter is that career choice has become more of a recurring issue throughout the career, requiring adaptability and career competencies, that is, career crafting, from the person, in view of their current and future employability and career sustainability. This implies a fresh perspective on the idea of occupational choice, thereby moving away our attention from how to enhance the quality of career choice as a once-in-a-lifetime type of decision, taken during the early career phase, to a focus on how to continuously facilitate individuals in going through different learning cycles and hence making occupational or career choices a serious point of attention in every stage of their career.

Further theory-building is needed in order to enhance our understanding of contemporary careers and the role of career crafting therein. For instance, what is the meaning of career crafting compared to related concepts such as job crafting, career competencies, and career self-management? What are its defining dimensions and how can it be measured? To what extent can we further build on models of occupational choice and career stages to understand career crafting throughout the career? How can we further integrate the idea of learning cycles in the notion of career crafting? What might be the relationship of career crafting with age?

The complexity of contemporary careers brings along new challenges for scholarly work on careers. More than ever, it urges us to incorporate the notion of time in the study of careers and to examine how careers unfold over the life course, thereby examining issues such as the characteristics of career crafting as well as antecedents and consequences of actively crafting one's career compared to taking a more reactive stance leading to career inaction. Possibly, new theoretical models and perspectives on occupational choice are needed.

In addition, as we have argued earlier, even though the emphasis of today's career success has changed to individual agency, career choices will always occur at the intersection of individuals and organizations. Although the traditional notion of lifetime job security within a single firm has mostly vanished, the vast majority of people are still working in organizations and, thus, have an interdependency with these. Yet, these interdependent relationships have significantly changed with the rise of short-term and flexible employment, and of entrepreneurs being hired for specific projects rather than receiving a longer-term contract (Cappelli and Keller, 2013), leading to an increase in non-standard career paths. All in all, these developments call for a

reconsideration of the way in which both individual and organizational needs can be managed successfully in today's dynamic career landscape. In terms of career crafting, this leads to questions such as: "To what extent are organizations still responsible for investing in their employees' career development when they are often working part-time or on temporary contracts?" and "To what extent are individual career choices still dependent on organizational boundaries?" Following from this, future research should also not only address career choices from the perspective of the type of job, organization or occupation that individuals choose but also examine the factors affecting the sustainability of such choices throughout the career.

In addition, it will also be important to gain a better understanding of the learning cycles characterizing jobs and how the learning cycles individuals go through are affected by personal (e.g., experience, age, motivation to learn) as well as contextual (e.g., mentoring, supervisor support, development opportunities) characteristics. Thereby, elements such as job design, the complexity of a job, and the volatility versus stability of tasks characterizing a job might play an important role which needs to be further addressed as well. This also requires considering contextual elements such as technological evolutions characterizing a job, occupation, or sector.

Finally, labor markets, and the policies and regulations by which these are governed, are also likely to influence the extent to which individuals engage in career crafting. To fully understand career choices and their sustainability, multi-disciplinary research will be needed which incorporates the ways in which individuals are stimulated and supported in safeguarding their employability over time, for instance through access to lifelong learning or career guidance (De Vos et al., 2016).

Last but not least, it is interesting to investigate the meaning, antecedents, and outcomes of career crafting across countries in order to help individuals and organizations with evidence-based recommendations on how career crafting can protect individuals' career sustainability, taking into account cultural and contextual influences.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to provide an overview of how the conceptualization of occupational choice has changed over the past decades, together with a changing perspective on employability and a growing emphasis on the importance of adaptability and career competencies. Given the many changes that are occurring simultaneously within the broader career context, we introduced the notion of "career crafting" to provide a fresh perspective on the current meaning of occupational choice, thereby emphasizing the dynamic, recurring nature of career choices, the central role of the individual career actor, and the importance of balancing individual needs with contextual demands.

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