
Careers and Career Development

Jos Akkermans, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Daniel Spurk, University of Bern, and Nadya Fouad, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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Summary

The field of career studies primarily focuses on understanding people's lifelong succession of work experiences, the structure of opportunity to work, and the relationship between careers and work and other aspects of life. Career research is conducted by scholars in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, management, and sociology. As such, it covers multiple levels of analysis and is informed by different theoretical frameworks, ranging from micro (i.e., individual) to macro (e.g., organizational, institutional, cultural). The most dominant theoretical perspectives that have been mobilized in career research are boundaryless and protean career theory, career construction theory, and social cognitive career theory. Other perspectives that have increasingly been adopted include sustainable careers, kaleidoscope careers, psychology of working theory, and theories from related disciplines, such as conservation of resources theory and social exchange theory. Key topics in the field of career studies include career self-management, career outcomes (e.g., career success, employability), career transitions and shocks, calling, and organizational career management. Research at the micro level with outcomes on the individual level has been dominant in the early 21st century, predominantly focusing on understanding individual career paths and outcomes. Thereby, however, contextual factors as either further important predictors or boundary conditions for career development are also considered as important research topics.

Keywords: career, career development, career management, career theories, career concepts

Subjects: Organizational and Institutional Psychology

Introduction: Definition and History

A career is typically defined as “the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time” (Arthur et al., 1989, p. 8). Careers have been studied in a wide variety of disciplines, including but not limited to psychology, management, and sociology (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007; Gunz et al., 2019). Following the Academy of Management Careers Division domain statement, the field of career studies could be characterized as “people's lifelong succession of work experiences, the structure of opportunity to work, and the relationship between

careers and other aspects of life.” Although research on careers has been around for over 100 years, it has become increasingly popular during the early 21st century (Wang & Wanberg, 2017).

The field of career studies dates back to the early 1900s, when the main topics of study were individual differences and mental testing (e.g., Thorndike, 1914) and occupational (or vocational, career) choice (e.g., Parsons, 1909). Studies primarily focused on creating occupational classifications, as well as studying people’s vocational choices and the degree to which those would fit with their individual characteristics. This trend was taken to the next level after the 1950s, when two highly influential theories were published: the theory of vocational development (Super, 1957) and the theory of vocational choice (Holland, 1959). These two theories provided a framework for understanding people’s vocational interests and their career development over time. The main emphasis in research was on preparing people to make “the right” occupational choice that would offer long-term secure and stable employment (Ginzberg, 1972). Until the late 1980s, careers research was dominated by studies on career choice, often using Super’s and Holland’s work as the theoretical foundation.

Career studies started to move from an employer-focused perspective to an employee-focused perspective after that time. This was a result of societal changes in job security and job transitions, which led scholars to start studying topics such as job search and individual career management (Wang & Wanberg, 2017). The research on occupational choice, which had primarily focused on matching an individual with a lifetime occupation, also started changing at this time. Because of a growing focus on individual competencies and behaviors, studies began to look at occupational choice as a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a once-in-a-lifetime decision (De Vos et al., 2019). The 1990s featured the introduction of protean career theory (Hall, 2002), boundaryless career theory (Arthur et al., 2005), and social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994), which became hallmarks of the field and still are at the core of careers research. These theories primarily emphasize individual agency as the key to career development and management, moving away even further from the traditional organizational career perspective.

Since the 2000s, the field of career studies has diversified even more, while mostly retaining its strong emphasis on individual agency in career development. Several review articles have examined trends in the field (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015; Byington et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2014) and draw similar conclusions. Most notably, all of these reviews conclude that the topic of career success has been the most dominant theme in the field. Furthermore, careers research has focused on topics such as employability, individual career management, and career choice. The field has been dominated by quantitative studies and a focus on the micro (i.e., individual) level, thereby further moving away from its sociological roots (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Baruch et al., 2015).

In the remainder of this article, a number of influential (a) career theories and (b) career topics will be discussed that have been highly influential in the field. These specific theories and topics were chosen because of their overall influence in the field in terms of citations, and the amount of scholarly work they have spurred. In addition, the choices were made based on review articles and chapters in the field of career studies that have provided overviews of the field, and distinguished similar theories and topics. Finally, some emerging theories and topics are also discussed, based on clear increases in their popularity in the field.

Theories in the Field of Career Studies

This section discusses some of the most prominent theoretical perspectives in the field of career studies.

Protean Career Theory

Protean career theory (Hall, 1976; Mirvis & Hall, 1994) became a leading career theory in the 1990s and has been highly influential ever since. Protean career theory argues that it is not the organization but, rather, the individual that manages their career. In addition, the theory was one of the first to propagate the importance of psychological, or subjective, success for people's careers. Furthermore, this theory emphasizes that careers are not just about upward advancement but also (or, even more so) about free individual growth (Hall, 1996). Thus, in contrast to the aforementioned models of Super (1957) and Holland (1959), protean career theory is about an individual agentic approach to career development, driven by intrinsic motivation (Hall, 2002). In doing so, it also emphasizes a changing employment relationship, arguing that careers are less about relational, long-term commitments and more about transactional, shorter-term psychological contracts (Hall & Moss, 1998).

Protean career theory consists of three elements: the protean career concept (PCC), protean career orientation (PCO), and protean career path (PCP) (Gubler et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2018). PCC refers to the theoretical concept of protean careers, emphasizing the aforementioned individual agency toward career development. Hall (2002) introduced the notion of "metacompetencies," which influence the degree to which individuals can develop other competencies. In the PCC, the two key metacompetencies are adaptability and identity (sometimes also referred to as self-awareness). According to Hall (2002), individuals must be able to constantly adapt to changing circumstances in order to thrive in their career. Yet, being adaptable in itself is not enough, because individuals also need to be aware of their identity. Together, these two metacompetencies form the core of the PCC. The PCO is an individual attitude toward career development that emphasizes two main aspects: self-direction (which associates with the PCC notion of individual agency) and being values-driven (which associates with the PCC notion of intrinsic motivation and psychological success) (Briscoe et al., 2006). Similar to the proposed interactive effect of the PCC metacompetencies, the two PCO dimensions are also assumed to interact for optimal effects. Indeed, Briscoe et al. (2010) showed that being self-directed and values-driven, together, explained more variance in willingness to change than either of the two dimensions by itself. Finally, the PCP is the objective sequence of job moves, the actual individual career path connected to the elements of the PCC and PCO (Gubler et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2018).

Though protean career theory already gained traction in the 1990s, its popularity has steeply increased since 2000 (Hall et al., 2018). In particular, research on protean careers skyrocketed in 2006, likely because this year marks the publication of a validated scale for PCO (Briscoe et al., 2006). The majority of empirical studies has focused on PCO, whereas only a few studies have explicitly examined PCC and PCP (Gubler et al., 2014). One of those strands in the literature has focused on further scale validation and development. The Briscoe et al. (2006) scale is still the most widely used and has been validated in a wide range of cultures, although others have developed similar PCO scales (e.g., Baruch et al., 2015; Porter

et al., 2016). The majority of PCO literature has examined its role as an antecedent of career behaviors and outcomes (Hall et al., 2018). Generally speaking, PCO is considered a “win-win” for individuals and organizations, as it can lead to enhanced career success, job and life satisfaction, as well as performance and commitment (Rodrigues et al., 2015). In their review of protean career studies, Hall et al. (2018) observed two interesting patterns in the literature. First, PCO does not necessarily have a uniform effect on outcomes, but its two dimensions of being self-directed and values-driven can differ in their role as antecedent. For example, being self-directed is a consistent predictor of subjective career success, whereas this is not always the case for the values-driven component. Second, although PCO implies an individual independence from organizations, findings thus far indicate that PCO is positively linked to organizational outcomes such as affective commitment and task performance.

To summarize, research on protean careers has become a hallmark of “new career” research. Empirical studies have primarily focused on protean career orientations as predictors of career outcomes, which leaves potential for further research (critically) examining the protean career concept and protean career paths (Gubler et al., 2014). There have been critiques on protean career theory that have argued that the protean career concept in itself is far from clear (Arnold & Cohen, 2008), for example that the term “values” is hardly clarified in the theory. Relatedly, some studies in non-Western countries found that the values aspect of the PCO scale by Briscoe et al. (2006) did not emerge as expected (Hall et al., 2018). Furthermore, Gubler et al. (2014) note that the protean career concept has rarely been critically examined, despite attempts to refine the model. In response, Hall et al. (2018) developed an integrative model of protean career theory, which attempts to reply to those conceptual critiques. Future research now needs to empirically test this model and further examine the core conceptual characteristics of the protean career concept, as well as protean career paths.

Boundaryless Career Theory

Boundaryless career theory emerged in the 1990s and gained popularity around the same time as protean career theory, within the context of a changing labor market with more structural and psychological flexibility (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The boundaryless career thereby describes emerging career patterns that are less dependent on traditional organizational career management (Guan et al., 2019). Although the boundaryless career has several meanings and was used in different ways in the past (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Guan et al., 2019), the concept of boundaryless careers often refers to “sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings” (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994, p. 306). Objectively described, as an example, a traditional career with one single job within one single organization over one’s lifetime can be described as the opposite of a boundaryless career. In contrast, a career that is composed of a pattern of different jobs, employers, and potentially occupations can be described as a prototypical boundaryless career pattern. However, reducing the boundaryless career to patterns of mobility between structural elements is an unnecessary, but often undertaken, reduction of the richness of the concept (Guan et al., 2019; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Indeed, Arthur et al. (2005) noted that it is not physical mobility per se that is key to the boundaryless career, but rather opportunities for mobility and independence from one’s employer. Within boundaryless career theory, the mobility concept can be separated and combined within two dimensions that are subjectively

represented within individuals: physical mobility (also called organizational mobility preference) and psychological mobility (also called boundaryless mindset, Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Physical mobility is the actual movement between jobs, firms, occupations, and countries, whereas psychological mobility is the capacity to move as seen through the mind of the career actor (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

Empirically, boundaryless careers have mostly been operationalized or measured by either objective patterns of career moves (clearly representing the physical mobility aspect) or a scale that captures both components (physical and psychological mobility) via individual ratings. This scale should best be interpreted as boundaryless career *orientations* because it captures a subjective pleasure or willingness to move between organizations or structural elements (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Research on the concept has mostly been conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative. In particular, the availability of the boundaryless career orientation scale caused an increase in quantitative boundaryless career research. To provide some examples: a boundaryless career orientation is helpful for dealing with workplace insecurity (Briscoe et al., 2012), the physical mobility component is negatively related to different types of organizational commitment (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2012) and positively related to salary (Volmer & Spurk, 2011), proactive personality and entrepreneurial interests predict a boundaryless mindset (Uy et al., 2015), and core self-evaluations predict boundaryless careers through higher levels of perceived employability (Rodrigues et al., 2019). A review by Guan et al. (2019) also showed the complex relationships of the boundaryless career with career success, indicating there is no universal linear relationship.

In sum, the boundaryless career can be seen as one of the most influential career theories between 1995 and 2020 (Guan et al., 2019; Sullivan, 1999). The framework has generated a considerable body of research and provided new insights for career development. These insights appear to be valid across countries, though the specific mechanisms may differ depending on contextual factors (Guan et al., 2019). For example, external career mobility could be particularly effective in liberal labor market situations (Fasang et al., 2012), whereas internal mobility is more effective in countries characterized by long-term orientations (Biemann & Wolf, 2009). Overall, the boundaryless career framework has provided a metaphor for the changing world of work within the last decades (for a review on the topic see also Arthur, 2014). Nonetheless, scholars have also criticized aspects of boundaryless career theory, like flexibility as a burden (Baruch & Vardi, 2016), less than expected objective career moves within the labor market (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010), or measurement and conceptual criticism about the boundaryless career orientation scale (Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). Future research needs to integrate past research and those critical voices to build an actualized and future-oriented research agenda.

Career Construction Theory

Career construction theory explains the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals construct themselves, impose direction on their vocational behavior, and make meaning of their careers (Savickas, 2013; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Interestingly, career construction theory did not only inform and influence career research on a large scale (Rudolph et al., 2017), but also generated a practical counseling approach (Savickas, 2015). Career construction theory thereby addresses how individuals build careers through personal

and social constructionism. It asserts that individuals construct representations of reality, yet they do not construct reality itself. Hence, career construction theory is a highly subjective approach about how individuals give sense, purpose, and meaning to their (past) career paths and decisions. Moreover, career construction theory can be applied to diverse career stages and tasks and was thereby consequentially researched, for example, within student, job market entry, or adult populations (Guan et al., 2014; Hirschi, 2010; Johnston, 2018; Spurk et al., 2016).

Although career construction theory has existed since the 1990s, the popularity of the theory has grown considerably and exponentially since 2010. The major reason for the explosion in career construction research was the development and measurement of one of its core constructs: career adaptability. The highly influential paper about the concept and measurement of career adaptability was published in 2012 (Savickas, 1997; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and triggered more than 100 empirical studies on the topic. Career adaptability is defined as “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, traumas in their occupational roles” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662). Within career construction theory, four sub-dimensions build the higher-order general career adaptability construct: concern (i.e., planning), control (i.e., decision-making, being decisive), curiosity (i.e., exploring, being inquisitive), and confidence (i.e., problem solving, being efficacious).

Furthermore, career construction theory (Hirschi et al., 2015; Savickas, 2005; Spurk et al., 2020) differentiates among (a) adaptivity (i.e., the psychological trait of willingness to meet the unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems presented by vocational development tasks), (b) adaptability (i.e., the resource for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, and traumas in their occupational roles), and (c) adapting (i.e., performing adaptive behaviors that address changing conditions, such as career planning, career exploration, or networking). This model was empirically tested and validated, for instance, by a study by Hirschi et al. (2015) and a meta-analysis by Rudolph et al. (2017). Further research showed that career adaptability is positively related to career and work outcomes, such as objective and subjective career success (Rudolph et al., 2017), well-being (Maggiori et al., 2013), job search strategies (Koen et al., 2010), employability (Spurk et al., 2016), and performance (Zacher, 2015). Moreover, a study by Spurk et al. (2020) showed changes in career adaptability go along with changes in proactive career behaviors and furthermore predict career satisfaction in a longitudinal manner. Career adaptability has now been studied across the globe, with most studies finding support for its basic premises in a variety of countries, such as in Italy and Switzerland (Santilli et al., 2017), the Czech Republic (Hlad’o et al., 2020), China (Ocampo et al., 2020), Malaysia (Ng et al., 2020), and Turkey (Karacan-Ozdemir, 2019).

In sum, since 2010, research has provided a solid basis for studying the nature, predictors, and outcomes of career adaptability and, more broadly speaking, career construction theory. Career adaptability surely can be seen as a central career self-management concept that helps to build more sustainable and successful careers. Nonetheless, there are first signs that not all components of career adaptability have the same meaning and importance for all outcomes (Rudolph et al., 2017) and that high levels of career adaptability can also decrease proactive career behaviors (Spurk et al., 2020). Furthermore, career adaptability should be seen as one important aspect of career construction theory, namely as a means for reaching purpose and

sense within one's career. However, career construction theory also focuses on career narratives, life themes, and career counseling methods that have received less attention within empirical career construction research.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) has its roots in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1999, 2001), which was developed to hypothesize why people approached or avoided various activities or actions. It was also a theory of how people regulated their behaviors to attain goals (Usher & Schunk, 2018). Bandura hypothesized that individuals would engage in tasks where they felt confident of their ability to act. Bandura termed this self-efficacy. Sources of self-efficacy are in four main areas: previous performance accomplishments, vicarious observation of role models, verbal persuasion, and physiological states and arousal. One result of the focus on sources of self-efficacy is that it has made this theory particularly amenable to interventions to bolster self-efficacy at the individual, group, and community levels. Self-efficacy is also connected to outcome expectancies, or the expectations one has of the result of behavior. Similar sources of outcome expectations operate: performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. According to social cognitive theory, one may be confident of one's actions but still not engage in those goal-related activities if the outcomes expected are negative.

Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, SCCT (Lent et al., 1994) was initially applied to work and career choices to predict career interests and career choices, as well as persistence at work and performance. Social cognitive career theory suggests that if one has confidence to perform tasks (self-efficacy) and believes positive outcomes (outcome expectations) will occur if they engage in that task, they will have higher interest in that area and will engage in actions to enact those choices. Self-efficacy and outcome expectancies are the perceptions of reality, as opposed to reality. Thus, someone might be perceived by others to be competent in an area, but not feel that they can engage in actions related to the area; that will be a stronger predictor of their actions than objective reality.

In 1981, Hackett and Betz (1981; Betz & Hackett, 1981) applied Bandura's social cognitive theory to women's traditional career choices, proposing that that low self-efficacy may be a reason that women continued to choose a limited number of occupations. Their work was expanded by Lent et al. (1994, 2002; Lent & Brown, 2006) into a full-fledged theoretical model of career choice. Their initial model also hypothesized that self-efficacy and outcome expectations in a specific domain (or area) predicted the development of interests in that area. For example, if one feels confident to engage in math-related tasks and thinks that positive outcomes will result from engaging in math related tasks, one will develop interests in math, and be more likely to choose a career that involves math. The constructs are domain specific; thus, efficacy in math is not the same as efficacy in English or French.

Self-efficacy and outcome expectations come from the learning experiences individuals have (Lent et al., 1994, 2002). Learning experiences can come from accomplishments one has, watching others as role models, being encouraged by others, or the physiological arousal, such as excitement or anxiety that can lead one toward, or away from, engaging in career-related activities (Lent & Brown, 2013). SCCT proposes that gender, race, and other demographic variables help to form the opportunities for learning experiences that then help

form self-efficacy beliefs and beliefs about outcome expectations. For example, if someone is from a high socioeconomic status (SES) family that provides a wide array of opportunities for their children, such as visits to museums, camps, tutoring, music lessons, and so on, they are more likely to have the learning experiences to form higher self-efficacy beliefs and positive outcome expectations. Thus, if someone previously did well in an area, watched role models succeed in that area, were verbally encouraged to engage in the area, and had excitement (or reduced anxiety) in that area, they would be more likely to have higher self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

SCCT also proposes that there are barriers and supports that influence decisions to pursue actions (Lent et al., 2002). Some are earlier than (distal to) the choice and others are more proximal to the choice. Examples of distal influences may be factors that influence learning experiences, such as gender-role socialization, impoverished learning environment, or increased opportunities, while proximal barriers and supports affect the implementation of choices, such as having a child or financial aid.

The first SCCT model was a career choice model (Lent et al., 1994, 2002). Subsequent to this model, Lent and Brown developed a *performance* model, which predicts the level of performance as well as the persistence an individual has in pursuing goals (Lent et al., 2002), as well as a satisfaction model (Lent & Brown, 2008). Finally, Lent and Brown (2013) developed a model of career self-management. This model was developed to integrate adaptive career-related behaviors, such as career decision-making and exploration, searching for work, advancing in a career, managing various transitions, and negotiating various roles (such as work and family) with developmental periods and life roles.

The social cognitive career model has generated a great deal of interest among researchers in vocational psychology, and has given rise to several meta-analyses of research on the various models, as well as on aspects of the model. Research has demonstrated support for the relationship between self-efficacy and interests and between self-efficacy and outcome expectations. In addition, there is empirical support for the influence of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in predicting interests, as well as predicting occupational choices and goals (Lent & Brown, 2019; Sheu et al., 2010). The relationships between supports and barriers proximal to goals were also supported, although to a more moderate degree (Lent & Brown, 2019). Meta analyses of the various sources of learning experiences, described earlier, have found that performance accomplishments are related most strongly to self-efficacy beliefs, moderately to vicarious learning and persuasion, and not significantly to physiological arousal (Byars-Winston et al., 2017). These findings have been robust across a number of U.S. racial/ethnic groups. Lent (2020) concludes that “research provides support for many of SCCT’s theoretical assumptions . . . and in understanding and facilitating the career development of persons across a number of diversity dimensions” (p. 149).

Other Theoretical Perspectives

Sustainable Careers

Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015) defined sustainable careers as: “sequences of career experiences reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, thereby crossing several social spaces, characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual” (p. 7). In their conceptual article, De Vos et al. (2020) argue that career sustainability is a dynamic interplay between individual, contextual, and temporal issues. For example, individuals can enact agency and search for meaning in their careers (i.e., individual), yet this depends on, for example, organizational, cultural, and nonwork factors (i.e., contextual) and it can change over time (i.e., temporal). Two crucial concepts in this regard are proactivity and adaptability. First, proactivity means that individuals need to take charge of their context and their own development over time. Second, adaptability refers to individuals being able to adapt to changes in their context and over time. Together, this implies that there is constant interaction between individual, contextual, and temporal factors that need to be balanced. De Vos et al. (2020) further argue that career sustainability is about an ongoing person-career fit dynamic, in which individuals strive for alignment between their career aspirations and behaviors. Career sustainability indicators are happiness (e.g., engagement, success), health (e.g., workability), and productivity (e.g., performance, employability). An important aspect of the conceptual work of De Vos et al. is that sustainable career theorizing complements other career theories (e.g., boundaryless and protean career theory) that have focused predominantly on individual agency by also explicitly taking into account context and time. Sustainable careers are highly idiosyncratic and are, as a consequence, highly diverse (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). There is no one universal path to career sustainability, and the path toward career sustainability may be much more challenging in certain circumstances, such as during unemployment, when being part of a minority population, or during economic recessions. As such, the sustainable career framework by De Vos et al. offers an inclusive framework for analyzing long-term career outcomes.

Empirical findings in the area of sustainable career have provided initial support for its basic premises. For example, studies have highlighted the importance of alignment between individuals and organizations, showing that reduced work load initiatives and career customization programs are only effective when there are clear agreements between employees and employers (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2020; Straub et al. 2020). Furthermore, career sustainability can only be understood from a whole-life perspective, as nonwork factors, such as leisure activities and work-home balance, are critical to long-term career sustainability (De Hauw & Greenhaus, 2015; Hirschi et al., 2020; Kelly et al., 2020). Learning and employability are also key for sustainable careers (Blokker et al., 2019; Heslin et al., 2020). Overall, Van der Heijden et al. (2020) conclude that studies in the area of career sustainability have offered support for its proposed mechanisms, yet that more research is needed to fully capture its theoretical, conceptual, and methodological complexities.

Kaleidoscope Careers

The kaleidoscope career perspective was introduced within the context of gendered opting-out career research (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Thereby, the kaleidoscope is seen as a metaphor that produces changing patterns when the tube is rotated and its glass chips fall into new arrangements. Similarly, women shift the pattern of their careers by rotating different aspects in their lives to arrange their roles and relationships in new ways. Although originally applied to women, the related “ABC” model has also been applied to men and mixed populations. Authenticity (A) relates to the question of whether people can be themselves in the midst of career chaos and role changes and thereby still be authentic. Balance (B) relates to the question of whether people who make a career decision can balance the parts of their life well enough so that there can be a coherent whole. Challenge (C) relates to the question of whether people can be sufficiently challenged if they accept specific career options. If all components (ABC) are met, the career will result in satisfaction and meaningfulness (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Empirical research has shown that the ABC factors can differ between men and women and across the lifespan. For example, though challenge was similar for women and men as declining over time, balance became increasingly important for women in the mid-career phase but less important for men (Mainiero & Gibson, 2017).

Psychology of Working Theory

The psychology of working theory (PWT; Duffy et al., 2016) grew out of Blustein’s psychology of working framework (Blustein, 2006), developed to address the work decisions of non-college bound individuals. As a theoretical framework, PWT incorporates a number of variables that other vocational theories do not include, such as economic constraints and marginalization, which lead to choices of decent work (or ability to find decent work). The theory conceptualizes decent work as predicted by economic constraints and marginalization, mediated by career adaptability and work volition, leading to positive outcomes such as social connectedness, survival needs, and self-determination, which, in turn, lead to well-being and job satisfaction. The construct of decent work follows the definition by the International Labor Organization (Duffy et al., 2016), which includes the five factors of: (a) physically safe work, that (b) has adequate free time and rest, (c) has adequate compensation, (d) offers access to health care, and (e) provides work-life balance.

The theory also predicts that four variables moderate the relationship between economic constraints, marginalization, career adaptability, work volition, and decent work: proactive personality, critical consciousness, social support, and external economic conditions. In sum, Duffy et al. (2016) predict that individuals who have high economic status and had few experiences with racism and sexism would have higher career adaptability and higher work volition, would find decent work, and would have positive career outcomes. But the theory really is designed to explain the opposite scenario, helping to understand how, for example, sexism, racism, and homophobia would interact with more economic constraints to explain how individuals may have lower career adaptability or work volition. Support was found for the perceptions of barriers due to race (Blustein et al., 2010), although in the same study, half of the high school students did not perceive racism as playing a role in career considerations. Though the theory is still quite nascent, the model is receiving extensive study, both quantitatively and qualitatively, including global research on decent work (Duffy et al., 2020).

Theories From Other Disciplines

The field of career studies has also adopted theories that originated in other, related fields. A few of them are discussed next.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory was originally proposed by Hobfoll (1989) to explain mechanisms related to stress, and has since been applied to work-related stress and resources. COR theory proposes that people strive to maintain their current level and type of resources, try to acquire new resources, and guard against the loss of resources (Hobfoll, 2002). The theory also proposes that people accrue resources to guard against loss of future resources, preventing a spiral of resource loss. Though COR theory began as a stress-oriented theory, it has moved beyond that area (for an overview, see Hobfoll et al., 2018). It has also become a popular theory in careers research, for example as a theoretical model to understand career success (Spurk et al., 2019), employability (Forrier et al., 2018), career hurdles (Ng & Feldman, 2014), and career sustainability (De Vos et al., 2020).

Human capital theory primarily focuses on the skills and knowledge that individuals acquire to enhance their performance and success in the labor market (Becker, 1964). Human capital is likely to be rewarded in the labor market and has specific relevance for career development research. First, the development of human capital from childhood via youth and adulthood to older individuals can be considered as one important aspect of career development per se. Second, human capital puts individuals at a competitive advantage compared to peers with lower human capital. According to the contest-mobility perspective of career success, therefore, individuals with higher levels of human capital (e.g., experience, tenure, skill levels, education, and social networks) usually also show higher levels of objective career success like income or promotions (Ng et al., 2005). However, with a shift toward more subjective criteria of careers, human capital theory has lost a bit of its momentum in the field of career studies, at least in terms of predicting objective career outcomes (Spurk et al., 2019) and employability (Forrier et al., 2018).

Social exchange theory (SET) (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2017) has been a highly influential theoretical perspective to examine employment relations (Cook et al., 2013). SET focuses on interdependent relationships between parties (e.g., employer and employee) as a series of reciprocal resource exchanges. High-quality employment relations are achieved when they are balanced (i.e., equal contributions from the parties involved) and of high level (i.e., there is a high amount of investment), which then lead to positive outcomes for employees (e.g., commitment, performance) and employers (e.g., retention of talent) (Cook et al., 2013; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In the field of career studies, SET has been used in a variety of topics, including employability (Forrier et al., 2018), organizational career management (Guan et al., 2015), and career opportunities and development (Kraimer et al., 2011).

Topics in the Field of Career Studies

In this section, some of the key topics and concepts that have been researched in the field of career studies will be discussed.

Career Choice Across the Life Span

It is axiomatic that individuals are now making career decisions at nearly every stage of life, rather than making a one-off career choice at the start of one's professional career (De Vos et al., 2019). As briefly described in the historical overview at the start of this article, in the 1950s, Super's developmental theory (1957) was revolutionary in conceptualizing that there were developmental stages that characterized final career choice (usually at age 18–20). Super proposed, first, that vocational development is a process of making several decisions, and second, that vocational choice is an implementation of the self-concept. He also proposed that choices were the result of an interaction between self-concept and external feedback, occurring over time. Thus, career choices were thought to be the result of a sense of self—"what I should do"—in combination with external reality—"What others think I should, or could do." Often, of course, the latter is shaped by what others, or the external world, says that one cannot do, in part due to gender or racial socialization, or discrimination.

Super proposed five distinct life stages, each with developmental tasks appropriate for the mid-20th century. The first was Growth (ages 4 to 13), the second was Exploration (ages 14 to 24), the third was Establishment (ages 25 to 44), the fourth was Maintenance or Management (ages 45 to 65), and the fifth was Disengagement (over age 65) (Hartung, 2013). Each stage had its characteristic developmental tasks (Hartung, 2013): for example, individuals at the career exploration stage needed to understand their own interests and values before going on to the implementing a choice task before the next state of establishment. If individuals mastered the tasks of one stage, they were thought to be prepared for the next stage. Successfully navigating developmental tasks of a stage was considered to be evidence of career maturity. Eventually, the construct of career maturity evolved to be thought of as career adaptability, which is part of career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005).

In the more than 60 years since Super (1957) proposed this theory, significant support has been marshaled for the tasks related to vocational exploration and career choice, although the role of career choice itself has changed. When Super was proposing his theory, as was discussed in the brief historical overview section of this article, individuals (usually men) chose a career path in secondary school, prepared for that path, were hired by a firm that determined the path of their career, and stayed with the firm their entire working lives. Now, the loosening of the contract between the individual and the employer means that individuals make career choices throughout their lives. Thus, individuals explore options at many points throughout their working career, sometimes changing organizations and sometimes changing career paths.

Jiang et al. (2019) reviewed studies of career exploration from 2000 to 2019, defining career exploration as "an adaptive mechanism of personal agency that allows individuals to build their career adaptability and manage adaptations and renewals in their vocational development" (p. 338). They found that, regardless of the age at which individuals engaged in career exploration, the agency with which they explored their options was related to the outcomes. In other words, individuals who were motivated to explore options (at any age) had better career outcomes, such as higher self-efficacy related to career decision-making, more career adaptability, better person-job fit, and higher satisfaction with the choice.

Jiang et al. (2019) also note the limitations of career exploration research and call for more research to study the psychological processes underlying career exploration. The original process of career choice was proposed by Frank Parsons in 1909 to help impoverished boys in Boston earn a meaningful wage. His model, termed the matching model, consisted of encouraging young men to know themselves, know the world of work, and find true reasoning between the two. Known as the matching model, Parsons's work gave rise to many ways to help individuals "know themselves," such as inventories to assess abilities, interests, and values, and the rise of occupational information models such as the U.S. Department of Labor's O*Net, which helps individuals know about the world of work. But "true reasoning between the two" happened in a somewhat magical black box. Lent and Brown (2020) have proposed a career decision-making model that integrates research on dual-process models of reasoning. Their model updates Parsons's model to reflect individuals' tendency to make decisions quickly and without reflection, although most models of career decision-making assume that individuals are rational processors. They have also updated the model to include career sustainability, such as is necessary in contemporary careers (cf. De Vos et al., 2020).

Career Success

Career success is one of the most prevalent outcome variables within career research (Ng et al., 2005; Spurk et al., 2019), and has been the most popular topic in the field of career studies (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017). Career success is an outcome of a person's career experiences and may be defined as: "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179). The distinction between objective career success and subjective career success has received much attention. Whereas objective career success is defined as directly observable by others and measurable in a standardized way (Arthur et al., 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005)—by weighing a person's career against societal norms concerning salary, job level, promotion history, or occupational prestige (Dries et al., 2008)—subjective career success is defined as the focal career actor's evaluation and experience of achieving personally meaningful career outcomes (Ng et al., 2005; Seibert et al., 2001; Shockley et al., 2016). Subjective career success is typically measured as career satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Seibert et al., 2013) or perceived career success (Heslin, 2003; Turban & Dougherty, 1994), though a multidimensional evaluation of career facets, such as growth and development, personal life, and authenticity would seem to more accurately measure the construct (Shockley et al., 2016). The correlation between objective and subjective success reported in meta-analytical reviews typically has been small to moderate, ranging from 0.22 to 0.30 (Ng et al., 2005), with even smaller or non-significant correlations reported between indicators of objective success and specific subjective success facets (Shockley et al., 2016). It should be noted that scholars have argued and shown that the objective versus subjective career success distinction does not fully capture the richness of the career success construct and, for cross-cultural generalizability, needs to be complemented with additional factors such as non-work and social elements (Shen et al., 2015). The Cross-Cultural Collaboration on Contemporary Careers (5C) has conducted career research inquiries in more than 30 countries across the world and found that, overall, career success consists of financial security, financial success, learning and development, work-life balance, positive relationships, positive impact, and entrepreneurship (Mayrhofer et al., 2016).

Although there are calls to investigate also outcomes of career success (Spurk et al., 2019), the vast majority of research has focused on predictors of career success. A seminal meta-analysis on the topic thereby identified four broader classes of predictors: (a) human capital, (b) organizational sponsorship, (c) socio-demographics, and (d) stable individual differences (Ng et al., 2005). A review by Spurk et al. (2019) organized research on predictors of career success and its related theories within a resource management framework, suggesting several resources that predict the attainment of career success: human capital, roles and identity, (competitive) performance, social environment, work environment, career agency, stress and coping, stable traits, national culture, person-environment interactions, life span, career transitions, and hybrid approaches. Importantly, the review also suggested that those approaches can have differential importance for predicting objective versus subjective career success. Studies, for example, linked various organizational career management approaches via different explaining mechanisms with objective career success (Bagdadli & Gianecchini, 2019), showing that organizational embeddedness predicts promotions and career satisfaction (Kiazad et al., 2020) and that the relationship between telecommuting and objective career success is rather complex (Golden & Eddleston, 2020).

In sum, although the prediction of career success is a well understood field, future research still can provide further insights by focusing on some specific topics: making sense of the theoretical heterogeneity in career success research, accounting for the theoretical differentiation of correlates of objective career success and subjective career success, focusing more on positive versus “dark side” outcomes of career success, and more clearly accounting for antecedent-career success-outcome dynamics and causalities (Spurk et al., 2019).

Employability

Another highly popular topic in the field of career studies is employability (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Byington et al., 2019). The rising popularity of the concept aligns with the historical developments in career studies (see the brief historical overview at the start of this article) in which individual agency has become the primary paradigm through which to examine career development. Employability is typically characterized as an individual's employment potential in the internal and/or external labor market (Forrier & Sels, 2003), and it has been brought forward as an important employment security mechanism.

Different perspectives exist in the literature on employability. First, Fugate et al. (2004) coined the *dispositional approach* to employability, which argues that employability is an individual characteristic that can enhance adaptive behaviors and positive employment outcomes (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). Their employability model consists of five main dimensions: work and career resilience, openness to changes at work, work and career proactivity, career motivation, and work identity. Second, Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) developed a *competence-based approach* to employability, which argues that a set of malleable employability competences forms the basis for one's chances of employment. There are five employability competences in their model: occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense, and balance. Though the specific individual characteristics differ somewhat, both the dispositional and competence-based perspectives on employability emphasize the importance of being adaptable and proactive. Forrier et al. (2009)

argued that these characteristics can all be considered a form of “movement capital” that enables individuals to obtain and retain employment. The third strand of literature is the *perceived employability approach*, which emphasizes the importance of an individual’s perceptions of their own employability, based on personal (e.g., competencies) and structural (e.g., labor market opportunities) factors (Vanhercke et al., 2014). Perceived employability is typically categorized into internal (i.e., with the current organization) and external (i.e., outside of the current organization) employability. Forrier et al. (2015) argued that the three types of employability can be considered as a dynamic chain that involves movement capital (i.e., dispositional and competence-based employability) as an input-based approach of employability, and perceived employability as an outcome-based approach.

Empirical studies on employability have flourished since 2005, which was made possible by the development of validated scales on dispositional employability (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), competence-based employability (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden et al., 2018), and perceived employability (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Studies have thus far primarily focused on employability—across the three strands—as an antecedent of work- and career-related outcomes. For example, empirical evidence suggests that employability can enhance health and well-being (e.g., Berntson & Marklund, 2007; Berntson et al., 2008; De Cuyper et al., 2012), job performance (e.g., De Cuyper et al., 2014; Philippaers et al., 2019), and career success (Bozionelos et al., 2015; Lo Presti et al., 2018). There is some emerging research on employability as an outcome as well. For example, Blokker et al. (2019) showed that career competencies and career success enhanced employability, which, in line with the arguments of Spurk et al. (2019), suggests that employability and career success may be mutually reinforcing phenomena. Furthermore, studies have started to investigate how employability can be enhanced. One line of research in this area has focused on the so-called management paradox of employability, which refers to employers fearing investments in employability due to a fear of their best talents leaving (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011). Interestingly, studies thus far mostly indicate that this paradox may not exist, as interventions and human resources practices seem to increase employability without necessarily increasing turnover or reducing commitment of employable workers (Akkermans et al., 2019; Nelissen et al., 2017; Philippaers et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2020).

Despite the quick rise of employability in the field of career studies, there are also concerns about the development of research in this area. The most prominent critique has been the overly agentic focus of employability research, thereby overlooking the role of, for example, employers and other contextual factors (e.g., Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017; Clarke, 2018; Van Harten et al., 2020). Indeed, Forrier et al. (2018) argued that employability research suffers from three blind spots that have been ignored in studies thus far: employability is contextual (rather than purely an individual asset), employability is relational (rather than purely agentic), and employability is potentially polarizing (rather than a win for all). Regarding the latter, Forrier et al. (2018) argue that employability development may lead to a “Matthew effect” in which the highly employable develop even more employability, whereas those who lack employability may increasingly be at a disadvantage. Another issue with the current state-of-the-art in the literature is that the relationships between input-based and output-based approaches has not been firmly established yet. While intuitively appealing, these associations may be more complex than expected and may have suffered from methodological problems (Peeters et al., 2020).

Career Self-Management and Career Resources

Similar to the aforementioned literatures on career success and employability, research on career self-management and career resources has gained in popularity in line with the growing emphasis on individual agency in contemporary careers. Greenhaus et al. (2010, p. 12) define *career self-management* as “a process by which individuals develop, implement, and monitor career goals and strategies.” Although the majority of studies on career self-management have focused on its behavioral nature (e.g., King, 2004), the overall consensus in the literature is that career self-management consists of a behavioral and a cognitive component (De Vos, De Clippeler, et al., 2009). Cognitive aspects of career self-management refer to becoming aware of one’s career aspirations, developing goals, and reflecting on career strategies (Lent & Brown, 2013), whereas behavioral aspects focus on actual behaviors to develop one’s career, thereby emphasizing the importance of proactive behaviors (Parker et al., 2010).

An influential model of career self-management was presented by King (2004). She categorized career self-management into three dimensions: positioning behaviors, influence behaviors, and boundary management. Positioning behaviors focus on gaining contacts, skills, and experience; influence behaviors are about influencing significant others; and boundary management refers to actively balancing work and nonwork domains. These career self-management behaviors have been empirically linked to, among others, career success (Abele & Wiese, 2008; De Vos & Soens, 2008), reemployment quality (Zikic & Klehe, 2006), and positive work-related outcomes such as psychological contract fulfillment (Sturges et al., 2005) and affective commitment (De Vos, Dewettinck, et al., 2009). Career self-management is also an integral part of social cognitive career theory, specifically its career self-management model (Lent & Brown, 2013). This model, however, does not focus on specific behaviors but, rather, presents a career self-management model that can be applied to a wide range of behaviors. In particular, the CSM model of social cognitive career theory argues that cognitive factors (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations) feed into career goals and, subsequently, behaviors. Empirical research has shown support for this process model of career self-management, and has linked it, in particular, to career decidedness and career indecision (Brown & Lent, 2019).

A related stream of literature in the field of career studies has examined different types of *career resources* (sometimes referred to as career capital). Hirschi et al. (2018, p. 339) defined career resources as “anything that helps an individual attain his or her career goals.” Based on Hirschi’s model of career resources (2012), they developed a measurement of career resources that consists of four categories: (a) human capital career resources (e.g., expertise, soft skills), (b) environmental career resources (e.g., organizational and social support), (c) motivational career resources (e.g., career involvement and confidence), and (d) career management behaviors (e.g., networking, learning). The career resources framework was originally developed to present an overarching collection of predictors of career success and is based on several literature streams, of which the research on career competencies and career adaptability are the most prominent ones.

Research on career competencies emerged with the arrival of the protean and boundaryless career theories. Based on a review of the career competencies literature, Akkermans, Brenninkmeijer, et al. (2013) developed an integrative model of career competencies.

According to their model, there are three overarching dimensions of career competencies, each consisting of two specific competencies. First, reflective career competencies are about creating an awareness of motivations and skills. Reflection on motivation taps into values and passions, whereas reflection on qualities focuses on strengths, shortcomings, and skills. Second, communicative career competencies are about being able to communicate with relevant stakeholders in one's career. Networking refers to having and being able to expand a relevant network, and self-profiling means that a person is able to present their competencies to the internal and external labor market. Third, behavioral career competencies are about the ability to proactively explore and construct a career. Work exploration focuses on actively exploring opportunities, and career control centers on the ability to influence learning and work processes by setting and pursuing career goals. Developing career competencies can, for example, enhance people's career success (Akkermans & Tims, 2017; Kuijpers et al., 2006), marketability (Eby et al., 2003), employability (Blokker et al., 2019), and work engagement (Akkermans, Schaufeli, et al., 2013).

A core element in career construction theory (see section on "Career Construction Theory"), career adaptability has been another influential career resource in the field of career studies. Career adaptability is a psychosocial resource that helps to cope with career-related tasks, transitions, and traumas (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and enables individuals to solve complex problems in their career (Hirschi et al., 2015). There are four career adaptability resources: being *concerned* about one's career-related future, exercising *control*, exploring possible selves through *curiosity*, and strengthening *confidence* to fulfill goals and aspirations. In line with the core elements of career construction theory, a meta-analysis by Rudolph et al. (2017) showed that career adaptability can enhance adaptivity (e.g., self-esteem), adapting (e.g., career planning), and adaptation (e.g., employability). Johnston (2018), in a systemic review of the career adaptability literature, concluded that career adaptability contributes to personal development and effectively undergoing career transitions throughout people's careers.

In all, although research on career self-management and career resources has evolved mostly separately, there are clear conceptual similarities. In particular, the cognitive aspects of career self-management seem to relate quite close to the notion of career competencies and career adaptability. Indeed, Hirschi and Koen (in press) concluded that career resources are, in essence, conditional elements to successfully self-management a career. Similarly, Tims and Akkermans (2020) integrated career self-management and career resources into a framework of *career crafting*, consisting of a cognitive component (i.e., proactive career reflection) and a behavioral component (i.e., proactive career construction). Research thus far has convincingly shown that career self-management and career resources are critical components of contemporary career development, and are important building blocks of career outcomes.

Organizational Career Management and Changing Employment Relations

Although most career theories have primarily highlighted the role of the individual and related career self-management (as discussed in the section on "Career Self-Management and Career Resources") within career development, organizational career management is still an important issue for individual career actors and organizations. On the one hand, labor market statistics across the globe, and specifically Europe, show that careers are still less boundaryless than predicted some decades ago (Dries & Verbruggen, 2012; Rodrigues &

Guest, 2010). On the other hand, how organizational career paths can be fitted to the needs and values of high potentials and other employees is a major task within human resource management. Hence, organizational career management is theoretically and practically important and located at the intersection of careers, organizational behavior, and management research.

According to Baruch (2006), organizations face three major issues when managing the careers of their employees: (a) strategic managing of human capital, (b) global careers and their management, and (c) diversity-homogeneity versus heterogeneity. With the emergence of the sustainable career perspective (as briefly discussed in the section on “Other Theoretical Perspectives”), the sustainability aspects also revived further importance for organizational career management (De Vos et al., 2020; Van der Heijden et al., 2020). To reach those goals, organizations traditionally and currently imply several diverse measures. Some examples are: formal education/tuition reimbursement, performance appraisal for career planning, counseling by manager, lateral moves/job rotations, pre-retirement programs, succession planning, formal mentoring, career booklets/pamphlets, career workshops, assessment center, special needs (highfliers or dual-career couples), diversity management, and expatriation/repatriation (Baruch, 2006; Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). It goes beyond the scope of this article to describe those career management practices in more detail, and nearly every mentioned practice is related to its own stream of research: talent management (Dries, 2013), mentoring (Eby et al., 2008), assessment centers (Arthur Jr et al., 2003), or diversity management (Mor Barak et al., 2016). This signals how organizational career management is an interdisciplinary topic, yet, at the same time, that there is little interdisciplinary connectivity.

Importantly, because of the changing employment relationships with highly individual needs of employees and erosion of the traditional psychological contract between employer and employee (Baruch & Rousseau, 2019), more flexible and individualized organizational career management practices seem to be useful. From the traditional approaches, for example, mentoring or career coaching already include highly individualized approaches and seem to be specifically relevant in contemporary work environments. Moreover, the application of idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) have received attention within the past several years (Hornung et al., 2008; Liao et al., 2016; Rousseau, 2015). I-deals are “voluntary, personalized agreements of a nonstandard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit each party” (Rousseau et al., 2006, p. 978). Typically, i-deals are negotiated between employees and their managers. I-deals have been shown to be positively related to, for example, leader-member-exchange, affective organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Liao et al., 2016).

A related career management practice is called career customization (Bal et al., 2015; Straub et al., 2020). Career customization provides employees with different options to customize their careers to meet their personal needs and has been suggested as a sustainable solution to the mismatch between traditional career models and the needs of today’s workforce (Straub et al., 2020). For example, employees can customize their work schedule, location, load, role, and promotion speed according to their personal needs, which has shown positive effects on career outcomes (Straub et al., 2020). This is a promising tool within current organizational career management, but future research needs to investigate it and other more flexible career management practices in more detail.

Current developments in the labor market, such as alternative employment types (Ashford et al., 2018; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Spurk & Straub, 2020), raise questions about which workers will have access to such organizational career management practices. Gig work, which is a type of temporary contract work that connects self-employed workers directly with clients via a digital platform (Spreitzer et al., 2017), is potentially the most flexible type of work arrangement. Most important, it is still unclear who is responsible for those gig workers in terms of career management: are they the prototype of protean and boundaryless career actors, managing their careers fully by themselves (Kost et al., 2020), or should they receive organizational career management through the digital contracting platforms (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019)? Those (digitalized) labor market developments raise several challenges and questions for organizational career management and changing employment relationships that should be addressed in future career research.

Career Transitions and Career Shocks

As a result of careers becoming more complex and individualized, individuals increasingly need to navigate *career transitions* throughout the life span (Vuori et al., 2012). The term “career transition” typically refers to a change in work experiences, which can be a change in, for example, a job or occupation (Louis, 1980). Research has shown that individuals are making more transitions during their career at all levels of analysis: transitions between jobs, organizations, occupations, industries, and labor markets (Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Research on career transitions has a rich and interdisciplinary tradition, being part of literatures in, for example, careers, human resource management, organizational behavior, international management, and sociology (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021). Similar to the literature on organizational career management, though, the literature on career transitions is highly fragmented, with a wide range of conceptualizations and theoretical perspectives underlying studies on career transitions (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2021).

Despite the fragmentation in the literature, there is a wealth of knowledge about normative transitions (i.e., those transitions imposed by society) as well as idiosyncratic transitions (i.e., those transitions initiated by the individual). This article cannot discuss all the different strands that exist in the literature in-depth, yet it will discuss some of the major streams of literature and mention other avenues of research on career transitions. Most notably, career transition research has focused on school-to-work transitions, unemployment-to-work transitions, work-to-work transitions, and work-to-retirement transitions.

The school-to-work transition (sometimes referred to as university-to-work or college-to-work transition) is the period during which someone leaves school and starts their first employment (Akkermans et al., 2021; Ng & Feldman, 2007). Though not often explicitly mobilized, this literature has clear commonalities with the literature on vocational and career choice. Indeed, research on school-to-work transitions traditionally focused on preparing individuals for a major, one-off, transition into professional life, but it has shifted focus toward continuous learning and decision processes across one’s life span (De Vos et al., 2019). Studies on successful (or adaptive) school-to-work transitions have typically focused on a combination of subjective and objective factors (Akkermans et al., 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2007), characterizing a successful transition in terms of employment quantity (e.g., employment status), quality (e.g., fit, over-qualification), and stability (e.g., temporary, permanent). Predictors of a

successful school-to-work transition are, among others, socioeconomic status, parental support, school performance, decision-making and career-related competencies, and coping skills (Akkermans et al. 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2007).

The unemployment-to-work transition literature has predominantly focused on the job search process and reemployment success (Paul & Moser, 2009; Wanberg, 2012). Wanberg et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of job search effort (or intensity) and quality as part of the unemployment-to-work process, and categorized predictors of a successful transition into three main dimensions: labor market, human and social capital, and contextual variables. Often used indicators of a successful transition are speed and quality of reemployment, as well as indicators of fit (e.g., person-organization, person-job) (Wanberg et al., 2002; Wanberg, 2012). In a review of the existing literature, Van Hooft et al. (2020) showed that job search intensity leads to (re)employment quantity (i.e., number of interviews, number of job offers, employment status) but not to (re)employment quality (e.g., person-job fit). They argued that self-regulation and job search quality (i.e., the thoroughness with which a job search is conducted) are key to achieving higher quality employment outcomes.

Research on work-to-work transitions is perhaps the most fragmented element of the career transitions literature, as it encompasses a wide range of literatures and terminologies. For example, there is research on job transitions, organizational transitions (including turnover), occupational transitions, and the wider career/organizational mobility literature (including expatriation). Overall, a wide range of predictors and outcomes of work-to-work transitions has been found. For example, Blau (2000) and Griffeth et al. (2000) showed that individuals are more likely to engage in a transition (i.e., to leave their organization) when they are less satisfied and committed, when they experience high levels of stress, when they have little autonomy and few promotion opportunities, and when they perceive many alternatives. There is some emerging literature on occupational transitions as well. The antecedents of occupational turnover are mostly similar to organizational turnover, including low levels of satisfaction and commitment. However, there are also differences. Blau (2007) found that job insecurity related to organizational turnover, whereas work exhaustion related to occupational turnover. In addition, Zimmerman et al. (2020) showed that people who have higher amounts of non-core duties and who have a job in addition to their main job (i.e., moonlighting) were more likely to change occupations versus change organizations. In all, most of the literature on organizational and occupational transitions has focused on antecedents of turnover, rather than looking at the organization or occupation someone joins after the transition.

The work-to-retirement literature has mostly adopted a dual focus, studying preparation for retirement and adjustment after retirement (Wang & Wanberg, 2017). With regard to the former, studies have examined the timing of retirement, for example whether individuals decide to retire early, on time, or late (Fischer et al., 2016). Findings indicate that a range of predictors determines the timing of retirement. For example, people who are financially secure or are in poor health likely retire earlier, whereas individuals who are satisfied with and committed to their job are less likely to retire (Topa et al., 2018). Pak et al. (2019) argued that preferred retirement age can be extended if organizations offer job resources, such as autonomy, variety, and security. The adjustment literature has mostly investigated the health and well-being outcomes after retirement, as well as potential predictors of such outcomes (Barbosa et al., 2016). Research shows that people who are more employable at retirement

can adjust better (Sullivan & Al Ariss, 2019). Furthermore, people who remain active in their work role tend to adjust better (Wang & Shultz, 2010), likely because there is an increased sense of continuity between before and after the transition.

Although the main emphasis in research on career transitions—and career studies in general—has been on individual agency and control, there is also an emerging literature on *career shocks*. A career shock can be defined as “a disruptive and extraordinary event that is, at least to some degree, caused by factors outside the focal individual’s control and that triggers a deliberate thought process concerning one’s career” (Akkermans et al., 2018, p. 4). Although there was a relatively rich literature on chance events and serendipity in the 1970s and 1980s, this stream of literature mostly disappeared with the introduction of the boundaryless and protean career theories. However, given the increasing complexity and unpredictability of careers, major unpredictable events—career shocks—are becoming increasingly salient in people’s careers (Akkermans et al., 2020). Studies have shown that such shocks happen to the majority of people and can have long-term consequences for their careers (Hirschi, 2010). For example, experiencing career shocks can lead professionals to pursue further education (Seibert et al., 2013) and a positive shock could lead academics to become more engaged in their work (Kraimer et al., 2019). The literature on career shocks is still in a rather nascent stage, though some important lessons can already be formulated (Akkermans et al., 2020). First, career shocks interact with individual agentic factors to impact on career development. For example, Blokker et al. (2019) showed that career shocks were a boundary condition in the career competencies–career success–employability relationship, such that negative shocks weakened and positive shocks strengthened that process. Seibert et al. (2016) also argued that resilience and adaptability are key individual characteristics that can help deal with career shocks. Second, the impact of career shocks is not straightforward. For example, Kraimer et al. (2019) showed that career shocks could have differential impact on people in different career stages. Moreover, studies have shown that events that were, at first, negatively valenced, ultimately turned out to have positive effects for people’s careers (e.g., Rummel et al., 2019; Seibert et al., 2013; Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Further research is needed to probe the theoretical mechanisms that explain the way in which career shocks can impact people’s career development.

Other Topics

Work-Nonwork Interface

Super (1980) was a pioneer in considering the development of vocational choices within the context of other life roles. He outlined six roles individuals could hold, sometimes at the same time: child, student, homemaker, worker, citizen, and leisurite. These roles could interact throughout their lives. Thus, as a child, the child role was primary, but often, was again a primary role as an adult caring for aging parents. Individuals play multiple roles in their lives, and those roles interact. He was, thus, one of the first to outline the need to understand the balance of work and family roles. In the decades since he proposed the concept of role salience and the possible conflict between roles, research on the relationship between work and family, or work-and nonwork roles has generated many studies and many theories. While some have focused on factors related to the conflict between work and family (e.g., Allen et al., 2020), others have focused on how one role enriches the other (Lapierre et al., 2018).

Because not all work environments are the same in their support for their workers' balancing work and family, attention is starting to turn to organizational policies that help employees manage multiple roles (e.g., Bourdeau et al., 2019; French & Shockley, 2020). Furthermore, research is starting to explore the role of nonwork orientations and leisure activities as core parts of career development (Hirschi et al., 2020). Overall, the work-nonwork interface has become an important part of career studies, for example in terms of career success, career sustainability, career self-management, and global careers (for an overview, see Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014).

Calling

Between 2010 and 2020, calling became a highly researched topic within career development. Following Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011), a calling can be defined as "a consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain" (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011, p. 1005). Thus, employees who experience a career calling are likely to perceive their involvement in their work as consuming and perceive their work domain as meaningful, too. As calling can be a guiding inner force for career decisions and paths, it possesses high relevance for career development. However, calling research has also been plagued by issues of concept clarity and differentiation between different calling conceptualizations (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Nonetheless, empirical insights have started to further develop scholarly knowledge on calling (cf. Lysova et al., 2019). A meta-analysis on the topic provides a comprehensive overview of different definitions and correlates of calling (Dobrow et al., 2019). For example, callings were more important for well-being concerned with self-realization and meaning than for well-being concerned with happiness and pleasure, reflecting calling's significance for deeper growth-oriented rather than more fleeting, pleasurable types of happiness. Moreover, callings were related to lower strain and more career and life satisfaction. Overall, it seems that experiencing a calling is beneficial for work and private life.

However, although studies have primarily examined positive effects of calling on careers and private lives, research has also mentioned potential dark sides of calling (Dobrow et al., 2019). Duffy et al. (2018) assumed in their calling model that calling in terms of a kind of "overcommitment" to the work domain might also trigger burnout, workaholism, and exploitation. Indeed, some studies linked calling with higher levels of workaholism (Hirschi et al., 2019; Keller et al., 2016). Such findings show that a more differentiated perspective on calling and its potential predictors and outcomes is necessary in future research (Dobrow et al., 2019). Generally, compared to research on outcomes of calling, research on predictors of calling is less frequent. Moreover, other topics for future research are the examinations of the processes and boundary conditions that link searching for a calling with presence of calling and living a calling (Dobrow et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The field of career studies has been around for a long time, yet has gained momentum in the early 21st century across disciplines (e.g., psychology, management). The field is fragmented, though, as theories and concepts are typically used within certain silos: boundaryless career theory, for example, has been prominent in management research, whereas career

construction theory has primarily been mobilized by vocational psychology scholars. This article aimed to provide an overview of the key theories and concepts in the broad field of career studies across disciplinary boundaries. Hopefully, this will provide a valuable collection of topics for anyone who wants to explore careers research, as well as a fruitful basis for interdisciplinary connections in research on careers and career development.

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