

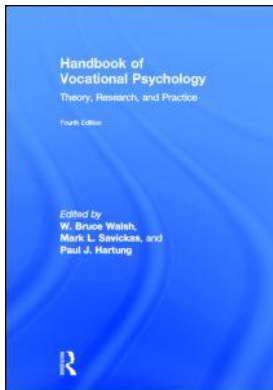
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### **Careers in Organizations**

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# Careers in Organizations

John Arnold and Laurie Cohen

## INTRODUCTION

There have been many calls to extend our understandings of career development beyond the boundaries of the organization (e.g., Arthur, Inkson, and Pringle, 1999; Hall, 2002). Indeed, this handbook is just one of many works that vividly illustrate the reach of the career concept, transcending work organizations and including domestic, educational, and leisure spheres. However, in this chapter we pay attention to organizational contexts. We examine and review some of the ways in which the relationship between individuals and organizations have been theorized, and the role of career in this dynamic interplay.

The concept of career with which we are perhaps most familiar is inextricably linked to the bureaucracies that burgeoned in the twentieth century (Moore, Gunz and Hall, 2007). Its typical metaphors are ladders, mountains, and treetops. Ideas of success were based on steady hierarchical advancement together with ever-increasing remuneration, and ethics of loyalty, commitment, and time-serving. Although many scholars have argued that such a view has become an anachronism in these post-bureaucratic times, in our experiences as both researchers and writers, the concept dies hard. Here we are not making a case for continuity over change, but rather that within our current usages of the career concept its bureaucratic heritage continues to resound today.

In their chapter for the 1989 *Handbook of Career Theory*, Gowler and Legge argued that “reproduced practices” of bureaucracy generate the dominant set of meanings that shape people’s understandings and experiences of career (p. 439). The “practices” they focused on in their analysis were “hierarchy, accountability, achievement and [organizational] membership” (p. 440), and cutting across all four was the notion of reputation. Notwithstanding the extent to which our organizational landscapes have shifted since then, these are all still pertinent career issues. Indeed, reputation is a key feature of what might be called post-bureaucratic career theories (e.g., Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). As we witness the career implications of the dramatic transformation of our work contexts in the wake of economic austerity, we are constantly reminded that careers do not unfold independently from organizational settings. They are inextricably bound up with organizations in manifold ways—material as well as ideological. Patterns of enablement and constraint are elucidated as people both react to organizational changes that are imposed upon them and seek to take control over the ongoing development of their careers.

In the light of this flux, we see this as an opportune time to consider some of the ways in which the relationships between individuals, organizations, and careers have been theorized and researched. First, we will introduce two macro sociological theories which have been applied to the career context: structuration theory, based on the work of Anthony Giddens (1976, 1984), and the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986). At the heart of both approaches is the nature of the relationship between social structure and individual agency—a relationship which (more or less explicitly) underpins much career theorizing. After that we shift our gaze from a macro to a more micro perspective, introducing two contrasting ways in which this relationship has been explored at the level of the individual's career: career as a disciplinary mechanism (Grey, 1994), and career self-management (King, 2004).

With this broad theoretical context in mind, we then examine mobility because this is a key aspect of most organizational careers, and a key arena in which individual and contextual factors intertwine. By mobility we mean movement between work roles, either within or between organizations. If we can understand the processes involved in mobility, then we have succeeded in anchoring general and perhaps abstract career concepts in the observable events that constitute careers. Then we turn to career success because in its various forms it is an outcome that matters to individuals, organizations, and societies. Indeed, some might even argue that it is implicit to the concept of career itself. As citizens/workers, we might benefit from developing new and/or well-articulated ways of construing our own career success, and an understanding of the reasons why we have (or have not) experienced success so far and how we can influence our success in the future. As employers, careers advisers or policy makers, we might benefit from understanding what kinds of success people want, knowing how to craft HR/careers guidance policies and practices to facilitate people's career success, and evaluating the distribution of opportunities in the labour market. Finally, we turn to the role of specific careers interventions in organizations in order to see what specific steps organizations sometimes take to play a part in career management. The reader might have expected this to be the biggest part of this chapter, but we only devote a modest share.

There are three reasons why we have taken this approach to this chapter. First, strong research evaluating these interventions and placing them into their broader context is thin on the ground. We cannot instantly create good evaluation research, but we can provide an analysis that offers a holistic view of careers in organizational settings rather than a focus on the operation of specific interventions. Second, we believe that in psychology there is insufficient consideration of the wider context in which careers are played out (Johns, 2006), especially regarding social structures and macro power relationships in careers. Third, Gottfredson's (2005) chapter about career development in organizations in the previous edition of this handbook is very helpful in discussing important operational aspects of how careers are managed in organizations. Many of the points made are, so to speak, timeless, as witnessed by the fact that only about one-third of the references Gottfredson cited were in the six years before publication of the third edition of the handbook. On the whole, then, we do not aim to repeat them here.

### INDIVIDUAL AGENCY AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS IN CAREERS

Both structuration and field theory describe an iterative relationship between social contexts and individual action. Both take issue with sociological and psychological perspectives that

conceptualize social structures and individual agency as dichotomous, leading to understandings that are either overly deterministic, or overly voluntaristic: a dichotomy that is similarly echoed in the careers field, with the more voluntaristic approaches typically achieving greater prominence, especially in recent years (Mayrhofer, Meyer and Steyer, 2007).

### **Structuration theory**

Giddens' theory of structuration sees the two spheres as a duality: mutually dependent and mutually constitutive. In other words, individuals are constructed by the structural arrangements (rules and resources) at play in their organizations and wider social contexts, and through their actions impact back on these arrangements. These actions may serve to reproduce the structures, even if the actions appear assertive and go-getting. For example, a person who realizes that in her organization it is necessary to work in three different functional areas before promotion is possible may actively network and seek out cross-functional experience in order to be offered posts in different functional areas, which then leads to promotion opportunities. Alternatively, a person or persons may challenge and potentially transform structures through their actions. By persistently applying for promotions without having the requisite experience in three functional areas, a person (or more likely a number of persons) may either explicitly argue that this element of structure is inappropriate, or induce a realization amongst senior management that the "three functional areas" expectation is inappropriate. Note that elements of structure may not be expressed as formal rules. They may instead be well-established custom and practice that have been neither explicitly considered nor challenged.

Structuration theory has been subject to criticism, for example, for the opaqueness of some of Giddens' language and his conceptualization of structure, which some argue favors enablement over constraint. Nevertheless, career scholars have found structuration theory useful in challenging the tendency within the field to separate and reify the dimensions of structure and action, ignoring their interdependence (Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Duberley, Mallon and Cohen, 2006). Scholars have argued that such dichotomization leads to perspectives that are either undersocialized, failing adequately to account for the significance of social contexts for people's career thinking and action, or (less typically in the careers literature) oversocialized and deterministic (Mayrhofer, Meyer and Steyer, 2007; Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh and Roper, 2012).

Following Giddens, in his analysis of the structuration of career, Barley (1989) locates career at the nexus between individuals and social structures. That is, people navigate through their social contexts, most notably their work organizations, through their career thinking and enactment (in his words, scripts, interpretive schemes and stories). Through their career actions, they impact back on these contexts, "policing" them so as to maintain existing arrangements, or changing them in the process. For instance, Richardson's (2009) study of academic mobility depicted academics as situated within diverse contexts: disciplinary contexts which encouraged and indeed even expected mobility, and organizational contexts whose rewards systems disadvantaged those who had taken "time out" overseas. Richardson showed how some academics accepted the restrictions and operated within them, while others surreptitiously subverted them, "working around the existing regulations and rules" (p. S166) to do what they wanted, but discreetly. Both of these strategies left the existing arrangements intact. A third group, however, returned from their overseas

experiences with the expressed intention of changing their department's promotion policies and practices.

Although notoriously difficult to apply empirically, a number of career studies (Duberley, Cohen and Mallon, 2006; Richardson, 2009; Al Ariss, 2010; Fernando and Cohen, 2011) have used the notion of career structuration as a "sensitizing device" (Burman, 1988; Connell, 1987) to examine how situated individuals account for and construct their careers in their organizations and beyond, and to highlight individuals' capacity for impacting on these contexts. For example, in their study of public sector research scientists in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, Duberley, Cohen and Mallon (2006) depict the complexity of the institutional environment in which the scientists operated, including not only their work organizations, but also their families, scientific disciplines, government policies, and national/cultural contexts. With their own systems of rules and resources, these contexts do not impact uniformly or consistently. Rather, they intersect and compete with one another to form a thickly textured web, in which the individual is at once suspended, and is actively weaving (Geertz, 1973; Duberley et al., 2006, p. 1145).

In his work on Lebanese professional workers in France, Al Ariss (2010) extends this analysis, providing insights into respondents' patterns of career decision making in the light of organizational and wider societal constraints. Al Ariss notes that different institutions (e.g. employers, government) in the same country have different and sometimes contradictory policies, thus creating what Richardson (2009) refers to as "seams" in the context affecting individuals. Individuals enacted one of four distinct but related approaches to career: maintenance, transformation, entrepreneurship, and opt-out. Maintenance involves identifying career barriers and working within them. Transformation means trying to change those barriers. Entrepreneurship refers to setting up one's own business in order to avoid barriers, including discrimination. Opt-out is withdrawing from the labor market in the belief that the obstacles are too great either to overcome or to tolerate.

This might suggest that at least one career orientation (transformation) means altering the context and therefore being "Protean." In fact, however, transformation is an optimistic label. For example, Al Ariss classifies changing one's name from Arabic to French as transformational. This seems to us to be more like maintenance. The reality for these migrants is that whilst they could exercise agency in the forms of hard work (e.g., getting educational qualifications) and creativity (e.g. setting up their own business), and indeed feel they had achieved success, this was almost always done by working within the rules of a system that was difficult for them and which they could not change, with the potentially significant exception of forming relationships with individuals in authority who might just waive a rule for a few exceptional cases only.

As Mayrhofer and his colleagues (2007) point out, the application of structuration to career theory has been particularly valuable in several ways. Here we highlight two. First, it emphasizes the power of formal and/or informal rules in guiding an individual's career thinking and action, and the extent to which these rules are legitimated within institutional contexts. In this sense, it is a contextually sensitive perspective for understanding processes such as socialization, organizational commitment, and the development of career identity. These are processes of central importance to vocational psychologists.

Second, it elucidates the interplay of structure and agency, social spheres which are all too often depicted as fixed and separate. Interestingly, when individuals narrate their careers they often construct these spheres as dichotomous and describe their engagement

with them as straightforward. For example, in El-Sawad's (2005) study of careers in a blue chip company, respondents spoke of the "rules of the game" which in their eyes defined and determined their career possibilities. Some respondents presented themselves as highly agentic and talked about how they proactively navigated through these structures to advance their careers. Others saw their organizations as constraining and limiting, and felt that there was little they could do to change their situations (indeed one man described himself as a "corporate mushroom"; p. 29). At first glance, then, her data appeared to reveal agency on one hand, and determinism on the other. However, through in-depth analysis within and between accounts, El-Sawad transcended this static picture. She illustrated the diverse and apparently contradictory ways in which respondents positioned themselves within these descriptions (El-Sawad, Arnold, and Cohen, 2004) and also how, through their behavior, these rules were "re/created" (and sometimes challenged). She thus highlighted the inter-relationship of social structure and individual agency. As Duberley and her colleagues have argued:

What we see, then, is not a picture of determinism or voluntarism, but a more complex synthesis. Even when they objectified social structures and viewed them in terms of constraint, this does not mean that scientists had no impact on them. It may be that they inadvertently reinforced existing social structures through their actions, or indeed that their actions impacted on structures in unintentional ways. (Duberley, Cohen and Mallon, 2006, p. 1147)

### **Field theory: a Bourdiesian approach to careers**

Like structuration theory, Pierre Bourdieu's field theory is based on an iterative, mutually constitutive relationship between social structure and individual agency, attempting to transcend unhelpful dichotomization and the rather static and reductionist analyses that it yields. Briefly, field theory (which Bourdieu developed to better understand matters of culture and social class, especially in the context of education) has three key facets: field, habitus, and capital. According to Thompson (2008), Bourdieu's idea of field contains a number of elements. First, like a sports field, it is a "boundaried site where a game is played. In order to play the game, players have set positions ... specific rules which novice players must learn ... What players can do, and where they can go during the game, depends on their field position" (2008, p. 68). Second, like a "science fiction force-field," it can be seen as its own world, designed to protect insiders from the outside world, and displaying regular internal structures to ensure orderliness and predictability. Finally, Thompson likens it to a force field in physics that is based on opposing forces which work together in a state of dynamic tension.

The concept of habitus can be understood as a set of dispositions or tendencies that leads people to understand and act upon things in particular ways, *in a given field*. It is structured by one's history and experience, but not determined by them. In Bourdieu's words, "it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" (1977, p. 214).

Finally capital, in Bourdieu's terms, moves beyond financial exchange to other assets: social, cultural, and symbolic, which are transformed and exchanged in complex networks within and across different fields. A person's access to particular forms of capital is closely linked to his or her position in the social field/s. Notably, Bourdieu highlights how within



a field, habits, tastes, and preferences of some groups are privileged over others such that they acquire greater status and lead to greater social advantage. Social practices, from this perspective, are not simply the result of one's habitus, but rather of *relations between* one's habitus and one's current circumstances (i.e., access to particular capitals, in a given social field).

In recent years career scholars have found aspects of field theory extremely useful (Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer, 2011), applying them to career counseling as well as a range of other contexts (Lindh and Dahlin, 2000; Hartman, 2000; Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer and Meyer, 2003; Wainright and Turner, 2006). Mindful of debates on post-bureaucratic times and boundaryless careers, Iellatchitch and his colleagues highlight the relevance of the approach to a wide range of potential settings. We see the linked concepts of field, habitus and capital as providing a powerful analytical framework for understanding organizational careers, in particular the relationship between individuals' "career making" and the re/production of the (organizational) "fields" in which this happens. Here Corsun and Costen's (2001) study of women and ethnic minority managers, which uses field theory to explore and explain the "glass ceiling effect" and its persistence, is but one of a number of notable examples (see also Dick, 2008; Mayrhofer et al., 2007).

Corsun and Costen (2001) use the linked concepts of field, habitus, and capital to show how in the U.S. the "glass ceiling" effect is an inevitable consequence of how the country has developed legally, socially, and economically. They argue that in the field of corporate America, the unequal distribution of capitals means that White men are in the best position to better promote their own interests. In that field, they have the power to define what is seen as valuable and worthy, and what is not. In Corsun and Costen's words, "Corporate America is the kind of place that is natural for White males. The game of business has a unique military sports theme, the rules of which were established years ago by White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant male, Captains of Industry" (p. 19). They suggest that only if the external environment (the market coupled by legislation) exerts significant pressure on organizations, will the kind of capital women and people from ethnic minorities have access to make a difference in the boardroom.

In the careers literature, it is the concept of career capitals in particular which has enjoyed huge popularity over the last decade. Scholars have debated the implications of different forms of capital, adding new capitals to Bourdieu's original four (see, for example, Al Ariss and Syed [2011] on ethnic capital, and Hakim's [2010] widely contested work on erotic capital). There have also been critiques and developments of the concept of capital itself (Duberley and Cohen, 2010) and applications of it in different settings (Jokinen, Brewster and Suutari, 2008; Singh, Ragins and Tharenou, 2009b). What seems to capture researchers' imagination is the empirical salience of the concept. First, it is socially embedded rather than existing in a social vacuum. Second, this contextualization gives the concept a critical edge: within social settings some ways of thinking and acting are dominant, defining how things are made sense of and acted upon, while others are subordinated and marginalized. Finally, the concept can be seen as a conceptual vehicle for linking social structure and individual agency. That is, it is not the case that career capitals are freely available to all to deploy as they see fit; rather, they are linked to wider structures of opportunity and constraint.

## STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN PRACTICE: TWO PERSPECTIVES ON THE NOTION OF THE CAREER AS A PROJECT OF THE SELF

In the section above we considered two grand theoretical approaches to understanding the relationship between individuals and their work organizations and highlighted their contributions to our understandings of career thinking and acting. In what follows we take a more micro focus to briefly consider how the structure/agency debate is played out in research at the level of the individual.

Linked with metaphors of protean and boundaryless careers (Hall, 2002; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Briscoe, Hall, and DeMuth, 2006), and the idea of the “enterprising self” (DuGay and Salaman, 1992), a key theme within the careers literature since the middle of the 1990s has been that of individuals “owning” and taking responsibility for their career growth and development. Admittedly, the purpose of some of this literature is to critique the link between career and bureaucratic organization discussed at the outset of this chapter, and to offer instead an idea of career as situated within a whole variety of settings. In fact, some of this work hardly considers setting at all, instead conceptualizing career as an individualized concept constructed by seemingly unfettered free agents. However, given this chapter’s central interest in careers in organizations, in what follows we consider what the career as a project of the self looks like when enacted in organizational settings. While our discussion of structuration and field theory emphasized the relationship between structure and agency in terms of duality, here we return to the more familiar stance of dichotomy: constraint on one hand, and voluntarism on the other. The first approach, based on a critical management studies perspective, construes the career as a disciplinary mechanism ultimately serving the needs of the organization, while the second takes a more individualistic, managerial approach identifying the strategies that people use to effectively manage their own careers.

### Careers as mechanisms of (self-) discipline?

Drawing on Foucauldian notions of discipline and surveillance, organizational theorists (Fournier, 1998; Grey, 1994; McKinlay, 2002; Savage, 1998) examine the link between the career as a project of the self, and as an extremely effective mechanism of organizational control. Taken together, these papers are interesting because while Grey and Fournier’s work is based on contemporary workplace settings, Savage and McKinlay’s perspectives are historical, focusing on career and practices in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain: the Great Western Railway (1833–1914) and Scottish banking. In a way, these papers tap into notions of protean and boundaryless careers insofar as they portray the individual as “engaged in a project to shape his or her life as an autonomous individual driven by motives of self-fulfilment” (Rose, 1989, p. 15). Career, from this perspective, is the mechanism through which these individual motives are pursued. However, where these papers dramatically diverge from protean and boundaryless perspectives is that while the “new career” ideas see career as a vehicle for the exercise of personal freedom, critical management scholars such as Grey conceptualize it as a form of discipline. Indeed, they argue that it is particularly effective precisely because it is based on *self-discipline*. Describing career as an organizing or regulative principle, Grey proposes that:



Career, as part of the project of the self, can constitute labor process discipline and surveillance in certain, and supposedly benevolent, ways ... Career links past, present and future in a series of stages, steps or progressions. Career offers a vehicle for the self to “become.” (Grey, 1994, p. 481)

Career thus works in tandem with the organization to control and discipline the individual. In terms of our previous discussion, this can be seen as a perspective that privileges determinism and constraint over voluntarism and individual agency, even though the individual may *feel* agentic.

In his analysis of accountancy, Grey discusses routine practices such as choosing a university course, recruitment processes, appraisal and performance management systems, and the establishment of professional networks. While these are quite obviously mechanisms for regulating and disciplining new recruits, Grey argues that framed within the discourse of career, they are experienced not as vehicles for managers to better control their employees, but as benevolent practices which enable aspiring accountants to achieve their goals and to be successful. In such a light, it does not make sense to challenge or resist such disciplinary mechanisms—rather, they are to be welcomed and embraced because they enable career success. So people are aware that they are conforming to their organization’s expectations. They reason that it makes career sense to do so, and that by being agentic they can make the system work for them. If career is indeed a project of the self, then career success is synonymous with being a successful person. In his words, “the successful development of an accountancy career entails that the individual’s whole life, including relations with friends and family, becomes an instrumental project which is to be managed and achieved” (1994, p. 494).

In the careers literature this notion of career as a mechanism for control is developed by El-Sawad (2005). Through her analysis of career conversations with employees in a blue chip company (noted above), she elucidates career development as a highly politicized process circumscribed by the needs, imperatives, and expectations of the organization, but legitimated through discourses of empowerment and choice. As she explains:

Participants closely monitor their adherence to a series of tacit career rules and demonstrate their acceptance of these rules by “not rocking the boat” ... Cathy monitors her own behaviour to ensure that she is being “good”. This is arguably evidence of self-management, but certainly not of the kind that the “new” careers literature describes. This is self-managed self-discipline and self-surveillance. (El-Sawad, 2005, p. 37)

### Careers as self-made liberation?

Another body of literature also considers the career as a project of the self, and careers as enacted and developed within politically-charged organizations, but argues that individuals can overcome such constraints by owning and actively managing their careers (De Vos and Soens, 2008; Raab, Freese and Beehr, 2007; Zikic and Klehe, 2006). Scholars working in this area have examined career self-management in a range of contexts: from how employees take charge of their careers within their current organizations (King, 1994; Raab et al., 2007; DeVos and Soens, 2008), to those whose work potentially spans a number of different organizations (Tams and Arthur, 2010) and who experience unemployment (Zikic and Klehe, 2006). This is distinct from the significant body of work within vocational and

counseling psychology which investigates the process of career decision making (e.g., Flum and Blustein, 2000; Gati, Krausz, and Osipow, 1996). Instead we are talking more about the strategies people use to enhance and progress the career paths they have already chosen.

Research into career self-management has highlighted a range of “effective” career behaviors. Of these, we find King’s conceptualization a useful attempt to synthesize some of this diversity. She suggests that career self-management involves three co-occurring behaviors. Through *positioning*, people ensure that they have the right contacts, skills and knowledge to achieve their aspirations. *Influencing* is about individuals developing relationships with gatekeepers such that they actively promote these individuals’ interests. Finally, *boundary management* concerns the ordering of home and work spheres of life so that they work together as sources of mutual enrichment, or, at the very least, so that they stay out of each other’s way. King argues that her framework can be applied to an array of career settings—from the most bounded to the boundaryless. She suggests that career self-management is a way of overcoming “thwarting conditions”: of exerting individual agency over organizational constraint.

For our purposes here, the specific strategies King introduces are interesting in themselves, illustrating some of the ways in which individuals navigate through their organizational contexts. More than that, though, her voluntaristic position with respect to the agency/structure debate is notable because it poses a stark contrast to the previous perspective we introduced. The critical management scholars discussed above construct the labor process and the process of building a career as inextricably fused, two sides of the same coin. Ultimately, from their perspective, career is a mechanism through which the individual does the bidding of those in power. Conversely, writers from a more managerialist perspective such as King see these spheres as separate and even antagonistic, suggesting that people can overcome the constraints imposed by their organizations through proactively engaging and taking control of their careers.

King’s work is one manifestation of a line of thinking that developed in the last part of the twentieth century. The starting point is that organizations remain the arena in which most careers are played out, but they can no longer be relied upon as vehicles for a fulfilling career. Note the implicit assumption here that organizations used to provide this. Perhaps what some organizations really used to provide more than they do now was a reliable career, not necessarily a fulfilling one (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Leaving that aside, it is said to be up to individuals to take control of their careers in organizational settings by being open to mobility, clear about their identities, adaptable in the face of changing labor markets, and skilled in identifying, engineering and exploiting opportunities, including via social networks (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002). This image of the assertive individual tends to be premised on a tension between individuals and organizations (see, for example, Briscoe and colleagues’ [2006] self-report measures of protean and boundaryless career orientations). This may not always be accurate. There is also a rather underanalyzed tension, though not necessarily an inconsistency, between a person assertively implementing his or her identity and changing that identity to fit the requirements of the labor market. Hall’s label of the “Protean” career is apt here, possibly unintentionally so. In Greek mythology Proteus was a creature who could change form at will, which sounds quite empowered. However, Proteus changed form as an emergency measure to escape capture by assailants. This has much less of an “individual in control” flavor (Arnold and Cohen, 2008).

Another manifestation of the individual career management approach is career competencies. The most commonly invoked, though rather underspecified, expression of this

is in the taxonomy of Knowing How (work skills), Knowing Why (self-understanding), and Knowing Who (social networks) that derives from the boundaryless career approach (Parker, Khapova, and Arthur, 2009; Eby, Butts, and Lockwood, 2003). Other attempts at career competency taxonomies are perhaps more tightly specified but have not yet enjoyed as much attention (e.g., Kuijpers and Scheerens, 2006). These competency approaches suggest that it is up to individuals to develop them and thus navigate what may be troubled waters. Whilst this can make it seem that the individual is in control, arguably it is simply increasing the levels of skill with which people play within the rules set by others, and indeed increasing the total skill set available to be used by those who have economic and social power (Hirsch and Shanley, 1996). As Hall says in a revealing aside, we must always be aware of “the employer’s path to profits” (2002, p. 303).

It might be countered that individuals cannot change the macro-economic conditions, so what is wrong with equipping them to find the best niche they can? This is where sociologists and political analysts would say that psychologists miss the point: individuals cannot change things, but individuals forming collectives have a chance to alter structures to suit them better. Probably the closest vocational psychologists get to this is the idea of career communities of practice (Parker, Arthur and Inkson, 2004), but these do not obviously have this reforming mission. This is also different from the “surreptitious career strategies” such as subtly disparaging the work of others in front of the boss, and taking an illicit look at the promotion criteria in a supposedly out-of-bounds filing cabinet, that Harris and Ogbonna (2006) reported were common amongst their respondents. These are individual acts of betrayal and subterfuge which only slightly buck the system. They may get people into positions that they do not merit, thus decreasing the overall performance of the economic system, but they do less than nothing for community, ethical conduct, or changing the structure and habitus of the workplace.

### MOBILITY WITHIN AND BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

Mobility is at the heart of much thinking about careers. It can be defined as the transition from one position to another (Forrier, Sels and Styne, 2009). Mobility is a key way of altering one’s position in the field, or having it altered on one’s behalf by the organization. Analyses of career over the last 20 years have usually construed mobility as an agentic individual response to uncertainty and rapid change (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002). It helps the person to remain employable and in work, and to move towards his or her career goals. However, some mobility is not entirely voluntary. A person may not wish to move, but be forced to do so by (for example) redundancy. Alternatively, he or she may wish to move but only be able to find a less than ideal destination. Mobility is also key from an organizational perspective. Within organizations, a key part of the structure is established patterns of, and expectations about, who can move where and when. Individuals’ positions in the field are often crucial to this. So are individual and collective ways of thinking about career mobility (habitus) within the field, and the perhaps field-specific capitals individuals possess.

Internal (i.e., within-organization) mobility implies changes in the deployment of people. Many organizational career management interventions (see below for more about these) are designed to stimulate and/or regulate internal mobility. Many are also intended to equip people for future mobility, and to provide the organization with the necessary skills and experiences to be competitive in the future (Hirsch and Jackson, 2004). They can also increase

the diffusion of knowledge, skills, and ideas throughout an organization. Finally, mobility opportunities are seen as a way of retaining talented employees (Baruch, 2004; Campion, Cheraskin, and Stevens, 1994).

Long ago, Nicholson and West (1988) demonstrated that relatively few moves between jobs are simple promotions, and that many involve changes in organization and job function. Life span development and organizational socialization theorists have identified a number of salient features of transitions that can affect how quickly and successfully they are negotiated, and the ways in which a person carries out his or her new work role (e.g., Brim and Ryff, 1980; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Fang, Duffy, and Shaw, 2011). These features include how desirable the transition is to the person undertaking it, whether there is a long time to prepare for it, whether it is undertaken along with many other people in the same position, whether there are role models in place to teach the person the new role, and whether many other people have undertaken it in the past and can be consulted about it. Relating to this last point, there is also the question of whether the transition is taboo and therefore hard to talk about openly (e.g., demotion). Sometimes ease of talking about a transition is also affected by whether it is on-time or off-time. Interestingly, despite supposedly being in an era of less predictable and more free-form careers, empirical findings suggest that the timing of mobility, as well as its frequency and nature, can affect subsequent career success (Shore, Cleveland, and Goldberg, 2003).

Most analyses of mobility implicitly or explicitly take the perspective of individuals rather than organizations. However, those in charge of organizational career management can also learn from them, even though this is rarely considered. For example, establishing or altering norms within the organization about what kinds of move can be expected at what career stage (especially perhaps in late career) can help to make mobility more acceptable to more employees. Careful consideration of who else has undertaken a specific kind of job move can lead to improved social support for a person or persons making that move now, especially if this is combined with a consideration of what kind(s) of support the person needs (Bosley, Arnold and Cohen, 2009).

Two excellent theoretical analyses of mobility offer further insights for organizational career management as well as individual counseling. Ng, Sorensen, Eby, and Feldman (2007) analyzed mobility according to whether it is internal or external to the organization, and whether or not it involves promotion. They suggested that structural factors affect the availability of mobility options, individual differences in personality and values affect preferences for certain kinds of mobility, and decisional factors such as subjective norm (i.e. what significant others think) affect intention to engage in mobility. The presence of subjective norm in this analysis re-emphasizes the importance of organizational norms noted above. Another decisional factor is readiness for change, which Ng and colleagues construed as a person's sense of efficacy that he or she can successfully negotiate a transition and succeed in the new job. This reminds us of the need for those in charge of organizational career management to ensure that people feel that they have the necessary attributes not only to handle jobs in the organization, but also to deal with change. This is, however, the kind of agency that enables a person to operate skilfully within existing structures, rather than challenging or altering those structures.

Forrier, Sels and Stynen (2009) have offered a model that attempts to conceptualize all kinds of mobility. Drawing on Bourdieu and a range of other sources, they propose that a key determinant of a person's capacity to be mobile is what they call movement capital,

which is a combination of human capital, social capital, self-awareness, and adaptability. The last of these comprises ability and motivation. Forrier and colleagues also use the self-determination theory of motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000) to define different degrees and types of agency in mobility decisions. Thus they move beyond overly-simple distinctions between voluntary and involuntary moves, and between purely extrinsic and purely intrinsic motivation. At one extreme, career moves may be made for what the person experiences as entirely externally regulated reasons, which do not reflect what they would do with a free choice. Near the other extreme, but falling short of truly intrinsic motivation, the person may exhibit what Ryan and Deci (2000) call integrated regulation, where external rewards or requirements are accepted and seen as an expression of self. This is reflected in Grey's critical management approach to career (above), where the requirements of organization(s) are taken on as a "project of the self."

Forrier and colleagues also point out that some people will be much better positioned than others to hear about mobility opportunities when they arise. In Bourdieu's terms, a person's position on the field matters a lot in this respect. All this is in the context of structural factors that largely determine the number and type of mobility opportunities available, and to whom they are available. This reflects Al Ariss's study where (we argue) agency was largely confined to adjusting the self to fit structural constraints. Unusually, the Forrier et al. model also takes into account the riskiness of opportunities, such as the probability of them paying off, and the ease of moving on (or back) if they do not work out. As with Ng and colleagues' analysis, there are some insights here for organizational career management. It is important to ensure that internal mobility opportunities are widely known about, and to understand the risks as well as the potential benefits people see in mobility opportunities.

The literature on employee turnover is almost entirely separate from that on careers and career management. However, Forrier and colleagues borrow from the unfolding model of turnover (Lee and Mitchell, 1994) to suggest that a shock in the form of an unexpected event or insight can trigger any type of mobility. This is important because internal mobility, like turnover, involves leaving a role as well as taking on a new one. Shocks may contribute to the disequilibrium that Ng and colleagues refer to, and to the degree and type of motivation as construed by Forrier and colleagues. A shock such as an unexpectedly negative interaction with a boss might indeed make a person feel inclined to leave the employing organization, but equally it might lead him or her to seek a new position within it.

Another relevant concept from the turnover literature is embeddedness (Feldman and Ng, 2007), which refers to the extent to which a person and his/her family are embedded in social networks and relationships that would be disrupted by a move. This is important because it indicates that for many people it's not just the job that matters. Whereas many of the reasons given for moving concern personal development and improved career prospects (Hippler, 2009), those given for *not* moving commonly relate to family commitments such as children's schooling, partner's job, or friendship ties where one currently lives—that is, embeddedness (Challioli and Mignonac, 2005). It must be remembered that embeddedness also refers to relationships in work, and of course these too can be disrupted by mobility (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, and Erez, 2001).

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that many people in organizations are unwilling to relocate, either nationally or internationally, when within-organization opportunities are offered to them (Brett, Stroh and Reilly, 1993). This reminds us that whilst the mobility opportunities that are available to an individual may be influenced by structure as well as



what Forrier and colleagues call movement capital, there is still agency involved in accepting or rejecting the opportunity. Habitus may dictate that a person or indeed many people in an organization view certain kinds of move or times of move as undesirable. Still, structures in the form of formal or informal policies may dictate that there are costs to turning down moves, such as not being offered a desirable move on a future occasion. With this in mind, a person may make a move he or she does not really want to make—in Ryan and Deci's terms, this would be an example of external regulation dictating a decision, even if that decision is in service of organizationally valued goals that have been adopted as one's own. Nevertheless, even when people are willing to move, this may be due to motives that do not fit well with organizational agendas, such as a desire to escape from an unpleasant situation (in or out of work), or a wish to make themselves more employable outside the organization (Dickmann and Doherty, 2008).

It is frequently argued that moving between organizations rather than within them is the way to get ahead (Lam and Dreher, 2004), so it would not be surprising if relocation is seen as an opportunity to enhance extra-organizational as well as intra-organizational mobility. However, this general assertion may need to be qualified. Data reported by Hamori and Kakarika (2009) and Hamori and Koyuncu (2011) suggest that external mobility in general and between-country moves in particular can impair a rise to the top. Their sample of CEOs were all successful in the sense that they had risen to the top of an organization, so Hamori and Kakarika were dealing with the speed of progress rather than the extent of it. Lam, Ng and Feldman (2012) found that in both the U.S.A. and Hong Kong there are salary benefits of making moves between organizations, but these are most notable for early career moves, and least marked for mid-career moves. Again, even in an era of supposedly individually-driven careers, this suggests that there are age/stage norms about when it's acceptable to be mobile.

### **Expatriate mobility in organizations**

There is a large literature on expatriate mobility within organizations (Harvey and Moeller, 2009). This is perhaps because of the “glamor” of company-organized expatriate moves, the fact that many of these happen in large prestigious companies, and the relatively high stakes. An expatriate assignment can be seen by an individual as an opportunity to develop human and social capital in order to help achieve his or her career aims, as well as an interesting and challenging experience in its own right (Hippler, 2009). From an organizational point of view, like most kinds of career management intervention, this kind of mobility has several potential benefits. These include meeting the immediate need of filling a post, and a number of medium-term outcomes to do with increasing the overall learning and human resources available to the organization. These are examined in more detail in the next section. Individuals will also have their own agendas, and are likely to be navigating their way between a global career script which prescribes the importance of certain kinds of experience and capital, and an organizational career script which may in some ways run counter to the global one. This is another example of a “seam” in the structure of careers, and of how people may try to alter one aspect of the career structure in order to enable them to perform effectively within another (Cappellen and Janssens, 2010).

For many years it has been clear that employees are often selected for expatriate assignments on the basis of their job performance and technical skills rather than their interpersonal and adaptive skills (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall and Stroh, 1999). This is



probably one reason why many expatriate assignments are considered failures or partial failures, and perhaps also a demonstration that some features of structure do not readily change, even in the light of evidence that they are ineffective. Extensive pre-move training, briefing, and inter-cultural training are needed. This can sometimes overcome deficits in the necessary skills. Ideally, it should be provided for the whole family if there is one, not least because support for and adjustment of the “trailing spouse” are often major factors in the success or otherwise from an organizational point of view of an expatriate assignment (Harvey, 1997). Support during the assignment is also important but is not always provided in the most-needed forms. It should include coaching to help the expatriate continue to learn the culture, and (at least for some time) a local support person to work with the expatriate and family in organizing and acclimatizing to life in another country (Collings, Doherty, Luethy, and Osborn, 2011). This applies to what might from the outside look like small cultural leaps, as well as big ones. It is sometimes the small things that catch expatriates out (Collings et al., 2011).

It has frequently been pointed out that repatriation is a neglected part of the process (Kraimer, Shaffer, and Bolino, 2009)—in fact, so often that it probably cannot be as neglected as claimed! Returning expatriates might expect opportunities to benefit from and use their skills and experiences acquired whilst on assignment. They may also wonder whether changes have occurred during their absence, of which they are not fully aware, especially if they came from and are returning to the organization’s headquarters. The social and human capital they have acquired might have come at the cost of weakening ties with influential people “back at the ranch” (Makela and Suutari, 2009). Keeping some of those ties, and thus retaining embeddedness within the organization, has been linked with retention of expatriates after their return (Sebastian Reiche, Kraimer, and Harzing, 2011). There is evidence that the skills and aspirations of returning expatriates are not always carefully considered by human resource and other managers, and that this can lead to suboptimal outcomes for both individual and organization (Kraimer et al., 2009). A repatriation plan therefore needs to be developed well before the person returns or moves to another country, and in consultation with him or her (Collings et al., 2011). In short, the expatriate episode needs to be seen as the middle part of a multi-stage process, not as the only or the final part.

### CAREER SUCCESS IN ORGANIZATIONS

If career is a project of the self, then career success is a strong indicator or even definition of how successful one is as a person. Career success can be defined as the accumulated positive work and psychological outcomes resulting from one’s work experiences (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden, 2001). Like most definitions in the social sciences, this has its ambiguities. The word “accumulated” seems important in order to reflect the long-term nature of career, but it may rather assume an ever-increasing set of outcomes. How then does one evaluate the success of a high-flyer who suddenly falls from grace, such as a derailed leader (Zenger and Folkman, 2009)? Rather like an account with a bank that goes bust, a lot had been accumulated but in an instant it is gone. If accumulated means what one has right now as a result of all one’s endeavors, then success has plummeted. However, if “accumulated” is rooted in the assumption that what is gained at any given time reverberates into the future and cannot be taken away, or that current career success is an average of all readings over time, then our imaginary person does not lose everything. In general, career success is talked about

massively more than career failure—witness the lack of articles about career failure and the low citation rates of those that do see the light of day (e.g., Cannon, 1997). Apparently career failure is something of a taboo subject. There are only degrees of success.

The assumption underlying a lot of career management in organizations is that career success for individuals and the success of organizations are compatible (Mayo, 1991). Following Schneider's ASA (attraction—selection—attrition; Schneider, Goldstein and Smith, 1995) model, compatibility may be achieved in several ways. People who want what the organization can offer may be disproportionately attracted to it in the first place, and/or they may be disproportionately selected into it, and/or those whose conceptions of success are not compatible with the organization may tend to leave it of their own accord. One of the most common objections to career management in organizations raised by senior managers is that it may make good performers realize that their future is not in the organization (Ito and Brotheridge, 2005). The usual response to this is that pragmatically and ethically it makes no sense to keep such people on a false prospectus, and it is best that they go.

### Concepts and measures of career success

Much of the extensive but rather disparate empirical research on career success has used objectively verifiable and organizationally-oriented outcome measures, most often earnings and/or position in an organizational hierarchy (Ng, Eby, Sorensen and Feldman, 2005). Sometimes these are refined to reflect extent and/or speed of growth in these variables (e.g., rate of promotion). Of course, a problem with this is that different organizations and occupations will constitute, in Bourdieu's terms, different fields, each with their own characteristic norms about these things. Comparison across fields is therefore tricky, despite careful attempts to develop measures of objective success that take into account local circumstances and individual differences in tenure, and so on (Dries, Pepermans, Hofman, and Rypens, 2009). This problem seems to be acknowledged surprisingly rarely. Also, whilst salary and promotions are objectively verifiable entities, they are often the result of subjective decisions made by others, so should not be viewed in any sense as more "accurate" than other criteria (such as those discussed below).

Thus some argue that subjective feelings of success are more valid measures of career success than earnings or status (Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom, 2005). Indeed, twenty-first-century approaches to career often assert that in an unpredictable world, subjective measures come to the fore, and that a key career developmental task is to know what forms of success one most values (Heslin, 2005), and how this can be woven into one's sense of identity and life/career narrative (Savickas et al., 2009). The subjective approach is usually encapsulated in the term career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005), but in a way this simply displaces the question of what a person regards as success, rather than solving it. Satisfaction presumably comes from the achievement or acquisition of things that one values, and this may be money and status. Indeed, the frequently used career satisfaction measures lean in this direction (e.g. Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley, 1990). Even so, Ng and colleagues in their meta-analysis found that the correlation between salary and career satisfaction was only 0.30.

Recent work has opened up the arena of subjective career success and what lies behind it. An early indication of what might be found was provided by Sturges (1999) in her qualitative study of managers in a large telecommunications company. They mentioned a

range of things that to them constituted career success, including reputation with peers, a sense of achievement, and being able to have informal influence within the organization. More recently, Dries, Pepermans and Carlier (2008) identified a range of criteria including security, work–life balance, creativity, advancement, and achieving personal goals. They arranged these on a two-dimensional plot with axes: Affect—Achievement and Intrapersonal—Interpersonal. Gubler, Arnold, Hartley and Coombs (2010) asked more than 1,300 IT professionals in Europe about what career success meant to them, and through content analysis developed a list of 21 types of criteria. The subjective dominated the objective. Within the remuneration category it was not uncommon to see references to adequate or fair pay rather than high pay, which undermines the use of how high a person's salary is as an indicator of career success. Hennequin (2007) has reported a French study of blue collar workers' definitions of career success. Despite an absence of opportunity to move up a hierarchy, they were able to articulate criteria that mattered. These were by no means confined to money, and included interpersonal/reputational criteria, and also the achievement of work with positive characteristics such as autonomy.

Clearly, if organizational career management is going to be successful it is necessary to be attentive to individual differences in career success criteria. Furthermore, organizations usually contain people with whom to compare one's success. So our evaluations of our success are likely to be made relative to salient others, which brings the career success literature into contact with several strands of social psychology, including social identity and organizational justice (Heslin, 2005). Awareness of this, and of the variety of criteria that individuals may use to evaluate their success, seems essential for those who manage career processes in organizations. Without such awareness, it will be difficult to run careers interventions that people are willing to participate in or take seriously.

The interplay between objective and subjective career success is also a matter of some discussion. Nicholson and De Waal-Andrews (2005) argue that status is a universal feature of human and many animal societies, and that this is linked with health, well-being, and reproductive outcomes. Therefore along with income it should take pride of place amongst career success criteria. Subjective criteria such as the satisfaction of knowing one has contributed to the recovery of a hospital patient are often “consolation prizes” for low status/income work, and arguably can be manipulated as a way of keeping people satisfied with their lot. In this analysis, then, a focus on subjective career success is far from being liberating as some advocates of new career theories suggest it is (cf. Khapova and Arthur, 2011). Objective success reflects the nature and operation of structures, and the kinds of capital and field positions that are needed in order to prosper. Subjective success, in this analysis, is what people console themselves with when structures work against them and they are unable to develop the kinds of career capital that are valued by those in power.

There are also discussions about the causal relations (if any) between subjective and objective career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2008). It can be argued, as in Hall's psychological success cycle (Hall and Foster, 1977), that objective success (in the form of pay, for example) will lead a person to feel subjectively successful. Conversely, it can be argued that feelings of self-efficacy arising from subjective success will lead to objective achievements and recognition. A large-scale longitudinal study of professionals in Germany by Abele and Spurk (2009) suggests that the latter is a stronger effect than the former. Consistent with this, Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge and Piccolo (2008) found an effect of self-esteem on occupational prestige and income, but no relationship in the reverse direction.

Perhaps analyses of career success need to place a little less emphasis on where people get to, and a little more on how they get there. In an uncertain world, the attributes could be considered success criteria as well as (or even instead of) predictors of success. As well as competencies and employability, this might include some novel criteria such as being fluent in the ways of talking that are dominant in a part of a field (Mayasandra Nagaraja, Cohen, and El-Sawad, 2010), and the ability to weave one's career experiences into a narrative (Sugarman, 2009) that is satisfactory to the individual (or indeed to those in power in the field).

As ever, lurking here is the interplay between agency and structure. Some notions of employability seem close to a willingness to do whatever an employer or other powerful organization desires. For example, an aspect of employability in Fugate and Kinicki's (2008) analysis is openness to changes at work, defined as being "receptive and willing to change, and/or feel that changes are generally positive once they occur." Sternberg's (2000) analysis of tacit intelligence in the context of careers is also potentially very preserving of the status quo, as people are portrayed essentially as figuring out what the rules of the game are, and playing by them. The same might be said of becoming fluent in ways of talking, though it could also be argued that people can keep a distance between the language they use and the self-identity they feel. In other words, the motivation may be towards the extrinsic end of the intrinsic–extrinsic continuum (Ryan and Deci, 2000). As well as engagement (or not) of identity, a typology of ways of achieving success would include whether one used one's attributes to make the structures work on one's behalf, or to change those structures so that they work differently and/or for different people.

### CORRELATES AND PREDICTORS OF CAREER SUCCESS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

The meta-analysis of predictors (actually, correlates) of career success by Ng and colleagues (2005) is still a landmark paper in the career success literature. The authors attempt, with partial success, to bring some kind of much-needed conceptual organization to the huge range of potential predictors of three indicators of career success: salary, promotions, and career satisfaction (mobility patterns as correlates of success were not covered in detail by Ng and colleagues, but are discussed above). One of their starting points is the distinction between contest mobility and sponsored mobility systems in organizations. In the former, people who ascend the organizational hierarchy possess human capital such as education, work experience, and training that enable them to gain high-status posts in competition against others. Sponsored mobility places more emphasis on gaining status via social connections who can provide mentoring/coaching, speak up on one's behalf, and assist in access to developmental opportunities via various formal or informal roles (Bosley et al., 2009; Seibert et al., 2001). In reality these systems are not as separate as they appear. People gain human capital partly via the help of others, which then in turn puts them in a strong position in contests for promotion, in which decisions about who gets the job are made by people in the organization who may well favor, legitimately or otherwise, those whose development they have been involved with.

A summary of some of Ng and colleagues' findings can be seen in [Table 11.1](#). Human capital and individual characteristics tended to be more strongly associated with salary than with career satisfaction, whilst the reverse was true for organizational sponsorship

and individual difference variables. Perhaps it is surprising that organizational sponsorship is more associated with subjective than objective success given that it is often intended to help people go places. It is depressing that the socio-demographic variables are associated with salary, and perhaps this bears out Nicholson and De Waal-Andrews' concern (above) that it is necessary to know how material opportunities are distributed in society. The reader will not be surprised to discover that older married White males tended to earn the highest salaries.

The categories of predictor used by Ng and colleagues are necessarily broad, and they contain some contrasts. Most notably, although social capital was included in the human capital category, it behaved somewhat differently from most other variables in that category. Defined as the number of people known in other functions or the amount of networking done (themselves two arguably different phenomena), social capital was like the organizational sponsorship variables in that it correlated more strongly with career satisfaction than with salary. In partial contrast, a well-designed longitudinal study by Wolff and Moser (2009) found that networking activity was correlated with concurrent salary and career satisfaction, but only with salary over time.

In general, Ng and colleagues, and other work, indicates that women experience less objective success but no less subjective success than men. The gender gap in salary does, however, appear to be smaller nowadays than it used to be. Women tend to be less concerned about objective success than men, and therefore satisfied with less in material terms—a finding which generalizes to those who own their own business (Powell and Eddleston, 2008). The Ng meta-analysis also revealed that education and hours worked were more strongly associated with salary for women than for men. A review and qualitative study by McDonald, Bradley and Brown (2008) has supported a consistent finding in the literature (e.g., Judiesch and Lyness, 1999), that objective success is handicapped by a lack of visible presence at work, especially it seems for part-time workers and those who take leave for childcare. Needless to say, this is predominantly women. However, to a lesser extent this may even extend to teleworkers. All in all this suggests that presenteeism may be a rational strategy for objective success. Also in line with previous findings, Lyness and Schrader (2006) found that even within the echelons of senior management, the kinds of moves women made were more limited in scope than men's.

Again illustrating that women continue to have a tougher time than men when managing their careers, O'Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) have reviewed a wide range of relevant

*Table 11.1. Correlates of two forms of career success*

<i>Type of predictor</i>	<i>Mean correlation with</i>	
	<i>Salary</i>	<i>Career Sat.</i>
<b>Human Capital</b> , e.g. hours worked, work experience, education level, career planning, social capital	.21	.10
<b>Organizational Sponsorship</b> , e.g. career sponsorship, training and skill devt, supervisor support	.13	.31
<b>Socio-demographics</b> , e.g. gender, White vs Non-white, marital status, age	.20	.02
<b>Stable Individual Differences</b> , e.g. "Big Five" personality, proactivity, locus of control, cognitive ability	.11	.24

Source: Adapted from Ng, T., Eby, L. T., Sorensen, K. L., and Feldman, D. C. (2005). Predictors of objective and subjective career success: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 58: 367–408.



literature and identified four paradoxes between women's career patterns and organizational career practices. This was published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, which perhaps reflects the wide applicability of the principles at stake here. The four paradoxes are as follows:

1. Women's careers are embedded in their larger life contexts, yet organizational realities continue to demand the separation of career and life.
2. Families and careers are both central to many women's lives, yet families continue to be liabilities to women's career development in organizations.
3. Women's career paths reflect a wide range of patterns (see, for example, Huang et al., 2007), yet organizations predominantly organize for and reward upward mobility.
4. Human and social capital are vital for women's career development, yet augmenting these has not yet defeated the glass ceiling.

Once again, this suggests that structures, especially those pertaining to the allocation of mobility opportunities, are still stacked against women. The same applies to other groups who happen not to be White males, even where apparently meritocratic reward policies are adopted (Castilla, 2008). The "habitus," or general way of thinking about career, still seems to reflect traditional concepts, with upward mobility the reward for making oneself available for work as much as possible, and without interruption. As we noted earlier, the bureaucratic notion of career dies hard. The kinds of capital that women typically acquire are less valued than those typically acquired by men, and the moves women can make around the field are smaller and more constrained than those available to men (cf. Duberley and Cohen, 2010).

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Organizations take different approaches to human resource policies and systems that affect careers (Sonnenfeld and Peiperl, 1988; Segers and Inceoglu, 2012). For example, some put an emphasis on recruitment to acquire the skills, abilities, and interests needed, whilst others set more store in developing people who are already there. Some have rigidly defined job roles, whereas others have enough scope for individuals to "craft" them somewhat in order to gain development without having to change job (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Clegg and Spencer, 2007). Some organizations have policies and practices that collectively mean they play an active or even dominant role in shaping how employees' careers develop. Others take a more facilitative approach by supporting employee initiative, whilst others again more or less withdraw from any engagement in the management of employee careers. Hirsh and Jackson (2004) and Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) argue that this last response was characteristic of the 1990s, but that subsequently there has tended to be a partial re-engagement with career management.

Organizational policies and established practices regarding careers can be regarded as a key part of the structures within which employee careers unfold. These policies and practices concern who has access to what opportunities, in what circumstances, and at what times. The opportunities most often concern access to within-organization mobility either immediately or in the future, but can also be about enhancing personal development or performance within the current job, or indeed outside work. Policies may be supported by a range of career management interventions. Some of these are described in [Table 11.2](#). It is not necessarily a case of the more interventions there are the better. The mere presence



of interventions can be attractive to potential employees, and perhaps to existing ones, as a sign that the organization is committed to their development. However, in order to be more than superficially attractive, they need to have clear purposes, be linked to career policies, be run in competent and fair ways, and include follow-up actions where appropriate (Hirsh, Jackson, and Jackson, 1995). The desired benefits of career management techniques for organizations usually include increasing the effectiveness of employee development and deployment, the sharing and transmission of knowledge and skills, and the provision of human resources that meet current and future organizational needs (Creed and Hood, 2009; Mayo, 1991). They can also be seen as a way of attracting and retaining high performers because they will believe that their employability is being maintained, and that opportunities for them within the organization are likely to be good.

Various attempts have been made to delineate different types of organizational career management intervention. Baruch and Peiperl (2000) used factor analysis to cluster them into five groups; *basic, active planning, active management, formal, and multi-directional*. They then placed each cluster group within two orthogonal scales based on the level of technique sophistication and the level of organizational involvement required. McDowall and Mabey (2008) compared four interventions and found 11 dimensions useful in doing so. These included formality, who owns the data/feedback, primary purpose, source of feedback, and frequency. De Vos and colleagues (2009) made a simple distinction between line manager-provided and HR-provided interventions. Perhaps it is not surprising that the least resource intensive and complex to arrange interventions tend to be used least, and that there is rarely any clear attempt to assess whether an intervention is working well (Iles and Mabey, 1993; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch and Budhwar, 2006).

Careers in organizations often have elements of a knock-out tournament, and some interventions (e.g. development centers) are used to clarify who will get them (Nurse, 2005). It is therefore important that employees believe the interventions are run in a fair way, and that they are treated with respect (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Another issue is that some interventions are only available to certain employees, typically those thought to have high potential for the future. The fairness issue therefore extends to who is allowed to participate in the first place, and some writers urge an inclusive approach (Hirsh and Jackson, 2004). With working lives looking set to lengthen, it is also necessary to consider more carefully career management interventions for people in late career. Retention and motivation of these people is important, especially where their retirement is going to be later than they expected (Greller and Stroh, 2004).

It is usually difficult to demonstrate a return on investment for career management interventions, so they are likely to require champions at high levels of the organization. Reliance on line managers to implement career management interventions is not uncommon, but of course they are usually busy people. They may lack the skills and/or inclination to facilitate the careers of others, and indeed may also have conflicts of interests such as wanting to keep effective employees in their team (see also below).

In some organizations, HR takes a strong controlling role in career management. This most often manifests itself in the term “strategic talent management.” It usually means identifying the key roles in an organization and ensuring that there is a supply of people to fill them (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Interestingly, it is argued that in some senior posts the performance of incumbents does not vary much, due to standard professional and other role requirements. The roles to watch out for are those where performance does vary. Often, then,

*Table 11.2. Career management interventions in organizations*

**Internal Vacancy Notification.** Information about jobs available in the organization, normally in advance of any external advertising, and with some details of preferred experience, qualifications, and a job description.

**Induction and Socialization.** Programmes of instruction, training and work experience that enable a newcomer to become familiar with the organization and prepare them for future roles within it.

**Career Paths.** Information about the sequences of jobs that a person can do, or competencies they can acquire, in the organization. This should include details of how high in the organization any path goes, the kinds of moves that are possible, and perhaps the skills/experience required.

**Online or Paper Self-Assessment Exercises.** These help employees to assess their skills, interests and values, and translate these into job options. Sometimes those options are customized to a particular organization. A few packages designed primarily for personnel records also include some career-relevant facilities.

**Career Planning Workshops.** Cover some of the same ground as online or paper exercises, but offer more chance for discussion, feedback from others, information about organization-specific opportunities and policies. May include psychometric testing.

**Individual Counseling.** Can be done by specialists from inside or outside the organization, or by line managers who have received training. May include psychometric testing.

**Training and Educational Opportunities.** Participation in courses (and/or financial support and information about courses), in the organization or outside it. These can enable employees to update, retrain, or deepen their knowledge in particular fields. In keeping with the notion of careers involving sequences, training in this context is not solely to improve performance in a person's present job.

**Secondment.** The opportunity to work in another context, usually in order to gain skills and experience not readily available in the present job.

**Personal Development Plans (PDPs).** These often arise from the appraisal process and other sources such as development centers. PDPs are statements of how a person's skills and knowledge might appropriately develop, and how this development could occur, in a given timescale. This and some other interventions may include the use of multi-source or so-called 360-degree feedback to the person about how he or she is perceived.

**Career Action Centers.** Resources such as literature, videos and CDs and perhaps more personal inputs such as counseling available to employees on a drop-in basis.

**Development Centers.** Like assessment centers insofar as participants are assessed on the basis of their performance in a number of exercises and tests. However, development centers focus more on identifying a person's strengths, weaknesses, and styles for the purpose of development, not selection.

**Mentoring.** Usually but not always done on a one-to-one basis, this is where an employee is attached to another, usually more experienced, person. The mentor may or may not be the person's supervisor, and may or may not be in the same organization. He or she acts as an advisor, and perhaps also as an advocate, protector, and counselor.

**Coaching.** Sometimes one aspect of mentoring, but increasingly seen as separate from it. A coach acts as a facilitator and perhaps tutor to one or more people in the organization, with the aim of improving their performance through use of discussion, reflection, and practice.

**Developmental Job Assignments.** Careful use of work tasks can help a person to stay employable for the future, and an organization to benefit from the adaptability of staff.

**Succession Planning.** The identification of individuals who are expected to occupy key posts in the future, and who are exposed to experiences which prepare them appropriately. This may be done on the basis of a specific post, or more generally for a set of people and set of posts.

**Outplacement.** This may involve several interventions listed above. Its purpose is to support people who are leaving the organization to clarify and implement plans for their future.

Source: Adapted and updated from Arnold, J. (1997). *Managing careers into the 21st century*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

strategic talent management can focus on relatively few roles and people. There is a danger of creating an elite of “superbrats” (Hirsh and Jackson, 2004), whilst arguably neglecting others. The HR response would be that strategically it makes sense to focus resources and energy on posts and people who will make the biggest difference to organizational performance. Here, then, the processes for identifying which posts are key and which people might fill them become part of the structure within which careers are played out. As always, ethical and practical questions arise about, for example, how open to be about which posts and which people. There is often a fear that if people know they are not one of the chosen ones to be developed, they will leave. On the other hand, the empirical evidence suggests that openness does more good than harm (Dries and Pepermans, 2008).

### THE INTERPLAY OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL CAREER MANAGEMENT

As noted earlier, there is a tendency to consider organizational and individual perspectives on career as being in conflict. However, there is accumulating evidence that when it comes to career management interventions, individual and organization can operate in harmony, or at least in cooperation. It might be tempting to view individuals engaging in the kind of career management strategies that King (2004) and others talk about as a substitute for organizational career management interventions: “If they aren’t going to help me, I’d better see to it myself.” Also, one might be inclined to assume that if an organization provides a lot of career management help, then individuals will not bother. The evidence suggests the opposite. De Vos, Dewettinck and Buyens (2009) found substantial positive correlations between career self-management activity and amount of organizational career support expected and received in a sample of nearly 500 employees of six large organizations in Belgium. Sturges and colleagues (2002) also reported signs that organizational involvement in career and individual career management can feed positively on each other. Intuitively, it seems plausible that managers will be more inclined to use organizational resources to help those who show signs of helping themselves, and this may well be behind these findings. Alternatively, carefully designed organizational career management interventions may encourage rather than substitute for individual action. Career action centers, for example, are usually set up so that individuals take responsibility for using them or not. Doing so seems to enhance a person’s sense of career resilience and motivation (Brotheridge and Power, 2008). Perhaps this effect would, however, be less marked if there was compulsory and/or more passive participation in an intervention (e.g., personal development planning); it would then be less likely that people would see their participation as expressing their own self career management.

Still, the kind of individual action that career management interventions induce is not always predictable. Also, the existence and modus operandi of these interventions are rarely defined on technical criteria alone. Organizational politics matter, as ever. One of us conducted a study of development centers for early/mid-career managers in a large telecommunications company who had shown potential for senior roles (Arnold, 2002). HR staff and external consultants who ran the center (several times a year) were clear that its main purpose was to give each participant detailed feedback on his or her performance, framed in terms of the competency framework used by the company, and then in a collaborative fashion draw up a development plan. However, some senior managers wished to use the

center to identify the highest of the high-flyers, and then to give those people the best opportunities thereafter. One manifestation of this tension was that the outcome of the center for each participant was not only feedback, but also a grade—1, 2, or 3—where 1 was the best. Those running the center said the grade was for guidance purposes only, and not intended to be predictive of participants' future prospects in the company. Nevertheless, on the whole those who got grade 3 felt they had "failed."

Furthermore, those who achieved grade 1 decided to form an informal network to keep each other informed of opportunities. They held meetings on occasions to share experiences and occasionally even had a visiting speaker. They (and others) were convinced that the grade 1's names were on a list somewhere that senior managers consulted when they were looking for a bright young thing. The researcher was unable to verify whether or not that list existed and, if so, how it was used. Still, list or no list, the grade 1s had done at least two things. First, they had established a new unofficial but real aspect of the career structure. Second, they had become more active in their own career management as a result of participating in an organizational career intervention.

In Lips-Wiersma and Hall's (2007) qualitative case study of a large public sector organization in New Zealand, individuals were more inclined to engage in self career management when they perceived that the organization was also playing its part. They characterized the process of career management in the organization as a dance, where both parties acted in close cooperation in discharging symmetrical responsibilities. That was not to say, however, that everything always went smoothly. For example, organizational responsibilities might include clarifying the consequences of particular career moves, where known or anticipated, and creating a culture in which individuals were not unnecessarily constrained by traditional professional boundaries. Parallel individual responsibilities would be setting long-term and short-term goals, and taking opportunities to test tradition by putting oneself forward for jobs outside the norm for one's career history. This is a good example of how agency and structure interact to facilitate individual action and (re-)create organizational structures. Still, not everything ran smoothly:

Employees were aware (and increasingly seemed to accept) that the shape of career had changed but they were still interested in career paths providing direction and as a way of thinking about their future. They also wanted assistance in aligning their personal aspirations with the strategic direction of the organization. HR was clearly relinquishing some of its responsibility ... individuals were more reliant on their team-leaders for career support but, unfortunately the immediate supervisor did not always have the skills to provide [it]. (Lips-Wiersma and Hall, 2007, p. 780)

The organizational responsibilities identified by Lips-Wiersma and Hall (2007) resonate with those suggested by Hirsh and Jackson (2004) as being the responsibility of HR. These include an explanation of what the organization means by career, a definition of what the organization is offering and to whom, and a simple explanation of the processes managers and employees are expected to use in managing careers.

## MENTORING AND THE EVALUATION OF CAREER MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

There are few robustly designed evaluations of career management interventions in the literature. Unlike school-based career counseling interventions (Kidd and Killeen, 1992), there is little evidence available to evaluate whether interventions have a net positive effect, and, if so, what this is. There are likely several reasons for this. First, it usually takes time for the effects of an intervention to become clear. Development, mobility, and performance are not instant fixes. The same is true for counseling and psychotherapy of course. Second, there is usually a lot going on at the same time in organizations. Therefore it is hard to be sure whether any changes observed can be attributed to the intervention. This problem has also been noted regarding efforts to redesign jobs (Kelly, 1993). Third, in the context of an organization, there are many outcome criteria that can be used, and they may conflict. For example, an intervention may help to develop people's skills but not to place them in a role that uses them. Therefore the picture is always complicated. Fourth, organizations may have a focus on return on investment, which will mean that a lot of attention is paid to what it costs to run an intervention, as well as what is gained from it. The costs are often more immediate and easier to quantify than the benefits. Finally, for reputational reasons organizations may be cautious about putting evaluations of their interventions into the public domain.

Yet, mentoring is a partial exception to all this. For very many years it has received a lot of research attention, spurred originally by anecdotal tales of successful mentoring and also life-span developmental analyses of career such as that by Levinson and colleagues (1978) ascribing an important role to mentors, especially when the mentor is at or somewhat beyond mid-career. Especially in earlier years, some of it tended towards the eulogistic. However, some has also been evaluative, especially concerning the effects of mentoring on the protégé. Meta-analyses by Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz and Lima (2004) and Underhill (2006) found that having a mentor as opposed to not having one tends to be associated with various positive outcomes for the protégé, especially regarding promotion and expectations of it, but also career satisfaction. Receipt of the so-called functions of mentoring was also associated with outcomes for protégés. Not surprisingly, receipt of psychosocial functions such as friendship and role modeling was more strongly associated with career satisfaction and (especially) satisfaction with the mentor than with salary and promotions. Receipt of the career functions of mentoring (e.g., being coached and favored for challenging assignments) was associated with both the objective and the subjective criteria. There was also a tendency for informal mentoring to be more strongly associated than formal mentoring with outcomes. This is to be expected, given that formal schemes may include people and pairings who are participating because they have been told to, not because they want to, whilst informal mentoring presumably occurs because both parties want it.

Other work on mentoring has focused on the beneficial effects for mentors (e.g., Eby, Durley, Evans and Ragins, 2006), and the "dark side" of mentoring, that is, where it harms the interests of the protégé, mentor, or organization (e.g., Scandura, 1998; Herrbach, Mignonac, and Richebe, 2011). This is somewhat separate from more domain-specific literatures (e.g., nursing, teaching, librarianship) which tend to focus more on how to set up and run a scheme, with some untested (though plausible) assumptions about what will make it good. Recently the scrutiny of mentoring has become more sophisticated, partly because of a widespread recognition that (i) the causal direction of relationships between mentoring and



so-called outcomes are far from clear; (ii) the processes by which mentoring might have an effect are also not clear; and (iii) there may be mediators of, or substitutes for, the effects of mentoring, especially perhaps to do with social networks.

These ambiguities are unsurprising given the strong tendency for mentoring research to be based on quantitative cross-sectional self-report surveys in Western countries, especially the U.S.A., with a focus on the protégé (less often the mentor or the dyad, and rarely the organization), and little information about the nature of the mentoring relationship (e.g., formal or informal) (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz, 2008). So, for example, perhaps people who are already on the road to success will find it easier to obtain (good) mentors than their less promising peers (Singh, Ragins, and Tharenou, 2009a). Also, it is possible that the benefit of mentoring is not so much from the relationship itself, but from the social networks to which the mentor gives the protégé access (Blickle, Witzki, and Schneider, 2009), as well as the protégé's wider network of people who are prepared to assist (Higgins and Kram, 2001). Perhaps most telling, however, is the analysis by Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, and Wilbanks (2011). They show that there has been a huge variety in the definitions of mentoring used in different studies, as well as the extent and ways in which these are communicated to participants in each one. Especially when overlaid with likely differences in pre-existing perceptions of the nature of mentoring by those participants, it is likely that the studies of mentoring aren't really getting at the same thing. Indeed, there may not be a universal "thing" called mentoring waiting to be tapped.

The focus by careers psychologists on mentoring more than other interventions is understandable. At least on the surface, it is about two individuals and the relationship between them. This is home territory for psychologists. Although often rooted in an organizational and human resource context, these can relatively easily be kept in the background. Yet this means that important information about field, habitus, and structure is neglected. This information could help both to frame studies and to interpret the findings. Given that organizations use mentoring (and indeed other interventions) primarily to enhance organizational performance, psychologists need to be interested in more organizationally-oriented processes and outcomes.

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

There is an important sense in which virtually all careers are organizational careers. Even freelancers often depend on organizations for their work. Organizations such as local, national, and supra-national governments put in place structures which affect and perhaps even regulate the careers of individuals (Mayrhofer and Schneidhofer, 2009). When we move between organizations, we usually do so because of features of the organization we are going to and/or the one we are leaving. The organizations we are associated with can affect our personal reputation and prospects (Hamori, 2007). In this chapter we have introduced and applied some concepts that take the broad context into account, which careers psychology does not typically do very well. Broadly, this context can be considered from two perspectives: organizational sociology and human resource management. We have chosen to focus more on the first than the second. Nevertheless, we are aware that at times we have reified organizations—that is, treated them as if they are sentient beings that take action. When we and other writers do this, we are really referring to those who have power in organizations. These are the people who take decisions and shape the structures, fields, and habitus



of organizations or parts of them, and emphasize the value of some forms of career capital over others. People who inhabit organizations operate within these parameters yet may also challenge and even alter them.

Considered in this way, the literatures on mobility, success, and career management interventions can be seen as central to how careers are enacted, shaped, and constrained. They are arenas in which the various forces affecting careers can be seen working, sometimes together and sometimes running counter to each other. They concern to whom, where, and when opportunities are available, and how easily. They also concern the outcomes of these opportunities and the behavioral strategies individuals and organizations bring to bear in the process. Given the complexity, it is perhaps not surprising that most empirical findings in careers do not appear to generalize especially strongly. Applied psychology is good at translating abstract concepts into measures and identifying generalizable, quantified findings. This is helpful, and it establishes that, for example, women are indeed still at a disadvantage in their career relative to men, and that mentoring on the whole is a good thing for protégés.

However, careers in organizations are the outcome of many factors. Who enacts what organizational career paths and in what ways can also affect an organization's practices in the future. The things that psychologists typically major on, such as individual predictors and consequences of career behavior, and the technical design of interventions, such as development centers and career workshops, are only part of the story. The analysis of careers in organizations needs psychologists' practicality and ability to ground abstract concepts in more concrete forms. It also needs an appreciation of context and an ability to conceptualize that too (Johns, 2006). It is no coincidence that when searching for organizational career-related literature, a great deal of it is occupation-specific: how mentoring, appraisal, career planning, succession planning are done in medicine, librarianship, and so on. Trying to establish whether there are findings that generalize across these contexts is a worthwhile activity, but so is trying to theorize the differences between settings, the reasons for them, and their career consequences. This is also a reminder that employing organizations are not the only ones involved in careers: the organization and structuration of occupations especially as manifested in legislation and/or professional bodies can have a profound effect.

Allen and colleagues (2008) have it right in their discussion of mentoring research when they call for more qualitative and case study research, and more theory development. We believe this call applies also to the full range of organizational career phenomena, not just mentoring. Some mentoring research at least gets beyond individual difference variables to examine dyads, and, as noted above, it shades into the relatively well theorized social network level of analysis. More attention is needed to the many social aspects of careers in organizations, including the roles and attributes adopted by those who give us informal career help (Bosley et al., 2007, 2009; Kidd, Hirsh, and Jackson, 2004). More than that, however, research and practice in organizational careers would benefit from more contextualized work where individual and structural features are considered together. Lips-Wiersma and Hall's (2007) effort is a good but rare example of this. Arthur's (2008) call for careers research to be more multi-disciplinary is also well founded. We psychologists need to develop a more richly theorized view of how careers unfold in organizations, and in particular how and why in some organizations careers do not unfold in the ways that our (weakly) generalized findings suggest.

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