

Determinants of alternative career paths

An international comparison of the empirical literature

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WSE-Report

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Een onderzoek in opdracht van de Vlaamse minister van Financiën, Begroting, Werk, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Sport, in het kader van het VIONA-onderzoeksprogramma

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	8
1.1	Newly emerging career types.....	8
1.2	Determinants of the non-traditional career types.....	9
1.3	The dark side of being protean.....	9
1.4	A break between the traditional and alternative patterns?.....	9
1.5	Practical relevance for the Belgian case.....	10
1.6	Terminology.....	10
1.7	What is intended in this paper.....	11
1.8	Policy relevance.....	11
1.9	Method.....	12
1.9.1	Why the choice of quantitative research only.....	12
1.9.2	Why the choice of these specific determinants.....	13
2	What constitutes a career? In search for a general definition.....	14
2.1	Multiple viewpoints on career.....	14
2.2	Objective-subjective dichotomy.....	16
2.3	Individual/organization dichotomy.....	17
2.4	Broad/narrow meaning of career.....	17
2.5	A working definition of the career.....	18
2.6	The new career perspectives: boundaryless and protean.....	18
2.6.1	The traditional career pattern as background for change.....	18
2.6.2	The boundaryless career.....	19
2.6.3	The protean career.....	21
2.7	Concluding the introduction of the new career.....	24
3	Introduction of the studies.....	26
3.1	Determinants of the new career patterns.....	40
4	Gender.....	41
4.1	Conclusion for the gender chapter.....	52
5	Age.....	54
5.1	Conclusion for the age chapter.....	60

6	Education	62
6.1	Conclusion for the education chapter	70
7	Boundaryless/protean career success	72
7.1	Introduction.....	72
7.2	Subjective career success	72
7.3	Objective career success	77
7.4	Conclusion for the career success chapter.....	80
8	Prevalence of the new career types.....	82
9	Conclusion.....	86
9.1	Study relevance and limitations	90
9.1.1	Policy relevance	90
9.1.2	Relevance for the future research.....	91
9.1.3	Limitations of the study	93
9.1.4	A word of thanks.....	93
10	Bibliography.....	94

List of Tables

Table 2.1:	examples of social science viewpoints on the career concept	15
Table 2.2:	The protean career of the 21st century.....	24
Table 2.3:	Comparison between traditional and new career	24
Table 3.1:	Career taxonomy.....	39
Table 4.1:	Intercorrelations between career attitudes and gender per educational level (subsample stage 2).	41
Table 4.2:	Intercorrelations between career attitudes and gender (subsample stage 3)	42
Table 4.3:	distribution of career patterns per gender (percent)	42
Table 4.4:	The effects of gender on protean and boundaryless attitudes	43
Table 4.5:	distribution of gender per career category (percent).....	43
Table 4.6:	means and standard deviations for gender-related variables per career cluster: national sample.....	44
Table 4.7:	means and standard deviations for gender-related variables per career cluster: regional sample.....	44
Table 4.8:	Means and standard deviations of selected study variables per gender category	45
Table 4.9:	the determinants of the traditional career per gender category – hierarchical regression of number of intra-organizational moves	46
Table 4.10:	the determinants of the boundaryless career per gender category – hierarchical regression of number of inter-organizational moves.....	47
Table 4.11:	correlations between gender and relevant study variables	48
Table 4.12:	the effects of gender on career patterns (correlations with discriminant functions, partial results)	50
Table 4.13:	summary for gender	53
Table 5.1:	correlations between age and protean/boundaryless attitudes (partial results for study 2). 54	
Table 5.2:	correlations between age and protean/boundaryless attitudes (partial results for study 3). 55	
Table 5.3:	mean age per career orientation category	55
Table 5.4:	stepwise regression of age on protean and boundaryless career dimensions (partial results)	56

Table 5.5:	correlations between age and boundaryless career indicators, national sample	56
Table 5.6:	mean age per career cluster (with ANOVA testing), national sample	57
Table 5.7:	mean age per career path preference category	57
Table 5.8:	mean age per career path category.....	58
Table 5.9:	mean age in permanent and temporary vacancy categories.....	58
Table 5.10:	regression of age on the chance to be shortlisted for a permanent vacancy (partial results)	59
Table 5.11:	correlations between age and career profiles.....	59
Table 5.12:	Summary for age.....	61
Table 6.1:	educational level per career type (percentage), overrepresentation is emphasized	64
Table 6.2:	stepwise regression of educational level and managerial background on protean and boundaryless career dimensions (partial results)	64
Table 6.3:	university diploma per cluster (percent).....	65
Table 6.4:	Hierarchical cluster analysis with ANOVA test for inter-cluster difference: partial results for national sample.....	66
Table 6.5:	Hierarchical cluster analysis with ANOVA test for inter-cluster difference: partial results for regional sample	66
Table 6.6:	correlation between education and job mobility.....	66
Table 6.7:	correlations between educational level and discriminant functions pertaining to career profile	68
Table 6.8:	summary for education	71
Table 7.1:	cross-tabulation of subjective career indicators with the four career profiles	72
Table 7.2:	correlation between subjective career success and measures of job mobility	73
Table 7.3:	correlations between the boundaryless career related variables and quality of reemployment variables.....	73
Table 7.4:	relationships between career patterns and subjective career success indicators (one-way ANOVA test for significance)	74
Table 7.5:	partial correlations between predictors and criteria	75
Table 7.6:	correlations between career satisfaction and career profiles	76

Table 7.7:	regression of protean and boundaryless career attitudes on measures of subjective career success (partial results, standardized coefficients)	76
Table 7.8:	distribution of income strata per career orientation profile.....	77
Table 7.9:	cluster means for wage indicators for traditional and boundaryless career clusters (national sample, ANOVA test for mean difference).....	77
Table 7.10:	cluster means for hourly wage for traditional and boundaryless career clusters (regional sample, ANOVA test for mean difference).....	78
Table 7.11:	correlation between annual earnings and job mobility.....	78
Table 7.12:	distribution of income-related scores between different career profiles (one-way ANOVA test for category differences)	79
Table 7.13:	regression of protean and boundaryless career attitudes on measures of objective career success (partial results, standardized coefficients)	80
Table 7.14:	summary for the subjective and objective career outcomes.....	81
Table 8.1:	comparison of prevalence between various studies	82
Table 8.2:	career profiles per country (percent).....	83
Table 8.3:	stepwise regression of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on career motivators standardized regression coefficients	84

1. Introduction

Social sciences are rarely blessed by a consensus among different schools of thought. If there ever existed an exception to this rule, a good portion the debate around the contemporary career changes would be a fine example of it. After all, in the light of the ongoing empirical research it became almost unfeasible to challenge the idea that modern careers are undergoing rather profound qualitative changes. The observation of disagreement returns nonetheless in full effect when we try to make out what the exact nature of these changes is. Although there are several points on which the contemporary career debate in various social sciences converges, the overall lack of clarity still plagues the field.

1.1 Newly emerging career types

In the recent decennia, a shift in the organizational structure and operational modalities is commonly perceived (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). A number of factors, including the pressures of globalization, the technological and informational revolution rendered the traditional bureaucratic organization logic less efficient than before, and at the same time opened venues for newer organizational forms, that are “flatter, leaner and meaner” (Guest & Sturges, 2007). In the wake of these changes the traditional career pattern is now perceived as undergoing an erosion (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2004a; Hall, 2002; Sullivan, 1999), the degree of which is not a subject of an academic consensus yet. Complementary to the logic of the organizational transformations that are designed to increase competitiveness in the dynamic international markets, the structural changes in question include outsourcing of peripheral activities to external suppliers while focusing on the internal core processes. As a result, organizational structures become on average less hierarchical, less rigidly defined and are thus inherently unable to maintain the same advancement and opportunity ladder that was so characteristic of the traditional bureaucratic organization.

The second, accompanying trend pertains to the transformation of cultural values in relation to work in the last decennia. With the definitive arrival of the consumer society the industrialist work ethic, that entailed a once-for-lifetime individual identity, has largely lost its function (Bauman, 2004). Even though work without doubt retains its role in the shaping and structuring of the individual life experiences, it must reconcile its influence with other life aspects, such as family (Greenhaus & Foley, 2007) or authentic self-development (Baruch, 2004a; Hall, 1996b).

Two factors have been responsible for this shift in values towards more family-friendly working arrangements (Guest & Sturges, 2007). The first one concerns the massive feminization of the labor force, whereby the gender differentiation of the family responsibilities is infused in the work space, calling for an alteration of the traditional male-oriented regulations pertaining to work-family combination. Second, the traditional work values are changing by virtue of the younger generations of workers, who have been brought up in the post-materialist cultural milieu and whose relationship with work in terms of aspirations and motivations differs from those of the older generations.

As the result of these changes, the traditional career pattern comes under pressure both in the aspect of lessened opportunities for hierarchical advancement (the objective career dimension), as well as the role it plays in the creation of meaningful individual experience (the subjective aspect). These changes have cast a distinctive thread in the academic career research that has focused explicitly on the recent career patterns that have emerged in the context of the erosion of the traditional career. A number of theoretical concepts has been brought forward, such as “boundaryless career” (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), “protean

career” (Hall, 1976), “intelligent career” (Arthur, Claman, DeFillippi, & Adams, 1995), “post-corporate career” (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997), all of which take a specific angle on the new phenomenon.

1.2 Determinants of the non-traditional career types

Although a relatively large body of theoretical literature on the subject of these career types has come to existence in the recent years, the empirical work in support (or, indeed, the critique) thereof has been rather scarce until recently. The popularity of the mentioned theoretical concepts, however, ensured a growing interest on the part of empirical researchers, resulting in several large-scale quantitative inquiries, which can provide a substantial improvement of our insight in the nature of the proposed career patterns. In this paper, we intend to assemble a detailed review, analysis and comparison of these studies. In particular, our interest goes to the factors that influence the adherence to a certain career pattern, biases in distribution of these patterns and finally the related career outcomes (both objective and subjective).

1.3 The dark side of being protean

Many authors note, that the *new career* rhetoric often strikes a humanist and/or a postmodernist note, offering a compelling view on the individual capacity as well as the opportunity for its realization (Gerber, Wittekind, Gudela Grote, & Staffelbach, 2009; Guest & Sturges, 2007; Van Buren, 2003). However, the concern is raised that this perspective, without being further refined in a dialogue with the empirical reality, may camouflage the inherent inequalities and deficits peculiar for the newly emerged career types. For instance, Guest & Sturges (2007) note that the existing academic discourse on the subject has been focused almost exclusively on the upper strata of the working population, who indeed may comply with more optimistic career narratives. The working arrangements of workers in lower segments of the labor market have been studied to a much lesser degree, in respect to the alternative career trajectories. It can be argued, that the inherent instability of the *new career* patterns creates both advantages and disadvantages for those who pursue them, combining, for instance, insecurity with flexibility. Consequently, the distribution of the positive and negative aspects may be expected to be unequal between individuals or groups, and vary, for instance, per educational level or age.

1.4 A break between the traditional and alternative patterns?

An additional point of departure for this paper is question pertaining to the nature of the dichotomy between the two theoretical views on the emerging career types. While there is no doubt about the changes in the traditional vertical career pattern *per se*, the first view holds that occurring changes are not as far-fetched as some (e.g. postmodern) career theories imply. While the overall labor market mobility has increased in the last decennia in the Western world (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) along with others related changes, the position of the traditional career is still strong (Guest & MacKenzie Davey, 1996; Guest & Sturges, 2007; Jacoby, 1999). Proponents of the second perspective maintain that changes concomitant with the emergence of the *new career* pattern are so pervasive, that the traditional career is neither a possibility nor reality for the vast majority of workers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996a).

In other words, two distinctive *theoretical scenarios* are possible, which may be employed to describe the evolution of the contemporary career patterns:

- the traditional career structural underpinnings are still operational, even though their influence undergoes perceivable changes, parallel to the developments of the globalizing economy. As a consequence, the traditional career patterns evolve, but in their amended form still remain common

on the labor market. Job security is still an aspiration for many, along with the perspective of progress in status and remuneration (McDonald, K. Brown, & Bradley, 2005). While the alternative career patterns do not fully adhere to the traditional postulates (such as a lifetime employment in a single organization), these are by far not being rejected, and are maintained whenever possible. To some degree this corresponds with the theory of career cycles (Hall, 2002), on the condition of aspirations towards the traditional psychological contract (cfr. Guest & Sturges, 2007)

- qualitatively and distinctively new career pattern(s) have emerged, which effectively *contradict(s)* the traditional career logic of functioning. These new patterns involve not only (or even not necessarily) a higher degree of inter-organizational mobility, but essentially a set of properties, that exhibit a clear break with the corresponding traits of the traditional career. The nature of embeddedness of these career structures differs substantially from that of the traditional career, as it draws on other type of resources in its development in the temporal dimension.

Simply put, these two views reflect an issue of continuity between the traditional and alternative career patterns. Do we ultimately have a new “species” of career that has transgressed a bifurcation point and developed a new set of characteristics beneficial in the globalized environment? Or are we simply dealing with an increased variation within the traditional type that struggles with the new challenges? While in itself this issue has little *direct* relevance for policy, it is nevertheless of substantial significance for the research practice, as only a correct conceptualization of the *new career* concepts with sufficient degree of detail will ensure that the empirical data are meaningfully aligned with the complex reality, which these conceptualizations attempt to model (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, Passeron, & Krais, 1991).

1.5 Practical relevance for the Belgian case

While Belgium is known for its relatively rigid labor market (De Winne, Stynen, Gilbert, & Sels, 2008), the topic of the alternative and less stable career patterns is not without relevance for its case. It has been suggested, that the non-traditional career patterns concern but a small percentage of the working population (Dries, Pepermans, & Kerpel, 2008; Forrier, Sels, & Verbruggen, 2005). First, we will establish that the exact share of the labor force adhering to the new career patterns is largely dependent on the measurement method, and may be relatively substantial in certain methodological perspectives. Second, we consider the impact of country-specific and cultural factors on the exact forms of career enactment of its non-traditional forms. The hypothesis in question is that the same ideal-typical career types may receive different practical implementations, depending on the local context of relationships between the state provisions (e.g. welfare system type), cultural variables and the nature of economy.

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, it is apparent that the alternative career patterns are becoming widespread on the international scale. It is thus necessary to advance our understanding of the exact nature of the phenomenon, as well as positive and negative implications it entails in regard to the labor market workings. In addition, it is necessary to acquire a solid theoretical and methodological base to capture both the extent and the specific form the alternative career patterns take in the context of the Belgian economy.

1.6 Terminology

It is important to make a note about the understanding and the use of career type denominations throughout this paper. We recognize that there are different strains of theory pertaining to the examination of the non-traditional career patterns. Furthermore, these theories each bear a unique connotation, and often put varying emphases on different aspects of career, approaching the issue from a number of

perspectives. For instance, the career patterns we will be focusing upon, the *boundaryless* and *protean* careers, represent interrelated but distinct constructs (Briscoe & Hall, 2006a). In addition, we have already mentioned other conceptualizations of non-traditional career patterns, such as the *intelligent* career or *post-organizational career*. Having recognized the differences between the terms and the implications of their corresponding theoretical argumentations, we will employ various synonyms throughout the paper, which will serve to denominate the general category of the non-traditional career patterns, encompassing all the mentioned ones. As most of these career trajectories are defined in a negative relation to the classic, traditional career concept, we will relate to the former as “post-traditional” or “alternative” career patterns, as well as “new career” patterns. This should not confuse the reader as to meshing the different conceptualizations into a single concept, but rather serves as an umbrella concept where the logic of argumentation requires one.

1.7 What is intended in this paper

The task set forth in this paper is twofold. First, we will take a look at the literature concerning the new career types, which include the boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and the protean career (Hall, 2002), and will review their determinants as they appear in the empirical studies. In doing this we have not the intention to (re)produce the entire theoretical debate around these emergent career types, albeit reserving a few pages for theoretical considerations, including an introduction. Instead, our focus lies within the field of existing empirical exploration of these career types, even though we are warned beforehand, that the extent of such exploration is not grand (Gunz, Evans, & Jalland, 2000; Segers, Inceoglu, Vloeberghs, Bartram, & Henderickx, 2008; Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). We limit ourselves to these two *new career* conceptualizations as at the time of this writing they account for the vast majority of the existing empirical work on the post-traditional career patterns, which to a degree reflects their popularity in the career literature in general.

Our secondary task is to put the “new career” thesis in doubt, even if only for the sake of argument, and try to set it in a critical perspective, comparing the newly emerged paradigm with the traditional outlook on the career. To be more precise, we would like to synthesize a coherent set of available theoretical options related to these two perspectives, and juxtapose this set to the array of the acquired data. In this sense, we are especially concerned with the issue of continuity between the two perspectives, as well as with factors ensure the descriptive power of the former and the latter models. We will closely inspect the elementary aspects of both career types in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the nature of their relationship with the empirical data across both models.

1.8 Policy relevance

Before we begin our exploration, a word is warranted in regard to the relevance of the subject of *new career* patterns to the matters of public policy. First, it is clear that, with the increasing diversification of career patterns in the context of a globalizing economy, the policy supporting new types of career will require a solid research foundation (Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). The added value of this paper lies not immediately in the domain of public policy, its primary intention to synthesize previous findings on the new career patterns in a critical fashion, in order to inform the future empirical studies, specifically including the career panel under the auspices of WSE¹, planned to commence in 2010. It is also apparent, that not

¹ Steunpunt Werk en Sociale Economie, <http://www.steunpuntwse.be/>

only capturing the empirical change in career composition in its minute detail is essential to both social science and public organizations, but also that an adequate, coherent and empirically underpinned theoretical account of such change is a must. Both endeavors should be policy relevant in an indirect fashion, by guiding and informing the primary research with the goal to achieve a better understanding of the new career types, at the same time resolving the remaining inconsistencies that emerge through a juxtaposition of different research frameworks.

Second, the public policy may benefit from an international comparison of the empirical research on the subject of non-traditional career patterns. It can be plausibly hypothesized, that the career trajectories in question will be largely shaped not only by the individual factors, which tend come into the research focus quite more often, but also by cultural and socio-economic contexts, for instance country-specific configurations of the social security framework. While the global economy pay put identical pressures on the career structure across the globe, the degree of amortization of these pressures and the specific enactments on the resulting career trajectories may depend to a great extent on the interaction between the local and global patterns. Therefore, the exact properties of a specific career model, and even the distribution of career typologies altogether may vary across these contexts. It is then imperative to understand the impact of the local context in the mentioned sense, and the first step towards that is a comprehensive review of the international experience.

1.9 Method

1.9.1 Why the choice of quantitative research only

We had to make several compromises in the choice of material for this study. First, in order to make the international comparison representative at least to some degree, we had to resort to a selection of quantitative studies only. While recognizing the value of qualitative research in the domain of non-traditional career patterns, the focus of our study rather goes to discovering regularities in relation to these patterns, based on statistical evidence. We hope to enhance our findings from this inquiry with a synthesis of insights derived from qualitative research in a separate paper.

Our choice goes to studies that deal specifically with the constructs of boundaryless and protean careers, and not just certain sub-dimensions thereof, such as job mobility for instance. Such a strategy would result in an endlessly large chain of material, as careers are a complex phenomenon, many aspects of which have been studied in independent academic traditions (Collin, 1998), thus resulting in a rich but unfortunately rather segmented field of knowledge. From the practical point of view, the primary selection of the empirical studies was carried out using keyword-based searches in *ISI Web of Knowledge* online database, *Google Scholar* search engine, *WorldCat* catalog and *CSA* database. The secondary selection was made using the snowball method, based on the included references. A comprehensive set of theoretically oriented works was also reviewed in the preparation for the analysis, but neither its analysis nor summary will be produced here, aside from serving as basis for the introductory chapters.

Second, we have found that even the quantitative studies pose certain difficulties pertaining to the comparison between them. It is apparent that the methods of conceptualization of the boundaryless and protean careers vary significantly. Some studies use simply the physical job mobility as proxy for boundaryless career, while others focus on the aspects of boundaryless mentality without combining them to any form of actual behavior. It would then be incorrect to represent these two different forms under a single façade of the *boundaryless career*, as masking the difference them would almost certainly lead to biased conclusions. After all, both subjective and objective aspects are molded in a single

theoretical construct of the boundaryless career, and it is necessary to account for the deviations from that construct motivated by practical needs and limitations of any given research.

In addition, the latter consideration bears a relation to difference in the operationalization of the *new career* patterns. For instance, some studies employ statistical methods (e.g. factor or latent class analysis) to operationalize the concept, while other achieve the same result by a cross-tabulation of a priori defined categories, for example a certain degree of the physical job mobility can be combined with certain categories of work attitudes. It is apparent, up to the level of the results, that these differences too must be made explicit in the comparative analysis, as their consequences can easily lead to false conclusions.

We have therefore chosen to compare the available body of research, reviewing not only the final results of the study, but paying explicit attention to the methods of operationalization, sampling, variable selection and so forth. For that end, we have created a short introduction of each study, so that the reader would have a more solid grip on the ontological and methodological contexts in which specific results have been obtained.

1.9.2 Why the choice of these specific determinants

For the purposes of determinant comparisons, we have been forced to choose the ones that emerge across a sufficient number of empirical studies, so that a meaningful analysis is possible. For obvious reasons, the most commonly used determinants are the following demographics: 1) gender and gender-related variables, 2) age 3) education. In addition to these determinants, there were sufficient data on both subjective and objective aspects of career success, which as we hoped would improve our understanding of the negative aspects the *new career* trajectories may entail, as well as their positive connotations. Finally, an aspect, which often was only indirectly present in the data, is the degree to which the *new career* patterns are prevalent on the labor market. In this regard there is a marked difference of opinion between the scholars of the *new career*, one side maintaining that the mentioned patterns have dethroned the traditional career from its dominant position, while the opposing view asserts that the traditional career is largely still in place.

2. What constitutes a career? In search for a general definition.

A general definition of career is best given in a reference to the broader context of the field of career studies. A justification for a relational approach to the definition is inherent in both the multifaceted nature of the concept and the variety of its interpretation by different fields of study. The term *career* is widely used in the lay, professional and academic discourses. This broad spectrum of its use imparts different connotations on the term, resonant with the specifics of the particular field. This makes the exact meaning of career ungraspable without relating it to a broader discursive framework, which legitimizes and underpins its particular semantic rendition. The concept of *career* is, in other words, multilayered and ambiguous from the very beginning (Young & Collin, 2000b), and is therefore inherently open to interpretational polemics. Without doubt we will depart from a specific definition of career to be used throughout this paper, but a major inspiration for this chapter is that, albeit similar in some aspects, definitions of career across different academic fields receives different connotations, which can be either explicit (included in the definition *sensu stricto*) or implicit, tacitly contained in the paradigmatic stance of that particular field. In the context of this paper, it seems unnecessary to make an overview of definitions per subfield in the universe of career studies, but it is certainly warranted to contemplate a snapshot of the theoretical foci of these subfields, and the corresponding loadings of the term “career”. In addition, we will try to render a set of (dialectic) factors that in one way or another must be processed in a satisfactory definition of career.

2.1 Multiple viewpoints on career

The field of career studies in itself is not a neatly defined science following linear development logic (Schein, 2007). It is rather a field with several academic traditions, epistemologically and methodologically varying perspectives (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Guest & Sturges, 2007, pp. 1-3). This, in turn, implies that we will be dealing with collectively constructed (and therefore often fuzzy overall) themes of research and theory, rather than sharply defined theories readily lending themselves for empirical verification. Generally speaking, we can distinguish between two major traditions in the research of careers (Collin, 1998): the first one is concerned with career choice, education and counseling. The second area is focused on organizational careers and contributes to the fields of career management and career development in organizations. Both areas are predominantly influenced by psychological and sociological backgrounds, with a notable lack of communication between them (cf. *infra*).

A similar, albeit somewhat more detailed corroboration is voiced by Moore, Gunz & Hall (2007), who too point towards the dichotomy of the sociological and psychological heritage of the career field, as well as the “siloed”, isolated character of the subfield development, with little interchange between them, if any at all. Each subfield has their own viewpoint and focuses on career, their own conceptual apparatus, methodology, discursive toolset, and published journals (Collin, 1998; Herr, 1990). In a certain sense these are to be seen as semi-separate threads of theoretical thought and research (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000), that scarcely stimulate mutual development due to lack of reciprocal acknowledgement (Collin, 1998; Schein, 2007). This state of fragmentation of theoretical and empirical work between the academic traditions is one of the reasons we need to consider the influence of their tacit paradigmatic underpinnings on the concept of career, if we are to make an attempt at arriving at some unified picture of affairs.

Moore, Gunz & Hall (2007) render the taxonomy of subfields within career studies, originally brought forward by Sonnenfeld & Kotter (1982). It further refines the description of research strands:

- a sociological perspective, focused on the social and class determinants of career;

- an individual differences perspective, focused on predicting how static dispositional differences influence career choice and success;
- a developmental perspective, focused on a dynamic understanding of career stages;
- a life cycle perspective, focused on the individual psychology behind a dynamic vision of career over the life course.

Finally, Arthur et al. (1989, p. 10) provide a list of viewpoints on careers per discipline, that further illustrates the diversity of approaches to career in different subfields:

Table 2.1: examples of social science viewpoints on the career concept

Discipline	Description
Psychology	<i>Career as vocation:</i> a viewpoint accepting the traditional psychological position on stability of personality in adulthood; associated theory is intended to guide individuals and organizations fill job openings in a mutually satisfactory way
	<i>Career as a vehicle for self-realization:</i> a humanistic viewpoint focusing on the opportunities a career can provide for further individual growth and how that growth can in turn benefit organizations and society
	<i>Career as a component of the individual life structure:</i> from this viewpoint eras and transitions throughout the career are predictable and are to be accommodated in the work arrangements made
Social psychology	<i>Career as an individually mediated response to outside role messages:</i> a viewpoint that studies particular occupational circumstances, such as those of priests, scientists or engineers, for their psychological effects.
Sociology	<i>Career as the unfolding of social roles:</i> this viewpoint overlaps with social psychology but places greater emphasis on the individual's reciprocal contribution to the social order
	<i>Career as social mobility:</i> seeing a person's title as an indicator of social position
Anthropology	<i>Career as status passages:</i> a viewpoint overlapping with functional sociology about how rites and ceremonies serve to maintain a society or culture over time
Economics	<i>Career as a response to market forces:</i> a viewpoint emphasizing the near-term distribution of employment opportunities and the long-term accumulation of human capital
Political science	<i>Career as the enactment of self-interest:</i> this views individual needs such as power, wealth, prestige or autonomy as prominent objects of self-interested behavior in the context of institutional political realities.
History	<i>Career as a correlate of historical outcomes:</i> looking at the reciprocal influence of prominent people and period events on each other.
Geography	<i>Career as a response to geographic circumstances:</i> focusing on variables such as availability of raw materials, a natural harbor, or a population ready for work or trade as they affect the way working lives unfold.

Source: (Arthur et al., 1989)

From this torrent of academic renditions of the term “career” (without even pondering ramifications related to its use in public policy and lay discourses) not only does it become apparent, that multiple definitions exist concomitantly, but also that each of these definitions will derive its properties from the respective field of study and therefore either tacitly or explicitly emphasize certain aspects peculiar to that field. It is, however, perhaps possible to arrive at a field-neutral definition, whereby the implicit field-specific connotations will remain outside the semantic brackets. The above overview is then meant to make the

reader aware of the multiplicity of these connotations, and to keep them in mind when comparing the empirical results from various subdisciplines in the subsequent sections.

To begin converge on such a field-neutral definition we can start by referring to Hall's (2002, p. 8) overview of *what career means* as word. He finds four prevalent connotations, that bear some resemblance to the viewpoints above:

- *Career as advancement*: this notion includes a certain degree of upward mobility, whereas the movement itself as well as its direction refer to the structure of a bureaucratic organization. This view does not exclude lateral career movements, especially if these signify some kind of qualitative improvement (e.g. responsibility), as well as a certain degree of inter-organizational mobility.
- *Career as profession*: this conceptualization of the term conducts the idea that some professions (e.g. lawyers, professors etc) are underpinned by an inherent career structure, while others (e.g. secretaries) are not. This interpretation is somewhat dependent on the previously mentioned view of career as advancement, with the addition of professional stereotyping. The latter may or may not be empirically justified, as some professions indeed do have "regularized status passages", that mark the path of career progression.
- *Career as a lifelong sequence of jobs*: this interpretation entails a series of (work related) positions held in the course of a lifetime, regardless of occupation or level. In this vision, all individuals with a work history are seen as having a career. A distinction is made between the *objective career* as the observable sequence of jobs on one hand, and the *subjective career* as the particular individual experiences in these jobs.
- *Career as a lifelong sequence of role-related experiences*: this rendition of the term refers to individual work role experiences as his or her working life unfolds, pertaining to the sequence of jobs and related activities. Essentially, this definition puts a very strong emphasis on the subjective component of career as described above.

2.2 Objective-subjective dichotomy

There are several lines of discourse within the career studies field, that merit attention before arriving at a working definition of career. They constitute dichotomous ways of thinking about career, and emerge in one form or another in the career conceptualization within every career study subfield. The first dichotomy pertains to the mentioned distinction between the objective and subjective interpretation of career. The objectivist/subjectivist dualism is known to stubbornly persist throughout the social sciences in general (Guba, 1990; Swartz, 1997), and the career field is no exception (Peiperl & Gunz, 2007). First, the academic subfields themselves are biased towards one of the two viewpoints due to the general nature of their inquiry and methodological stance (e.g. psychology). In addition, different schools of thought within a single discipline can develop propensity towards either the objective or subjective perspective. Moore et al. (2007) trace, for example, two distinct traditions within sociology, the first one focusing on the social structural determinants of occupational choice and attainment, effects of class and parental occupational attainment, etc. This tradition is then primarily concerned with objective career properties. The second tradition has its focus on the subjective career and has its roots in the legacy of the Chicago school of sociology (Barley, 1989). The paradigmatic choice is thus traceable both in regard to the conceptualization of career (cf. supra), specific emphasis on either the objective or subjective dimensions of career and the methodological approach to the problem.

Second, the notion of career itself is comprised of both these dimensions: objective and subjective (Barley, 1989; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977; Weick & Berlinger, 1989). To reiterate the definitions mentioned above, objective careers are “defined by a sequence of official positions, salary changes, formal statuses and titles” (Weick & Berlinger, 1989), all of which are recognized (and often institutionalized) externally. Subjective careers are defined then by individual experiences as the objective sequence unfolds, including aspirations, satisfactions, self-conceptions and attitudes towards different aspects of work. Success in subjective career is a reflection of individual interpretation of the both objective and subjective aspects (Hall, 2002), and is often defined in terms of self-fulfillment, challenge and job satisfaction (Weick & Berlinger, 1989).

A proper definition of career must incorporate this Janus-like (Barley, 1989) character of the career concept. Both dimensions are inseparable one from another, the problem resembling the structure/agency ontological dichotomy in the social sciences at large (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000; Swartz, 1997). Yet another challenge is to transcend this and other dichotomies through multidisciplinary approach to career studies (Arthur et al., 1989; Arthur, 2008), or at the very least to deploy both sides of the dialectic in the analysis (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005).

2.3 Individual/organization dichotomy

The second line of debate, finding itself on the similar ontological level is the one between the individual and organizational levels of analysis. Partly it stems from the previously mentioned objective/subjective distinction, and partly due to the peculiarities of theoretical focus of various academic disciplines. Since the times of the Chicago school of sociology the career was thought of as a concept that links individuals on one hands, and institutions on the other (Barley, 1989). Causally, career dynamic viewed from the individual viewpoint has ramifications for career conceived from the organizational perspective, and vice versa. While individual agents may have aspirations, interests and preferences of their own, organizations provide a structure (cf. supra) within which these play out in accord with external limitations. At the same time, these are individual actors who reproduce and change the organizational structure altogether. In the same line of thinking, individual and organizational careers are irreducibly interlinked (Baruch, 2004a; Peiperl & Arthur, 2000; Schein, 1968). Nevertheless, a lot of research in the career field focuses predominantly on either one aspect or the other, depending on the particular academic discipline and/or school of thought (Moore et al., 2007).

2.4 Broad/narrow meaning of career

In its early use, the term *career* had a connotation of personal progress through life being “publicly conspicuous” or “abounding in remarkable incidents” (“Career”, n.d.), being thus biased towards certain professions and at the same time rendering other professions incapable of constituting a career (see Arthur et al., 1989; Goffman, 1959; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007; Young & Collin, 2000). Next to this elitist interpretation, the sociologists of the Chicago school are often renowned for applying the term in the very broad sense, denoting not only the work-related experiences in the regular sense of the word, but life histories of their subjects in general, for instance those of marijuana users or mental patients (Barley, 1989). Aside from these two semantic extremes, the span of meanings of the term is more limited in the contemporary literature (even though not every body of work on the subject exhibits the respective definition). Nevertheless the issue is not settled entirely, for instance, there is an ongoing debate whether the notion in question should be restricted to work, or extrapolated onto pre- and post-vocational activities, as well as areas pertaining to the balance between work and life (Gallos, 1989).

2.5 A working definition of the career

We have thus (even if briefly) demonstrated that aside from the definition *strictu sensu*, provided in a formal style, each subdiscipline in the career study field carries further connotations for the term, often tacit, for example by the virtue of the character of its theoretical focus. We have tried to set aside these connotations by 1) making them explicit, and 2) sketching several dichotomous lines of theoretical contradiction, that plague every rendition of the term.

Having done so, we finally arrive at the conceptual definition of career, borrowing it from (Arthur et al., 1989, p. 8): [...] career is *the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time*.

This conceptualization refers to one's experiences in regard to *work*, thus avoiding too broad a perspective, nevertheless allowing sufficient flexibility for studying different aspects of working lives. The temporal dimension highlights the "moving perspective" on the unfolding interplay between the social and the individual levels. At the same time, it links objective and subjective dimensions mentioned before (Arthur et al., 1989; Inkson, 2006a).

2.6 The new career perspectives: boundaryless and protean

2.6.1 The traditional career pattern as background for change

As we have already mentioned, the career patterns emerging in the recent decennia are rooted in the context of organizational changes that characterize the globalizing economy. As consequence, virtually all *new career* theories juxtapose the concepts brought forward to the notion of the traditional career, which actually receives this status in the process. In order to create a viable contrast we need to say a few words about the traditional career pattern as a form of introduction to its rivaling concepts. This pattern can perhaps be best imagined in the setting of the bureaucratic organization that is typical for the industrial economy. Its organizational structure, being hierarchical and linear in nature, provided support for career paths with analogous properties. The traditional career trajectory is characterized by "an intense commitment to and continuous engagement with the occupational world, along with a striving for upward mobility and achievement of external markers of success" (Valcour, Bailyn, & Quijada, 2007).

The commitment mentioned in the quote is typically meant for a single organization, and most likely a single occupation. This career pattern begins after the initial educational stage, typically in one's twenties, and continues until the permanent withdrawal from the labor force at retirement, some 40 or more years later.

The traditional career is related to a specific work ethos (e.g. Bauman, 2004), which stipulates the prevalence of work over other life spheres, such as family or leisure. The tacit agreement between the worker and the employer is that of a long-term relationship, whereas lifelong commitment to the organization and dedication to work are exchanged for job security. In this vision it is the employing organization which provides career development opportunities, coupled predominantly with non-transferrable skills.

It has been contended that the pattern just sketched was applicable but to a portion of employees, especially those in managerial positions, and is somewhat of less relevance e.g. to technical specialties (for an overview see Guest & Sturges, 2007). We will not elaborate this perspective here, although it will be useful to keep in mind, that the normative implications of the career conceptualization may emphasize more prominent work trajectories at the expense of those pertinent to the peripheral strata of the labor

force. This possibility seems to have retained its relevance in the context of the *new career* as well (King, Burke, & Pemberton, 2005; Van Buren, 2003).

2.6.2 The boundaryless career

The concept of boundaryless careers was originally coined by Arthur (1994) and has, since then, become rather popular a vessel for conceptualization of newly emerging career types, probably more so than its other above mentioned counterparts. The logic of it goes in parallel with the term “boundaryless organization”, which was, in turn, allocated to remedy the appearing descriptive deficiencies of the formal traditional organization concept in the context of globalizing markets (Inkson, 2006b). In the original work, Arthur introduces the boundaryless career concept by the use of example involving a career of a baseball player. The story itself is only of an illustrative value, so we will not render it here. The narrative of the career mentioned produces four thematic threads, summarized as follows:

- Organizational effectiveness can be enhanced by career movements across organizational boundaries.
- A temporary contracted individual can show high level of commitment to the organization.
- Rigid assumptions about roles and careers can interfere with organizational development.
- A career can be sustained by individual competence and reputation.

Departing from this example, Arthur introduces the notion of the boundaryless career primarily as the opposing concept to the well established model of the traditional career:

Put simply, the boundaryless career is the antonym of the “bounded” or “organizational” career that has denominated empirical research in recent times. (Arthur, 1994, p. 296) [The latter are] careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting. (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 5)

In the practice of empirical research the boundaryless career tends to be defined in two styles; the first one simply operating along the single dimension of job mobility. This simple conceptualization is reflected in the following definition from DeFillippi & Arthur (2001, p. 116):

[...] career paths may involve sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings. Such career paths are defined here as boundaryless careers.

Although the unidimensional approach has become highly popular in the empirical literature (Inkson, 2006b; Segers et al., 2008), it has been criticized for too strong an emphasis on the aspect of inter-organizational mobility (Arthur et al., 2005; Colakoglu, 2005). It has been consistently pointed out, that the concept of boundaryless career is a multidimensional phenomenon, including both objective and subjective aspects (Arthur, 1994; Arthur et al., 2005; Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006). In addition, there is empirical evidence, that the interaction between subjective aspects of the boundaryless career and the actual job mobility is far from being straightforward (Briscoe et al., 2006). Therefore it seems generally unfeasible to use the latter dimension as a sole proxy for the conceptualization and/or measurement of the boundaryless career pattern.

Two reasons may account for the tendency to favor the unidimensional approach of the boundaryless career in the empirical literature. The first one relates to a simple and measurable manner of capturing the phenomenon in question by ascribing career patterns characterized by heightened job mobility

(specifics dependent on the context of the study) to the boundaryless paradigm (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The second reason pertains to an umbrella-like nature of the boundaryless career concept. The growing need to describe the alternative career patterns theoretically is apparent in the career literature, while at the same time the number of post-traditional career theories and their theoretical support remains limited. In this context the boundaryless career concept has become one of *de facto* leading themes in the mentioned research domain (Briscoe et al., 2006). Considering the mentioned easiness of a unidimensional conceptualization thereof, it is not surprising that the boundaryless model has been a subject of application to a very broad range of situations. The following examples are meant to illustrate the broad application of the concept in practice. In one instance, the model was used to describe the career trajectories followed by spouses of relocated workers (Eby, 2001), a condition that somewhat undermines the voluntary nature of their career transitions. An opposing example includes a study of top ranking executive managers (Cheremie, Sturman, & Walsh, 2007), whose careers are arguably similar to that of a mainstream employee. These two instances illustrate the vast range of theoretical flexibility of the boundaryless career model, and raise the question whether its practical flexibility can follow the suit. The polyvalent nature of the boundaryless career model is specifically intended from the very beginning (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 3), but the issue at hand is whether the “boundaryless” similarity between multiple career patterns brought to this common denominator is more important than substantial differences in other career aspects from the perspective of both scientific and policy-oriented analysis.

One of the hazards related to this issue would be an oversimplified use of the concept in practical research (Briscoe & Hall, 2006a), potentially masking crucial differences between distinct career patterns of the “boundaryless” family, some of which deserving more problematization in specific areas than others. To use the examples mentioned before, problematic aspects of the top executive careers are likely to be different than those of the individuals who are forced to switch jobs out of necessity. In other words, while having provided a solid point of departure towards the exploration of non-traditional, alternative career trajectories, the concept of boundaryless career may itself require further refinement and elaboration by means of a dialogue between the empirics and the theory.

The non-mobility dimensions of the boundaryless career

Besides moving across the boundaries of separate employers, other dimensions (or, to use the original word, “meanings”) are considered - albeit none of them are denoted as mandatory for the concept. All of these meanings are summarized as being independent, rather than depending on, on the traditional organizational career arrangements:

- The boundaryless career draws validation and marketability from outside the present employer.
- It is sustained by external networks or information.
- The breaking of traditional organizational career boundaries, notably those involving hierarchical reporting and advancement principles.
- The rejection of existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons on the part of an individual.
- The interpretation of the career by the actor itself, who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints (and, indeed, the other way around (Gunz et al., 2000))

The use of the non-mobility aspects in the empirical research has been limited, especially in a union with the objective dimension (Arthur et al., 2005).

An alternative approach is to view the boundaryless career as a specific mindset in relation to working arrangements, and not any actual pattern of behavior (Briscoe & Hall, 2006a). In this perspective it is feasible to speak of a “boundaryless career orientation”, which does not include physical job mobility directly, but involves a *mobility preference* dimension instead (Briscoe et al., 2006). It is thus necessary to discern between two concepts, the boundaryless career as a specific form of working history on one hand, and the boundaryless career orientation as a set of career dispositions on the other. While these terms are being used somewhat interchangeably in the literature, it might be fruitful to consider the ontological difference between them. In this paper, however, we will limit ourselves to simply observing the difference.

2.6.2 The protean career

The concept of the protean career comes from the same context of the eroding traditional career patterns as described previously. It was coined by Douglas T. Hall (1976) in his book titled “Careers in organizations”. Although having been sketched only briefly in the last pages of the book, the term has attracted a profound popularity in the decennia of practical and theoretical work on careers since then, and akin to the boundaryless model is used to describe the newly emerging career patterns of the last decennia. The term derives its apparent significance through a metaphor: the shape shifting nature of the Greek god Proteus, who could assume any form the situation would require. In contemporary English the word receives the meaning of being “variable in form; variously manifested or expressed; changing, unpredictable”, in its noun form it denotes “a person who or thing which changes form, character, nature, role, etc., rapidly or frequently” (“Protean,” 2009). Hall used the metaphor to describe an individual who is able to swiftly adjust his or her career to the changing circumstances.

The adaptability of a protean career is linked to the increasing demands of flexibility in organizations, concomitant with the global changes of the workplace in the last decades of the 20th century (Hall, 2004). In this we can observe a parallel with the departure point of the boundaryless career concept, which finds its inspiration in the theory of “boundaryless organization” (cf. supra) that in the essence describes the same array of organizational transformations, albeit perhaps with an emphasis on somewhat different aspects thereof.

The protean career has been originally defined as:

[...] a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all of the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organizations, changes in occupational field, etc. [...] The protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the unifying or integrative elements in his or her life. The criterion of success is internal (psychological success), not external. (Hall, 1976, p. 201)

Whereas in the context of traditional career pattern it was predominantly the organization that managed and directed the course of the individual career, the protean career becomes rather an individual responsibility. This property of the *new career* is largely consistent with the postmodernist thesis regarding the erosion of supporting external structures (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991). Individuals are no longer able to rely on externally available pre-defined social scripts to shape their working lives. Instead, they are to embrace the individual challenge of perpetual identity formation and reflexive organization of their career paths. The integrative element of this continuous process can no longer be rooted merely in the objective career success (in terms of the traditional career setting), but must also rely on the subjective interpretation of the external conditions. This process occurs against the backdrop of

the cultural value shift described above, and thus entails a dissolution of strict borders between work and other life domains, such as family or personal development.

In a later elaboration of the concept (Briscoe & Hall, 2002, as cited in Inkson, 2006), these trends are delineated more explicitly:

*The protean career is driven by the person, not the organization, based on individually defined goals, encompassing the whole life space, and being driven by psychological success (rather than) objective measures of success such as pay, rank or power. We define the protean career as a career in which the person is (1) **values driven** in the sense that the individual's personal values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual's career, and (2) **self-directed** in personal career management—having the ability to be adaptive in performance and learning demands”*

Psychological contract

The protean career is associated with a new type of psychological contract between the worker and the employer (Hall, 2002). Briefly sketched, a psychological contract is a set of mutual expectations, often implicit, held by both parties to the employment relationships (Hall & Mirvis, 1996). It can be thus seen as a set of shared assumptions embedded in the economical structure, which facilitates and regulates the workings of the latter.

In the traditional career setting this unspoken agreement included an exchange of workers' loyalty for employment security, whereby the metaphor of family was often used to describe the nature of the relationship with their employees. A long-term reciprocity based on trust included also a certain sense of identification with the organization, its goals and values. The emphasis was made organization-specific (and thus non-transferrable) skills. The old psychological contract also included a tacit understanding that the organization would “take care” of the individual career. This type of psychological contract is called *relational* (Rousseau, 1995).

The protean career is closely tied to another type of psychological contract, which is denoted with the term *transactional*. Organizations are no longer able to guarantee long-term commitment, and lifetime employment is no longer available for a vast majority of workers. It is being replaced by the concept of *employability*, which by definition spans a continuum of multiple working arrangements, thus generating insecurity and at the same time fostering career resilience. The exchange process can be described as a series of short-term transactions, whereby the emotional value originally present in the relational contract, disappears almost entirely. The relationship is hence based on concrete, tangible values, and does not extend beyond this exchange. In other words, the value rests in the utility of the entities exchanged, rather than the relationship itself (Hall & Mirvis, 1996)

Identity and adaptability as career meta-skills²

According to Hall (2002), identity forms one of the *career meta-skills* in the protean paradigm of career. With the external support for a career fading away, it becomes important for the individual to develop an

² A career meta-skill or a meta-competency enables the individual to acquire other skills. For example, understanding alphabet is a meta-skill in the context of learning.

internal perspective, a more or less coherent narrative (ultimately rooted in the career identity), which would facilitate practical career orientation in the times of transitions, and define the framework of career success available to the individual. Hall compares such an identity to a compass, the presence of which is a necessary condition in order to experience the psychological success in the context of unstable employment. The development of the identity is dependent on two factors, a reflexive review of information about oneself, learning about one's strengths and deficiencies. The second factor pertains to the self-awareness, which includes a clear understanding of one's goals, values and needs. Here too we can draw a parallel with the Giddens' (1991) notion of reflexive self-project, whereby the individual has to deal with opposing and often contradicting forces of fragmentation and unification of experience, in this particular case related to work experiences.

Another meta-skill of the protean career is that of adaptability. Next to self-awareness, indispensable to the authentic career identity, adaptability is a requirement for those in shifting working environments. It empowers the individual to be self-adjusting in reaction to new demands from the organizational environment, independent of the formal training and/or development on the part of the organization (Hall & Moss, 1998). While in principle denoting a concept of potentiality³, adaptability may be manifested through behaviors related to the following aspects (Hall, 2002, p. 161):

- Flexibility and exploration
- Openness to new and diverse people and ideas
- Dialogue skills and eagerness to accept new challenges in unexplored territory
- Comfort with turbulent change.

It is important to note, that both protean career metaskills are closely intertwined, being dependent on each other to shape what Hall calls "the path with a heart", the ultimate form of the protean career. If one of the skills is developed insufficiently, the individual in question may follow a career path that is not true to his own values (in the case of low self-awareness and identity); or exhibit too rigid a behavior for his career path to be adequate to changes in his or her environment (in connection to adaptability).

In conclusion we would like to render a summary of the protean career traits in a following table:

³ A distinction is made in this connection between adaptability and adaptation, the former related to the potential while the latter to the actual process.

Table 2.2: The protean career of the 21st century

The goal: psychological success
The career is managed by the person, not the organization
The career is a lifelong series of identity changes and continuous learning
Career age counts, not chronological age
The organization provides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work challenges and - Relationships
Development is not necessarily:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal training - Retraining - Upward mobility
Profile for success:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From know-how → to learn-how - From job security → to employability - From organizational careers → to protean careers - From work self → to whole self

Source: Hall (1996b)

2.7 Concluding the introduction of the *new career*

To conclude the introduction of both boundaryless and protean career types, we would like to present a summarizing table, in which the synthesis of both patterns is juxtaposed to the respective aspects of the traditional career.

Table 2.3: Comparison between traditional and new career

	Traditional Career	New Career
Boundaries	One or two firms	Multiple firms
Identity	Employer-dependent	Employer-independent
Employment relationship	Job security for loyalty	Employability for performance and flexibility
Skills	Firm-specific	Transferable
Success measured by	Pay, promotion, status	Psychologically meaningful work
Responsibility for career management	Organization	Individual
Key attitudes	Organizational commitment	Work satisfaction, professional commitment

Source: Forrier et al., 2005)

In this regard we would like to briefly return to the issue of the continuity between the traditional and the post-traditional career models, that we have sketched in the introductory part of this paper. We have

made a distinction between two different perspectives on the emergence of the *new career* patterns, in relation to their continuity. The first perspective treats the changes in the traditional pattern as being merely an extension of that pattern, that does not in principle defy the logic of the traditional career. Traditional aspirations still exist, and individual workers strive to fulfill them. Moreover, it remains possible to realize these aspirations on a regular basis, even if the resulting career trajectory is not as rigid as several decades before. Proponents of the second perspective view the emerging *new career* patterns as being radically different from the traditional career, standing (as it is reflected in the table above) in the opposition with the characteristics of the latter.

One of the secondary research questions which we set forward in this study pertains to the dialectic between these two perspectives. It is necessary to determine whether the *new career* model is merely an ideal type that may (or may not) lend one or several of its properties to actual individual careers, or is it an actual coherent career pattern with interdependent characteristics that exist in a specific configuration which cannot be freely mixed with the properties of the traditional career. Simpler put, if we are confronted with the arguments about the persistence of the traditional career, which is the case for Belgium (Dries et al., 2008; Forrier et al., 2005), how are we to reconcile this with the arguments about the proliferation of the *new career*, increasing job mobility, growing importance of the subjective career dimensions and so forth? Are we dealing with mere geographical and economic differences that are responsible for this dual perspective, or are there other, perhaps non-empirical factors that could explain the existence of the opposing views.

We can hypothesize, that the perception of the transformations of the traditional career can potentially be traced on two separate levels: empirical and paradigmatic. The empirical level entails observable shifts in the relevant career properties such as individual or aggregate job mobility and practices of career management, that separate the traditional career pattern from its modern counterpart. The paradigmatic level escapes by definition the scope of empirical research, being concerned with how exactly the actual empirical changes *are perceived* by the academia, policy makers and workers themselves. It is possible, that aside from changes in the actual career behavior we are witnessing a *shift in criteria* which are used to define and evaluate a career. For instance, the subjective individual interpretation of career success exists in both traditional and protean models, but it is only in the latter that it receives critical importance that extends beyond single worker, as a consequence of its resonance with the emphasis on individual identity in the context of reflexively organized social modes (Giddens, 1991). In this paper we will focus solely on the empirical data, but it is essential to keep in mind that the latter receive their meaning and practical interpretation only within the theoretical framework in which these data are cast (Bourdieu et al., 1991).

As consequence, it is possible that the dual perspective on the continuity between the traditional and post-traditional career patterns which we have sketched above, must not necessarily be resolved by empirical means. Rather, this duality might exist due to differences in conceptualization of what the *new career* pattern specifically entails, and how its properties relate to each other and to those of the traditional career.

3. Introduction of the studies

In this chapter we will provide a brief introduction to the empirical inquiries that will be reviewed in the subsequent sections of the paper. Since the inquiries in question will be analyzed multiple times, each time in the light of the synthesis of a distinct variable, the current chapter will serve as a repository of specific details about the study, such as sampling strategies, operationalization of the *new career* concept, and other features relevant for the interpretation of the data. Each study will be assigned a numeric identifier, which will facilitate referencing to it throughout the analysis chapters.

1

Briscoe, J. P., Hall, D. T., & Frautschy DeMuth, R. L. (2006).

Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration.

Introduction

We begin with the review of the analysis by Briscoe et al. (2006). This study is meant to address the scarcity of “rigorous empirical research” (p. 30) of the concepts of protean and boundaryless careers. The researchers conduct a three-step study with the aim to construct and validate a measurement instrument (Likert scales), which would assess attitudes related to both boundaryless and protean career types. Each of the instruments is bidimensional: the protean career scale includes the dimensions of *self-directed career management* and values-driven career attitudes. The boundaryless career scale includes, in turn, the dimensions of *boundaryless mindset*, namely the attitudes pertaining to working across organizational borders, and the *organizational mobility preference*.

The study consists of three phases, each phase based on a separate (sub)sample. During the first phase both scales are constructed on the basis of factor analysis (PCA). In the second stage the scales were tested for reliability and validity. Additional correlates, such as gender and age were added in this phase. The educational background was not included explicitly, although the samples were based on respondent classes with more or less similar educational background (undergraduates, MBA and EMBA). The third stage seeks to demonstrate convergent validity of the scales, introducing theoretically complementary psychological measures, such as proactive personality, career authenticity, as well as objective variables of inter-organizational mobility.

Limitations, caveats

A potential caveat pertaining to this study concerns the selectivity of samples, which were for the largest part drawn from educational institutions, and are predominantly comprised of students (even though some of them were working students or EMBA). The resulting homogeneity of the sample (on the characteristics of educational background at least) may distort the relational dynamic between the covariates of the main construct, when compared to the population in general.

2

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffebach, B. (2009).

Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach.

Introduction

This study is characterized by a two-stage design. In the first stage a latent class analysis (LCA) is performed on the data pertaining to a sample of Swiss employees, in German-speaking part of the country alone (N=835). For the construction of the career typology, *career orientations* were measured, by presenting the respondents with nine forced-choice dichotomous items (for example: “career is not important to you” versus “career is very important to you”).

Characteristic for this study is a non-dichotomous view of career, discerning not only between the traditional and boundaryless (the authors themselves employ the term “independent”) career types, but also enriching these career taxonomy with the option of “disengaged” career. They maintain the relevance of the dimension pertaining to the importance an individual attaches to his or her career, aside from the career dimensions of linearity and hierarchic progression. The researchers note a general growth of interest in work-life balance on the part of employees, concomitant with the rise of career types that are marked by a reduced importance of an upwardly oriented career or of the work ethics in its classic sense. In other words, some workers might be renouncing the notion of career as central life interest, or at least striving for the amalgamation of it with other life domains. Taking into consideration this perspective, there can be at least three career (ideal) types, including the *disengaged* career path, aside from the traditional/post-traditional dichotomy. The results of the LCA confirm this hypothesis, asserting the superiority of the four-class model based on statistical parameters of the various models (ranging from 2 to 6 class solutions).

In the second stage of the inquiry the latent classes acquired in the first stage are juxtaposed to a set of demographic and work attitudes variables. The latter consisted of measures related to employability, career success, intention to quit and affective commitment. A separate sample was used in this stage (N = 737).

The LCA in this stage has confirmed the applicability of the four class model, supporting the initially suggested non-dichotomous character of the career typology. The first latent class was interpreted as referring to the *independent* career orientation, scoring high on the items related to low organizational loyalty and career self-management. Pertaining to its second dimension, this class scored high on the importance of career success and the aspiration towards higher positions. The second class had similar scores on the independence/loyalty scale, but centrality of work items yielded low scores, thus rendering this class to resonate with the logic of *disengaged* career. The third and fourth classes clearly related to the *traditional* career orientations, with a difference of the former scoring highly on promotion related items, and the latter exhibiting high scores for organizational loyalty, with low emphasis for the vertical career advancement. The authors supply a warning note about the interpretation of the *disengaged* career, namely that it does not imply that work ceases to be important.. On the contrary, they maintain, work is a key element of most Swiss employees’ lives, the attitude of “disengaging” occurs rather in relation to careers as a part of self-identity, and not from the work itself.

Limitations, caveats

The authors report several limitations of their methodology, such as potentially slightly biased sampling framework (fixed phone line users), which might have resulted in over-reporting of the traditional types of career orientations. In addition, the simplified measurement instrument adapted to the setting of telephone interviews was unable to capture the *new career* orientations in their full meaning. Finally, the objective (behavioral) aspects of career are not taken into consideration in this study, the conceptualization of career types thus being based on the self-reported measures alone.

3

Segers, J., Inceoglu, I., Vloeberghs, D., Bartram, D., & Henderickx, E. (2008).

Protean and boundaryless careers: A study on potential motivators.

Introduction

This study uses the SHL Motivation Questionnaire data from nine European countries (N = 13655) to construct a number of dimensions that are conceptually aligned with the notions of protean and boundaryless careers. Pertaining to the protean career the corresponding dimensions were *self-directed* and *value-driven* motivators, while the boundaryless career was represented by *physical mobility* and *psychological mobility* motivators. Relationships with a range of independent variables, including socio-demographic, work-related and cultural indicators were tested by means of (stepwise) linear regression. Afterwards a number of clusters were identified in order to establish the degree of correspondence between the motivational data and the eight theoretical *new career* profiles proposed by Briscoe & Hall (2006). The dataset yielded a four cluster solution (cfr. Gerber et al., 2009), which was labeled according to the mentioned career profiles based on their respective intrinsic scores on the corresponding dimensions. Thus, a career pattern with high scores on all four dimensions was denoted as a “protean career architect”. A pattern with scores low across the board was labeled as “trapped/lost”. Cluster three scored low on value motivation (as opposed to financial, promotional and status drives), but high on the motivators pertaining to self-directedness and moderately on the mobility dimensions. It was labeled as the “hired gun/hired hand” pattern. The last cluster yielded very low scores on motivators pertaining to value-driven and self-directed dimensions, but scored moderately on physical mobility and material reward and status. Subsequently, it was called “curious/wanderer” profile.

Limitations, caveats:

The study does not contain variables pertaining to the objective career aspects. The authors also note, that the link between career motivators and career attitudes remains unconfirmed, although both ways of career conceptualization exhibit similar logic. A few sources of potential sample bias are mentioned, most importantly (in the light of our goals) related to lower educational backgrounds.

4

Marler, J. H., Woodard Barringer, M., & Milkovich, G. T. (2002).

Boundaryless and traditional contingent employees: worlds apart.

Introduction

This inquiry departs from the theoretical dichotomy between the traditional and post-traditional career patterns. The authors begin by postulating a substantial growth in “contingent employment” arrangements. Two hypotheses are brought forward. According to the first one, the mentioned growth is a vehicle for the creation of a working underclass (cfr. dual labor market system), subject of low wages, absence of job security and poor career prospects in general. In this vision the individual freedom granted by increased labor (market) flexibility is predominantly channeled into uncertainty, parallel with what the post-modern sociological tradition suggests (e.g. Bauman, 2000). The authors make a connection between this phenomenon and the political credo of the last decennia, oriented towards the increasing personal responsibility and the shifting of economic risks towards the individual.

The opposite view puts an emphasis on the bright side of the individual freedom mentioned before. Once again, if we seek parallels with the postmodern sociological literature, its paragon is a strong individual, not only *de jure*, but also *de facto* (cfr. Bauman, 2001), the one that embraces his freedom and is able to tame it as a vehicle for self-development and empowerment. In other words, the individual freedom brings not only insecurity and existential anxiety (cfr. Giddens, 1991), but also enables individuals to make choices unavailable before, ultimately resulting in life configurations unbound by external (to the individual) constraints and therefore having a high degree of authenticity (cfr. Hall, 1996a).

The authors employ a broad theoretical framework, paying attention to both supply and demand factors of contingent work arrangements. The hypotheses derived are tested empirically on sample of contingent workers (N = 614), selection being representative for the U.S. An additional regional sample (N = 276) was drawn in the Northeast U.S. A cluster analysis was used on ten variables (including demographic variables, work attitudes, work preferences etc), with subsequent differentiation (t and chi-square) tests per variable between clusters. One of the clusters was identified as “traditional”, and the other as pertaining to the boundaryless career type. Multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses related to the effects of temporary worker types on work attitudes and behaviors.

Limitations, caveats:

One of the points to be concerned about when interpreting results of this study is the application of the term “boundaryless” to the respective empirical cluster established in this inquiry. The interpretation of both clusters is based on 1) preferring a temporary work arrangement and 2) valuing the flexibility of temporary work. It remains, however, an open question to which degree this conceptualization supports the original definition of the boundaryless career *stricto sensu* (see, for instance, Briscoe & Hall (2006) or Arthur & Rousseau (1996a)), as temporary working arrangements entail a set of specific characteristics, as the structure of career opportunities and choices is different in this labor market. In addition, both clusters had low shares of respondents valuing temporary work for its flexibility (10 vs. 20 per cent), potentially implying that stability of their career patterns might have been a more desirable option.

5

Valcour, M., & Tolbert, P. (2003). Gender, family and career in the era of boundarylessness: determinants and effects of intra- and inter-organizational mobility.

Introduction

This study is particularly interesting to the gender section of the present paper, as it explicitly focuses on the gender and family related determinants for the inter- and intra-organizational mobility in the light of the boundaryless career concept. In addition, the effects of job mobility are examined in relation to objective and subjective career success, also differentiating by gender. The respondent selection happened through seven large organizations in the state of New York (US). Eligible respondents were living in a dual-earner partnership arrangement (cfr. Marler, Woodard Barringer, & Milkovich, 2002), either married or cohabitating; total sample amounting to 1890 individuals. Choice of the sample framework organizations was driven by their exemplary character for the four key economic sectors: manufacturing, healthcare, higher education and utilities.

A brief review of study variables: *intra- and inter-organizational mobility* is measured as a number of job changes respectively with the same employer or from one employer to another, from the age of 30. *Labor force experience* is a number of years that has been spent in the labor force (further unelaborated). *Occupational prestige* is based on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC⁴) codes, with prestige scores assigned according to a specified method. *Career priority* implies the respondent's career priority of that of his/her spouse, and is a self-reported dummy variable. Objective career success has been indicated by *earnings*, measured as total (brutto) annual salary, whereas *subjective (perceived) career success* is expressed by a single self-reported 1 to 100 score on the corresponding question. *Marital stability* is a measure involving a number of times the respondent has been married or living in a committed relationship.

The boundaryless pattern is conceptualized by proxy of inter-organizational mobility, whereas the traditional trajectory is related to intra-organizational mobility.

Caveats, limitations

Probably the most obvious concern about the study is its unidimensional conceptualization of both boundaryless and traditional careers expressed as inter- and intra-organizational mobility, respectively. It adds an additional consideration to the interpretation of the results, namely the possibility, that the psychological/attitude dimensions (of the "complete" polydimensional concept) can counteract the effects of the indicators involved in this inquiry. Other studies support the idea that the interaction between objective and subjective aspects of the *new career* might not be straightforward (Arthur et al., 2005; Briscoe et al., 2006).

In addition there are two methodological remarks. First, there is a concern regarding the representativeness of the sample to the general population of workers, since the research focused

⁴ <http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm>

predominantly on dual-earners couples. Also, the sample framework selection may result in a bias towards traditional careers; and due to privacy issues it was not possible to estimate the self-selection bias. Second, the question may be raised about the chosen indicator for marital stability, as the measure employed is self-reported and the definition of a “committed relationship” without further elaboration can invoke varying interpretations on the part of the respondents.

6

Tremblay, M., Wils, T., & Proulx, C. (2002). Determinants of career path preferences among Canadian engineers.

Introduction

This article focuses not on the boundaryless/protean career patterns *sensu stricto*, instead studying career patterns that are alternative to the traditional (vertical) type. The inquiry explores career path preferences of engineers in Canada (Quebec), whereby five career paths are discerned: *managerial* and *technical* paths, as well as the *project-based*, *entrepreneurial* and *hybrid* career trajectories. Despite the explicit absence of the boundaryless/protean career concepts, we chose to include this research due to the theoretical similarity of its approach. After all, the boundaryless career definition entails “a range of possible [career] forms that defies traditional employment assumptions” (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 3), and the juxtaposition between the traditional and the alternative career types is inherent to the design of this study. A conceptual similarity is also apparent between boundaryless career and the last three career paths, especially the *project-based* and *hybrid* types.

The sample (N = 900) was recruited via several professional organizations (thus not being entirely random), and the authors note that sample characteristics are similar to those of the total population in question. Discriminant analysis has been used to discern between the five preference groups. A set of determinants related to the choice between the mentioned patterns is explored.

Limitations, caveats

The authors explicate a self-critique pertaining to the representativeness of their sample by over-representation of female engineers and under-representation of English-speaking engineers. In addition, several sources of potential bias are mentioned.

7

Reitman, F., & Schneer, J. A. (2003). The promised path: a longitudinal study of managerial careers.

Introduction

The authors present a longitudinal study with a sample ($N = 116^5$) of MBA graduates, predominantly situated in the USA. The research distinguished between the two career patterns: *the promised path* and *the protean path*. The research questions posited can be summarized as a search for differences between both paths in regard to demographic variables, career histories, outcomes and attitudes, as well as gender. A peculiar use of terminology is to be noted, as the *promised path* implies per definition a traditional career pattern (p. 60). This is also reflected in the operationalization of the *promised path* as being employed in the same organization through the entire three waves of the survey, thus with a span of 13 years. The *protean path*, on the other hand, is conceived as having worked full time for multiple organizations within the same time range. This operationalization is in fact much more congruent with the *boundaryless career* rather than its *protean* counterpart. These considerations do not diminish the practical value of the study, however, but merely illustrate a tradition of interchanging these two *new career* concepts in the research context as Briscoe & Hall (2006, p. 5) have observed.

Limitations, caveats

There are two concerns relevant to the interpretation of the results of this inquiry. First of all, we must consider the fashion in which the *promised* and *protean* paths are defined. Although some subjective career indicators are present in the analysis, they are not used in discerning between the two paths (cfr. Briscoe & Hall, 2006b). In this fashion, the line is drawn between no mobility and any possible amount of mobility, which renders the definition rather strict.

Second of all, due to the technique of the analysis, some of the respondents could not be considered in the context of the dichotomy of career types. This resulted in a rather small base for statistical analysis ($N=70$), which was further split in two groups (per career type). The exclusion of the respondents with less clearly defined career patterns might have substantially distorted the outcome. While difficulties the inclusion of this group entails are understandable from a methodological point of view, theoretically speaking the non-typical career patterns are by definition likely to be *boundaryless* in character (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), potentially forming a third cluster.

⁵ Ultimately retained in the analysis: $N = 70$

8

Eby, L. T. (2001). The boundaryless career experiences of mobile spouses in dual-earner marriages.

Introduction

This study also focuses on dual-earner couples, more specifically on examining the (boundaryless) careers of 414 respondents who accompany their spouse in job-related relocations (i.e. *tied moves*) in the US and Canada. Comparison is made between current and previous employment positions of the accompanying spouse, on indicators such as *quality of reemployment*, *skill demand*, *family power*, as well as several role theory and social capital variables. All respondents are seen as following the boundaryless pattern by definition, by virtue of their derivative job mobility. The authors aim to explore the extent to which boundaryless careers may have negative consequences for the workers (cfr. Hall, 1996a).

Limitations, caveats

A question may be raised as to whether involuntary (in a sense) inter-organizational mobility can be equated with boundaryless career, as this is a rather narrow definition thereof, even considering a general trend in the current literature to employ a unidimensional conceptualization of the boundaryless patterns.

9

Reitzle, M., Körner, A., & Vondracek, F. W. (2009). Psychological and demographic correlates of career patterns.

Introduction

This study is one of few where career patterns under examination are expressed both through a subjective interpretation of the respondent, as well as are correlated with objective career indicators, such as income and job security. The subjective aspect is measured in two conceptually different ways, using standard indicators such as job satisfaction on one hand, and graphically represented career trajectories (pictograms) on the other. For example, a straight upwards line or a horizontally oriented zigzag line were presented to the respondents, nine pictograms in total. Several pictograms were eliminated during the preliminary analysis due to data scarcity, resulting in five final categories: *downward*, *erratic downward*, *stable*, *erratic upward* and *upward*. Although these patterns are not immediately translatable into *traditional/boundaryless* career dichotomy, the study still provides an insight about differences between the ideal-typical upward traditional career and its alternatives. The sample was drawn in four federal states in Germany, two from the Western and two from the Eastern part, in each part one state being economically more prosperous and the second having a more “struggling” economy. The total sample for this study amounted to 1368 respondents, aged from 16 to 43, and (self-)employed at the time of the sampling and having a working experience of minimum one year.

Due to a large number of categories in the dependent variable (career patterns), the authors chose the discriminant analysis as their statistical method. The data from Eastern and Western Germany was analyzed separately, since different predictor patterns were expected for socio-historical reasons, which

was confirmed during the analysis. For both regions two models were drawn: a full model and a model including only significant predictors. For both regions two discriminant functions emerged, significant at $p < 0.001$. The interpretation of the functions is similar across the regions, differing only slightly. Summarizing grossly, the first function differentiated between the (non-erratic) upward movement and all other patterns, explaining 77.1% (East) and 72.1% (West) of the variance. With some degree of caution a parallel can be drawn with the distinction between the traditional and the boundaryless career. The second function discerns between the stable pattern and movements in the career (in any direction). Variance explained is respectively 20.1% and 18%. Differences between the regions are that the stable career pattern is not being discerned on the first function for the East Germany, while the upward career pattern scores exactly zero on the second function.

Limitations, caveats

It can be argued that the link between the ultimately intricate and complex phenomenon as an actual career path on one hand, and a visual pictogram on the other can be vulnerable to subjective interpretation on the part of the respondents. Since boundaryless and traditional workers may use different criteria to evaluate and construct representations of their career paths, a systemic bias in the mentioned interpretation may be the result.

In addition, we can note that the vast majority of the respondents in this study were in possession of a permanent contract (93%). It is thus possible that the German labor market has not (yet) developed a substantial share of the *new career* patterns, perhaps as the result of the institutional organization of its welfare state (see Jacoby, 1999).

10

Ackah, C., & Heaton, N. (2004). The reality of "new" careers for men and for women.

Introduction

The study uses a relatively small sample ($N = 65$) of postgraduate students with work experience to explore the extent to which the *new career* patterns have substituted the traditional career in Northern Ireland. It departs from the general opposition between the boundaryless and the traditional perspectives, and attempts to establish whether both patterns are appropriated by men and women in a different fashion. Drawing on a broad spectrum of career literature, the authors depart from a hypothesis that women are more likely than men to embrace boundaryless careers. A comparison of frequencies is made on indicators such as job mobility, reasons for job change, promotional opportunities, career influences (positive and negative), career barriers and career management drivers. The boundaryless career is discerned by the means of job mobility and promotion.

Limitations, caveats

An obvious constraint of this study is its small sample drawn from a potentially homogenous sampling framework. The generalizability of the study is therefore limited.

11

McDonald, P., Brown, K., & Bradley, L. (2005). Have traditional career paths given way to protean ones?: Evidence from senior managers in the Australian public sector.

Introduction

This study has been carried out in an Australian government agency, and uses a mixed methods design. 15 qualitative interviews were taken, next to the questionnaire, which was collected from 81 senior managers of the mentioned organization. The research questions posited are of particular relevance to the gender section of the current paper. The first question pertains to the degree to which the career experiences of the respondents reflect the traditional and/or protean characteristics as described in the literature. The second research question concerns the potential gender biases in the distributions of these characteristics, or in other words, the interaction between the choice of a career pattern and gender. Career types were distinguished on a number of dimensions (themes), including *career orientation*, *definition of career success*, perception of *organizational environment*.

Limitations, caveats:

Aside from a relatively small sample, we should take note of a likely bias towards the traditional pattern within the organization chosen as sampling framework. This does not render these findings any less useful, but it does restrict the area of their applicability in a broader range of organizational types, whereby the new career patterns might be more typical for more flexible organizations (e.g. see Saxenian, 1996). In addition, due to the managerial sample there might be a bias towards career trajectories more typical for white-collar occupations.

12

Cheramie, R., Sturman, M., & Walsh, K. (2007). Executive career management: Switching organizations and the boundaryless career.

Introduction

This study examines job mobility of top executive managers, who have changed organizational position in the reference period between 1992 and 1997. This change is then considered in the theoretical context of boundaryless careers. The “movers” group was compared to a sample of their stably employed counterparts on a range of indicators, including age, education and objective success measures⁶. The sample of this study was comprised of the top paid executives across a range of organizations⁶, in total amounting to 91 movers and 87 non-movers, i.e. individuals who have or have not changed their jobs in the study period. Potential factors relevant for the career mobility, such as previous history of job changes (cfr. King et al. (2005)), compensation, status and organizational health were analyzed. The interpretation of the boundaryless career is based primarily on the actual job mobility, regardless of the subjective

⁶ Based on the database containing the data on top five paid executives across more than 1700 companies.

factors, although the history of job changes can potentially serve as a secondary indicator of belonging to the boundaryless type.

Limitations, caveats

Although the boundaryless career theory is invoked, no subjective indicators of this career pattern are used in the study, operationalizing the concept by proxy of job mobility. In addition, the study focuses on the extremely exclusive set of working arrangements, which in many respects are atypical for the general population. This consideration does not undermine the value of the study, but it does call for a certain degree of caution in the interpretation of the results.

13

De Vos, A., & Soens, N. (2008). Protean attitude and career success: The mediating role of self-management.

Introduction

This study explores the set of relationships between protean career attitude, career self-management behaviors, career insight and career success outcomes. The latter is conceptualized as career satisfaction and perceived employability. The statistical model entails the protean career attitude being the independent variable, influencing both career insight and career self-management behaviors. The latter factors, in turn, have an opportunity to affect perceived employability and career satisfaction (the relationship being established only partially). Structural equation modeling has been used to construct the model. The study is based on a sample (N = 289) of Belgian employees, who participated in career counseling from January 2005 to February 2006. The *protean career attitude* is expressed by the single self-directedness dimension, measured by the corresponding subscale (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Limitations, caveats

Although the sample was stratified to achieve representativeness to the general population on the accounts of age, educational level, ethnic origin and geographical location, it is still possible that the sample has unique characteristics due to the specific sampling frame (counseling companies).

It is important to note, that protean career attitude measurement is based on the self-directedness dimension alone, without the corresponding value-drivenness indicators. As consequence, this consideration would entail certain caution when extending the results of the study to the integral (multidimensional) *protean career* concept.

14

Dries, N., Pepermans, R., & Kerpel, E. D. (2008). Exploring four generations' beliefs about career: Is "satisfied" the new "successful"?

Introduction

This study explores the generational difference between career pattern types, making a comparison between four generations: Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Six career

types are being discerned: bounded, staying, homeless, trapped, released and boundaryless. The study is carried out in Belgium, the sample was drawn in one of the universities and included both employees and students.

The mentioned career types are constructed based on a number of indicators, pertaining to both objective and subjective aspects. On the dimension of objective mobility the distinction were made between stable and multiple-employer careers. In regard to subjective factors, a set of measures pertaining to the importance ascribed to organizational security was used, as well as a projected expectation to leave the employer within five years.

Differences in perceived career success were evaluated between the four generations. A factorial survey was used to determine the degree of success ascribed to 32 fictive career paths, varying in both objective and subjective aspects.

Limitations, caveats

The authors report large differences in sample sizes per generation due to the convenience sampling strategy.

15

King, Z., Burke, S., & Pemberton, J. (2005). The 'bounded' career: An empirical study of human capital, career mobility and employment outcomes in a mediated labour market.

Introduction

This study explores the careers of workers assigned by recruitment agencies to either temporary or permanent positions in the IT sector of southeast England (UK). Chances to pass two selection steps are analyzed for both temporary and permanent options, namely *agency shortlist* and *client shortlist*. The former denotes candidates selected by an agency to be forwarded to the employer, while the latter refers to a selection of candidates for the job interview. Demographic and human capital variables are analyzed in this study, as well as several indicators of career history, including job mobility and previous job placements by a recruitment agency. No subjective career indicators are used in the study. The total sample is comprised of 630 vacancy-candidate pairs (591 candidates and 217 vacancies). ANOVA and binary logistic regression are used in the analysis.

Limitations, caveats

This study does not explore the notion of the boundaryless career in its explicit (statistical) form. Instead, it draws on a set of related phenomena to establish the context within which career mediation occurs, and argue the “bounded” nature of careers as a counterpart to the “boundarylessness” hypothesis. We are still able to derive useful conclusions in relations to the *new career* phenomenon, therefore the inclusion of this study in our selection is warranted.

16

Eby, L. T., Butts, M., & Lockwood, A. (2003). Predictors of success in the era of the boundaryless career.

Introduction

This study adopts a competency-based perspective on the boundaryless career (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994) and explores the relationship of three classes of competencies with the perceived career success indicators. The first predictor class (denoting “knowing-why” competencies) is comprised of *career insight*, *proactive personality* and *openness to experience* indicators. The second class (“knowing-whom”) relates to *experience in a mentoring relationship*, and the *extensiveness of networks within and outside organizations*. Finally, the last class (“knowing-how”) consists of *career/job-relevant skills* and *career identity*. The dependent variables are *perceived career success*, *perceived internal* and *perceived external marketability*.

The study sample consists of around 400 individuals, selected from the alumni group of one of the US university, who graduated in 1995.

Limitation, caveats

The time span between the graduation and the survey is rather limited, potentially resulting in a relatively short career track that comes in focus.

17

Forrier, A., Sels, L., & Verbruggen, M. (2005). Career Counseling in the New Career Era: A Study About the Influence of Career Types, Career Satisfaction and Career Management on the Need for Career Counseling.

Introduction

This study explores the extent to which the perceived need for employer-independent career counseling varies between different career types. Six career types are being identified, based on three factors. The first factor pertains to the actual career path – stable vs. multi-employer, while the second factor relates to the individual aspiration towards either stable/secure or flexible working arrangements. In addition to this two-by-two model, the third factor operates under the condition of the mismatch between the actual career path and its corresponding aspiration. In these cases, each subtype is further split in two, according to the individual’s expectation to leave or stay with the current employer. The taxonomy is summarized in the table below:

Table 3.1: Career taxonomy

	Stable career path	Multiple-employer career path
Stability and security	Bounded	Expect to stay: Staying Expect to leave: Homeless
Change and flexibility	Expect to stay: Trapped Expect to leave: Released	Boundaryless

The sample of this inquiry consisted of Flemish employees with one year of working experience or more (N = 957), stratified by age and educational levels reflecting the distribution of these variables in the general study population. Equal gender proportions were realized in the sample as well.

18

Valgaeren, E. (2008). Nomadic careers in the Flemish IT-sector: fact or fiction?
Presented at the First ISA Forum of Sociology, Barcelona.

Introduction

This study posits two research questions, the first one pertaining to the extent to which the boundaryless careers are prevalent in the Flemish IT sector (the authors prefer the term “nomadic careers”). The second question is similar to the main subject of our own study and concerns the determinants of the mentioned career type. It is initially supposed that the IT sector can be specifically supportive of the *new career* trajectories, due to the specific career opportunity structure and rapid technological development of the field in general (cfr. Saxenian, 1996). The data were collected in 2002-2003, using in-depth interviews and quantitative surveys; the qualitative section involved 24 respondents, and the quantitative part involved 577 individuals.

The quantitative approach to the conceptualization of the boundaryless career is based on four variables, pertaining to physical mobility (subjective career dimensions were not used):

- The number of companies (external career steps),
- The number of changes of functional domain,
- The number of horizontal career steps, and
- The number of refusals of vertical career steps.

These variables are combined to yield a composite score referring to the degree, in which the individual's physical career is characterized by nomadic (boundaryless) traits.

Introduction

This study explores the relationship between the protean and boundaryless career attitudes on one hand, and both objective and subjective career success on the other. The mentioned career attitudes are measured based on the scales developed by Briscoe et al. (2006), thus reflecting the subjective dimensions of the *new career*. Subjective career success was defined by the career satisfaction scale (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), as well as a self-evaluation in comparison with one's peers. Objective career success, in its turn, was measured by respondent's annual salary and number of promotions during his or her career.

The data were collected in 2008 by means of online survey, with two internationally operating and manufacturing companies, the final sample consisting of 116 German employees. 37% of the sample were women, in addition, all of the respondents were in possession of a university degree or a comparable diploma.

Limitations, caveats

The authors note a limitation of their sampling strategy as being limited to a single industry type. In addition, respondents with lower educational levels are underrepresented.

3.1 Determinants of the new career patterns

Provided general diversity of research on the subject, a certain degree of cautiousness is feasible when comparing similar determinants and correlates of career types. Even with quite obvious parameters such as age or education, causal relationships may acquire different meaning due to dissimilarities in definition or operationalization of other variables. This consideration is especially noteworthy since the concept (or concepts) of new career types is somewhat polysemic, changing meaning somewhat when used by different authors. A fine example of this is the discrepancy between the unidimensional and the multidimensional approaches to the concept of boundaryless career, which we have already mentioned above. When all dimensions thereof but physical mobility are stripped, the logic of the boundaryless pattern in this sense is likely to be quite different from the case when psychological factors are involved, such as career attitudes and preferences. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from comparing similar determinants within different research frameworks should be always made with a certain degree of caution.

As we have mentioned previously, several socio-demographic variables have been chosen for the analysis. We commence the following part with the determinant that has been most commonly used in the empirical research, and provides therefore an excellent starting point for the comparison between various studies in the context of the *new career* patterns. We thus begin with the set of gender-related indicators.

4. Gender

Some thirty years ago the literature around the role of gender in career was virtually absent from the academic debate, let alone the subjects of work-life or work-family balance, mentions Hall (2002). Today there exists a separate body of literature on the intersection of virtually every subject within the field of career on one hand and gender on the other (idem, p. 6). It is not coincidental then, that gender is taken up as covariate in most empirical studies around the new career patterns. It will serve as a natural departing point for our inquiry.

In the context of the traditional career, the division of labor was sharply gendered, being deeply embedded in the family structure. The traditional family order is undergoing an erosion, and new post-romantic relationship types emerge that are peculiar for the contemporary stages of social development (Giddens, 1993). Does the *new career* imply freedom from the familial dependencies, based on the weakening of the external supports that held the traditional career in place? Can we indeed confirm that the *boundaryless* character thereof entails the elimination of inequalities between men and women that have existed in the focus of feminist research of the last decades?

In this chapter we will explore the nature of interaction between gender, family-related variables (e.g. having children, marital status, etc) and the *new career* patterns, both boundaryless and protean. Please note, that we will provide a summarizing table at the end of this chapter.

1

Briscoe, J. P., Hall, D. T., & Frautschy DeMuth, R. L. (2006). Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration.

The study shows the following results for gender, differentiated per a set of dimensions, the first two of which relate to the protean career concept, while the last two refer to the boundaryless pattern. The correlations are split per educational level, the following table represents the results for the Stage 2:

Table 4.1: Intercorrelations between career attitudes and gender per educational level (subsample stage 2).

	Self-directed	Values driven	Boundaryless mindset	Mobility preference
Undergraduate	0.06	-0.07	0.18*	-0.07
MBA	-0.03	0.07	0.01	-0.07
EMBA	0.07	0.21	0.13	0.03

* p < 0.05 (2-tailed)

The following table represent the results from the Stage 3 of the study, and are no longer split per educational level:

Table 4.2: Intercorrelations between career attitudes and gender (subsample stage 3)

	Self-directed	Values driven	Boundaryless mindset	Mobility preference
Gender*	0.009	-0.051	0.069	-0.077

* no statistical significance for all relationships

Both samples reveal virtually no connection between the attitudes peculiar to the new career types and gender. A single exception is a statistically significant, but rather modest in effect relationship between gender and boundaryless mindset, within the confines of the undergraduate sample only. The authors provide no particular explanation for that matter. Considering that the majority of studies does find the connection, it is possible that the sample properties of the study could have caused a bias in this regard (see study limitations).

2

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffelbach, B. (2009). Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach.

The following table shows the distribution of the four statistically constructed career patterns between both genders:

Table 4.3: distribution of career patterns per gender (percent)

	Independent	Disengaged	Traditional/Promotion	Traditional/Loyalty	All respondents
Men	67.8	47.0	63.1	55.3	57.5
Women	32.2	53.0	36.9	44.7	42.5

Note: p (Pearson chi-square) < 0.05

We can see, that the *independent* career type (roughly corresponding to the *new career* pattern) has a disproportionately high percentage of male respondents, parallel with the *traditional/promotion* class. This correspondence may be explained by the similarity of both types on several LCA items, like having “a series of jobs at the same kind of level”, “living in the present” and “a career is important to you”. On these items there is less similarity between the two traditional career orientation classes (promotion vs. loyalty), than between each of them and the remaining two classes. The finding of the independent career path being peculiar to men goes contrary to the main trend sketched by other studies.

Interestingly enough, the *disengaged* career type is clearly more pertinent to women than men. As this category is not explicitly present in the vast majority of the research in question, there is a potential danger of it being commonly enmeshed with the independent orientation, thus masking the difference. This calls for attention towards more refined career taxonomies used in the empirical research, and can potentially explain the prevalence of men in the independent career pattern in this inquiry.

3

Segers, J., Inceoglu, I., Vloeberghs, D., Bartram, D., & Henderickx, E. (2008). Protean and boundaryless careers: A study on potential motivators.

The following table represents standardized regression coefficients of the four *new career* dimensions on gender. The first two dimensions pertain to the protean pattern, while the last two relate to the boundaryless career.

Table 4.4: The effects of gender on protean and boundaryless attitudes

	Gender
Self-directed motivators	-0.01
Value-driven motivators	-0.06*
Physical mobility motivators	0.03*
Psychological mobility motivators	-0.14*

* p < 0.001

The table above should be interpreted having in mind that the gender dummy variable equals 0 for female gender, and 1 for male. Three of the four dimensions have statistically significant relationships with gender, even though the strengths of these effects are not overly substantial, perhaps with an exception of the last dimension. How should we interpret the relationships with these dimensions in the light of the new career patterns?

Provided that men score less on the value-driven dimension, and there is no significant difference between the genders on the self-directed dimension, we might conclude that men are slightly less likely to possess the protean career motivation than women. Regarding the boundaryless career, the results are ambivalent. On one hand, there is a slight positive connection for men on the part of physical mobility motivators, although the absolute strength of this effect is quite minuscule. On the other hand, motivation to cross psychological boundaries plays out in favor of women, and the effect in question is the largest of all three established. We must note, that no other gender related control variables (e.g. number of children, marital status etc) were used in the analysis.

Second part of the analysis related to gender is the examination of demographical factors per cluster described above. The results are displayed in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5: distribution of gender per career category (percent)

	Cluster 1 (Protean career architect)	Cluster 2 (Trapped/Lost)	Cluster 3 (Hired gun/hired hand)	Cluster 4 (Curious/Wanderer)	Total
Female	42.9	26.9	30.9	39.4	36
Male	57.1	73.1	69.1	60.6	64

These results further confirm a gender disparity in relation to the protean and boundaryless career types (to remind, the protean career architect cluster included respondents with high scores on all four dimensions, two for each theoretical career type). Women are overrepresented in the “new career” cluster in relation to the total sample ratio with the difference of 6.9 percent. Female respondents are also slightly more expressed in the last, fourth cluster, albeit the difference is 3.4 percent. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to inhabit the (normatively) less favorable cluster 2, with low scores on all dimensions. Additionally, men are slightly overrepresented in the third, *hired gun/hired hand cluster*, which out of all four clusters bears the most resemblance to the traditional career pattern. Overall we might conclude from this study, that the new career patterns (motivation wise) are somewhat more characteristic for women,

than men, albeit the difference is far from being overwhelming. Nevertheless, the trend is clearly present, especially considering the specifics of the fourth *wanderer* cluster, namely medium scores on the mobility dimension and propensity towards variety in work, hence this cluster having some resemblance with the *new career* aspects as well.

4

Marler, J. H., Woodard Barringer, M., & Milkovich, G. T. (2002). Boundaryless and traditional contingent employees: worlds apart.

The inquiry at hand does not investigate the effects of gender as such. Nevertheless there are two gender-related variables included in the study, namely the marital status and the interaction between marital status and female gender. In addition, we include the *dual earners* variable in our excerpt, since it reflects the distribution of labor between the partners.

Table 4.6: means and standard deviations for gender-related variables per career cluster: national sample

	Traditional Cluster		Boundaryless cluster	
	Means	SD	Means	SD
Married woman*	0.106	0.39	1.24	0.82
Married*	0.080	0.27	0.75	0.43
Dual earners*	0.070	0.27	0.64	0.48
N	338		276	

* Group means are statistically different (p < 0.05)

Table 4.7: means and standard deviations for gender-related variables per career cluster: regional sample

	Traditional Cluster		Boundaryless cluster	
	Means	SD	Means	SD
Married woman*	0.30	0.46	0.08	0.27
Married	0.52	0.50	0.58	0.50
Dual earners	Variable unavailable for the regional sample			
N	200		72	

* Group means are statistically different (p < 0.05)

It is apparent, that the cluster differences for “married woman” and marital status are inconclusive across both samples. Regarding the “married woman” variable, its mean is significantly higher for the boundaryless cluster in the national sample, at the same time being significantly lower in the same cluster for the regional sample. Marital status per cluster is not significantly different between clusters in the regional sample, thus the substantial difference in the national sample is not reproduced. These inconsistencies can potentially be attributed to the sampling method for the regional sample and the likely self-selection bias of the respondents. One can also note, for instance, a substantial difference in relative cluster sizes that may provide a similar indication. All in all, the results obtained from the national sample data may have more credibility.

In regard to the other variables, we find sound evidence that workers of boundaryless type (cluster 2) are much more likely to be married, than traditional types. Additionally, about two thirds or 64% of the

boundaryless workers find themselves in the dual earner marriages against mere 7% for their traditional counterparts.

The interpretation of this finding may be found in third party research according to the authors, whereby they refer to Rogers (2000), who postulates gender differences in the perception of choices related to work. According to her, women may find temporary positions better than the “traditional” female jobs they perceive as alternatives for a number of reasons, for instance as a consequence of the higher importance of work-family balance, that being in contrast to men. Additionally, choice for a temporary job tends to be influenced by social status: women accepting these jobs have working partners, thus valuing flexibility over (extra) income. The shortcomings of unstable work arrangements, such as lower wages and status, are less seen as such in the light of occupational segregation by gender and women’s emphasized family responsibilities.

5

Valcour, M., & Tolbert, P. (2003). Gender, family and career in the era of boundarylessness: determinants and effects of intra- and inter-organizational mobility.

The following table shows correlates of gender, split per its categories. Since the gender is the central variable in this study, we chose to render multiple career indicators for a more complete representation:

Table 4.8: Means and standard deviations of selected study variables per gender category

	All (N= 1890)		Men (N= 967)		Women (N= 923)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Labor force experience***	17.77	9.05	19.76	9.56	15.69	7.97
Occupational prestige***	54.02	10.87	55.23	10.79	52.76	10.81
Career priority***	0.39	0.49	0.59	0.49	0.18	0.39
Intra-organizational moves***	1.45	1.95	1.68	2.23	1.21	1.57
Inter-organizational moves**	2.40	1.59	2.30	1.56	2.50	1.61
Annual earnings***	\$54 062	\$30 443	\$66 412	\$28 618	\$41 131	\$26 710
Subj. career success**	79.53	13.58	78.59	13.40	80.52	13.71

*** between groups difference significant at $p < 0.001$

** idem at $p < 0.01$

These results seem to contradict the thesis about the emerging dominance of the new career types (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), at least in its optimistic individualist version of unconstrained transgression of organizational and psychological boundaries. The overall picture (i.e. without a further distinction per career pattern type) suggests that gender role patterns typical for the traditional career still prevail. Men have more labor force experience, substantially higher earnings, and have a striking advantage what concerns their career receiving higher priority in the dual earner couples. These of course are not unrelated factors, for instance there is a strong correlation between annual earnings and career priority (0.37).

In regard to the mentioned dominance thesis, it would be tempting to interpret the fact that the number of inter-organizational moves is higher than its intra-organizational counterpart across the board as a supporting argument for the proliferation of the mobile career patterns. Nevertheless we need to be

cautious in order not to simplify the multidimensional concept of boundaryless career in order to (perhaps hastily) affirm the new outlook on contemporary careers (Guest & MacKenzie Davey, 1996; Jacoby, 1999). In other words, the positive interpretation of the data in the light of the dominance thesis is quite convincing when the multidimensionality of the definition (cf. supra) is relinquished, but the argument might not in case both objective and subjective career aspects are examined.

If we accept, however, that the new career types are indeed present in this picture, the data do make a suggestion concurrent with the results of Marler et al. (2002), who has also examined the subject of dual career couples. It was contended that women's (temporary) employment was dependent on the social and working status of the partner, and flexibility was preferred above income. These findings fully corroborate the same scenario, revealing lower career priority and earnings for women, and higher inter-organizational mobility while deriving slightly higher satisfaction from work.

It is also interesting to note, that there is a negative correlation between inter- and intra-organizational mobility (-0.28). That implies that when people are changing jobs within an organization they are less like to switch employers altogether, and vice versa.

Table 4.9: the determinants of the traditional career per gender category – hierarchical regression of number of intra-organizational moves

	All		Men		Women	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Labour force experience	0.024***	0.005	0.019**	0.007	0.027***	0.006
Gender	-0.104	0.095	--	--	--	--
Education	0.082***	0.017	0.080**	0.027	0.079***	0.021
Occupational prestige	-0.008†	0.004	-0.014*	0.007	-0.004	0.005
# of marriages	0.074	0.079	0.021	0.130	0.173†	0.093
# of children	0.101**	0.034	0.217***	0.053	-0.058	0.042
Career priority	0.322***	0.096	0.458***	0.143	-0.007	0.128
# of inter-org moves	-0.366	0.027	-0.433***	0.045	-0.282***	0.031

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

Although the effect of marital instability is of borderline statistical significance ($p < 0.10$), with a bit of caution (in regard to interpretation) it does suggest that mobility within a single organization (cfr. the traditional career) are somewhat at odds with traditional marital patterns. On the other hand, having of children does not have any statistically significant effects on women's traditional career outcomes, albeit it does for men. These findings are in line with the postulated hypotheses that (financial) responsibilities of having children stimulate men to seek stability with a single employer and thus avoid change of organizational settings. Please make a note of a substantial effect of the career priority variable (giving one's career a priority of that of partner) for men, to make a further comparison with its counterpart for the boundaryless career pattern (inter-organizational mobility):

Table 4.10: the determinants of the boundaryless career per gender category – hierarchical regression of number of inter-organizational moves

	All		Men		Women	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
Labour force experience	0.037***	0.004	0.032***	0.005	0.046***	0.006
Gender	0.147*	0.076				
Education	0.045***	0.014	0.068***	0.019	0.035†	0.021
Occupational prestige	-0.013***	0.004	-0.022***	0.005	-0.004	0.005
# of marriages	0.208***	0.064	0.327***	0.088	0.103	0.094
# of children	0.077**	0.027	0.005	0.036	0.152***	0.042
Career priority	-0.275***	0.078	-0.246**	0.099	-0.199	0.129
# of intra-org moves	-0.237***	0.018	-0.204***	0.021	-0.286***	0.032

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

Please note how the career priority is negatively related to the boundaryless career pattern, albeit again for men alone, a finding that stands in sharp contrast with the traditional career pattern (cfr. supra). If we combine this differential with the skewed distribution of the career priority between men and women from the exploratory variable analysis in Table 12, we arrive at yet another indication of a gender-driven determinism towards the choice of career pattern.

Consistent with the previous table, boundaryless career patterns are more typical for men with low marital stability. The same does not hold for women, however. Having children, on the other hand, does lead to less stable career patterns for women, but the same variable is of no statistical consequence for men. All in all, we arrive at the conclusion (keeping in mind the limitations of the study discussed below), that both career patterns are significantly differentiated by gender-related phenomena, which is not a new finding for the traditional career, but is perhaps somewhat contradictory to the humanistic and postmodernist spirit of the boundaryless career. The authors phrase this eloquently: “our findings suggest that women pay a price for following a traditional career pattern, while men pay a price for following boundaryless career pattern”. A similar gendered constraint in relation to the choice of career patterns is visible in other studies as well.

6

Tremblay, M., Wils, T., & Proulx, C. (2002). Determinants of career path preferences among Canadian engineers.

In regard to gender, the authors point at mixed results in the existing literature around career paths of engineers. Some researchers were able to conclude that female engineers' career patterns are similar to those of their male counterparts, while other authors supported the view that has been stated above in this paper. Namely, female engineers are less likely to be attracted to managerial career paths, owing that to demands of work-family compatibility. In addition, organizations are less likely to promote female engineers into managerial positions, according to the second perspective. Five career paths are discerned in this study: managerial, technical, project-based, hybrid and entrepreneurial. Based on the result of the pair-wise discriminant analysis, gender appears to have no influence on the career path preference.

7

Reitman, F., & Schneer, J. A. (2003). The promised path: a longitudinal study of managerial careers.

The authors find that traditional career is still a pattern describing about one third of all careers (34%), while the protean path is shown to be followed by 38% of the respondents. The rest of the sample followed an “alternative career path” (p. 66), shifting from full employment to other sorts of working arrangements. This group was excluded from the further analysis, due to the small sample size and the (too) diversified character of the career paths taken.

The inter-variable correlation analysis reveals the following relationships with gender:

Table 4.11: correlations between gender and relevant study variables

	Gender (woman = 1)*
Marital status (married = 1)	-0.35
Having children	-0.37
Career interruption	0.25
Work experience	-0.22

* all correlations in this table are significant at $p < 0.05$

Albeit at this stage there is yet no distinction between the two career paths, the general background of the managerial sample reveals several handicaps in relation to women pursuing a career (of either type). On average, female MBA holders are less prone to being in a marriage and having children. Both career paths imply more discontinuity in terms of career interruption and less work experience for women. The correlation between gender and the career type is not statistically significant, which suggests that for this particular occupational group *the new career* still implies the same penalties in terms of work-family combination as we have mentioned previously.

The inter-group analysis of variables brings out several gender-related differences between the *promised* and the *protean* paths. It is conspicuous, that the *promised path* has attracted significantly more women. The share of women in this path is 58%, while the *protean path* has been followed by a mere 38% ($p < 0.05$). It is interesting to note that, when comparing between the gender groups, only two variables are significantly different, namely being married (86% men, 55% women) and having children (92% men, 61% women). Due to a small sample size (37 men, 33 women), as well as other factors potentially unexposed in the original analysis, such as peculiar educational and occupational backgrounds, either a structural or a random bias is not unlikely. Therefore any generalizations outside the original sample should be made with the uttermost care, but the picture within the sample corroborates findings from other studies, namely the “punishment” thesis: women are disadvantaged in family terms as they (attempt to) pursue the traditional career.

Returning to the distinctions between the *promised* and *protean* groups, there is also a significant ($p < 0.01$) difference in amount of hours spent for childcare, where the traditional career followers spend 2 hours per week, whilst their protean counterparts average at 10 hours a week. Interestingly, should we remind, both groups do full-time work.

On the other hand, there is no difference between men and women in regard to income or its increase over the course of the 13 year span. There are also no significant differences between genders in subjective career satisfaction. On the negative side, women report a somewhat higher stress balancing work life (3.3 vs. 3.7 on a 5-point scale, $p < 0.1$). In addition, female managers show a preference for the traditional career path in this study.

These findings stand in contrast with those of Valcour & Tolbert (2003), who have demonstrated slightly higher career satisfaction for women, together with lower earnings and a preference for the protean career pattern. This contrast might be explained by population differences in both studies. A certain “price” for the pursuit of the traditional career by women is found in both studies.

8

Eby, L. T. (2001). The boundaryless career experiences of mobile spouses in dual-earner marriages.

This study explores the careers of spouses who followed their partners in job-related geographic relocations. First observation is that these are predominantly women who accompany their husbands in their careers, their share amounting to 81.6%. Overall, without further differentiation for gender, relocating spouses are likely to acquire jobs with similar intrinsic characteristics (job satisfaction, quality of work etc), but with less attractive extrinsic characteristics (salary and promotion opportunities), given the same level of responsibility (indicating lateral inter-organizational mobility). The equality of familial power relations⁷ has a positive effect on job quality, implying that *partners in weaker positions lose the most from engaging in boundaryless work trajectories*. An additional analysis found no differences between men and women as to distinctions between older and new jobs, with a single exception of freedom on the job (p. 361).

The author finds these results consistent with the previous research on the subject of negative impact of (involuntary) career mobility in terms of lower income and diminished advancement opportunities. Similar to other authors presented in this paper she enunciates a concern that the boundaryless career era “may not improve the quality of work for some employees, particularly women” (p. 357).

9

Reitzle, M., Körner, A., & Vondracek, F. W. (2009). Psychological and demographic correlates of career patterns.

In the table below we see the correlation of gender with two discriminant functions. The first function can be interpreted as a propensity towards upward career, while the second is related to career stability in general.

⁷ Operationalized as a share of family income in this study.

Table 4.12: the effects of gender on career patterns (correlations with discriminant functions, partial results)

	1 st function	2 nd function
East Germany	excluded	excluded
West Germany*	-0.17	0.60

* $p < 0.001$

Gender (coded as 1 = female) appears to have significant effects in the Western regions only. In general, the results can be interpreted such that women have less chance to have an upward career (possibly the traditional career pattern) than men. On the other hand, based on these results women tend to have more stability (or stagnation) in their careers, both findings being in principle complementary. These conclusions are only partially consistent with the research on the interaction between gender and new career forms, in the sense that these are men to whom the upward career progression is more peculiar. On the other hand, there was no specific measurement instrument associated with a stable but intermittent career, so it is not unlikely that (lateral) boundaryless careers were more associated with the stable pattern.

10

Ackah, C., & Heaton, N. (2004). The reality of “new” careers for men and for women.

This study shows that frequent jobs moves are indeed the norm within the sample, including cross-functional mobility. In accord with the *new career* literature the vast majority of the respondents assumed themselves the responsibility for their career development, instead of their employing organization. They did not find any substantial evidence that women are more likely to espouse boundaryless careers more than men. On the contrary, women were more likely to stay with a one organization and make their career moves on the internal labor market. On the other hand, men were more prone to make lateral inter-organizational career movements in the spirit of boundaryless career. One of the potential explanation for that would be an age bias in the sample, women being on average much younger than men, and thus finding themselves in a different stage of their lifecycle, namely before the family responsibilities, including children, begin to have differentiating effects on women’s career trajectories.

11

McDonald, P., Brown, K., & Bradley, L. (2005). Have traditional career paths given way to protean ones?: Evidence from senior managers in the Australian public sector.

This inquiry finds that regardless of gender, the aspiration towards a traditional career based on continuity and length of service was still an enduring feature of the organization under study. Notably, the only exception to the traditional definition of success was reported by two female managers, who had dependent children. While it is obviously impossible to draw definite conclusions based on such a circumstantial evidence, the results of the inquiry do support findings from other studies cross-relating gender and career types. The interpretation the authors themselves provide is that women (especially the ones facing family demands), tend to have a less normative model of working, including a different perspective on a definition of achievement and success. This interpretation is consistent with the existing research on the subject (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Corresponding to the findings from other studies, women do tend to pay a price for the pursuit of the traditional career. The results presented in quantitative

section of this study revealed that female managers are twice less likely to have children in comparison to their male counterparts. This effect is attributed to the specific organizational environment, that provides little support for work-family balance. Other gender differences included a higher organizational mobility with men, higher importance of mentorship in women.

Interestingly, both qualitative and quantitative parts revealed protean aspects regarding the individual responsibility for one's own career. The importance of this finding can be seen in the light of the macro-level shift of the risks from organization towards individual, who comes to bear the ultimate responsibility for the construction and management of his or her career (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Baruch, 2004a; Hall, 1976). In the traditional career framework this role was largely fulfilled by the organization. Might this change reflect an ideological adaptation to larger macro-economical trends, instead of a genuine choice for the protean career? This hypothesis is not entirely unconvincing, provided the demonstrated aspirations for the traditional career in other aspects. Similar to Van Buren (2003), the authors note that at least some of the shifts towards the *new career* patterns have benefited organizations

17

Forrier, A., Sels, L., & Verbruggen, M. (2005). Career Counseling in the New Career Era: A Study About the Influence of Career Types, Career Satisfaction and Career Management on the Need for Career Counseling.

more than employees.

The study does not find a significant relationship between career types (including the boundaryless trajectory) and gender.

The study finds a small difference in the nomadic character of the physical career between men and women, but it is not statistically significant. On the other hand, a significant and positive relationship is found between the nomadic career and having children, the partial correlation coefficient amounting to 0.13 ($p < 0.01$). This finding supports the general trend in the empirical literature pertaining to the family-friendliness of the boundaryless career pattern.

18

Valgaeren, E. (2008). Nomadic careers in the Flemish IT-sector: fact or fiction? Presented at the First ISA Forum of Sociology, Barcelona.

The authors find no correlation between the four career attitude dimensions and gender.

4.1 Conclusion for the gender chapter

The results discussed above show that the interaction between gender and the new career exhibits a peculiar bias of being embedded in the classic gender role patterns, including not only work, but also the familial responsibilities. It seems that at least some of the *new career* subtypes are motivated by family related factors, and are thus inseparable from them analytically. This conclusion supports the original *new career* thesis pertaining to the increasing importance of life domains unrelated to work, and the blurring of borders between them and individual working lives.

19

Volmer, J., & Spurk, D. (2010). Boundaryless and Protean Career Attitudes: Relationships with Subjective and Objective Career Success.

We can tentatively conclude based on the majority of studies reviewed, that women are more likely to follow the *new career* work trajectories, than men. Being married and having children further increases the likelihood for women to find themselves on a non-traditional career path. In addition, partners in a dual breadwinner families have higher chances to pursue a *new career*.

The most prevalent explanation for these biases entails a gender-differentiated approach to family responsibilities, career and work-family balance (Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). First, women might be using the flexibility inherent to post-traditional working arrangements in order to achieve a more preferable work-family balance or as a coping strategy for work-family conflict. This perspective implies an alternative (to the classic career) set of values that contrast the traditional work ethic, laying more emphasis on subjective satisfaction, which to some extent is derived from fulfillment with family life. Second, the negative aspects of the post-traditional career patterns stemming from its less stable character might be mitigated by the supporting structures of the family, both in the sense of subjective career interpretation and financial consequences.

It can be argued that post-traditional working arrangements do not defy the existing gender-related barriers. Quite to the contrary, they seem to be interacting with the gender patterns in a manner that reflects traditional role divisions in relation to work. While the new career patterns can thus potentially signify a systemic relaxation of the rigidity of the traditional gendered division of labor, they are also in capacity to reinforce the gender-related inequalities that have been vastly criticized by the feminist tradition, for instance the wage difference and access to higher ranking positions. This potentiality is at least partially supported by the findings throughout this paper, including the familial penalties for women in traditional working arrangements (e.g. in terms of marital stability), and social sanctions for men in pursuit of the alternative career paths (e.g. objective career success).

The embeddedness of the post-traditional working arrangements in the gender relationships seems to be somewhat at odds with the humanist and post-modernist notes present in the *new career* theories. The individual freedom emphasized therein is limited by the existing structurally defined inequalities, returning this issue to the unresolved structure-agency problematic in the career studies (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000). In addition, a question might be in order as to which degree the apparent gender coloring of the *new career* trajectories is congruent with the image of the organizationally independent, self-organizing individual driven by values in pursuit of his or her authentic career path? Although this is by far not a contradiction, a hypothesis may be brought forward (which will receive further support in the subsequent sections of this paper), that there are in fact several career types that categorically belong to the *new career* container

concept, which in many situations should become analytically distinct in order to avoid the obscuration of differences essential to practical research.

Empirical research often portrays career categories as a dichotomy between the traditional and post-traditional paths, an approach that can easily conceal relevant stratifications. This might explain, for instance, the findings by Gerber et al. (2009) who distinguish between the *independent* and *disengaged* career orientations, the types often enmeshed into the *boundaryless career* container, as both of them are characterized by heightened career mobility. In their case, these are men who are overrepresented in the *independent* pattern, that roughly corresponds to the postmodern vision of career. Women, on the other hand, tend to follow the *disengaged* career scenario, that resembles our general findings in regard to the combination of flexible working arrangement with family, as discussed above. Guest & Sturges (2007) voice a similar concern, noting the possible normative connotations of the career concept (both traditional and post-traditional), and the potential exclusion of substantial share of workers from the analysis, when these connotations are taken for granted.

The overview of the results can be rendered as follows:

Proposition 1: New career patterns are more characteristic for women than men.

Proposition 2: Work-family balance related factors have a positive effect on the choice towards a new career pattern (e.g. being married, having children, dual income).

Table 4.13: summary for gender

#	Author(s), Year	Proposition 1	Proposition 2	Remarks
1	Briscoe et al, 2006	Partial support	No data	
2	Gerber et al, 2009	Counter evidence	No data	Additional career types
3	Segers et al, 2008	Support	No data	
4	Marler et al, 2002	No data	Support	
5	Valcour&Tolbert, 2003	Support	Support	
6	Tremblay et al, 2002	No relationship	No data	
7	Reitman&Schneer, 2003	Counter evidence	Support	Specific and relatively small sample
8	Eby, 2001	Support	No data	Restricted <i>new career</i> meaning
9	Reitzle et al, 2009	Partial support	No data	
10	Ackah&Heaton, 2004	Counter evidence	No data	Potential age bias for women
11	McDonald et al, 2005	Inconclusive	No data	
17	Forrier et al, 2005	No relationship	No data	
18	Valgaeren, 2008	No relationship	Support	
19	Volmer&Spurk, 2010	No relationship	No data	

5. Age

In this section we will investigate whether age has any effects in regard to the dichotomy between the traditional and the new “boundaryless” career. Although age is rarely taken as a central theoretical factor in the literature pertaining to the *new career* theory, it nevertheless is an essential indicator in the analysis of the career pattern changes. In contrast to the static view of career (Arthur et al., 1989; Gallos, 1989) or career as property (Jones & Dunn, 2007), the factor of age necessarily translates into the dimension of *time*, which is by definition inherent to the notion of career (cf. supra). Career as process (the latter perspective) is especially characteristic for the developmental perspective in the career studies, which is largely situated in the psychological tradition (D. Brown, 2002), but has sociological roots as well.

Given the explorative nature of this paper,, we can formulate two opposite hypotheses in regard to age as determinant of the post-traditional career. On one hand, the relatively recent character of the phenomenon might suggest that boundaryless careers should be more prevalent amongst younger cohorts, as the latter are being socialized into the “boundaryless” labor market from the start, whereas older workers would have greater difficulties converting to non-traditional career types (Baker & Aldrich, 1996) due to the initial investments in firm-specific skills and low generalizability of these skills on the external labor market (Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Sullivan, Carden, & Martin, 1998). On the other hand, it can be suggested that older people are more driven by values and motivated externally to a lesser degree, which is characteristic of new career types (Segers et al., 2008).

1

Briscoe, J. P., Hall, D. T., & Frautschy DeMuth, R. L. (2006). Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration.

We intentionally review this article in a juxtaposition with the previous inquiry due to their similarity in the dimension-based conceptualization of both career types. The specific indicators chosen for the operationalization in each case are different, nevertheless on the composite level the dimensions express exactly the same meaning (or at least are intended to do so). This offers us an opportunity otherwise rarely available due to the diversity of the operational definitions of the boundaryless and protean career types, namely to directly compare the results between the two studies.

Table 5.1: correlations between age and protean/boundaryless attitudes (partial results for study 2).

	Protean pattern (attitudes)		Boundaryless pattern (attitudes)	
	Self-directed	Value-driven	Mobility preference	Boundaryless mindset
Age	0.13*	0.16**	0.12*	0.12*

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

In contradiction to the results of Segers et al. (2008), both dimensions of the protean career correlate positively to age in this study. In other words, older cohorts unambiguously express stronger protean-oriented attitudes according to this study. In the previous study the *self-directed* dimension was correlated negatively, and the *value driven* dimension was correlated with comparable relationship strength. The results on both dimensions of the boundaryless career are being contradictory between two studies as well. Both dimensions, in regard to physical as well as psychological mobility, are positively and significantly correlated with age. As a reminder, Segers *et al.* (2008) find a negative impact of age on physical mobility, and no significant correlation for psychological mobility. It cannot be clear whether this

inconsistency is to be explained by the differences in the operational definitions of the four dimensions or by sample differences (the operationalization of the dimensions is not identical, the similarity mentioned above concerns the use of identical dimensions to construct the career types).

It is worth mentioning that the statistical significance of the relationship between age and the four dimensions disappears, when the sample is split into three groups according to their educational background: undergraduates (N = 264), MBA (N = 233) and executive MBA (N = 64).

In the subsequent independent sample (study 3), the authors have established the following relationships between age and the dimensions of protean and boundaryless careers:

Table 5.2: correlations between age and protean/boundaryless attitudes (partial results for study 3).

	Protean pattern (attitudes)		Boundaryless pattern (attitudes)	
	Self-directed	Value-driven	Mobility preference	Boundaryless mindset
Age	0.102*	0.184**	0.78	0.82

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

It follows that the results for the protean type are fully replicated in both samples, while those for the boundaryless pattern are not, the respective correlations being non-significant in the second sample. Unfortunately, no theoretical explanation for the totality of discovered relationships is given, in particular as to why could age prompt more boundaryless/protean attitudes and by proxy less stable and less structured career patterns.

2

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffebach, B. (2009). Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach.

The authors depart from the hypothesis that independent career pattern (a synthetic term for the boundaryless and protean types employed in this particular inquiry) is followed to a higher degree by younger age cohorts.

Table 5.3: mean age per career orientation category

	Independent	Disengaged	Traditional / Promotion	Traditional / Loyalty	All respondents
Age	39.4	43.7	42.0	47.2	43.7*

* $p < 0.05$

Indeed, comparing the independent career type with the traditional one, we observe a statistically significant difference, the former career pattern being more characteristic for younger respondents. The difference is especially pronounced with the traditional-loyalty type, members of which relate to the classic psychological contract with high emphasis on job stability and security. On the other hand, the category of respondents who still aspire to have a more or less traditional career pattern within few organizations (or even a single one), but prefer promotion to higher positions to job security, have the average age that is closer to that of the independent career type.

3

Segers, J., Inceoglu, I., Vloeberghs, D., Bartram, D., & Henderickx, E. (2008). Protean and boundaryless careers: A study on potential motivators.

This study explores the relationship between the four dimensions of protean and boundaryless career patterns and a set of determinants. The following table depicts results pertaining to age:

Table 5.4: stepwise regression of age on protean and boundaryless career dimensions (partial results)

	Protean pattern (motivators)		Boundaryless pattern (motivators)	
	Self-directed	Value-driven	Physical mobility	Psychol. Mobility
Age	-0.04*	0.11*	-0.17*	-0.01

* p < 0.001

In regard to protean career the effect of age is manifested in different directions on the dimensions of self-directedness and being value-driven. Age has a slight negative effect on self-directedness, as predicted by theory, attributing the effect to older people being less motivated to follow training and develop themselves, interfering with the learning requirements of career advancement (p. 216). On the other hand, being less motivated externally (e.g. by achievement markers) and having more ability to resist social pressures on the authentic career and life choices, individuals after the midlife transition period become more prone to being driven by terminal values (such as “comfortable life” or “social recognition”). The latter finding is reflected in a positive statistical relationship between the value-driven dimension and age.

In regard to the boundaryless career pattern the influence of age is established for physical mobility dimension only. Various reasons, such as lower expected value return on job mobility, habituation effects, and relative scarcity of corresponding positions on the labor market, contribute to a negative impact of age. A positive relationship on the other dimension (psychological mobility) was hypothesized, but not confirmed empirically.

4

Marler, J. H., Woodard Barringer, M., & Milkovich, G. T. (2002). Boundaryless and traditional contingent employees: worlds apart.

This inquiry finds significant relationships between age and the boundaryless career profile. First of all, inter-variable correlations indicate the following connections:

Table 5.5: correlations between age and boundaryless career indicators, national sample

	Correlation with age (N = 614)
Preference for temporary work	0.13*
Valuing flexibility	0.13*

* p < 0.05

The results for the national sample indicate a positive relationship between age and attitudes towards flexible career arrangements, which constitute one of the *new career* pattern aspects. The same associations have not been replicated within the regional sample.

Turning to the results of the cluster analysis combined with ANOVA for testing differences between the traditional and the boundaryless clusters (national sample), we find that the latter career cluster is indeed related to higher age.

Table 5.6: mean age per career cluster (with ANOVA testing), national sample

	Means Traditional Cluster	Means Boundaryless Cluster
Age*	33 (12.1)	39 (12.3)

* means are significantly different with $p < 0.05$

As expected, the age mean difference is not significant in the regional sample.

6

Tremblay, M., Wils, T., & Proulx, C. (2002). Determinants of career path preferences among Canadian engineers.

Although this study does not render the concept of boundaryless and protean careers in their pure respective forms, it does refer to career paths (preferences) of the similar order, namely *project* and *hybrid*.

Table 5.7: mean age per career path preference category

Managerial	Technical	Project	Hybrid	Entrepreneurial
35.93	36.40	37.25	33.62	34.39*

* non-significant

The difference between these categories is nonetheless not statistically significant, based on the f-test.

7

Reitman, F., & Schneer, J. A. (2003). The promised path: a longitudinal study of managerial careers.

In correspondence with the findings of Gerber et al. (2009), this study shows a positive and statistically significant correlation between age and the “promised” (i.e. traditional) career path, amounting to 0.24 ($p < 0.05$). The corresponding means are as follows:

Table 5.8: mean age per career path category

	Promised (traditional) path	Protean path
Age*	49	47

* $p < 0.05$

The protean path is thus more characteristic for the younger age groups, according to these findings.

12

Cheramie, R., Sturman, M., & Walsh, K. (2007). Executive career management: Switching organizations and the boundaryless career.

Results for age

This study compares a number of top executive managers that have made a job relocation in the reference period with the control group of their stably employed counterparts. The correlation between age and being “a mover” amounts to -0.11 ($p < 0.05$). Note, that due to interdependence of the person-period data used to calculate the estimate, this correlation should be interpreted with caution.

The hazard modeling analysis for age yielded the score of -0.07 ($p < 0.0001$). Both these results support the previously mentioned findings that job mobility declines with age. As the authors provide argumentation that the boundaryless career framework generally supports their findings (p. 371), it seems feasible to acknowledge the credibility of the job mobility indicator as proxy for that career type in the context of this particular study. It must be noted, that the top executive sample may not represent career trends in the entirety of the population. The correlation between age and the history of job changes appeared to be statistically insignificant.

15

King, Z., Burke, S., & Pemberton, J. (2005). The 'bounded' career: An empirical study of human capital, career mobility and employment outcomes in a mediated labour market.

This study of the IT sector finds that workers that receive temporary assignments have higher age on average, which runs contrary to the average trend in Europe, where temps are younger on the average (Storrie, 2006).

Table 5.9: mean age in permanent and temporary vacancy categories

	Permanent vacancies	Temporary vacancies	Sample
Age at vacancy date*	31.15	33.62	32.76

* $p < 0.001$ (ANOVA)

Does this imply a propensity towards boundaryless careers among older IT workers? Further study results show, that age is not a significant factor for being placed (shortlisted) in a temporary position, but it does have a statistically significant effect on chances of being shortlisted for a permanent vacancy:

Table 5.10: regression of age on the chance to be shortlisted for a permanent vacancy (partial results)

	Logit (B)	Odds ratio	S*B
Age at vacancy date*	0.10	1.10	0.73

* p < 0.1

These data suggest that for permanent vacancies the job-placement agencies prefer older candidates, the finding which also confirmed in the interviews with agency consultants. How are we to explain the discrepancy between the higher average age in temporary positions on one hand, and higher chances for the older employees to be selected for a permanent position on the other? The authors maintain that one of the typical career patterns in the IT sector consists of a permanent employment in the early career cycles, shifting towards project-based employment in later stages, when individual credibility and relevant skill sets have been established. It is then possible that older employees are more desirable for permanent positions (hence a higher chance to be selected), but prefer to work in temporary working arrangements. This perspective supports the hypothesis about the positive relationship between age and boundaryless career pattern, although the data are not conclusive. We can also note that career paths in IT sector might not be typical for labor market in general, although there is evidence of structural support for post-traditional careers in IT industry (Saxenian, 1996).

17

Forrier, A., Sels, L., & Verbruggen, M. (2005). Career Counseling in the New Career Era: A Study About the Influence of Career Types, Career Satisfaction and Career Management on the Need for Career Counseling.

The study finds the following relationships between career types and age:

Table 5.11: correlations between age and career profiles

	Age
Bounded	0.203**
Boundaryless	-0.046
Staying	-0.162**
Homeless	-0.152**
Trapped	0.076*
Released	-0.056

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

Although age seems to be an important factor in the adherence to several career types in this taxonomy, especially the bounded career trajectory, it has virtually no effect on the boundaryless pattern. It does, however, have a relatively strong effect in the staying and homeless career clusters, which are characterized by multi-employer career trajectories combined with aspirations for security and stability. These two patterns resonate to a degree with the negative connotations of the boundaryless career, which often remain inexplicit due to specifics of operationalization strategies. In this sense the results above supports our general finding that more stable *de facto* career patterns are preferred at higher age, regardless of the subjective protean and boundaryless career attitudes.

Volmer, J., & Spurk, D. (2010). Boundaryless and Protean Career Attitudes: Relationships with Subjective and Objective Career Success.

The authors find no correlation between the four career attitude dimensions and age.

5.1 Conclusion for the age chapter

To summarize the findings of this section, the studies on the new career we have reviewed reveal the negative relationship between age and physical job mobility, showing no difference with related findings on the traditional career pattern (Garavan & Coolahan, 1996; Vardi, 1980). The results for the subjective dimension, including attitudes, motivators and preferences (also those relating to the objective mobility indicators), expose inconsistent relationships with age, some being negative and others positive. The lack of relevant empirical material does not allow a solid explanation of these inconsistencies, albeit the issue in itself definitely certainly merits attention due to the continuing emergence of non-traditional career types (whatever their specific substantial implementation may entail) and the concurrent ageing of the European population.

Conform to career development theoretical postulates (see D. Brown (2002) for a comprehensive overview), as well as adult development theories (see Cytrynbaum & Crites (1989) for a comprehensive overview), age does indeed seem to have a recurrent relationship with the set of conditions under the common denominator of the “new career”. While the problem of separation between the objective and subjective sides of career is a well-known plague of the career studies field in general (Arthur et al., 1989; Baruch, 2004a; Sullivan & Crocitto, 2007), the “new career” subfield at this point is by a large margin no exception, as we hope to make the case in the present study. The epistemo-methodological chasm between the subjective and objective sides of career is of particular relevance when put in the context of age, since both career dimensions interact one with another *in time*, including longitudinal effects of that interaction (Arthur et al., 2005). This problem of separation is well visible in the research related to age and is highly likely to be a major contribution towards the inconsistency of the empirical results manifested on the subjective dimension.

Two issues of general theoretical order emerge, when we make a summary of the results presented above. Since in most cases only one of the two career aspects (either the objective job mobility or self-reported subjective narrative, even when being interpretative of the objective career properties) are presented in the respective papers, it is not clear how to combine these dimension-specific results in an attempt to arrive at some sort of synthetic statement about the new career types. In other words, one must exercise the utmost caution when projecting the empirical results from each of the separate dimensions onto the concepts of boundaryless or protean careers as whole. For instance, Briscoe et al. (2006, p. 44) deduct from their empirics that the (authentic) new career pattern followers must not necessarily display marked levels of actual job mobility, it is rather the possession of the protean traits (such as being proactive, open-minded or having specific related meta-skills (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994)) that defines the distinction between the traditional and non-traditional career dispositions, in combination with *readiness* to become mobile.

The second issue emanates logically from the described separation between the objective and subjective dimensions, in the context of its particular application, namely the choice of physical job mobility (i.e.

objective) as the measurement proxy for the boundaryless career *per se*. The discrepancy of the results on both dimensions calls for an adequate theoretical explanation of the longitudinal relationship between them in the context of the *new career*. Without such an explanation, it is difficult to imagine a coherent theoretical framework pertaining to the developing career patterns, also due to the elevated importance of their subjective aspects, in comparison with the traditional career.

The results of this chapter can be summarized as follows:

Proposition 1: objective dimensions of the new career pattern are negatively correlated with age

Proposition 2: subjective dimensions of the new career pattern are positively correlated with age

Table 5.12: Summary for age

#	Author(s), Year	Proposition 1	Proposition 2	Remarks
1	Briscoe et al, 2006	Inconclusive	Support	
2	Gerber et al, 2009	Support	No data	
3	Segers et al, 2008	Support	Partial support	
4	Marler et al, 2002	Inconclusive	Support	
6	Tremblay et al, 2002	No relationship	No data	
12	Cheramie et al, 2007	Support	No data	
15	King et al, 2005	Counter evidence	No data	Specific sector (IT)
17	Forrier et al, 2005	Partial support	Partial support	
19	Volmer&Spurk, 2010	No relationship	No relationship	

6. Education

While the value of education as a significant factor for career success requires no argumentation in itself, it is less clear whether higher educational levels create propensity towards either traditional or *new career* patterns, or at least certain elements thereof, such as career meta-skills (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Mirvis & Hall, 1994) or employability (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). The matter of causal reverberations between education, knowledge and career is a subject of the utmost complexity, as a large number of factors is involved, exerting their effects over time. For instance, the break between the traditional and the boundaryless/protean career types can be paralleled with the shifts in the educational patterns, such as lifelong learning, non-formal and informal learning (Werquin, 2010). Global and long term changes to the labor market, reflecting an ever-increasing pace of the technological evolution render lifetime employment largely unrealistic (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), and thus require that knowledge, skills and competences are transferred within new working environments (Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004). When job security is no longer a promise of a single employer, and the workers themselves become responsible for that security through the means of managing their employability, education (or rather learning in general) becomes a key background factor defining the individual career project as whole. Consequently, we might expect that boundaryless/protean employees to whom external marketability is the backbone of their career continuity, will be ultimately more motivated to seek educational enhancements and thus will have higher levels of educations than traditional employees, who rely (or at least aspire to rely) to a lesser degree on the transferrable skills.

Nevertheless, if we are to be cautious with the optimistic notes in the rhetoric of the boundaryless/protean patterns, and follow the advices of Gerber et al. (2009) and Hall (1996a) to include the negative facets of the mentioned career types in our framework of thinking, an alternative hypothesis is also conceivable. If the above cited market pressures are exerting knowledge-related demands on organizations, it might be their strong imperative to reward the employees with more human capital (including transferrable competencies and general education) by forming relatively more stable work relationships with the offer of greater job security, taking some of the individual career responsibility load off their shoulders and further stimulating their skill development. On the other hand, individuals with lower educational background, may find themselves in more precarious working arrangements without any compensation for their increased risk (Van Buren, 2003), and with little or no prospects of improvement on the educational front. In bifurcated labor markets the working of both these hypotheses combined can potentially imply a Matthew effect in regard to learning/work relationship. In this section we will explore a pattern of relationships in regard to educational background, having the stated considerations in mind.

1

Briscoe, J. P., Hall, D. T., & Frautschy DeMuth, R. L. (2006). Protean and boundaryless careers: An empirical exploration.

While education is not taken as an explicit and separate variable in this study, we can deduce its effects using the fact that steps 1 and two of the study use subsamples stratified per educational level. Study 1 distinguishes between undergraduate, MBA and executive samples. Study 2 distinguishes between undergraduates, MBA and Executive MBA degrees in the corresponding subsamples. As it has been mentioned before, the interpretation of these results needs to be made with caution, as these subsamples are likely to be homogenous in regard to respondent age, therefore the effects of education as such may be intertwined with the effects of different career cycle stages in general. Homogeneity on other variables

is not excluded as well. We carried out the comparison using t-tests for subsample means. The results per each of the four dimensions are as follows (all differences significant at $p < 0.05$):

- Scores on the *boundaryless mindset* dimension increase correspondingly for undergraduate, MBA and EMBA (Executive) samples in *both* studies.
- *Mobility preference* of the executive subsample of study 1 is lower than that of the two other subsamples. The results for study 2 are inconclusive in this regard.
- MBA are more *self-directed* than undergraduates, but no difference is found between EMBA and executives/EMBA or between undergraduates and executives/EMBA (both studies)
- The *value-driven* dimension puts MBA and EMBA samples in lead with no internal difference between these subsamples, while undergraduates score somewhat lower (Study 2). Study 1 reveals no differences on this dimension.

The inconsistency of results between the two studies, as well as the slight difference in the background of the third subsample (executives vs. EMBA) make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. However, in regard to the boundaryless career pattern we may note that while the boundaryless mentality might increase with higher skill level (perhaps education and work experience should be both considered as factors as a consequence of the remark about the age presented above), the physical mobility preference does not follow the same pattern. For one, it provides an additional argument for the independence of the physical and psychological dimensions for the boundaryless pattern noted above. Second, these results may imply that while the *potential or capacity to move* (e.g. in terms of the bargaining power) increases with age and skill, the very same capacity can be used to strive for more stable work arrangement, for example by using that power negotiate better conditions without actual job change.

In regard to the protean career pattern, it is not clear whether the increase of value-drivenness is caused by differences in educational levels or age. It has been noted in the chapter on age that this factor does positively influence the *value-driven* dimensions.

2

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffebach, B. (2009). Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach.

The following table renders the distribution of educational levels per category of career orientation, the independent type referring to the post-traditional career pattern:

Table 6.1: educational level per career type (percentage), overrepresentation is emphasized

	Independent	Disengaged	Traditional / Promotion	Traditional / Loyalty	All respondents
Compulsory school	0.8	2.4	4.3	5.0	3.5
Vocational level	41.3	54.9	66.8	63.0	58.6*
High school	5.0	4.9	3.2	3.8	4.1
Bachelor level	27.3	24.4	15.0	15.3	19.2*
University degree	25.6	13.4	10.7	13.0	14.6*

* p < 0.05

These results render an unambiguous picture in regard to the relationship between the new and traditional career patterns on one hand, and education on the other. It is clearly visible from the distribution, that the *independent career* orientation category contains significantly more respondents with tertiary educational levels, while at the same time the *traditional orientation* lags behind the average respondent representation in these educational strata. In regard to lower educational capacities that are statistically significant, namely the vocational level, the situation is reversed. The *independent orientation* category is underrepresented with the marked difference of 25.5 and 21.7 percent in comparison with *traditional-promotion* and *traditional-loyalty* orientations respectively. At the same time the respondent share in this category is by 17.3% different from the average proportion. Summarizing, the lower educational strata have clear propensity towards traditional career patterns, while higher educational levels tend to adopt the new career patterns. Interestingly, the *disengaged* career orientation accompanies the *independent* type in its overrepresentation on the bachelor level, but not on the level of university. Compulsory and high school levels are not statistically significant (even though their data also support the general trend) and are in addition by far the smallest strata accounting together for 7.5% of the sample.

3

Segers, J., Inceoglu, I., Vloeberghs, D., Bartram, D., & Henderickx, E. (2008). Protean and boundaryless careers: A study on potential motivators.

he authors posit the hypothesis that individuals with management background and higher educational levels will score higher on self-directedness and physical mobility than non-managers and those having lower educational levels (p. 217). Although managerial experience is only indirectly related to education (linked by developing specific skills in the sense of non-formal or informal education), we follow the authors in reviewing these two factors in a single instance.

Table 6.2: stepwise regression of educational level and managerial background on protean and boundaryless career dimensions (partial results)

	Protean pattern (motivators)		Boundaryless pattern (motivators)	
	Self-directed	Value-driven	Physical mobility	Psychol. mobility
Educational level	0.19*	-0.03*	0.14*	0.08*
Management exp.	0.19*	0.02	0.07*	0.03*

* p < 0.001

Educational level is coded as dummy, 1 represents having a university degree, and 0 its absence. Managerial background is an ordinal variable with six categories pertaining to various length (in years) of the relevant experience. In regard to the protean career motivators, we notice that in accord with the original hypothesis higher educational levels and management experience have positive and significant relationship with self-directed motivators, whereas educational level has only a minor effect on the value-drivenness motivators. Both factors have a positive effect on both dimensions pertaining to the boundaryless career, albeit the connection between management experience and the boundaryless mindset is almost negligible.

Therefore the initial hypothesis is at least partially confirmed . Does that mean that the boundaryless and protean career patterns are reserved for highly educated individuals, and perhaps even imply a bifurcating labor market structure? In themselves, the strength of the mentioned relationships are not grand. Nevertheless, the interconnection between the new career types and higher educational levels is consistently corroborated by various studies in this section. Lacking longitudinal research we may only ask ourselves at this point, whether the emergence of non-traditional career patterns is a rapidly evolving process whereby the educated ones are in lead, reaping the most benefits in the forms of personal flexibility and freedom of the work-life project composition, while the less educated individuals are forced to accept the same flexibility without the corresponding capital to exploit its positive aspects. The following distribution of educational attainment per cluster suggests that the situation is not as straightforward:

Table 6.3: university diploma per cluster (percent)

	Protean	Trapped	Hired hand	Wanderer	All
No univ. dip.	31.5	43.3	38.4	48.6	40.1*
University dip.	68.5	56.7	61.6	51.4	59.9*

On one hand we can indeed notice, that the protean career cluster has more respondents with a university degree than the sample average. In addition, the wanderer profile, one that is characterized by low scores on all motivators, except physical mobility, contains relatively more respondents *without* a university degree, in comparison with the average. It is an open question whether the lower average educational level in the wanderer cluster reflects the negative connotations of the boundaryless experiences, as the indicators in question pertain to *the motivation by physical mobility*, and do not imply actual job mobility per se.. On the other hand, most respondents in *all four clusters* are in possession of a university diploma. This shows that although highly educated respondents do have relatively more propensity towards the new career patterns, those are by a large margin not reserved specifically for the highly educated strata.

4

Marler, J. H., Woodard Barringer, M., & Milkovich, G. T. (2002). Boundaryless and traditional contingent employees: worlds apart.

The inter-variable correlation tables for both national and regional sample offer no suggestion as to the effects of education on the new career patterns. Neither the variable indicating a preference for temporary work nor valuing flexibility and independence in working arrangements yield any significant scores. The cluster solution combined with ANOVA to estimate the inter-cluster differences does render a result however:

Table 6.4: Hierarchical cluster analysis with ANOVA test for inter-cluster difference: partial results for national sample⁸

	Means Traditional Cluster (SD)	Means Boundaryless Cluster (SD)
Education*	12.57 (2.02)	13.88 (2.23)

* p < 0.05

These data further corroborate the trend we have noticed in other studies. The boundaryless cluster is comprised of the respondents with higher on average educational levels.

Table 6.5: Hierarchical cluster analysis with ANOVA test for inter-cluster difference: partial results for regional sample⁹

	Means Traditional Cluster (SD)	Means Boundaryless Cluster (SD)
Education	3.03 (1.33)	3.29 (1.01)

The results from the regional sample exhibit the same educational bias towards the boundaryless cluster as well, although this time the difference between the means has not reached an acceptable level of statistical significance.

5

Valcour, M., & Tolbert, P. (2003). Gender, family and career in the era of boundarylessness: determinants and effects of intra- and inter-organizational mobility.

In this study the educational level is measured as total number of years of formal education beyond high school.

Table 6.6: correlation between education and job mobility

	Education
Number of intra-organizational moves	0.11*
Number of inter-organizational moves	-0.01

* p < 0.001

The results show a positive relationship to number of job moves within same organization, which, as the authors suggest, is related to the traditional career pattern. On the other hand, education has no effects on the inter-organizational mobility, and if we accept it as proxy, also on the boundaryless career. In this regard we might however refer to Briscoe et al. (2006), who have found that the psychological and physical mobility dimensions of the boundaryless career are not invariably related to each other. It is possible to maintain the boundaryless mindset while having relatively stable working arrangements.

⁸ Education is represented by an ordinal variable with 16 categories, the highest being a PhD degree.

⁹ Education is represented by an ordinal variable with 6 categories, the highest being a PhD degree.

Looking at the regression results of various predictors on the inter-organizational mobility, we see a small but significant effect of education, amounting to 0.045 ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, when split by gender, it appears that for men the effect of education is 0.07 ($p < 0.001$) while for women the effect is smaller and only on the verge of acceptable significance, namely 0.035 ($p < 0.10$). Therefore in general we may conclude that this study also confirms the relationship between higher educational levels and inter-organizational mobility.

6

Tremblay, M., Wils, T., & Proulx, C. (2002). Determinants of career path preferences among Canadian engineers.

No statistically significant relationships are found in this study between the educational level and the career path preference. The only exception concerns engineers whose MBA degree has lead them onto the managerial path. This absence of results in regard to education is potentially related to the way educational levels were operationalized, namely by dummy variables for MBA, MSc and PhD levels. The main distinction was thus made between technical- and management-oriented education, and not the educational levels as such. To remind the reader, this study focuses on engineers, therefore the sample is likely to be relatively homogenous on the account of absolute educational level.

8

Eby, L. T. (2001). The boundaryless career experiences of mobile spouses in dual-earner marriages.

This study does not find any significant correlation between the level of education and either number of job moves or willingness to move (i.e. both objective and subjective aspects). On the other hand, education had a negative effect on the quality of job relocation, namely on the job content plateauing, the correlation coefficient being -0.13 ($p < 0.05$). This result brings us back to the distinction between the positive and negative scenarios of the boundaryless career, where in the “trapped” version thereof the individual in question can be forced to accept discontinuous or unstable working arrangements due to the lack of better opportunities. This experience can differ substantially from the positively inspired image of a self-driven protean, exercising control over his or her career and using flexibility to maximize own potential. It seems quite feasible to assume then, that education can provide at least partial relief in this regard, considering the (meta-)skill set characteristic for the non-traditional career patterns (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Fugate et al., 2004).

9

Reitzle, M., Körner, A., & Vondracek, F. W. (2009). Psychological and demographic correlates of career patterns.

This study does not construct the new career profiles explicitly, but we are able to derive the relevant career properties, interpreting the discriminant functions obtained in the analysis. In the table below we render the results of the optimized¹⁰ model with statistically significant predictors:

Table 6.7: correlations between educational level and discriminant functions pertaining to career profile

	1 st function	2 nd function
East Germany	excluded (0.34)	excluded (-0.32)
West Germany*	0.33	0.15

* $p < 0.001$

To remind of the interpretation of the functions, the first one discriminated stable upward career movement from all other types, whereas the second function marked the difference between stable career pattern (no movement) and all other patterns. Upward movement scored exactly 0 on the second function.

As it was the case with gender, education was excluded from the optimized model in East Germany, as it did not significantly contribute to the explanatory power of the model (we provide the full model scores in parenthesis).. For West Germany education (measured as dummy for college level vs. vocational level) is positively related to both functions. This implies that college education makes a significant contribution to the *stable upwards* career movement. At the same time it also contributes, albeit to a lesser degree to the *stable* career pattern (little or no progression). As this study measures career patterns using simple graphical representations, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether both stable upwards and stable (static) career patterns are closely related to the traditional career. It is in fact possible to report a stable upward movement in the conceptual framework of boundaryless career, as a change of employers does not automatically imply an erratic character of the transition between jobs. In other words, both traditional and boundaryless careers can be perceived (by the respondent) as stable and developing upwards. The conclusions of this study pertaining to education are therefore inconclusive.

12

Cheramie, R., Sturman, M., & Walsh, K. (2007). Executive career management: Switching organizations and the boundaryless career.

Inter-variable correlation table shows no significant relationship between being a mover and the level of education. The history of job changes, however, has a correlation coefficient of 0.16 ($p < 0.05$) with the latter indicator, implying that the respondents with relatively higher education are more prone to reap benefits through a mobile career pattern. The post-move analysis indicated a substantial and significant increase in salary and organizational rank of the mobile career followers in comparison to non-movers. In accord with the boundaryless theory this could imply that individuals with higher levels of skills and training *systematically* choose to transcend organizational boundaries in pursuit of better career paths while constructing their own reflexively organized career project (cfr. Giddens (1991)). Considering the nature of the sample (top five ranking executives) we are likely to witness the exclusive “bright side of

¹⁰ Wilk's Lambda: $F_{in} < 0.05$, $F_{out} > 0.10$

being protean”, if we may rephrase Gerber et al. (2009), who raise the issue of the exclusion mechanisms (i.e. the “dark side”) in the non-traditional career patterns.

13

De Vos, A., & Soens, N. (2008). Protean attitude and career success: The mediating role of self-management.

Educational level was measured as a trichotomous variable, distinguishing between low education (until the age of 15), high school certification and bachelor/master degrees. A significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation of -0.13 was found between the educational level and the protean career attitude. These results contradict Segers et al. (2008), who have established a relationship of comparable strength but with an opposite direction, this comparison being possible due to the similarity in operationalization of the protean attitude in both studies. No explanation is given as to why higher educational levels might negatively influence self-directedness (or, indeed, the other way around). We must remind, that protean attitude reflects only one of the two dimensions that are combined in the theoretical framework of the protean career.

15

King, Z., Burke, S., & Pemberton, J. (2005). The 'bounded' career: An empirical study of human capital, career mobility and employment outcomes in a mediated labour market.

Education-related variables are not present in the first model, which accounts for placement in temporary positions, therefore we assume they were excluded due to the lack of significance. The second model, pertaining to placement in permanent job positions, shows statistically significant results for the dummy variable denoting A-level education (logit = 8.16, $p < 0.05$), but not for the dummies pertaining to the bachelor and master degrees. Considering that this inquiry investigates IT specialists, it is possible to suspect the relative homogeneity of the sample in regard to education. It is also possible that in the sector there is little practical consequence for the difference between post-graduate diploma levels. All things considered, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from these results.

17

Forrier, A., Sels, L., & Verbruggen, M. (2005). Career Counseling in the New Career Era: A Study About the Influence of Career Types, Career Satisfaction and Career Management on the Need for Career Counseling.

No effects of the education on the career pattern was established in this study. A single statistically significant correlation coefficient is between higher educational levels and the bounded career trajectory (-0.077, $p < 0.05$). This result in principle complies with the general trend in the literature, but on itself is insufficient to draw any conclusions.

The study does not find any significant effects of education on the nomadic characteristics of one's career.

6.1 Conclusion for the education chapter

Before we summarize the results of this section, a methodological remark is due. In the introduction to this chapter we have mentioned a correspondence between the boundaryless career and the newly emerging patterns of learning, implying a certain erosion of the traditional education patterns (formal education at the beginning of life, little or no education later in the course of career), that goes parallel to the erosion of traditional working arrangements. In this line we can but only notice the lack of systematic operationalization of learning, skills and knowledge by other means than the highest formal degree obtained, set in relation to actual career patterns or subjective attitudes. This consideration in itself adds certain ambivalence to the interpretation of the results, because a proper contrast between the two career archetypes should also account for the shifts in the learning logic peculiar to each of these types. Namely, the issue must be addressed if the highest diploma available is an adequate measure in the context of the boundaryless/protean careers, where life-long learning is the ideal outcome. Without it, a comparison on the aspects of education would not be able to render fully conclusive and/or meaningful results.

In general we can conclude that the majority of the research presented in this section does find a relationship between career patterns and educational levels. With a few exceptions it points out that post-traditional career types (in a spectrum of specific operationalizational interpretations) are relatively more peculiar to individuals with higher educational levels. Those cases where the mentioned relationship was not found, have certain methodological properties (e.g. sample homogeneity on specific factors; unorthodox operationalization of the boundaryless/protean career types), which might provide an explanation for the absence of the connection. In regard to the opposing evidence, there is but a single study (De Vos & Soens, 2008) that finds a *negative* relationship between the *self-directed* dimension of the protean career and educational level. As we have argued before, this might be due the specifics of the sample in that particular inquiry, although it is not possible to ascertain that without additional empirical data.

The results of this chapter can be summarized as follows:

Proposition 1: New career patterns are more prevalent among respondents with higher educational levels

Table 6.8 summary for education

#	Author(s), Year	Proposition 1	Remarks
1	Briscoe et al, 2006	Partial support	
2	Gerber et al, 2009	Support	
3	Segers et al, 2008	Support	
4	Marler et al, 2002	Support	
5	Valcour&Tolbert, 2003	No relationship	
6	Tremblay et al, 2002	No relationship	
8	Eby, 2001	No relationship	
9	Reitzle et al, 2009	Inconclusive	
12	Cheremie et al, 2007	Support	
13	De Vos&Soens, 2008	Counter evidence	Partial dimensionality
15	King et al, 2005	Inconclusive	
17	Forrier et al, 2005	No relationship	
18	Valgaeren, 2008	No relationship	

7. Boundaryless/protean career success

7.1 Introduction

The subject of career success determinants is a rather extensive topic in itself. It is not our intention to elaborate on (a subset of) all possible determinants of success of the boundaryless career. Instead we would like to explore to what extent the new career types are a blessing or a curse (or, indeed, both) in the light of previously mentioned potential double-edged character thereof. More specifically, we will pay attention to the correspondence between the new career trajectories (or their dimensions, where appropriate) and both objective and subjective career success variables, such as career satisfaction and salary.

7.2 Subjective career success

In this section we will review the relationship between the *new career* patterns and indicators of subjective career success.

2

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffelbach, B. (2009). Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach.

The distribution of scores for several subjective career indicators is shown in the following table:

Table 7.1: cross-tabulation of subjective career indicators with the four career profiles

	Independent	Disengaged	Traditional / Promotion	Traditional / Loyalty	All respondents
Job satisfaction	7.0	7.1	7.5	7.4	7.3*
Affectional commitment	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.5	3.5*
Intention to quit	2.4	2.2	1.8	1.8	2.0*

* $p < 0.05$

We see that the followers of the independent pattern score significantly lower on job satisfaction than their traditional counterparts. In addition, the independent pattern can be characterized by low affectional commitment to organization and the highest intention to quit. The latter two findings should not necessarily be seen in a negative light, as both attitudes form are structurally inherent to the independent career behavior.

5

Valcour, M., & Tolbert, P. (2003). Gender, family and career in the era of boundarylessness: determinants and effects of intra- and inter-organizational mobility.

The following table shows the relationship between inter- and intra-organizational mobility (serving as proxy for boundaryless and traditional career types respectively) and subjective career success:

Table 7.2: correlation between subjective career success and measures of job mobility

	Subjective career success
Number of intra-organizational moves	-0.04†
Number of inter-organizational moves	0.02

† p < 0.10

It follows from these correlations, that no clear relationship is established in this study between job mobility and subjective career success. Internal mobility shows a very weak negative relation with the latter, but both its strength and poor level of statistical significance prevent any definitive conclusions.

On the other hand, the regression model with perceived career success as dependent showed much stronger relationship with intra-organizational career mobility, namely -0.496 (p < 0.01). The authors hypothesize that this might be due to increased career aspirations resulting in a wider gap between these aspirations and actual achievements, ultimately leading to lower self-evaluation of success. Still no significant relationship with inter-organizational mobility has been found in the regression analysis. The conclusion is that while the traditional pattern leads to lower career satisfaction, the boundaryless trajectory has no effect on the same indicator.

7

Reitman, F., & Schmeer, J. A. (2003). The promised path: a longitudinal study of managerial careers.

This study does not find any relationship between career type and job satisfaction.

8

Eby, L. T. (2001). The boundaryless career experiences of mobile spouses in dual-earner marriages.

In this study a number of variables pertaining to subjective career success is correlated with the indicators of mobile career pattern:

Table 7.3: correlations between the boundaryless career related variables and quality of reemployment variables

	Number of moves	Willingness to move
Job satisfaction	0.01	-0.13*
Promotion satisfaction	0.01	-0.05
Pay satisfaction	-0.12*	-0.04
Security satisfaction	-0.01	-0.02

* p < 0.05

The data above show two negative correlations, the first one between the number of moves and pay satisfaction, and the other between willingness to move and job satisfaction. To remind, these are characteristics of spouses who relocated geographically following their partners. In this sense, it is a very

specific sort of the boundaryless career. Nevertheless, the conclusion is clear in that this type of boundaryless pattern is slightly and negatively related to career satisfaction variables.

9

Reitzle, M., Körner, A., & Vondracek, F. W. (2009). Psychological and demographic correlates of career patterns.

The following table shows the distribution of the scores of two subjective career success indicators between various types of career trajectories.

Table 7.4: relationships between career patterns and subjective career success indicators (one-way ANOVA test for significance)

	Downward	Erratic downward	Stable	Erratic upward	Upward
Job satisfaction*	4.64	4.73	5.53	5.27	5.77
Financial satisfaction*	3.95	3.73	4.79	4.53	5.21

* p < 0.001

Although, as mentioned before, these patterns do not directly relate to the boundaryless/protean career concepts, a few observations are in order. For instance, we may note that job satisfaction for erratic upward is lower than for both stable and upward career patterns. The same goes for financial satisfaction. From this it is possible to conclude that that erratic career pattern in itself (thus including at least certain types of boundaryless careers) yields lower satisfaction, potentially due to increased stress and decreased security.

13

De Vos, A., & Soens, N. (2008). Protean attitude and career success: The mediating role of self-management.

The authors find a (direct) correlation between the protean career attitude and career satisfaction amounting to 0.24 (p < 0.01). The structural equation modeling has confirmed that there exists a mediating factor, namely *career insight*, which refers to insight in the Self and career decision-making processes. Within that model a direct relationship appeared insignificant, but the relation between protean career attitude and career insight equaled 0.87 (p < 0.01) and that between career insight and career satisfaction amounted to 0.60 (p < 0.01). In addition, the relationship between career insight and perceived employability was found, with the strength of 0.67 (p < 0.01). These findings support the thesis that the relationship between the new career types and career outcomes is probably not linear and is mediated by a number of psychological and social factors.

16

Eby, L. T., Butts, M., & Lockwood, A. (2003). Predictors of success in the era of the boundaryless career.

This study departs from a set of hypotheses, that postulate positive relationships between all of the predictors (related to knowing-why, knowing-whom and knowing-how competencies-) with perceived career success, perceived internal and external marketability.

Table 7.5: partial correlations between predictors and criteria

	Perceived career success	Perceived internal marketability	Perceived external marketability
Knowing why predictors			
Proactive personality	0.28***	0.28***	0.26***
Openness to experience	0.13*	0.15**	0.19***
Career insight	0.38***	0.29***	0.24***
Knowing whom predictors			
Experience with a mentor	0.10	0.07	0.12*
Internal networks	0.20***	0.22***	0.14**
External networks	0.24***	0.21***	0.23***
Knowing how predictors			
Career/job-related skills	0.33***	0.29***	0.39***
Career identity	0.27***	0.22***	0.24***

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$;

These data show that for the largest part the hypothesized relationships are confirmed, with the only exception pertaining to *experience in a mentoring relationship*. We can therefore conclude, that if these predictors represent the boundaryless career pattern in a theoretically sound fashion, then indeed the mentioned career type is positively related to higher degrees of *perceived career success*.

There is an additional consideration that needs to be taken into account when interpreting these findings. Namely, this study does not distinguish between traditional and boundaryless career types. It is therefore impossible to ascertain whether the three competency types pertain to the traditional career, boundaryless career or both (Bridgstock, 2007). The pertinence of the three competencies to the boundaryless type remains theory-based in this case.

17

Forrier, A., Sels, L., & Verbruggen, M. (2005). Career Counseling in the New Career Era: A Study About the Influence of Career Types, Career Satisfaction and Career Management on the Need for Career Counseling.

This study finds that career satisfaction has an apparent relationship with career pattern types:

Table 7.6: correlations between career satisfaction and career profiles

	Career satisfaction
Bounded	0.104**
Boundaryless	-0.061
Staying	0.117**
Homeless	-0.212**
Trapped	0.001
Released	-0.132**

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Although the coefficient of the boundaryless pattern is slightly above the margin of acceptable statistical significance, the negative relationship in itself is consistent with the general trend in the literature. A much stronger negative effect can be observed in the *homeless* category, which in certain sense can be interpreted as a negative aspect of being boundaryless (Gerber et al., 2009). Contemporary empirical literature on the *new career* trajectories has paid very little attention so far to the investigation of this aspect, largely focusing on the positive dimensions of the boundaryless/protean patterns.

19

Volmer, J., & Spurk, D. (2010). Boundaryless and Protean Career Attitudes: Relationships with Subjective and Objective Career Success.

The study finds a limited relationship between career attitudes and subjective career success:

Table 7.7: regression of protean and boundaryless career attitudes on measures of subjective career success (partial results, standardized coefficients)

	Career satisfaction	Comparison with colleagues
Values-drivenness	0.02	-0.15
Self-directed career management	0.28*	0.34**
Organizational mobility preference	-0.14	-0.01
Boundaryless mindset	-0.12	-0.05

* $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$.

As we can see, the only dimension that has an effect on subjective career success, is *self-directed career management*. We can therefore infer from these results that the protean career pattern in its full form might have a partial positive relationship with subjective career success, while the boundaryless pattern has respectively no such effect. Of course, we need to keep the limitations of the study in mind, when generalizing these results.

7.3 Objective career success

If the previous section focused on the indicators of subjective career success, in the following part we will explore the relationship between new career patterns and objective career success, such as salary and promotions.

2

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffebach, B. (2009). Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach.

The income distribution per career profile is given in the following table:

Table 7.8: distribution of income strata per career orientation profile

	Independent	Disengaged	Traditional / Promotion	Traditional / Loyalty	All respondents
< 4000	9.1	28.2	20.0	25.7	22.0*
4001-6000	27.3	31.3	33.0	24.9	28.8
6001-8000	29.8	21.5	23.2	38.0	23.8
> 8000	33.9	19.0	23.8	22.2	22.2*

These results show, that followers of the independent career have relatively less chance to belong to the lowest income stratum, and relatively more chance to belong to the highest income stratum. For the two middle strata there is no significant difference in income. It need be noted, that this study focuses on career orientations (i.e. the subjective dimension) and not the actual job mobility.

4

Marler, J. H., Woodard Barringer, M., & Milkovich, G. T. (2002). Boundaryless and traditional contingent employees: worlds apart.

This study compares several indicators of objective career success between the traditional and boundaryless clusters of employees.

Table 7.9: cluster means for wage indicators for traditional and boundaryless career clusters (national sample, ANOVA test for mean difference)

	Traditional cluster (SD)	Boundaryless cluster (SD)
Relative ¹¹ adjusted wage*	-19% (0.40)	-7% (0.54)
Weekly wage*	\$296 (211)	\$461 (368)

* p < 0.05

¹¹ In comparison with the wage of an equivalent conventional work arrangement.

Table 7.10: cluster means for hourly wage for traditional and boundaryless career clusters (regional sample, ANOVA test for mean difference)

	Traditional cluster (SD)	Boundaryless cluster (SD)
Hourly wage*	\$12.49 (10.45)	\$29.96 (10.62)

* p < 0.05

The data from both tables indicate that the “boundaryless” cluster has significantly higher wages. Nevertheless, we need to be cautious interpreting this, since the denomination of clusters as boundaryless and traditional may itself contain ambiguity. The interpretation is based predominantly on the work arrangement preference, valuing flexibility, educational level and pink/blue vs. white collar occupations. It is possible to question this classification, especially considering the a priori inclusion of the educational and occupational strata as indicators for specific career types, rather than simply their correlates. Therefore, the higher wage in this situation is not necessarily attributed to the career pattern as such, but is rather likely to be determined by education and occupation.

5

Valcour, M., & Tolbert, P. (2003). Gender, family and career in the era of boundarylessness: determinants and effects of intra- and inter-organizational mobility.

Intra- and inter-organizational mobility appear to have significant effects on job remuneration:

Table 7.11: correlation between annual earnings and job mobility

	Annual earnings
Number of intra-organizational moves	0.31*
Number of inter-organizational moves	-0.19*

* p < 0.001

The data points out that intra-organizational mobility, which serves as proxy for the traditional career pattern in this study, has positive influence on annual learning, whereas its boundaryless counterpart (in the form inter-organizational mobility) carries a substantial penalty for one’s income.

7

Reitman, F., & Schneer, J. A. (2003). The promised path:a longitudinal study of managerial careers.

This study does not find any relationship between career type and income.

9

Reitzle, M., Kömer, A., & Vondracek, F. W. (2009). Psychological and demographic correlates of career patterns.

Personal income scores are distributed as follows in the sample of this study:

Table 7.12: distribution of income-related scores between different career profiles (one-way ANOVA test for category differences)

	Downward	Erratic downward	Stable	Erratic upward	Upward
Personal net income*	5.59	6.72	6.43	6.91	8.16

* p < 0.001

These results show that the stable career pattern is related to somewhat lower net income than both upward and upward erratic patterns. Interestingly, it yields slightly smaller financial benefit than the erratic downward pattern as well. It is however difficult to translate these findings in the language of boundaryless/traditional career dichotomy, as both can be interpreted as upwards

12

Cheramie, R., Sturman, M., & Walsh, K. (2007). Executive career management: Switching organizations and the boundaryless career.

The inter-variable correlation table does not reveal any evidence for the relationship between a job move on one hand, and either salary, bonus or other compensation on the other. There is a small correlation (-0.14, p < 0.05) between being “a mover” and salary based on the person-period data. However, since observations in these data are not independent, it is not feasible to accept this as a reliable finding.

The hazard model, on the other hand, shows a statistically significant negative relationship between salary and probability of job movement, namely -0.27 (p < 0.01). Bonus and other compensation did not have any significant effects. To interpret this, we must also take into account the post-hoc tests differentiating between movers and non-movers in regard to salary. Those with a job change enjoyed an average increase of \$197 000 in salary and \$202 000 in bonus, in comparison with \$21 000 and \$64 000 for non-movers (p < 0.0001 and p < 0.05 respectively). In addition, executive movers lost an average of

19

Volmer, J., & Spurk, D. (2010). Boundaryless and Protean Career Attitudes: Relationships with Subjective and Objective Career Success.

\$808 000 in the category *other compensation* (mostly comprised of long-term awards, such as stock options and grants), compared with an average gain of \$883 000 for non-movers. From these results we cannot definitively conclude that (by proxy of mobility) the boundaryless career necessarily expresses itself in lower salary. Rather, it is that higher salary may decrease the chance of job change, implying that executives with lower salaries can use boundaryless career strategies to increase their earning potential, while sacrificing the benefits that a traditional career would otherwise bring. It remains an open question whether this conclusion can be extrapolated to less elite strata of employees. In addition, this consideration also raises an issue of the direction of causality between salary and boundaryless career.

This study establishes the following effects of the protean and boundaryless career dimensions on the objective measures of career success:

Table 7.13: regression of protean and boundaryless career attitudes on measures of objective career success (partial results, standardized coefficients)

	Promotion	Salary
Values-drivenness	-0.04	-0.06
Self-directed career management	0.03	0.09
Organizational mobility preference	-0.10	0.15*
Boundaryless mindset	0.12	0.04

* $p < 0.05$

The data above imply that only a single dimension out of the four has a positive relationships with one of the indicators of objective career success used in this inquiry, namely salary. We can thus infer that the protean career pattern in its totality has no connection with objective career success, while the boundaryless career (in its totality) may be connected to higher pay levels. The latter conclusion is consistent with the general trend in relation to salary, although the unresolved issue of causality between a career type and income must be stressed once again.

7.4 Conclusion for the career success chapter

Concluding this chapter, we must summarize the observations pointed out in the course of the discussion of the results above. First observation concerns the fact that cross-sectional research (to which category the vast majority of all studies belong) is unable to discern the direction of casual relationships. We cannot, therefore, treat either subjective or objective career success (in terms of satisfaction and income) as *career outcomes*, which the word “success” would naturally imply. Both factors can function as antecedents in the choice of career patterns, with the possibility of a bidirectional relationship unfolding over time. Second, it is possible that estimating a *direct* relationship between career success and career patterns provides little insight as to the presence of mediating factors (cfr. De Vos & Soens, 2008). In other words, we might need more complex statistical and theoretical models in order to avoid an all too simplistic rendering of the interplay between the elements of the boundaryless type.

The emerging pattern in this section is that the boundaryless career type *negatively correlates* (taking into consideration the causality direction issue just mentioned) with subjective career success indicators, such as satisfaction. On the other hand, it relates *positively* to income. The data are not without ambiguity, as with both subjective and objective dimensions there were studies that reversed the direction of the mentioned relational trends. This ambiguity will be partially explained by the two considerations stated in the previous paragraph. In addition, the definitional problem of the boundaryless concept discussed in the beginning of this paper can also contribute to this difference in the results. All in all, we must stress once again that these results must be interpreted with caution until longitudinal studies are available.

The results of this section can be summarized as follows:

Proposition 1: new career patterns are positively related with objective career success

Proposition 2: new career patterns are negatively related with subjective career success

Table 7.14: summary for the subjective and objective career outcomes

#	Author(s), Year	Proposition 1	Proposition 2	Remarks
2	Gerber et al, 2009	Support	Support	
4	Marler et al, 2002	Support	No relationship	
5	Valcour&Tolbert, 2003	Counter evidence		
7	Reitman&Schneer, 2003	No relationship	No relationship	
8	Eby, 2001		Partial support	
9	Reitzle et al, 2009	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	
12	Cheramie et al, 2007	Counter evidence		
13	De Vos&Soens, 2008		Counter evidence	Partial dimensionality
17	Forrier et al, 2005		No relationship	
19	Volmer&Spurk, 2010	Partial support	Inconclusive	
	Eby et al, 2003		Counter evidence	Competency-based operationalization

8. Prevalence of the new career types

In this part we will attempt an estimation of whether the protean/boundaryless career types have indeed become able to challenge the traditional (organizational career) for its title of the dominant work arrangement pattern in the contemporary Western world (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). We begin by summarizing the findings across various studies in the table below:

Table 8.1: comparison of prevalence between various studies

	New career Prevalence	Operationalization	Remarks
Gerber et al, 2009	18.6%, 16.4%	Latent class analysis, post-hoc interpretation	Two independent samples
Segers et al, 2007	30,4%	Factor analysis, post-hoc interpretation	
Marler et al, 2002	45%	Cluster analysis, post-hoc interpretation	
Reitman & Schneer, 2002	38%	Protean, full-time multi-org	
Dries et al, 2008.	6%	Boundaryless, operational, (mobility 5 years + expectation to leave)	Same method as in Forrier et al. (2005)
Forrier et al, 2005	5.5%	Boundaryless, operational (mobility 5 years + expectation to leave)	6 total types, some of them can be classified as non-traditional

We can immediately notice the vast differences in the rates of prevalence of the non-traditional career types, ranging from as low as 5.5% to 38%, with the additional understanding that these findings represent different countries. While the country-specific contexts have without doubt influenced these discrepancies, it is legitimate to posit a question as to the extent to which the prevalence is affected by differences in operationalization strategies of the boundaryless/protean concepts. It is clear that operational definitions which define career patterns by the interaction of an *a priori* set of properties (as is the case with the last two studies in the table above) can yield results with substantial differences in them, according to the specific properties that are chosen in the light of a particular inquiry. While the dimension of physical job mobility is fairly uniformly used in the operationalization of the boundaryless career, the operationalization of the psychological (subjective) dimension is achieved through a variety instruments. While there exist validated scales specifically designed to measure the dimension in question (Briscoe et al., 2006), at the time of this writing their use has been limited.

It is also apparent, that the operationalization of the boundaryless career carried out purely on the basis of its physical mobility dimension is bound to yield higher results, as a) some degree of job mobility is a fact of the contemporary work arrangement, that is pertinent to the vast majority of workers and b) such operationalization does not account for involuntary job mobility, which by definition is not what the concept of boundaryless (or protean) career essentially implies. As consequence, such approach also neglects the “dark side of being protean” (Gerber et al., 2009) as it simply lacks the conceptual power to cast it into the analytical focus.

Perhaps most interesting for the purposes of this chapter can be deemed the findings of studies where the non-traditional career types are constructed statistically, e.g. by the means of cluster, factor or latent

class analyses (Gerber et al., 2009; Marler et al., 2002; Segers et al., 2008). In accord with our expectations due to the unidimensionality critique stated above, the results of Marler et al. (2002) are indeed the highest across all the studies examined. On the other hand, the two other studies show a lesser degree of the non-traditional career pattern prevalence, albeit still substantially higher than the a priori operational definitions of the first kind (16-19% and 30% vs. 6% respectively). Making minor recalculations we can juxtapose the results of Segers et al. (2008), who offer a breakdown of career preference clusters per country (including Belgium) to those of Dries et al. (2008) and Forrier et al. (2005), who provide their results for Flanders. The former research shows, that Belgium is indeed not the country to display a large proportion of boundaryless careers, being underrepresented in the respective cluster (10.1% vs. 14.7% on average), while achieving a large overrepresentation in the *curious/wanderer* cluster (21.5%). In this respect Belgium stands in a vivid contrast with other European countries involved in the study, seconded by France with 11.5% in the same cluster, in comparison to 9.4% average (Segers et al., 2008, p. 224).

3

Segers, J., Inceoglu, I., Vloeberghs, D., Bartram, D., & Henderickx, E. (2008). Protean and boundaryless careers: A study on potential motivators.

In the following table we render the distribution of career types per country:

Table 8.2: career profiles per country (percent)

	Protean career	Trapped/Lost	Hired hand	Curious/Wanderer	All respondents
Belgium	10.1	13.7	13.5	21.5	14.7*
Denmark	14.1	10.6	8.0	11.5	11.4*
France	6.8	8.9	11.1	11.5	9.4*
Germany	4.3	5.1	5.9	4.2	4.8*
Italy	8.4	18.1	30.7	11.3	15.9*
Netherlands	11.1	9.0	5.3	9.7	9.1*
Norway	10.8	7.1	6.9	8.4	8.5*
Sweden	32.1	22.5	11.6	18.9	22.2*
UK	2.3	5.0	7.0	3.0	4.0*

* p < 0.001

If we consider the absolute totals for country sample and the first (protean) cluster, we derive the relative cluster size of 21%, providing a rather sharp contrast with the research in Flanders alone. This difference can be attributed to a range of factors, from the use of various operationalization methods to the specific conceptual implementation of the non-traditional career pattern. Nevertheless, this makes it legitimate to raise an issue of the further refinement of epistemological and conceptual principles on which the new career research is based, as well as the methodological repertorium to the same end.

Comparing these results, we may thus conclude, that although the non-traditional career patterns might not be as radically pervasive as some authors suggest, their prevalence cannot nevertheless be discounted as being marginal. In fact, the studies reviewed ascertain on a substantial scale the existence of a *new career* type that is positively distinct from other career patterns, such as *traditional* or *disengaged*. It remains, however, an open question to what degree does this statistically constructed career type resonates with the original theoretical concepts of the boundaryless and protean careers.

Finally, we notice that empirically driven taxonomies are quite different from each other, varying per country of research and, of course, per selected set of indicators employed in a particular study. This observation implies a theoretical possibility, that the non-traditional career pattern is not invariably given for all socio-cultural contexts, and may in fact receive different interpretations, depending on the culture of the country in question (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), as well as its welfare system (cfr. Arts & Gelissen, 2002) or educational system properties (Cadin, Bailly-Bender, & de Saint-Giniey, 2001), among other factors. It might be therefore dangerous to assume the validity of generally formulated postulates in regard to specific empirical properties of the new career type, without embedding it in the context-bound set of factors, the development of which is placed in a temporal perspective (Bourdieu et al., 1991, pp. 46-47). This implies by extension that instead of trying to empirically pin down the exact gestalt of the new career type which allegedly pervades the western knowledge-intensive economies, it might prove more fruitful to focus on *which particular new career forms are produced in the specific conditions that lend systemic durability to their existence*. Simpler put, it may be more rewarding to study the (determinants of) career pattern *taxonomies* in various contexts, rather than trying to verify a single a priori hypothesized condition, especially while attempting to achieve methodological uniformity that is bound to dissociate all empirical findings from the meaningful variance of their ontological sources¹².

Thus, Segers et al. (2008) convincingly show that both country-specific and cultural factors help define the structure of career preferences:

Table 8.3: stepwise regression of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on career motivators standardized regression coefficients

	Self-directed	Values-driven	Physical mobility	Psychological mob.
Individualism	-0.01	0.03	-0.02	-0.06*
Masculinity	-0.10*	-0.32*	0.15*	-0.13*
Power distance	-0.09*	0.03	-0.02	0.00

* p < 0.001

In the collectivist cultures a higher share of individuals is driven by psychological mobility motivators. In the context of low masculinity cultures, individuals are more motivated by aspects linked to psychological mobility, self-directedness and value-drivenness, while at the same time they are less motivated by the aspects pertaining to physical mobility. The potential explanation provided by the authors connects this low importance of physical mobility to relative insignificance of money and status in the context of this cultural type, which with greater ease trigger job mobility in more competitively inclined high masculine cultures. Finally, a low power distance culture is related to higher influence of self-directedness factors, congruent with the cultural notion of higher value being put on individual determination and to a lesser degree relying on authority to delineate one's career path.

Furthermore, as noted above, the authors find that country-specific factors help shape career preferences. While the study cannot strictly distinguish between cultural and country-bound factors, it is apparent, that country differences are not attributed to culture alone. For instance, Cadin et al. Cadin, Bailly-Bender, & de Saint-Giniey (2001)(2001) note that the stratification of jobs and careers in France

¹² If indeed the interpretation and meaning of the boundaryless career varies per culture and/or country, than all attempts to devise a uniform "validated" instrument to measure a single (deductive) version of the concept would forfeit the causally relevant variation, and thus potentially deprive the *new career* research of a deeper insight in the logic of its genesis.

corresponds to the hierarchy of technical and general education, this being in contrast to Germany, where there is more equality between these educational trajectories.

9. Conclusion

This study has reviewed the quantitative empirical literature on the alternative career trajectories, focusing especially on the *boundaryless* and *protean* career patterns, which have been receiving increasing attention in the context of career research in the last decennium. While there are multiple theoretical works that discuss the emergence of the post-traditional career trajectories and their (allegedly) dominant position on the labor market, the empirical evidence to support these claims was lacking until recently. The growing academic and policy-related interest in the alternative career patterns has stimulated research in this subject area. This paper is aimed to critically review and summarize these findings, considering both the determinants and the outcomes of these career trajectories.

In the following paragraphs we will briefly summarize the findings that have been established in the body of this paper. In the beginning of this paper we have departed from a conceptual dichotomy between the traditional and boundaryless careers pattern. Several research questions have been driving our inquiry, whereby we can discern among two types. The first type entails two major concerns which we intended to explore by means of a comparative secondary-source research, namely a) whether the boundaryless career pattern has indeed been as widespread internationally as Arthur & Rousseau (1996) suggest, contesting the traditional career pattern for its dominant position and b) what the determinants of this new career pattern are.

The secondary array of question pertains to the (meta-)theoretical level. For instance, we have initially raised an issue of the exact ontological relationship of the boundaryless career pattern to that of the traditional career, namely whether it is a case of a radical break with the traditional working arrangements, or perhaps the one of continuity or even integration. Another example would be the issue of the duality between objective and subjective career aspects in the light of the boundaryless career research. Although these issues seem purely theoretical, they in fact relate to the practical ways in which new career patterns are conceptualized and studied, and therefore have profound practical consequences for the empirical plane of research (Bourdieu et al., 1991). In this paper we chose, however, to concentrate on the first (empirical) array of issues, while at the same time briefly sketching a set of theoretical questions that can serve to stimulate further research (Collin, 1998; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

We have found that the transformation of the traditional career pattern into the new career arrangements does not occur unconditionally. The humanistic note in the boundaryless/protean career rhetoric, emphasizing the individual ability to direct one's own working life in a self-reliant manner (cfr. Bauman's (2000) *individual de facto*) as well as the thesis regarding the prevalence of the new career pattern, stands to a certain degree in dissonance with the fact, that the enactment of these career types is unequally distributed between such fundamental social characteristics as gender, age and educational levels.

From the data reviewed there emerges a tentative conclusion (albeit one not being absolutely unequivocal across the complete selection of studies) that the boundaryless career pattern is more characteristic for women, especially married and with children, a phenomenon closely related to the family role distribution between both genders. Dual income household is another correlate of the boundaryless pattern. Women seem to be more inclined to exploit the flexibility of the boundaryless career to achieve a more comfortable combination between work and family, as familial care responsibilities still rest largely on their shoulders. At the same time family related factors may provide a buffer that mitigates the negative aspects of the boundaryless/protean pattern. In regard to gender, it was keenly summarized that women must pay a price pursuing the traditional pattern, while men are constrained in choosing a non-traditional one (Valcour & Tolbert, 2003). Women are thus sanctioned in

terms of familial rewards, if they aspire to a traditional career trajectory, resulting in lower marital stability, less chance to be married and lower number of children in comparison with similar male groups. Men, on the other hand, are penalized in terms of career success, e.g. income, if they choose to follow one of the alternative career patterns. In one form or another, and also to a varying degree, this theme emerges in the majority of gender related studies reviewed in this paper, albeit the vision can better be treated as a working hypothesis rather than a definitive conclusion. Unfortunately, due to the virtual absence of research on the specific intricacies of the logic of the relationship between gender-related variables and non-traditional career patterns, it is difficult to arrive at conclusions of general order that could more thoroughly describe the nature of the relationship outside the scope of a single study context.

Reviewing the findings of this study it seems feasible to conclude that the new career pattern is not simply a replacement of the traditional pattern, but rather that it is embedded and rooted in the very same gender-bound factor structure, that initially supported the traditional career (or still supports it in its current form). If that is correct, a set of theoretical questions, peculiar to gendered division of labor in general, can and should be transposed on the subject of new career. It seems only logical, that the boundaryless pattern would inherit all the gender-related limitations of the traditional career by virtue of the mentioned embeddedness. On the other hand, it still has to be determined how exactly the enactment of this new pattern is related to the evolution of the inter-gender relationships in general, and whether the new interpretation of working arrangements results in a more fair (since it is not gender-neutral in either case) distribution of fruits and responsibilities of labor.

The role of age in the context of the new career pattern follows a different logic. While this conclusion does not receive an unequivocal evidential support, it would seem that age has a twofold effect on the boundaryless/protean career, influencing the subjective and objective career aspects in different manners. Physical mobility decreases with age, the trend that is no different from the traditional career pattern, as we have noted previously. However, its effects on the subjective dimension are much less straightforward, some of the research pointing out a negative relationship between age and the new career patterns, while other studies prove otherwise. Although the number of studies dealing with age is not great, it is still possible to discern a provisional pattern in their results. There are two studies (King et al., 2005; Marler et al., 2002) that pertain to mediated (by temporary work agencies) labor markets that stand separately from the rest of the selection. Their results demonstrate a positive relationship between age and (preference for) temporary work arrangements. The situation of temporary agency workers cannot nonetheless be held equal to the rest of the labor market. If we set these two studies apart, the rest follows a more or less clear trend on the subjective dimension (where applicable), namely exhibiting slightly positive correlation with age. The remaining two studies, which construct career types empirically (without thereby using age as determinant) place on the average younger workers in the boundaryless/protean classes. On this basis we can provisionally conclude, that new career patterns are more typical for younger generations, consistent with our initial expectations, albeit some of new career psychological characteristics receive development in later stages of career, a trend that may offset the former bias.

We have also concluded that educational background is related to the structure of career patterns. In itself, the interrelationship between education and career is far from being a newly studied phenomenon. Our concern was, however, whether educational background is related specifically to the *new career* work trajectories (as a dependent variable). Although once again the data do not reveal a pronouncedly uniform picture, a pattern has emerged. First, it seems that the boundaryless/protean career patterns attract relatively more individuals with higher educational levels. It is worth noting though, that not all research is methodologically able to separate the consequences of education from secondary effects, such as age or any other time-bound variable that may predict the propensity towards these career trajectories. Although we have sufficient grounds to accept a working hypothesis that higher educational

levels correlate with the career patterns in question, by no means should we imagine these career types as exceptionally peculiar to the educational elite.

Several authors have voiced a concern (e.g. Gerber et al., 2009; Van Buren, 2003) that the *new career* patterns are not as beneficial as the original hypothesis might have suggested (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The same idea was suggested by some of the empirical trends that we have seen throughout this paper. The postmodernist rhetoric on the career restructuring offers an image of unprecedented individual freedom entailed in the diffusion of organizational borders, and the possibility to navigate career opportunities taking charge of one's own life-project. While a powerful image without doubt, and perhaps doing justice to some aspects (or some cases) of the career type in question, even from a purely theoretical point of view it is self-evident to expect that the decrease in external regulation of working arrangement and the concomitant emphasis on the individual choice and freedom cannot but result in heightened uncertainty (Giddens, 1991). From the perspective of practice, the introduction of uncertainty inherent even to the constructed change of working arrangements automatically implies a certain degree of failure (for instance, employability does not in itself guarantee employment), and any systematic biases pertaining to that degree can lead to unstable and precarious career patterns without an adequate compensation in positive terms for this instability (Van Buren, 2003).

We have searched the body of available empirical material for the outcomes of *new career* trajectories, in terms of both subjective and objective career success. With some additional considerations (elaborated in the corresponding section) we arrive at the twofold conclusion. First, we find that subjective career outcomes (in most cases job/career satisfaction) receive a relatively more negative coloring in the context of the *new career*. We have hypothesized the possibility, that it is not the *new career* pattern as such that causes dissatisfaction with one's work life, but rather the other way around. When the perception of one's career becomes unsatisfying, the individual in question receives an additional incentive to seek remedy through changing his or her working arrangements. Obviously, this consideration does not preclude the opposite logic, where the long-term uncertainty can yield lower satisfaction. Second, the financial aspects of the *new career* pattern seem to be positively correlated with the pattern itself, once again considering the issue of the direction of causality. In the same manner, it is possible that higher earnings, that are likely to go hand in hand with higher degrees of other modes of capital (we can surely draw a parallel here with boundaryless career competencies (DeFillippi & Arthur, 2001)), secure, at least psychologically, the success chance of work-related transitions, thus facilitating more mobile career patterns. Alternatively, the boundaryless/protean career patterns may be inherently more efficient on the average in the context of globalized labor markets.

Subsequently, we have reviewed the determinants pertaining to the cultural and geographical contexts of careers. Although the data on this career determinant category is far from being sufficient, we can still conclude, that cultural modalities influence if not the career pattern choices themselves, then definitely a career taxonomy structure, reshuffling not only the statistical distribution of the working population between the constructed types, but potentially also the specific *interpretation* or the conceptual gestalt of these types. On this basis, we are to suggest, that the empirical study of the *new career* trajectories may be more fruitful when particular qualities of non-traditional career are put in the focus of research, being embedded in the specific contexts of cultural, educational and social-structural country-specific factors. In this fashion the promised polysemy of the *new career* types can be meaningfully explored, and the internal inventory of these types is likely to provide more conceptual clarity (with substantial practical relevance for policy), than attempts to verify a single theoretical concept that is a priori dissociated from the system of relationships that give it its precise form and meaning.

In other words, when the mentioned polysemy of the *new career* concept is broken down per contextual unit of analysis, the conceptual overlap between different types of *new career* trajectories can be

accounted for, and distinctive subtypes can emerge, each with their own set of determinants and problematics. This kind of overlap is readily apparent in the current empirical research, whereby the career patterns of high-ranking managers are meshed with those of contingent workers, both under the banner of the boundaryless career. It is then a legitimate question, whether their similarities pertaining to their “boundaryless” nature have more combining power than their other characteristics, which warrant placing these examples into distinct categories, e.g. precariousness, poverty, career aspirations and so forth. Such enmeshment may easily deprive the new career concepts of their explanatory potential, and impede the empirical research by conjoining the theoretical schemes that should be kept separate, while keeping separate those which could be integrated.

We have concluded our inventory of the new career patterns by reviewing the data describing the degree, to which these career types have pervaded the working lives of employees in the Western economies. The estimations vary per country (cfr. supra) and per chosen operationalization method in a particular study, ranging thus from 6% to 45%, these extremes based on an *a priori* defined set of determining factors on one hand, and on the unidimensional definition of the boundaryless career by proxy of work mobility on the other. While each of these definitional types have their own merits and problems, it is perhaps more advisable to consider the statistically constructed *new career* classes, due to the inductive character of their construction, which is to a greater degree independent from pre-defined theoretical notions. These estimates fall in the middle of the range mentioned hereinabove, amounting to 16% and 30% in two respective instances.

Considering all three approaches to operationalization along with their epistemological and methodological profiles, we can tentatively conclude, that there are no indications that the *new career* types have become dominant on the labor market, at least not in the absolute sense. According to most of the data, these types are, however, able to compete with the traditional career patterns for its followers, leading to the logical conclusion that the latter career variants might still be popular, but have in either case to share that popularity with new, alternative career patterns, whatever their specific gestalt may be. On the other hand, we deem highly unlikely the possibility of *bona fide* rejection of the practical importance of the *new career* theories on the grounds of their alleged empirical marginality. While substantial evidence has been produced in favor of the persistence of the traditional career patterns (Guest & MacKenzie Davey, 1996; Jacoby, 1999; McDonald et al., 2005; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010), it calls for a serious rethinking of the non-traditional career theories in the light of these arguments, with a subsequent theoretical elaboration to account for the contradicting arguments, rather than their abandonment.

Concluding this chapter, we might add a general observation that the gap between theoretical popularity of the *boundaryless* and *protean* career concepts and their (previously lacking) empirical verification has narrowed in the recent years. Various studies employing complex statistical techniques have advanced our insight in the nature of the non-traditional career types, their outcomes and determinants. On the other hand, the same empirical verification brought to the light several epistemological, methodological and theoretical inconsistencies, which will pose a challenge for the future field of contemporary career studies. Many of these problems have already been singled out and discussed to a varying degree of detail (Briscoe & Hall, 2006a; Brocklehurst, 2003; Collin, 1998; Collin & Watts, 1996; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Inkson, 2006b; King et al., 2005). Both the empirical findings and the critique in the wake of their emergence underscore the importance of further development of this career studies branch, as a timely and correct understanding of the ongoing changes of career structures may help us cope with the difficulties they pose and to some degree alleviate the inequalities which inevitably will be produced in the light of the ultimately global character of such changes.

9.1 Study relevance and limitations

9.1.1 Policy relevance

Considering policy-related value of our results we must indeed note that our conclusions are of more relevance to the subsequent academic research on the subject of new careers, rather than supplying immediate evidence for public policy uses. Bourdieu (1991) has postulated that the empirical data make sense only in the light of the theory in which they were cast and organized. Our study has therefore an inherent limitation in the analysis of secondary sources, as their data are not specifically oriented towards the focus of our own (external to them) research, and thus are only able to provide partial answers to the questions we have posed.

The second reason for a limited practical application is that the field of empirical study of non-traditional career patterns is relatively young. The number of studies providing a solid and representative basis for an international comparison is far from being abundant, which in turn diminishes the conclusiveness of the analysis. Nevertheless, we believe a meta-level comparison between various studies per determinant has been useful in revealing several theoretical and methodological problems that could only become clear in a juxtaposition of the otherwise separate inquiries. Although some of these issues are difficult to resolve, the explication thereof may stimulate a more robust empirical approach to the issues of the *new career* patterns. In addition, several tentative conclusions were drawn, which will prove useful to matters of public policy, to the degree in which international career trends resonate with the local context.

Reviewing the conclusions on gender-related variables probably the most eloquent finding is that women must pay a price in terms of familial values for pursuing a traditional career trajectory (insofar the option is still available), while men seem to be systematically sanctioned for attempting less traditional and more flexible career paths. While women-oriented measures are often the subject of policy focus, it is less usual to encounter a concern with how the rigidity of the traditional male gender roles interact with the growing need for flexibility and adaptability in the context of the globalizing economy (Goldberg, 1987), and *in hoc casu* the emerging *new career* trajectories. Men are typically seen as being dominant on the labor market, and correctly so from many perspectives. However, this might no longer be the case at least *in some* aspects of post-traditional career paths, as the shift in emphasis from the objective to subjective success redefines and likely undermines the value of career tokens typically related to the mentioned dominance. In other words, there might be a conflict between the traditional gender role pattern and the adaptive strategies available in the settings of the *new career*. If these strategies are indeed socially and economically sanctioned for men, their long-term employability might suffer due to the sustained rigidity of career behavior.

We have demonstrated that these are predominantly women who inhabit the category of the *disengaged* career, the type that in practical research can often be concealed by the blanket-concept of the post-traditional career. Without a pejorative judgment about either of these career forms, it is possible that some women will benefit from counseling measures aimed at transforming the *disengaged* career patterns into more authentic ones. It has been shown that career insight positively mediates perceived career satisfaction (De Vos & Soens, 2008), implying that a reflexive career approach can be beneficial regardless of the objective career progression, a notion that reflects the tenets of the *new career* theory. Career identity development might also positively influence overall employability, since it is a core meta-skill of the protean career (Hall, 2002).

In regard to education, a similar suggestion can be made. We have demonstrated that lower educational strata have a higher chance to either be trapped in less flexible career patterns, or to follow more

precarious career paths (the “dark side of being protean”) without utilizing the advantages of the flexibility they entail. These groups will also benefit from strengthening their career (meta-)skills through specific training and/or counseling measures.

9.1.2 Relevance for the future research

We have already mentioned that the current study is predominantly intended as the preparation for a longitudinal career study in regard to the alternative career paths. Several theoretical and methodological considerations have emerged in the course of our analysis, that might prove useful both to practical research on the subject and the development of theory in the field.

First of all, we must absolutely stress a certain degree of definitional and/or operationalizational fuzziness of the *new career* concepts existing in the practice of empirical research, especially in regard to *boundaryless career* (cfr. Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). This entails a lack of consensus in regard to how the *new career* trajectories can be operationalized and which non-traditional career settings specifically call for an application of one or another *new career* subtype. It is, for instance, very common to operationalize the boundaryless (and sometimes protean) career paths solely by the means of work mobility, completely disregarding the subjective dimensions thereof. Another type of operationalization entails individual career preferences based on self-reported measures, this time dissociated from the objective career events. While it is clear, that a single way of operationalizing any complex concept is neither practically possible nor feasible for theoretical reasons, a too diverse array of operationalization methods poses a threat of obscuring finer distinctions within the concepts in question. In addition, this state of affairs hinders meaningful direct comparisons between results of empirical studies, as peculiarities in operationalization may impart different semantic connotations on the findings, or simply lead to a fallacy of connecting phenomena that have little in common aside from a shared nomenclature imposed by the researcher.

Aside from the operationalization issues, the notions of the boundaryless/protean career paths receive vastly different conceptualization in the practical research. The idea of the boundaryless career is applied in a spectrum of different situations, the extremes of which are so outstretched, that the justification of all applications in the context of the same theoretical concept can be cast in a doubtful light. The danger here is that the spectrum contains different phenomena, that might share some properties (e.g. higher job mobility), but in essence are not to be combined.

For example, one instance of such application includes working histories of *spouses* of geographically relocated workers. Considering the involuntariness of career movements of the former category, its members are by definition not in full control of their careers, not in the same sense as are high(est)-ranking executive managers, another case of the application of the *boundaryless career* concept. It is not a question whether one of these cases may have been mislabeled (since it is the intention for the concept to be polyvalent). Rather, we ask ourselves whether the broad range of its practical application is not threatening to render the *new career* concept so semantically stretched that it suffers in clarity, and begins to mask certain phenomena instead of clarifying them. In other words, the mentioned sharing of certain (boundaryless) properties may steal the empirical focus from characteristics that justify theoretical separation of career pattern types, thus potentially concealing inequalities between groups of individuals.

What follows practically from the considerations sketched above, is that the *new career* concepts should not be taken for granted in each separate study. The issues with presuppositions of the concept must be explicitly recognized and dealt with, before the empirical exploration of the concept can begin. In other words, we cannot simply accept the theoretical notion of the *boundaryless career* (or any other subtype

for that matter) as a black box, and see how it interacts with external factors. Instead, the box must be opened and its contents treated critically in order to enable the researcher to make conscious epistemological and methodological choices in regard to the relation between the presuppositions of any given *new career* concept and his or her research question (cfr. Bourdieu et al., 1991).

Both sources of theoretical obscurity mentioned are closely related to the unresolved issue of the relationship between the objective working history and the subjective, individual interpretation thereof (Arthur et al., 2005; Khapova, Arthur, & Wilderom, 2007). A general consensus is that both dimensions exhibit specific properties in the context of the *new career*, e.g. high levels of inter-organizational job mobility and value-drivenness. However, it is less clear how these properties interact in that context. For instance, Briscoe et al. (2006) find support for the thesis that job mobility does not have to be actualized in the boundaryless setting; it is the *readiness* to be mobile that counts. In other words, the potential job mobility may or may not be translated into reality, and in this sense boundaryless career can be seen as *strategy*, that can manifest itself in different degrees of physical career mobility.

This idea stands in sharp contrast with the widespread practice of using job mobility as proxy for the *new career* paths. If we extend the mentioned perspective, it is possible that the very same objectively perceivable career trajectory (e.g. stable in terms of low mobility) can receive different and even opposite interpretations as to categorization into the traditional/alternative career taxonomy. In other words, the researcher may classify the same individual career as the traditional or the post-traditional pattern, depending on his or her interpretation of the relationship between the subjective and objective career dimensions. Both classifications would seem methodologically correct (regardless of the apparent logical contradiction), as long as the issue of the mentioned relationship remains inexplicit.

One of the remedies that can be applied to this problem is a strong inductive emphasis in the approach to *career taxonomy construction*, whereby the empirical research would be less driven by *a priori* conceived notions of the post-traditional careers (most frequently resulting in a simplistic dichotomy between the *new career* and its predecessor). In this case, the exact configuration of the boundaryless and protean types *in specific context* could emerge and be studied, including the dynamic between the objective and subjective dimensions (likely resulting in further categorization within each of the *new career* subcategories).

A related issue concerns the normative aspects of the post-traditional career. If there indeed several subtypes of the boundaryless/protean patterns, the deductive approach to empirical research can result in an exclusion of substantial groups of workers from the analysis (Guest & Sturges, 2007). Parallel to the traditional career ideal type, the post-traditional career metaphors exert the same kind of normative power as to construction of the career narrative (whether individual or shared). In this process career paths alternative to the prevalent narrative are often disregarded, and the latter is represented as depicting the vast majority of actual working histories. An example of an expression of such a normative logic might be seen in a claim that the *new career* patterns have become dominant, whilst even the most optimistic estimates do not support this conclusion. It is therefore imperative for empirical research to discern the ideological and normative career aspects.

In other words, just as the notion of traditional career was biased towards white-collar occupations in large companies (Barley, 1989), the post-traditional career theory may exclude normatively atypical (for the boundaryless era) worker strata. One of the most obvious potentialities in this regard is the “dark side of being protean” (Hall, 1996a), whereby very little attention is paid to the downsides of the boundaryless/protean career trajectories, related to insecurity, instability, lower income and career satisfaction. It has been noted that these aspects have been largely neglected in the post-traditional career research (Gerber et al., 2009). It is thus essential for the subsequent research on the subject to

pay due attention to the distribution of both positive and negative dimensions of the post-traditional career patterns.

Another issue that so far has received very little attention is the role of culture and country-related factors, and the fashion in which these shape post-traditional careers. Our review suggests that these factors may indeed exert profound effects not only on the properties of the mentioned career types, but also on the configuration of career type distributions in specific contexts as well. One of the venues for research would thus be (in combination with our previous remarks) to explore how cultural and socio-economic contexts shape post-traditional career forms and paths alternative to them.

Last but not least, a larger methodological issue emerges in the study of careers as the time-bound phenomenon, namely the problem of causality, which we have been able to observe in the career outcomes chapter. For instance, it cannot become clear from cross-sectional research, whether lower career satisfaction is the outcome of the *new career* or its antecedent. Both versions are credible, and perhaps both logics operate at the same time. However, the question is crucial, as it entails an evaluation of the new career pattern either as a useful strategy or as a source of negative career outcomes. It thus necessary to employ longitudinal methods in order to unravel the complex dynamic of causation between various career factors, not only in relation to career outcomes, but also in general.

9.1.3 Limitations of the study

One of the obvious limitations of this study is the scarcity of empirical material in the area of boundaryless and protean careers. The available research is often based on samples, representativeness of which to the population in general is restricted. This grants some of the conclusions we have reached in this study a tentative status, and renders them a subject for further investigation.

The second limitation pertains to the general nature of our comparisons. We have deliberately chosen to review a range of determinants to the extent of their visibility in the empirical research. An alternative approach would be to explore a single area (e.g. gender) in more depth, crossing the borders of the boundaryless/protean career studies and using neighboring studies to deepen the understanding of a particular aspect of *new career* patterns. For instance, it would be possible to examine the issue of gender in job mobility studies, or to explore the value of self-managing behaviors in relation to career success. Instead, we chose to concentrate on the protean/boundaryless career research, and we hope that this approach has allowed us to connect different areas of otherwise disconnected fields.

9.1.4 A word of thanks

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