

Career Development¹²

A career has been defined as “the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person’s life” (Hall, 1976, p. 4). Importantly, this definition recognizes that everyone has a career (not only professionals or managers) (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2013). Several popular conceptualizations of careers exist, including the boundaryless and the protean career. The “boundaryless” career concept recognizes that over the past several decades careers have become increasingly independent from traditional organizational arrangements (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). A “protean” career is one that is under the control of the individual rather than the organization (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Individuals pursuing a protean career are focused on psychological success through continuous learning and identity development.

A major theme within the career development literature concerns career success. Career success is commonly viewed from both a subjective and an objective perspective. Subjective or psychological career success refers to the personal appraisal of one’s career accomplishments, recognizing that individuals vary in what they value in a career (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2013). Objective career success is based on externally verifiable accomplishments, which include income, promotions or advancement, and occupational status (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2013). Four sets of variables have been identified as predictors of career success; they include human capital (e.g., education), organizational sponsorship (e.g., mentoring), socio-demographic status (e.g., gender), and stable individual differences (e.g., cognitive ability; Ng, Eby, Sorenson, & Feldman, 2005). Each category of predictors is associated with career success, with some differential prediction across objective and subjective career success. For example, as a group human capital and socio-demographic variables are generally more highly related to objective career success while organizational sponsorship and stable individual differences are more strongly associated with subjective career success (Ng et al., 2005). Within this stream of research, diversity issues often take center stage as one’s membership in certain subgroups has been associated with variance in employment patterns and opportunities. For example, the career patterns of men and women differ as well as their career outcomes. Women tend to change their careers to fit their relationships and roles in new ways (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Moreover, the objective career outcomes achieved by women continue to lag behind that of men (Ng et al., 2005).

Primarily driven by theory based on Levinson’s (1986) stages of adult life, careers research takes a developmental approach, recognizing that career challenges and concerns evolve and change across the lifespan. Early career issues concern vocational choice, socialization into the organization, and being mentored by others (Allen & Eby, 2007; Chao, 2007). Mid-career issues include managing work and family roles, becoming a mentor to others, and achieving occupational success (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010). Later career issues concern avoiding obsolescence, managing stereotypes about older workers, and

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² Please cite as: Career Development. (2018, August 28). Retrieved from <https://www.siop.org/Events-Education/Educators/Incorporating-I-O>

preparation for retirement (Wang, Olson, & Shultz, 2012). Each of these topics (e.g., mentoring, work-family, retirement) has their own unique body of literature.

Organizations play a role in helping employees develop and navigate career issues across the lifespan through implementation of various programs. Such programs cut across all areas of industrial-organizational psychology and include employee on-boarding, formal mentoring programs, 360-degree feedback, career management programs, leadership development programs, flexible work arrangements, and phased retirement, to name a few (Greenhaus et al., 2010).

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