The interplay of boundaryless and protean careers: Combinations and implications

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Abstract

The boundaryless and protean career concepts are compared in this article. It is suggested that the theories can be more finely delineated to produce more effective theory and research. The boundaryless career concept is profiled according to Sullivan and Arthur's (this issue) categories of psychological and physical boundarylessness. The protean career concept is discussed based upon the degree of self-directed and values driven career orientations a career actor demonstrates. We join these respective boundaryless and protean delineations to produce eight likely career profiles based upon combinations of the boundaryless and protean career orientations. These eight profiles are examined in terms of challenges to career actors and those who assist them in their career development.
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Keywords: Protean career; Boundaryless career; Career development

1. Introduction

In Giacomo Puccini's opera "Madame Butterfly" we are presented with two strikingly different characters. Cio-Cio San (Madame Butterfly) is a 15-year-old Japanese girl in Nagasaki who falls in love with Captain Pinkerton, while he is in port with the US Navy. Completely committed in her love for him, and the relationship she has been led to believe in, she faithfully awaits his next visit and the time when they can be bound together in more enduring fashion. Captain

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Pinkerton's devotion on the other hand is ephemeral. While he roams the world his devotion is to the relationship of the moment. When his true nature and lack of loyalty become revealed, Cio-Cio San is overcome and unable to go on, takes her own life.

In our minds, this tragic story demonstrates dramatically how a strong sense of identity and values as well as adaptability and boundarylessness are needed to successfully navigate the course of one's life. Captain Pinkerton is physically boundaryless and adaptive—able to cross the world and find himself at home wherever he travels. But he is without a home port in terms of moral guidance and identity. In stark contrast, Madame Butterfly is teeming with devotion to her values, yet in the end she is unable to adapt to a world in which her values cannot find their ideal fulfillment.

What are the lessons of such a tale for careers? While the consequences of a career are usually far less dramatic than Madame Butterfly's saga, we argue that a sense of identity and values can guide one's career. The ability to adapt and be flexible can substantially shape the direction, potential, and success of the career as well. We suggest that such abilities represent two broad metacompetencies—identity and adaptability (Briscoe & Hall, 1999; Hall, 2002). We further submit that the protean and boundaryless career approaches with their respective emphases on value expression (Hall, Briscoe, & Kram, 1997) and "knowing why" (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996) as well as independent career management and opportunity-seeking are promising as orientations that will lead to clearer identity and enhanced adaptability.

To explore various career possibilities, we analyze the boundaryless and protean career models—separately and in combination. We suggest eight probable career profiles based upon combinations of the boundaryless and protean career dimensions and discuss career challenges and potential interventions for individuals as well as those who assist them in career development.

2. Discovering career possibilities through exploring boundaryless and protean careers

The boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and protean (Hall, 1996, 2002) career concepts seem to be ideal for examining the strengths and weaknesses of various career orientations. The boundaryless career emphasizes the seemingly infinite possibilities the career presents and how recognizing and taking advantage of such opportunities leads to success (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). The protean career is one that emphasizes a self-directed approach to the career, and a career that is driven by ones own values (Briscoe & Hall, 2002).

In the last several years, the protean and boundaryless career concepts have framed the thinking of academics and career practitioners. They have enjoyed considerable success as accepted metaphors in the field of career theory. This popularity attests to the appropriateness and timeliness of these metaphors to describe the current economic and employment relationships that are defined in many cases by less loyalty, greater mobility, and less certainty (Cappelli, 1999; Rousseau, 1995).

We believe that while the two concepts are indeed useful, they have sometimes been interpreted simplistically and at times too intertwined as symbols of the new career. Conceptual clarity of the two metaphors will advance theory-building and research in this area. Furthermore, clarifying the protean and boundaryless dimensions allows a more careful examination of potential career combinations. Exploring such combinations, as we do in this paper, produces a richer understanding of the myriad career experiences that can be encountered in career theory and research.

2.1. The boundaryless career

Arthur and Rousseau (1996) describe boundaryless careers as not bounded, not tied to a single organization, not represented by an orderly sequence, marked by less vertical coordination and stability … "Put simply, *boundaryless* careers are the opposite of "organizational careers"—careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting (1996: 5). DeFillippi and Arthur (1996) offered a congruent explanation of the boundaryless career that revolves around opportunities across organizational boundaries which has often been interpreted by others as interfirm mobility (Eby, 2001). Miner and Robinson (1994) summarized the boundarlyless career as organizational membership, departmental identity, and job duties that are ambiguous.

The definitions above seem to gravitate around the notion of the career transcending organizational boundaries, and this is the obvious conclusion and popularly cited feature of the boundaryless career concept. Yet, the boundaryless career is much more. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) offer six "meanings" of the boundaryless career, including reference to career support through extra-organizational networks, personal-family boundaries that impact the career, and the subjective interpretation of the career by the career actor. As outlined by Sullivan and Arthur (this issue), the boundaryless career is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses and transcends various boundaries and levels of analysis—physical and psychological, objective and subjective.

2.2. The protean career

Hall and his colleagues (Hall, 1996; Hall et al., 1997; Hall & Moss, 1998; Mirvis & Hall, 1996) have focused primarily upon the subjective perspective of the individual career actor who faces the external career realities of the contemporary business environment. They have characterized the protean career as being driven by the person, not the organization, based upon individually defined goals, encompassing the whole life space, as well as being driven by psychological success rather than objective success such as pay, rank, or power (Hall, 2002).

We argue that a person's career perception can manifest itself as greater and lesser degrees of a protean career orientation. This orientation represents a self-directed perspective in looking at one's career that provides a guide to action. In that sense, it is similar to an attitude (McGuire, 1985), which has a cognitive component (a set of beliefs about the career), an evaluative component (a sense of what would be a "good career" or a "bad career" for oneself), and a behavioral component (an action tendency or a predisposition to behave in certain ways). Thus, the protean career orientation does not imply particular behavior, such as job mobility, but rather it is a mindset about the career—more specifically an attitude toward the career that reflects freedom, self-direction, and making choices based on one's personal values. As Hall and Chandler (2004) have discussed, the extreme form of this protean career perspective would occur when the person's attitude toward her career reflects a sense of calling in her work—that is an awareness of a purpose that gives deep meaning to the career.

2.3. Boundaryless and protean careers as overlapping but distinct concepts

It should be noted that while the protean and boundaryless concepts are fairly distinct, they have shared substantial overlap in academics' theoretical and empirical

efforts. Hall (1996) has suggested that the protean career can play itself out in multiple organizations. In some cases, the two concepts have been used almost synonymously. For example, Hall et al. (1997) concluded that because certain employees were not more mobile, they were therefore not as boundaryless or protean. Yet, Briscoe and DeMuth (2003) recently found that managers in many companies were perceived to exhibit various characteristics of the protean career (e.g., greater attention to personal values, greater emphasis upon work-life balance), while at the same time not exhibiting the mobility that is usually assumed to characterize a boundaryless orientation. Further, research in this issue (Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006) demonstrates that some have strong boundaryless and protean attitudes although they do not all have an inclination toward physical mobility.

Thus, greater conceptual precision is needed in describing the boundaryless and protean career orientations. Otherwise, these metaphors will not be adequate to describe the assorted career conditions perceived by people across the world. Furthermore, the theories may lose their efficacy and relevance for researchers if they cannot be effectively and precisely used to understand the reality of the people and organizations under study.

In this vein, researchers' inability to fully explain their empirical findings with the protean and boundaryless metaphors is already evident, which is supporting a predictable, if modest, backlash against these career paradigms. For example, based upon their research, Craig and Kimberly (2002) challenge whether careers are or can be generalized as "boundaryless" at all based upon the inherent interplay in the career between structure and agency. It may be that a more precise and less holistic notion of boundaryless would make such a conclusion less tenable. In the same study cited earlier, Gratton, Zaleska, and de Menezes (2004) conclude there is no increase in boundarylessness in several companies they studied over the last decade. Their study suggests that only traditionally non-privileged employees become more boundaryless with greater development and opportunities. But this conclusion also rests upon a very dichotomous view of boundarylessness—one that equates it only with employment mobility.

While these popular conceptions of career have been thought of as ubiquitous and inevitable by many academics, they are not obvious to many "people on the street." When presented these career templates, a typical response from some students and clients is one of surprise and curiosity, but not always recognition. Beyond being logical theoretical constructs, do the protean and boundaryless career concepts speak to people's experience of their careers? Certainly they do for some. But can they more broadly encompass the subjective field of experience in modern and not so modern organizations? And what of the many career actors whose careers do not center upon a single employer? We believe that the protean and boundaryless concepts can speak to people's experiences, and that this can be more quickly and effectively achieved with a more precise understanding of the unique interplays and combinations of the protean and boundaryless careers. By creating more, and more accurate categories of modern careers that do not simply dichotomize one as "boundaryless" or not, "protean" or not—the possibility that laypeople can identify their own career identities, opportunities, and structures is greatly enhanced.

3. Boundaryless and protean careers

We now explore the boundaryless and protean careers separately, before combining them and discussing the implications of various combinations.

3.1. Clarifying the boundaryless career

As described by Sullivan and Arthur (this issue), the boundaryless career can be considered broadly along dimensions of physical and/or psychological mobility. This transcends the simplicity sometimes assigned to the boundaryless career as being synonymous with only physical mobility or with the protean career. Thus, Sullivan and Arthur classify boundaryless careers into four broad quadrants. In quadrant 1 are careers considered to be low in both physical and psychological mobility; in quadrant two careers are considered to exhibit high physical but low psychological mobility; in quadrant 3 careers exhibit strong psychological but not physical mobility; and, finally in quadrant 4 careers exhibit both physical and psychological mobility. If considered, these variations should help theorists and researchers to be more precise in their scholarly pursuits in this area. We now turn our attention to the protean career in a similar way.

3.2. Clarifying the protean career

Consistent with recent iterations of protean career theory (Briscoe & Hall, 2002) we define the protean career as a career in which the person is (1) *values driven* in the sense that the person's internal values provide the guidance and measure of success for the individual's career; and (2) *self-directed*[1] in personal career management—having the ability to be adaptive in terms of performance and learning demands. We are more concerned here with the stance or "orientation" one takes toward the career rather than the career structure itself.

Based upon this rendering of the protean career, people can be higher or lower, weaker or stronger, in terms of being values driven, and/or self-directed in career management. These different combinations of the two components of the protean career orientation are shown in the upper section of Table 1. It is the union of such attitudes and behaviors that results in one being considered to fully demonstrate a protean career orientation.

There are four primary categories of career as seen through the protean lens—dependent, reactive, rigid, and protean. A person who is neither values driven nor self-directed in terms of career management would be considered "dependent," as they are really unable to define priorities or behaviorally manage their career on their own. A person who is not values driven but who is self-directed in career management would not ultimately have the perspective to guide his or her own career sufficiently. Such a person would be "reactive." And people who are values driven but not self-directed, not able to adapt to the performance and learning requirements of their career—cannot be said to be able to fully shape their own career. We would define such a career orientation as "rigid." Those with a "protean" career orientation on the other hand are both values driven in defining their career priorities and identity, as well as self-directed in adapting to the performance and learning demands of the career. Such people are thus more able to lead themselves and others, are more capable of continuous learning, and thus "transformational."

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[1] (Sullivan, Carden, & Martin, 1998) also use the term "self-directed" in their "Career Grid" which shares some similar dimensions to our Table 1. However, we use self-directed as an approach to active career management whereas their use of the term is closer to what we define as "values-driven."

Table 1
Likelihood of protean and boundaryless combinations

		Protean			
	Values driven?	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Self-directed career management?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Boundarylessness		*Dependent*	*Rigid*	*Reactive*	*Protean (transformational)*
Physical mobility	Psychological mobility?				
No	No	Medium	High	Low	Low
Yes	No	Medium	Low	Low	Low
No	Yes	Low	High	Medium	High
Yes	Yes	Low	Low	Medium	High

Thus, we see a multiplicity of possibilities in career profiles that consider the protean perspective, but not as a simple monolithic application that dichotomizes one as exhibiting the "new" career or not.

4. Combining the boundaryless and protean careers

Just as there is utility in defining intricacies within the protean and boundaryless career concepts, there is also value in exploring the richness of protean and boundaryless *combinations*.

If one overlaps the protean and boundaryless categories presented in the previous section, it results in 16 possible combinations. Each of the combinations represents a career profile that is high or low in four areas: values driven and self-directed (both of these being equated with protean careers); and, psychological and physical mobility (both of these being equated with the boundaryless career).

While multiple possibilities provide greater utility to the theorist and researcher, some may in fact only be *possibilities*, but not likely to occur in the natural environment of today's career actors. Furthermore, emphasizing endless possibilities may result in unnecessary complication or confusion, which ironically would thwart efforts to make the new career forms more, not less accessible to study.

As such, in Table 1, we rate the 16 possible combinations of protean and boundaryless careers according to how likely they are to be encountered in contemporary career contexts (high, medium, or low likelihood). These judgments are subjective on the authors' part, and others may arrive at different conclusions.

We used a simple process of determining how readily we could generate real-life examples of each of the possible career profiles by reflecting upon our collective experience with thousands of students, clients, acquaintances, and even examples from popular culture. For example, we could not conceive of or recollect a "transformational" career actor (high in self-directed and values driven in the protean orientation) who was lacking in psychological boundarylessness. On the other hand, we could readily identify examples of people with a "rigid" career posture (high in values driven but not very self-directed) who lacked a boundaryless orientation in terms of psychological and physical dimensions.

From the matrix represented in Table 1, we turn our focus to the eight combinations of career profiles whose likelihood we consider to be medium or high. By specifying the degree to which one's orientation toward their career can be described in terms of protean and boundaryless dimensions, it is possible to explore the personal challenges a given career actor will likely face in maintaining their career status quo (which is not always desirable). More importantly, we also address the developmental challenges and opportunities that present themselves to those who wish to strengthen their career profiles; such challenges and opportunities are also relevant for employing organizations, career counselors, support groups, partners, mentors, and other parties interested in helping people with career development.

The power of competencies in combination has recently been demonstrated in the leadership literature (Zenger & Folkman, 2002). Understanding the specific strengths of a given career profile allows the possibility of more carefully developing powerful combinations of career competencies.

5. Characteristics and development challenges for specific career profiles

By specifying problems and opportunities that go beyond the simplified "protean" or "boundaryless" careers, it is possible to more precisely understand and potentially influence people with various career profiles.

People and the organizations work with are likely to face different challenges depending upon their career profile. The assorted combinations of career profiles developed here are displayed in Table 2. These profiles are presented as hybrids between protean and boundaryless careers and archetypes of likely career combinations. The personal challenges listed under the second column from the right in Table 2 are challenges individuals must meet simply to maintain their career status quo. The development challenges in the final column are relevant for career actors, but also for the many individuals, organizations, and agencies that have some active interest or stake in a person's career development.

5.1. Trapped/lost

We consider those who are low in all four areas spanning the protean and boundaryless career dimensions to be "trapped" or "lost." Such people are trapped or lost in the sense that their lack of emphasis on inner values (which could direct them), or on boundaryless perspectives (which could uncover assorted options) ultimately restricts them to very narrow possibilities over which they have little control.

In such a state, the career actor's simple challenge is to react quickly enough to survive. People who are trapped/lost are reduced to reactive instead of more proactive behavior (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999) because of their passivity and inability to see possibilities across boundaries (Arthur et al., 1999). The success of a person in such a condition—in terms of survival or better—probably depends more on luck and circumstance than on anything within their direct control.

We submit that those in the lost or trapped condition can be helped through very basic career development processes such as values clarification and attempts to increase self-efficacy (Betz, 1992, 2002) as it relates to the career. Career exploration activities such as informational interviews can also unfreeze them and motivate them about new possibilities, both in terms of opportunities in the world (external exploration) and their own values and interests (internal exploration.) Those interested in educating lost or

Table 2
Protean and boundaryless combinations: Career profiles and development challenge

Protean: Self-directed career management	Protean: Values driven	Boundaryless: Psychological mobility	Boundaryless: Physical mobility	Hybrid category/ archetypes	Career actor's personal challenge in maintaining status Quo	Career actor's and supporting groups' career development challenge
Low	Low	Low	Low	"Lost" or "Trapped"	React quickly to opportunities, survive.	Clarify priorities, gain career management skills, expand perspective.
Low	High	Low	Low	"Fortressed"	Find stable, opportunities in predictable organizations that match values.	Broaden in terms of open-mindedness and self-direction. Otherwise, person and employers will suffer unless this person is a perfect fit for an extremely stable situation/organization.
Low	Low	Low	High	"Wanderer"	Continuously find new rides to "hitch."	Help develop self-direction, establish whether fit good after this is achieved.
Low	High	High	Low	"Idealist"	Finding organizations that match values, curiosity, but don't require mobility.	Find challenges to push out of comfort zone and help build adaptability skills—in terms of mindset and working across boundaries.
High	Low	High	Low	"Organization man/ woman"	Find stable organizations in which basic performance competence can be demonstrated.	Don't be seduced by performance ability. Increase self-awareness to make leader of high performer.
High	High	High	Low	"Solid Citizen"	Person-organization fit a must. Mobility a threat.	Maintain diversity of talent but leverage solid citizen's contributions.
High	Low	High	High	"Hired Gun/hired hand"	Identify and respond to best opportunities for providing services across boundaries	Convert talented, reactive person into effective, self-aware leader with a sense of priorities.
High	High	High	High	"Protean Career Architect"	Leverage capability into meaningful impact	Provide stages on which to shine, learn, engage. Temper if needed.

trapped people will want to expose them to teams and groups outside of their organization, trade group or industry and give them opportunities to become more boundaryless in thought and action. Such individuals should be held accountable for their behavior in a way that encourages and reinforces autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The risk with such an individual, of course, is they may avoid these very experiences and interventions that will help them. This raises a dilemma as to how to reach and help such members of any society with the greatest need in adapting to modern economic life.

5.2. Fortressed

Unlike the trapped or lost career actor, one who is fortressed is very clear on personal values. However, such people are inflexible in their ability to direct their own career behavior and to recognize opportunities across psychological and physical boundaries. Thus, fortressed career actors are only satisfied in conditions which match their values *and* which are stable. Such career contexts my indeed give rise to and sustain the fortressed career perspective, but they are seemingly harder to find, because of the flux presented by the new economy. The challenge of those with fortressed careers, then, is to find a stable situation (organization, business opportunity, etc.) that matches his or her strongly held values.

These career actors and some organizations may be persuaded that such a career stance is a good thing. After all, employees with strong values agree that they have found the ideal place in which to fulfill those values, and such perceived fit has been shown to result in satisfaction (Chatman, 1989). However, we argue that this perspective is ultimately too restricted to an unrealistic set of conditions. The probability that individual circumstance, employment or business conditions will change is high, in view of the rate of failed entrepreneurial start-ups, organizational life spans (Senge, 1990) etc., so the desired fit may be short-lived.

Those wishing to modify such a career perspective will want to stimulate awareness and exploration of opportunities across boundaries and develop the behavioral skills the person needs to independently pursue, or at least appreciate such opportunities. Opportunities to reflect on and challenge the person's current career situation (such as through the Intelligent Career Card Sort, Parker & Arthur, 2000), seem especially relevant for this group.

5.3. The wanderer

The perspective of the wanderer is one of an individual who is very boundaryless physically, but not so psychologically, and who is very low in the protean dimensions. The wanderer is willing to link up with whatever opportunities come along and does not see organizational or geographical boundaries as a barrier in this pursuit. The limitation of such career actors comes in the sense that their psychological appreciation across boundaries is not as sophisticated as their ability to be physically mobile. And because they are not truly self-directed in terms of values or career management, wanderers are essentially controlled by opportunities instead of directing them. The challenge for those with a wanderer career profile in maintaining the status quo is simply in finding new rides to "hitch."

To change this career pattern, wanderers need to learn how to become attuned to their core values and not surrender to the expediency of the latest opportunity. Because such opportunists may skip from organization to organization, it may be difficult for organiza-

tions to identify and help them. Successful wanderers may even be less likely to get help because failure does not catch up with them as easily, a situation (failure) more likely to generate potentially life and career altering exploration (Hall, 1986).

While it seems obviously in wanderers' self-interest to define priorities more clearly and navigate their career boundaries more thoughtfully, it seems to be in the interest of any employing organization as well. Whether a "wandering" employee becomes a long term employee or not (which is more likely if "wandering" possibilities exist *within* an organization we would suggest), their contributions will be richer and more effective when they are informed by values and informed boundary-crossing, not just reactive opportunity-seeking.

5.4. The idealist

We use the "idealist" label to describe more broadly the interesting group of people who are very values driven and psychologically boundaryless, but who are not necessarily effective in career self-management nor in crossing physical boundaries. The curious professor, bound to the university, comes to mind, just as could a computer programmer who is willing to consult others around the globe to get advice, but who is clumsy when it comes to intelligently managing career issues and is tethered geographically.

The challenge of such people is to find, maintain, and protect (or be protected by) a career situation that allows them to be idealistic but does not require them to be flexible. The stereotyped "ivory tower" might be such a refuge for academics. Finding a place with a strong values fit is ideal for such a person because it probably means that an employing institution is as interested in maintaining like-minded members as the members are in maintaining the institution. But, true to the ivory tower metaphor, not just any organization will do. It must be one that allows the career actor to peer beyond their borders, literally or figuratively.

The challenge to stretch the idealist developmentally is to get them out of their comfort zones by encouraging (or even requiring) them to manage their own career more, to immerse themselves in opportunities for physical mobility, and to somehow nudge them in to action. Many multinational companies for example, have reaped the rewards of managers on the executive track who have been required to stretch their geographical boundaries and returned with greater insight for themselves and the organization (Osland, 2001). In the academic realm, the concept of sabbatical offers a similar opportunity if it is leveraged correctly. Career actors who are self-employed or who do not have built in organizational encouragement for such developmental opportunities would be wise to join support groups and to engage in mentoring opportunities where possible (Hall et al., 1997).

5.5. Organization man/woman

We use this label to designate those who have strong ability in taking charge of career management, but who are not terribly clear on their own values, and who are also able to work well across boundaries psychologically, although not as willing to do so physically. Such people are somewhat opportunistic in directing their career to match the needs of others, typically an organization, while their own needs may be less than lucid (in terms of values). They are not interested in mobility if they can avoid it, but are willing to work across boundaries from a set location.

This career perspective is potentially dangerous for career actors and organizations they are a part of alike. This is because the person and their organization(s) may find outward success and recognition in fulfilling organizational goals, but never reach greater potential (e.g., to lead) because their own values have not been sufficiently realized nor relied upon.

Experiences that force people out of their comfort zone can potentially cause greater introspection and values clarification (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Maslow, 1962). One approach may lay in becoming more physically boundaryless, getting exposed to new perspectives and having one's values challenged. However, the career actor will wish to seek, and organizations may want to offer extra support and a buffer of reassurance so that otherwise risk-averse career actors will be willing to take such chances and anticipate genuine opportunities as a consequence. In addition, encouraging reflection is an effective way to encourage better identifying and harvesting of lessons learned (Hall, 2002; Seibert & Daudelin, 1999).

5.6. Solid citizen

Solid citizens are protean in the sense of being both self-directed in career management and values driven. They are psychologically boundaryless, but for whatever reason they are not physically boundaryless. This may be due to preference or to circumstance. One character who seems to match this definition is George Bailey in the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." In the movie, George (played by Jimmy Stewart) is a very capable individual, well-grounded, adaptive, and curious about the world. But medical problems and war prevent him from leaving his small town, and he establishes a career that causes him to put down various roots that make it hard to be mobile. Yet he "blooms where planted" by defining values for himself and adding value for others within his defined geographical context.

No doubt many contemporary career actors are in a similar situation in which they are fully capable of and willing to embrace a full range of career potentialities, but are immobile for any number of reasons. Such people ideally need to find a "home" for their career that matches their strong values, allows them autonomy, and enables them to satisfy their curiosity and learning drive through their work. Organizations, partners, and others tied into solid citizens' careers need to recognize their mobility limitations, but also leverage their considerable contributions. Beyond this, organizations need to make sure that they are selecting and developing a diversity of contributors if they wish to remain adaptive, including people with the ability to be more physically mobile as is necessary for continued organizational performance.

5.7. Hired gun/hired hand

Some people may emphasize directing their career management activity, and be willing to work across not only psychological boundaries—but physical ones as well. But they may not be values driven—with a clear sense of priorities for their career contributions. Their gun or hand is for hire, but not their heart. We label such a person a "hired gun" or "hired hand"—in the sense that they are able to be mobile and adaptive in managing their career across boundaries, but not very good at defining and responding to their own values. The challenge of the hired gun/hand in maintaining the status quo becomes one of identifying the best opportunities that take advantage of and reward their abilities.

On the other hand, the developmental challenge is to more fully inculcate the values dimension within such people. In this way, it might be possible to persuade the hired gun/hand into becoming more of a self-leader and potentially a leader of others. Without the values dimension, the hired gun/hand seems destined to be a productive tool and resource at best, but not a leader that can ultimately drive change.

5.8. Protean career architect

We label as "the protean career architect" the career actor who is psychologically as well as physically boundaryless, who actively directs his or her own career management, and who is driven by personal values in their quest to define meaning and success through the career. That is, they combine all of the potential of both protean and boundaryless career perspectives. In a political realm, an archetype of such a career would be emulated by Mahatma Gandhi, whose conviction, self-regulation, open-mindedness, and travels made him a leader for the whole world to be served by. A less monumental but still inspiring example from the realm of business would be Percy Barnevik, who organized the Asea Brown Boveri multinational organization through attention to common values and respect for other cultures, and inculcated leadership, career development skills, and a requisite global boundarylessness among the company's leadership ranks (Kets deVries & Florent-Treacy, 1999).

The challenge for such a person may be in deciding where to apply their considerable ability. In what realms can their life and career have the greatest impact in terms of what they value most? This career perspective in all likelihood does not apply to many people. We wonder if questions of balance become an issue for the protean career architect.

The abilities and rarity of a protean architect also imply that few organizations, associations or groups will have the luxury of "managing" such a leader. When they do, their challenge may be one of boundary management. That is, how can they help the inspired leader transcend boundaries and obtain resources to accomplish truly marvelous things? And who in the career actor's environment can recognize and rein in a protean career architect who could be defined as a global leader but who may have become overly quixotic, or even unethical (Conger, 1990) along the way?

6. Conclusion

Utilizing the boundaryless and protean career templates specifically, we have shown that both within *and* across these contemporary career metaphors, there is ample opportunity for more deconstruction and for more generative combinations. The goal of this cognitive exercise is practical—to generate richer theory, more precise research, and more effective career intervention.

An inherent limitation to our presentation here is our reliance upon metaphors ("the substitution of a concept … by another that is typically more concrete and more striking" [Inkson, 2002, 15]) to illustrate types of career orientations. As Inkson suggests, few if any metaphors perfectly encapsulate the phenomena they hope to symbolize, and ours are no exception. However, metaphors seem particularly well-suited to introducing new stories and establishing new connections between career theory and experience in ways not possible at this time using more clinical and exact constructs.

A future task, subsequent to this article, would be to develop more precise theory tied to a variety of relevant fields that allows a finer conceptual sifting of the career experiences occurring in contemporary society. And of even greater need, are more empirical studies that help us understand continuing and emerging career varieties. This should include rich theory-generating (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) study as well as quantitative study using finer and more sophisticated constructs to capture the diversity of today's careers and the consequence of assorted career orientations.

Beyond types of career orientation, it seems that a major area of research energy should be devoted to how career actors can be made aware of their orientation, their opportunities (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996) and context. We have hinted at some of the general directions such intervention might take but much more is needed.

Such effort may require more attention to context than has occurred in the past, and we acknowledge a lack of attention to this issue as a limitation of this present article. For while the boundaryless approach emphasizes opportunity and the protean approach emphasizes agency, neither gives adequate tactics for understanding and navigating the broad economic context. It may be that career actors need more specific understandings of their environment(s) to hope to truly find agency within them.

And likely, the protean and boundaryless metaphors will play out very differently in non-Western and non-Anglo cultures (Briscoe, 2004; Dany, 2003). Each of these metaphors speaks to agency, individualism, and opportunity which are as much cultural values as they are objective possibilities (Inkson, this issue). It is beyond the scope of this article, but future career metaphors and constructs will ideally be developed to more fully understand careers in all cultures.

Turning back to the individual as the unit of analysis, we suggest that research examine specific problems and opportunities related to self-awareness and motivation to change, associated with various career profiles such as those we present. As individuals follow their own scripts they will face unique challenges in being aware of themselves, alternate career possibilities, and change strategies.

Consider again the examples of Cio-Cio San and Captain Pinkerton in "Madame Butterfly." Each of them had a particular blind spot based as much on their strength as their weakness. They lacked a wider self-awareness and/or willingness to change, which tragically limited them both. With possible assistance from others, Cio-Cio San may have seen herself as "fortressed," and been taught to see the possibilities beyond the immediate situation that her values seemed to support. And maybe, with similar assistance and reflection Captain Pinkerton could see the limitations in being essentially a "wanderer" and learn how more disciplined self-awareness and priority-setting could bring a more ultimately rewarding life.

A happier example would be Ebenezer Scrooge from Dickens' classic, "The Christmas Carol." Through the personal feedback that he received from his frightening experiences with the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Future, Scrooge had a chance to look in the mirror and receive some feedback on the way his behavior impacted the lives of others, and he did not like what he saw. As a result he became much clearer on the values that were most important to him, and he saw the happier potential of his behaving according to what he truly esteemed. He was still very self-directed but in a manner that was values driven, from the heart. And he also saw that the boundary between himself and other people, such as the Cratchits, was much more permeable than he had originally thought, so that he felt a new connection to

them. He was given the gift of time to adapt and correct his mistakes and change his behavior. The result was a transformation of his relationships and much greater happiness for himself and those around him. Thus, through his transformation, he became at once both more protean and more boundaryless. We would argue that similar transformations in career perspectives are possible in the modern world, and we would encourage research that will provide us with rich real-world stories of how this development process can happen.

Acknowledgments

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