

# The Contemporary Career: A Work–Home Perspective

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## Abstract

This article proposes a perspective on careers that recognizes the interdependencies between work and home over the life course and is particularly suitable to contemporary careers. We first discuss the meaning of a work–home (WH) perspective and elaborate on the economic, organizational, and workforce changes that have affected contemporary careers. We then illustrate the implications of adopting a WH perspective for four streams of scholarship relevant to contemporary careers (career self-management, career success, global careers, and sustainable careers), suggest directions for future research in each area, and discuss the practical implications of adopting a WH perspective. We conclude that contemporary careers can be better understood by considering how employees' home lives influence and are influenced by career processes and that the adoption of a WH perspective requires understanding the role of gender norms in prescribing and sanctioning women's and men's participation in the work and home domains in a given culture.

## INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the difference between a job and a career is the difference between forty and sixty hours a week. However, the essence of the career concept does not depend upon the number of hours committed to work. Rather, a career is generally viewed as the pattern or sequence of work experiences that evolve over time, that is, over the life course (Arthur et al. 1999, Moen & Roehling 2005). Viewing a career as the evolution of work experiences over the life course implies that all individuals who are engaged in work-related activities have a career, thereby rejecting the overly restrictive constraints that have historically equated a career with a high level of work commitment, professional status, rapid upward mobility, or stability in an occupation (Greenhaus et al. 2010).

It is essential to understand career dynamics not only because all employees have a career but also because careers have substantial implications for organizational performance (Higgins & Dillon 2007), personal identity, health, and well-being (Christie & Barling 2006, Valcour et al. 2007). Moreover, because careers are enacted within social contexts that include individuals' families, employers, and national cultures (Mayrhofer et al. 2007), understanding how careers evolve provides insights into the connections between individuals and the broader societies in which they live. An examination of the contemporary career, that is, the career enacted in the early portion of the twenty-first century, is particularly timely in light of substantial changes in the economy, work organizations, and families over the past several decades that have transformed careers in significant ways that are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

One major research stream in organizational psychology and organizational behavior that has implications for the contemporary career has examined the relationship between work and family lives. Unfortunately, despite a burgeoning work–family literature, organizational careers have been historically studied in isolation from other parts of employees' lives. To illustrate, the number of work-related antecedents of career-related processes, such as job choice (Chapman et al. 2005), employee turnover (Griffeth et al. 2000), long work hours (Ng & Feldman 2008), and career success (Ng et al. 2005), far exceeds the number of family-related antecedents examined in the literature.

However, there are sound reasons to believe that career experiences and home experiences are inextricably intertwined in many contemporary careers. As we elaborate in a later section, the increased participation of women, dual-earner partners, and single parents in the workforce juggling their work commitments with caregiving responsibilities (Greenhaus & Ten Brummelhuis 2013) in conjunction with increasingly demanding jobs that are flexible in time and location of work (Burke & Cooper 2008, Kossek & Distelberg 2009) has blurred the boundaries between work and home (Allen et al. 2014, Kossek & Lautsch 2012). Furthermore, these changes have evolved in the midst of an uncertain economic environment that has produced job insecurity and has necessitated more frequent career decision making over the life course (DiRenzo & Greenhaus 2011), which provides more opportunities to make career decisions that might affect family life (Poelmans 2005).

Therefore, we propose a work–home (WH) perspective on careers that recognizes the interdependencies between work and home over the life course and is particularly suitable to contemporary careers. Because many employees' careers are substantially influenced by—and influence—their home lives (Powell & Greenhaus 2010), ignoring the connections between career and home limits our understanding of career dynamics for a sizeable segment of the workforce.

The aim of this article is to illustrate the relevance of a WH perspective to the examination of the contemporary career. We first discuss what we mean by a WH perspective and then elaborate on the economic, organizational, and workforce changes that have produced the contemporary

career and have made a WH perspective particularly applicable in today's world. We then demonstrate the implications of a WH perspective by focusing on four streams of scholarship that are central to understanding the contemporary career: (a) career self-management, (b) career success, (c) global careers, and (d) sustainable careers over the life course. For each of these four areas, we selectively discuss WH theory and research to demonstrate the virtues of viewing careers from a WH perspective, and we suggest areas for future research to enhance our understanding of the interplay between work and home lives in the development of careers. Moreover, careers (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005) and the WH interface (Powell & Greenhaus 2010) are often experienced differently by women and men, in part because women are more likely than men to view work and home as entangled strands (Lee et al. 2011) and to integrate these two domains in their lives (Kossek & Lautsch 2008). Therefore, where appropriate, we incorporate gender issues into our discussions of these four research streams.

## A WORK-HOME PERSPECTIVE ON CAREERS

A WH perspective on careers is a lens through which to examine careers that explicitly recognizes the interdependencies between individuals' work and home domains. Consistent with Kreiner (2006), we define home broadly to include a variety of nonwork roles and settings, such as the nuclear and extended family, friendships, community engagement, and leisure and self-development activities.

The interdependencies between the work and home domains are reflected in a number of research themes within the work-family arena. In fact, causal connections between work and home (Edwards & Rothbard 2000) have served as the theoretical underpinnings for the two most dominant concepts in the work-family literature: work-family conflict (WFC) and work-family enrichment (WFE). WFC represents negative interdependencies "in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985, p. 77). The incompatibility of role pressures (through a shortage of time to participate fully in both domains, a spillover of strain from one domain to the other, or the presence of conflicting behavioral expectations) results in situations in which participation in one role makes it more difficult to function effectively in the other role.

Researchers have recently examined the process by which experiences in one domain strengthen or enhance outcomes in the other domain, in contrast to the negative role interference in WFC. We use the term enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell 2006) to represent this process, although similar concepts have been developed to capture positive WH interdependencies, such as positive spillover (Hanson et al. 2006) and facilitation (Wayne et al. 2007). Despite several differences among these positive perspectives, they all attribute importance to the transfer of resources or positive affect from one domain to another that promotes effective functioning in the latter domain.

Our conception of WH interdependencies extends beyond WFC and WFE in two important respects. First, some causal connections between the work and home domains are neither inherently negative (conflict) nor inherently positive (enrichment) in their consequences. For example, the relationship between the extensiveness of a woman's family responsibilities and the likelihood that she will start her own business (Powell & Greenhaus 2010) illustrates the impact of home commitments on a career-related decision (self-employment) that does not necessarily reflect family-to-work enrichment or conflict. Similarly, the decision of career-focused spouses to postpone having a child exemplifies the impact of career commitments on a home-related decision that does not necessarily reflect work-to-family conflict or enrichment. Second, our conception of WH interdependencies includes the various ways in which individuals and couples configure their

work and home lives in terms of the relative priority they place on each domain (Han & Moen 1999), the permeability of the boundaries that they construct around the domains (Kossek et al. 2012), and the way in which they define success in each domain (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005).

Although the WH interdependencies discussed above have been well established in the work-family literature, less research has been conducted on the implications of these interdependencies for the manner in which individuals experience and appraise their careers. Therefore, the uniqueness of a WH perspective lies in its application of these various connections between work and home to contemporary career-related phenomena. To provide a foundation for establishing the importance of a WH perspective, we next examine societal changes that have had significant effects on the ways in which careers are experienced in the contemporary environment.

## SOCIAL CHANGES AND THE CONTEMPORARY CAREER

Contemporary careers are pursued in a global business environment that is increasingly competitive and turbulent (DiRenzo & Greenhaus 2011). (For a description of changes impacting contemporary careers, see the sidebar titled Summary of Social Changes Affecting the Contemporary Career.) As a result of changes in market pressures and the need to be lean and flexible, organizations often forsake long-term relationships with their employees in favor of short-term transactional exchanges (Herriot et al. 1997, Smithson & Lewis 2000) with heightened job loss at all organizational levels (DiRenzo & Greenhaus 2011). This organizational strategy has left employees with fewer opportunities for vertical mobility with their current employers (Arthur & Rousseau 1996), which in conjunction with extensive reductions in the workforce have produced higher levels of voluntary and involuntary interorganizational mobility (Arthur et al. 1999).

In addition, technology has changed the organization of work such that information can now be globally transmitted almost instantaneously. Information technology transformation has led to flatter organizations in which decision making has frequently been delegated to business units whose professional and managerial employees are now required to communicate electronically across national borders on a regular basis (McKern 2003). Trends indicate that the pursuit of a global career is an increasingly important contemporary development, as the number of individuals who are employed cross-nationally working in cultures other than their own or interacting with employees who are culturally diverse in nationality and leadership values is expected to grow (Brodbeck et al. 2000).

### SUMMARY OF SOCIAL CHANGES AFFECTING THE CONTEMPORARY CAREER

**Business environment:** As a result of the highly competitive global business environment, employees experience heightened job loss, fewer opportunities for vertical mobility with their current employer, and more extensive inter-organizational mobility.

**Technology:** Advances in information technology require increased electronic communication across national borders, increase the portability of work, and result in an increasing number of employees electronically tethered to their organizations.

**Diversity of family structures:** Women, dual-earner partners, single parents, and employees responsible for their aging parents represent significant portions of the workforce and are likely to express a desire to balance their work with other parts of their lives.

**Aging of the workforce:** Because many baby boomers remain in the workforce beyond traditional retirement age, the careers of many employees extend over a longer portion of their lives.

Advances in information technology have also made work more portable, enabling employees to work at home or other remote locations. At the same time, portable work has rendered an increasing number of employees electronically tethered 24/7 to their organizations through email and cell phones (Kossek & Lautsch 2008), frequently leading to employee overwork and information overload.

Coupled with these economic and technological trends has been a dramatic shift in the composition of the workforce over the past four decades. Driven by economic need and/or the desire for additional sources of satisfaction, the percentage of women in the US workforce, including those with young children, has increased substantially. In 2012, the labor participation rate of mothers with children under 18 years of age reached 70.5%, and the rates for mothers with children under 6 (64.8%) and with children under 1 (57%) were substantial as well (US Bur. Labor Stat. 2013). Although many employed women are partners in dual-earner relationships, others are single parents, and whether married or not, a sizeable percentage of women (and men) feel responsible for the care of their children and their aging parents in addition to meeting the demands of their careers (Neal & Hammer 2007). Given these escalating commitments to multiple roles, it is not surprising that many employees express a need to balance their work with other parts of their lives (Newman 2011).

The workforce has also gotten older. A significant number of baby boomers have remained in the workforce beyond traditional retirement age owing to their good health, their need for additional income, and/or their desire to continue to make a contribution in the later years of their careers (Newman 2011). The trend for many employees' careers to extend over a longer portion of their lives (Callanan & Greenhaus 2008) raises important questions about the sustainability and viability of careers over the long haul (Newman 2011).

As a result of these economic, technological, and social changes, the dominance of the traditional, linear, organization-driven career characterized by continuous, full-time employment with a single employer (Arthur et al. 2005) has subsided. (For a summary of trends in contemporary careers, see the sidebar titled Contemporary Career Trends.) Increasingly flat and lean organizations have reduced the opportunity for frequent upward mobility, and organizations' penchant toward short-term commitments to employees has increased interorganizational mobility and has fostered a need for individuals to manage their own careers and remain employable, even those pursuing relatively traditional careers (DiRenzo & Greenhaus 2011). Moreover, a combination of organizations' human-resources cost-savings strategies and employees' desires to balance work

## CONTEMPORARY CAREER TRENDS

Employees pursuing contemporary careers are less likely to

- Play out their careers in one or a small number of organizations.
- Experience frequent upward mobility within an organization.
- Feel substantial job security.

Employees pursuing contemporary careers are more likely to

- Adjust their timing of retirement to meet lifestyle needs.
- Seek reduced-workload arrangements.
- Telework.
- Make career decisions that accommodate their family or personal circumstances.

and home demands has made part-time employment an essential or appealing option for many individuals, with the percentage of part-time employees in some career fields such as hospital registered nurses reaching 20% (Cappelli & Keller 2013).

The traditional organizational career has not disappeared, but rather it has been supplemented by an increasingly diverse set of career patterns, of which the most frequently discussed is the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau 1996). Although it has been defined inconsistently in the literature and its pervasiveness has been questioned (Greenhaus et al. 2008), the boundaryless career remains a useful perspective by which to understand contemporary careers. At its heart, a boundaryless career departs from “traditional organizational career arrangements” (Arthur & Rousseau 1996) that assume upward hierarchical mobility, long-term employment in a stable organization, and a work identity and an accumulation of social capital that flow primarily from one’s current employer. Because careers can depart from these assumptions in different ways, there is no single form of a boundaryless career. Although some boundaryless careers may be characterized by frequent interorganizational mobility (the most popular depiction), others may involve nonhierarchical mobility within a single organization, fluctuations between part-time and full-time employment or between organizational and self-employment, and stability within a single job that an employee has crafted (Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001) to better suit his or her needs (Greenhaus et al. 2008).

The customized career, also conceptualized as an alternative to the traditional linear career (Kossek et al. 2011a, Valcour et al. 2007), is shaped by individual choices made in response to personal and/or family circumstances. Valcour et al. (2007) identified three ways in which customized careers are different from traditional careers. First, a customized career may depart from a full-time work schedule such that employees work a reduced workload through part-time employment or job sharing. Second, a customized career may deviate from the assumption of continuous employment through delayed entry into the workforce, employment interruptions, or personalized approaches to retirement. Third, a customized career may be based on relatively nontraditional relationships with employers, such as a temporary rather than permanent relationship or a contractor/agency association rather than one of core employee. Moreover, the particular ways in which careers are customized are not necessarily permanent and can vary over the life course as individuals move through different phases of personal and family life, making customization a career concept rather than a feature of job design.

In sum, there is probably no single career pattern that dominates the contemporary scene, but rather there are a number of trends that characterize many careers in the early years of the twenty-first century. Contemporary careers are less likely to be structured in a linear manner with consistent upward mobility in one or a small number of organizations. They are more likely to be unpredictable with more frequent mobility across organizations, less job security, and more varied approaches to retirement. For many women, and an increasing number of men, contemporary careers are also likely to be customized through reduced-workload arrangements, telework, or employment discontinuities to accommodate family or personal circumstances. Because of these trends, we believe that there are four topics or issues that both are particularly salient to contemporary careers and provide an opportunity to illustrate the relevance of a WH perspective on careers:

1. Career self-management, by which individuals take responsibility for the planning and management of their own careers in order to make effective career-related decisions. Career self-management is increasingly important because of employers’ reluctance to invest in the long-term careers of their human resources and employees’ need to remain employable in a turbulent economy (DiRenzo & Greenhaus 2011).

2. The achievement of career success, a prominent outcome variable in the careers literature (Arthur et al. 2005; Ng et al. 2005; Seibert et al. 2001a,b) that is increasingly unpredictable because flatter and leaner organizations provide fewer opportunities for hierarchical advancement, a traditional hallmark of a successful career. More limited prospects for vertical mobility, in conjunction with a workforce that is progressively more diverse in terms of career and life values, has required employees to develop their own idiosyncratic views of what constitutes a successful career to them (Arthur et al. 2005).
3. Global career issues, which have become progressively more relevant because of the globalization of business activity, the proliferation of international careers, and the differences across cultures in how careers are construed (Briscoe et al. 2012, Shaffer et al. 2012). Moreover, global work experiences have taken a variety of forms in the contemporary economy, each with its own costs and benefits (Shaffer et al. 2012).
4. Sustainable careers, which enable employees to have positive career experiences in the present and remain engaged over the long term. These are careers that promote organizational effectiveness and individual well-being over time (Herman & Lewis 2012, Kossek et al. 2014, Newman 2011). The urgency of understanding sustainability in contemporary careers is highlighted by employees' exposures to long-work-hours cultures (Burke & Cooper 2008) and rising workloads while at the same time needing to attend to their caregiving responsibilities and their pursuits of personal life interests (Hall et al. 2012).

## CAREER SELF-MANAGEMENT

Career self-management (CSM) is a problem-solving and decision-making process intended to help individuals achieve desired career outcomes. Although the terminology researchers use to describe career management varies, common components of CSM include career exploration or information seeking (Greenhaus et al. 2010, Kossek et al. 1998, Zikic & Richardson 2007), career goal setting (Greenhaus et al. 2010, Seibert et al. 2013), and career strategies to help individuals achieve their goals (De Vos et al. 2011, Greenhaus et al. 2010, King 2004, Kossek et al. 1998). A common theme that cuts across the different perspectives on CSM is its focus on proactive steps that individuals take to achieve success and satisfaction in their careers.

CSM has become increasingly important because the turbulence of the contemporary economic environment and the trend of organizations to hold a short-term transactional view of their human resources require employees to make numerous career decisions and transitions over the life course and take greater responsibility for managing their own careers (Greenhaus et al. 2010, King 2004, Kossek & Lautsch 2008). The utility of active career management has been confirmed empirically through relationships between extensive participation in CSM activities and a variety of positive career outcomes, such as salary and career progression, performance in training situations, employability, marketability, career satisfaction, and constructive reactions to job loss (De Vos & Soens 2008, De Vos et al. 2011, Rowold 2007, Seibert et al. 2013, Spurk & Abele 2011, Zikic & Richardson 2007).

### Work-Home Perspective on Career Self-Management

We believe that it is critical for employees to self-manage their careers in the broader context of their entire lives because many career decisions and strategies (e.g., relocation, working extended hours) have implications for employees' commitments outside of work. Unfortunately, most conceptualizations and measures of CSM within organizational behavior neglect WH

interdependencies (see King 2004 as an exception), and the empirical research looks almost exclusively at work-related antecedents and consequences of employee CSM. As a result, the literature provides an overly narrow view of CSM that is out of touch with the reality of most contemporary employees.

The application of a WH perspective can broaden our understanding of what it means to self-manage a career, and provide more insight into the connections between CSM and well-being in multiple life domains. One way in which a WH perspective can be applied to CSM is to incorporate home-related factors into the dimensions inherent in the career management process. For example, the conceptualization of career exploration can be expanded to include the search for information regarding one's family's needs and the ways in which one's personal and career values can be better aligned with the values of one's family. In a similar manner, the concept of career goal setting can include aspirations for achieving a particular balance between different life roles or intentions to use a specific boundary management strategy (e.g., segmentation), and the delineation of career strategies can include action plans that are relevant to the attainment of both work and nonwork goals and values.

One perspective on CSM that is particularly compatible with a WH perspective is the protean career orientation (PCO), which is an individual's tendency to pursue an autonomous career to achieve feelings of psychological success (Hall 1976, 2002). Two dimensions underlie the PCO: (a) an emphasis on self-direction, in which individuals assert personal control over their careers, and (b) a values-driven orientation that guides individuals to pursue personally meaningful values and goals rather than those imposed or encouraged by organizations or society. It has been suggested (Briscoe et al. 2006) and empirically confirmed (M.S. DiRenzo, J.H. Greenhaus & C.H. Weer, manuscript under review) that individuals with a strong PCO also tend to adopt a whole-life perspective to CSM in which they view their careers broadly within the context of their entire lives, seek competence and fulfillment in both work and nonwork roles, and make career decisions with a mindfulness of the consequences of the decisions for their lives outside of work.

Consistent with the notion of a whole-life perspective, Greenhaus & Powell (2012; Powell & Greenhaus 2012) developed the concept of the family-relatedness of work decisions to capture the extent to which family situations (e.g., the presence of young children at home) are considered in making work-domain decisions (e.g., to relocate or travel extensively). They proposed a framework to identify the antecedents and consequences of family-related work decisions (Greenhaus & Powell 2012) and identified the decision-making steps followed by individuals who make work decisions with high family-relatedness (Powell & Greenhaus 2012). We suggest that a WH perspective that defines CSM broadly and incorporates a whole-life perspective and family-related work decisions can provide a more comprehensive view of the determinants of a variety of career decisions, such as job selection, advancement aspirations, and organizational turnover.

A WH perspective can also shed light on the consequences of CSM for life beyond work. For example, because CSM can promote objective and subjective career success, the tangible (e.g., money) and psychological (e.g., feelings of self-esteem) outcomes associated with a successful career can enrich one's home life when material, psychological, and social resources acquired in one's career are applied to the home domain (Greenhaus & Powell 2006). In addition, individuals who actively manage their careers can negotiate for specialized or customized employment conditions (I-deals), such as additional schedule flexibility in the workplace (Rousseau 2005), that can reduce the extent to which work interferes with family life (Hornung et al. 2008). Because individuals do not necessarily engage in CSM activities in order to enhance their home lives, active career management may be more likely to promote work-life balance for those who also adopt a whole-life perspective (M.S. DiRenzo, J.H. Greenhaus & C.H. Weer, manuscript under review).



As noted above, because men and women tend to view their careers in somewhat different ways (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005), it is important to consider whether they also differ in CSM. The limited research in this area has revealed no consistent sex difference in the frequency with which individuals participate in CSM activities (De Vos & Soens 2008, Kossek et al. 1998). But this does not mean that the specific actions taken to self-manage a career are identical for both sexes. For example, Hornung et al. (2008) found that women were more likely than men to negotiate flexibility I-deals, suggesting that sex differences in CSM may depend on the particular self-management action that is taken. Moreover, several studies have shown that women score higher than men on the values-driven component of PCO (Cakmak-Otluoglu 2012, Segers et al. 2008), indicating that women are especially motivated to attain personally defined meaningful goals in their careers. Women's tendency to view career decisions relationally by taking into account the needs of other people in their lives (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005) is consistent with a growing body of findings that women are more strongly influenced than men by family responsibilities when making career decisions such as becoming self-employed, restricting one's work hours, and quitting a job (Powell & Greenhaus 2010).

## Future Research

A WH perspective on careers suggests that it is important to incorporate employees' nonwork lives into theories and measures of CSM. Two alternative approaches can accomplish that aim. One approach involves broadening the conceptualization and assessment of the central elements of CSM—career exploration, goal setting, and strategy development—beyond work-related issues to include family, community, and other nonwork roles. The advantage of this approach is that it requires researchers and respondents to consider how each step in the career management process addresses employees' whole lives and affects the next step in the process. For example, individuals who disregard home-related issues in their career explorations are likely to exclude nonwork aspirations and constraints in developing career goals, with the resultant career strategies so heavily focused on work-related outcomes that they either disregard the effects of their career goals and strategies on their home lives or fail to see how the resources that they acquire at home can help them achieve their work-related goals.

The second approach is to view WH interdependencies as a separate dimension of CSM. For example, King (2004) proposed three behavioral dimensions of CSM: positioning behaviors to develop the necessary human and social capital to achieve desired career outcomes, influence behaviors to shape the decisions of key gatekeepers (e.g., one's boss) regarding one's career, and boundary management behaviors to help balance the demands of the work and home domains by maintaining appropriate WH boundaries and by transitioning effectively between the two domains. In a similar vein, work–family role planning has been conceptualized as a separate aspect of career management that involves individuals' planning for how to effectively combine their participation in multiple life roles (Basuil & Casper 2012).

It is likely that these two approaches can be integrated because boundary management and work–family role planning have implications for career exploration, goal setting, and strategy development. Incorporating WH interdependencies in CSM (either as a separate dimension or integrated into all dimensions) opens up a wide variety of research questions, including whether employees who bring home considerations into CSM pursue more satisfying careers, achieve more WH balance, and experience greater satisfaction in life than do those who focus CSM exclusively on work-related issues. Depending on the answer to these questions, it may make sense to replace the notion of CSM with the broader concept of life self-management.

## CAREER SUCCESS

Career success refers to the accomplishment of desirable or positive outcomes that one has accumulated as a result of work experiences over time (Arthur et al. 2005, Judge et al. 1995, Seibert 2006). The distinction between objective and subjective career success is frequently recognized in the current literature. Objective career success is conceptualized as the achievement of objectively verifiable outcomes that society accepts as benchmarks of success (“shared social understanding” per Arthur et al. 2005) and is most frequently assessed by income, advancement rate, and organizational level. By contrast, subjective career success is conceptualized as an individual’s personal appraisal of the success of his or her career according to whatever criteria are most relevant to the individual (Arthur et al. 2005) and is generally assessed through self-reports of career satisfaction.

Identifying the antecedent factors that contribute to a successful career has been a significant area of research for decades. Ng et al.’s (2005) meta-analysis determined that four broad categories of antecedents (human capital investments, organizational sponsorship, stable individual differences, and demographic characteristics) are associated with objective and/or subjective career success. Subsequent research has generally confirmed the relevance of these antecedents while incorporating additional predictors beyond those examined in Ng et al.’s meta-analysis (Abele & Spurk 2009, De Vos et al. 2011, Enache et al. 2011). Moreover, observations that some antecedents more strongly predict objective success and others predict subjective success and that many relationships between antecedents and success are moderated by individual or contextual factors (Greenhaus & Callanan 2013, Ng et al. 2005) highlight the complexity of the career success process.

### Work–Home Perspective on Career Success

Central to the aim of this article, we believe that there is substantial interplay between home life and career success. The home domain can inhibit or promote career success, and the effects of home demands and resources on career success may depend on how an individual personally defines a successful career. We suggest that a WH perspective can shed light on the meaning, achievement, and consequences of career success.

It is noteworthy that much of the thinking regarding the connection between home life and career success has been viewed through a gender lens. For example, the career success of women can be more severely constrained by home demands than the success of men (Greenhaus & Callanan 2013) because family responsibilities are more likely to dampen work centrality (Mayrhofer et al. 2008) and restrict success-enhancing experiences, such as job mobility (Kirchmeyer 2006), relocation (Eddleston et al. 2004), and long work hours (Greenhaus et al. 2012a), for women than for men. Home responsibilities trigger women’s priority of family over work likely due to a combination of gendered socialization experiences, unsupportive spouses, and inflexible employers (Friedman & Greenhaus 2000, Powell & Greenhaus 2010). By contrast, men’s family responsibilities have either no effect or a positive effect on their career success (Melamed 1995, 1996), suggesting that family responsibilities either mean something different to women (caregiver) and men (provider) or signal different messages to organizational managers regarding women’s and men’s careers.

Moreover, although home demands can restrict women’s salary progress, advancement, and organizational levels, they may not necessarily dampen women’s subjective appraisals of their career success to the same extent. In part, this disparity can be explained by a relatively weaker relationship between women’s objective career success and the subjective appraisal of their success, in contrast to the stronger positive relationship among men (Mayrhofer et al. 2008). In

fact, this may explain why women can be as satisfied with their careers as men despite the fact they are less successful than men in objective terms (Mayrhofer et al. 2008).

These findings suggest that women's appraisals of their career success depend less on objective success indicators and more on broader feelings about their career experiences (Powell & Mainiero 1992). Although many women undoubtedly leave jobs because of limited career advancement opportunities just as many men do (Stroh et al. 1996), women tend to value objective status in their careers less than men do, placing more emphasis on such socioemotional factors as helping others and working with supportive and friendly coworkers (Eddleston et al. 2006, Konrad et al. 2000).

Mainiero & Sullivan (2005) have argued that women view their careers broadly through a lens of relationalism that focuses on the needs of other people outside and inside of their organization as opposed to men's agentic orientation that stresses their personal achievements at work. As a result of holding a relational view of their careers, women tend to make career decisions with a consideration of their effects on other people including their families (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005) and construe their careers (and we believe the success of their careers) in a holistic manner (Powell & Mainiero 1992) that emphasizes connectedness with others and life balance as well as the accomplishment of personal goals in the work domain. We do not suggest that women are pleased when family responsibilities restrict their career achievements or advancement, nor do we condone unsupportive societal institutions that require many women to make career-home trade-offs that men do not have to make. Rather, we believe that the factors that affect women's subjective appraisals of their careers (and their lives) go beyond traditional objective indicators of success and incorporate a more relationally oriented set of criteria.

Although the literature suggests a negative effect of home demands on career success, at least for women, there is increasing evidence that resources acquired at home can enhance or enrich one's experiences at work (Greenhaus & Powell 2006, Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker 2012). Resources acquired at home, including skills, social support, financial capital, and psychological resources such as self-confidence, enable people to perform effectively at work (Ruderman et al. 2002), which in turn can promote career success. That women and men have been found to experience equivalent levels of family-to-work enrichment (Wayne et al. 2006) suggests that both sexes can leverage their experiences at home to achieve more successful and satisfying careers.

## Developmental Relationships and Career Success

The literature has clearly established that developmental relationships with mentors inside and outside one's organization can promote career success (Allen et al. 2004, Baugh & Fagenson-Eland 2005, Eby et al. 2013, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008, Kram 1985). Nevertheless, the adoption of a WH perspective in conjunction with a broader view of career success can extend the research on mentoring and other developmental relationships in several respects.

First, it is essential to understand the effect of mentoring on protégés' feelings of balance in life, which is increasingly becoming an important criterion for gauging one's career success. Although having a supportive mentor has been associated with protégés' reduced WFC (Nielson et al. 2001), we need to understand the process by which mentoring affects protégés' WFC and ultimately work-life balance. Consistent with a relational perspective on mentoring (Ragins 2010, Ragins & Verbos 2007), Greenhaus & Singh (2007) proposed that mentors who adopt a "work-family lens," that is, who view support for protégés' attempts to achieve balance in life as an essential part of their mentoring responsibilities, enact career-enhancing and psychosocial mentoring functions (Kram 1985) with special sensitivity toward protégés' multiple roles such that work-related demands are contained and resources are enhanced. Therefore, a WH perspective on careers suggests an expansion of the mentoring role to take into account the idiosyncratic meanings of

career success held by protégés and to empower protégés to experience success in their careers without excessive intrusion into their home lives.

Second, a WH perspective can explain the conditions under which developmental relationships with their supervisors and managers help subordinates reduce the interference between home and work (Hammer et al. 2009, Kossek et al. 2011b). It is likely that supportive managers not only encourage subordinates to participate in an organization's formal flexibility policies (Allen 2001) but also refrain from penalizing them when they do. Leslie et al. (2012) found that managers who attributed employees' participation in flexible work practices to their desires to accommodate their personal lives perceived the employees to be uncommitted to the organization, which in turn constrained the employees' career success. These findings suggest that an important component of managerial support is the avoidance of career-damaging assumptions about the commitment and motivation of employees who seek workplace flexibility.

Third, a perspective that focuses on the interdependencies between home and work recognizes the combined influence of developmental relationships in both domains. Consistent with a complementarity or enhancement perspective on social capital (Adler & Kwon 2002, Friedman & Greenhaus 2000), Greenhaus et al. (2012b) found that having a family-supportive supervisor was associated with strong feelings of work–family balance only for subordinates whose spouses were also supportive. Presumably, receiving social support in one domain enables individuals to take advantage of support provided in a different domain. As a result, it is likely that the achievement of career success depends on the availability of resources both at home and at work.

### Future Research

A WH perspective raises many important questions about career success. However, addressing these questions requires improvements in the assessment of career success. The measurement of objective career success primarily through salary, advancement, and organizational level hinges on the assumption that society still considers these indicators to be landmarks or signals of success, which corresponds with Arthur et al.'s (2005) notion of shared social understanding. It is possible that changes over the past several decades in the economic environment (e.g., fewer promotion opportunities, frequent interorganizational mobility) as well as workforce characteristics (more dual-earner couples and single parents, greater emphasis on life balance) have weakened the shared understanding within society that vertical mobility and money reveal the success of a career. Dries et al. (2008) found that the dominant factor in judging another person's career as successful was the person's satisfaction in his or her career much more than his or her advancement rate or organizational level achieved.

Therefore, additional research on social norms regarding success should be conducted before salary, advancement, and level are routinely used as indicators of objective career success. If the studies reveal little consensus, research on the interdependencies of home life with money and advancement may still be important, but they do not, in our opinion, say anything about career success. This may seem like a purely semantic issue, but the term success is so loaded in everyday language that its measurement should be limited, at least in an objective sense, to those variables that do represent success in the eyes of a large segment (or subgroup) of society.

That said, from a WH perspective, we believe that subjective career success is a more important and interesting variable because ultimately, how individuals appraise their success is likely to influence their well-being. Unfortunately, the measurement of subjective career success (i.e., career satisfaction) is due for an overhaul as well. Measures of career satisfaction may be deficient (Heslin 2005) because the items comprising the scale (e.g., satisfaction with progress toward goals for income, advancement, or skill development) may not fully incorporate an individual's personal

criteria regarding what constitutes success in his or her eyes (Arthur et al. 2005). Alternative assessment approaches might either contain only overall, facet-free items (e.g., satisfaction with overall career) that enable respondents to use their own idiosyncratic criteria to gauge their success, or include a much wider range of facets of a career that are relevant to a larger portion of a sample. Perhaps most promising is a measurement procedure in which respondents self-identify personally relevant criteria on which they judge their career success, rate their success on each criterion, and ultimately generate a multidimensional assessment of subjective career success (Arthur et al. 2005). The dimensions might include factors such as learning and growth, financial security, work–life balance, and status.

A multidimensional assessment of subjective career success would enable us to examine a variety of questions from a WH perspective, including whether home responsibilities hinder or promote some aspects of success more than others or affect varied dimensions of success differently for women than men. It would also enable us to determine whether the relevance of—and achievement in—different dimensions of career success change over an individual’s life course. Because the impact of home on work may be due to the salience of an individual’s family role rather than his or her biological sex (Powell & Greenhaus 2010), a multidimensional approach to career success can also provide insight into the influence of gender-related constructs (e.g., gender belief systems, life-role values) on the importance attached to different aspects of career success. A more complex, multidimensional approach to subjective career success may also be useful in understanding similarities and differences across national cultures in the meaning of success (Demel et al. 2012).

A multidimensional approach can also shed light on the consequences of career success, which have received less attention in the literature than the antecedents of success. The intriguing possibility that achieving high levels of income and status in a career can breed alienation from oneself and others (career success/personal failure syndrome per Korman & Korman 1980) has not, in our opinion, been sufficiently tested, in part owing to deficiencies in the measurement of career success. Although WFC theory might predict a negative effect of objective career success on the home domain and WFE theory might predict a positive effect, career theory has been silent on this question. It is also important to ask whether certain dimensions of subjective career success are more or less likely to harm or benefit one’s home or personal life, whether these relationships differ for men and women, and more basically, whether it is career success that influences the quality of home life or rather the behaviors or attitudes that produce career success, such as extensive time investment in work, skill development, and the willingness to take risks.

## GLOBAL CAREERS

The continuing globalization of multinational corporations, societies, and the world economy and the increasing cultural diversity of organizations’ workforces (Adler 2008, Cerdin & Bird 2008) have intensified the need to understand careers from a global perspective. Global careers refer to careers that involve cross-national career experiences that are developed and performed over time through a sequence of job responsibilities with global and multicultural components, often crossing national borders (Shaffer et al. 2012). Less studied in the literature is the notion of multicultural careers, which are careers in which performance on work-related tasks regularly involves interactions with stakeholders from two or more ethnic or national cultures. Thus, all global careers are inherently multicultural, whereas multicultural careers involve elements of either domestic or international cultural diversity. Because of its greater development in the literature (Shaffer et al. 2012), we focus on global careers in this article.

Comprehensive reviews of cross-cultural organizational behavior generally pay relatively little attention to global careers beyond discussions of expatriate experiences (e.g., Gelfand et al. 2007). Within the careers literature, however, considerable attention has been paid to expatriates' need to adjust to different cultures, work tasks, and interactions and the linkage of adjustment in these areas to job performance (Takeuchi et al. 2009) and turnover (Stahl et al. 2002). Studies have identified factors that contribute to adjustment such as support emanating from the job, supervisor, and organization as well as personal qualities such as learning orientation and self-efficacy (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005, Hechanova et al. 2003, Palthe 2004). Studies have also examined the trajectory of adjustment (e.g., a U-shaped or sideways S-shaped curve) over time (Gelfand et al. 2007).

### Work–Home Perspective on Global Careers

Home-related factors have not been ignored in the literature on global careers (Shaffer et al. 2012). Indeed, research has shown that family demands or resources can either discourage or encourage an employee to take on a global assignment (Richardson & Mallon 2005), that family strains can pose challenges for expatriates on assignment (Riusala & Suutari 2000), and that a family's cross-cultural adjustment can affect an expatriate's job performance (Lazarova et al. 2010) and completion of an international assignment (Caligiuri & Joshi 1999). Still, the adoption of a WH perspective on global careers can allow us to better understand (*a*) how cross-cultural differences in WH interdependencies (e.g., WFC) and underlying values and norms can affect global career experiences and (*b*) the effects of new global workforce deployment strategies on expatriates' effectiveness in the work and home domains. We next elaborate on each issue and follow with future research directions.

**Cross-cultural phenomena.** The adoption of a WH perspective on global careers is important because most careers research has been conducted in North America and Europe (Briscoe et al. 2012), and most work–family research has been either culturally neutral or Western based (Powell et al. 2009). The work–family literature that has taken a cross-cultural perspective, although somewhat inconsistent in its findings (Allen 2013), suggests that WH linkages may operate differently across cultural contexts (Spector et al. 2007). Powell et al. (2009) have identified four cultural dimensions that have significant implications for understanding the work–family interface in different cultural contexts: individualism–collectivism, humane orientation, specificity–diffusion, and gender egalitarianism.

For example, employees in collectivist cultures who work long hours may be seen as supporting and aiding their families, whereas the same behavior in individualistic cultures may be viewed as self-centered (Yang et al. 2000). Additionally, members of cultures high on specificity (diffusion) may be more likely to segment (integrate) their work and home roles in order to maintain WH boundaries that are compatible with their cultural norms (Powell et al. 2009). Therefore, cultures are likely to differ not only in how employees allocate their time to different parts of their lives but also in how they view their time commitments in the context of their whole lives. To illustrate, although employees in Asian cultures such as Singapore devoted more hours to eldercare than employees in US and EU samples, their eldercare activities were not associated with perceptions of higher WFC, unlike in the United States where eldercare and WFC were positively related (Kossek et al. 2013a).

Such variation in cultural values and norms has a number of implications for global careers. First, it requires expatriates to have sufficient cultural intelligence (Van Dyne et al. 2010) to navigate relationships with host-country employees who may hold different values regarding work

and home. For example, although managerial support reduces subordinates' WFC in the United States, where work and home are thought to be separate domains (Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013), it may increase WFC in other cultures (e.g., Hong Kong) where the boundaries between work and other parts of life are less separated (Luk & Shaffer 2005) perhaps because Confucian values create a greater obligation for employees to work more intensely as a form of reciprocity for support. Expatriates may also experience difficulties collaborating with peers and higher-level managers whose values regarding work and home depart from those of the expatriate. Contacting a peer or manager at home after work hours, for example, may be resented in cultures in which family time is sacrosanct.

In addition, differences in cultural values may have indirect effects on expatriates' work engagement and effectiveness through adjustment problems experienced by their partners. Cultural attitudes and practices regarding family life (e.g., availability of playdates or organized activities for children) that are at odds with those to which a partner is accustomed may constitute a stressful demand that hampers the partner's cultural and family adjustment and ultimately detracts from the expatriate's work effectiveness (Lazarova et al. 2010).

A WH perspective also has implications for the opportunity for women from different cultures to pursue global careers that regularly cross national borders, particularly in light of cross-cultural differences in masculinity and femininity and gender-role traditionalism (Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000, Hofstede 1984) and cultural norms regarding men's role in caregiving. The Gender Promotion program of the International Labour Organization (<http://www.ilo.org/actrav/areas>) notes that although globalization has created unprecedented economic opportunities, it has also deepened gender-related career inequalities, some of which are due to gender-related norms regarding the appropriateness of women working outside of the home in paid employment, and has resulted in women continuing to dominate the invisible, home-based care economy such as housework and dependent caregiving. A WH perspective can examine linkages among cultural norms and home-related responsibilities to better understand sex differences in global career opportunities in different cultures.

**New workforce deployment strategies.** Although expatriate assignments are expected to continue to grow in number, there is also a trend toward greater variation in the type of global work experiences. Shaffer and colleagues (2012) identified five types of global workers, some of whose work experiences are designed to avoid the difficulties that are often associated with the traditional expatriation–repatriation process: (a) corporate expatriates who are relocated abroad often for 12 months or more, (b) self-initiated expatriates who are not affiliated with an employer when they relocate, (c) international business travelers who regularly travel for work without their family members, (d) employees who take short-term global assignments of less than a year, and (e) flexpatriates who are regularly dispatched for brief (1–2-month) assignments without their families (Mayrhofer et al. 2004). Shaffer et al. proposed three dimensions that distinguish among the experiences of these five types of global workers: the amount of physical mobility required, the degree of cognitive complexity demanded, and the disruption by work of other parts of the employees' lives.

A WH perspective can help us understand the consequences of this increasing variation in global-deployment career experiences. Although relationships between the dimensions of global experiences and WH interdependencies have not been systematically examined to date, there is some evidence that different forms of home-related stress may be experienced by international business travelers (Westman & Etzion 2002) and expatriates who have relocated to another country with their families (Riusala & Suutari 2000). It is also likely that the different types or dimensions of global work experiences provide different opportunities for positive WH

interdependencies to emerge. For example, compared with short-term assignees, corporate expatriates may be more likely to find that their intense exposure to a different culture enriches the quality of their family lives by broadening their appreciation of different people and perspectives. Moreover, certain forms of family support (e.g., emotional support, appraisal support) may have a stronger positive impact on the work effectiveness of expatriates and short-term assignees than on that of international business travelers and flexpatriates who leave their families behind.

### Future Research

A WH perspective can reinvigorate research by focusing attention on gender influences on global careers. Studies might build on Adler's (2002) seminal work countering the myth that women are less interested in expatriate assignments and global careers than men because of dual-career and home-related demands that make them reluctant to become the primary spouse in a global career family. Because a global assignment seems increasingly critical for career advancement in many organizations (Shaffer et al. 2012), it is essential for research to examine why women still lag behind men in the number of global assignments they receive. Such research should examine the interrelationships among career, home, and gender to help us understand within-culture (emic) and across-culture (etic) factors that serve as enablers of—and barriers to—global careers. This research would necessarily examine cultural differences in gender ideology that prescribe how work and home roles should be shared between the sexes and in particular, norms regarding whether women should have a career outside of the home.

The growth of different workforce deployment strategies presents a fertile area for future research. As suggested above, one stream of research in this area might focus on how variations in the types of global assignments, such as those identified by Shaffer and colleagues (2012), differ in enriching and depleting WH influences and career success. For example, do international business travelers experience less work interference with family than relocated expatriates because they do not have to adjust to a foreign culture for extended periods of times, or do they experience more interference because they are away from their families more frequently? What are the costs and benefits in terms of effectiveness at home and at work of cultural border crossing, which is likely to be more frequent among international business travelers and flexpatriates than among expatriates who remain in one culture for an extended period of time? In a similar vein, research can examine whether shorter expatriate assignments result in greater career success because employees have less difficulty readjusting when repatriated with fewer dual-career and family difficulties. It is also important to determine whether technology-enabled virtual caregiving (e.g., helping a child with homework during a Skype conversation, discussing a parent's health with medical professionals on an international conference call) during global business travel or short-term expatriation enables individuals to meet their commitments to work and home with relatively little stress. Addressing these kinds of questions would allow for issues of cultural values, adjustment, and mobility to be examined in a more nuanced way.

Research might also examine whether multinational corporations should standardize their career and work-life systems across countries or customize them to fit local cultural norms, which is a specific instance of the broader convergence (standardize)—divergence (customize) distinction discussed in the management literature (Geppert et al. 2003, Pudelko 2005). Finally, as Richardson (2004) argued, the global career literature has overproblematized family as a career barrier, and more multifaceted perspectives are needed to determine the conditions under which families can be a source of support to employees pursuing global and multicultural careers. Lazarova et al. (2010) have proposed processes by which families' cultural and role adjustment in an



international assignment can cross over to enhance expatriates' engagement and effectiveness in their work roles. Therefore, research that examines the resources that contribute to families' adjustment (and the crossover between partners) can shed light on the positive effects of home on expatriates' and business travelers' success in their careers.

## SUSTAINABLE CAREERS

Referencing the growing concern about promoting the sustainability of environmental resources, scholars argue that there should be a similar concern for fostering the sustainability of careers (Kossek et al. 2014). Sustainability suggests protecting and fostering (rather than depleting) human and career development with a focus on balance and renewal (Newman 2011). Current career trends—the rise in precarious work (Kalleberg 2009), growing job and economic insecurity, eroding health benefits, and longer work hours (Bianchi et al. 2006)—require that careers theory and research be more fully updated to address career sustainability. Unfortunately, much of the careers literature neglects the influence of institutions and macroeconomic and political factors that shape individual careers and entire workforces (Kossek et al. 2014) in ways that make them increasingly less sustainable.

There is also a growing disconnect between the mystique of what careers are thought to encompass and the experiences of individuals in contemporary society. The myths that hard work, long hours, and continuous employment promote career well-being are not aligned with twenty-first-century reality (Moen & Roehling 2005). Indeed, sustainability appears to be increasingly problematic in many key stages of the career life cycle. For example, young adults with secondary or college educations are facing double-digit unemployment rates that make it difficult for them to find postgraduation employment to start off their careers, let alone pursue the American dream of unlimited career opportunity (EPI 2009). In addition, older adults are being let go years before they planned to retire as industries are restructured and jobs are churned. Parents, caregivers for elders, and many high-talent individuals (especially women) are finding it increasingly difficult to synthesize family demands with careers and leadership roles (Sandberg 2013).

Sustainable careers allow individuals to have positive career experiences over the long term in ways that promote organizational and individual effectiveness (Herman & Lewis 2012, Kossek et al. 2014). Similar to Newman (2011), Kossek et al. (2013b) proposed that a sustainable career has the following essential characteristics: (a) sufficient security to meet economic needs, (b) fit with one's core career and life values, (c) flexibility and capability to evolve to suit one's changing needs and interests, and (d) renewability such that an individual has regular opportunities for rejuvenation. Careers are increasingly being characterized as having too much work to do in the time historically allotted for work, with rising time pressures (deadlines), increased velocity (pacing), and heightened load (quantity of work) (Skinner & Pocock 2008). These conditions have produced an increased potential for career burnout as work demands rise and the ability to control workload and intensity lessens, thereby compromising the ability to integrate careers in a sustainable way with satisfying personal and family lives.

## Work–Home Perspective

The application of a WH perspective to career sustainability enhances our understanding of contemporary careers by broadening assumptions and by emphasizing new approaches to studying careers. It focuses on the spillover of flexibility, energy, renewal, and well-being back and forth between career and home over time that is based on the assumption that it is difficult to experience vitality at work if one does not experience vitality at home. We see three areas in which

a WH perspective raises important sustainability issues: (a) dynamic ongoing WH interdependencies over the life course, (b) questioning the career as the foreground and the rest of life as background over time, and (c) career-life trajectories.

**Sustainable interdependencies over time.** A WH perspective takes the position that interdependencies between different life domains can vary in different career stages (e.g., early career, preretirement). A life-course perspective focuses less on whether simultaneous involvement in career and home affects outcomes negatively or positively, but rather emphasizes the pathways by which well-being and social integration in subsequent years of adulthood are shaped by the timing, process, and context of earlier events (Moen et al. 1992). For example, in their classic panel study of 313 wives and mothers, Moen and colleagues (1992) found that participation in community, volunteering, and paid employment early in life was positively related to health and multiple-role involvement two decades later. What may be most important to achieve sustainability over time is the avoidance, early in one's career, of sacrificing substantial time and involvement in one realm (home or career) for the other, reflecting the importance of the ability to control the management and flow of energy and time between domains so that resources are enriched rather than depleted.

Another implication of a WH perspective to sustainable careers—further illustrating the relevance of CSM discussed previously—is the importance of WH connections during episodes of decision making and career transitions that are characteristic of contemporary careers. Decisions regarding moving between organizations, entering or temporarily leaving the workforce, reducing or increasing work hours, or opting out of certain career options (e.g., line management, global careers) all have implications for home life and, in fact, may be triggered by home considerations (Greenhaus & Powell 2012). Career sustainability over the life course requires employees to factor home considerations into career decisions and career considerations into home decisions so that they have sufficient time, energy, and vitality to meet their core values in different parts of their lives. This perspective also requires researchers to understand how decisions in both domains facilitate or hinder employees' engagement in their careers in a sustainable manner that is compatible with having a high-quality family life and time for social and personal development.

**Career as foreground.** A WH perspective on career sustainability challenges the general tendency in careers research to assume that one should conceptualize careers in the foreground and the rest of life in the background. For growing numbers of individuals motivated to have a sustainable life, the career may at some points over the life course be placed in the background or at least equally intertwine with other parts of life. Indeed, determining the centrality of the career is itself a CSM decision that can shift over the life course. Consistent with this notion, Lee and colleagues (2011) found that high-talent corporate professionals (mostly women) who reduced their workloads over six-year periods in their early careers made a variety of other changes in their careers and family contexts over time. The authors concluded that individuals construct their careers over time; constantly shift their energies across personal, work, family, and community roles; and make sense of these fluctuating entanglements across life domains. These findings suggest that careers do not always play a dominant role in shaping other parts of life; rather, family, community, and self-development can be catalysts of individuals' decisions regarding how to pursue careers over the course of their lives.

**Career-life trajectories.** A WH perspective on sustainable careers encourages a consideration of the breadth, sequencing, linearity, and continuity of career experiences. Regarding breadth, we believe that the careers field should view vitality, resilience, and well-being both at work and at home as essential because having a sustainable career requires a sustainable nonwork life.

Sequencing is also important because early career (or home) experiences can sap or enrich vitality that might harm (or help) subsequent home (or career) events. For example, early home and personal life experiences (investment in a health fitness regime, divorce) might enrich or deplete subsequent energy, vitality, and positive career involvement over the long term. Also relevant are the notions of linearity and continuity in careers. Although it is common in the careers literature to note that career trajectories are not necessarily relentlessly upward, plateaus and career gaps are still generally assumed to be negative experiences. Yet a WH perspective might view decisions to allow a career to plateau or even downshift for personal renewal as positive strategies to promote career sustainability over the long haul.

## Future Research

Research is required to determine how organizations and societies can support employees' sustainable careers and lives. Under what conditions do opportunities for employees to take breaks or downshift their career involvement for personal or family reasons promote career engagement and success over the long term? What factors determine whether employee deviations from traditional career arrangements lead to significant career penalties and stigmatization in organizations? Research should also examine whether normalized or lockstep pathways (education, then work, then family, then full retirement) allow for authentic career sustainability for an increasingly diverse workforce.

Studies are also needed to understand how careers can be made sustainable in an increasingly competitive global economy with extensive economic uncertainty and many national populations facing bleak employment prospects. How can organizations and societies promote sustainable careers that enable people to experience security and well-being during periods of economic hardship? How do we also ensure sustainable societies in which the elderly and children are cared for in positive ways? And perhaps a more basic question is whether organizations can thrive over the long term without enabling their employees to have sustainable careers. Multilevel studies are needed that link economic, family, organizational, and job environments with individuals' health and well-being over time.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

A WH perspective on CSM, career success, global careers, and sustainable careers has many implications for individual and organizational effectiveness. Because CSM increasingly involves family and personal life self-management, organizations should offer increased opportunities to incorporate discussions of nonwork goals and aspirations as an aspect of career development. This would require a culture change in many firms in order to make it safe for employees to discuss sensitive issues such as a spouse's career trajectory, job loss, when to have a child or move closer to one's extended family, or the decision to cut back on work to enable greater involvement in family or personal life endeavors. Having regular opportunities to discuss family and personal interests openly and to develop strategies to integrate the insights derived from these discussions into CSM should be an essential part of the career management process.

Moreover, we believe that organizations need to accept multiple versions of career success that contribute to an organization's effectiveness. A key task for organizations will be to legitimize a self-determined framing of career success that departs from the traditional conception of the ideal employee who consistently prioritizes work over other parts of life. Individuals should be supported to make career changes that allow them to pursue career success in ways that incorporate greater involvement in meaningful nonwork roles. Organizations can also help shape greater

cultural acceptance of multidimensional career success by giving recognition to individuals who both are successful in their careers and participate in family, community, or self-development activities that provide additional meaning to their lives.

Multinational organizations should evaluate whether the current movement of many firms toward standardization of global career and work–life systems will be problematic for employee retention and recruitment. A career mismatch may occur in organizations that apply parent company work–life policies in new markets where norms regarding work and home involvement are different from those of the home country. Multinational organizations need to support changing host-country policies regarding work and home relationships (e.g., China’s recent legislation requiring children to visit their elderly parents) to avoid clashes with employees and local governments and remain an employer of choice.

Given the growing diversity of global work experiences, companies need to develop policies to support these new career patterns. For example, flexpatriates may experience heightened cultural ambiguity and career–home conflict as a result of their frequent crossing of boundaries between countries and between work and home and may lack sufficient transition time for recovery and reorientation to be effective. In addition, immigrant employees who leave their families behind for extended periods of time may need human-resources policy support to provide more time off during holidays and vacations to return to work with replenished resources. Moreover, policies and practices for corporate expatriates (e.g., the number of annual reimbursed trips home, the opportunity to telework from their home country while visiting family) may have to be reviewed for currency and appropriateness.

Organizations also need to experiment with mass career customization to allow employees to have increased opportunities to transition between full-time and reduced-workload schedules and to vary their levels of work involvement over time (Benko & Weisberg 2007). Although scholars have called for more on- and off-ramping between paid employment and nonemployment (Hewlett 2005), many employees fear that they cannot have a long-term sustainable career if they slow down, because these career options often remain stigmatized as mommy or daddy tracks. Recent evidence suggests that off-ramped women are staying out of the workforce longer, which may make it more difficult for sustaining career involvement over time (Hewlett et al. 2010).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our aim was to demonstrate that a WH perspective is a promising lens through which to examine contemporary careers. (For a list of recommendations to researchers, see the sidebar titled Recommendations to Researchers of Contemporary Careers.) We believe that each area selected for scrutiny—career self-management, career success, global careers, and sustainable careers—can be better understood by considering how employees’ home lives influence and are influenced by these four elements of many contemporary careers. It is also likely that insights into other phenomena not highlighted extensively in this article, such as entrepreneurial careers, immigrant careers, low-income careers, and second (or third) careers, can benefit from considering the intertwining of home and work. The adoption of a WH perspective will be inextricably tied to issues of sex and gender as long as gender norms prescribe and sanction emphases on different roles for women and men in a given culture. Therefore, appreciating the implications of WH dynamics for the development of careers requires a deep understanding of what gender means in different cultures and how it influences career processes. Simply examining main effects of sex in careers research or worse, statistically controlling for sex in testing theoretical models is a poor substitute for delving into the more subtle similarities and differences regarding how women and men construe, pursue, and appraise their careers over the life course.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESEARCHERS OF THE CONTEMPORARY CAREER

- Incorporate home demands and resources into theories and measures of career self-management.
- Determine whether employees who take home considerations into account in making career decisions achieve more work–home balance and experience greater satisfaction in their careers and their lives.
- Determine whether there is sufficient social agreement regarding the signals of a successful career to continue to use salary, advancement, and organizational level as indicators of objective career success.
- Develop multidimensional measures of subjective career success to determine how different facets of success are affected by and influence life outside of work.
- Examine whether various types of global career assignments differ in enriching and depleting work–home influences and career success.
- Determine whether multinational corporations should standardize their work–life and career systems across countries or customize them to fit local cultural norms.
- Examine crossover and spillover processes to identify the positive effects of families on employees’ global career experiences.
- Determine how organizations and societies can support employees’ sustainable careers and lives.
- Examine multilevel relationships of economic, family, organizational, and job environments with employees’ health and well-being over time.
- Understand the ways in which gender processes relate to career self-management, career success, global career experiences, and sustainable careers.

## SUMMARY POINTS

1. Adopting a perspective that recognizes the interconnections between the work and home domains can shed light on the careers experienced by contemporary employees.
2. Because of economic, technological, and social changes over the past several decades, organizational careers have been supplemented by a variety of nontraditional career patterns, including boundaryless and customized careers.
3. Incorporating home issues into theory and research on CSM can broaden understanding of the factors that influence employees’ career decisions and the consequences of these decisions for life outside of work.
4. Individuals’ appraisals of the success of their careers (subjective career success) can depend on how effectively their careers and their home lives support their life values.
5. Understanding WH connections within and between national cultures can provide insight into the factors that enhance employees’ success in global careers and the consequences of employers’ utilization of different global deployment strategies.
6. Sustainable careers that promote long-term individual and organizational effectiveness depend upon the spillover of flexibility, energy, renewal, and well-being between work and home over the life course.
7. The adoption of a WH perspective on careers requires insight into the impact of gender processes on how individuals experience and draw meaning from their careers.

## FUTURE ISSUES

1. How can home-related demands and resources be incorporated most effectively into the conceptualization and measurement of CSM?
2. Does a society's shared understanding of what constitutes a successful career warrant the continued use of salary, advancement, and organizational level as indicators of objective career success? What is the most useful way to incorporate individuals' idiosyncratic criteria to measure subjective career success?
3. How do alternative types of global assignments differ in depleting and enriching WH influences and career success?
4. How can organizations and society support employees' sustainable careers and lives in an economic environment that is increasingly competitive and uncertain?
5. How do gender norms and stereotypes influence the career experiences of women and men and explain sex similarities and differences in CSM, career success, global career experiences, and sustainable careers?

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## Errata

An online log of corrections to *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* articles may be found at <http://www.annualreviews.org/errata/orgpsych>.