At the crossroads of agency and communion: Defining the shared career

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Summary   This article extends the predominant depiction of careers as individual undertakings and advances insights on collective careers. It defines the shared career as the co-evolving sequence of work collaboration and jointly pursued career opportunities by two or more career actors. It proposes that this new career construct mixes agency and communion. Furthermore, it conceptualizes a life cycle model of shared careers, using supporting illustrations. Finally, it articulates how focusing on shared careers could open up avenues for the advancement of research on boundaryless careers. Copyright © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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Two architects were chosen to share the 2001 Pritzker Architecture Prize, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron of Basel, Switzerland. The two men, both born in Basel in 1950, have nearly parallel careers, attending the same schools and forming a partnership architectural firm, Herzog & de Meuron in 1978. ... [They] work so closely together that each one complements the abilities and talents of the other. Their work is the result of a long term true collaboration making it impossible to honor one without the other.

2001 Pritzker Award Announcement

Will you all work at Google for the rest of your careers?
Schmidt: We agreed to work together for how long, gentlemen?
Brin: Twenty years.

Really? When did you make that agreement?
Schmidt: Two years, seven months, and four days ago. But who's counting? Actually, we agreed the month before we went public that we would work together for 20 years.

2008 Fortune magazine interview with Sergey Brin, Lary Page, and Eric Schmidt

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Introduction

What do architects Herzog and de Meuron and the Google top team Brin, Page, and Schmidt have in common with science duo Pierre and Marie Curie, artist–entrepreneurs Christo and Jeanne-Claude, or the ''fathers'' of the blackberry, Michael Lazaridis and James Balsillie? Despite their different occupations, at particular stages in their work lives, they not only engaged in close task collaboration but also in sharing a career.

Shared careers have been in existence for a long time. Yet, they are particularly salient in the new career realities characterized by multiple changes in the organizational, occupational, industry, and societal contexts, which pose numerous demands and challenges to careers (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). Consequently, jobs become increasingly complex and require a wider range of mindsets, roles, approaches, competencies, abilities, and activities (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003; Sullivan, 1999). However, individuals on their own are unlikely to provide all of these. Instead, a career shared by two or more individuals with complementary skills and different approaches has the potential to address job complexity and overcome some of the limitations of pursuing careers on one's own.

Building on earlier studies on dyads and triads (Simmel, 1902a, 1902b), executive role constellations (Hodgson, Levinson, & Zaleznik, 1965), plural chief executives (Daniel, 1965), and working dyads (Gabarro, 1987), recent scholarship reveals a renewed interest in the nature and dynamics of such collective actors (Gronn, 2002; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; O'Toole, Galbraith & Lawler, 2002). However, research on these phenomena in terms of career implications remains in its infancy, with a few exceptions. For example, Alvarez and Svejenova (2005, 2002) introduced the notions of united and symbiotic careers, respectively, and de Bruin and Lewis (2004) put forward the term ''joint career'' to capture careers in cases of familial entrepreneurship. Overall, career theory and practice remains largely premised on careers as independent undertakings (Nicholson & West, 1989). Defined as the ''evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time'' (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989: 8–9), independent careers are considered vehicles for personal growth and an essential part of individuals' life structures, which are expressive of their needs for power, wealth, prestige, or autonomy (Levinson, 1984; Shepard, 1984).

This article extends the extant literature on careers as individual and independent undertakings. It adds to a growing relational perspective on careers by defining a new construct, the shared career. A shared career is pursued collectively and represents the co-evolving sequence of work collaboration and career opportunities pursued by two or more career actors. It also advances the study of boundaryless careers by articulating how two aspects of career sharing—agency and communion— open up new avenues for research.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, using illustrations, we suggest the shared career as an umbrella construct that encompasses a number of related notions and phenomena. We also distinguish it from other relational concepts. Second, we conceptualize a life cycle model of career sharing, highlighting the main phases throughout which shared careers unfold. Then, we discuss the continual mixing of agency and communion as a key aspect of shared careers, identifying their benefits and drawbacks. Last, we outline avenues for further research on boundaryless careers with a focus on collective career actors and comment on the construct's implications for both individuals and organizations.

The Shared Career Construct

The cases listed in Table 1 present a diversity of contexts in which shared careers have thrived, ranging from investment banking and architecture to fashion and politics, and spanning in time from the 19th

through to the 21st century. These cases illustrate career sharing not only by duos, but also by career constellations of three or more individuals.

A shared career constitutes a reframing of traditional ideas of careers as independent individual undertakings. Below, we refine the construct definition by distinguishing it from independent careers, identifying aspects that are part of it, as well as those from which it is separate.

Shared versus independent careers

An individual's career can be either independent or part of a shared career. Both cases involve a sequence of work experiences and job opportunities. In the case of sharing a career, the sequences of individuals' experiences and opportunities co-evolve. While both independent and shared careers require collaboration in the completion of work, in the case of the shared career, the work collaboration between two or more individuals is a defining characteristic. Also, in contrast to the independent career, in the shared career job opportunities are pursued jointly, through collectively made career decisions and moves. These collective responses reflect common goals and mutual accountability, as well as a shared repertoire of tools, actions, and concepts (DeFillippi, Arthur, & Lindsay, 2006). Individuals in shared careers identify, define, and modify some of their career goals together and jointly undertake career moves within an organizational setting or across different projects or employers. Ultimately, though, while individual motivations do play a role in a shared career, the relationship is the principal career anchor.

When career sharing is harmonious, it is characterized by a kind of symbiotic mutualism in which each individual has a more meaningful and satisfying career—i.e., pursuing career goals and needs for advancement, while enjoying the benefits of relational cohesion (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2002). Relational cohesion is an outcome of a special attachment and commitment to the relationship which develops with successive satisfactory exchanges (Lawler & Yoon, 1996). Consequently, the members place higher value on staying connected in professional and career terms than on pursuing careers independently.

The shared career as an umbrella construct

A shared career is a general career construct that encompasses and integrates a number of relational career notions that have previously been advanced such as the symbiotic career (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2002), the joint career (de Bruin & Lewis, 2004), and the united career (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2005). Their definitions have been restrictive in a number of ways. They have either focused on dyads (couples) instead of larger constellations or have captured career sharing in specific domains such as professional careers, family enterprises, and copreneurship.

Distinctions between the shared career and other relational types of work and career

Table 2 offers a broader comparison of selected relational types, denoting their defining characteristics (i.e., the necessary and sufficient conditions for a relational type to be in place) such as work collaboration, business ownership, family tie, joint career decisions, and joint pursuit of career opportunities. The table also distinguishes between affective and working relationship types.

Table 1. Illustrating the shared career[a]

	Individuals sharing a career (family tie, if applicable)	Related company/brand	Principal activity	Professional relationship	Beginning	End
Dyads						
1	Sidney and Beatrice Webb (husband & wife)	London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)	Politics, education	Co-founders of LSE (1895); co-authors of books; involved in the Fabian Society, the Labour Party, etc; pioneers in social/ economic reforms; historians	1894 (publish first book together)	1935 publish their last book; retire
2	Pierre and Marie Curie (husband & wife)	n.a.	Science	Nobel Prize winning physicist and physical chemist; discovered radium and polonium, jointly investigating radioactivity	1895 (start collaboration)	1906 Pierre dies
3	Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque	Cubism	Art	Co-creators of cubism	1908	1914 Georges goes off to war
4	Ernest and Julio Gallo (siblings)	E&J Gallo	Winery	Co-founders	1933	1993 Julio dies
5	Akio Morita and Masaru Ibuka	Sony	Consumer electronics	Co-founders	1946	1997 Masaru dies
6	Paul Simon and Arthur (Art) Garfunkel	Tom & Jerry Simon & Garfunkel	Music	Singer–songwriter duo	1957 (first professional recording)	1970 duo dissolves
7	Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti	Valentino fashion group	Fashion	Co-owners until 1998/Designer and manager	1960	2007 Valentino retires
8	Christo Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon (husband & wife)	Christo (until 1994), then Christo and Jeanne-Claude	Art	Artists who work together on large scale outdoor and indoor temporary installations	1961 (first project together)	2009 Jeanne-Claude dies
9	Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Berge	Yves Saint Laurent Haute Couture house	Fashion	Co-founders/designer and manager/ also co-founders of Foundation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent, since 2002	1962	2008 Yves dies
10	Gerard Pelisson and Paul Dubrule	ACCOR Group	Hotels	Co-founders, co-CEOs, co-Chairmen	1967	2006 joint retirement
11	Gilbert Prousch and George Passmore	Gilbert & George	Art	Performance artists	1970	—

	Names	Company	Industry	Role	Year	Notes
12	Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron	Herzog and de Meuron	Architecture	Co-founders/partners	1978	—
13	Harvey and Bob Weinstein (siblings)	Weinstein Co.	Film	Co-founders, producers; previously, founders of Miramax	1979	—
14	Barry Friedman and Dan Holzman	Raspyni brothers	Corporate entertainment	International juggling champions, Guinness Record holders, entertainers on the corporate seminar circuit	1980	—
15	Ferran Adrià and Juli Soler	El Bulli	Haute cuisine restaurant	Chef and restaurant manager; co-owners since 1990	1983	—
16	Fernando y Humberto Campana (siblings)	Estudio Campana	Design	Co-founders/designers	1983	—
17	Joel and Ethan Coen (siblings)	Mike Zoss Production Inc.	Film	Scriptwriters, directors, producers	1984	—
18	Pedro and Agustín Almodóvar (siblings)	El Deseo, S.A.	Film	Scriptwriter and director/producer	1985	—
19	Stephen Friedman and Robert Rubin	Goldman Sachs	Investment banking	Divisional co-heads, co-COOs, Co-CEOs, co-chairmen	1985	1992 Robert goes into politics
20	Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers	The River Café	Restaurant	Co-founders and chefs, co-authors of books	1987	2010 Rose dies
21	Daniel and Nina Libeskind (husband and wife)	Studio Daniel Libeskind	Architecture	Co-founders and partners, architect and COO respectively	1989	—
22	Paul Lightfoot and Sol León (husband and wife)	Lightfoot León	Choreography	Resident co-choreographers of the Nederlands Dans Theatre	1991	—
23	Jerry A. Greenberg and J. Stuart Moore	Sapient Corporation	Business and technology consultancy	Co-founders, co-CEOs	1991	—
24	Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren	Viktor & Rolf	Fashion	Co-founders, co-designers	1992	—
25	Michael Lazaridis and James Balsillie	RIM (Research in Motion)	Wireless communications	Co-founders, co-CEOs	1993	—
26	Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec (siblings)	Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec	Design	Co-designers, co-founders	1998	—

(Continues)

Table 1. (Continued)

	Individuals sharing a career (family tie, if applicable)	Related company/brand	Principal activity	Professional relationship	Beginning	End
27	José María Alonso and Miguel Gordillo	Garrigues	Tax and legal services	Co-directors	2000	2009 partners retire
28	Niklas Zennstrom and Janus Friis	Joost	Free online TV	Co-founders; serial Entrepreneurs, also co-founders of Kazaa, Skype, Atomico Ventures	2001	—
29	Victoria Sopik and Jennifer Nashmi	Kids & Co.	Childcare chain	Co-founders, President and CFO	2002	—
30	Vanessa Knox-Brien and Baukjen de Swaan Arons-van Sonsbeeck	Isabella Oliver	Maternity wear	Co-founders	2003	—
	Triads and larger constellations					
31	Arthur, Walter, and William Davidson (siblings) and William S. Harley	Harley-Davidson Motor Co.	Motorcycles	Co-founders, managers	1903 (incorporated 1907)	1937, 1942, 1943 William D., Walter & Harley die
32	John Lennon, Paul Mccartney, George Harrison, Ringo Star & Brian Epstein/Neil Aspinall	The Beatles Apple Corp (their firm since 1968)	Music	Band members (1957 John, Paul, 1958 George, 1962 Ringo), and the manager/CEO of their company	The Beatles since 1960	1970 band breaks up
33	Richard Rogers, Su Brumwell (Richard's first wife), Norman and Wendy Foster (Norman's first wife)	Team Four	Architecture	Partners	1963	1968 partnership dissolves
34	Joan Garcia, Paco Mir, and Carles Sans	Tricicle	Humor	Continuous joint stage work and over seven productions	1979 (Paco joins in 1981 in the place of another member)	—
35	Vinod Khosla, Andreas Bechtolsheim, Scott McNealy, and Bill Joy	Sun Microsystems	Computers, software, IT services	Co-founders	1982	1985 Vinod leaves; 1995 Andreas leaves, rejoins in 2004, and leaves again in 2008; 2003 Bill leaves

36	Muneko Otani, Jennifer Leshnower, Michiko Oshima, and Nicole Johnson	Cassatt String Quartet	Music	Founders and members	1985	—
37	Joan, Josep, and Jordi Roca (siblings)	El Celler de Can Roca	Haute cuisine restaurant	Owners and managers of the restaurant; chef, somellier, and pastry chef, respectively	1986 (Joan and Josep) 1998 (Jordi joins)	—
38	Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen	DreamWorks	Film	Co-founders	1994	2006 founders sell company to Viacom; Spielberg, Geffen remain with co.; 2008 co. restores independence
39	Larry Page, Sergey Brin and Eric Schmidt	Google	Search engine	Page and Brin—Researchers, co-founders, Schmidt—Chairman since 2001	1996 (Larry and Sergey) 2001 (Eric joins) 2004 (the three commit to a shared career)	—
40	Virginia Kindred, Lauren Rubin, and Amy Shakespeare	Redtop Architects	Architecture	Co-founders	2003	—

aShared careers are listed by year of their beginning in an ascending order.

Table 2. Distinguishing the shared career from other relational types of work and career

Relational type of work or career	Definition	Defining characteristics (necessary and sufficient conditions)				
		Work collaboration	Business ownership	Family tie	Joint career decisions	Joint pursuit of career opportunities
Working relationship						
Job-share	Two or more individuals who share a position (Worzniak & Chadwell, 2002)	x				
Executive pair or constellation	Executives who perform top job together and are held jointly accountable for organization's results (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2005)	x (at the top of organizations)				
Partnership	A type of unincorporated business organization of multiple individuals as partners (Greenwood & Empson, 2003)	x	x			
Affective relationship						
Dual-career couples	Spouses who pursue jobs which are personally salient, have a developmental sequence, and require a high commitment (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969)			x	x	
Affective and working relationship						
Copreneurs	Spouses who share ownership and management of a business (Marshack, 1994)	x	x	x	x	
Family business	A business owned and managed by a nuclear family (Chua et al., 1999)	x	x	x		
Shared career	The co-evolving sequence of collaborative work experiences and job opportunities pursued jointly by two or more individuals	x			x	x

As seen from the table, while the listed relational types have some commonalities with the shared career, they also exhibit essential differences. Next, we compare these relational work and career types with the shared career.

"Job-share" is illustrated by the example of two or more physicians with similar competencies who provide cross-coverage for their patients (Worzniak & Chadwell, 2002). Like job share, a shared career can involve sharing a position. However, unlike it, career sharing also involves joint career decision making and pursuit of job opportunities. It entails both similarities and differences in competencies for the collective trajectory to be sustained.

"Professional duos" or "pairs at the top" (Alvarez & Svejenova, 2005) refer to executives who perform the top job together and are held jointly accountable for a company's results. In contrast, a shared career can take place at any level of an organization, not necessarily at its apex. In addition, career sharing is not synonymous with a partnership (Greenwood & Empson, 2003) or a co-founding team of a new venture (Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003). A shared career can emerge in such contexts. Yet, for a partnership or co-founding to become a shared career requires not only a sequence of joint work experiences but also jointly pursued opportunities.

In "dual careers," spouses or partners pursue two separate career paths (Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001; Hall & Hall, 1979; Parker & Arthur, 2004; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969). Here, couples have to balance the personal and the professional domains of their lives. In particular, they have to deal with the tensions that emerge as a result of sharing a personal life, while being at different career stages and advancing along independent careers paths with different professional requirements (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976; Schein, 1996; Weishaar, Chiaravalli, & Jones, 1984). However, they do not have to engage in task collaboration or joint pursuit of career opportunities. A dual career can become a shared one, if the couple starts collaborating on work tasks and seeking job opportunities together.

In "mentor-protégé dyads," the career interventions are primarily unidirectional, usually from the mentor to the protégé (Farrell, 2001). Even in cases of informal mentorship characterized by closeness and intimacy, there is no shared decision making on career issues or joint career moves (Kram, 1985; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Shared careers are different because they do not imply that one individual is expected to sacrifice her or his trajectory to support the career of others (Chadwick & De Courtivron, 1996).

Having elaborated the meaning of the shared career and its distinction from other relational types of work and careers, we conceptualize below a model of its life cycle.

A Life Cycle Model of the Shared Career: Phases and Variations

In her study of the mentor relationship, Kram (1983) identified four distinctive phases: *Initiation*, in which the relationship gets started and gains importance; *cultivation*, during which the range of functions performed by the mentor expands; *separation*, which is triggered by a significant change in the relationship; and *redefinition*, when the mentor relationship ends or transforms substantially. Similar to Kram, we advance in this section a conceptual life cycle model of the shared career, identifying a sequence of phases and the nature of and variations within each phase. Like Kram's model, ours starts with initiation. However, we go further and discuss the antecedents and geneses of initiation. The second stage of functioning comprises a shared career's central activities: Work collaboration along with joint pursuit of job opportunities. Finally, there is termination, which differs from Kram's separation and redefinition phases in both its origin and originators.
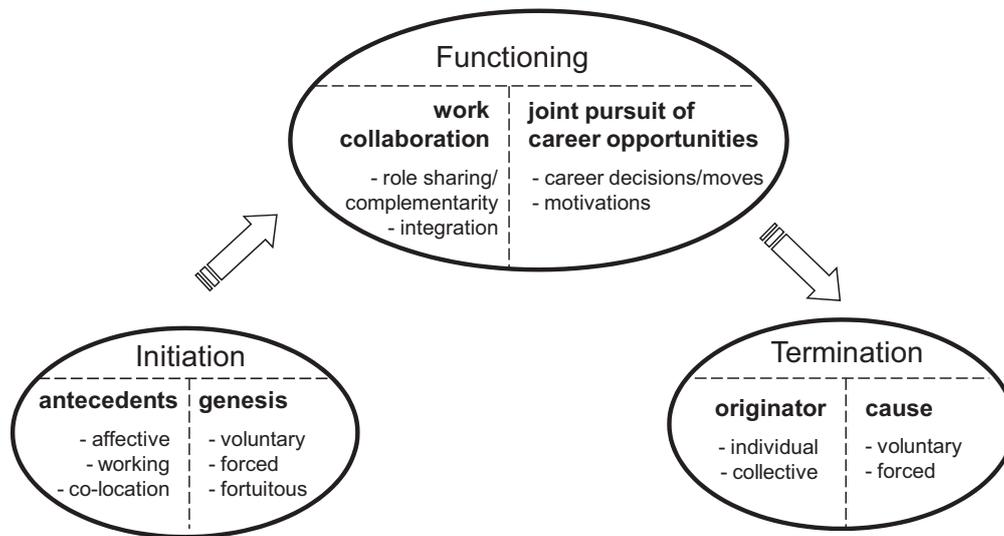
Figure 1. A life cycle model of the shared career.

The phases of the shared career are depicted in Figure 1 and discussed below.

Initiation

Using Kram's (1983) definition, the initiation phase is when the relationship gets started and gains importance. Yet, shared careers have antecedents and geneses different from those of mentoring.

Antecedents
Some of the cases listed in Table 1 have an affective background, such as siblings or husband–wife pairs. Others have emerged from work collaboration, which expanded its commitment into the career domain. Thus, antecedents to the shared career are those working and/or affective relationships that share some of its defining characteristics, yet lack one or more of its essential features. For example, all relational types listed in Table 2 could be antecedents to a shared career if the individuals involved in them were to expand the range and nature of their joint activities.

Affective relationships
Affective relationships, such as siblings, spouses, romantically involved couples, or close friends, are usually grounded in reciprocated affection (Marshack, 1998). That is why the family appears to be a natural environment for relational work and careers. Family members begin exchanges at an early age and by the time siblings or parent-and-child contemplate professional collaboration, they have already strong and close insight into respective abilities and character, which facilitates the entry into and success of a shared career. Thus, individuals can initially share a strong and binding social relationship and use it as a foundation upon which to build their professional collaboration and shared career.

Working relationships
Working relationships, such as job-share, executive pairs and constellations, or partnerships, can also evolve into shared careers. In task-based relationships, individuals initiate their interaction through work-specified encounters (Gabarro, 1987). Task-based relationships differ from affective bonds in that

they are influenced by different situational and contextual forces and are subject to different social controls (Gabarro, 1987; Marwell & Hage, 1970). Shared careers can also emerge when two or more employees who work together in the same organization identify an opportunity to join another business or establish their own business, as in the case of Sapient's co-CEOs and co-chairs who met as consultants employed by what is now Cambridge Technology Partners, and then moved on together to establish their own company (Whitford, 2000).

Co-location
Being co-located may bring like minds together. Farrell (2001) describes places that enable collaboration and attract individuals with shared values and aspirations as ''magnet places.'' This can be an art studio, a laboratory, or a university. In the words of Nicholson (2000: 179), ''one could say that the whole of Silicon Valley stems from gangs of young men who carried on playing together beyond their college years.''

Genesis
In addition, the genesis of a shared career requires commitment. This may result from a purposeful, voluntary binding of the working lives of two or more individuals who commit to joint work and shared investments in the chosen field, occupation, or activity (DeFillippi, Arthur, & Lindsay, 2006). In such voluntary binding, the individuals involved are aware of the contribution which each of them is able to add and the opportunities for value creation that arise from uniting competencies and networks. Alternatively, a shared career can also be forced upon, rather than chosen by two or more individuals. This is evident in the cases of subsequent generations in family firms, whose careers are joined in representation of the participating families' interests. Finally, the genesis of a shared career can be serendipitous, as external events or magnet places bring people together, providing the conditions for collaboration and a shared career to emerge.

Functioning

The functioning phase is characterized by an accumulation of experiences of work collaboration and a joint pursuit of career opportunities.

Work collaboration
During functioning, work collaboration takes place through role sharing and role complementarity, as well as role integration.

Role sharing and role complementarity
Some career pairs and constellations share a role. For example, the Coen brothers have been described as ''just about equally responsible for everything in the movie'' (Hinson, 1985: 13). Partners of certain architectural practices have been described to behave the same way (Spencer, 2008).

Shared careers can also unfold through complementary roles, skills, approaches, and networks, particularly in those activities that require different logics in the creation and delivery of products and services such as design, film, architecture, and electronics (Alvarez et al., 2005; Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Kaplan, 2000; Nathan, 1999; Svejenova et al., 2007). In those contexts, designer–manager, director–producer, architect–engineer, and engineer–marketer duos, trios, or larger constellations tend to form, which may turn into shared careers. For example, in the case of Spanish culinary trio Roca, owners of El Celler de Can Roca, ''Joan Roca. . . is the savory mind, Josep Roca. . . the liquid mind, Jordi Roca. . . the sweet mind.'' They constitute an ''equilateral triangle,'' in which the Roca brothers combine their complementary competencies in cuisine, wine, and deserts (Diez, 2008).

Some cases combine both role sharing and complementarity. For example, while Christo and the late Jeanne-Claude were co-artists in their projects, ranging from the fabric gates installations in NYC's Central Park to the wrapping up of the Reichstag, there were three things they did not do together. In the words of Jeanne-Claude, "I don't draw. We never fly on the same plane. And I have deprived Christo of the pleasure of talking with our accountant" (Tomkins, 2004: 77–78).

Role integration

Role sharing and role complementarity affect the degree of and the way in which the inputs of individuals in a shared career are integrated. Role sharing implies the need for a much stronger integration than that required for the execution of complementary roles. Integration may take place through communication, as in the case of the culinary siblings Roca who are involved in "a daily three-way communication and complicity."

Integration is also influenced by positive affect and explicit or implicit agreements around motives, goals, and direction for the future. As the Roca brothers affirm, "We know each other very well and the three of us think more or less the same," or, according to the designer Humberto Campana on working with his brother Fernando since 1983, "We collaborate successfully because of the enormous respect and affection we have for each other. It's a meeting of souls" (Swengley, 2008: 5).

Moreover, individuals may achieve integration by developing and employing over the span of their shared career a kind of "liaison competency," which allows them to pull together parts of their career capital: Their knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom competencies (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). By its nature and function, the liaison competency is a higher-order capability, a kind of meta-competency (Hall, 2002) that facilitates the establishment of collaboration in the work and career domains between the sharing partners and between them and other parties. For example, Herzog and de Meuron's partnering with artists, a hallmark of their architectural practice, is realized through their "capacity for collaboration ... that stems ... directly from their interaction as partners" (Foster, 2005: 42).

Joint pursuit of career opportunities

This aspect of functioning is about the members making career decisions and moves together and aligning their career goals and motivations.

Career decisions and moves

There are a number of important decisions involved in the joint pursuit of career opportunities. For example, it is important to articulate the division of labor; specify which tasks are to be performed separately and which are to be carried out jointly; and secure sufficient space for each partner to exercise personal responsibilities and provide mechanisms that integrate these contributions back into a single voice and action program (Gronn, 2002). Additionally, there is a need for a shared awareness of critical interdependencies and ways in which coordination and mutual adjustment can take place, as well as a working relationship with a strong level of commitment and interaction (Gronn, 2002). In terms of moves, the partners of a shared career may embark on a number of relevant career moves across projects, organizations, fields, or geographies.

Motivations

The members of a shared career are driven by both common and individual motives. Common goals can precede the career sharing and pave the way to its formation. For example, while working for a New York firm, architects Kindred, Rubin, and Shakespeare found they had "similar aesthetic and goals" and joined careers to realize "their individual desires for true authorship of projects" (Spencer, 2008).

Similarly, career-sharing individuals in other creativity or science-driven enterprises may be united by their quest for a distinctive style or an innovation (Pycior, Slack, & Abir-Am, 1996; Zuckerman, 1967).

Common motivations act like centripetal forces for the shared career. For example, in the words of Luis Valls, on the joint career with his brother Javier at the helm of Spanish bank Banco Popular: "Sharing things – ideas, hobbies, tastes, exhaustion – helps to prevent fighting. There is no doubt that having the same . . . criteria, vision of the game greatly reduces the scope for disagreement. . . . there is 'instinctive' consensus about the goals or how to achieve them" (Valls, quoted in Alvarez & Svejenova, 2005: 185).

Throughout the functioning of the shared career, individual motivations may change and, thus, act as centrifugal forces, requiring updating and renegotiation of the career sharing. This can bring either maintenance or dissolution. For example, in the case of the singer–song writer duo Simon and Garfunkel at some point in time, individual motivations took precedence over the collective ones, leading to the breakup of this successful duo and making reconciliations difficult and short-lived.

Termination

Finally, as the examples in Table 1 reveal, a shared career can be concluded for a number of reasons that differ based on who or what provokes the split. Personal circumstances as well as relational and contextual circumstances may produce changes that cause a drift away from career unity, back to individual trajectories.

Originator

A shared career can end unilaterally or by mutual agreement. A unilateral termination takes place when one of the members decides singlehandedly to exit the shared career. For example, in the case of musicians Simon and Garfunkel, the latter became interested in developing a career in acting. In that case, agency takes over communion. It can also disband by mutual agreement such as if members retire.

Cause

A shared career can have a voluntary or forced termination. A voluntary termination is reached by mutual agreement of the individuals who take part in a shared career. A forced termination is one triggered by a natural cause such as the death of a partner, or a public or private conflict that might erode the trusting relationship and lead to a break up—for example, Woody Allen's public breakup with his best friend and long term film producer Jean Doumanian, or the Beatles' split up.

For the members of a shared career to avoid a forced termination, they need to have or develop a bond with a strong relational foundation based on openness and disclosure, detailed knowledge of one another and—as a consequence—predictability of their reactions and the capacity to handle conflict (Gabarro, 1987). The longevity of shared careers can also be improved and their operation enhanced through a thoughtful role design and the employment of integration mechanisms (Alvarez, Svejenova, & Vives, 2007). Furthermore, professional duos are more balanced if they are able to turn their working collaboration into an affective one and combine the benefits of both affective and cognitive trust as the glue that holds the partnership together (McAllister, 1995). As explained by architect Pierre de Meuron regarding his relationship with career partner Jacques Herzog: "It's not only professional collaboration . . . It's friendship, and that's unique. To have no barriers in a relationship, whether it's husband and wife or a working collaboration, [means you can] be open to everything" (Dyckhoff, 2008).

Shared careers also thrive when their members are provided with room to develop and grow. For example, designer Ronan Bouroullec, referring to the collaboration with his brother Erwan, explains: "Our work is strongest when we disagree, because that's when we push each other to go further"

(Design Museum, 2007). Finally, another take on the stability of a shared career is that provided by the Roca brothers, who acknowledge that "equilibrium is possible because the three of us have achieved professional recognition within our respective areas."

Balancing Agency and Communion: Benefits and Drawbacks of the Shared Career

Throughout its life cycle, a shared career is characterized by the duality of two essential career forces, agency and communion (Bakan, 1966; Marshall, 1989; Weick, 2001, 1996). Agency is an individualistic dimension, expressed in feelings of separation, independence, focus, control over one's environment, as well as self-assertion through concrete achievements (Weick, 1996). Individuals engaged in shared careers maintain individual traits, preferences, and motivations when they seek to advance professionally. Communion, in turn, is about togetherness, collaboration, fusion, openness, trust, acceptance, and continuity (Marshall, 1989; Weick, 2001). Shared careers are marked by communion as the individuals fuse their work and career, negotiating objectives and jointly making career choices and moves.

Agency and communion may work in opposition (Bakan, 1966), creating conflicts and tensions, and leading to the termination of a shared career. When continuous learning is essential, however, as in the cases of shared careers where partners engage in a continual adjustment of motivations and expectations, as well as of their competencies and styles, integrating agency and communion becomes a necessity (Weick, 2001). By combining agency and communion in a collective career, agency gets mitigated by communion (Bakan, 1966), while communion gets enhanced by agency (Marshall, 1989).

Shared careers can have both benefits and drawbacks for the individuals involved in them. On the positive side, sharing a career with one or more trusted individuals may provide complementary capabilities for performing a job. This can lead to achievements which the individuals alone would be unable to deliver. Increasingly complex occupations and demanding employers require mindsets, roles, and competencies that are difficult for an individual to possess and employ (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). For example, the joint work and career of London-based designers Pearson and Lloyd is "a balancing process" that has allowed them to "level out each others' failings" (Swengley, 2008: 5).

Similar to occupational communities, shared careers provide opportunities for the development of extant and new career competencies (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). As explained by artist Jeanne-Claude: "I was not an artist when I married Christo, but I became one. If Christo had been a dentist, I would have become a dentist" (Tomkins, 2004: 78).

Furthermore, sharing a career offers communion, companionship, and support in demanding occupations that can be characterized by loneliness such as certain top executive, art- or science-related occupations. It is also a source of autonomy in the pursuit of distinctive and innovative projects. For example, as the filmmaking Coen brothers acknowledge, their career unity allows them to overcome loneliness and isolation and to pursue their distinctive vision, making "their own films their own way" (Levine, 2000: 164).

There are also potential drawbacks. For example, one member's problems could negatively affect the career and reputation of the other member(s). In addition, for individuals who have been involved in a shared career, there is a risk of becoming relationship-dependent, and upon termination of the career sharing, unable to project a distinctive individual set of competencies on the job market. As partners have advanced along successful trajectories by working together, relying on critical complementarities and interdependencies, they may also experience difficulties in pursuing a career path independently.

Contribution and Implications

Recent work on boundaryless careers has updated and expanded the repertoire of available career trajectories. Yet, it still revolves around the individual as the ''elementary unit in work arrangements'' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996: 3). This paper contributes to career theory by defining a new career construct—that of the shared career—and conceptualizing a life cycle model of its development over time. As a relational career type, the shared career reframes traditional ideas of careers as individual undertakings and opens them up to a range of collective career trajectories. By elaborating how career agency can be inherently social and interdependent, it suggests promising avenues for further boundaryless career research (Tams & Arthur, 2010).

In a boundaryless career, it is no longer the organization channeling individuals' career progress but individuals organizing their experiences into a life narrative and holding responsibilities for their skill set and career development (Hall, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Parker & Inkson, 1999; Sennett, 1998). Hence, on the one hand a boundaryless career context may seem liberating as it offers more flexibility and freedom in shaping people's lives. On the other hand, however, it is more difficult to manage. Career planning and advancement are replaced by improvisation and learning (Rock & Garavan, 2006; Weick, 1996). Career behavior becomes more fragmented and risks leave the individual disoriented and confused (Hirsch & Shanley, 1996; Sennett, 1998). Thus, character ''expressed by loyalty and mutual commitment, or through the pursuit of long-term goals, or by the practice of delayed gratification for the sake of a future end'' (Sennett, 1998: 9) is corroded. Such ''corrosion of the character'' (Sennett, 1998) diminishes individual's loyalty, commitment, and attachment and leaves the two main life and career forces—agency and communion—unbalanced (Arthur et al., 1999).

In this paper we argue that a shared career may provide a career structure which is able to combine agency and communion, offering opportunities for expression of both individuality and collective identity. The study of shared careers advances our understanding on how to balance the duality of agency and communion in boundaryless career development (Marshall, 1989; Bakan, 1966). On one hand, the shared career provides opportunities for agency to its individual members, in which they can take initiatives and convince and coordinate with their career partners on necessary career adjustments or moves. On the other hand, the relational binding of the career provides continuity across career fragments and thus facilitates sense-making and communion, the latter being often unrewarded or unrecognized by formal organizational systems (Marshall, 1989: 285). After all, ''if communion is to be better understood, we will need new theories of organization which accommodate the settings and processes beyond the workplace through which communion frequently takes place'' (Arthur et al., 1999: 176).

Examinations of shared careers could help shed light on communion. Additionally, they improve how we represent and conceptualize careers in contexts of growing importance, such as communities of practice, in which collaborative work, shared learning, and joint identity formation are essential (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Hendry, Arthur & Jones, 1995). Finally, the study of shared careers calls attention to the social and organizational context in which they unfold (Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007).

Thus, future research on shared careers can energize work on boundaryless careers by encouraging exploration of the fine balance between several dynamics of careers: Agency and communion, complementarity and overlap, and competition and collaboration. Furthermore, the notion of the shared career calls for systematic empirical study, in particular of the variations in its life cycle phases and the creation, leverage, and/or loss of individual and joint career competencies. It also needs to examine the transformation of different relational types—such as dual careers, partnerships, mentor-protégé—into shared careers, and the consequences of such transformations. In addition, future research needs to

compare and contrast dyadic shared careers with those shared among more than two individuals to identify meaningful similarities and differences in their nature and dynamics. It also needs to delve into what constitutes success and failure in career sharing and identify criteria and challenges. Finally, process research could be useful in order to gain a deeper understanding of joint career decisions making and moves in the context of a shared career, as well as the co-evolution of members' motivations and identities.

Shared careers are not only theoretically meaningful phenomena, but also empirically relevant ones both for individual careers and organizational practices. The underlying logic of career sharing, in which the relationship is a career anchor (Schein, 1996), allows its members to successfully manage careers in the absence of "external markets" by focusing on "competencies rather than titles, fulfillment rather than advancement and roles rather than positions" (Weick & Berlinger, 1989: 320). Furthermore, shared careers have implications for organizations, particularly with regard to their tendency to hire and promote individually, even though specific competitive advantage or combination of competencies may reside among members involved in career sharing.

There is a need for empirical work on the practices of companies that are able to recognize and realize the potential of dyads or larger career units. Hiring pairs, trios, or entire teams requires special selection and development mechanisms that are able to capture and realize potential synergies for an organization from the teaming up of talents. Such committed duos or larger teams could be a source of competitive advantage for the organization. Not realizing the importance of career sharing and promoting its members individually may destroy effectively functioning work units (Belbin, 1981).

Individuals who are contemplating a shared career have to be able to share a position or work closely with (an)other person(s) and be willing and able to accept the other's point of view, not only with regard to work, but also with respect to career direction and job opportunities. It is important to periodically assess the benefits and tradeoffs of a shared career. Although it may provide what Farrell (2001) called instrumental intimacy—the connectedness of two or more minds in reaching joint ideas—it may also lead to difficulties in making joint career moves (e.g., a more restricted range of viable alternatives, less flexibility, or slower speed in deciding or acting), as each new career opportunity must provide room for two or more individuals rather than one.

Finally, in the contemporary context of increasingly fragmented career experiences, shared careers could provide individuals with continuity, coherence, and source of attachment in their professional lives. They can also energize the boundaryless career literature and enrich it with a much-needed relational view.

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