



Boundaryless and protean career attitudes

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Theoretical background (I)

- Substantial changes in today's work environment
 - Flattened hierarchies, decreased job stability, higher mobility demands, ...
- The "new" career perspective receives more and more attention (e.g., Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006; Rousseau, 1995)
 - Responsibilities to career progress from organizations to individuals
 - Emphasis on individual's freedom and growth



Theoretical background (II)

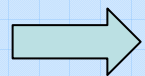
- The rise of new organizational careers requires new ways of viewing careers
- Two key concepts were developed:
 - Protean career (Hall, 1976; 2004)
 - Focuses on achieving subjective career success through self-directed vocational behavior
 - Boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996)
 - Focuses on crossing both physical and psychological borders
- Briscoe et al. (2006) developed a scale for measuring protean and boundaryless career attitudes
- Relationship between the protean and boundaryless career models:
 - Protean and boundaryless career attitudes are independent yet related constructs

Research focus

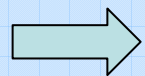
Two perspectives:

- the “new” career researchers (e.g. Briscoe et al., 2006) focus on the impact of protean career attitudes on *subjective* career success
- career success researchers (e.g., Feldman & Ng, 2007) suggest an impact of protean and boundaryless career attitudes also on *objective* career success

Study objectives:



Empirical investigation of the impact of the protean and boundaryless career attitudes on subjective and objective career success; important for career counseling



Theoretical integration of research on ‘new’ careers (Briscoe et al., 1995) with career success research (e.g., Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005)



The "new" career attitudes (I)



The "protean" career attitude:

- Protean comes from "Proteus" a Greek sea-god
- Is a synonym for being flexible, adaptive, changeable
- Hall (1976): careers in which individuals adjust themselves to changing environments by rapidly changing their shape

**Self-directed
career management**

**Values-driven
orientation**



The "new" career attitudes (II)

The "boundaryless" career attitude:

- people with a boundaryless mindset "navigate the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterized by different levels of physical and psychological movement" (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006, p. 9)
- Enjoy working on projects with people from different organizations
- Are enthusiastic about engaging in new experiences and situations outside the organization

Boundaryless mindset

**Organizational mobility
preference**

Previous research – protean attitudes

Quantitative empirical research is scarce:

Positive associations with subjective career success:

- Career satisfaction
- Other-referent subjective success

(e.g., Briscoe, 2004; Briscoe, Water, & Hall, 2005; Gasteiger, 2007; DeVos & Soens, 2008)

Inconclusive findings for objective career success

- Salary
- Promotions

(e.g., Briscoe, 2004; Gasteiger, 2007)

- Proactive personality (Briscoe and Hall, 2005) – objective success (Ng et al., 2005)

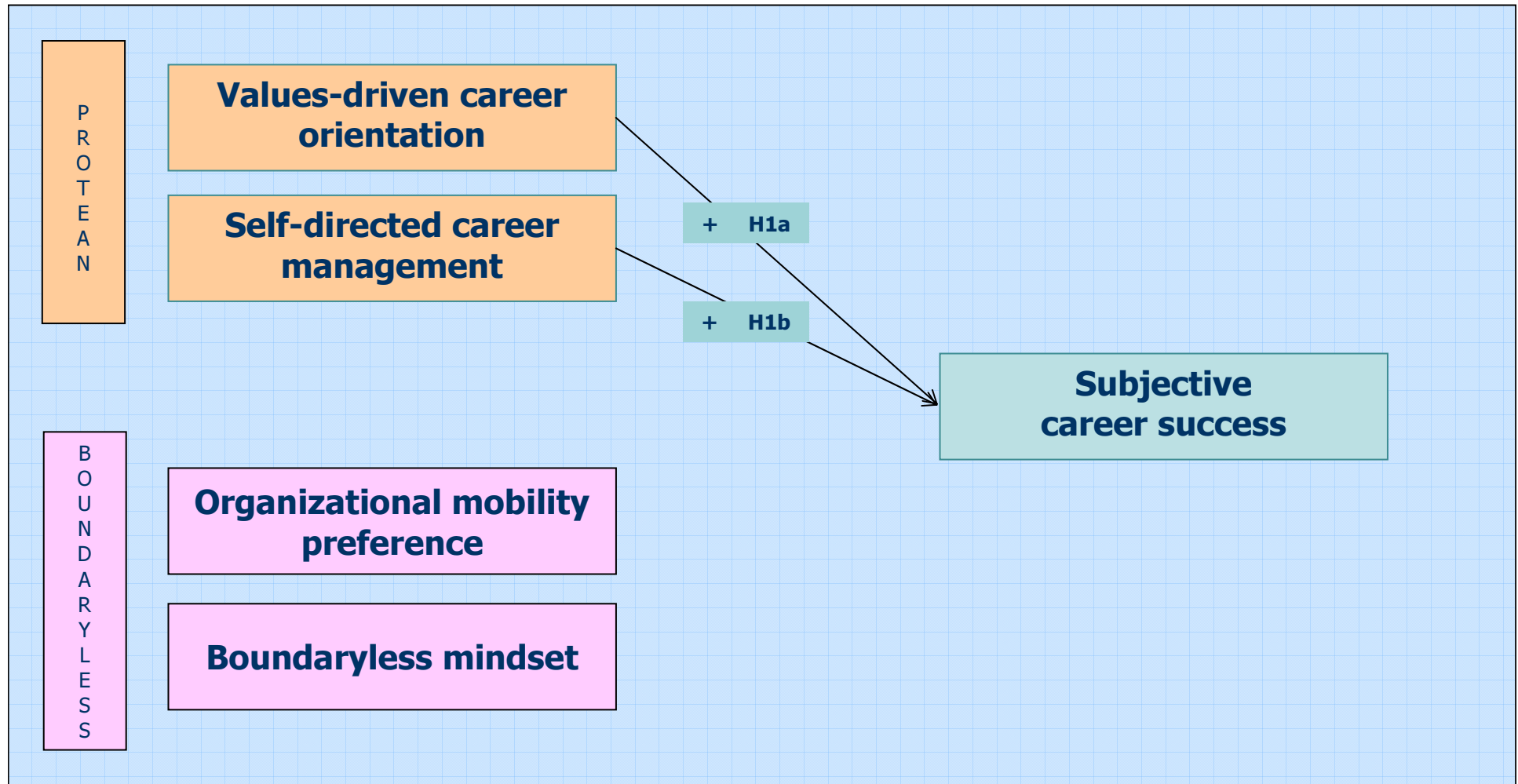
Previous research – boundaryless attitudes

- To our knowledge no empirical studies on boundaryless career orientations and subjective and objective career success

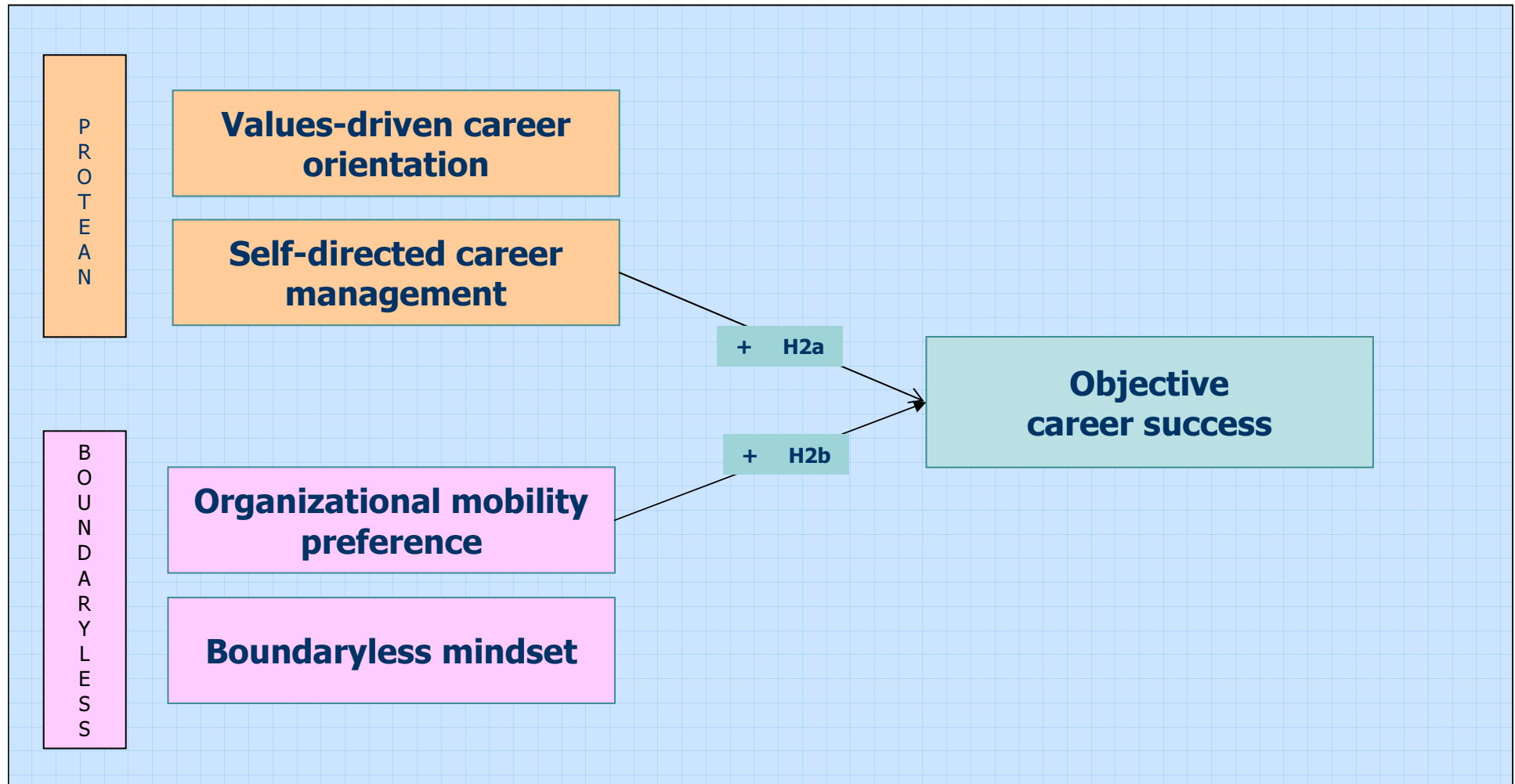
Indirect support from career success research:

- Interorganizational mobility tends to be positively related to objective career success (e.g., Feldman & Ng, 2007), not necessarily to subjective career success
- Change only when significant pay raise occurs
- Increase of human capital

Hypotheses: subjective career success



Hypotheses: objective career success



Empirical study

Procedure:

- Online-survey within a large engineering and producing company in Germany



Sample:

- $N = 116$ employees
- 63.9% male, \bar{X} age: 32.86 years ($SD = 7.08$)
- 79.3% had a university degree
- \bar{X} working hours per week: 42.62 hours ($SD = 3.72$)
- Job tenure: \bar{X} 6.44 years ($SD = 7.20$)



Measures

Career Attitudes:

Protean and Boundaryless Career Attitude Scale

(Briscoe et al., 2006; Gasteiger, 2007)

- **Self-directed:** e.g., *"I am responsible for my success or failure in my career"* ($\alpha = .83$)
- **Values-driven:** e.g., *"What's most important to me is how I feel about my career success, not how other people feel about it"* ($\alpha = .65$)
- **Boundaryless mindset:** e.g., *"I would enjoy working on projects with people across many organizations"* ($\alpha = .78$)
- **Organizational mobility preference:** e.g., *"If my organization provided lifetime employment, I would never desire to seek work in other organizations"* ($\alpha = .75$)

Measures

■ Objective career success:

- **Salary:** annual salary before taxes; from no salary to more than €100.000 (zero to 11)
- **Promotions:** number of promotions during their career

■ Subjective career success:

- **Career satisfaction:** career satisfaction scale (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), e.g. *"I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals"*
- **Other-referent career success: comparison with co-workers** (cf. Abele & Spurk, 2009)

Preliminary findings – Confirmatory factor analysis

	χ^2	<i>df</i>	$\Delta \chi^2$	Δdf	<i>p</i>
One factor (all items on one factor)	951.76	325	364.34	6	0
Two factors (boundaryless and protean)	756.26	324	168.84	5	0
Four factors (as expected by the scale)	587.42	319			

→ Four-factor solution is the best

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1 Self-directed career management	3.92	.55			
2 Values-driven career attitude	3.31	.53	.40***		
3 Organizational mobility preference	3.30	.74	.29**	.09	
4 Boundaryless mindset	3.95	.51	.32**	.08	.24*

→ Small to medium correlations between the factors

Key Findings – subjective career success

	Career Satisfaction		Other-referent subjective career success		
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	
Step 1: control variables					
	.11		.16		
gender ^a		-.23*		-.23**	
age		-.03		-.03	
working hours		.25*		.28***	
Step 2: protean and boundaryless					
	.08		.09		
values-driven career attitude		.02		-.15	- H1a
self-directed career management		.28**		.34***	✓ H1b
organizational mobility preference		-.14		-.01	
boundaryless mindset		-.12		-.05	

*N=116. *p < .05. ** p < .01. ***p < .001. ^aGender is coded as 0 = male, 1 = female.*

Key Findings – objective success

	Promotions		Salary		
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	
Step 1: control variable	.27		.57		
gender ^a		-.28*		-.19*	
age		.11		.56***	
working hours		.33**		.34***	
Step 2: protean and boundaryless	.01		.02		
values-driven career attitude		-.04		-.06	
self-directed career management		.03		.09	- H2a
organizational mobility preference		-.10		.15*	✓ H2b
boundaryless mindset		.12		.04	

N=116. *p < .05. ** p < .01. ***p < .001. ^aGender is coded as 0 = male, 1 = female.

Summary & Implications

Summary

- **Protean career** explains variance in subjective career success
 - Those people craft their career according to their own terms (cf. Briscoe et al., 2006)
 - Fits well to emphasis of subjective perspective among “new” career researchers
- **Boundaryless career** explains variance in objective career success
- Integration of career success research and research on “new” careers – broadens the scope!

Are the “new” career attitudes successful?

- Yes:
- Self-directedness and organizational mobility preference are important
 - Match with key requirements of contemporary work conditions?
- Future research: replication of findings, moderators/mediators

Thank you for your attention!

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