

Career adaptability issues in Chinese context: A mixed-methods study

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Statement of originality

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis is my own work and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

This work has not been previously submitted for any other degree at any university.

(Signed)_____ Date: 07/11/2019

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ABSTRACT

This research program investigated how personal qualities impact on individual's proactive behaviours to adapt to career development tasks. Using mixed-methodology, three empirical studies clarified mechanisms and boundary conditions. These studies offered insights into the influence of the Eastern Chinese social context on individual behaviours that differ from Western cultures.

Paper One was a quantitative study. The primary objective of this study was to distinguish proactive career behaviours from organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) and further examine different mechanisms between calling and the two kinds of proactive behaviours. Evidence from time-lagged measures of a sample of 303 Chinese MBA students showed that both organisational and career identifications partially mediate the effect of calling on OCBs and proactive career behaviours. Further comparison results of the mediation effects demonstrated that organisational identification relates closely to OCBs while career identification relates closely to proactive career behaviours.

To further provide evidence based on career construction theory, paper two examined effects of the combination between one's career self-management willingness and ability. This paper linked career-related behaviours to organisational outcomes and examined the mechanism and boundary conditions from individual career adaptability to organisational performance. Results from a sample of 232 Chinese employees showed that career self-management had a partial mediation effect on the relationship between career adaptability and performance. The indirect effect of career adaptability on performance was stronger

among proactive employees than those with lower levels of proactive personality.

Finally, paper three narrowed down the study to the Chinese in a single cohort. By conducting 41 semi-structured interviews, paper three examined the role that career adaptability plays when individuals navigate career transitions through Chinese social constraints. Results indicated that *system constraints*, *hukou restrictions* and *district attraction* are three unique social constraints in this cohort in China. While using career adaptability resources to navigate career transitions, *guanxi* is an element that matters in the adaptation process.

Taken together, this research program contributes to the understanding of relationships between personal qualities and proactive behaviours in the Chinese context. As a whole, the empirical studies investigated how personal calling, willingness, or career adaptability impact on career-related and organisation-related proactive behaviours differently. The present research shed light on the knowledge of Eastern social context on personal dispositions as well as proactive behaviours. Theoretical and practical implications, and future research directions are provided.

List of publications

This thesis consists of three related studies. Paper One was presented at the 32nd Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, Auckland, New Zealand on 6 December 2018. Paper Two was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, Illinois, USA on 14 August 2018. This paper has also been published on the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* on 22 January 2019, (doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02695). Paper Three was accepted by the European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium 2019 and has been prepared according to the publication guidelines for *Journal of Vocational Behaviours*. All three papers are reported in chapters of this thesis, as detailed below.

1. Xueyuan Gao, Xiaozhou Xue, Wenxia Zhou, Denise Jepsen (2018). Influence Mechanisms of Calling on Proactive Behaviours: Self-determination Theory Perspective. The shortened version of the paper was presented at the 32nd Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, Auckland, New Zealand on 6 December 2018, as detailed in Chapter 2.
2. Xueyuan Gao, Xun Xin, Wenxia Zhou, Denise Jepsen (2019). Combine Your “Able” and “Will”: Career Adaptability’s Influence on Performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2019.1. (doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02695). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, Illinois, USA on 14 August 2018, as detailed in Chapter 3.
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In 2015, I enrolled at Renmin University of China and studied at the School of Labor and Human Resources there. At my second year in Renmin, in 2017, I went on an exchange to Macquarie University as a Cotutelle student for another two years’ study. Under the Cotutelle program I was enrolled at both universities, with one supervisor at Renmin and two supervisors at Macquarie. The “most amazing” is also because I have to meet the requirements of both universities, separately, to finish two dissertations. It’s been a long journey, but now I’m approaching the end. I am excited to the point of tears to express my gratitude to everyone who helped me out on this amazing journey.

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Chapter 1: Overall Introduction

Introduction

This chapter gives an overall introduction to the thesis project. First of all, the research background of this project is discussed. By setting the research context, the significance and necessity of the thesis is highlighted, particularly the research gaps put forward after the background introduction. Research questions related to the overall research aim focusing on career adaptability issues (that is, aimed at improving individuals' career adaptability in the face of career development tasks, exploring the relationship between individuals' career dispositions and their proactive behaviours in their careers, at both personal and organisational levels) are then listed. Related literatures are then reviewed, including those on the career dispositions examined in the thesis project (such as career adaptability and proactive personality) and all proactive behaviours in careers that are examined in this thesis (such as career transition or career self-management). Lastly, an overview of the three studies is given, together with the layout of each of the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Research background

In the past, individuals generally anticipated working in a single organisation or career for their whole working lives. The relationship between themselves and the organisation or career was solid (Kattenbach et al., 2014). With the dramatic changes in the career environment since the late 1990s, when boundaryless and protean careers became popular (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004), people's attitude to their careers has been reshaped greatly. A boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) differs greatly from an organisational career. The latter places more emphasis on the bound relationship between a person and their organisation, whereas the key characteristic of the former is the "permeation of organizational boundaries" (Donnelly, 2009, p319). In the era of boundaryless careers, it is much easier for an individual to move from one organisation to another. The word "protean" in this context indicates personal responsibility towards a career (Hall, 1996). Individuals with protean careers consider their own personal interests and work values when choosing a career. As a result, in this new career era, individuals have more opportunities than ever before to decide and manage their careers, no matter whether it is because of external permeable organisational boundaries or their own internal pursuit of personal career values.

Another feature of organisations in the new career era is the change in organisational structure. Organisations are becoming less hierarchical, with hierarchies flattening, and the career management roles that organisations once played are weakening and to a great extent are being replaced by individuals' initiatives to sustain employment over time (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015; Sylva, Mol, Den Hartog, & Dorenbosch, 2019). It seems that this new era has loosened the bond between organisations and their employees and there seems

now to be a contradiction or conflict between individuals' pursuit of their career values and organisations' pursuit of performance. However, in a fiercely competitive market economy, organisations rely more than ever on people to improve their performance.

Besides the worldwide trend of changes in the career environment, social context matters when examining the relationship between individuals and their careers within a specific society (Barkema, Chen, George, Luo, & Tsui, 2015). Previous research has demonstrated the differences in many aspects of Western and Chinese societies, such as the differences in attitudes towards older workers (Chiu, Chan, Snape, & Redman, 2001), the social-cultural environment for entrepreneurship (Begley & Tan, 2001), ethical perceptions (Chung, Eichenseher, & Taniguchi, 2008) and individuals' personality differences (Lipsmeyer & Nordstrom, 2003; Parsons & Schneider, 1974). Studies of the relationships between individuals and organisations in a particular field have shown that differences caused by social context do exist. In China, for example, historical differences in social development, have resulted in the impact of the career environment changes in China being much more dramatic than in Western countries. Under China's planned economy people were assigned to a particular career by the government with no consideration of the fitness of the match between the two (Sun & Wang, 2009). With the implementation of economic reforms since the late 1970s, the Chinese now have much more choice and are no longer obliged to adhere to one career for their whole lives. The magnitude of the social transition in China is totally different from that in any other Eastern countries (Sun & Wang, 2009). This contextual issue is one that this thesis project will particularly focus on, and Paper Three will discuss in depth the unique nature of China's social context.

The three studies in this thesis are all rooted in the Chinese context. Similar to the global trend, the contradiction between organisations and the employees mentioned above also exists in the Chinese context but that “contradiction” has its uniqueness because of the magnificent transition of the society itself. Specifically, after the implementation of the “*Open Door Policy*”, the country has been transitioned from a command planned to a totally free market economy. Results of psychological research among the Chinese also shows the great impact of the societal transition on individuals’ behaviours. A survey conducted by China Agricultural University and reported by *China Daily* in 2017 showed that the mobility of Chinese labour has increased continuously during the last ten years and that individuals mainly make changes in pursuit of personal development and career satisfaction (http://www.sohu.com/a/167727839_157267).

All taken together, under the global career turbulence background, the Easterners are faced with a unique contextual environment. It is necessary and under investigate to enhance their career adaptability to exert effects of their dispositions as well as proactive behaviours to further adapt to career development tasks. This thesis project, using a mixed-method way, examined career adaptability issues in the Chinese context, a representative context of the Eastern world.

Research gaps and research questions

As addressed in the background section, social context matters when examining individual career behaviours and the relationship between individuals and organisations. Previous studies in the career field were mostly conducted within Western society, while in the new career era few studies have been conducted in the Chinese social context. However,

because of the uniqueness of cultures, the results of studies conducted in Western societies cannot adequately represent the situation in China. Studies in career transition have been popular among Westerners since the early 1980s (Louis, 1980), yet at that time the majority of Chinese people were still being assigned careers by their government (Sun & Wang, 2009). In terms of the relationship between individuals and their organisations or leaders, results drawn from Chinese society represent the collectivist culture and are absolutely different from that drawn from Western societies, which value individualism (Triandis, 2001). Moreover, China is a country that can typically represent the “big picture” of Eastern society, and studies conducted in the Chinese context can fill the gaps in present research and broaden knowledge of issues regarding careers.

In response to the gap addressed above, this thesis, rooted in the Chinese context, examines several career-related issues among Chinese people to explore the uniqueness of the effect of the Chinese social context. All of the issues being examined in this thesis are aiming to investigate how Chinese individuals’ career dispositions will impact on their proactive behaviours in careers at both personal and organisational levels. This thesis project uses a mixed-method approach and comprises two quantitative studies and one qualitative. Key research questions included in this project are:

1. How does calling disposition influence organisational and individual-related proactive behaviours in careers?
2. How could the outcomes from both individual and organisational aspects be combined?
3. How does career adaptability disposition show its impact on either organisational or

individual-related outcomes?

4. Are there any boundary conditions that impact on the relationship between personal dispositions and organisational outcomes?
5. In a career transition situation, how do people's career adaptability dispositions or resources influence their career transition decisions?
6. To what extent do contextual factors influence personal dispositions and subsequent career transition behaviours?

Taken all together, the aim of this thesis project is to improve individuals' career adaptability in the face of career development tasks in Chinese context. Based on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) which is complemented by the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this thesis project specifically examined calling, career adaptability and proactive personality as career dispositions. Organisational citizenship behaviour and proactive career behaviours are investigated as proactive behaviours on both organisational and individual levels, respectively. In addition, career self-management and career transitions are also examined as proactive behaviours in this thesis project. Finally, to adapt to career development tasks, career outcomes such as performance and career transition results are evaluated.

Literature review

The following sections give a review of related research about individuals' proactive behaviours in their careers, career dispositions and the relationship between the two. Particularly, variables that have been examined as career dispositions and proactive behaviours are reviewed in detail. Based on the review, the purpose and contributions of this research are then presented. Finally, the organisation and logic of the three studies are discussed.

Proactive behaviours in careers

Proactive behaviours have been examined and shown as the opposite of passive behaviours. Instead of accepting arrangements imposed by the environment or watching things happen passively, self-initiation is the essential factor in proactive behaviour, which emphasises adjusting to and taking control of the situation to make things happen (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010; Parker & Collins, 2010). In an uncertain career environment, more emphasis has been given to the need to utilise proactive behaviours (Mohd Rasdi, Garavan, & Ismail, 2011). Prior to reviewing the literature, we first need to clarify what proactive behaviours in careers means for this study.

Proactive behaviours in a career are not the same as proactive career behaviours. Proactive career behaviours, consisting both cognitive and behavioural aspects, are deliberate actions, toward achieving career goals. The latter is included in the scope of proactive behaviours in the career field. The key elements of proactive behaviour include individuals' anticipation of, plans for and attempts in bringing about changes in either themselves or the environment to reach to a different future (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker, Williams, &

Turner, 2006). Any initiative behaviours that can equip individuals to achieve more career development opportunities are the proactive behaviours in that career field that concern this study. For example, people may show more organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) to build networks with colleagues or leaders, which in turn create new opportunities for individuals to improve their working skills while networking. In that case, the OCB is a kind of proactive behaviour in a career field. All activities where someone uses their own initiative (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2010) are included as proactive behaviours in careers in this study. This includes any proactive career transition behaviour which shows great control of a situation within a changing career context and aims to seek more career development opportunities.

In the following three studies, the thesis project examines organisational citizenship behaviour, proactive career behaviour, career self-management and proactive career transitions as four proactive behaviours in the career field.

Organisational citizenship behaviour

Studies of OCBs have been attracting much attention in the last three decades. As a result, organisational citizenship behaviour has rapidly become a popular topic in organisational behaviour studies (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Behaviours such as voluntarily helping others with their work, helping to keep a good external organisational image or making suggestions for improvement are all in the OCB category (Williams & Anderson, 1991). OCB is a voluntary proactive employee behaviour which goes beyond the duty and will not be rewarded by the organisation (Kreitner, Kinicki, & Buelens, 2002). In the empirical Paper One in this research program, OCB is taken as an organisation-related

proactive behaviour in careers, which is differentiated from career-related proactive behaviours (that is the proactive career behaviour).

Since research on OCBs has been popular for more than three decades, there are now numerous studies on this topic. OCB is a valid indicator of good performance and has many positive outcomes (Deery, Rayton, Walsh, & Kinnie, 2017; Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2018). Based on the results of previous research, we can put the antecedents of OCBs into two categories, including personal characters and organisational management practices. A large body of research examined the influence of personal character on OCBs, such as the effect of an individual's attitude to their job. Bowling, Wang and Li (2012) extended and investigated the influence of core self-evaluation, as a dispositional moderator on the relationship between job attitude and OCBs. Organisational management practices are also key factors that could impact on OCBs (Saoula & Johari, 2016). When employees are being treated fairly/equally and being involved in decision-making process in an organisation, they are more willing to perform more OCBs (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012).

Social exchange theory (SET) is the theoretical framework that is most widely used in OCB studies (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997). SET explores the idea of reciprocated benefits. According to the theory, one party involved in the exchange relationship will provide benefits to the other voluntarily, while anticipating benefits in return (Yoon & Lawler, 2005). In organisations, when individuals are being equally treated, they are more likely to demonstrate OCBs to the organisation in reciprocation (Chinomona & Dhurup, 2015).

In the literature, there are two popular methods of measuring OCBs. One way to measure OCB is to take it as a whole construct and evaluate the possibility of performing OCBs (Jung & Yoon, 2012). The sample item was “I am always ready to help those around me”. The other popular method of measuring is to divide OCB into two dimensions: OCBI, the organisational citizenship behaviour towards individuals, and OCBO, the organisational citizenship behaviour towards organisations (Lee & Allen, 2002). An example of OCBI is to “Help others who have been absent” and an example of OCBO is to “Defend the organisation when other employees criticise it”.

Proactive career behaviour

Proactive career behaviours are deliberate actions, directed towards achieving career goals, which consist of both cognitive and behavioural aspects. The cognitive aspect represents anticipation of the future, which drives specific behaviours to realise career goals. There are three specific types of behaviours: networking, career planning and skill development (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). In most studies, career planning and skill development are also examined as a whole, as career initiative (De Vos & Soens, 2008; Sylva et al., 2019).

In previous studies, the consensus among researchers is that proactive career behaviours lead to desired career outcomes both for individuals and organisations. For example, De Vos, De Clippeleer, and Dewilde (2009) investigated and found a positive relationship between networking and individual subjective and objective career success. Individuals with performance-prove orientation will utilise proactive behaviours in their careers to attain high performance (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2010). In addition, Strauss, Griffin, and Parker (2012)

demonstrate that the improvement of organisational performance partially results from improvement in proactive career behaviours. Because of the positive effect of proactive career behaviours, academics have increasingly examined its antecedents. For instance, leadership style (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2010), individual employment-related early career experiences (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998) and career adaptability (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015) have all been shown to play a positive effect on individuals' proactive career behaviours. Among the studies, the most popular approach is to investigate the antecedents of proactive career behaviours from a motivation perspective, and the motivational antecedents mainly include dispositional hope (Hirschi, 2014) and future work self-salience (Strauss et al., 2012; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015).

Empirical research should be based on a theory. The different researchers explain the paths from various antecedents to proactive career behaviours from a number of theoretical perspectives. Drawing on self-regulation theory (Carver & Scheier, 1990) and Strauss et al. (2012) explain how future work self-salience motivated individuals to utilise proactive behaviours to pursuit their career goals. Specifically, future work self-salience is the cognitive representation of an ideal future which may create discrepancies between the future and the current self. The discrepancies further motivate individuals to perform actively to achieve ideal career goals. Drawing on career construction theory (CCT), (Savickas, 2013) and Taber and Blankemeyer (2015) found that career adaptability creates an additive effect when future work self shows its influence on proactive career behaviours. According to CCT, career adaptability is a kind of psychosocial resource which contains four elements: career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence. People can use their career adaptability

resources to cope with various career development tasks and finally reach a perfect person-environment fit (Savickas, 2013). In terms of the additive effect of career adaptability mentioned above, specifically, career concern enhances the effect of future work self on career planning. Both career curiosity and career confidence play a mediating role while future work self predicts skill development and networking. Within the person-environment fit theoretical framework, Sylva et al. (2019) take a dynamic approach to show how increases in perceived demands-abilities fit will impact on an individual's career initiative over time. The large degree of misfit will greatly drive proactive work behaviours to achieve a better match. The current study examines, in Study 1, proactive career behaviour as one of the proactive behaviours in the career field and explains how the proactive career behaviour comes from a motivation perspective.

In the proactive career behaviour studies examined, researchers measure the variable in different ways, which can be summarised into three categories. First, taking the three elements of proactive career behaviours—career planning, skill development and networking—as a whole, and measuring the construct with a 12-item scale (Backman, O'Maley & Johnston, 1978; Penley & Gould, 1981). Second, instead of investigating proactive career behaviour as a whole, some studies focus on one or two dimensions of the variable. For instance, Taber and Blankemeyer (2015) focus on career networking engagement and examine how it will be influenced by future work self and career adaptability. Sylva et al. (2019) use two items to measure career initiative, including career planning and skill development. The third category extends the scope of proactive career behaviours to include additional proactive behaviours concerning career. De Vos et al. (2009) measure career engagement as a proactive career

behaviour catalogue and include more proactive behaviours, such as self- and environmental exploration, positioning behaviour, and voluntary training.

Career self-management

Career self-management (CSM), as an individual initiative, represents the degree to which people gather information to engage in career problem-solving and career decision-making process (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998). Recently, research has expanded the concept of CSM to a process whereby individuals proactively contribute to education to make self-improvements and career developments throughout their life-span (Lent & Brown, 2013).

In early studies, academics examined CSM in a static way. For example, Kim, Fouad, and Lee (2018) and Chiaburu, Baker, and Pitariu (2006) investigated how proactive personality will show its influence on career self-management behaviours. In that study, CSM was a collection of behaviours with job mobility preparedness and developmental feedback-seeking behaviours included (Kim et al., 2018; Kossek et al., 1998). More recently, with the extension of the concept itself, research on CSM has shifted to dynamic process examination.

The theory that is the most popular in investigating CSM is the social cognitive model of career self-management (Lent & Brown, 2013). This model is developed from the earlier social cognitive model which focused on career fields where people may show their interests (Lent, 2005). Instead of examining the content of the concept directly, the theory explains it as a process and examines the process aspect in details ranging from career choices, decision-making, career development, problem-solving, and career development outcomes (Lent & Brown, 2013).

Regarding CSM measurement, because of the two ways of examining career self-management, the measurement methods in previous research can also be differentiated into two categories. In earlier studies, career self-management was investigated as a collective concept. The two dimensions of the concept, developmental feedback-seeking and job mobility preparedness behaviours (Kossek et al., 1998), are measured using the CSM scale. From the process perspective, however, instead of measuring CSM, scales are developed to measure the elements in the CSM process taken from the social cognitive model of CSM, such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals, and career decision status.

Career transitions

In the new career era (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2004) since the late 1990s, research on career transitions has flourished. Career transitions may happen to people at different career stages or in different career fields, leading to varied ways of conceptualising the construct. For example, Forrier, Verbruggen, and De Cuyper (2015) studied the transition as any change in employment status, including changes that happened either in or outside an organisation. However, Oleski and Subich (1996) define career transition as the change from one occupation to a totally different one. Differences in conceptualising the construct lead to several types of career transition studies. Some researchers focused on school-to-work transition in their studies, while both transition from employed work to entrepreneurship (Obschonka, Goethner, Silbereisen, & Cantner, 2012) and the retirement transition (Griffin, Hesketh, & Loh, 2012; Hesketh, Griffin, & Loh, 2011) are very popular areas in career transition studies. In the career transition field, the transition types, such as transitions within or between organisations, transition within or between a career field, are broadly investigated.

These different theoretical frameworks for conceptualising career transitions lead to researchers explaining this phenomenon from different theory perspectives. The life span theory for career development (Super, 1980) is mostly used in career studies (Elder & Johnson, 2003). According to the theory, career is a sequence of roles of a person during the course of a lifetime. Each time when a person choose a career role is a process of the development of self-concept. The conceptualization of career roles in the theory gives explanations to varies kinds of career transitions. Besides the lifespan perspective, researchers explained career transitions in different career stages from different theoretical lens. For career entry transitions, such as the school-to-work transition, self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) frameworks are mostly used. According to SDT, three types of individual psychological needs—autonomy, relatedness, competence—play their roles as motivational factors in making choices. Through the lens of SDT, academics pay more attention to the antecedents of individuals' psychological needs and focus on how to improve proactive work behaviours and the process of socialisation when they finish the transition and enter into their new career. The TPB approach emphasises the influence of personal attitude on behaviours. In career entry transition studies, the theory of planned behaviour helps to clarify how individuals' job-search intentions will influence the coming career transition behaviours (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005).

For career transitions occurring at the mid-career stage, such as transitions within or between organisations or occupational fields, protean (Hall, 1996) and boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) perspectives and intelligent career theory (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) are widely used. Protean and boundaryless careers became popular with the

development of high-technology and changing organisational structures which emphasise the freedom of making career choices (Sullivan, 1999). Research showed that there is a high frequency of intra- and inter-organisation/occupation career transitions in protean and boundaryless career era. The second popular theory, intelligent career theory (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) explains mid-career transitions from the competency perspective. It views social capital, human capital and psychological capital as the competencies of an individual. When people are faced with a career transition, the integration of the three competencies will increase the frequency of mobility in the external career market and help them use career strategies to achieve a successful transition (Lam, Ng, & Feldman, 2012).

For career transitions that happen because of a trauma or happen in the later career stages, such as retirement, the theory of work adjustment (Brown & Lent, 2004) is popularly used as the theoretical framework. According to the theory, individuals and their environments impose requirements on one another and the fit between the two is viewed as a “successful” work relationship. Adjustment to a new work environment or setting after retirement or traumatic career events is a popular and necessary field within career transition studies. For example, Hesketh et al. (2011) focused on retirement transitions and, in their study, suggested a retirement transition and adjustment framework. In addition, under the life course perspective (Elder & Johnson, 2003), researchers in the field pay more attention to both trajectories of career transition and its interdependence with career development stages (Szinovacz, 2003; Wang, 2007).

With uncertainties of career becoming widespread and inevitable, the antecedents of career transitions have been investigated extensively in previous studies, which can be

categorised from four aspects: environmental influence, personal characteristics, person-environment fit and evaluation of capabilities. First, using external environment perspectives, the broader economic environment (Kattenbach et al., 2014), permeation of organisational boundaries (Donnelly, 2009) and family factors (Blau, 2000) will all show their influence on career transition behaviours. For example, research showed that family factors will greatly impact on females' career choice. Those taking care of a young child have to transition to a more flexible career (Cabrera, 2007). Second, in terms of personal characteristics, demographics, personalities or interests (Sedge, 1985) will show their influence on career transition decisions. For example, age is a factor that could negatively influence career transition decisions. For different gender groups, research showed that males are more likely to make career transitions than female (Carless & Arnup, 2011). Third, the person-environment fit, such as the fit between personal skills and job demands, is a key factor to predict career transition possibilities; a perfect person-environment fit is less likely to lead to a transition (Donohue, 2006). Finally, individuals' evaluation of their capabilities, such as the human capital, social capital or perceived employability, will significantly influence their career transition behaviours. Research showed that when individuals evaluate themselves as rich in human capital, with more work related knowledge and skills for example, it will be less likely for them to make a transition, and vice versa (McGuire, Polla, & Heidl, 2017). However, when people perceive themselves as having more social capital, such as networking capacity, they will be more likely to make a career transition (Forrier et al., 2015; Higgins, 2001). Moreover, a positive evaluation on personal employability will lead people to a career transition with more confidence (Forrier et al., 2015).

Career dispositions

Career disposition, or the dispositional trait, is one of the main career development components (Hartung & Borges, 2005). Dispositional traits are those “relatively nonconditional, relatively decontextualized, generally linear, and implicitly comparative dimensions of personality” (McAdams, 1995, p391). Personality is the most popular disposition for research attention, with a focus on considerations such as the “Big Five” personality traits (Watson & Hubbard, 1996), goal orientation (Yousefi, Abedi, Baghban, Eatemadi, & Abedi, 2011), coping styles (Watson & Hubbard, 1996), and self-efficacy or internal locus of control (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). Career dispositions are different from experiential variables (Bozionelos, 2004): the former is what a person usually does during their career or nonconditional and decontextualized dimensions of personality whereas the latter relates more closely to a certain experience. To investigate the influence of career disposition on proactive behaviours within a career, in this thesis we focus on two kinds of career disposition—calling and career adaptability.

Calling

The research into calling has many facets. In some studies, researchers examine calling as a sense of meaning that can lead to a high degree of occupational identification (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), whereas in other research calling may be examined as work hope, representing a positive motivational state (Duffy, Allan, & Dik, 2011). Investigations into the meaningful life, meaningful work or prosocial work motivation all fit within the context of calling research (Ryan D Duffy, Allan, et al., 2011). It is a personal disposition or a “higher power” that can facilitate meaningfulness or purpose for people, and compel them to behave positively (Duffy & Blustein, 2005).

Researchers examine the relationship between calling and many other variables from a number of theoretical perspectives. Because calling is a disposition that can make people pursue their goals and find meaningfulness in their work and lives (Conway, Clinton, Sturges, & Budjanovcanin, 2015), the commonness of theories used in calling studies emphasises individuals' internal impetus, either from their cognition or behaviours. For instance, (Cardador et al, 2011), explain the way the calling orientation influences the organisational identification from both role investment and identification convergence theoretical perspectives. According to the role investment theory, people will show their positive attitudes and devote their behaviours to the role that they regard as important (Brown, 1996; Lobel, 1991). Identification convergence theory puts the emphasis on self-consistency seeking while individuals are faced with different identification targets (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987).

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) is one of the most popular theoretical frameworks used to explain the motivational effects of calling (Conway et al., 2015; Duffy, England, Douglass, Autin, & Allan, 2017). SDT is the theory that emphasises how people can be motivated intrinsically by satisfying the three basic psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness and competency (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Specifically, autonomy represents an individual's control over activities. Relatedness is the level of connection with others, and competency refers to self-efficacy when engaging in an activity. Using SDT, studies examined from a motivational perspective how an answered calling could satisfy people's three kinds of psychological needs which in turn improve their job and life satisfactions (Gazica & Spector, 2015) or directly impact on people's daily life well-being

(Conway et al., 2015).

In calling studies, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is a framework used to explain the relationship between calling and career outcome expectations (Domene, 2012). Within SCCT, individuals' learning experiences will impact on their outcome expectations in either direct or indirect ways. Calling is viewed by academics using an SCCT lens as a learning experience, and Domene (2012) investigated, among university students, the mechanism between a sense of calling and the career outcome expectations.

Apart from the SCCT perspective which examines mechanism of the cognition (i.e. expectation), career construction theory (CCT) (Savickas, 2013), focusing on behavioural outcomes, was used in some studies to explore how calling is related to career adaptability (Douglass & Duffy, 2015). CCT focuses on ways in which individuals utilise their self-regulatory resources, in particular career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence, to adapt to the environment they are in. The research shows that calling is a predictor of the development of career adaptability by cultivating the four elements in CCT (Douglass & Duffy, 2015).

Empirical research on calling has been very popular in the careers field, especially studies examining the linkage between calling and well-being such as work and life satisfaction. For example, Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1997) investigated an employee group and showed that those who were working as a calling reported a higher level of work and life satisfaction. Calling was also examined as a predictor of work-related attitudes such as career engagement (Hirschi, 2011), career commitment (Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011) or occupational identification (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). By investigating participants

from health care occupations, Cardador et al. (2011), found that calling orientation is positively associated with organisational identification and negatively associated with turnover intention. Overall, as a motivational disposition, calling has been mostly examined as a factor which can positively predict work or career-related outcomes.

Regarding measurement of calling, the construct was measured either with scales or in qualitative ways. For the calling scales approach, researchers may use different scales. For instance, Domene (2012) used the calling and vocation questionnaire (CVQ) (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012) to measure the meaning of calling and vocation to undergraduate students. This scale contains six dimensions with 24 items within it. However, Douglass and Duffy (2015) similarly examined the undergraduate students using a 2-item subscale from the Brief Calling Scale (BCS) (Dik et al., 2012) to assess the participants' level of calling. In addition, when studying faculty members, Gazica and Spector (2015) adopted a 6-item scale (Gazica, 2014) to measure their occupational calling. Besides quantitative measuring, some researchers used a daily diary method to let participants record the activities they experienced in relation to their calling (Conway et al., 2015).

Career adaptability

Career adaptability, as a disposition or tendency, enables people to enrich their other competencies to pursue adaptation towards the environment (Morrison & Hall, 2002). Career adaptability is a kind of personal self-regulatory resource which can help individuals cope with career development tasks, transitions or traumas to reach a perfect fit between themselves and their environment (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2013). As a higher-order construct, career adaptability consists of four elements: career concern, career control, career

curiosity, and career confidence. Career concern is a planful behaviour concerning the future. People with a high level of career concern will show their ability in predicting any changes that may happen in their career. Career control is an assertive attitude or a sense of responsibility towards the career. Career curiosity is the desire for new things. With career curiosity, people will always be happy to explore opportunities around them. Finally, career confidence is a degree of self-efficacy which is a positive attitude towards difficulties. Problem-solving is a way for people to gain their career confidence.

Career adaptability is the core concept in career construction theory (CCT) (Savickas, 2013), which is the most widely used theory in career adaptability studies. CCT, also known as the adaptation model of career construction, exams how individuals will use their self-regulatory resources to overcome difficulties in their careers from a psychosocial perspective. Career construction theory demonstrates how people's willingness or career adaptability will influence their career choices which in turn lead to adapting behaviours and adaptation results. CCT will be explained in more detail in Paper Two and Paper Three.

In previous research, career adaptability was examined either as a predictor of many adaptation results, such as life satisfaction (Hirschi, 2009), or as the outcome of some other personal disposition such as goal orientation (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009) and positive emotions (Hirschi, 2009), especially in the career transition context. In many other studies, the role of career adaptability was examined as a mediator or moderator, based on the adaptation model of career construction (Savickas, 2013). For instance, Guan et al. (2014) examined the mediating role of career adaptability in the relationship between future work self and employment status. In another study, Guan et al. (2014) also found that for people who have a

higher level of career adaptability, the positive influence of future work self on job search self-efficacy will be stronger, demonstrating the moderating role of career adaptability.

Regarding measurement of career adaptability, researchers in early studies viewed the construct differently. For example, they may use career optimism (Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005) or commitment to career choices and confidence (Duffy & Blustein, 2005) to represent career adaptability. Since more studies began to examine the concept of career adaptability, there was an urgent need to measure the concept consistently. To accurately account for the four elements (i.e. career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence) in the career construction model of adaptation (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) was built up and academics from various countries testified to the measurement efficiency of the construct using this scale (for example Tolentino et al. in 2014 in Australia; Hou, Leung, Li, Li, & Xu in 2012 in China; Soresi, Nota, & Ferrari in 2012 in Italy). Finally, the concept of career adaptability was measured with the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale which contains 24 items in total (with four subscales, each subscale having six items) to evaluate the four elements of the construct.

Instead of investigating career adaptability empirically, some researchers have suggested that a career is a story that needs to be reflected from different aspects (Del Corso & Rehfsuss, 2011; Nicholson & West, 1988). Therefore, instead of using structural measurements, narrative is used as a method that can shed more light on the role of career adaptability in the whole career “story” (Savickas, 2005). Each way of measuring career adaptability has its merits and flaws. For instance, the CAAS has been tested worldwide and can be used broadly to measure the career adaptability of a large group of people, but because of the structuring of

the measurement, it cannot examine career adaptability from a life-span perspective (Super, 1980). Instead, a narrative approach, or the qualitative method, could deeply explore the role that career adaptability plays in the whole career story. This thesis combines the two ways of measuring career adaptability for different research purposes. In empirical Study 2, we measured career adaptability with CAAS to investigate its relationship with other variables in a broader sense, whereas in Paper Three we examined, through interviews with 41 participants, career adaptability using a narrative approach, to investigate deeply how career adaptability may affect a career transition episode within the whole career story.

Proactive personality

Proactive personality is a dispositional tendency that drives people to express their values and to make self-directed career choices (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Proactive individuals tend to “scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change” (Bateman & Crant, 1993, p. 105). They are future oriented and their proactive behaviours are aimed at improving themselves.

In theory, the initial effects of proactive personality were mostly explained in studies within the theory of proactive personality (Jiang, 2017) or from the role theory perspective (Dik et al., 2012). The former suggested that the proactive tendency is a factor that could impact on people’s reaction towards all motivators that may facilitate a good career outcome (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). According to the latter, the role theory perspective, people with proactive personalities will be driven by their personal initiatives and build relationships with people around them actively, especially in their early career stages (Dik et al., 2012).

In previous research, academics examined either the direct or moderating effect of

proactive personalities. For example, Jawahar and Liu (2016) investigated the direct link from proactive personality to citizenship performance among 356 employees. In another study, similarly among employees, the effect of proactive personality on career success was examined (Turban, Moake, Wu, & Cheung, 2017). Research also showed that the proactive tendency can also make individuals more sensitive and willing to establish good relationships with people around them who control resources and can advance their career (Thompson, 2005). Because of the motivating effect of the proactive tendency on career outcomes (Seibert et al., 1999), in previous studies, proactive personality is examined as a moderator which is associated with individuals' other dispositions and any behavioural outcomes (Wang, Hu, Hurst, & Yang, 2014).

When measuring proactive personality, a meta-analysis on proactive personality noted that Bateman and Crant (1993) 10-item Proactive Personality Scale is the most widely used measurement tool (Dik et al., 2012). Besides the full scale, other researchers used the four items with the highest factor loading in the scale, an approach which has also been used in a Chinese context (Gong, Cheung, Wang, & Huang, 2012).

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**Chapter 2: Paper One. Calling and proactive behaviours:
identifications as mediators**

Introduction to Paper One

Paper One is conducted to answer the thesis's first research question regarding "How does calling influence organisational and individual-related proactive behaviours in careers?" This paper examines organisational citizenship behaviours and proactive career behaviours as organisational and individual-related proactive behaviours in careers, respectively. To answer the research question, this paper, using quantitative surveys, investigated and compared the different mechanisms between calling and two types of proactive behaviours in careers. In a time-lagged way, the sample of this study consists of 127 dyads (supervisor-client dyads) with 303 clients or subordinates who were MBA students from a state-owned university in Beijing, China. Paper One finds that organisational and career identifications are the two mediators that can reveal the "black box" between calling and two types of proactive behaviours. Further comparison results show that organisational identification relates more closely to OCBs whereas career identification relates more closely to proactive career behaviours.

Paper One was presented at the 32nd Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, Auckland, New Zealand on 6 December 2018, as detailed on p. v. Reviewer feedback as well as feedback received at the conference presentation was incorporated into revisions to this paper.

**Influence mechanisms of calling on proactive behaviours: Self-determination theory
perspective**

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Abstract

Based on self-determination theory, this study examines the mediating effects of identification on the relationship between calling and proactive behaviours. The results demonstrate that both organisational identification and career identification partially mediate the effect of calling on organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) and proactive career behaviours. Further comparison results of the mediation effects show that organisational identification relates closely to OCBs while career identification relates closely to proactive career behaviours. However, the overall mediation effect of organisational identification is stronger than that of career identification. Both theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Calling, identification, mediation, proactive behaviours

Introduction

Research on calling has been drawing considerable attention for a long time (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007a; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010). In a broader sense, studies on meaningful life, meaningful work and prosocial work motivation all fit within the context of calling research (Duffy, Dik, et al., 2011). In the work field, at the time when individuals' efforts are valued most, meaningful work has been considerably addressed in several studies. People drawn to a career they feel is meaningful and who are motivated are deemed to have a sense of calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012). In previous research, the relationship between calling and many other variables has been examined, which we categorise into work-related and career-related outcomes in our study. For example, research shows that, in terms of career-related outcomes, calling can positively predict career decision and career maturity (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007a; Dumulescu, Opre, & Ramona, 2015). In addition, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) found that when someone can experience calling in their career, they will have a strong sense of meaning which leads to high degrees of occupational identification. From organisational perspectives, calling has been demonstrated to positively correlate with organisational citizenship behaviours (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010). Moreover, previous studies reported that participants with a strong sense of calling will have high levels of job satisfaction (Davidson & Caddell, 1994), and high organisational commitment (Cardador et al., 2011).

Despite the growing interests of research in the influence of calling on different outcomes, some gaps are still needed to be further investigated. First of all, while many studies have demonstrated how calling may influence someone's career development or the

organisation-related outcomes separately, little is known about how the two types of outcome will be influenced differently by the same calling. Duffy, Dik, et al. (2011) combined the two types of outcome and examined whether people who endorse a calling will be more committed to their career or organisation. They found that commitment to the career comes first but did not make a comparison between organisation and career commitments. More work needs to be done to examine how and why calling influences organisation and career-related outcomes differently. Second, it is likely that variables based on different theoretical perspectives will work as mediators between calling and the two outcomes. Research has shown that identification play key roles in exerting the effect of someone's calling (Duffy, Dik, et al., 2011). In current studies, little research has been done to investigate the different extents to which both career and organisation are perceived as central to one's identity will influence the calling outcomes differently. As a result, there is currently a need for multiple mediator research to explore the relationship between calling and positive outcomes (Duffy, Dik, et al., 2011). To address these gaps, based on the self-determination theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2000), we will combine organisation and career-related outcomes and investigate how calling will influence the two proactive behaviours — organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and proactive career behaviour. SDT is a theory that emphasises how the intrinsic motivation will positively impact one's behaviour. The motivated effect of calling on individuals' behaviours comes from their intrinsic motivation. In addition, responding to the need to use multiple mediators, we tested and compared the mediation effects of both organisational identification and career identification in the relationship between calling and the two proactive behaviours. Investigation of the underling mechanism

of calling on both organisation and career-related outcomes could give insights to both theory and practice.

Literature review

Calling and proactive behaviours

There are three perspectives on the concept of calling: classical, modern, and neoclassical (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Ponton et al., 2014). The neoclassical perspective on calling combines the classical and modern perspectives together and has been widely tested (Zhang, Dik, Wei, & Zhang, 2015; Zhang, Herrmann, Hirschi, Wei, & Zhang, 2015). Therefore, we identified calling according to the neoclassical perspective as “transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life-role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427).

From the neoclassical perspective, both talents and abilities are key sources of calling (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Calling is a kind of value or a goal “driving a sense of purpose” (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427) that is, to large extent, conceptually close to intrinsic motivation (Dobrow, 2013). Motivation types were categorised from intrinsic to external according to the degree of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Few studies pay attention to intrinsic motivation in a calling (Dik et al., 2012). In self-determination theory perspective, intrinsic motivation is addressed as a “natural process” which “concerns active engagement with tasks that people find interesting” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 233)”. Drawing on insights offered by this theory, people who have a high level of intrinsic motivation and, at the same

time, are confident with their ability, will have a strong will to engage in the work (Gagné & Deci, 2005) and show more proactive behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 2010; Strauss & Parker, 2014). In this study, we paid attention to two kinds of proactive behaviours—organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and proactive career behaviour—from both organisation and career-related perspectives.

OCB is an extra-role proactive behaviour performed in organisations (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Research shows that individuals may regard their organisation as a place to realise their calling via organisational instrumentality (Cardador et al., 2011). In this way, calling can greatly enhance individuals' organisational attachment, thus leading to more beneficial behaviour, such as OCB, towards organisations. We therefore propose that:

Hypothesis 1a: Calling is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviours.

Proactive career behaviours are behaviours that individuals use to manage and maintain their career (Mirvis & Hall, 1994) and contribute value to their organisations (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). The antecedents of proactive career behaviours can be divided into individual differences and surrounding factors which could have an impact on proactive career behaviours through the effects of cognition or motivation (Chen, 2013; Parker et al., 2006). According to Hall and Chandler (2005), calling, a career-related concept, is an individual characteristic that works as a key element to career success and career ability development. Yet, up to now, little research has investigated the positive effect of calling on career development and career planning behaviours among employees. Therefore, for the employee group, we propose that:

Hypothesis 1b: Calling is positively related to proactive career behaviours.

Identifications as mediators

Identification is a kind of knowledge of self that includes both internal cognition of oneself and external cognition of the relationship with others (Castells, 1997). Organisational identification is a perceived oneness with an organisation and the experience of the organisation's successes and failures as one's own (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) whereas according to Van Maanen and Barley (1982), career identification refers to the extent that someone will define themselves according to the work roles rather than to any specific organisations. The big difference between organisational identification and career identification concerns the result. Organisational identification values the organisational interests prior to any other factors, while career identification values more personal career development. Thus, we propose that organisational identification and career identification will have different effects on career-related and organisational related outcomes separately.

The mediating role of organisational identification

Organisational identification works as a strong link between employees and their organisations (Wan-Huggins, Riordan, & Griffeth, 1998) and plays a big role in both employees' behavioural adjustment and environment adaptation. For example, a high level of organisational identification can lead to strong cooperation among organisational members (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002). Therefore, we can conclude that those with high levels of organisational identification have a strong sense of belonging to their organisation and will closely link personal career development and organisational development. In that case, they are more likely to focus on tasks that will benefit their organisation instead of personal interests. As a result, employees with strong organisational identifications will perform more extra-role behaviours such as OCBs. Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2a: Organisational identification mediates the relationship between calling and OCBs.

Organisational identification describes a stable bond between employees and their organisations (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). With high levels of organisational identification, employees will be highly engaged in their work, which will help them clarify their career goals. Since a planned career goal is an important characteristic of proactive career behaviours (Carless & Bernath, 2007), we propose that:

Hypothesis 2b: Organisational identification mediates the relationship between calling and proactive career behaviours.

Research on organisational identification shows that people who have a high level of organisational identification will value the organisation's goals and norms and will put the organisation's benefits first when making a decision (Knippenberg & Schie, 2000).

Comparison studies on differences between the two proactive behaviours show that OCBs are closer to an organisation's benefits (Lee & Allen, 2002) while proactive career behaviours are concerned more about the personal results (Vos, Clippeleer, & Dewilde, 2009). Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2c: The mediation effect of organisational identification between calling and OCBs is stronger than that between calling and proactive career behaviours.

The mediating role of career identification

Career identification is formed when individuals construct the meaning of their work by recognizing the importance of that work, experiencing their strongest interest while working and setting meaningful career goals (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Research suggests that

calling can positively predict career choice and self-clarity (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007a), two indicators of career identification. Thus we propose that calling can positively predict career identification.

Identification serves as a basis for individual behaviours (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). People with a strong career identification will define themselves according to their career (Fugate et al., 2004) and thus may easily adapt to the changes that occur in the career development process. After gaining sufficient working experience in the career, individuals will be highly confident in their ability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017) which may lead to more proactive behaviours. In addition, according to the SDT framework which addresses the driving role of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008), those with high levels of career identification will be greatly motivated by their career roles and more willing to perform proactive behaviours in their career. Therefore, we proposed that:

Hypothesis 3a: Career identification mediates the relationship between calling and proactive career behaviours.

Career identification generates positive psychological experiences in individuals. People with high levels of career identification will experience the significance of work and a strong sense of subjective career success which will lead them to engage in their work (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Those with high levels of work engagement will exhibit more altruistic organisational citizenship behaviour (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Therefore, we proposed that:

Hypothesis 3b: Career identification mediates the relationship between calling and OCBs.

Research shows that organisational identification and career identification lead to different consequences (Egold & Van Dick, 2015). Compared with identification towards organisations, career identification is linked more closely with personal career goals (Millward & Haslam, 2013). As a result, people with high levels of career identification will primarily aim to improve their career-related abilities to achieve their career goals. Hence, we propose that career identification is more closely related to proactive career behaviours than organisational citizenship behaviours.

Hypothesis 3c: The mediation effect of career identification between calling and proactive career behaviours is stronger than that between calling and OCBs.

The aim of the current research is to integrate and test the effect of calling on both organisational and career-related outcomes among Chinese employees. Based on SDT, we first examine the direct effect of calling on OCBs and proactive career behaviours separately. Then the mediation effects of identifications are examined. The research model is shown in Figure 1, below.

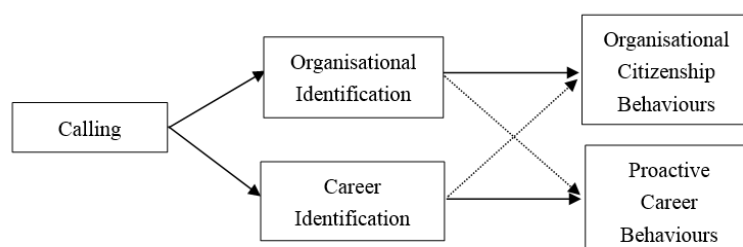


Figure 1
The proposed research model

Method

Participants and procedure

The sample consists of MBA students from a state-owned university in Beijing, China. Each of them was asked to recruit two to three colleagues and their supervisors to complete the surveys. When the potential respondents were contacted, they would first be explained the purpose of the study and then, with their consent, complete the questionnaires. In addition, to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), we collected the data at two time points and with multiple sources of ratings. At the first time-point (Time 1), clients were asked to provide their demographic information and the calling survey. One month later (Time 2), they were asked to rate their organisational identification and career identification, while their OCB and proactive career behaviour were rated by their supervisors.

At Time 1, we distributed 400 questionnaires to clients to gather their calling information and received 351 valid responses, representing a response rate of 87.8%. A month later, we distributed questionnaires to the 351 clients who had finished their T1 survey and their supervisors. At Time 2, clients were asked to rate their organisational identification and career identification and the supervisors were asked to rate their subordinates' OCBs and proactive career behaviour. Each supervisor rated one to three client/s in his/her group. And each group is viewed as a dyad. Finally, we collected data from 127 supervisors/dyads with 303 clients/subordinates who were recruited through various industries in China, including manufacturing (29%), electronic communications (27%), IT services (33%) and finance (11%). The overall response rate was 75.8%. In this study, 48.5% of the respondents were

female and more than 90% of the participants had a Bachelor's degree or above education level. The average age of all respondents was 35.1 years ($SD = 10.3$) and the average tenure was 12.3 years ($SD = 9.1$).

Measures

Independent variables

Calling was measured using the Chinese Calling Scale (CCS), developed with Chinese participants by Zhang, Herrmann et al. (2015) based on the calling and vocation questionnaire (CVQ) developed by Dik et al. (2012) with strong levels of reliability (Cronbach's alpha for the CVQ was .90) and validity. The scale uses 10 items in total. A sample item is "Compared with other careers, I think I should be engaged in my current career." Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Zhang, Herrmann et al., (2015) indicate that Cronbach's alpha for CCS was .77 and provide evidence for the convergent validity and criterion-related validity of the scale. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .86.

Mediators

Organisational identification was measured using the 5-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). A sample item is "When it comes to the organisation, I always use 'we' rather than 'they'." Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Mael and Ashforth (1992) reported that Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .87. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .80.

Career identification was measured using the 5-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). A sample item is "When someone praises my career, I feel as if I have been praised." Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree, according to their feelings towards their career. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .70.

Dependent variables

Organisational citizenship behaviour was measured using the scale developed by Lee and Allen (2002). The scale consists of two sub-dimensions: OCBs directed to individuals (OCBI) and OCBs directed to organisation (OCBO). Lee and Allen (2002) reported that the reliabilities of the two sub-scales in their study were .83 (OCBI) and .88 (OCBO) separately. This scale has 16 items in total with each dimension having eight items. A sample item is “Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.” Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. In the current study, we examined the overall OCBs and Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .92.

Proactive career behaviour was measured using the 12-item scale developed by Strauss et al. (2012). Strauss et al. (2012) reported that Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .92. The scale consists of four sub-dimensions: career planning, proactive skill development, career consultation and network building. A sample item is “I am planning what I want to do in the next few years of my career.” Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .87.

Control variables

Previous studies show that age, education and tenure can positively predict OCBs (Malek & Tie, 2012) and proactive career behaviour (Strauss et al., 2012). Gender can also affect OCBs in the sense that men have been found to have more OCBs than women (Bahrami, Montazeralfaraj, Gazar, & Tafti, 2013), thus we include these as control variables in our study.

Results

Data screening was conducted before doing the analysis. Invalid copies such as those with lots of blanks or all the same answers were deleted. With the valid data, SPSS 22.0 was used to conduct the descriptive, correlation and reliability analyses. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also conducted to verify the distinctiveness of the latent variables of interest. Results indicated that a five-factor model distinguishing between calling, organisation identification, career identification, OCBs and PCBs was the best fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.11$; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .92; TLI = .91; IFI = .93). Results of CFA showed that all concepts in our study can clearly distinct with one another and the respondents that we surveyed could differentiate different latent variables.

Descriptive statistics and correlations

The descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability coefficients of the study variables are shown in Table 1 (below). Results show that calling correlated positively with organisational identification ($r = .62, p < .01$), career identification ($r = .59, p < .01$), OCBs ($r = .67, p < .01$) and proactive career behaviours ($r = .63, p < .01$). Organisational identification correlated positively with OCBs ($r = .81, p < .01$) and proactive career behaviours ($r = .68, p < .01$). Career identification correlated positively with OCBs ($r = .69, p < .01$) and proactive career behaviours ($r = .66, p < .01$). These results in the expected directions support the positive effects of calling, organisational and career identifications as well as OCBs and proactive career behaviours and provide preliminary support for all the hypotheses in our study.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and inter-correlations of study variables (N=303)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Calling	3.68	0.60	(0.87)				
2. OI	3.88	0.62	0.62**	(0.80)			
3. CI	3.70	0.62	0.59**	0.73**	(0.70)		
4. OCBs	3.98	0.50	0.67**	0.81**	0.69**	(0.92)	
5. PCBs	3.91	0.51	0.63**	0.68**	0.66**	0.77**	(0.87)

Note. Reliability coefficients appear in brackets on the diagonal. ** $p < .01$.

(OI=organisational identification, CI=career identification, PCBs = proactive career behaviours.)

Hypothesis testing

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

The results (see Table 2, below) show that after controlling for the effects of gender, age, tenure and education, calling can positively predict OCBs ($b = 0.33, p < 0.01$) and proactive career behaviours ($b = 0.32, p < 0.01$), as shown in column M3a and M4a. Thus, hypotheses 1a and 1b are supported.

Table 2

Results of hierarchical regressions (N=303)

Variables	OI	CI	PCBs		OCBs	
	M1	M2	M3a	M3b	M4a	M4b
Control variables						
Gender	0.06	0.12	0.02	-0.02	0.07	0.03
Age	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tenure	0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.00
Education	0.06	-0.06	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.02
Predictors						
Calling	0.38***	0.38***	0.32***	0.14***	0.33***	0.12***
Mediators						
OI				0.26***		0.46***
CI				0.21***		0.10*

Note. *** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$

(OI=organisational identification, CI=career identification, PCBs = proactive career behaviours.)

We then tested the mediation effect of two identifications. First, we put identifications as

outcomes. The results show that calling can positively predict organisational identification ($b = 0.38, p < 0.01$) and career identification ($b = 0.38, p < 0.01$) respectively, as shown in column M1 and M2. Second, we took two kinds of proactive behaviours as outcomes and added both calling and the identifications to the regression model. The effects on calling of both OCBs and proactive career abilities decrease, as shown in column M3b and M4b, and the mediation effects of organisational identification ($b = 0.26, p < 0.01$; $b = 0.46, p < 0.05$) and career identification ($b = 0.21, p < 0.01$; $b = 0.10, p < 0.05$) in relationships between calling and two kinds of proactive behaviours are still significant. Therefore, hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b are all supported.

Further, by means of bootstrapping (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), we tested whether significant pathways between calling and proactive behaviours represent the indirect relationships and make a comparison between the mediation effect of two of them. The results show that the mediation effect of organisational identification is stronger in the relationship between calling and OCBs than that between calling and proactive career behaviour. Moreover, the mediation effect of career identification is stronger in the relationship between calling and proactive career behaviour than that between calling and OCBs. Thus, hypotheses 2c and 3c are supported, as shown in Table 3 (below).

Table 3

Comparison of mediation effect (N = 303)

Model	Mediation effect	95% CI
Calling → OI → OCBs	0.35	[.25, .44]
Calling → CI → OCBs	0.08	[.02, .14]
Calling → OI → PCBs	0.19	[.10, .29]
Calling → CI → PCBs	0.15	[.08, .22]

Note. OI = organisational identification, CI = career identification, PCBs = proactive career behaviours.

Discussion

The current study has important theoretical implications. First, this study extends previous research about the effects of calling on two kinds of proactive behaviours. Second, adopting the intrinsic motivation perspective from the SDT framework (Deci & Ryan, 2008), we investigate the mediation effect of identifications and find that two identifications can partially mediate the effect of calling on proactive behaviours. Third, we find two different influencing mechanisms of calling on proactive behaviours by integrating organisational and career paths. When simply comparing the effects of two identifications on proactive behaviour, results show that the effect of organisational identification on the outcomes will always be stronger than career identification. These results have thus shed light on the effects of different kinds of identification on behaviour outcomes.

These results also have important practical implications. From the organisational perspective, interventions such as taking calling as part of a broader set of criteria for selection could be implemented to improve employees' sense of calling. For the employees, from the career development perspective, they should be clear about their orientation towards work and then find the work that suits them. In this way, they can both enjoy themselves in their work and pursue the career success that they want.

Despite these promising results, there are some limitations associated with the research. Calling is not a one-time disposition but a lifelong orientation, thus a longitudinal study is still needed to explore the development of calling and its effect on outcomes in a lifelong perspective. In addition, future research may also focus on particular careers, those of doctors or teachers for example, and investigate the differences in calling among different groups to

extend our understanding of the nature of calling.

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Conclusion to Paper One

This study examines calling as an individual disposition and examines OCBs and proactive career behaviours as organisational and individual-related outcomes respectively. The findings of this paper provide an answer to the first research question on “How does calling influence organisational and individual-related proactive behaviours in careers?”. Organisational and career identifications are the two mediators that can unpack the “black box” between the calling and proactive behaviours. Comparison of the mediating effects shows that differences do exist when calling shows its influence on the two kinds of proactive behaviours within careers. First, the direct effect of identifications on behaviours outcomes show that, compared with the direct effect of career identification, organisational identification relates more closely to organisational-related behaviour (i.e. OCB), and vice versa. However, results of further comparisons of the mediation effects show that the overall mediation effect of organisational identification is stronger than that of career identification. Together, using quantitative method, Paper One answers the first question and reveals that calling is related to proactive behaviours either on an organisational or individual level, while there are differences when personal dispositions influence the two types of outcome. Besides proactive behaviours being examined in Paper One, many behaviours on individual level could link the benefits of both individuals and organisations together. After distinguishing differences of the mechanisms between individual and organisational outcomes, the question of “How could the outcomes from both individual and organisational aspects be combined?” remains to be solved. To address this question, using the same methodology in Chapter 3, Paper Two is presented to further examine the relationship between personal dispositions and proactive

behaviours in careers and to have both organisations and individuals achieve “win-win” results.

Chapter 3: Combine your “Will” and “Able”: Career adaptability’s influence on performance

Introduction to Paper Two

The findings in Paper One answer research question 1 and indicate that differences do exist when personal dispositions show their influence on two kinds of behaviour outcomes. In the new career era, when individuals have more opportunities to pursue their career values and can easily make a career change, how the benefits of organisations and the realisation of personal values can be combined is an important question. To broaden our knowledge of the relationship between personal dispositions and behavioural outcomes, Paper Two focuses on the career adaptability and examines the possibility of combining both organisational and individual-related outcomes to help achieve a “win-win” result.

Using the lens of career construction theory, Paper Two investigates the joint effect of career adaptability and proactive personality dispositions on career self-management, which can lead to improved performance. A quantitative survey was conducted with 232 Chinese employees. The results show that personal career adaptability can positively predict performance and that this relationship is mediated by individuals’ career self-management behaviours. Moreover, this paper adopted the view of resources in the conservation of resources theory (COR, Hobfoll, 1989). The tenets of COR are that people strive to build resource and the loss of resources will threaten them. By introducing the idea of resource building in COR, Paper Two seeks to understand the boundary conditions while the career adaptability shows its impact on both career self-management and performance.

Paper Two was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, Illinois, USA on 14 August, 2018. The paper was also published in the journal *Frontiers in*

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Combine your “Will” and “Able”: Career adaptability’s influence on performance

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Abstract

Adaptivity and adaptability are two key elements representing one's "willingness" and "ability," respectively, in the career construction theory (CCT) framework. On the basis of CCT and complemented by the visual of resources in the conservation of resources theory, this study combines career issues and performance and examines the joint effect of adaptivity and adaptability on career self-management which will lead to improved performance. Using a sample of Chinese employees ($N = 232$), the study first examines the mediating role that career self-management plays between career adaptability and performance and then tests the moderating role of proactive personality. Results show that career adaptability positively predicts performance, with this relationship partially mediated by career self-management. The positive effect of career adaptability on career self-management is stronger among those who are more proactive than less proactive. Further, the indirect effect of career adaptability on performance is stronger among proactive employees than those with lower levels of proactive personality. These findings provide implications for both theories and practices.

Keywords: career adaptability, proactive personality, career self-management, performance, career construction theory

Combine your “Will” and “Able”: Career adaptability’s influence on performance

Performance is a concept that had been valued by organisations for a long time, yet a good performance largely depends on the endeavour of individuals. Employees in an organisation are creators of organisational performance and are also the principle of their own career development. The dual identity of individuals in organisations highlights the importance of performance in career issues. When more attention is being paid to individuals’ career development, they can put much effort into their work, thus leading to improved work results. There are many studies having been conducted on the predictors of performance, including factors at the individual (Chang & Chen, 2011), team (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013) and organisational (Lee & Chin, 2017) levels. However, with flattening of organisational structures and a boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) career environment, it seems individual factors are more pivotal than team and organisational factors in predicting performance. Individuals are increasingly more flexible in making career choices and are now more likely to have some career self-management behaviours to influence their career development (Lent, Ezeofor, Morrison, Penn, & Ireland, 2016). Consequently, much scholarly attention is being paid to factors at the individual level.

Career construction theory (CCT) also called the adaptation model of career construction, is an individual-level theory based on adaptability of the individual. Career adaptability, a central concept in CCT, refers to an individual’s psychological resources and represents their ability, or “able”, towards work tasks. The other three components in the CCT framework are adaptivity, adapting responses and adaptation results. To specific, adaptivity is a trait-like and

stable psychological characteristic involving an individual's readiness, and "will", also known as willingness, to adapt to changing situations in their career. Individuals' adaptivity can be measured through their cognitive ability, proactive personality or "Big Five" personality traits (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). "Adaptivity positively influences career adaptability which in turn positively influences adapting responses and adaptation results (Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017, p. 18)." Adapting responses are individuals' beliefs or behaviours for dealing with career development tasks (Hirschi, Herrmann, & Keller, 2015). Operational indicators of adapting responses include behaviours such as career self-management or career planning (Rudolph et al., 2017). Adaptation results are most of the time referring to the fitness between a person and their surroundings. The goals of career adaptation are to get results that are indicated by individual development, satisfaction or career success (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Savickas, 2013).

As for the effect that proactive personality plays on career adaptability in the CCT framework, numerous studies to date have largely examined proactive personality's influence on career adaptability. For example, in early empirical studies, Savickas (2005) and Duffy (2010) found a significant positive effect of proactive personality on career adaptability. Tolentino and her colleagues tested the hypothesis that students' career adaptability can be positively influenced by proactive personality (Tolentino et al., 2014). Also, in recent studies (Jawahar & Liu, 2016), proactive personality is continuously being examined as a positive antecedent of ability. In spite of the cause and effect relationship between proactive personality and career adaptability that has been largely tested, the CCT also addressed the interplay between the two. In particular, "higher levels of adaptation (outcome) are expected

for those who are willing (adaptive) and able (adaptability) to perform behaviors” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 663). Thus, in our situation, high levels of career self-management require both proactive personality and career adaptability which then lead to good performance. Meanwhile, using conservation of resources theory (COR, Hobfoll, 2001), ability and personality are identified as different categories of individual resources. Career adaptability is a kind of volatile resource which can be more easily changed or transferred than proactive personality working as a stable key personal resource (Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In fact, from the management practice, adaptability as a kind of volatile resource can be influenced by many factors, such as training, education or personal experiences, all of which can be gained easily and thus lead to a change in ability. Career adaptability and proactive personality are, therefore, two different kinds of individual resources and the combination of these different resources will promote each other and lead to positive results. This situation is the same as in organisations—when different kinds of resources are combined, the company’s competitive advantage will be maximised. As a result, proactive personality is, on one hand, working as a predictor of career adaptability, which has been tested in previous studies. On the other hand, as a distinctive stable trait factor, proactive personality can also have an interplay effect with career adaptability in leading to adaptation results. Yet up to now, there are few studies examining the joint effect of career adaptability and proactive personality within a CCT framework. Recognising this gap, this study investigates proactive personality as a moderator and tests its moderating effect in the Moderated mediation model. The exploration of proactive personality as a boundary condition is thus meaningful, providing a fresh lens to test the CCT framework.

The current research has two main contributions to make to the existing studies. First, the mediation effect of career self-management in the way that career adaptability predicts performance is examined in the CCT framework. In this way, we relate performance that is valued most by organisations with career issues that are valued most by individuals, and tightly combine the benefits of organisations and employees together. Second, we theorise and examine the moderating role that proactive personality plays by putting the visual of COR (Hobfoll, 1989) on resources into the CCT framework. In doing so, on one hand, we find a link between CCT and COR as the two theories both concern proactive personality as an important component of personal resources. On the other hand, we address calls for a comprehensive knowledge of the CCT model. Specifically, other than a simple linear cause and effect relationship, proactive personality can also interact with career self-management in predicting career self-management. Further, high levels of career self-management will lead to a good performance. In the following parts we will develop our hypotheses first and then discuss the core findings as well as the implications from both theoretical and practical perspective.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Career adaptability, career self-management and performance in career construction theory framework

Drawing on CCT, we inform our knowledge of how the three variables—career adaptability, career self-management and performance—can be integrated as operational indicators of adaptability resources, adapting responses and adaptation results separately for the study. Career adaptability refers to “a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, or traumas in their occupational roles” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662). Career adaptability is known as a psychosocial resource that represents self-regulatory capacities and can lead to various adapting behavioural responses and adaptation results. Career adaptability has been examined as a higher-order construct in previous studies. It contains four dimensions, namely “concern, control, curiosity and confidence” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 663). Career concern means individuals’ ability to foresee and predict the occurrence of events that might lead to changes in work tasks in the future. Career control means individuals’ self-discipline, which may affect their ability to take conscientious actions. Career curiosity means individuals’ ability to identify career opportunities and explore the relationship between both themselves and their surroundings. Career confidence means a positive belief in ability to overcome difficulties in pursuing career goals. Taking the four dimensions together, individuals with strong career adaptability will be willing and able to invest their inner resources, such as physical or emotional energies, into career development (Guo et al., 2014; Savickas, 2013). In contrast, those who do not have as much career adaptability will tend to doubt themselves and show little confidence towards career matters.

Career self-management is an operational indicator of adapting responses in the adaptation model of career construction (Savickas, 1997). According to CCT, career self-management can be encouraged by career adaptability (Rudolph et al., 2017). Research suggests that career self-management involves the three career self-managing behaviours of “positioning, influence and boundary management” (King, 2004, p. 127). Positioning behaviours concern an individual’s skills or experience that can realise their career goals. Influence behaviours refers to the influencing effect that individual activities have on organisational decision-making processes. Boundary management concerns the balance between work demands and non-work domains. Employees regularly use career self-managing behaviours for gathering information, planning to solve problems and making decisions to achieve desired career outcomes (Kossek et al., 1998). As a way of overcoming difficult situations that would frustrate career progression, career self-management is important in individuals’ career development (Crites, 1976).

Work performance is a key indicator of objective career success (Rosikiewicz, DiRenzo, & Greenhaus, 2016) and in CCT is an operational indicator of adaptation results (Rudolph et al., 2017; Savickas, 2013). Performance, in this study, refers to general task performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) in work situations, referring to how someone can do the work to their best ability, and their ability to deal with workplace relationships. Many factors can influence performance, such as personal resources or employee-organisation relationships (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). For example, Ohme and Zacher (2015) demonstrated how an individual’s career adaptability can lead to better performance, and Paradnike and Akkermans (2017) found that career adaptability can enhance study success via better study

engagement.

The mediating role of career self-management

Career self-management represents a type of individuals' initiative activities and behaviours (King, 2004). Individuals who are good at managing their career are more likely to have a high degree of personal initiative and be better at dealing with career development tasks than those with lower levels of career self-management (Frese & Fay, 2001; Hirschi et al., 2015). Career self-management is a career-related behaviour which can combine individuals and their organisations and potentially benefit both sides. Good career self-management can result in a frequent salary progression and promotions (Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Tharenou, 1997), or improved performance for individuals, and can positively influence organisational effectiveness to varying degrees (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Moreover, in line with the adaptation model of career construction, career self-management, as an adapting behaviour, can be encouraged by career adaptability. The positive effect of career adaptability on employability as well as work engagement has been tested before (Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012). When an individual has a strong level of employability and is highly engaged in their work due to high levels of career adaptability, their work performance will probably be increase. Additionally, work performance is an indicator of the fit between an individual and their working environment, and the appropriateness of this fit is addressed as an adaptation result in the CCT framework. Therefore, in accordance with the CCT framework (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Savickas, 2013), career self-management could be encouraged by career adaptability and mediate the association between career adaptability and performance.

In summary, drawing on CCT, career adaptability is a kind of self-regulatory resource that people could use to deal with career development tasks. Individuals will rely on their career adaptability to generate a specific career self-management behaviour to achieve better performance and reach a good person-environment fit. Thus, we propose a mediation model between career adaptability, career self-management and performance:

Hypothesis 1a: Career adaptability can positively predict performance.

Hypothesis 1b: Career self-management plays a mediating effect between career adaptability and performance.

Role of proactive personality

Of great interest in this research model is the interplay effect of proactive personality and career adaptability in predicting career outcomes. Proactive personality is a kind of individual disposition aiming at identifying opportunities and taking actions to influence the surroundings. Research show that proactive personality is “one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces and who effects environmental change” (Bateman & Crant, 1993, p. 105). People who are proactive will show willingness and confidence to take risks and also have desire for achievements (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000). Also, they are likely to be self-initiated and will focus on developing themselves (Parker et al., 2010). A meta-analysis found proactive personality can be a predictor of objective career success, such as job performance, and was a stronger predictor than any other personality trait, including the “Big Five” factors. Other studies have found that proactive personality can positively affect subjective career success outcomes such as career satisfaction (Jawahar & Liu, 2016; Turban et al., 2017).

CCT recognises that adaptivity can lead to adaptability. Thus, proactive personality, an operationalised indicator of adaptivity, can positively predict career adaptability. Research shows that proactive individuals tend to be well prepared to manage career tasks and changes (Rudolph et al., 2017). There are many works examining proactive personality as a predictor of career adaptability (Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016; Duffy, 2010). Extending the CCT view on the relations between proactive personality and career adaptability, the visual of COR (Hobfoll, 1989) on resources is introduced. According to COR, people strive to build resource and the loss of resources will threaten them. This study, taking the resource perspective from COR, examines the question of whether proactive personality can also interact with career adaptability, gaining more resources for individuals to initiate their behaviours.

Given that people who have high levels of proactive personality will tend to perform proactive work behaviours, it is feasible that under the same level of career adaptability, those who are more proactive tend to be more active in exploring and manipulating their surroundings than less proactive ones. Moreover, COR (Hobfoll, 1989) suggests proactive personality as a trait-like key resource which is stable in a person, while career adaptability is a volatile resource with more flexible characteristics. Different kinds of resources can be combined in different ways and then impact on individual behaviours differently. For example, some people may have strong adaptability but not be highly proactive because of a lack of autonomy or other environmental support, while others, with the same level of career adaptability, are also very proactive towards work. The cumulative effectiveness of different resources will be greater than the effect of a single one.

As a consequence, it is reasonable to suspect that proactive personality will have an

amplification effect on the link between career self-management with career adaptability.

Hypothesis 2: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between career adaptability and career self-management, such that under higher, as opposed to lower levels of proactive personality, career adaptability will have a stronger effect on career self-management.

Considering the mediating effect that career self-management plays between career adaptability and performance, we then argue that proactive personality will moderate the indirect effect that career adaptability plays on performance. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Proactive personality will moderate the indirect effect of career adaptability on performance, such that compared with the low proactive group, positive effects of career adaptability on performance through career self-management will be greater for those with higher levels of proactive personality.

The goal of the current research is to present and test an extended relationship in career construction theory. On one hand, points in the CCT framework have addressed the importance of the combination of proactive personality and career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), yet few studies have in practice examined this. On the other hand, the resource perspective in COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) can further complement CCT and provide the supportive evidence of the joint effect between proactive personality and career adaptability. Hence, in the following sections, we investigate the interaction effects of career adaptability and proactive personality on career self-management and performance among Chinese employees. As shown in Figure 1 (below), we first examine the direct effect of career adaptability on performance. The mediation effect of career self-management is then tested.

We inspect proactive personality as a moderator affecting the relationship between career adaptability and career self-management before testing the final moderated mediation model.

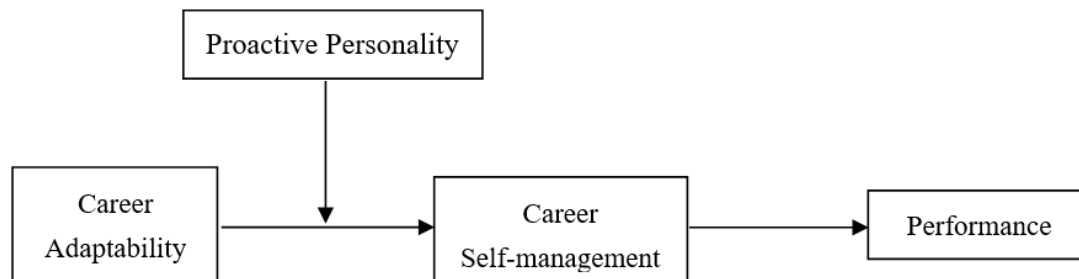


Figure 1

The proposed moderated mediation model

Materials and methods

Procedure and participants

Data in the present study was gathered in 2016 through an online survey. Following ethical approval, around half the employees in a manufacturing company with branches in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Shenzhen were invited to voluntarily participate in the study. There were 232 valid responses representing a response rate of 77%. Respondents were 139 (60%) male and 93 (40%) female, with an average age of 32.7 years ($SD = 5.27$). Most (84%) had been employed in their current job from one to four years. Nine (3.9%) respondents' education level was high school, 25 (10.8%) had associate degrees, 168 (72.4%) had Bachelor's degrees, while 30 (12.9%) had Master's degrees or above. The sample included a variety of occupations, including 52 (22.4%) administration, 24 (10.3%) production, 29 (12.5%) research, 48 (20.7%) sales, 32 (13.8%) finance, and 47 (20.3%) others (e.g., logistics support).

Measures

Career adaptability

Career adaptability was measured by the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (Hou, Leung, Li, Li, & Xu, 2012; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) with 24 items. The scale has four dimensions of the four aspects of career adaptability, with each dimension containing six items. Within the stem of career adaptability, sample items for each dimension were: “Thinking about what my future will be like”; “Making decisions by all myself”; “Looking for opportunities to grow”; and “Overcoming difficulties”. Respondents rated statements from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, indicated from one to five, in a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach’s alpha for the total career adaptability scale was .94 and Cronbach’s alphas for each sub-scale were .85, .83, .86 and .85.

Career self-management

Career self-management was measured using an 11-item scale developed with Chinese participants (Weng & McElroy, 2010) based on previous research (Noe, 1996; Zikic & Klehe, 2006). The scale consists of three sub-dimensions: career exploration, development of career goals, and career strategy implementation. A sample item is “I have developed a detailed career development plan”. Respondents rated statements from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, indicated from one to five, in a 5-point Likert scale according to their actual career self-management experiences. This scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was .86.

Proactive personality

We measured proactive personality with the 10-item proactive personality scale developed by Bateman and Crant (1993). The scale was translated from English into Chinese using a strict translation procedure by two doctoral candidates majoring in English.

Respondents rated statements from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, indicated from one to five, in a five-point Likert scale according to their level of agreement. Sample items include “Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality” and “Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change”. The scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was .87.

Performance

Performance was measured by the Chinese version of a four-item scale that was developed and translated from English under the translation and back-translation procedure by Chen and her colleagues (Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002). A sample item was “I can finish my work on time”. Respondents rated statements from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, indicated from one to five, in a five-point Likert scale according to their level of agreement. The Cronbach’s alpha for the performance scale was .91.

Control variables

To make the model testing more accurate, we took some factors as control variables. Specifically, we controlled for gender (0 = male, 1 = female) because evidence suggests that males have higher capability beliefs than females (Hirschi, 2009). We controlled for education and length of service (dummy coded, 1 year and below as reference group) as these variables have previously been found to influence career outcomes (Rudolph et al., 2017; Zacher, 2014a).

Results

Data screening was conducted before doing the analysis. Invalid copies such as those with lots of blanks or all the same answers were deleted. On this basis, using the Harman single factor method, the common method variance was examined. With the valid data, Mplus7.0 was used to conduct the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Further, SPSS and the PROCESS program in SPSS software (Hayes, 2013, 2017) were used to conduct the descriptive, correlation and reliability analyses, as well as the model examination.

Confirmatory factor analysis

To evaluate the distinctiveness of all variables in the current study, with Mplus7.0, we evaluated our research model against other competing models. The CFA results indicated that a four-factor model distinguishing between career adaptability, career self-management, performance and proactive personality was a better fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2254.84$; $df = 1028$; $p < .001$; RMSEA = .07; TLI = .88; CFI = .89; SRMR = .07) than other plausible models:

- (a) a three-factor model combining career adaptability and career self-management in one factor ($\chi^2 = 2673.18$; $df = 1031$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .08; TLI = .72; CFI = .74; SRMR = .08);
- (b) a three-factor model combining career adaptability and performance in one factor ($\chi^2 = 2461.24$, $df = 1031$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .07; TLI = .72; CFI = .73; SRMR = .08);
- (c) a three-factor model combining career adaptability and proactive personality in one factor ($\chi^2 = 2427.09$, $df = 1031$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .08; TLI = .84; CFI = .86; SRMR = .08), and
- (d) a one-factor model in which all variables in our study loaded on one factor ($\chi^2 = 2962.78$, $df = 1034$, $p < .001$; RMSEA = .09; TLI = .62; CFI = .64; SRMR = .09). Results of CFA showed that all concepts in our study can clearly distinct with one another and the respondents

that we surveyed could differentiate different latent variables.

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive results are shown in Table 1 (below) with the reliability coefficients shown in brackets. The results show career adaptability positively correlated with proactive personality ($r = .73, p < .01$), career self-management ($r = .41, p < .01$) and performance ($r = .32, p < .01$); proactive personality positively correlated with career self-management ($r = .51, p < .01$) and performance ($r = .41, p < .01$); and career self-management correlated positively with performance ($r = .50, p < .01$). These results, in the expected directions, support the hypothesis regarding the positive effects that career adaptability and career self-management have on performance.

Table 1**Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and inter-correlations among variables**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	1.40	.49	-										
2. Education	2.94	.62	-.10	-									
3. Length of service	1.93	.90	-.01	-.05	-								
4. Career concern	4.09	.69	-.04	.11	-.02	(.85)							
5. Career control	4.05	.66	-.06	.04	-.06	.70**	(.83)						
6. Career curiosity	3.87	.70	-.06	-.02	-.06	.72**	.69**	(.86)					
7. Career confidence	4.00	.65	.01	-.06	.04	.66**	.66**	.72**	(.85)				
8. Career adaptability	4.00	.59	-.04	.02	-.03	.88**	.87**	.90**	.86**	(.94)			
9. Proactive personality	3.73	.59	-.05	.04	-.04	.60**	.61**	.66**	.69**	.73**	(.86)		
10. Career self-management	2.83	.52	.08	.06	-.13	.38**	.32**	.41**	.31**	.41**	.51**	(.87)	
11. Performance	3.48	.53	.05	-.06	.04	.20**	.28**	.31**	.34**	.32**	.41**	.50**	(.91)

Note. Reliability coefficients appear in brackets on the diagonal. ** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis testing

Following the moderation mediation model examining procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), first we examine how career adaptability impacts on performance, and second whether career self-management plays a mediating role between career adaptability and performance. There are three criteria that need to be met to examine the mediation role. First, the independent variable should have a significant relationship with the mediator. Second, besides the effect the independent variable plays on the outcome, the mediator should significantly predict the outcome. Third, the indirect effect should be significant. Prior to the analyses, according to the suggestions of Aiken, West, and Reno (1991), we centred all continuous variables to better explain the regression model in the study (Aiken et al., 1991).

The results show that when controlling for the effects of gender, education and length of service, career adaptability ($B = .29, p < .001$) was positively correlated with performance. Thus, Hypothesis 1a is supported. However, in the model, after the proactive personality was added, all effects of career adaptability on performance were replaced. Reasons for this result may be that career adaptability is a variable which is closely related to career issues and is concerned with individuals, while performance is a standard most used by organisations. Research suggests that individuals with proactive personality will be proactive at work behaviours and achievements (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000). Thus, proactive personality relates more directly to work outcomes than career adaptability and can largely explain the performance result. In this study, instead of investigating the direct effect that career adaptability has on performance, we examined the indirect effect that career adaptability has on performance through the mediator of career self-management that is also

regarded as a career-related issue.

The mediation role that career self-management plays between career adaptability and performance was then tested. On taking career self-management to the research model, the results indicate a positive relationship between career self-management and performance ($B = .47, p < .001$). Career adaptability's coefficient decreased from .29 ($p < .001$) to .12 ($p < .05$). These analyses are presented in Table 2 (below). We further use Model 7 of the PROCESS program (Version 2) in SPSS software (Hayes, 2013, 2017) to analyse the indirect effect that career adaptability has on performance through career self-management. Results show that the indirect effect is also significant (95% CI = [.09, .27]). Therefore, the effect that career adaptability plays on performance is partially mediated by career self-management and Hypothesis 1b is supported.

Table 2

Hierarchical regressions: career self-management and performance as outcomes

Predictors	Career self-management		Performance	
	Step 1	Step2	Step 1	Step 2
Constant	1.227	1.80	2.343	1.769
Gender	.109	.15**	.06	.02
Education	.04	.04	-.05	-.07
Length of service	-.06*	-.07*	.03	.05
Career adaptability	.36***	.19*	.29***	.12*
Proactive personality		.38***		
Career adaptability \times Proactive		.24***		
Career self-management				.47***
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.18	.34	0.10	0.27
<i>F</i>	13.43***	29.54***	7.16***	55.03***
ΔR^2		.17***		.17***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

We then tested the moderation hypothesis as well as the med-mod hypothesis in this study. We followed the Preacher's procedure of testing two regression equations (Preacher, Rucker,

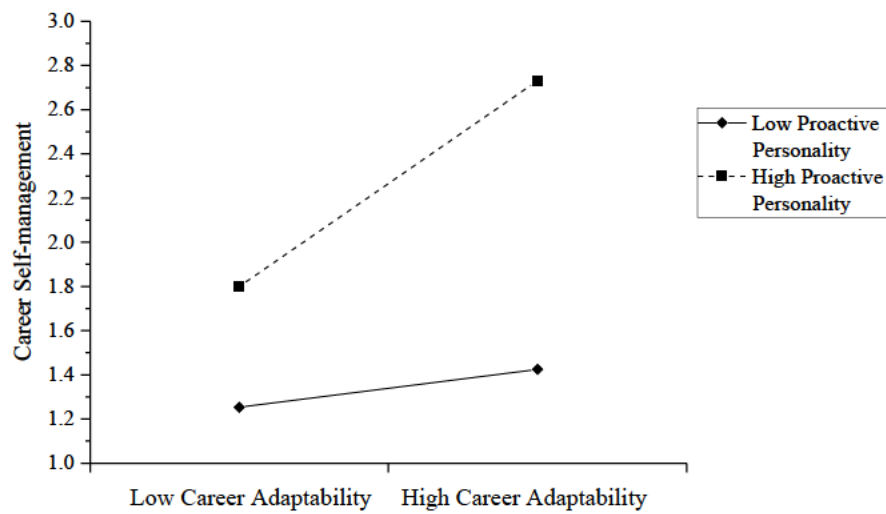
& Hayes, 2007). First, a “mediator model” that takes career self-management as the outcome and second, a “dependent variable model” that takes performance as the outcome (Guan et al., 2015). To simply test the moderation model, there should be a significance in the interactions in the first mediator model. Then, to test the overall model, the indirect effects of independent variables on the outcome should vary with different levels of the moderator. With the micro PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, 2017) in SPSS software, we conducted the analysis while controlling for all demographic effects. The results are shown in Table 3 (below).

Table 3
Moderation and moderated mediation effects for proactive personality on career self-management and performance

Variable	B	SE	t	p
Dependent variable model with career self-management as dependent variable				
Constant	2.56	.18	14.58	<.001
Gender	.15	.06	2.65	<.05
Education	.04	.05	.94	ns
Length of service	-.07	.03	-.24	ns
Career adaptability	.19	.07	2.61	<.01
Proactive personality	.37	.07	5.40	<.001
Career adaptability × Proactive personality	.24	.05	5.11	<.001
Dependent variable model with performance as dependent variable				
Constant	2.26	.25	9.02	<.001
Gender	.01	.06	.10	ns
Education	-.07	.05	-1.50	ns
Length of service	.05	.03	1.82	ns
Career self-management	.47	.06	7.42	<.001
Career adaptability	.12	.05	2.20	<.05
Conditional indirect effect as a function of proactive personality				
Value of proactive personality	Career adaptability			
	Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
-1 <i>SD</i> (-0.59)	.02	.05	-.07	.13
+1 <i>SD</i> (0.59)	.13	.06	.04	.27

Note. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. Results were reported after controlling for gender, age, education and length of service.

These results indicate that the interaction between career adaptability and proactive personality on career self-management is significant ($B = .21, t = 4.51, SE = .05, p < .001$). We plotted the interaction at one standard deviation plus and minus the mean of proactive personality to estimate the nature of the mediator (see Figure 2, below). Results are as expected, showing that there is a stronger relationship between career adaptability and career self-management when the level of proactive personality is higher ($B = .30, p < .05$) relative to when the proactive personality is lower ($B = .05, ns$). In addition, to test the results, we also made a comparison between this model and what had been studied most previously. Specifically, many studies have investigated proactive personality as an antecedent of career adaptability in predicting adaptation outcomes but few studies have examined the hypothesis that proactive personality could also interact with career adaptability in the CCT framework (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). To further test the joint effect between career adaptability and proactive personality, we first entered career adaptability and proactive personality into regression model 1 (as the competitive model). Then, we entered career adaptability, proactive personality and their interaction items into regression model 2. We assume career self-management as the outcome variable in the two models. Results indicated that, in model two, 34.3% variance of the outcome could be explained ($\Delta R^2 = .067, p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is totally supported.

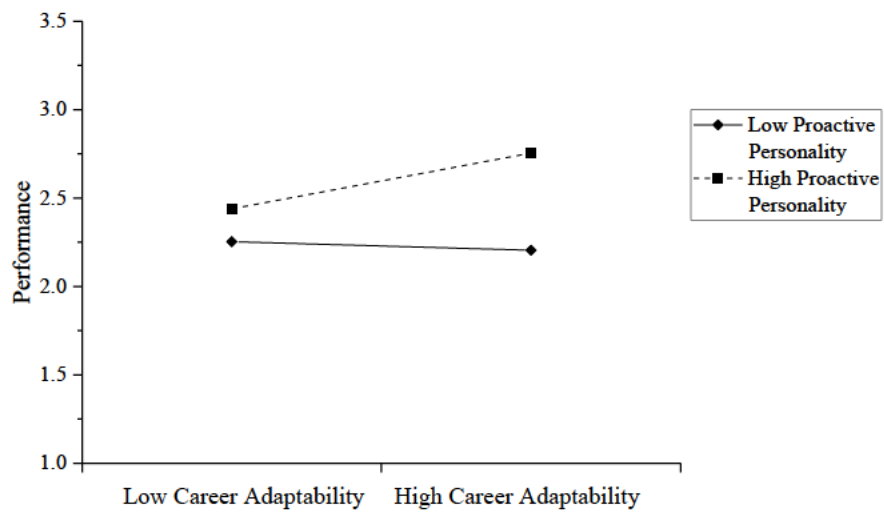


Note. Low career adaptability and low proactive personality are defined as at least one standard deviation above the mean; high career adaptability and high proactive personality are defined as at least one standard deviation above the mean. High numbers indicate greater career self-management.

Figure 2

Interaction between career adaptability and proactive personality on career self- management

The results also support the med-mod hypothesis in this study. Specifically, when the level of proactive personality is higher, there is a highly significant effect of career adaptability on performance through the mediator, 95% CI = [.04, .27]. In addition, when proactive personality is on a lower level, this indirect effect is not significant, 95% CI = [-.07, .13] (see Figure 3, below). Thus Hypothesis 3 is supported.



Note. Low career adaptability and low proactive personality are defined as at least one standard deviation above the mean; high career adaptability and high proactive personality are defined as at least one standard deviation above the mean. High numbers indicate greater performance.

Figure 3

Interaction between career adaptability and proactive personality on performance through career self-management

Discussion

From the point of view of career construction theory (CCT), we investigated the moderating effect that proactive personality has on the relationships between career adaptability, career self-management and performance among Chinese employees. Specifically, we predicted that career adaptability would positively predict performance (Hypothesis 1a) and career self-management would mediate the positive relationship between career adaptability and performance (Hypothesis 1b). According to CCT, proactive personality is an operational indicator of adaptivity, career self-management is one of the indicators of adapting responses, and performance is viewed as an indicator of adaptation results. Therefore, under the CCT framework the two predictions were supported. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies addressing the positive influence of career adaptability on performance (Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Zacher, 2014a) and the mediating effect of career self-management on the relationship between career adaptability and adaptation results (Rudolph et al., 2017).

We then predicted that, compared with the low proactive personality group, career adaptability's effect on career self-management would be stronger for people who have a high level of proactive personality (Hypothesis 2). Further, we conjecture that the conditional indirect effect of career adaptability on performance via self-management would be stronger for employees who have high as opposed to low levels of proactive personality (Hypothesis 3). Complemented by the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), career adaptability and proactive personality belong to different categories of resources. The role of different resources to a person is the same as the role of different resources to a company. When a

company has more resources, such as support from the government or having many patents, it will be more conducive to gaining benefits. Likewise, the interplay between career adaptability and proactive personality in a person will produce more proactive results than the situation whereby only one kind of resource is in effect. From the resources combination perspective, these two hypotheses were also supported by the findings. These results are also consistent with previous studies indicating that proactive individuals may identify more opportunities (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000) and tend to be more self-initiated to approach career goals than less proactive individuals (Parker et al., 2010). That is, high proactive personality enhances the effects of career adaptability on career self-management behaviour, which in turn promotes the improvement of performance. This research thus identifies proactive personality as a key boundary factor that determines to what extent career adaptability can foster career self-management and performance.

The present study has important theoretical implications. First, these results are consistent with career construction theory (CCT) which highlights the mediation role that career self-management plays in the relationship between career adaptability and performance. That is, individuals' career adaptability will strengthen their performance by enhancing the level of career self-management, which has become one of the main concerns in today's career field (Baruch, Szűcs, & Gunz, 2015). As an indicator of adapting response, career self-management serves as an important explanatory link in the relationship between adaptability resources and adaptation results under the CCT framework. This study enriches previous studies on career self-management by examining its impact factors as well as its influence on performance in an empirical way.

Second, our use of the resource perspective in conservation of resources theory also deserves reflection. We use visual resources in COR as a complement to add breadth to our understanding of the relationship between adaptivity and adaptability under the CCT framework. The findings of this study suggest a new theoretical understanding of the role that proactive personality plays. We examine the joint and interaction effect of adaptability resource and adaptivity in predicting adapting responses and adaptation results. In particular, individuals having rich career adaptability and showing more proactive personalities tend to have good performance compared with those who have relatively low levels of career adaptability or are less proactive.

We tested whether career adaptability could interact with proactive personality and whether their joint effect could then affect performance through the mediation role of career self-management. Results further indicate that someone's "will" (i.e., proactive personality, an indicator of adaptivity) will strengthen the positive effect of "able" (i.e., career adaptability) on adapting responses as well as the adaptation results. In this way, the present study has shed light on the role of adaptivity in the adaptation model of CCT. Also, from the combination of resources perspective, it is likely that when employees who are sufficiently proactive and simultaneously have a high level of career adaptability, more effort will be devoted to achieving their career goals than those with only one kind of resource and without a high level of proactive personality. All results indicate that employees' career adaptability indeed plays a key role in predicting levels of career self-management, which leads to good performance. Meanwhile, proactive personality and career adaptability have a joint effect in predicting career-related outcomes.

The results of this study can also provide insights for practice. Both employees and managers need to be aware that proactive personality can strengthen the benefits of career adaptability on enhancing career self-management and improving performance. For managers, to increase the effects that proactive personality plays on the mediated relationship between career adaptability and performance, some interventions should be implemented to improve employees' career adaptability and proactivity. For example, there may be merit in organisations providing training to help employees improve their career adaptability to deal with workplace difficulties. In the recruitment process, managers may regard proactive personality as one of the criteria for selection.

In addition to these promising results, there are some limitations to the study. Participants completed the survey at one time, which may limit the extent to which causal inferences may be made (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Performance is appraised by employees rather than managers, and as with much self-report survey data, the findings may be affected by common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, Evans (1985) suggests that common method bias actually has less effect on the moderated mediation effect. Future research may use multiple source data or well-designed longitudinal studies to better investigate the causal relationship between all the substantive variables of interest.

In terms of the relationships of all variables we observed, we only found the joint effect of career adaptability and proactive personality on career self-management, and not on performance. The comparison of competitive models in our data analysis further addressed the strong effect of the interplay between career adaptability and proactive personality on career self-management. We regard career adaptability and career self-management as

career-related issues, which are more valued by individuals, while performance is more valued by organisations. Given that proactive personality in a person will exert more proactive work behaviours than people who are not proactive, the variance of performance will be mostly explained by proactive personality other than career-related issues like career adaptability and career self-management. Therefore, after proactive personality is added to the model, both career adaptability and the interplay item cannot significantly predict performance. Future studies should pay more attention to the relationship between career-related issues and performance.

In spite of the enhancement effect that proactive personality plays on career outcomes, proactive personality may potentially also cause some negative results. As a motivational force (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), proactive personality may engender excessive initiative that could lead to a strong feeling of control. People who are too confident with their abilities and behaviours may have unrealistic expectations of their career. Another topic for future studies may be the potential negative influence of proactive personality on career outcomes.

Highlighted by the complementing role of conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this study has shed great light on the interactive effects of adaptivity and adaptability in the CCT framework. While this study has extended understanding of the relationship between adaptivity and adaptability in CCT, other aspects of the CCT framework remain open for further investigation. We hope these results will spur further studies to investigate the effect of adaptivity on career adaptability in CCT to promote individual career development.

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Conclusion to Paper Two

Paper Two extends the results of Paper One. In Paper One, the different effects of personal dispositions on organisational and individual-related career outcomes were found, but did not answer the question “How to combine benefits from the two sides?” Paper Two finds a way of answering this question. In this study, the effect of career adaptability disposition on performance was examined, with career self-management behaviour playing a mediating role in this relationship. These results combine organisational and career-related issues. In addition, through the lens of visual of resources in conservation of resources theory, Paper Two further examined and found the moderating role of proactive disposition both in the direct relationship between career adaptability and individuals’ career self-management, as well as the indirect mediated relationship between career adaptability and performance. Specifically, the positive effect of career adaptability on career self-management is stronger among those who are more proactive rather than less proactive. Further, the indirect effect of career adaptability on performance is stronger among proactive employees than those with lower levels of proactive personality.

Papers One and Two have examined and found the mixed relationship between personal career dispositions and behaviours as well as a way that could combine organisational and individual-related outcomes. To further understand, while considering context, how the individuals’ career dispositions will impact on their behaviours, Paper Three investigates these relationships with a qualitative method, in the Chinese social context.

Chapter 4: Navigating career transitions in China: A career construction theory perspective

Introduction to Paper Three

The findings in Paper One and Paper Two have demonstrated how personal disposition will differently influence both organisational and individual-related proactive behaviours in careers and explored the possibility and boundary conditions when integrate personal dispositions and organisational outcomes together. The career environment has changed dramatically and employees now have more initiatives to make a career change accordingly. In paper three, voluntary career transitions are examined as an individual proactive behaviour in career. By conducting 41 valid semi-structured interviews in a qualitative way, this paper aims to answer the last two research questions and deeply investigated how people's career adaptability dispositions or resources will influence their career transition decisions and to what extent the Chinese contextual factors will influence personal dispositions and their career transition behaviours.

Paper Three was accepted by the European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium 2019 as detailed on p. v. Reviewer feedback was incorporated into revisions to this paper.

This paper has been prepared according to the publication guidelines for the *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*.

Navigating career transitions in China: A career construction theory perspective

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Ms. Xueyuan Gao was responsible for the design of the study, participant sampling, data analysing and preparation of the paper. Senior Lecture Laramie R. Tolentino, Associate Professor Denise Jepsen and Professor Wenxia Zhou provided research supervision throughout the research process.

Abstract

Career transitions have become the norm in the unsettled career paths of modern-day workers. Evidence suggests that transition decisions are influenced by social factors. Many studies on career transitions focus on Western societies and use quantitative methods. Based on career construction theory (CCT), this study examines the career transition process in the light of social constraints that are unique to China. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 41 Chinese employees who are among the “first generation” to have begun their working careers in the wake of momentous social and economic changes in China. The data obtained from these interviews were analysed deductively with a qualitative template approach. The results indicate that *system constraints*, *hukou restrictions* and *district attraction* are three unique social constraints in China. We put forward an adaptation model of career transitions under these constraints. In addition, we extend CCT by introducing *guanxi* as an element in the adaptation process for career transitions. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Career construction theory, career transitions, Chinese context, social constraints

Navigating career transitions in China: A career construction theory perspective

Turbulent and unpredictable career paths in this new era (i.e. the last two decades) have made career transition a perpetual state (Brougham & Haar, 2018; Hall, 1996). Career transitions are common all around the world in modern-day economies. A survey conducted by China Agricultural University and reported by *China Daily* in 2017 showed that the mobility of Chinese labour has increased continuously during the last ten years, and that most workers tend to make a career transition in pursuit of personal development and career satisfaction (http://www.sohu.com/a/167727839_157267).

Researchers define career transitions using different criteria. For example, some studies examine school-to-work and retirement transitions from a life-stage perspective (Glewwe, Huang, & Park, 2017). Others examine transitions across or within organisational boundaries (Dunford, Shipp, Boss, Angermeier, & Boss, 2012). Transitions caused by a trauma (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011) and transitions to entrepreneurship have also been examined in career transition studies. In the current study, a career is defined as a composite of various work roles in which each role has a boundary that distinguishes it from other roles (Gunz, Peiperl, & Tzabbar, 2007). Role boundaries may represent changes in work location, job responsibilities or social interaction, that help to differentiate work roles. For example, a boundary exists between the two roles of a person who once worked as a doctor in a hospital and then transitioned to a university serving as a professor. In another case, a boundary exists between the two roles of a person who once worked as a finance director in one organisation and then transitioned to another organisation serving in the same position. While his job

responsibilities may have remained the same, the change in work location and social interaction nevertheless constitutes crossing a boundary. Therefore, career transitions are behaviours defined by the crossing of a role boundary, that is, by a change in any aspect of a role. Considering that during the career, each person may face with making a career transition decision but not everyone will end up with a real transition behaviour. Hence, to deeply investigate the career transition process, in current study, the career transition decision prior to the actual transition behaviour is also included.

Because of organisational restructuring and the respect for personal values, modern-day workers have more autonomy than ever before to choose a career according to their personal preferences (Kattenbach et al., 2014). In addition, the fast pace of technological development will continue to have a significant impact on career diversity. For example, Brougham and Haar (2018) point out that smart technologies such as artificial intelligence will greatly impact on careers by 2025. It will create some new jobs and hybrid careers in specific sectors such as software development but at the same time do away with many other jobs, especially those in sectors where machine learning can be applied. It seems that, nowadays, Chinese workers are experiencing the same degree of career turbulence as is found in Western countries. However, contextual factors matter when make a career transition (Higgins, 2001), so the process of career transitions among Westerners has little reference for Chinese workers.

The recent evolution of China's economic environment has been unique. Under the planned economy, the government controlled the distribution of market resources, including labour. In that context, instead of making career choices independently, workers were assigned to positions by the government. For example, at that time, a person who studied

business at a university would have been assigned by the government to work as a civil servant in a management department even before they graduated, irrespective of whether they wanted to be a civil servant or not. This situation began to change in the 1980s, when China underwent extensive economic reforms (Sun & Wang, 2009), beginning with the abolishment of the planned economy and the implementation of the Open Door Policy (Lin, Cai, & Li, 2003). The rapid economic development that followed these reforms brought greater diversity to the Chinese market. People could choose their own careers more freely, and non-state enterprises, including both private and foreign-owned companies, began to stand apart from the state-owned ones (Li, 1997; Lin et al., 2003). These changes led to greater career mobility in China than ever before.

Whereas Western academics have been studying career transitions for at least 40 years, the corresponding research in China began only in or around the year 2000. Some of these Chinese studies focused on students and examined the effects of type of education (Glewwe, Huang, & Park, 2017) or parental influence on school-to-work transitions. Only one paper, published in 2009, descriptively investigated two distinct Chinese career transition types—inter-system transition and geographic transition—and identified six perceived career transition challenges. Among the reported challenges, the most popular one is unclear career paths and directions, followed by the influence from environment and unfamiliarity of how career transition happens (Sun & Wang, 2009). Although they helped to define career transition types in the Chinese context, Sun and Wang (2009) have simply answered the questions of “what” and “why” using data from study participants drawn from only one MBA program, rather than investigating the career transition process more thoroughly in a larger

group of participants. Social change in China after its economic reforms has been dramatic, yet few studies unpack the contextual factors that may impact on the career transition process. To address this gap, the current study investigates the nature of career transitions in the Chinese context at the time when initial results have been achieved in implementing the Open Door Policy. It also analyses how social constraints impact on career transitions and how individuals cope with these constraints by using their self-regulation resources.

Theory background

Career construction theory (CCT) examines individuals' psychological development while they build their careers from a psychosocial perspective. CCT places much emphasis on how individuals can use their self-regulation or career adaptability resources to help them navigate changing conditions in their careers (Savickas, 2013). A transition, no matter whether it is wanted or unwanted, planned or unplanned, is one of such changes that expose workers to new stressors (Latack, 1984), and therefore, individuals have to use their resources to accommodate the change and foster personal development. Meanwhile, the impact of social context on career transitions should not be neglected. Specific to China, social constraints have constantly been greatly influencing the career development process, and CCT could provide an insight into how individuals will use their career adaptability resources to deal with career transition changes. CCT has frequently addressed the role of career adaptability in selecting or changing a career. Building on this theory, we use a template approach (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, 2015), take the Chinese context into consideration, and explore the wider contextual influences on the way people use their career adaptability resources to deal with the transitions.

Career adaptability, the core concept in CCT, refers to personal self-regulation resources that can help individuals cope with stressful situations encountered in their careers. There are four career adaptability resources: career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence. Career concern is a future orientation associated with planful behaviours and an optimistic attitude. The opposite of career concern is career indifference, which often manifests as a lack of resourcefulness and a pessimistic attitude towards the future. Career

control is a sense of responsibility that an individual has for their own career. An assertive attitude is the main component of career control because it helps to promote decision-making competence. The opposite of career control is career indecision, which is the inability to make decisions independently. Career curiosity is a person's strong desire to try new things or environments in order to further their career. A broader information brings realism to substantive choices, whereas the lack of career curiosity can lead to unrealism about themselves and the environment. Lastly, career confidence is the degree of someone's self-acceptance or self-efficacy. People usually gain career confidence through problem-solving. The opposite of career confidence is known as career inhibition, which lowers a person's confidence and efficacy in achieving their goals.

According to CCT, career adaptability is positively influenced by personal adaptivity, which denotes someone's willingness or readiness to negotiate a lifetime career change (Savickas, 2013). When people are willing to adapt to a changing career, the four self-regulation resources then play a role. As a collection of resources, career adaptability will in turn generate specific adapting behaviours or coping strategies to help individuals deal with tough situations in their careers. Furthermore, adapting behaviours will further lead to adaptation results to help individuals navigate career changes and finally achieve personal development. Career transition is a task that requires an adaptation process involving personal willingness, adaptability resources and coping strategies.

Literature review

Many studies have examined career transitions from a CCT perspective. To assess career adaptability, most previous studies have used the Career Adapt-Ability Scale (CAAS). These studies empirically investigate how career adaptability plays a role in individuals' objective employment quality, representing the fit between a person and their job and organisation (Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012) or in someone's subjective well-being (Ramos & Lopez, 2018) after career transitions. However, quantitative analyses of career transitions fail to capture the story of a career in its entirety. As Nicholson and West (1988) suggest, a career is a story that is continuously constructed by individuals throughout their lives. A career transition is an episode in that story. Therefore, compared with structural measurements, participants' narratives can shed more light on the role of career adaptability during a transition stage. In addition, there have been calls to use narratives to understand the working person as a composite of many parts (Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011) and to completely comprehend their behaviours (Savickas, 2005).

Besides the gap in ways of investigating career adaptabilities, attention also needs to be paid to the human participants of career transition studies. Many studies have investigated people who experienced transitions, and unpacked the ways they use to get through the transitions. For instance, research has shown that both formal and informal learning (Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, & Hughes, 2012) and future or reality orientation (Ebberwein, Krieschok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004) can help individuals to make career transitions smoothly. However, regardless of the insights provided by these studies, career transitions represent only a part of the real life of working adults, not the whole reality. In fact, people tend to face a transition

choice first and then the transition itself. Gunz et al. (2007) suggested that the actual transition behaviour depends on the degree of “reluctance to move” (p. 482), which may cause someone to reconsider the transition choice and could stop them right at the decision-making point. A sense of unattainability, which depends on a person’s evaluation of the resources they have and the context they are in, will lead to a high degree of reluctance to move. People facing a career transition choice will firstly evaluate the situation they are in and the career adaptability resources they possess. Then, to adapt to the changes and achieve a new fit between themselves and their working environment, they will use their resources to cope with the changes in career. Based on that adaptation result, they can finally decide whether to make a transition or not.

To address these gaps in the research literature, we used inductive and qualitative ways to investigate: 1) how Chinese social constraints influence people’s cognition on the change of career; 2) in the Chinese context, how people evaluate and deploy their career adaptability resources to cope with career transitions; and 3) the final career transition decisions made under the influence of Chinese social constraints.

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, we explore the impact of social constraints on career transition choices in China and the ways in which Chinese workers use their career adaptability resources to cope with changing vocational tasks. This exploration widens our knowledge of career transition studies outside Western societies and of the effect of adaptability in different contexts. Second, every worker may face times in their career when a transition choice must be made, but not every worker ultimately decides to make that transition. Previous studies focused primarily on groups who successfully made

career transitions. Instead, this study extends the target participants by including people who may have had the opportunity to make a career transition but ultimately decided against it. This helps to examine the suitability of CCT in career transition studies more widely. Finally, through in-depth interviews, we respond to the call for narrative approaches (Savickas, 2005, 2013) to fully understand the career development paths taken by Chinese workers.

Method

This research was designed to use a template approach in a qualitative way. As a type of thematic analysis, the template approach is more flexible than the grounded theory method (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Studies that use the purely grounded theory method aim to build a theory and thus carry a heavy baggage of specific prescriptions and procedures when performing the analysis. The template approach, on the other hand, is based on previous studies and allows researchers to tailor their method to specific goals. The template approach entails modifying an existing template or a list of codes compiled from multiple previous studies (Brooks et al., 2015). The template approach suits the present study, which is based on career construction theory (Savickas, 2005, 2013), involves interview transcripts (Brooks et al., 2015) and allows new themes emerging from the data to be integrated into an existing research template.

Participants and procedures

As a result of the economic reforms that began in the late 1970s, China has experienced an economic boom, especially after the year 2000, when economic planning was mostly abandoned in favour of free-market policies. Because China is undergoing extensive societal changes, both freedom to make career choices and social constraints have co-existed in society ever since the year 2000. We therefore expected that the cohort of students who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in and after 2000 would be the first generation of workers to benefit fully from the results of economic reform and would thus be pioneers in making independent career choices. This cohort best represents the uniqueness of the Chinese social context with respect to career transitions—a social and historical context that is quite different

from anything found in Western countries. Therefore, we chose this first generation of Chinese graduates with freedom of career choice as participants in our study.

To ensure the selection of a representative sample, we set “graduation year” and “academic subject background” as criteria for selection. Specifically, considering that workers are unlikely to fully understand their own career interests until they have had several years of working experience, we added the “graduation year” as a selection criterion to ensure all participants have at least ten years of working experience. by doing so, we increase the likelihood that participants had faced at least one career transition choice. This yielded a pool of potential interviewees who graduated from Chinese universities with a Bachelor’s degree from 2000 to 2009. In addition, we had to take into consideration the potential complexity of the career transition itself. For example, it would be almost impossible for a worker with expertise in general management to become a doctor and work in a hospital. To clearly distinguish the social constraints, while selecting participants, we ensure that each one had faced comparable difficulties when making career transitions. We therefore defined the participants’ academic subject background as a selection criterion as well. Thus we recruited only participants with a Bachelor’s degree in management at first, because management is a generalist degree that allows graduates to find employment in a number of different job types and industries.

We first narrowed down our selection to two faculties in Renmin University of China (the School of Labor and Human Resources and the Business School) because both offer management degrees. The fourth author collected the contact details of alumni from each school and then made the initial contact by emailing recruitment flyers to alumni who fit the

selection criteria. Alumni who volunteered to participate in the study were asked to connect with the first author directly to confirm their interview appointments. In this manner we recruited 46 alumni in total who expressed a willingness to participate in the interview, 32 of whom were eventually interviewed.

In order to gain access to more potential interviewees, we used a “snowball sampling” method by asking the first round of participants to recommend and invite at least one of their fellow alumni to participate in the interviews. In addition, we loosened the subject area restriction to include other subjects, such as law, economics and accounting. Career transition is a behaviour of gaining new skills which determines the transition magnitude. For example, when individuals transition from the art to science subject, they will need to put more efforts to get technical skills that are irrelevant to their knowledge background. Therefore, a key criterion for selecting participants from other academic disciplines was that they experience a similarity in efforts of attaining new skills while making a career transition, compared with graduates who have a management degree. To ensure that all participants in the study experienced the same transition magnitude or putting the same degree of efforts while gaining new skills, a joint review was conducted and other three scholars separately evaluated how much efforts individuals have made when they transitioned from other academic disciplines.

We conducted 34 face-to-face interviews in Beijing, Hebei, Liaoning and Tianjin, four cities located in northern China. All face-to-face interviews were held in university offices or at other appropriate and convenient public locations that afforded sufficient privacy. We also used telephone and Skype to interview participants who could not attend face-to-face meetings, including one interviewee from Shandong, two from Shenzhen, two from Shanghai

and four from Hubei, thus covering the middle, eastern and southern areas of China. All participants were asked for consent and filled out a consent form before the interviews started. After the interview, each respondent received 50 RMB as an incentive. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed for text analysis.

We interviewed 43 respondents in total, but two of them were later excluded because their graduation year was out of the range 2000 to 2009. The Bachelor's degree background of the 41 valid participants (29 males and 12 females) included management (62%), accounting (11%), agriculture, computer science and economics (5% each), and electronic engineering, industrial economics, information management, international trade, law and marketing (2% each). The participants' ages ranged from 32 to 40 years, and all had completed their Bachelor's degree between 2000 and 2009. In terms of the highest level of education attained, 17 interviewees (41%) had a Bachelor's degree, 18 (44%) had a Master's degree and the remaining six (15%) had earned PhDs. We ensured that all the participants had at least ten years of working experience and had experienced at least one career transition choice during their careers. The background information of each interviewee is shown in Appendix D.

Data collection

To collect data to investigate the constraint factors in the Chinese context and individuals' career adaptation process, we conducted semi-structured interviews both by telephone/Skype and face-to-face. The interview questions were developed based on Savickas's study on career construction (Savickas, 2005, 2013). Interview questions were designed to investigate each participant's career development history and, in particular, the contextual factors that could

impact on their career development, the ways they coped with social constraints and their final career transition choices. To gain additional information about the career adaptation process during transitions, we asked all participants to freely express their decision-making process in detail, irrespective of whether they did or did not make a transition in the end. Our aim was to identify the constraint factors that threaten career transition decisions among the first generation of Chinese workers who are able to choose their careers freely, and to determine how they use their career adaptability resources under the influence of social constraints to support the adaptation process.

The descriptors derived from previous studies and included in our interview outline were: career development history since university graduation; constraint factors that participants came across when facing a career transition decision; evidence of anxiety between making a career transition decision and constraints that thwart transition decisions; self-reflection about making or not making a transition decision while considering constraining factors; how career adaptability resources are used when thinking about a transition decision; and self-reflection on the relationships among the constraint factors, the way they use their career adaptability resources and the final decision about transition or not.

Following these descriptors, we developed the semi-structured interview questions. The themes in our interview included: (a) social constraints felt by individuals when they are facing a career transition; (b) the influence of constraints on the decision-making process; (c) evidence of career adaptability resources used while coping with social constraints; and (d) final decision type (i.e., whether or not to make a transition).

To ensure the duration of each interview and that the data that we collected fit the interview themes, we piloted the interview outline and introduced a joint review process using three trial interviews ahead of the real ones. Trial interviews showed that each one took around 50 minutes to be completed, and the interview outline was revised based on the results of the joint review.

Data analysis

Following the template analysis approach (King, 2004), we first built an initial relationship among social constraints, career adaptability resources and career transition decision types based on the CCT framework (Savickas, 2005, 2013). Then, based on the four themes mentioned above, we coded our data. Specifically, we coded social constraints (theme a) and the influence of constraint factors on career transitions (theme b) into a social constraints category in our template; we coded the use of career adaptability resources (theme c) into a career adaptability category, and coded the final decision type (theme d) into a career transition decision type.

Once the template was constructed, we input the raw data into the NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software for coding. The relevant texts were transcribed into one or more appropriate codes. The initial template was further revised according to the coding results.

Results

The data analysis aims to increase the understanding of the career experiences of the first generation of Chinese workers who can make career decisions freely. Following the template approach (King, 2004), we first identified the social constraints that this generation may suffer in their careers. Some factors unique to their social context emerged, such as system constraints, *hukou* restrictions and district attraction. Details of these three social constraints will be discussed later. On this basis, we analysed the way people use their career adaptability resources to cope with changing careers. According to CCT, to make a career transition successful, individuals need to utilise their career adaptability resources to deal with difficulties in the transition process. The participants' own evaluation of their career adaptability resources may make them perform differently when making career transition decisions. Considering that career adaptability resides at the person-environment intersection (Zacher, 2014b), in our data, we first identified *guanxi* as a unique contextual factor in Chinese culture that people will consider first before using their career adaptability resources. *Guanxi* is not the same as a social constraint because the latter objectively exists in the society, whereas *Guanxi* can either help or hinder workers dealing with the social constraints. On this basis, an adaptation model of career transitions under Chinese constraints was put forward. This model enriched the original template, which simply proposed the direct impact of social constraints on people's career transition decisions. Instead, we found that in the Chinese context the relationship between the two is more complex. In this paper, we show the entire career transition process of this Chinese generation and, in particular, the way they use their

career adaptability resources to overcome social constraints to reach a good fit between themselves and their working environment.

In the following sections, we will present our results starting with the social constraints, followed by the unique factor *guanxi* that influences the way people utilise their career adaptability resources. Then, discussion of how the career adaptability resources they possess lead to a change in their evaluation of constraint factors. Finally, evaluation of the social constraints that impact on people's adapting behaviours towards a career transition, making or not making a career transition decision in the end. To protect participants' privacy, we give each interviewee a false name while presenting their answers in the results section. Findings of this study extend the use of CCT.

Social constraints in the Chinese context

This study pays special attention to the unique social constraints that the first generation of 21st-century graduates in China may come across during their career. Three unique social constraints reflecting the Chinese social context emerged from our data: system constraints (in-system and out-of-system considerations), *hukou* restrictions and district attraction.

The “system culture” or “*Tizhi* culture” in China is rooted in its ancient feudal society. “System culture” is really a set of perceptions or beliefs about how enterprises are structured and behave in the economy. During the planned economy era, all companies were state-owned, whereas with the implementation of the Open Door Policy, non-state-owned enterprises arise. The system or *Tizhi* sets a boundary between the two kinds of companies. The state-owned companies are largely administrated by central or local governments (Cai, 2008), covering the nation's key industries such as defence, banking, oil and others (Sun & Wang, 2009). The

Chinese regard state-owned companies as “in-system” entities that are stable but rigid, whereas non-state-owned or “out-of-system” companies are supported by foreign, private or joint (i.e. when more than two investment parties are involved) investments (Sun & Wang, 2009). The Chinese regard non-state-owned companies as having more freedom but less stability. The transition to the market economy has made system character more obvious. The “first generation” have to evaluate constraints relating to the *Tizhi* in the Chinese context while making career transition decisions. In our data, 25 (61%) of respondents described that they had taken *Tizhi* constraints into consideration when making transition decisions. Among them, 19 (46.3%) mentioned their consideration of the *Tizhi* restriction before transitioning.

As Peter described:

The structure of the in-system companies is very rigid. You cannot get a promotion based on your abilities or performance. Your promotion depends on whether your direct boss might leave and make that position vacant.

The system constraints can also set a career plateau to individuals in their mid-career or even early-career development stages, which can limit an employee’s career development, as Owen described on another occasion:

I have worked seven years in that institute and have gained rich experiences. I don’t think any other fresh skills are needed to do the work well. But, because of the hierarchical environment of the system, I cannot get a promotion without the permission of the managers. So in the last year, I thought a lot about the constraints in the system and finally decided to make a change and jumped out of the system to avoid wasting time there.

Besides constraints inside the system, there are also some constraints outside. In non-state-owned companies, the most common constraint factor identified in our data was

“work instability”, which was mentioned by 11 participants (27%). Historically, non-state-owned companies came into existence as a result of the Open Door Policy and the adoption of the market economy. Because these out-of-system companies are more exposed to market forces, they do not provide job stability as much as in-system companies do. For example, among the respondents, Kitty commented:

You may get a higher position and a higher income in an out-of-system company, but you could also be fired at any time in that competitive environment. High opportunity and high risks co-exist there.

The second social constraint we found in the Chinese context is *hukou* restrictions. *Hukou*, China’s household registration record, officially identifies a person as a resident of a certain area (Sun & Wang, 2009) and prevents people from moving freely to settle down in other areas, especially in large cities. Among all the respondents, ten (24%) mentioned *hukou* as a constraint factor influencing their career transition decisions. A key phenomenon revealed by our data is that, under *hukou* restrictions, people often choose a career that they may not be genuinely interested in just to obtain a *hukou* record that entitles them to move to a larger city and enjoy the benefits of that location, such as better education for their children, and better medical resources and facilities. After obtaining the desired *hukou*, they can make a career transition to a job or industry that matches their professional interests more closely. This phenomenon was quite common among respondents. For instance, Owen said:

I spent the first three years of my career in that state-owned company. My salary was lower compared with my other classmates working in the same industry, but I was able to get a *hukou* from there. Now I have the *hukou* and I’ve bought my own house in the city. I can also enjoy great medical resources and facilities now. So later I changed to my current career to live the life that I really want.

The third social constraint that emerged from our study is district or geographic location attraction, especially the attraction of the metropolis. Because of the regional development imbalance in China, there is a trend of moving from rural, underdeveloped areas to large cities (Zhang & Shunfeng, 2003). In the data, 11 respondents (26.8%) described their experiences of relocating to large cities in China, but for different reasons. The majority moved to seek better career development opportunities, as Guo mentioned: “The most important reason that I transitioned to Beijing is that I can have a better chance to show my talents. I’m more likely to find good opportunities here.” Achieving their life’s ambition was another reason for transitioning to large cities, as was the case for Ellison:

To me, Beijing is the best city in China. I’m seeking perfection and I believe that I can achieve self-realisation in the best city.”

Others, like Owen, relocated to large cities in order to remain with their families:

“I applied to change my job to Beijing because my wife had settled down there. I could not be separated from her all the time.

Despite the trend of moving from underdeveloped places to large cities, district attraction also functions in reverse, that is, people sometimes move away from large cities. Two respondents described transitions in this opposite direction—they moved from large cities to their hometown or to second-tier cities. The main reason for such reversed district attraction is family, as Kitty explained: “Under my parents’ influence during my childhood, I prefer stability, so I decided to go back to my hometown and find a job nearby.”

And:

My cousin found me in Beijing and told me that my parents would never want me to face too many difficulties alone there. Later, I was persuaded and went back home, finding a job and living with my parents.

These two statements from Kitty illustrate the significant influence on personal career choices that parents can have, a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in Chinese culture.

***Guanxi* in the Chinese social context**

According to CCT, career adaptability resources reside at the person-environment intersection (Savickas, 2013). Therefore, factors existing in the environment should be evaluated before analysing the career adaptation process. In our data, *guanxi* emerged as a social factor in the Chinese context that can either restrict individuals from using their career adaptability resources to cope with social constraints during the career transition process, or, conversely, promote the use of these resources. *Guanxi*, defined as “the existence of direct particularistic ties between two or more individuals” (Tsui & Farh, 1997, p. 56), has been examined in many Chinese context studies. For example, Farh and his colleagues emphasised the role of *guanxi* in Chinese business, especially as a basis for trust among executives when making professional connections (Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998). Li and Wright (2000) identified two types of *guanxi*—person-to-person and firm-to-firm—and investigated the importance of firm-to-firm *guanxi* for Western companies hoping to broaden their presence in the Chinese market (Li & Wright, 2000). *Guanxi* also matters in career-building. Gloria, one of the participants in our study, described what she observed in her company: “When a problem arises at work, individual workers can solve it by building a closer *guanxi* with each other, which starts by chatting about ordinary daily life.”

Based on our data, we concluded that two types of *guanxi* are relevant in the career construction process: *guanxi* with leaders and *guanxi* with friends.

***Guanxi* with leaders**

The first type of *guanxi* plays a particularly significant role in in-system companies. Although China has become more open than in former times, its business environment is still characterised by traditional, hierarchical structures of authority. Leaders in in-system companies have all the power to determine the nature and content of the work and to appoint workers to vacant positions. Jake, who worked in a branch of a state-owned company, had this to say:

My direct manager arranges the work for me and I cannot change it without his permission. All I need to do is to follow his arrangements and do the work well. I don't have any opportunity to explore my own career.

Because of the *guanxi* with the leader, Jake may not use his career adaptability resources to explore his future career. Gay, another participant, described a similar situation:

The person who worked in an administrative role left and the manager wanted to find someone young to fill that vacancy. He arranged for me to take on that responsibility and, therefore, I switched from HR to administration, even though it's almost irrelevant to my professional development.

In this example, because of the dominant position of the leader, the respondent was unable to choose her own career. Therefore, *guanxi* with leaders is a key social factor that can have a strong influence on career transitions.

***Guanxi* with friends**

Guanxi with friends is used more broadly than *guanxi* with leaders, which exists primarily in in-system companies. *Guanxi* with friends exists everywhere. It can be the source

of information for individuals at transition points, helping them to deploy more career adaptability resources in the face of transition uncertainties. For instance, *guanxi* with friends can provide more opportunities to individuals and help them find their own strengths, especially when they lack confidence or drive, as Peter shared:

I was upset about losing money in my personal investment portfolio. When I decided to make a transition, one of my friends invited me to help him in the initial stages of his advertising business. He really gave me a lot of confidence then. So, I transitioned from finance to the advertising industry and started to explore a totally new career.

Guanxi is a unique social factor we found in the Chinese context. People first need to evaluate what *guanxi* they have, and they can then use their career adaptability resources to navigate career transitions. Good *guanxi* with both leaders and friends can often pave the way for an individual's career development. Even for a person with limited career adaptability resources, good *guanxi* can help them to alleviate risks and deal with difficulties in their career development. In our data, evidence about actively constructing or keeping good *guanxi* can also be found. For example, Peter said:

I transitioned to Shenzhen because the headquarters is there and I will have a greater chance to gain access to some big bosses. This will benefit the likelihood of getting my promotion.

Oscar told the same story: "Whether you decide to leave or not, you should keep good *guanxi* with leaders and colleagues. You don't know when good *guanxi* could be useful."

To integrate the effect of *guanxi* into the model of career adaptation, we will later illustrate how *guanxi* plays a role in the way people evaluate their career adaptability resources in the career transition adaptation process.

Adaptation model of career transitions under Chinese constraints

In this study, based on the adaptation model of career adaptability (Savickas, 2013), we took individuals' final career transition decisions as the adaptation results. As shown in Figure 1 (below), we then added the evaluation of social constraints into the path from career adaptability to adapting behaviours. Career transition consideration is a type of behaviour that individuals exhibit when adapting to a changing environment. *Guanxi* is added to the model to show its influence on ways that people evaluate and use their career adaptability resources. It should be noted that we set each decision-making point before a transition as the unit of analysis, which means that two transition decisions made by the same person constitute separate data points.

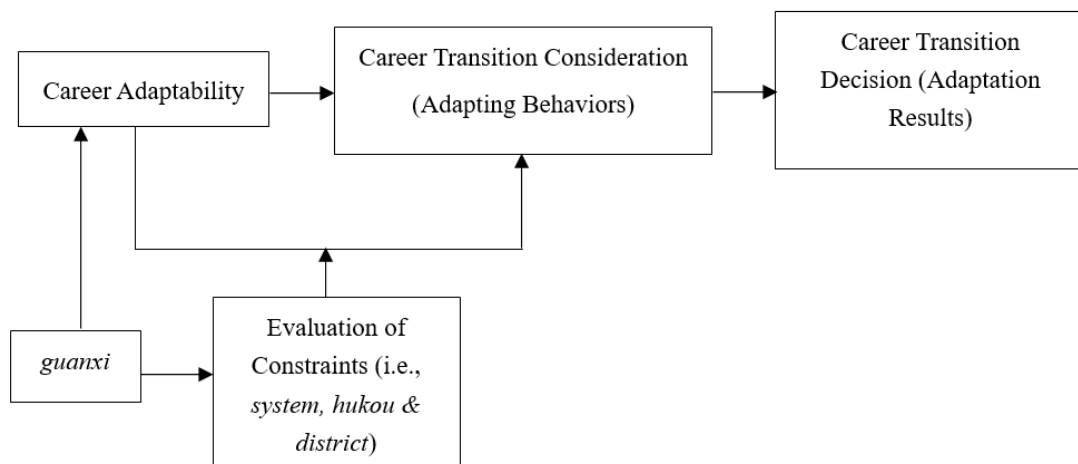


Figure 1

Adaptation model of career transitions under Chinese constraints

The use of career adaptability resources depends, first, on someone's perception of what resources they have. People tend to be more optimistic about the resources they have at their disposal and therefore prefer to take risks when they are young, at an early stage in their career or before marriage. They are curious about their future and are confident about their

ability to overcome difficulties they may encounter. As a result, they are more likely to make a career transition. As Lee explained:

I did not consider any constraints when I decided to quit my lawyer job, and I went to Shenzhen without any other clear aims. At that time, I was young and single. Opportunities were everywhere in Shenzhen.

In another interview, when asked how she decided to become an entrepreneur, Anna said, “I was only 30 years old then, so I quit my former job without further ado. It was no big deal. Even if I failed, I could always find a job in a different company.” However, when the above two respondents were asked about their present view of the former transition decision, they both described themselves as “impulsive” or “arrogant” at that time. Besides the age factor, an individual’s evaluation of their resources can also change under different circumstances. For example, in our study, Guo—a man who once wanted to change his company’s main business activity from training to application development—said:

I valued [the application] at more than 30 million in the market! Together with my team, I engaged in the application development. No one could stop me and it didn’t matter if my house was mortgaged to fund the application development.

Convinced of the new business activity’s value, Guo showed his extreme disregard for constraints. However, three months later, he was forced to interrupt his work due to a health emergency in the family, resulting in more consideration of the constraints on his transition.

Adapting behaviours happen when individuals evaluate themselves and the environment they are in before making a help or hinder workers career transition decision. The main task of individuals during this period is to make career transition considerations. An important factor that links career adaptability resources and adapting behaviours (i.e. career transition

considerations) is the evaluation of social constraints (as shown in Figure 1). The evaluation results are greatly influenced by *guanxi*, including *guanxi* with both leaders and friends, which, in turn, restricts or promotes the use of personal career adaptability resources. When facing social constraints, people will evaluate their self-regulation resources while considering the working environment first; the evaluation result will then impact on their perceptions of the constraints and help them to decide whether to transition or not. Therefore, considering the influence of *guanxi* on individuals' career adaptation process, we analysed how individuals use their career adaptability resources to evaluate social constraints and finally adapt to career transitions. In our data, 21 participants (51%) reported that they take *guanxi* into consideration before exerting career adaptability resources to cope with constraints when facing a transition.

Good *guanxi* with leaders lowers individuals' anxiety towards constraint factors and allows them to indulge in more risk-taking behaviours. In that situation, people rely on their leaders, which restricts them from using their own resources to cope with constraints. Regarding the career transition decision, they may or may not make it, depending on their leaders' own career transition decision. In our data, 14 respondents (34%) told stories of not making a transition and staying in their careers because they wanted to remain with their leaders. For example, Jacob said:

The boss I'm always working with is the one who recruited me at the very beginning. He has always given me great support, both at work and in family matters. Although I'm not satisfied with my current career, I will continue to stay because of my boss.

Because of good *guanxi* with the leader, Jacob will not try anything new, even though he is not satisfied with his current career. Integrated into the CCT framework, *guanxi* with

leaders here leads to diminished career concern and career curiosity resources in a person's career development. This is very common in China, especially in in-system companies.

In another example, Oliver changed his career especially to maintain good *guanxi* with his leader:

I had worked in the previous company for over seven years. Last year, my boss transferred to the current company, becoming one of the management staff here. To continue to work with my boss, I followed him and transferred my job here.

In this case, concerns about one's future career are alleviated by good *guanxi* with leaders. When Oliver was asked whether he had considered any constraints while transitioning, he answered:

There were some risks at that time, but the company that I worked in now is also an in-system one, so all I considered was to keep a close relationship with my leader. Other people will also respect you if you have good *guanxi* with the leader in a company.

Conversely, ordinary or even bad *guanxi* with leaders will definitely increase individuals' anxiety about constraint factors. In that situation, if people want to find other career opportunities, they will make the most use of their self-regulation resources to overcome the anxiety caused by poor *guanxi*, which, most of the time, will lead to a career transition, as happened to Jake:

After the leader who recruited me left the company, the new leader arranged for me to do some other jobs. It was very hard to build good *guanxi* with that leader, so I looked outside and tried my best to find a better place and finally decided to change into a totally new environment.

In this case, the bad *guanxi* with the leader encouraged Jake to use more self-regulation resources to seek other job opportunities.

Regarding *guanxi* with friends, in our data, 10 participants (24%) acknowledged that *guanxi* with friends could facilitate their transition process and encourage them to use more career adaptability resources and make a change. For example, information from a friend allowed Oscar to exert more career control resources to make a career transition decision:

It was very hard for me to find a well-paid job in Wuhan. During the job search, I was quite doubtful about my decision to come back to Wuhan until one of my friends told me that there is a company actively looking for management talents. It was a great chance for me to do a work that I'm interested in and help me earn breads at the same time. I quickly agreed without hesitation.

People's evaluation of social constraints is variable and depends above all on their personal perception of their career adaptability resources. For one person, the perception of their own career adaptability resources might change with personal factors such as age, career stage and marriage status. In terms of the evaluation of constraints, evaluation results could change with someone's *guanxi* with leaders or friends. All these can further impact on the way people use their career adaptability resources when facing career transitions.

Discussion

Guided by CCT, we investigated the relationship between career adaptability resources and career transition adapting behaviours among the first generation of university graduates in China who were able to choose their careers freely after the country itself had experienced profound economic reforms. Using in-depth interviews, we first identified three unique social constraints: system constraints, district restrictions and district attraction. One factor—*guanxi*—that is significant in the Chinese environment was revealed by the research. All these elements constitute a major portion of the unique Chinese social context. As such, these findings respond to calls by previous research to examine career issues embedded in cultural contexts (Higgins, 2001). We investigated factors that influence the perception of career adaptability resources, as well as the path from career adaptability resources to career transition adapting behaviours following the evaluation of social constraints. The results showed the role of *guanxi* in the usage of career adaptability resources and the role constraint evaluation plays in the interplay between career adaptability and adapting behaviours. In doing so, this research extends the adaptation model used in CCT to explain career transition issues.

This paper has important theoretical implications. The findings of this study expand CCT in two ways. First, career adaptability in CCT has been examined extensively in China but mostly with a focus on students. We applied CCT in the Chinese context by focusing on the first generation of graduates in China who have fully experienced the country's economic reforms and were thus able to make career choices freely. Our findings suggest that the unique environmental factor *guanxi* impacts on the way people use their career adaptability resources

under three unique social constraints, namely, system constraints, *hukou* restrictions and district attraction. According to CCT, career adaptabilities are self-regulation resources that will be generated by intra-personal readiness and ability (Savickas, 2013). We complement the theory by considering contextual factors and find that, apart from intra-personal readiness and ability, individuals' *guanxi* with both leaders and friends influences the way they use their career adaptability resources. In the Chinese context, what matters most to individuals is not what career adaptability resources they have, but what resources they are able to use in the presence of these contextual factors.

Second, in the CCT framework, career adaptability resources generate adapting behaviours or strategies to overcome constraints to the career development process (Savickas, 2013). We expand the relationship between career adaptability resources and adapting behaviours by introducing evaluation of the constraints between them. After evaluating the career adaptability resources they can use, individuals show their preference for constraint factors first and then develop strategies for making or not making a career transition in response to the constraints. In this manner, the original relationship between career adaptability and adapting behaviours in CCT is expanded.

Besides implications to the theory itself, the methodological implications for career studies also deserves reflection. We take an individual, their career and the surroundings as a whole and use qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, to investigate the career development process. Apart from the new findings from this study, we also extend the methodology used in career field studies. The method used responds to calls for using

narrative to investigate career adaptability in CCT (Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011; Savickas, 2013).

Our findings also shed light on *guanxi* studies. *Guanxi* is a unique social factor in China and there are many studies on it. Although many researchers have examined *guanxi* in different situations, little has been done on *guanxi* in the career field, especially with reference to the larger economic changes in the country. There is a debate in the literature about whether *guanxi* still matters in post-reform China (Li & Wright, 2000). Some researchers believe that the reliance on *guanxi* will decrease as a result of the economic reforms being promoted in the country, whereas others think *guanxi* is so deeply rooted in Chinese culture that its relevance will not wane. By investigating the impact of *guanxi* on people's adaptation process during career transitions, our study supports the idea that *guanxi* still matters in China.

Our results also have important practical implications. First, career adaptability is a pivotal tool used to generate strategies to overcome difficulties in the career development process. Therefore, individuals need to purposefully increase their career adaptability resources. For example, they can try to define clearer career goals to improve their sense of control over their careers. By seeking positive feedback and taking chances to solve problems, they can increase their career confidence.

Second, we found that both *guanxi* with leaders and *guanxi* with friends matter when individuals use their career adaptability resources in the Chinese context. However, *Guanxi*, as a contextual factor, can only help those who actively interact with the environment rather than determine their career development outcome. Some empirical research on *Guanxi* has indicated that too much *Guanxi* is not good for employees' self-development and often works

as a negative predictor of individuals' proactive behaviours (Ren & Chadee, 2017).

Combining these perspectives together, we suggest individuals to build their career adaptability resources first and, on this basis, develop a good *guanxi* with leaders as well as friends. For example, they can take opportunities to work in corporate headquarters rather than in branch offices to increase their access to leaders.

The limitations of this study also need to be addressed. First, the participants we interviewed are people from a business background or similar field. This homogeneity reduces the external validity of our research conclusions. Future research could target other groups, especially in technical fields, to test our model. Second, although we identified *guanxi* as a unique social factor that could influence people's adaptation process, it is only one social factor embedded in a broader Chinese context. The impact of other social factors on career behaviours needs to be explored as well. Thus we suggest that future studies take a broader view of the impact of social factors, such as parental influence and government policy, on individuals' career development process. Lastly, the results obtained from this study are based on the Chinese context. Because of the uniqueness of the country's recent social development, it remains to be explored whether our conclusions can be extended to other Eastern cultures.

To conclude, through the lens of career construction theory, this study examined the adaptation process in career transitions among the first generation of post-reform Chinese university graduates. We integrated into the analysis the influence of *guanxi*, the evaluation of constraints, the ways in which people use their career adaptability resources and their final career transition decisions. Three unique social constraints emerged that have not been studied in previous research, including system constraints, *hukou* restrictions and district attraction.

The study also investigated how *guanxi* could influence the way people use their career adaptability resources. We conclude that in the Chinese context good *guanxi* with leaders and friends will pave the way for individuals' career development. Besides *guanxi*, some personal factors such as age, marriage status and family condition can also impact on people's evaluation and use of their career adaptability resources. Regarding the adaptation process, we investigated the role of constraint evaluations as a step from the use of career adaptability to the final career transition decision. Results show that constraint evaluation is not a stable factor and it aligned with career transition decisions in a mixed way. Both theoretical and practical implications of this study's findings are discussed. At the end of the paper, we also clarify the limitations in our study and address future research challenges accordingly.

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Conclusion to Paper Three

Paper Three expands the results of the former two papers. Career transition is a popular proactive behaviour in this new career era. It is also a behaviour that may have adverse effects on organisations especially when their talents choose to make a transition across organisational boundaries. The third paper answered research question 5, “how do people’s career adaptability dispositions or resources influence their career transition decisions?” and research question 6, “To what extent the contextual factors will influence personal dispositions and their career transition behaviours”. According to Paper Three, individuals’ career adaptability disposition shows its influence on career transition behaviours but it largely depends on the peoples’ *guanxi*, both with their leaders and with their friends; the *guanxi* factor could greatly impact on individuals’ career transition decisions. Besides, three other contextual factors—system constraints, *hukou* restrictions and district attraction—also emerged in Paper Three through the interviews examining relationships between career adaptability and career transition behaviours. The results of all three studies in this thesis project, including the theoretical and practical implications are presented in Chapter 5, which summarises the key findings of the three papers in this thesis and also presents an overall discussion of the results.

Chapter 5: General discussion of the key findings

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis project is to investigate how the Chinese people's career disposition will impact on their proactive behaviours in careers, at both personal and organisational levels. Three papers in this thesis project examined career calling, career adaptability and proactive personality as individuals' career dispositions, and examined organisational citizenship behaviour, proactive career behaviour, career self-management and voluntary career transitions as proactive behaviours in careers, respectively. This chapter commences with a summary of the key findings of each paper and then presents how these findings extend the knowledge gained from prior studies both in theory and practice. The research's limitations and directions for future studies are also discussed.

Summary of findings

In this section, we synthesise the key findings of the three papers. The current research project was conducted in the Chinese context and the overall aim of the project is to investigate how people's career dispositions will differently enact proactive behaviours on both personal and organisational levels to adapt to career development tasks. To achieve the broader research aim, we conducted three studies in a mixed-method approach to examine relationships between career dispositions and proactive behaviours in careers across a variety of samples of Chinese workers.

The research project had three overarching goals. First, to investigate and compare the differences in mechanisms from career calling disposition to both organisational and individual-related proactive behaviours in careers. Second, to combine career-related and organisation-related issues, it examined the mediating role of career self-management, which linked career adaptability disposition to the performance outcome. The moderating role of proactive personality disposition on this mediated relationship was also examined. Third, focusing on voluntary career transition behaviour, which has been paid much attention in the era of changing career environment, to investigate to what extent the individuals' career adaptability disposition or resources could influence them to make a career transition. On that basis, some contextual factors that influence people's career transition decision-making process were discussed. Taken as a whole, through a mixed method approach, the results of this research project offer insights on the influence of personal dispositions on proactive behaviours in careers in the Chinese context, thus extending a field of inquiry that was previously restricted to the Western world.

As shown in Table 1 (below) and Figure 1 (below), this thesis project used a mixed-method approach to the research. Both Paper One and Paper Two are quantitative studies and Paper Three uses a qualitative method. To make the research results clear, in this part, we summarised the hypotheses and results of Paper One and Paper Two together in Table 1 and produced a summary of the results of Paper Three separately in Figure 1.

Table 1

Summary of hypotheses and results of Papers One and Two

Number	Hypothesis	Paper One Results	Paper Two Results
<i>Paper One: Calling and Proactive Behaviours: Identifications as Mediators</i>			
H1a	Calling is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviours.	√	
H1b	Calling is positively related to proactive career behaviours.	√	
H2a	Organisational identification mediates the relationship between calling and OCBs.	√	
H2b	Organisational identification mediates the relationship between calling and proactive career behaviours.	√	
H2c	The mediation effect of organisational identification between calling and OCBs is stronger than that between calling and proactive career behaviours.	√	
H3a	Career identification mediates the relationship between calling and proactive career behaviours.	√	
H3b	Career identification mediates the relationship between calling and OCBs.	√	
H3c	The mediation effect of career identification between calling and proactive career behaviours is stronger than that between calling and OCBs.	√	
<i>Paper Two: Combine Your “Will” and “Able”: Career Adaptability’s Influence on Performance</i>			
H1a	Career adaptability can positively predict performance.		√
H1b	Career self-management plays a mediating effect between career adaptability and performance.		√
H2	Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between career adaptability and career self-management, such that under higher as opposed to lower levels of proactive personality, career adaptability will have a stronger effect on career self-management.		√
H3	Proactive personality will moderate the indirect effect of career adaptability on performance, such that compared with the low proactive group, positive effects of career adaptability on performance, through career self-management, will be greater for those with higher levels of proactive personality.		√

In Paper One and Paper Two, we quantitatively investigated how calling and career adaptability influence on proactive behaviours in careers, which are in turn beneficial for both organisations and individuals. Results of the first two studies were listed in Table 1. Based on the assumption that career disposition indicates what people usually do (Watson & Hubbard, 1996), in Paper One we operationalised career disposition as career calling. The results of Paper One indicate that calling, as a positive motivational state, is positively related to both organisational citizenship behaviour and proactive career behaviour (i.e. Hypotheses 1a and 1b). The investigation shows that two kinds of identifications play mediating roles in this relationship, organisational identification and career identification (i.e. Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b). However, differences do exist in the relationships between calling and these two behaviours either related with organisations or individuals. Specifically, in Paper One, we further compared the different effects of the two identifications on both organisation and individual-related results. As Hypotheses 2c and 3c show that the mediation effect of organisational identification is stronger linked to the organisational outcome (i.e. organisational citizenship behaviour) whereas career identification closely linked to proactive career behaviours.

In Paper Two we examined the relationship between individuals' career adaptability disposition and proactive behaviour outcomes. In addition, in this study, we combined organisation-related and career-related issues in order to have the organisations and individuals achieve “win-win” outcomes while people achieve their career goals in the new career era. Specifically, Paper Two first examined the direct effect of career adaptability on performance (Hypothesis 1a) and then examined career self-management behaviour as a

mediator in this relationship (Hypothesis 1b). Results showed that individuals' career adaptability disposition can positively influence performance through the effects of career self-management. In that case, by encouraging people to pursue their career values through managing their own careers more proactively, the organisation can at the same time reap a better performance. Further, in Paper Three, through the lens of CCT, proactive personality was examined as a boundary condition when career adaptability disposition impacts on both individual and organisational related outcomes. Results showed that proactive personality, as an individual disposition, moderates the direct relationship between career adaptability and career self-management (Hypothesis 2) as well as the indirect relationship between career adaptability and performance (Hypothesis 3). Specifically, for the direct relationship, under higher as opposed to lower levels of proactive personality, career adaptability will have a stronger effect on career self-management. For the indirect mediated relationship, the positive effects of career adaptability on performance, through career self-management, will be greater for those with higher levels of proactive personality.

In Paper Three, using a qualitative approach, through in-depth interviewing we examined how Chinese workers will utilise their career adaptability resources or dispositions to adapt to tasks during their career development. The overall research process of this research is shown as Figure 1. First, based on the main research aim of this whole project, this paper, using the framework of CCT (Savickas, 2013), examined career adaptability as personal dispositions and focused on two specific research questions. This paper aims to investigate how individuals' career adaptability disposition will influence their career transitions, a behaviour that has received much research attention in this new career era. In addition, this paper mainly

explored role of social context in the career transition process. Participants in this study are employees, called here “the first generation”, who were able to choose their careers freely after China had experienced profound economic reforms. Then, to conduct in-depth interviews, we first decided on the themes of the interview based on research questions. Having conducted the interviews, we investigated the findings of the research. In the results, the strong influence of the unique social factor *guanxi* emerged; this includes *guanxi* with leaders and *guanxi* with friends. Besides *guanxi*, Chinese society has its constraints, such as system constraints, *hukou* restrictions, and district attraction. All these social factors will greatly impact on the relationship between career adaptability disposition and transition behaviours.

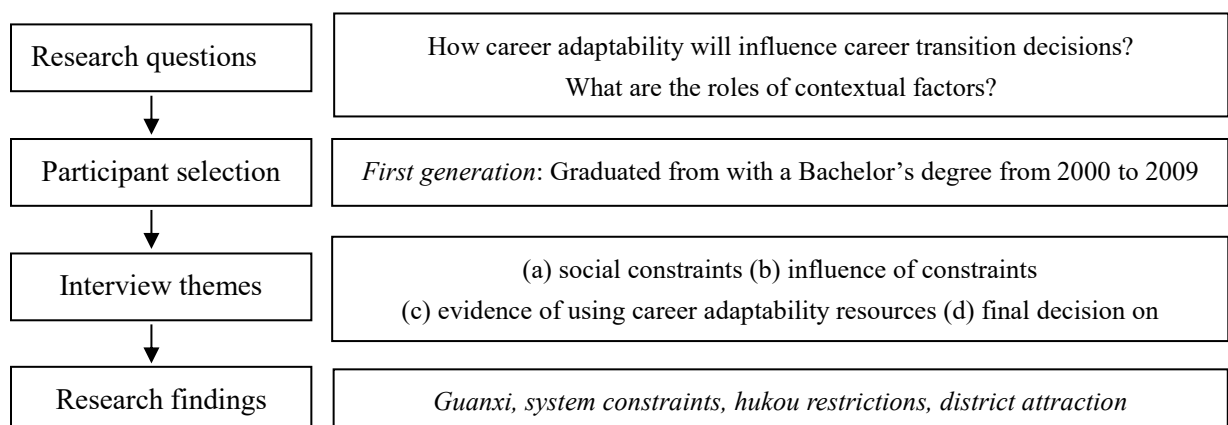


Figure 1
Overall research process of Paper Three

Theoretical implications

This thesis project contributes to the literature in several ways. The overall relationship between career dispositions and proactive behaviours within a career was examined in the Chinese context in three studies. In previous studies, academics carried out most of the research in the Western world (Sun & Wang, 2009). Results from the three studies in this thesis broadened our knowledge about how people's career dispositions will influence their

proactive behaviours in their careers in Eastern societies, where people hold differing cultural values (Triandis, 2001). In Paper One, proactive career behaviours were differentiated by organisational and individual perspectives. By comparing the mechanisms when calling disposition shows its influence on the two types of proactive behaviours, differences of the two mechanisms were testified. These results contribute to literatures by distinguishing the different influences of career disposition on individual and organisation-related career outcomes. In addition, instead of testifying the three components of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) — autonomy, competence and relatedness — which has been widely investigated, this study highlighted the basic theoretical foundation from the intrinsic motivation perspective.

Based on the results of Paper One and guided by the idea of integrating the interests of the two sides (i.e. individuals and organisations), Paper Two examined an effective way of combining individual career-related and organisational-related issues by introducing career self-management, an individual proactive career behaviour and one of the main concerns in the career field (Baruch et al., 2015). Moreover, examination of the moderating effect of proactive personality broadens our knowledge of the relationship between career adaptivity and career adaptability in the CCT framework (Savickas, 2005, 2013) by adopting the resource perspective in conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Specifically, instead of examining a linear relationship between career adaptivity and career adaptability, this study contributes to CCT by examining the joint effect of an adaptability resource and adaptivity in predicting adapting responses and adaptation results.

Finally, focusing on individuals' career transition behaviours, Paper Three further

investigated how contextual factors will impact on the way career adaptability influences career transition behaviours. The results of this study contribute to CCT by including consideration of social contextual factors. Participants selected in this study broaden knowledge of career adaptability among students to knowledge of that in employees, within the modern Chinese context. In addition, four unique social factors—*guanxi*, system constraints, *hukou* restrictions and district attraction—were reported in Paper Three, which complemented CCT by considering contextual factors apart from intra-personal readiness and ability in it. These findings extended our understanding towards the adaptation model of career construction by showing that career adaptability will play out differently among people from different cultural backgrounds.

Practical implications

The primary aim of career studies can be described from two aspects. For individuals, career research aims to maximise their career values and help to pursue their career values and goals. For organisations, career research aims to provide managers with guidance on how to make full use of their talents, obtain better performance from employees and improve their reputation. An ideal result is to integrate the interests of individuals and organisations and thus achieve a “win-win result” for both.

This thesis project also has several implications for practice. First, the results in Paper One guide individuals as well as managers in organisations notice the differences between them. Only when the differences are noticed can they present a result more comprehensively, such as career choices for individuals or management implementation for managers. In addition, in the recruitment process, calling can be viewed as a criterion for selection, as

people with a sense of calling tend to more easily combine their personal career autonomy with organisational development. Second, the results from Paper Two give guidance for managers of organisations. To integrate organisational and individual-related outcomes, managers should take notice of the role that career adaptability plays and proactive personality's strong effect on the two outcomes. However, considering that personality type is hard to change in adults, managers could utilise the positive effects of career adaptability and take measures to improve the employees' volatile career adaptability resources. Finally, results regarding the Chinese contextual factors investigated in Paper Three highlighted insights for individuals considering the influence of those factors. *Guanxi* is a contextual factor emerged from this study and the positive effect of *guanxi* on using career adaptability resources was identified. For instance, people can actively develop their *guanxi* either with leaders or with friends (or both) and use these *guanxi* to overcome social constraints and promote their career development. However, taking prior empirical research on the negative effect of *guanxi* (Ren & Chadee, 2017) as well as the interactive relationship between *guanxi* and career adaptability resources in our study into consideration, we enlightened that individuals need to build their career adaptability resources first. Then, a good *guanxi* with leaders and friends will pay its role.

Limitations and directions for future studies

Several limitations of this thesis project should also be addressed. First of all, Paper One illuminated the differences of the influence of career dispositions on individual and organisational-related career outcomes. In reality, the differences may exist not only in the relationships between individuals' dispositions and their career behaviour outcomes, but may

also exist in other aspects such as leadership style. In later studies, researchers should pay more attention to the differences in outcomes and balance the factors that may influence individuals and organisations differently. Besides, calling, as a career disposition, is a lifelong orientation. A better way to measure this concept in future research is to use a longitudinal method.

Second, in Paper Two, although this study has combined and examined relationships between organisational and individual-related issues, all the surveys in this study were conducted by participants at one time, which may be influenced by the common method variance and limit the extent to which causal inferences may be made (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Although Evans (1985) had suggested that the moderated mediation model will not be affected by the common method bias, future studies should avoid this by using multiple source data or longitudinal studies to better investigate relationships among variables.

Finally, in Paper Three of this thesis project, we found unique contextual factors in China through in-depth interviews among “the first generation” who are the pioneers of employees freely making career choices after the country itself experienced a transition. However, the participants we interviewed are all from a business background or similar field, which limits their representativeness of the whole society. For example, *guanxi* may affect people differently, who are also “the first generation”, if they have a science background or are doing technological work. People with a broader educational background and in a different career field should be targeted in future research. In addition, society is a complex system with many factors to take into account. The impact of *guanxi* and the other three constraining social factors were found in the third study, but the interaction of these social factors or interactions

of these factors with other contextual elements should be further investigated.

Overall conclusion

In these uncertain times, societal change has greatly refined our understanding of individuals' proactive behaviours in careers and also has shown the need for theoretically investigating the influence of career disposition on these behaviours, especially in the Chinese context which is completely different from that of Western countries. As a response to this need, this thesis project, using a mixed-method approach, investigated the multiple paths from individuals' career disposition to their proactive behaviours in careers in a Chinese context. This thesis contains three papers. Paper One and Paper Two empirically investigate the relationships between three kinds of career dispositions and two types of proactive behaviours in careers. Moreover, in these two studies, after distinguishing the differences between organisational and individual-related outcomes in Paper One, the second paper integrates the two and finds an effective way to combine the interests of the two sides through the moderating effect of career self-management. To further test the relationship between career disposition and proactive behaviour outcomes in the Chinese context, in Paper Three individuals' career transition behaviours were examined qualitatively. Unique contextual factors were discovered through in-depth interviews. It is hoped that this thesis project will inform both researchers and practitioners in their research and practice while balancing the interests of individuals and organisations, especially in the new career era.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics application approval

Xueyuan Gao (HDR)

From: [REDACTED] FBE Ethics <fbe-ethics@mq.edu.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 19 December 2017 8:27 AM
To: Denise Jepsen
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: ethics application (5201701164)

Dear Associate Professor Denise Jepsen

Re application entitled: Career Anchoring or Career Transitions: Antecedents and Outcomes — A Qualitative Study Based on In-depth Interviews

Reference Number: 5201701164

The above application was reviewed by the Faculty of Business & Economics Human Research Ethics Sub Committee. Approval of the above application is granted, effective "18/12/2017". This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf>.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Associate Professor Denise Jepsen
Professor Wenxia Zhou
Miss Xueyuan Gao

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 18 December 2018
Progress Report 2 Due: 18 December 2019
Progress Report 3 Due: 18 December 2020
Progress Report 4 Due: 18 December 2021
Final Report Due: 18 December 2022

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned, you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/forms_templates_and_useful_information/ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five-year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/forms_templates_and_useful_information/ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics

<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/human-research-ethics#policy>

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the FBE Ethics Committee Secretariat, via fbe-ethics@mq.edu.au or 9850 4826.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nikola Balnave
Chair, Faculty of Business and Economics Ethics Sub-Committee

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Appendix B: Materials for Empirical Paper One

Appendix B.1. Chinese Calling Scale (CCS) Items

Appendix B.2. Organisational Identification Items

Appendix B.3. Career Identification Items

Appendix B.4. Organisational Citizenship Behaviours Items

Appendix B.5. Proactive Career Behaviours Items

Appendix B.1. Chinese calling scale (CCS) items (Zhang, Herrmann et al., 2015)

Directions: There are some statements about the career you are engaged in. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	Compared with other careers, I think I should be engaged in my current career.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The value of my life depends to a large extent on my career.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel that I am destined to pursue my current career.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Engaging in my current career has made me feel the meaning of life.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My work contributes to society.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am engaged in a career that meets the needs of society.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am engaged in a career that can benefit others.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am committed to my career.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I am willing to make great efforts for my own career.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I will not give up my dreams in careers easily.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B.2. Organisational identification items (Mael & Ashforth, 1992)

Directions: There are some statements about your feelings towards your organisation.

Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	When someone criticizes my organisation, I feel as if I am being insulted.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am very interested in other people's opinions about my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
3	When talking about my organisation, I often use "we" instead of "they".	1	2	3	4	5
4	The success of my organisation is the success of my own.	1	2	3	4	5
5	When someone praises my organisation, I feel like I am being praised.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B.3. Career identification items (Mael & Ashforth, 1992)

Directions: There are some statements about your feeling towards your career. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	I feel my career meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I don't have any attachment to my current career.	1	2	3	4	5
3	When someone criticizes my career, I feel like I am being insulted.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am very interested in other people's opinions towards my career.	1	2	3	4	5
5	When someone praises my career, I feel like I am praised.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B.4. Organisational citizenship behaviours items (Lee and Allen, 2002)

Directions: There are some statements about your behaviours in your organisation.

Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	Help others who have been absent.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Adjust your work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Show genuine concern and courtesy toward co-workers, even under the most trying business or personal situations.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Assist others with their duties.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Share personal property with others to help their work.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Keep up with developments in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Defend the organization when other employees criticize it.	1	2	3	4	5
12	Show pride when representing the organization in public.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Express loyalty toward the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Take action to protect the organization from potential problems.	1	2	3	4	5
16	Demonstrate concern about the image of the organization.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B.5. Proactive career behaviours items (Strauss et al., 2012)

Directions: There are some statements about your behaviours in your career. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	I am planning what I want to do in the next few years of my career.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am thinking ahead to the next few years and plan what I need to do for my career.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I engage in career path planning.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I develop skills which may not be needed so much now, but in future positions.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I gain experience in a variety of areas to increase my knowledge and skills.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I develop knowledge and skill in tasks critical to my future work life.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I seek advice from my supervisor(s) or colleagues about additional training or experience I need in order to improve my future work prospects.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I initiate talks with my supervisor about training or work assignments I need to develop skills that will help my future work chances.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I make my supervisor aware of my work aspirations and goals.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I am building a network of contacts or friendships with colleagues to obtain information about how to do my work or to determine what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I am building a network of contacts or friendships to provide me with help or advice that will further my work chances.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I am building a network of colleagues I can call on for support.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C: Materials for Empirical Paper Two

Appendix C.1. Career Adapt-Abilities (CAAS) Items

Appendix C.2. Career self-management items

Appendix C.3. Proactive personality items

Appendix C.4. Performance items

Appendix C.1. Career adapt-abilities (CAAS) items (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)

Directions: Different people use different strengths to build their careers. No one is good at everything. Each of us emphasizes some strengths more than others. Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities.

Item #		Not strong			Strongest	
1	Thinking about what my future will be like.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Realizing that today's choices shape my future.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Preparing for the future.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Becoming aware of the educational and career choices that I must make.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Planning how to achieve my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Concerned about my career.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Keeping upbeat.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Making decisions by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Taking responsibility for my actions.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Sticking up for my beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Counting on myself.	1	2	3	4	5
12	Doing what's right for me.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Exploring my surroundings.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Looking for opportunities to grow as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Investigating options before making a choice.	1	2	3	4	5
16	Observing different ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Probing deeply into questions I have.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Becoming curious about new opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Performing tasks efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5
20	Taking care to do things well.	1	2	3	4	5
21	Learning new skills.	1	2	3	4	5
22	Working up to my ability.	1	2	3	4	5
23	Overcoming obstacles.	1	2	3	4	5
24	Solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C.2. Career self-management items (Weng & McElroy, 2010)

Directions: There are some statements about your behaviours in your career. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	I usually search for detailed information about the vocational area and jobs in which I am interested.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I usually consider how to combine my early work experience with my future career development.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I often try to play new roles at work to explore whether I am suitable for them.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My career goal is very definitive.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have established detailed career development plans.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am very clear about how my present position is related to my career objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am very clear about what efforts are needed to realize my career goals.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I always attempt to learn more new knowledge and skills to realize my career objective.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I try to let my boss know about what I am doing to pursue my career and career objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I have established a helpful interpersonal network inside my company which can promote my career development.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I usually consult with my boss and experienced colleagues for helpful career guidance.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C.3. Proactive personality items (Bateman & Crant, 1993)

Directions: There are some statements about your behavioural tendency in your career.

Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	I am constantly exploring new ways to improve my life.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Wherever I am, I am the main force of promoting constructive change.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas come true.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I will change things I don't like.	1	2	3	4	5
5	If I believe in something, whether it will be successful or not, I will try my best to do it well.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Even if others object to my thoughts, I have to promote my own ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am good at seizing opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am always looking for a better way to do things.	1	2	3	4	5
9	If I firmly believe in an idea, I will overcome all obstacles and make it a reality.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I can find opportunities ahead of others.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C.4. Performance items (Chen et al., 2002)

Directions: There are some statements about your performance. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements.

Item #		Not strong Strongest				
1	I can make significant contribution to the overall performance of our work unit.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I always completes job assignments on time.	1	2	3	4	5
3	People believe that I am one of the best employees in the work unit.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My performance always meets the expectations of the supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D: Materials for Qualitative Paper Three

Appendix D.1. Background info. of each interviewee

Appendix D.2. Participant information and consent form

Appendix D.3. Recruitment advertisement (flyer)

Appendix D.4. Interview questions

Appendix D.1. Background information on each interviewee

Name	Gender	First Degree	Career 1	Career 2	Career 3	Career 4	Career 5
Peter	M	Management	Labor Bureau, GPI, Shenzhen	Salesman, NSC, Shenzhen	Marketing/Investment, NSC, Shenzhen	Advertising, NSC, Shenzhen,	Investment, NSC, Beijing
Anna	F	Management	HR, NSC, Beijing	Counselor, Entrepreneur, Beijing			
Ben	M	Agriculture	College Admin.,GPI, Beijing	Government officer, GA, Beijing	Counselor, SC, Beijing	Counselor, NSC, Beijing	
Guo	M	Computer	Technician, NSC, Shandong	Salesman, NSC, Shanghai	Management assistant, NSC, Beijing	Management counselor, NSC, Beijing	Counselor, Entrepreneur, Beijing
Lee	M	Law	Judge, GPI, Jiangxi	HR, NSC, Shenzhen	Counselor, Entrepreneur, Shenzhen		
Jarvis	M	Management	HR, SC, Beijing				
Grace	F	Management	HR, NSC, Beijing	Training, Entrepreneur partner, Beijing	Counselor, Entrepreneur, Shenzhen		
Gerry	M	Management	HR, SC, Henan	HR & investment, SC, Beijing			
Thad	M	Management	HR (IT company), NSC, Beijing	HR (software R&D company), NSC, Beijing	HR (real estate company), NSC, Beijing		

Name	Gender	First Degree	Career 1	Career 2	Career 3	Career 4	Career 5
Eric	M	Management	HR (industrial company), NSC, Tianjin	HR (medical company), NSC, Suzhou	HR (oral/mouth company), NSC, Beijing		
Gloria	F	Agriculture	Engineer, SC, Beijing	HR, NSC, Beijing	HR strategy, SC, Beijing		
Tess	F	Management	HR, SC, Beijing				
Jeff	M	Management	Store management, NSC, Beijing	Location chosen, NSC, Hebei	Location chosen, NSC, Beijing	Mobile agent, NSC, Beijing	HR, NSC, Beijing
Kitty	F	Economy	Program planning, NSC, Beijing	Collage, GPI, Hebei	Management assistant, NSC, Beijing	Marketing, SC, Beijing	
Jacob	M	Electronic	HR, SC, Beijing				
Noble	M	Economy	Officer, GPI, Shenyang	M.Sc. in Economy	Trading, SC, Beijing		
Ellison	M	International Trade	Purchasing agent, NSC, Tianjin	Purchasing agent, NSC, Beijing	M.A. in Management	Market management, SC, Beijing	
Owen	M	Management	Civil servant, GPI, Beijing	HR, SC, Tianjin	M.A in Economy	HR, SC, Beijing	
Ted	M	Management	HR, SC, Hubei	Party work, SC, Hubei			
Bliss	F	Management	HR, SC, Beijing				
James	M	Accounting	Account, NSC, Shenzhen	Account manager, NSC, Shenzhen	Financial manager, NSC, Shenzhen	Finance director, NSC, Shenzhen	
Jolly	F	Accounting	Officer, GPI, Hubei	Finance, SC, Hubei			

Name	Gender	First Degree	Career 1	Career 2	Career 3	Career 4	Career 5
Betty	F	Industrial Economy	HR, NSC, Beijing	M.A. in Political Economy	HR, NSC, Shanxi	HR manager, NSC, Beijing	
Jay	M	Management	HR, NSC, Hubei	HR & admin, NSC, Hubei	HR, SC, Hubei		
Sawyer	M	Management	HR, SC, Hubei	HR, SC, Shenzhen	HR & admin., SC, Hubei	Training, Entrepreneur, Hubei	
Odell	M	Accounting	HR manager, SC, Beijing				
Foster	M	Accounting	Account, SC, in Hubei				
Tom	M	Management	HR, SC, Hubei	Admin, SC, Hubei	HR, SC, Hubei		
Cain	M	Management	Study consulting, NSC, Shanghai	Education, Entrepreneur, Shanghai			
Joe	M	Computer	Information business, NSC, Beijing	Professor, overseas, Korea	Information business, NSC, Beijing		
Oscar	M	Management	HR, NSC, Shenzhen	HR, SC, Wuhan/abroad			
Yong	M	Management	HR, SC, Hubei	HR, SC, Beijing	HR, SC, Hubei	Admin., SC, Beijing	HR manager, SC, Beijing
Polly	F	Management	HR assistant, NSC, Shanghai	HR, NSC, Shanghai			
Jeremy	M	Management	HR, SC, Beijing				
Jason	M	Marketing	Salesman, NSC, Beijing	Product manager, NSC, Beijing	Product manager, SC, Beijing	Technology development, NSC, Beijing	Product development, Entrepreneur, Beijing

Name	Gender	First Degree	Career 1	Career 2	Career 3	Career 4	Career 5
Sally	F	Information Management	M.A. in Management	officer, GPI, Shandong			
Fonda	F	Management	Survey & data analysis, GPI, Beijing	HR, NSC, Beijing	HR manager, GPI, Beijing	HR manager, SC, Beijing	
Gay	F	Management	HR, SC, Hubei	HR & admin, SC, Hubei	Emergency service, SC, Hubei		
Jake	M	Management	HR, SC, Beijing	HR, NSC, Beijing			
Bab	M	Management	HR, SC, Beijing	Finance manager, SC, Beijing	HR Management, Entrepreneur, Beijing		
Oliver	M	Management	HR, NSC, Beijing	Head-hunter, NSC, Beijing	Talent development (psychology), NSC, Beijing	Psychological Counseling, Entrepreneur, Beijing	

Note. SC = State-owned Company, NSC = Non State-owned Company, GPI = Government/Public Institution.

Appendix D.2. Participant information and consent form

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Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title: Associate Professor Denise Jepsen

Name of Project: A Qualitative Study on Career Transitions

You are invited to participate in a study of career anchoring and career transitions among Chinese individuals. The purpose of the study is to look into the process of making a career transition decision and the contextual factors that may influence this process. Aim of this research is to investigate any possible contextual factors from the society and details of the transition process.

The study is being conducted by Associate Professor Denise Jepsen, Department of Management, Macquarie University (denise.jepsen@mq.edu.au) and Professor Wenxia Zhou, School of Labor and Human Resource, Renmin University of China [REDACTED] and Miss Xueyuan Gao, Department of Marketing and Management, Macquarie University [REDACTED] (*a local work mobile phone number will be available later*). This study is being conducted to meet the requirements of Miss Xueyuan Gao's PhD of Marketing and Management under the supervision of Associate Professor Denise Jepsen, (denise.jepsen@mq.edu.au) of the Department of Marketing and Management.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last around 45 to 60 minutes. The interview questions are relevant to the key issues regarding career transitions and your understand towards contextual factors. Demographics information will be collected as control variables for data analysis. After you complete the interview, you will receive 50RMB cash as a thank you.

Some participants might feel distress when talking about their career transition experience or career choice results. If you come to feel any distress in the interview, you have rights to pause or withdraw at any time without any consequences. You could call Beijing Psychological Assistance Hotline (24 hours) on 800-810-1117 to get help.

To ensure an accurate record of your response, the researcher will be taking notes during the interview and a digital audio recording will be used for transcribing verbatim and analysis purpose. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. No one in your organisation will ever know your individual responses.

Only the researchers in this project have access to the research data. The data may be available to other researchers for future Human Research Ethics Committee-approved research projects. Once the research has been completed, a copy of publications arising from this research will be available to you on request by contacting Miss Xueyuan Gao [REDACTED]

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____ (*participant's name*) have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____

(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____

(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

—
—
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix D.3. Recruitment advertisement (flyer)

You are invited to participate in a study of **A Qualitative Study on Career Transitions**. The purpose of the study is to look into the process of making a career transition decision and the contextual factors that may influence this process. Aim of this research is to investigate any possible contextual factors from the society and details of the transition process.

The study is being conducted by Associate Professor Denise Jepsen (denise.jepsen@mq.edu.au) and Miss Xueyuan Gao [REDACTED], Department of Management, Macquarie University, Australia and Professor Wenxia Zhou [REDACTED], School of Labor and Human Resource, Renmin University of China, China.

If you 1) graduated with a Bachelor's degree from the year 2000 to 2009; 2) have gotten your degree in management; 3) once faced with a career transition time point in your career development, you are invited to participate in an interview that last around 45 to 60 minutes.

After you completed the interview, you will receive 50RMB cash as a thank you.

If you decide to participate the interview, please contact Miss Xueyuan Gao via phone call (a local work mobile phone number will be available later) to register with your contact details and preferred time. All information collected will only be accessed by the researchers.

For more information, please contact Professor Wenxia Zhou or Miss Xueyuan Gao via phone call or email.

Your assistance will make a great contribution to understanding Chinese contextual factors' influence on individuals' career transition process.

Please forward this message on to anyone who might be interested in being a part of this research.

Thank you for supporting this research.

Appendix D.4. Interview questions

- **Career and development history**

Main Q1: Can you please tell me about your career history including the changes, start from the completion of your undergraduate studies, just like telling a story with different episodes.

Main Q2: What you majored when you were an undergraduate? Why you choose *** as your major at that time?

Did your parents or others help you at that time?

Did your parents have any anticipations for your future career development?

What are your parents' careers? Have they had any change experiences? (*parents' or other people's influence*)

- **Transition adaptation - Vocational personality**

Main Q3: Who did you admire when you were growing up? Celebrities or people around you? (*self-concept*)

Main Q4: What is your favorite book or movie? What type they are? Are there any characters that you like most (or be impressed most) in that book/movie? (*interests*) (*self-concept*) (*next chapter of career & initiating action*)

Main Q5: What is your earliest recollection in terms of your ideal job you want to pursue when you were younger? Why you made it as your earliest ideal job? (*work-related interests and values*)

- **Transition Adaptation - stage ONE - orientation, antecedents & risk preference (before transition happened)**

Main Q6: (*The interviewee mentioned at least one change in career in Q4*) Why did you want to make such a change at that time or why did you made that goal as your career aspiration? (*provisional vocational aspiration*)

(If the interviewees have never changed before) Have you ever thought of making a change in your career? What plan it was? Why didn't you implement that plan?

(answer WHAT)

How did you implement your transition plan at that time? *(planning process)*

To make this change successful, what had you prepared in advance? *(planning process, career process skill & instrumental behaviour)*

Main Q7: What risks/costs have you experienced when you made the transition plan? How did you overcome them? *(risk preference)*

Main Q8: What career management strategies did you use to overcome the risks to make the transition happen? *(problem-solving skills)*

Why did you give up to the risks?

How did you balance the relationship between the risks and the career goal that you want?

Main Q9: Were there any supportive factors during the transition period (e.g. environmental possibilities, support from families, etc.)? *(self-concept, e.g. P-E matching possibilities)*

Did some others give you any help to overcome the difficulties?

(surrounding factors)

- **Transition Adaptation - stage TWO - exploration**

Main Q10: Tell a story about how you search and re-search about the role that you wanted in your new career **after the transition happened?**

Main Q11: What strategies did you use to make yourself adjust to the new career? *(work readiness, employability skills and self-regulatory behaviour)*

Main Q12: How did you explore possible career paths when you first entered into the new career? *(exploring possible career paths)*

Main Q13: What were your specific career goals or plans when you living in your

new career? *(forming more specific vocational goals and plans)*

- **Transition Adaptation - stage THREE - establishment**

Main Q14: What difficulties have you faced when you want to **embed yourself into the present career?** What strategies have you used to overcome those difficulties? *(becoming socialized)*

Main Q15: What stress situations have you experienced in your current career, such as work stress, dissatisfaction, work-family relationship, etc.? *(managing stresses)* How did you overcome those stress situations?

Main Q16: Suppose that you are a member of a football team... How do you think this result will influence your future football career? *(coping with negative events)*

Main Q17: How would you describe yourself in your group, like according to gender, city or rural area? *(managing identity)*

- **Transition Adaptation - stage FOUR - management**

Main Q18: How prepared are you to deal with emergencies in your career at the moment? *(preparing for career-related changes)*

Main Q19: How you make yourself unique **in the present career?** *(building job niches)*

Main Q20: How do you think of your current career compared with your original career goals/career plans? *(revising or stabilizing career goals)*

- **Transition Adaptation - stage FIVE - disengagement**

Main Q21: How satisfied are you with your current career (using 5-point scale)? *(tentative question about disengagement)*

Why are you satisfied/dissatisfied with your current career?

How can you make your career to your satisfaction?

How will you cope with the dissatisfied situation in your career?

What will you do in the future to make the career more satisfying?

Main Q22: How do you suppose the development of your future career? (*future plan about career*)

- **Transition outcome - career satisfaction & career success**

Main Q23: How about your satisfaction toward your new career right after the transition happened? Could you please describe the change of your satisfaction in each career experience? (*continuous change of career satisfaction*)

Main Q24: What does career success mean to you?

How do you think your current career under such career success standards?

Can you give an example of a person whom you think is successful in career?

Why do you think that person is successful in career? (*career success as transition outcomes*)