

Careers of Older Women in Austria and Australia

Introduction

Careers may be defined as paths involving a sequence of job opportunities (The term “job” is used in its broad definition here.) that go beyond a single employment setting and involve adapting to changing circumstances (Defillippi and Arthur 1994). More significantly, career can be seen as a major part of life, especially when it is considered to provide not just a regular income but also a sense of purpose, a challenge, self-fulfilment, status, and social contacts. Careers can be considered as journeys through life. The interpretation of whether career steps are defined by individuals or by organisations has varied over the last few decades (Baruch 2004). In early human resource management literature, career management was often identified as an organisational function rather than an activity undertaken by individuals to enhance their career opportunities. HRM practices, such as strategic HRM, consider career management as a system within the organisation and assume responsibility for this in a variety of ways (Baruch and Peiperl 2000).

The widespread acceptance of new career concepts, such as the *boundaryless* career and the *protean* career, as “accepted metaphors in the field of career theory” (Briscoe and Hall 2006a:4), have highlighted a shift in the thinking of some organisations and individuals. Baruch and Peiperl (2000) note that such career concepts focus on the individual without giving sufficient recognition to the links between organisations and individuals, which, however, continue to play a vital role, even though they may be less permanent than they used to be in the context of traditional long-term organisational careers. Organisations which have skilled yet transient employees benefit if these em-

employees manage their careers successfully and may develop career management activities to foster career management, if only to ensure that the organisation's labour requirements can be met. Without a long-term psychological contract, it cannot be assumed that long-term employees will focus on career investment in one organisation (Mayrhofer et al. 2005; Hauff 2007). Individuals may seek to fulfil their interests and maximise their financial returns by career management actions that enhance their options. For example, individuals may select developmental and strategic activities that involve knowledge, skills, and abilities which are in high demand on the labour market and which are of interest to them. As a result, they might benefit by having better and more varied options, as well as by receiving personal and financial rewards. We will begin this paper by examining the most recent findings on the relevance of the new career concepts mentioned above and revisit the model of Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988), since it provides evidence that employment contracts have always been varied depending on business/organisational needs. We will then assess the extent to which even employees in fairly conventional forms of employment may benefit from taking a career management approach that focuses on building career competence or career capital.

In the next section we will compare older women's working lives in two countries with similar names but many differences in their economic and political frameworks – Austria and Australia. With regard to the Austrian labour market, it should be noted that the expansion of the European Union and the opening of Eastern European countries to economic involvement by Austrian companies have provided a powerful impetus for expansion and, in some cases, for relocation of existing businesses, as well as for the development of new businesses in Austria. Concurrently, the arrival of many semi-skilled and unskilled people from Eastern countries has created new social and political

challenges for the Austrian government. These changes, the privatisation of former government services, (for example, the national railway, telecom, and post), and the deregulation of business and employment conditions have changed life in Austria. The expansion of shopping hours is just one example of changes which have had an effect on the organisation of work as well as on family life. Interestingly, similar changes have occurred in Australia. There, changes have taken place in a different context, for instance, with regard to controlled migration or the business and mining resources boom, which, in turn, has brought unemployment to low levels. Recent governments, including the conservative government (from 1996 to 2007), have legislated major changes affecting business, government, employment relationships, and the power of unions. The impact recent changes regarding the government will have on society remains unclear. In both countries, the directions taken are similar but, as will be explained, there are fundamental differences in their approaches to social security, which makes it even more interesting to compare the two countries.

We will make an attempt to assess how the changes mentioned above influence women's late working life options. The rising generation of older women in the workforce is likely to face more favourable labour market conditions than in the past, as skill shortages are becoming evident in many countries and, at the same time, government-funded retirement incomes are under increasing pressure as populations age. Will the changes regarding labour market conditions lead to better chances and possibilities for older woman to get the highly valued positions they want? What are the career positions they would like to occupy? To reflect on the differences between organisational and individual career concepts, we will analyse the permanently changing definition of the term *career*.

Careers and Career Theory

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In their review of prevailing career theories in the last two decades of the 20th century, Baruch and Peiperl (2000) argue that most theoretical models of career management tend to focus on individual rather than on organisational perspectives. This also holds true for two career concepts that have been developed to fit changes in employment relationships: the *boundaryless* career and the *protean* career.

The notion of a boundaryless career incorporates people's movements across organisations by focussing on physically boundaryless careers with an enhanced occupational or professional emphasis rather than on long-term employment with one organisation. It also stresses the accompanying psychological aspect that involves the capacity to make transitions. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) identified six examples of boundaryless careers represented by (1) high technology careers and movement across organisations; (2) by academics drawing validation from outside their present employment; (3) by real estate agents sustained by external networks; (4) by those individuals rejecting traditional assumptions of hierarchy and advancement; (5) by those incorporating family or personal priorities; and (6) by individuals perceiving themselves as boundaryless. All these options incorporate the notion of self-directed and values-driven career management undertaken by the individual.

Briscoe and Hall (2006a) define a protean career as self-directed and independent career behaviour, based on individually defined goals, encompassing the whole life-space, and driven by psychological rather than objective success, such as pay, rank, or power. In other words, such careers are influenced by the individual's set of values and are self-directed by individuals, as they adapt to circumstances that influence their performance as well as to the learning demands arising from their careers. A person in a boundaryless career is likely to act in a protean fashion. A protean career is a mindset that claims

freedom, self-direction, and choices based on personal values. Ultimately, it is the perception of the individual which counts and, therefore, single organisation (in other words *bounded*) careers may be protean, if individuals believe that they have a certain degree of self-direction, independence, and a work-life-balance related to their values. Hence, boundaryless and protean careers are related but, nonetheless, independent constructs (Briscoe and Hall 2006a). In both conceptions, the value component within the theory is defined as a rejection of hierarchy and advancement, pay, rank, and power. To examine whether these values were widely adopted and whether they were a result of a lack of advancement possibilities or of changing values regarding career commitment and work-life-balance, would go beyond the scope of this paper. However, in 2008, higher salaries, rank, and power still seem to be important components in creating further career opportunities, components that can assist in creating the freedom for psychological success as well as the flexibility desired by individuals in categories 4 to 6 above.

The base from which the new career ideas originally developed becomes clearer when considering Sonnenfeld and Peiperl's (1988) typology of career systems. This classification was based on the entry, development, and exit strategies that distinguished the management practices of different U.S. firms and, ultimately, on their reliance on internal versus external labour markets. They identify two main characteristics of career systems within organisations: supply flow - movement in and out of the organisation - and internal movement or assignment, which is the flow across job assignments and promotions (see Figure 1). 20-year-old concepts like this indicate the range of employment circumstances then available in the U.S.A. and provide an interesting basis for contemporary investigations.

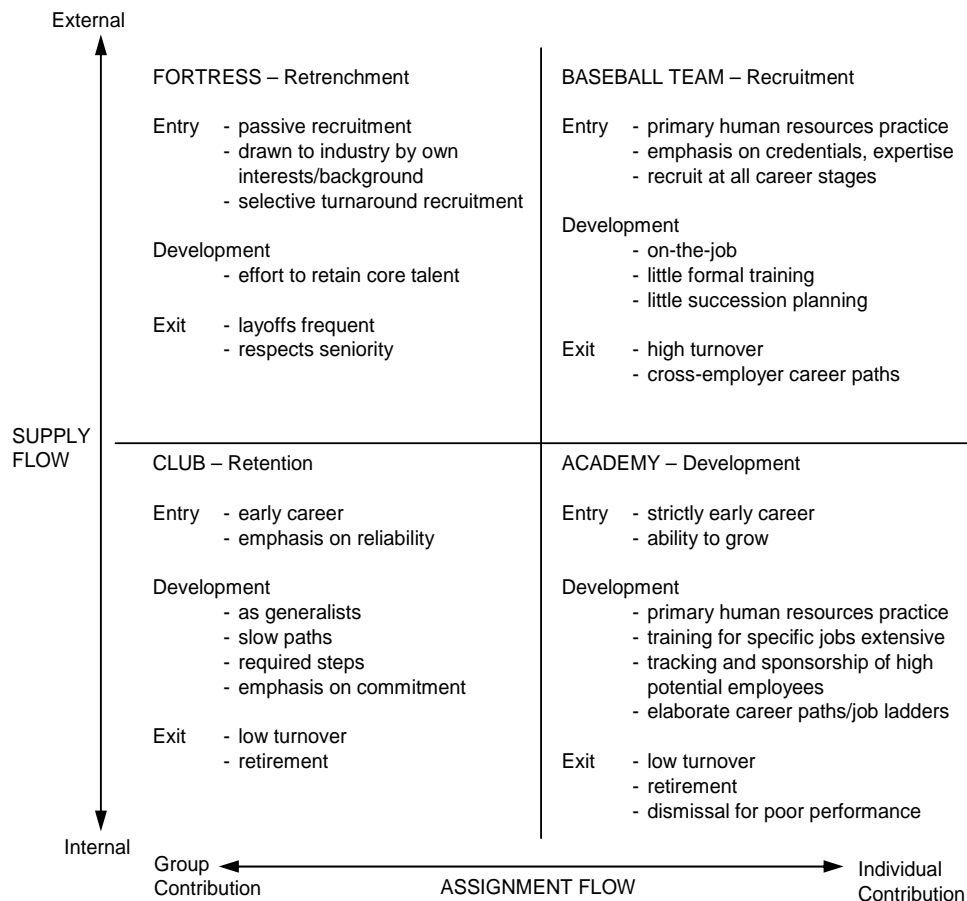


Figure 1: Model of career systems (Sonnenfeld and Peiperl 1988: 591)

Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988) identified typical industries for each model (see Figure 1). The Fortress model was linked to hotel (contemporary tourism providers), retail, publishing, textile, and natural resources industries and is characterised by the organisation's focus on survival and by a low commitment to individuals. The Baseball team model was linked to broadcasting, entertainment, bio-research, software development, investment banks, law firms, consulting firms, and public relations, and the metaphorical title was chosen because sports teams rely on skilled individual performers as well as on an open external labour market managed by agents and talent scouts. The Club model was linked to utilities, museums, government agencies, defence, airlines, and banks, where internal labour supply is developed and group factors are

important. The Academy model was linked to automobile, electronic, pharmaceutical, office product, and consumer product industries, which are stable and strive to develop their employees' knowledge skills and commitment. With respect to possible exit strategies, the Fortress system respects seniority, but only the Club and the Academy systems mention retirement as a way out of the organisation.

Sonnenfeld and Peiperl's twenty-year-old system is one of the few practical representations of different employment systems and illustrates the widespread use of different employment contracts prior to the High Technology revolution, which prompted the development of the protean and boundaryless career concepts. Yet, it fails to include an increasingly relevant aspect which contemporary systems are able to account for: the side-by-side presence of a casual/temporary labour component in addition to a permanent/contractual workforce.

The expansion of boundaryless careers was attributed to the development of new forms of organisation in new technology companies, but the systems shown above indicate their relevance for other industries, including community, health, and education services, where many women are employed. It is not difficult to transpose the career circumstances that Defillippi and Arthur (1994) considered applicable to rapidly developing technological firms to the sectors mentioned above. In higher education, people with teaching competencies in particular fields may obtain teaching contracts in a range of educational institutions; the positions academics occupy involve a range of responsibilities – research, administration, and teaching – and moving from one focus to the other does not result in a loss of status (Baruch 2004). In health services, the skills of highly trained therapists or medical specialists may be shared across a number of locations, and their career success may depend on their reputation as well as on the degree of their involvement with a number of different organisations. A specialist

service provider needs to network in order to know where her services are required, why she is to be involved rather than on-site staff, and how to engage in and contribute to a given situation. In order for local staff to gain access to specialist staff, their required competencies may include a clear understanding of the internal or external resourcing strategies of their organisation, specific skills in recognizing how particular clients can be assisted, and the knowledge of who has the skills to provide these services and of how to involve them.

Even before Defillippi and Arthur (1994) described the features of boundaryless career systems, structures like the ones they mention were common within organisations or as internal/external interfaces in service organisations. The way in which contemporary work environments differ from such earlier structures is that specialist service providers or consultants are more likely to be self-employed or to work for a consulting enterprise rather than in the user organisation. Mayrhofer et al (2005: 252) refer to these people as "free floating professionals". In HRM, practitioners with competencies and interests in particular fields, for example training, often work self-employed or from consulting businesses that provide specific services to a range of organisations rather than from training departments within large organisations. This development has certain parallels with the new forms of intra-firm relationship and starburst organisation associated with the introduction of new technologies in engineering and production in the late 1900s.

Much of the research on this topic has been based on experiences in the U.S.A., but, as will be shown at a later point, similar situations are identifiable in Austria and Australia. More recent research is attempting to clarify what career expectations employees have and how employers can manage employment relationships successfully (Roehling et al. 2000) and to develop models which reveal the typologies of different types of careers. Sullivan and Arthur (2006), for example, argue that attitudes to a boundaryless career

can be characterised by varying levels of physical (objective) and psychological (subjective) mobility. The positions they describe are: (1) dependence due to an inability to define priorities or to behaviourally manage one's own career; (2) reaction because values are unclear and do not provide a perspective to guide decisions; (3) rigidity when values are known but the individual is not able to adapt performance and learning requirements and in such a way shape their career; and (4) protean management incorporating self-direction in line with values. In this investigation, preferences for mobility were not necessarily associated with other attributes of self-direction and of values-driven career management. Hence, it is suggested that this new way of viewing career determination may be applicable to a range of career settings and is a worthwhile concept in itself. There is, however, a big gap between identifying self-direction in line with personal values as a career management strategy and understanding the successful use of this strategy in a range of employment settings. In this regard, the concept of career competencies or career capital proves extremely useful.

The Concept of Career Capital

Career capital, human capital, or career competence are often interchangeable terms that assist in conveying the idea of individuals possessing valuable skills, knowledge, and abilities which they bring to their work and build throughout a life-time career (DeFillippi and Arthur 1994; Dickman and Harris 2005). A resource base view of organisational competence would define these capacities as firm-specific or generic. An individual whose competencies are mainly firm-specific will be more limited in their adaptability outside the firm's environment, whereas an individual with generic competencies will have wider opportunities. In a contemporary business environment, many

competencies essential for firm-specific success are also generic, although individuals may not be aware of this and may have a limited view of their own adaptability. –

In general, human capital is defined broadly as “the stock of knowledge, skills, and abilities which can potentially increase productivity and performance at work and also life in general” and bring future returns in the form of higher salaries and better employability (Hietala 2006). The definition of the means to acquire *capital* is often limited to education and training, while a broader career view also identifies the development of competence through a careful selection of job opportunities and personal relationships.

<i>Firm-based competency</i>	<i>Career competency derivatives</i>	<i>Related career and human resource management approaches</i>
Culture	<u>Know-why:</u> Identity Values Interests	Specialization Team building Organisational career development
Know-how	<u>Know-how:</u> Knowledge Skills Ability	Job analysis Job design Performance appraisal Training and development
Networks	<u>Know-whom:</u> Inter-firm Relations Intra-firm Relations Professional and Social Relations	Interpersonal relations Customer relations Mentoring programmes

Figure 2: The relationships among firm competencies, career competencies, and common approaches in career and human resource management (Defillippi and Arthur 1994: 310)

Figure 2 reflects the dominant view of the late 1900s. It was argued that a major influence on the development of career competencies was through development activities in organisations that enabled involvement with a range of work situations and

people as well as through reward policies that reinforced this development (Defillippi and Arthur 1994). Organisational culture was seen, and is still often seen, as a major influence on an employee's sense of identity, interests, and motivation - which are all important factors that make individuals *know why* they are involved. Knowledge management strategies relate to *know-how* competencies involving knowledge, skills, and expertise. *Know-whom* competencies are linked to meetings, on-site visits, and company communication and have considerable consequences for the company's reputation and its operations. There was an expectation within this that compatible individuals would be selected into the organisation and sufficiently developed in these competencies in order to meet organisational requirements.

In response to the model depicted above, Defillippi and Arthur (1994) argue that its organisational basis for the development of career competencies is a major limitation with regard to the application of the career capital concept, since it ignores the development of professional and entrepreneurial career identities, skills, and networks. There are mechanisms which assist in the development of career capital that go beyond organisations. These include occupational associations, which provide opportunities for sharing the *knowing* of *why*, *how*, and *whom* and, also, as we will show in a later section, involvement of governments wishing to increase employment of older women. The more organisations struggle to adapt to changing environments, the more their requirements of individuals and their expectations of the individual's adaptability will increase. Some individuals may become part of a core employee group with long-term organisational prospects, and others may join a peripheral, casual, on-demand, performance-contingent workforce.

This fact has important implications for individuals. Only recently, Dickman and Harris (2005) have highlighted how a variety of types of international assignments have been

used by organisations to develop their employees' career capital. However, the HRM processes associated with these assignments have often been so poorly managed that individuals have not been able to recognise the correlation between their experiences and the organisational context. Others (Vance 2005) argue that individuals do not need to rely on their organisations and can manage and initiate their own international career development. The protean and boundaryless career concepts bring to attention the need for individuals to be aware of their values, that is, the need to *know why* they value a particular type of career involvement as much as *why* a particular task is important - for themselves or for an employer - to succeed. The individual also needs to be self-directed, that is, they need to *know how* to position themselves in order to achieve their preferred career involvement and to gain the required job competencies with a task, firm, or context-specific objective. Lastly, it is crucial to recognise that *knowing-whom* competencies belong to the individual as well as to the organisation, and the selective use of non-hierarchical, industry-based networks can assist their careers as well as organisational purposes. Most importantly, Defillippi and Arthur (1994) conclude that the value of an individual's career competencies is "not intrinsic but is dependent on their being employed in settings that recognise their potential contribution and provide corresponding opportunities" (ibid.: 310). In a later section of this paper, we will assess how these competencies are being promoted to assist older women in Austria and Australia who wish to continue in employment. First of all, however, we will examine the contextual factors which can influence their work options.

Employment and Career in Austria and Australia

In the preceding section we discussed the different forms of career systems identified some 20 years ago by Sonnenfeld and Peiperl (1988) as well as the concepts of boun-

daryless and protean careers, which try to redefine certain factors with regard to contemporary career management. Several essential issues emerged, including new styles of organisation involving a wider range of employment conditions and movement across organisations. More recently, Bright and Pryor (2005) have argued that the wide range of influences exerted on careers include unplanned and chance events that occur throughout the individual's total life-space and create a highly complex and chaotic situation. In this section, we will assess conditions both in Austria and Australia which provide examples of some such changes by focussing on two aspects, (1) workplace regulation of wages and working conditions and (2) access to age pensions, which will illustrate the fundamental differences between Austria and Australia.

The first issue we will examine is the extent to which wages and working conditions are regulated and the impact these regulations have on employment options. Information obtained from two successive OECD reports (2005a, 2005b) indicates that policies as well as certain institutions play a large role in determining employment rates of all age-groups in both countries. In general terms, there are two possible approaches when it comes to improving employment options for older women – one is enhanced regulation of employment conditions, for example, by setting wage levels, by recognising seniority, by regulating working hours, and by limiting lay-off or redundancy options. The second approach is to deregulate employment conditions, so that labour market demand and the employee's competence determine wages, hours, and stability of employment rather than seniority.

Amid much controversy, the second option has become widespread in Australia over the last ten or more years, since there has been a change from collective bargaining agreements based on occupational classifications to workplace agreements negotiated by each organisation with their workforce, and again, more recently, to individual work

contracts at any level within the organisation. Negotiating individual work arrangements, of course, offers more flexibility for employers, and wage growth has been at low levels except in industries where increased demand and profitability have increased the willingness of employers to offer more. Trade union membership has declined, and the role of unions in negotiating employment agreements has become less important.

It appears that similar trends can be observed in Austria, although official collective agreements provide the legislative context of workplace negotiations. There is more regulation in that collective agreements are negotiated through the Chambers of Commerce and Labour in which membership is obligatory and the structure is legally determined, and also through voluntary representations by Trade Unions (Müller 2002; Runggaldier 2006). However, in Austria, individual company agreements (i.e. work agreements) concluded between the company owner/employer and the Works Council are increasing in number, particularly in privatised government organisations (Runggaldier 2006). Pay levels are excluded from these agreements, which is not the case in Australia.

A further difference is evident in the coverage of contracted labour conditions through labour hire companies. In Austria, this has been addressed by a collective agreement, whereas in Australia this is mostly covered by individual work contracts. Other employees, such as atypical employees and casual staff, workers with an economic but not a personal employment relationship, and self-employed staff are outside the scope of Austrian labour law and must negotiate their own employment conditions, as they do in Australia. Like in Australia, the use of such employees has increased in recent years to minimise social security and employment costs and increase employers' flexibility (Runggaldier 2006; Hauff 2007; Keller 2007). Another change similar to those in

Australia is the increasing dissatisfaction with the seniority principle in determining wage levels, since the application of this principle increases the costs of older employees just because they are older, rather than because of their competence, contribution, and labour demand.

The OECD report (2005a) notes that full-time and life-time employment is becoming less secure in various industries in Austria, and that changing patterns of family life in combination with employers' demands have interacted to create significant growth in flexible or irregular types of employment. Like in Australia, much of the employment growth in the past two decades has concerned part-time employment, particularly among women. In contrast to most other countries, however, part-time work is less frequent among older workers than among prime-age workers (OECD 2005a). In Austria, regional mobility of labour is low and so small firms can provide cyclical employment without the risk of losing their labour market. However, like in Australia, there has been a significant transfer of labour-intensive and low to medium technology industries to cheaper countries. At the same time, high value-added work has expanded since the mid 1990s providing more long-term employment stability for qualified salary earners and, hence, more security for members of this section of the labour force. Consequently, employment rates are relatively high for prime-age workers of both sexes up to and including the 50-54 age-group. Yet, older workers have a higher unemployment rate because they are over-represented in declining industries, and they have a much lower level of educational attainment than members of the younger generations (OECD 2005a). For the future generation of older female workers opportunities and experiences may be somewhat different from those of the present generation.

In Australia, the unemployment rate is between 2-4 % for over 55-year-old men and women, and labour shortages are creating new opportunities for older workers across

the labour market (ABS 2008). In Austria, opportunities vary more widely as the labour supply is still abundant in major occupations and skill segments, and prospects are considerably better in occupations where growth has occurred in recent years. One of the challenges, therefore, will be to prepare workers of all ages in such a way that they are able to transfer from shrinking sectors of the economy to growing ones (OECD 2005b).

Older Workers: Work and Retirement

The previous section has identified some disparate trends and similarities concerning the projected problems and issues related to older women's access to late working life in Australia and Austria. In this context, it is important to consider broader factors that might influence their desire to work. There are fundamental differences between Austria and Australia regarding the rationale for the provision of retirement income for older persons, and, consequently, the structures of the two systems are quite different. The general circumstances pertaining to retirement income in Australia are outlined in another chapter of this book (c.f. Clarke, Hartmann, and Patrickson). Therefore, the comments in this chapter will focus on the system in Austria and how it compares to that in Australia.

Both in Austria and Australia, effective (that is, *actual*) and official retirement ages for women are almost the same - as opposed to many EU countries where early retirement of approximately five years is widespread. Interestingly, however, while the official retirement age for men in Austria is 65, the effective retirement age is 60 (OECD 2005a: 66). Figure 3 shows how the participation rate of Austrian men aged 60-64 has nevertheless increased from 12 % to nearly 20 % between 1995 and 2003, while the participation rate of women belonging to the same age-group has remained steady at

about 5 %. However, in Australia (Figure 4) the participation rate of men in the same age-group has been steady at about 50 % for the last 20 years, and the participation rate of women aged 60-64 has risen by 10 % to 17 % since 1995.

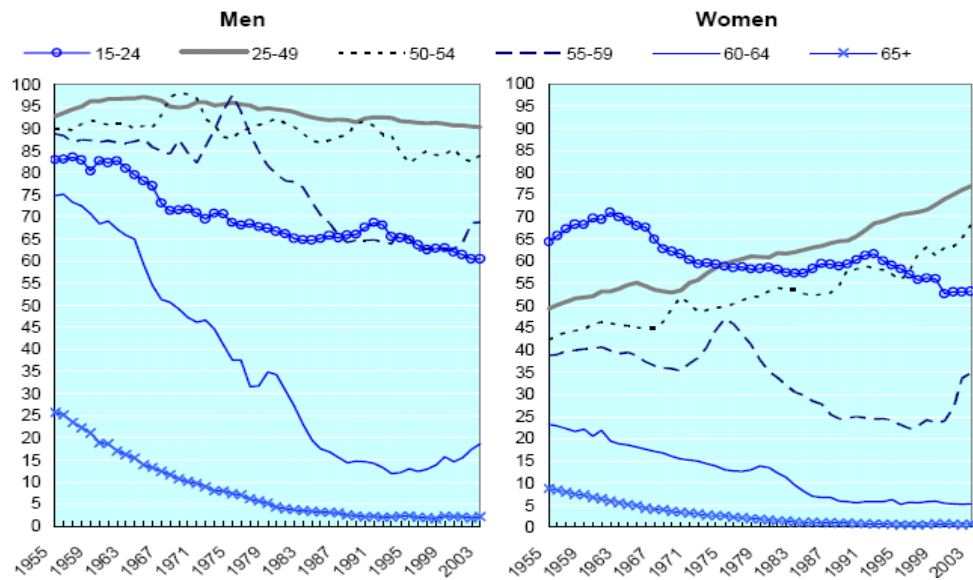


Figure 3: Participation rates in Austria by age and gender: 1955-2003 (percentages;
OECD 2005a:62)

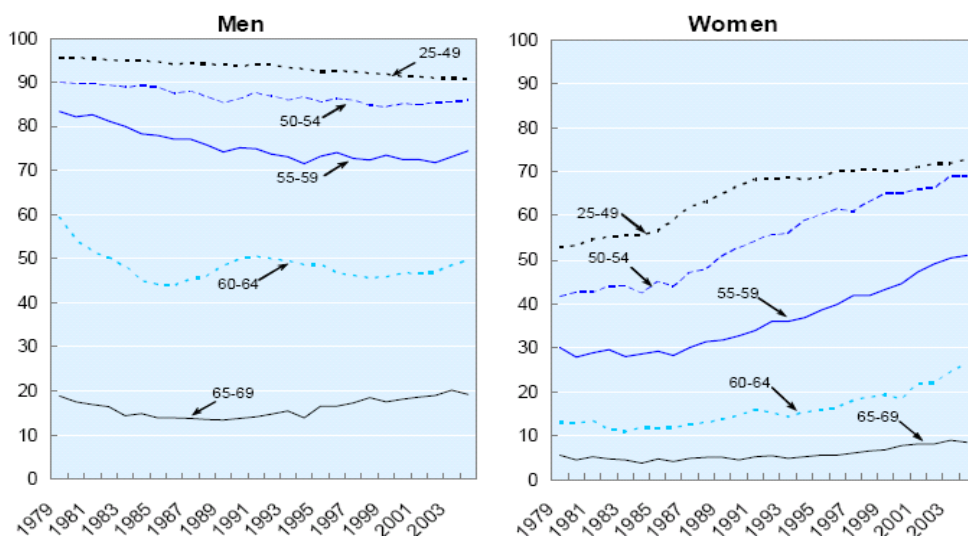


Figure 4: Participation rates in Australia by age and gender: 1979-2003
(percentages; OECD 2005b:42)

The clear differences between the two countries regarding the participation rates of older workers can be investigated from the perspective of retirement income options and, at a later point, in terms of work options.

OECD (2005a) reports indicate that, in Austria, the purpose of the government's pension scheme has been to maintain the individual's standard of living pre and post retirement. The scheme was set up in 1956 and has, since then, been adjusted many times, but it has not been changed fundamentally. It provides an earnings-related old-age pension for workers with at least 15 insurance years, accessible from age 65 for men and from age 60 for women. It incorporates various and changing forms of early retirement as well as a derived survivor's pension for widows, widowers, orphans, and divorcees with a judicial claim to alimony. Occupational pensions are of minor relevance (and play a less important role than in most other OECD countries), as more than 90 % of all pensions are paid out of this public, first-pillar scheme. High-income earners in the private sector need to have private retirement savings because of a ceiling at about twice the average income, above which neither contributions are paid nor benefits received. Similarly, civil servants have a separate pension scheme with slightly higher income replacement rates, and the same holds true for professionals who have their own organisational pension schemes. The OECD report emphasises that new private and occupational pension schemes are unlikely to become important influences on retirement behaviour. In contrast to this, in Australia, taxation reductions for investment superannuation schemes have turned them into an attractive vehicle for accruing wealth. In 2000, early retirement on the basis of reduced work capacity was abolished in Austria, and, by 2003, more than two-thirds of all new retirees were employed before drawing a pension, although 40 % of all men retired early on account of their long insurance record. The pension reform of 2005 established a unified pension system to

include the entire labour force and is based on the rules of the previous scheme concerning private sector employees and the self-employed. The difference between the minimum early retirement age for men and women will be reduced progressively from five years to two years by 2017 (By then, women will no longer be able to retire before the age of 60.), and will be eliminated by 2033. In consistence with past practice, pensions will be equal to 80 % of the revalorised lifetime earnings to a person retiring at age 65 who has accumulated 45 insurance years, and pensions will be adjusted in line with the consumer price index. However, the latest pension reforms mean that, by 2028, the calculation of income replacement pension rates will change to one based on lifetime earnings rather than on the best 15 income years. Consequently, replacement rates will generally be lower for career workers with steep increases in earnings. As women tend to have more moderate salary increases, they may benefit from this change. A pension account will be established for each insured person to permit valorised contributions and entitlements through non-contributory periods (such as periods of unemployment or intensive childcare). Retirement will be possible at the age of 62 (with 37.5 insurance years), with 4.2 % reduction for each year below age 65. A corresponding 4.2 % bonus will be given in the first three years of retirement after 65 years. Until 2010, men aged 55 and over and women aged 50 and over with 45 and 40 contribution years respectively will continue to be entitled to early retirement from age 60 (men) and 55 (women) onwards. Many men with uninterrupted careers qualify for this. Also, years of strenuous work lower the pension eligibility age. In contrast to the situation in other countries, in Austria, early exit from the workforce has not meant a great reduction in income, and retrenchment was not seen as an act of discrimination either by workers or by their institutional representatives. Only in 2004 did age discrimination become illegal.

In contrast to Austria, where pension amounts are closely related to pre-retirement income levels, the purpose of the Australian age pension payment is to provide a minimum standard of living which is paid to everyone after a certain age (and which is subject to certain income and assets tests). The amount is unrelated to previous salaries, and there are no specific contributions. In 2003, 54 % of the age eligible population received the full age pension (OECD 2005b: 67). A second tier of pension, called superannuation, which was directly linked to a person's employment status, applied to public employees. Frequently, it also concerned employees of large organisations but, generally, not those of smaller organisations or non-managerial employees. This tier of superannuation has now largely been superseded by a third tier of investment-related superannuation. Both these types of superannuation can be accessed after age 55 rather than at the considerably later age needed for the age pension. Provided a minimum income level is reached, there is a legal requirement for a specified minimum percentage of income to be paid by employers into a superannuation fund chosen by the individual. A large number of profit-driven investment funds have been created over the last 20 years, as well as "industry-based" funds in which members elect the board, and there are no other investors. For example, Unisuper is a superannuation fund for university staff and their spouses, and similar funds have been established for people working in government, health, and education services. Each individual decides on the nature of the risk and on the type of investment for their superannuation savings. Thus, the process of funding retirement through personal savings and investment growth has become well established. In 2007, measures were taken to make age pension/superannuation income tax free for all citizens over 60 years of age, and changes to asset and income limitations made it easier to receive at least a part-age pension and the supplementary health and other benefits that go with it.

In both Australia and Austria, the increasing life expectancies of those who are entitled to receive age pensions have put pressure on the government pension funds' ability to meet these payments. Consequently, the option of gradual retirement is an idea that is being actively pursued in Australia and becoming increasingly relevant in Austria. However, in Austria, part-time work and a reduced income prior to retirement can reduce pension payments and are, therefore, financially disadvantageous. In Australia, taking retirement income and still working part-time in a gradual retirement process is viewed as an option to help people increase their financial assets for retirement and to retain older workers in the workforce. The government provides a small subsidy for superannuation contributions made by older workers with a low income.

A common feature of the public pension scheme in Austria as well as of the investment-based funds in Australia is that women and others who have gaps in employment and who do not find the means to continue to make payments to pension funds will be disadvantaged at retirement. Men with continuous careers are likely to accumulate more retirement wealth. In Australia, married couples receive less age pension than two single people, and widows are classified as single persons for government age pension assessment. In second tier organisational/salary-based superannuation systems the widow of a man who received a salary-linked benefit receives a reduced pension similar to that of an Austrian widow without her own pension. Women who have short working lives and rely on their spouses' employment-based pensions receive a reduced income if they are widowed, whereas a man's pension is not altered if his spouse dies. The increasing life expectancy of men, therefore, results in a financial advantage to married women with limited working lives. However, in most of the now dominant third tier investment-based superannuation pensions, funds are preserved as part of the owner's

estate and are, therefore, most likely to be accessible to a widow or widower without any reductions. –

Hence, apart from personal and emotional advantages associated with continuing to work or maintaining a career interest, there are basic financial reasons for women, who now have a life expectancy of 85 or more years, to continue to work. The career decisions that women make have significant long-term impacts on their financial status in these long retirement years. Again, some significant differences appear to be evident between Australia and Austria with regard to the extent to which women are able to take advantage of their late working lives in order to enjoy their careers and to accrue financial assets.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, in Australia, where labour shortages are evident in both the skilled and the unskilled/casual sectors of the workforce, the government campaign to encourage organisations to employ older workers is omnipresent on television and in the print media. The government's efforts to promote older people's employment is facilitated by the fact that the social security system requires all unemployed persons to actively seek work or risk loss of unemployment benefits. Recent changes permitting receipt of both a work income as well as a private pension income encourage older workers to remain working, at least part-time, prior to receiving age pension. Tax free retirement incomes from age 60 on means that self-funded retirees pay no or low taxes on any extra work income. The Australian government has, thus, tried to make it profitable for older workers to continue to work. (Such a policy has not been applied to other social security benefits.) In Austria, however, due to the generous early retirement options, many older employees and their employers have not attached much value to updating and upgrading employees' skills or maintaining their work capacities, and pensions can be reduced if they take partial retirement (OECD 2005a).

Yet, the OECD (2005b) report on Australia contends that improving financial incentives for employees to remain employed longer, even if supplemented by encouraging employers to be more receptive to an age-diverse workforce, may still not be successful in creating more opportunities for older workers, unless their level of employability can be maintained and improved. Older workers who have poor health or face unsuitable work conditions will have difficulties remaining in employment. More importantly, they need empowerment through opportunities to maintain and develop their skills and access to efficient employment services and career advice. In Austria, there are a variety of government-supported labour market programmes which aim to provide just these services as well as programmes within not-for-profit and business organisations that focus on the education and the development of all groups of employees. In Australia, government-supported initiatives are mainly directed at job seekers who are receiving government income support, including older workers who can be brought together with organisations which are experiencing difficulties in recruiting labour.

Career Capital Theory Implications for Older Working Women

Practical examples of career capital competencies can be derived by examining how they apply to older women in specific situations. For example, in Austria, with its extended hospitality industry, it is not uncommon for an older woman to manage her home as a small guest house. *Knowing why* would involve understanding the following factors: (1) why she would wish to continue to meet the demands associated with this role, (2) the impact which time and personal contacts have as she becomes older, (3) the appropriateness of financial rewards, and (4) why some tasks must be done and when. *Knowing how* might mean to understand the local labour market, the various forms of marketing, customer expectations, how to keep back-up staff available, and how to

balance customers' expectations against costs. *Knowing whom* could relate to establishing networks to provide assistance with marketing and casual workers, to contributing to local government promotion committees, and, in consistence with her understanding of *knowing why*, to managing these time commitments in line with her life style preferences. Similarly, an older teacher in Australia would need to be aware of her motivation for continuing full-time or part-time permanent employment rather than casual work or retirement, of any physical, intellectual, or psychological issue arising from her age, as well as of how she will adapt to changing student characteristics and varying school/government expectations in education. *Knowing how* would involve expertise developed over her career in following or developing curricula, in maintaining students interested, in dealing with parents, difficult students, and other staff, and in managing workload peaks. *Knowing whom* could involve academic and personal support in keeping up-to-date and in interpreting and influencing policy developments. It could also involve academic networking regarding other employment opportunities and help from the community in bringing resources into class. An older woman factory worker would need to *know why* she is undertaking this work, what the implications are as she becomes older, and what her employer's as well as her own expectations are for the future. *Knowing how* would require identifying her competencies and her contribution to the organisation, not only regarding specific job demands but also her relations with other staff, producers, and customers as well as her participation in opportunities for consultation. The *knowing-whom* component may arise from her long employment in the organisation and from her place in the community, which enables her to connect with other potential employees and customers and which provides her with the knowledge about how things are done in different organisations and in sections within her organisation.

With these three examples, each employment relationship is different and covers a different time-span, but in each case the breadth of the job can be narrow or quite broad depending on the job-holder and the employer. Women who operate within a narrow perception of their job may miss opportunities for development of competencies as well as the opportunity to be able to contribute historical knowledge to their working community in their later working lives. Older women can find themselves in two types of situations: The first situation may occur when they need to maintain their credibility in their chosen, long-term domain of employment/business in response to changes in the work place or to perceptions of themselves as older women. The second situation may arise when the owner of the guest house, the teacher, or the factory worker finds that the demand for her services has declined – a new type of accommodation has become popular, the local student population has declined or their educational interests have changed, or when the factory has moved to Romania.

Changing labour market circumstances indicate that such situations are not uncommon and that employment is likely to be less stable – at least until demand in a specific segment of the labour market becomes tighter. An important option for older women may be to identify and take advantage of growing employment sectors in order to maximise their opportunities and to understand which types of career contracts employers want as well as which segments they are in or can move to. The trend toward individual contracts seems likely to continue, and women need to be able to negotiate their employment conditions. Under the given circumstances, an older woman may need to deal with a situation in which her business community or employer indicates that her career capital (or that of her colleagues who may have been “let go”) is no longer valued. Developing a successful and trusting relationship with a new employer can then be difficult (Defillippi and Arthur 1994), especially as studies, such as that by

Armstrong-Stassen, and Cameron (2006), show that the career satisfaction of older female professionals and managers is influenced by the efforts their organisations make to retain them and give them challenging assignments.

In both OECD reports (2005a, 2005b) much has been written about institutional and individual factors influencing employability of older workers. The focus of this paper is on the individual perspective. In this context, employability is commonly linked to possessing the required skills, to the use of training, and involvement in life-long learning; to maintaining good health and accessibility to suitable working conditions; and, lastly, to having access to good employment services and career advice (OECD 2005b). Threats to the individual career can be connected to low competitiveness (unemployment, low wages, a stagnating career, and poor development of know-how), to health problems, or to an unfavourable work environment (poor working conditions and negative organisational climate), and to the lack of access to networks and assistance. Hietala (2006b) argues that a good career is characterised by intentional investments to minimise these risks rather than reliance on luck. Being unaware of the importance of certain issues is a career risk. For example, older workers often do not recognise the importance productivity has for both employers and the government, even though employees' wages and purchasing power are to a great extent determined by productivity (Hietala 2006b). The issue of individual responsibility for maintaining work ability and employability is reiterated in the EU (2006) report on employment of older workers. Just as employers need to review work procedures to protect the health of their workforce, employees have a responsibility to maintain their fitness for work. Such concerns may require a shift in the mindset of older workers, especially since opportunities for early exit from the workforce are becoming less available. We suggest that the concept of career capital provides an accessible framework for older workers to

develop a new mindset regarding career management. *Knowing why* requires the individual to understand their own and their employer's perspective regarding their employment relationship; *knowing how* requires the individual to assess what is required and to evaluate the competencies they possess in order to meet these requirements; *knowing who* requires an understanding of their colleagues within and outside their immediate employment context. The *knowing-who* factor is important if older women are to be able to work with a range of colleagues and to access the networks and institutional programmes that will assist them to make transitions.

Conclusion

If we subscribe to the view that knowledge is power, it is clear that a thorough understanding of how employment markets work and how career options can be managed should assist older women in managing their career moves successfully and in achieving more satisfaction in their late working lives. Career models are one way of organising this information. However, a specific model must always be relevant to the context in which the individual finds herself.

In this paper we have examined the context of older women's employment in Austria and in Australia. The prevailing ideologies differ considerably, and, yet, there are clear parallels between the two countries with regard to the challenges that need to be faced and the general thrust of the solutions that are implemented. Since the difficulties with regard to skill supply and dependency ratios have advanced a little further in Australia than in Austria, attempts to increase the workforce participation of older workers and to provide them with the necessary skills to manage their career situations are better developed. At the same time, the deregulation of workplace relations has not advanced as far in Austria as it has in Australia, and more protection is available to workers due to

industry and organisation-based agreements. Yet, the differences in employment opportunities and the strong emphasis on small, rural enterprises in Austria also mean that the many temporary but recurrent labour opportunities for older women may not be included in government statistics. The recent OECD (2005a, 2005b) reports have highlighted the need for older workers to understand in what way they contribute to productivity, to articulate the skills they possess, and to see the opportunities the labour market holds in store for them. To perceive these tasks as opportunities to increase their career capital through *knowing why*, *knowing how*, and *knowing whom*, may be a useful framework for the empowerment of older women.

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