Guest editorial: Introducing the Special Issue on current trends in careers theory and research

2021 marked the 25th anniversary of *Career Development International* (*CDI*). As a key milestone in the journal's history, I'm proud to recognize the journal's contribution to careers scholarship and practice. This occasion also provides a timely opportunity to reflect upon the progress made and acknowledge the challenges to furthering our understanding of careers.

With this mind, I invited eminent scholars to write on a topic that aligns with their research interest. I am pleased to present a collection of excellent papers authored by Yehuda Baruch and Sherry Sullivan, Arnold Bakker, Jerry Ferris *et al.* and Maria Tims *et al.*. The quantitative and qualitative associate editors of *CDI* graciously agreed to write about quantitative and qualitative research, respectively. Finally, Arup Varma *et al.* have provided a bibliometric analysis of the research published in *CDI* since its inception. I trust these papers will be widely read and cited. Next, I offer a brief description of each paper in this special issue.

Contemporary careers in current fast-paced world of work are dynamic, complex and are influenced by a myriad of individual and contextual factors. In addition, the field of careers is interdisciplinary and consequently fragmented with some areas that are well developed and others not so much. For individuals, careers are a major source of identity and provide instrumental and symbolic benefits. For organizations, careers and aspirations of employees are a source of competitive advantage and investing in human capital can be advantageous at the national level as well.

Yehuda Baruch and Sherry Sullivan tackle this landscape by succinctly summarizing and critically evaluating career theories, concepts and models. After briefly commenting on the methodologies used to study careers, they identify ten major topics for future research. And for each topic, they offer several very specific recommendations on what could be, and should be, explored in future research to further our understanding of careers.

Politics is a fact of organizational life, and consequently, political skill can be very useful for navigating the uncertainties of organizational life, building networks and alliances, managing impressions, influencing others, garnering resources and generally achieving goals, including advancement and career success. Political skill is defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives (Ahearn *et al.*, 2004, p. 311)." Equally important is political will, "the motivation to engage in strategic, goal-directed behavior that advances the personal agenda and objectives of the actor that inherently involves the risk of relational or reputational capital (Treadway, 2012, p. 533)." In their paper, Liam Maher, Aqsa Ejaz, Chi Nguyen and Gerald Ferris review 40 years of theory and research on political skill and political will. Using a meta-theoretical framework, they organize their discussion of political skill and political will in terms of these constructs' influence on self-evaluations, situational appraisals, situational responses, evaluations by others and group and organizational processes. They conclude by offering future research directions and encourage researchers to examine the positive as well as the negative outcomes associated with political skill and political will.

Work engagement refers to a motivational and fulfilling state characterized by high levels of mental and physical energy, enthusiasm about and dedication to work and complete

absorption in work activities (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Kahn, 1990). Work engagement is garnering increased attention from researchers and practitioners alike. This attention is warranted, given the documented benefits of work engagement for the individual and the team as well as the organization. In terms of research, work engagement is studied as an independent variable and a mediator as well as a dependent variable. In his paper, Arnold Bakker persuasively argues that employee engagement results from various social processes, including social influence, emotional contagion and modeling. He then proposes a social psychological model of work engagement showing how leaders, followers and family members provide, craft and exchange resources and facilitate each other's work and family engagement. Employees can increase their own work engagement through job crafting, notably relationship crafting and redesigning work to make it more playful. Leaders influence followers' work engagement through fast and slow leadership. In addition, research shows that team-level work engagement exhibits the same pattern of relationship with outcomes as individual work engagement. Several avenues for future research are embedded throughout the article.

In their paper, Maria Tims, Melissa Twemlow and Christine Fong review current trends in job crafting research from an individual, team or social perspective. Since its introduction by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), interest in job crafting has grown exponentially. Researchers have introduced new forms of job crafting, such as the role-based approach embedded in the JD-R model (Tims *et al.*, 2012), approach crafting and avoidance crafting (Bruning and Campion, 2018), promotion and prevention crafting (Bindl *et al.*, 2019), career crafting (Lee *et al.*, 2021), leisure crafting (Jones, 2021), collaborative crafting (Salas *et al.*, 2015) and others. While most research has documented the positive effects of job crafting for the individual as well as the organization, research that examines the negative consequences is sorely needed. Tims *et al.* highlight the necessity of examining reactions of others, notably co-workers and supervisors, to the crafting behaviors of individual employees. Research on the prevalence and consequences of collaborative crafting at the team level is likely to be another area of fruitful research. Tims *et al.* offer excellent summaries of major research streams that characterize each current research trend, highlighting areas for future research.

Bert Schreurs, Angus Duff, Pascale Le Blanc and Thomas Stone articulate the ingredients of a high-quality, quantitative article. They begin by emphasizing that research questions need to be novel, interesting and of theoretical and practical relevance. While we may have interesting and novel ideas, how those ideas are presented matters and rightly these authors highlight the critical role of walking the reader through a narrative of what we know, what we do not know, why we need to know it and how the present research will achieve this objective. Many manuscripts are rejected because the sample used is not appropriate to answer the research questions or there is a mismatch between constructs and how they are operationalized, failure to use well established measures or adapting or shortening existing measures without a convincing justification. The readers will find the sections on use of control variables and appropriate time lags in a time-lagged study informative. Schreurs *et al.* offer an excellent discussion of why cross-sectional data are inappropriate for testing mediation models and suggest alternative approaches to analyze cross-sectional data that can offer valuable insights. They summarize these suggestions in a table. Both experienced as well as less-experienced researchers will benefit from reviewing this table before designing their studies, i.e. prior to collecting data as well as when analyzing data and preparing their manuscripts for journal submission.

Relative to quantitative manuscripts, fewer qualitative manuscripts are submitted to journals that welcome research based on all types of methodologies. This trend is true for *CDI* as well. Qualitative research that examines the "lived/emic experiences" of individual actors can be particularly useful for uncovering new insights, advancing new paradigms or studying emerging phenomenon. In their paper, Julia Richardson, Deborah O'Neil and Kaye

Thorn remind us of the important scientific contributions made through qualitative research. They note that explication of research methodologies, walking the reader through what was done and how, is a defining feature of award-winning qualitative research published in *CDI*. In addition to new knowledge, good research has scientific utility, providing rigor and specificity and practical utility, applying theory to "real-life" problems. Through their bibliometric and visual analysis of qualitative research published in *CDI*, they identify the interrelatedness and frequency of topics examined in qualitative papers as career identity, work–life balance, women's careers, expatriate careers, career transitions and career paths and patterns. They identify gaps in careers theory and research best suited for exploration through qualitative research.

Arup Varma, Satish Kumar, Riya Sureka and Weng Lim provide a bibliometric overview of research published in *CDI* since its inception. Using bibliometric data of *CDI* from Scopus, these authors provide a retrospective of major trends, research constituents and thematic structure. Next, they use negative binomial regression to examine a set of factors contributing to the citation impact of *CDI* articles. Specifically, they offer insights regarding the citation structure, note the decline in sole-authored manuscripts and identify the most productive and influential authors and the co-authorship network. Their analyses indicate that research has centered around five clusters. namely career development, work engagement, entrepreneurship career, career outcomes and career mentoring. Varma *et al.* conclude by identifying areas and topics that require more research attention and advocate the need for more qualitative research. While most research is authored by USA and/or European authors, there is a steady increase in authorship from other countries. Co-authored manuscripts are on the rise, and *CDI* has witnessed an exponential growth in its citations.

In closing, I want to recognize and thank the many people without whom *CDI* 's accomplishments would not have been possible. The journal owes its achievements in the past quarter century to its many authors, readers, reviewers, associate editors and editors. I have faith the journal will continue to grow and develop in the next 25 years.

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