23 Managing the transition to retirement: from meaningful work to meaning in life at retirement
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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, the vision of scholars on transition to retirement has shifted from a traditional withdrawal from work to pursing multiple pathways and opportunities at a late career stage. Consequently, retirement issues need to be taken into account when considering career development and sustainable careers. Our aim in this chapter is to provide an understanding of retirement adjustment by specifically focusing on meaning in life for retirees and meaningful work for older workers who are close to retirement. To illustrate our point, we will present quotations from semi-structured interviews realized with French-speaking Swiss older workers, between 60 and 67 years old, who were going to retire within a few months. We approach transition to retirement from the standpoint of sustainable careers, thereby focusing on the elements of continuity and personal agency. In this regard, we describe ways to promote meaningful work for older workers and how to create a new meaning or to pursue a previous meaning as a retiree, from both individual and organizational standpoints.

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON AGING

Over the last few decades, scholars' understanding of aging has evolved. Whereas theories such as disengagement theory (Cummings and Henry, 1961) posited an inevitable process through which older persons would slowly disengage themselves from society and from many relationships, new gerontological perspectives propose a more positive view of aging. The deficit perspective is mainly rooted in the decline in physical abilities, which has been associated with a decline in cognitive and intellectual capabilities (Wechsler, 1944). However, scholars in several fields showed that this presupposition of general decline with age is far too simplistic. Research suggests that contrary to popular belief, the majority of older adults over 65 are both physically and psychologically healthy and are aging well (Williamson and Christie, 2009). Consequently, nowadays, aging is mostly understood as implying different patterns of development, such as loss (for example, fluid intellectual abilities), growth (for example, general knowledge), reorganization (for example, change of focus in time orientation), and exchange (for example, change in personality traits) (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004).

This more nuanced view of aging also suggests that retirement should not just be viewed as a decline in activity generally and retreatment from work specifically. Rather, in this chapter, we suggest that the transition to retirement should be viewed as an active phase in the lifelong process of creating a sustainable career.

RETIREMENT CONCEPTUALIZED AS A PART OF SUSTAINABLE CAREERS

Newman (2011) proposed a conceptualization of sustainable careers as a lifecycle engagement in work. Her vision comprises that baby boomers, the current generation that is entering into retirement, 'present an opportunity to invent more sustainable, long term, fluid careers that engage people appropriately over the lifespan, well past the [official] retirement age' (p. 136). She further describes three characteristics that depict sustainable careers through the lifespan. First, the need for renewability that aims to support longer working lives and by doing so enhances work–life balance opportunities. In practice, this proposition could be translated into a sabbatical, in order to reinvigorate oneself, for instance by spending more time with one's family. Second, she describes the need for flexibility through continuous learning and increasing knowledge. To become more adaptable, one needs to build a protean career (Hall, 2004), which means a career driven by the individual's sources of satisfaction and values, rather than by those of the organization. Third, the need for the integration of different elements of the self-concept across life spheres is part of sustainable careers. Practically, it means that as people reach later career stages, they feel a greater need for integrity, congruence and meaning.

This conceptualization offers a general view of sustainable careers across the lifespan. In this chapter, we will focus on the specificity of the transition to the retirement stage – including the period before retirement, and the period thereafter when the new retirees' task is to find (new) meaning in their life. A first important element of sustainable careers is the idea of continuity throughout career episodes. This notion is in line with continuity theory (Atchley, 1999), which is one of the theories that explain the adjustment process needed after having retired. This theory posits that individuals generally tend to maintain consistency across their lifespan, despite the occurrence of disruptive events. Therefore, it predicts that only a severe amount of difficulties would cause an unpleasant quality of life and a more difficult adjustment in the transition to retirement. Continuity theory further suggests that retirees are likely to maintain their former lifestyle patterns and interpersonal relationships into their retirement (Wang and Shultz, 2010).

Flexibility skills based on continuous learning constitute a second important resource to foster a sustainable career, as we have presented above. Consequently, it can be assumed that it will be easier for retirees who have accumulated a great amount of knowledge to maintain their previous lifestyle. For instance, they might have more opportunities to continue working in the form of a part-time or on-demand job in their organization or professional field after retirement. As such, this greater flexibility increases personal agency, enabling these flexible retirees to shape their retirement according to their own preferences and be less constrained by environmental factors.

> I don't like talking about a new life because I think that it is still my life, with another direction. (Male, 70 years old).

> I see my life as being part of a unity [. . .] this is a growing process with a unity of life. (Female, 64 years old).

Another conceptualization of retirement in line with the sustainable career is to understand retirement not as the end of the career, but instead as a new, late career development

stage. Here, retirement represents one of the different kinds of career episodes implied in sustainable careers. Specifically, this conceptualization recognizes the continued growth and renewal potentials of retired people and focuses on the numerous resources that retirees may still offer to the job market or work in volunteering (Wang and Shi, 2014).

> After a first year without any occupational life, I decided to divide my years in two: I hate winter, so from November to April I offer to work for replacements [for his employer before his official retirement] but part-time only. And from May to October I have six months completely free. (Male, 67 years old).
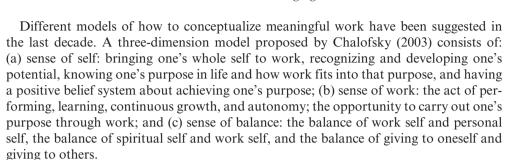
This kind of arrangement between complete retirement and complete working life has been called *bridge employment*, a type of employment which aims to facilitate the transition from full-time work to full retirement. Three kinds of bridge employment exist, namely working for the same organization as before official retirement, working in the same field but not the same organization, and working in a new career field. Numerous studies have investigated the different types and reasons for choosing bridge employment (for example, Müller et al., 2013). A specific kind of bridge employment was discussed by Freedman (2007), namely, the encore career, a purpose-driven career that makes a difference in the overall well-being of self and community. This idea of a career driven by personal values and goals is also consistent with the protean career model. Specifically, 'this conceptualization pays great attention to how retirees may align their career goals with their work and leisure activities in retirement life and emphasizes examining unique factors that are associated with retirees' career potential and career pursuit, which may inform retirees' workforce participation activities and patterns after they retire' (Wang, 2012, p. 573). Therefore, one can question the appropriateness of the term 'retirement', which literally means to retire from work, a withdrawal, and also implicitly implies to retire from either society, relationships, or both. Dennis and Fike (2012) described different attempts to find a new terminology. Propositions were made such as renewment, end-joy-ment, Gen R or Life 2.0, but thus far no consensus has been found to definitively replace the word 'retirement'.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEANINGFUL WORK FOR OLDER WORKERS

After presenting conceptualizations of retirement that position retirement as a late career stage, we will now focus on how organizations and individuals can successfully foster meaning in work and life in their late career and during retirement. A focus on meaningful work is particularly pertinent because research has showed that performing meaningful work provides richer, more satisfying and more productive employment (Steger et al., 2013). Employees with meaningful work invest themselves in work more fully and benefit from greater job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and affective organizational commitment (Steger et al., 2013). Moreover, research suggests that for older workers and retirees conducting meaningful work and finding meaning in life are particularly important (Shacklock and Brunetto, 2011; Steger et al., 2009). In accordance with Rosso et al. (2010), we define meaningful work as work experienced as particularly significant and holding positive meaning for individuals.

Different models of how to conceptualize meaningful work have been suggested in the last decade. A three-dimension model proposed by Chalofsky (2003) consists of: (a) sense of self: bringing one's whole self to work, recognizing and developing one's potential, knowing one's purpose in life and how work fits into that purpose, and having a positive belief system about achieving one's purpose; (b) sense of work: the act of performing, learning, continuous growth, and autonomy; the opportunity to carry out one's purpose through work; and (c) sense of balance: the balance of work self and personal self, the balance of spiritual self and work self, and the balance of giving to oneself and giving to others.

A second model of meaningful work was proposed by Steger and Dik (2010), which posits meaningful work as being made of two dimensions: work comprehension and work purpose. The former involves people's ability to make sense of their self and work experiences, as well as their understanding of their fit with their organization, whereas the latter refers to people's identification with and intention to pursue personal and organizational goals. Rosso et al. (2010) introduced a model of meaningful work that specifically raises this issue of balance between self and others. Their two-dimensional model, placed in a continuum (self versus others and communion versus agency), suggests four major pathways to meaningful work: (1) Individuation (that is, meaningfulness of actions that distinguish the self as worthy); (2) contribution (that is, meaningfulness of actions perceived as done in service of the greater good); (3) self-connection (that is, meaningfulness of actions that make individuals feel closer to how they see themselves); and (4) unification (that is, meaningfulness of actions that make individuals feel in harmony with other beings).

Lastly, a recent model by Schnell et al. (2013) implies three levels in which meaning in work may occur. First, at a person-level self-efficacy is necessary to perceive one's acts as significant. Self-efficacy increases feelings of autonomy and mastery at work and therefore facilitates the perceived signification of one's work activities at an organizational and societal level, leading to a perception of one's actions as meaningful. Second, at a work-level task significance is supposed to be higher if the task is performed for a person other than oneself. Between the work and individual level lies the notion of work-role fit, implying a match between personal identities and work activities. Finally, at the organizational-level, socio-moral climate (that is, an open, appreciative and collaborative climate) and self-transcendent orientation (that is, a genuine organizational commitment to corporate values) are important to foster meaningful work.

We propose that these models may be summarized into three dimensions that constitute meaningful work (see Figure 23.1) by considering the three levels recommended by Chalofsky (2003): the sense of self, sense of work, and sense of balance. Steger and Dik's (2010) two-dimensional model of comprehension and purpose may also be translated into the sense of self, work and balance. In fact, they suggested that each of their two dimensions be distinguished into three sub-dimensions, concerning the level of self, work and the balance between these two levels. In a similar vein, the model by Schnell et al. (2013) also offers a three-level structure, referring to self, work and work-role, with the latter being closely related to sense of balance. By contrast, the model by Rosso et al. (2010) focuses only on the sense of balance through their distinction between the two dimensions of self versus other and communion versus agency.

Author	Self level	Work level	Balance level
Chalofsky (2003)	Self	Work	Balance between self and work
Steger and Dik (2010)	Comprehension (understanding self) / Purpose (personal purpose)	Comprehension (understanding organization) / Purpose (organizational purpose)	Comprehension (understanding fit within organization) / Purpose (leadership)
Schnell et al. (2013)	Person (self efficacy)	Work (task significance) / Organization (socio moral climate, self transcendence)	Work-role fit
Rosso et al. (2010)			Other <--> Self / Communion <--> Agency

Figure 23.1   Comparison of the different existing models of meaningful work
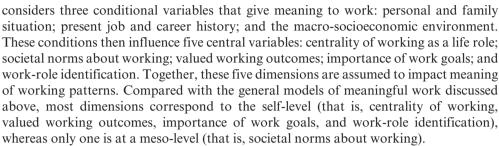
Older Workers: How to Foster Meaningful Work?

We have seen different models of meaningful work and presented an integrative view by using the three levels introduced by Chalofsky (2003). We now turn to the question of how such models can be applied to the population of older workers. By doing so, it is also important to address the question of whether differences exist between meaningful work for older workers as compared to younger workers.

From a theoretical standpoint, few attempts exist to conciliate older workers and meaningful work. It seems helpful to look at the literature that has investigated *meaning of work* or *meaning of working* among older people. In contrast to *meaningful work*, meaning of work and working refers to the meaning attached to work per se, as an institution and life domain (Chalofsky, 2003) while it does not necessarily imply that the work performed itself is meaningful. A first international group of scholars was created in the 1980s to empirically study the *meaning of working* patterns also for older workers (MOWIRT, 1987). Specifically, they distinguished between the noun of work and the action of working. They defined meaning of working as 'the significance, beliefs, defini-tions and the value which individuals and groups attach to working as a major stream of human activity that occurs over much their lives' (p. 13).

The respective scholars proposed the *heuristic meaning of working model*, which

considers three conditional variables that give meaning to work: personal and family situation; present job and career history; and the macro-socioeconomic environment. These conditions then influence five central variables: centrality of working as a life role; societal norms about working; valued working outcomes; importance of work goals; and work-role identification. Together, these five dimensions are assumed to impact meaning of working patterns. Compared with the general models of meaningful work discussed above, most dimensions correspond to the self-level (that is, centrality of working, valued working outcomes, importance of work goals, and work-role identification), whereas only one is at a meso-level (that is, societal norms about working).

The heuristic meaning of working model would hence suggest that the self-level is particularly important for older workers. The group's empirical findings further reveal that other life domains have an important impact on the perception of meaning of working among older people, such as leisure, friends, family, community and spiritual development. This suggests that being able to conciliate work and other life domains is especially important for older workers, as we will discuss in more detail later.

More recently, a new model of the meaning of working for older workers (MOFOW) has been proposed by Baltes et al. (2012) with the aim to integrate different aging theories into a heuristic model. Mainly, they have described two components that determine meaning of working for older workers. First, rewards and expectations refer to how working may satisfy needs and wants at the extrinsic (working as a means to maintain standard of living and quality of life) and the intrinsic level (working as a means to achieve and maintain self-esteem). Research showed that the importance of extrinsic motivators for work generally tends to diminish with age while the importance of intrinsic motivators generally tends to increase (De Lange et al., 2010; Kooij et al., 2011).

The second component comprises identification with working, which is the global degree of importance of working compared to other life domains, at any time in the life course. Therefore, meaning of working depends on the subjective importance placed on extrinsic/intrinsic motivators and importance of work across time. According to Baltes et al. (2012), this importance may vary across the life course due to distal external influences (that is, macro-socioeconomic conditions) as well as proximal external influences, which can be organizational (for example, organizational culture) and individual (that is, age, education and training) ones.

Apart from addressing the issue of meaning of working, general theories of aging may also be used to specify significant sources of meaningful work for older workers. For instance, socio-emotional selectivity theory (Carstensen et al., 1999) predicts a growing importance for deep interpersonal relationships that support one's identity with age and would imply that older workers mostly derive meaning from significant relationships with co-workers. Because older workers are looking for deeper emotional interactions, working may represent an important source to satisfy this emotional need. This also would be an explanation of why more and more older workers decide to continue working after their official retirement age. Furthermore, as we have seen in the concept of encore careers, the aim to benefit the greater good in the second half of one's life, but especially during retirement, might mean that meaningful work for older workers could be derived not only from work itself but also from the significance of their work within society. From an empirical standpoint, research showed that older adults tend to have higher levels of identification with work, define working more positively, and place

higher value on the outcomes of working as compared to younger employees (Baltes et al., 2012).

Meaningful work for older workers has also been linked with intentions to continue working past official retirement age (Shacklock and Brunetto, 2011). Rosso et al. (2010) pointed out the necessity to investigate the specificities of meaningful work for retirees working in bridge employment. Following this idea, Shacklock and Brunetto (2011) proposed that the subjective expectations about future working conditions after official retirement age are important in this regard (for example, attachment to work, working conditions). Moreover, personal attitudes have also been linked with meaningful work and the intention to continue working through bridge employment. Hall et al. (2013) suggested that a protean career orientation (a self-directed and values-driven approach to one's career) impacts workers' search for meaningful work. As employees with a high protean career orientation are more self-managed and tend to follow more their personal values, they are also hypothesized to be more likely to change jobs in order to attain meaningful work. This hypothesis would apply to every worker but might be especially important for older workers close to retirement.

In sum, theoretical and empirical research suggests that meaning of working for older workers might specifically depend on expectations and rewards of work (Baltes et al., 2012) and achieving valued working outcomes (MOWIRT, 1987). Specifically, as people age, the importance given to different types of rewards evolves from an importance given to extrinsic outcomes such as pay, to a greater importance put on intrinsic rewards (De Lange et al., 2010). Socio-emotional selectivity theory (Carstensen et al., 1999) further suggests that older adults pay greater attention to the fulfillment of their emotional needs through work – that is, a need for deeper interpersonal relationships with co-workers. Moreover, the need for identification with working and work centrality as compared to other life domains is especially important for older workers for work to be meaningful (Baltes et al., 2012; MOWIRT, 1987). Finally, some authors have assumed an association between meaning of working and intentions to continue working after official retirement age (Shacklock and Brunetto, 2011), suggesting that meaning of working and its different sources (for example importance of work-goals) would influence their subjective expectations about future working situations.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING IN LIFE AS A RETIREE

In this contribution so far, we have evoked different aspects of meaningful work for older workers. In a more general sense, meaningful work represents meaning for a specific life domain. Steger and Dik (2009) investigated the link between domain-specific meaning (that is, meaningful work) and meaning in life. Their results based upon studying a sample of students showed that individuals seeking global-level meaning in life showed greater well-being if they experienced work as meaningful (that is, as a calling). The specificity of the transition to retirement is that people lose their work-role as they are no longer workers. This has important implications in terms of meaning in life. Work as a source of meaning disappears, while meaning at a broader level (that is, meaning in life) is still possible to search for and/or to reach or maintain.

Before describing two important models of meaning in life, it is important to define

this concept. According to Steger et al. (2009), the presence of meaning in life refers to 'the extent to which people comprehend, make sense of, or see significance in their lives, accompanied by the degree to which they perceive themselves to have a purpose, mission, or over-arching aim in life' (p. 43). This definition is quite close to the one used by Krause and Hayward (2014), which posits that meaning 'involves having a sense of purpose, order, and direction in life, as well as the belief that there is a reason for one's existence' (p. 7). Steger et al. (2009) proposed that the same two dimensions they suggested as comprising meaningful work also apply to overall meaning in life: purpose (highly motivating, long-term goals about which people are committed and highly passionate) and comprehension (the ability to find patterns, consistency and significance in the many events and experiences in their lives).

These two dimensions are also considered in the five factors model of meaning in life by Krause and Hayward (2014). The first factor is having values, which function as norms that describe behaviors and beliefs that are desirable. The second dimension is having a sense of purpose consisting of the affective evaluation following the successful implementation of behaviors which are consistent with one's values. The third factor comprises goals which give a line to follow along which people may invest their energy, efforts and ambitions. Fourth, is being able to reconcile the past, derived from Erikson's (1959) identity theory. Fifth, is the feeling that life makes sense; the ability to explain the events in one's life, as well as others' behaviors and one's own actions. In sum, the model of Steger et al. (2009) and Krause and Hayward (2014) are similar in that they both propose that meaning in life consists of (at least) two major dimensions: sense of purpose and comprehension. In addition, values, goals and reconciling with one's past are important to construct meaning in life.

Retirees: How to Foster Meaning in Life?

Based on this brief review of some principal models of meaning in life, we will now have a deeper look into the specificities of meaning in life for older adults who are either fully retired or have invested in bridge employment. We have seen that one dimension of meaning in life elaborated by Krause and Hayward (2014), being able to reconcile the past, is derived from Erikson's (1959) identity theory. This theory sheds light on the growing importance of meaning in life in late life stages. Erikson proposed eight developmental stages through the lifespan, each of them characterized by an identity crisis. The last developmental stage is characterized by the crisis of integrity versus despair. This stage necessitates a deep introspection, undertaken with the aim of accepting the kind of person one has become. In order to achieve integrity, older adults need to reconcile with the different parts of their life (for example, events, personal actions, and others' behavior). Consequently, a deep sense of meaning in life represents the successful resolution of this crisis (Krause, 2004). If not, the opposite result of this crisis would be despair, because one would evaluate one's life as lacking meaning (Baltes et al., 2012).

Another important theory for understanding meaning in life for older adults is socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen et al., 1999). It considers that the time focus shifts to focusing on the 'time left' among older people. This places a growing importance on the most important, therefore meaningful, aspects of life. Nevertheless, it would be a misinterpretation to believe that older adults live more hedonistic lives compared to

younger adults (Hershfield et al., 2013). By contrast, the emotional changes that occur with age – especially a decrease in negative affect – should lead older adults to 'a more eudemonic sense of meaningfulness and well-being in life' (Hershfield et al., 2013, p. 157).

> Of course there is the pleasure to do a lot of things. But, in itself, pleasure helps to find meaning but it doesn't completely give meaning to my life. (Female, 60 years old).

It is clear that the main difference concerning meaning in life for older versus younger adults is their position at the end versus the beginning of the life course. This different position has an impact on counterfactual reflection (Hershfield et al., 2013). Counterfactual reflection means thinking about what might have been if different events had happened in one's life as opposed to those that have actually happened. In other words, it conveys the idea of 'what if I had (not) done this or that?' or 'what would have been if this had (not) happened?' In their chapter, Hershfield et al. (2013) explain that counterfactual reflection plays a major role in the construction of personal meaning, giving a sense of who we are, reinforcing our deep values as well as our most valued relationships. Specifically, they propose two ways in which counterfactual thinking leads to meaning in life. First, it contributes to *connecting the dots* among life events. Second, it increases a sense of fate in one's life, because it leads to the idea that life took a path that was meant to be.

What is specific for older adults is that their longer life paths are likely to offer more instances of twists and turns, so counterfactual thinking may play a greater role for them regarding finding meaning in life as compared to younger adults. Moreover, as people age, they encounter numerous transitions, such as retirement, which imply a loss of something previously cherished (for example, work). This loss leads to a greater value placed on positive experiences, on the notion of enjoying life and the 'time left', and on paying less attention to potential regrets. In addition, research findings show that with age, specific events and details tend to vanish from memory, making individuals able to consider their life from a broader viewpoint (Hershfield et al., 2013).

Other studies have put a focus on this limited time perspective for older adults versus a future time perspective for younger adults. Hicks et al. (2012), for instance, asked their participants to mark an X on a lifeline that indicates where they think they currently are in their life course – in the beginning, middle or end. Their results show that for people who perceived themselves as having a limited amount of time left to live, positive affect was a stronger predictor of meaning in life. This is in line with socio-emotional selectivity theory (Carstensen et al., 1999) that posits that as people age, they place greater importance on positive emotions as an indicator of a meaningful life.

In addition, some studies have investigated changes of meaning in life across the lifespan. Krause and Hayward (2014) showed that not only does the way older adults tend to understand meaning in life remain relatively stable over time, but also that they are more likely to see meaning in life as a resource which helps them to cope with changes that arise as they age. Steger et al. (2009) differentiated between the search for and the presence of meaning. They discovered that presence of meaning in life was generally higher for older adults, while search for meaning in life was lower than for younger adults. These results suggest that meaning in life constitutes an important resource in later life stages, despite accumulation of interpersonal losses and declining physical capacity.
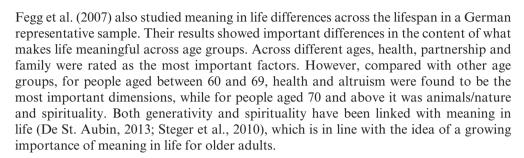
Fegg et al. (2007) also studied meaning in life differences across the lifespan in a German representative sample. Their results showed important differences in the content of what makes life meaningful across age groups. Across different ages, health, partnership and family were rated as the most important factors. However, compared with other age groups, for people aged between 60 and 69, health and altruism were found to be the most important dimensions, while for people aged 70 and above it was animals/nature and spirituality. Both generativity and spirituality have been linked with meaning in life (De St. Aubin, 2013; Steger et al., 2010), which is in line with the idea of a growing importance of meaning in life for older adults.

> I would like to do a long walk, a pilgrimage, to ask myself questions, find a new meaning [. . .] walking for one or two months would give meaning to my retirement. (Female, 60 years old).

Altruism may be linked with the idea of generativity, which is a stage occurring in midlife (Erikson, 1959), suggesting a developmental shift to other-orientedness with the aim of benefiting future mankind. The same idea lies behind Freedman's (2007) concept of encore career. Freedman proposed that a shift from freedom from work (before retirement) to freedom to work/engage in meaningful activities after retirement occurs among retirees.

> When I will be retired I think I could find meaning through helping others [. . .] It is great to be retired – also for other people, not only for oneself. (Male, 60 years old).

> I would like to reorient my working energy into an activity that would be both intellectually and socially stimulating, like being a volunteer who helps teenagers to do their homework. (Female, 62 years old).

Another specificity of retired adults is the important role played by leisure activities that partially replace the previous role of work before retirement. Liechty et al. (2012) offered the framework of innovation theory, suggesting that 'the adoption of new leisure activities in later life (leisure innovation) may facilitate healthy aging through personal growth, interest renewal, identity reconstruction and increased sense of meaning in life' (p. 389). Williamson and Christie (2009) have also pointed out the importance of daily activities or pastimes for older adults. They considered that aging well depends on the extent to which people are able to engage in personally meaningful activities, because it increases physical and psychological functioning of older adults. By contrast, they suggest that activity restriction, due to illness, for instance, constitutes a major factor for poorer mental health.

To summarize, theory suggests that meaning in life for retirees might specifically depend on their developmental stage at the end of the life course, which implies a specific search for integrity (Erikson, 1959), a greater need to reconcile with their past (Krause and Hayward, 2014), but also a greater use of counterfactual thinking with a shift from a focus on their life events in a detailed way to a focus on their life events in a broader scope (Hershfield et al., 2013). Furthermore, empirical research showed that older adults have higher scores on the presence of meaning in life and lower scores on the search for meaning in life, compared to younger adults (Steger et al., 2009), and that the elements that make their life meaningful are mostly health, nature, spirituality and

altruism compared to their younger counterparts (Fegg et al., 2007). This last element can be linked with the concept of generativity (Erikson, 1959), that is, the desire to give to others, and that one's actions may benefit a larger community. This idea has also been developed by leisure innovation theorists (Liechty et al., 2012), who stress the importance of keeping meaningful activities (that is, leisure, volunteering, encore career or bridge employment) during one's retirement.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREER COUNSELORS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO FACILITATE A MEANINGFUL TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

In this last part of the chapter, we will describe practical ways in which both individuals and organizations may enhance meaningful work and meaning in life in the transition to retirement. We will organize our points along a timeline representing the transition to retirement (from being an older worker to being a retiree) and including individual (career counseling) and organizational (HR management) standpoints for each stage in this process.

First, during the first stage of transition, when people are still older workers approaching retirement, several interventions at the organizational level can be suggested. Cartwright and Holmes (2006) proposed that, especially for jobs that do not easily lead to a sense of benefiting the greater good, the organization could help their employees achieve a sense of meaning by actively supporting them to be involved in community work or donating a percentage of their profits to charity. Otherwise, organizations may also implement off-work periods for their employees in which they could engage in activities that would give them the opportunity to make a difference in the life of others as well as their own, for example by working in a community project. Schnell et al. (2013) further insist on the importance for employees to know the short-, middle- and long-term consequences of their activities, and the ability to approach questions of responsibility, sustainability and global interconnectedness within the organization.

Another suggestion is that older workers clearly constitute a resource for their organization concerning training, supervision and mentoring of younger colleagues. These tasks allow older workers to stay fully engaged and may increase their perception of meaningful work, especially as this supervision includes generative motives and a closer emotional relationship with co-workers. Moreover, this strategy may be part of a global knowledge management in the firm, in order to keep specialized knowledge in the organization.

At the individual level, reflection about meaning in life and meaningful work can be enhanced and further developed through career counseling. This kind of counseling may help older workers to realize what their work goals and work values are and then to undertake actions so that work would be more aligned with their personal values. Career counseling may also help individuals to position themselves in an organization where their personal priorities fit their job tasks. This would increase intrinsic motivation, leading to greater meaningfulness at work (Rosso et al., 2010; Schnell et al., 2013). In addition, career counseling approaches that focus on identity construction through narrative techniques (Hartung, 2013) might be especially suitable. This type of career

counseling aims at constructing a meaningful life story and then assisting clients in implementing and projecting their identity into their work.

During the second period of the transition, as people have just entered the retirement stage, an important human resource management practice to enable a meaningful transition is to facilitate work–life balance for older workers. Whereas work is a very important component for meaning in life, the gradual change between full employment to full retirement may begin with a slow decrease in workload. Employers should foster flexibility of employment for their older employees in order to help them follow personal interests and to find meaningful activities outside work that could continue after retirement. At the individual level, career counseling could support a reflection about work–life balance through specific exercises that enable older workers to determine their different life spheres and assess the relative importance of each of them compared to the others.

In the third phase, as the retirees get used to their new condition, career counseling approaches might also be useful to achieve meaning in life. Work values can be related to more general personal values that would direct older adults to life goals they would like to attain and describe what kind of life would be meaningful for them. Moreover, their reflection about work values may also help the retiree to define meaningful daily activities that are linked with their personal values and/or near to their previous work goals.

A final suggestion is to insist on the need for organizations to develop new HR management practices toward their retirees. Policies should be undertaken to give them the opportunity to continue working (bridge employment), either part time or full time for a specific period of time and projects. Apart from the clear benefit for the organization in terms of retaining knowledge and expertise, these policies may also be a way for retirees to get involved in meaningful activities and share their willingness regarding generativity.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

We would like to summarize the main messages of this chapter. First, we have outlined global issues of aging and work. We have seen that age is no longer seen as a gradual and inevitable decline, but as consisting of different developmental patterns. Subsequently, we have discussed the transition to retirement from the standpoint of sustainable careers; specifically, its main dimensions of continuity and importance of personal agency (that is, retirement as a new career development stage and adjustment process). Next, we analyzed the literature on meaningful work and meaning in life and their different theoretical conceptualizations and empirical findings, distinguishing three levels that constitute meaningful work (that is, self, work, and balance between the former two) and five dimensions of meaning in life (that is, values, goals, purpose, reconciling with one's past, and making sense/comprehension). When applied to older workers and retirement issues, it appeared that both meaning in life and meaningful work are especially important for older adults, due to their developmental stage characterized by a growing importance of interpersonal motives and deep relationships, as well as a growing importance of meaning in life and a global aspiration for more eudemonic well-being. Finally, we distinguished different ways to foster meaning in life and meaningful work from the standpoint of individuals (that is, work and personal values, benefiting the greater good, narrative identity construction) and of organizations (that is, facilitating work–life

balance, creating opportunities to benefit the greater good, knowledge transfer and mentoring within the organization) at different times in the transition process.

To conclude, our aim was to position the transition to retirement as a specific career stage within the larger notion of sustainable careers. We believe that focusing on meaningful work and meaning in life is of particular importance in this transition and that career counselors and organizations can help to make the transition to retirement a successful part of a sustainable career

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