This file was downloaded from BI Open, the institutional repository (open access) at BI Norwegian Business School https://biopen.bi.no

It contains the accepted and peer revied chapter cited below:

Dries, N., Marescaux, E., & Zelderen, A. (2021). Talent Management and Career Management. In Tarique, Ibraiz (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Talent Management* (1.ed., pp. 265–279). Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315474687-21

Copyright policy of Taylor and Francis., the publisher of this chapter.

Each individual author or contributor can also choose to upload one chapter from the 'Accepted Manuscript' (AM). An AM is typically the post-contract but pre-production (i.e. not copy –edited, proofread or typeset) Word Document/PDF of the chapter. Authors may upload the AM chapter to a personal or departmental website immediately after publication of the book - this includes posting to Facebook, Google groups, and LinkedIn, and linking from Twitter. Authors can also post the AM book chapter to an institutional or subject repository or to academic social networks like Mendeley, ResearchGate, or Academia.edu after an embargo period of 18 months for Humanities and Social Sciences books or 12 months for STEM books.

https://www.routledge.com/our-products/open-access-books/publishing-oa-books/chapters

Talent Management and Career Management

Nicky Dries [1], Elise Marescaux [2], & Anand van Zelderen [1]

[1] KU Leuven

[2] IÉSEG School of Management

Correspondence concerning this chapter should be addressed to Nicky Dries: KU Leuven, Department of Work and Organization Studies, Naamsestraat 69, 3000 Leuven, Belgium, E-mail: nicky.dries@kuleuven.be, Phone: +32 16 37 37 19

This research was funded by a C1 KU Leuven Internal Funds Research Grant (C14/17/014), an FWO Project Grant (G074418N), and an FWO Aspirant Grant (1113919N)

Talent Management and Career Management

Studies estimate that around 65 percent of organizations worldwide have talent management programs in place (Church, Rotolo, Ginther, & Levine, 2015; Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, 2019; Dries & De Gieter, 2014). Talent management typically revolves around the identification of a 'talent pool', referring to the 1 to 10 percent most high-performing, high-potential employees in the organization (Finkelstein, Costanza, & Goodwin, 2017). Inspired by a 'war for talent' discourse (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), companies have become convinced that they should groom their most talented employees (i.e., their 'A players') for positions of strategic importance, whilst directing their 'B players' towards support positions, and their 'C players' towards the exit (Huselid, Beatty, & Becker, 2005).

The notion of the war for talent is rooted in two main assumptions (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). First, in a knowledge economy context traditional sources of competitive advantage are losing their edge whereas human talent is a renewable resource not easily replaceable or recruited away from a competitor. Second, attracting and retaining high-potential employees is becoming increasingly difficult as a result of specific demographic and psychological contract trends. Organizations worry that a consumerist attitude has taken hold of their employees, in which the organization is considered a resource to the individual just as much as the other way around (Dries, Forrier, De Vos, & Pepermans, 2014). A typical target for talent management programs (i.e., *"activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization"*; Collings & Mellahi, 2009, p. 305), then, is to

increase the commitment, engagement, and loyalty of those employees the organization can least afford to lose (Church *et al.*, 2015).

Somewhat paradoxically, considering its focus on achieving retention and commitment through differentiation, the typical mode of communication about talent management seems to be strategic ambiguity, meaning that openness and clarity are deliberately avoided (Dries, Schleicher, Tierens, Hofmans, Gelens, & Pepermans, 2017) thus creating information asymmetries in which one party (i.e., the organization) has more or better information than the other (i.e., the employee). At the heart of the talent management secrecy phenomenon (Dries & De Gieter, 2014) lies the assumption that although those who attain the highly coveted talent status are likely to react positively to talent management, negative reactions among those not assigned such a status by their organizations (who are by definition in the majority) are likely to cancel out these positive reactions when considering the net effect of talent management on the organization as a whole (Marescaux, De Winne, & Sels, 2013). As a result, organizational decision makers are increasingly calling into question the legitimacy of their existing talent management programs, often leading to (quick or temporary) solutions where talent status is kept secret from employees, even from employees identified as ‘talents’ (Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014).

These observations beg the question: why do organizations insist on differentiating between employees on a matter they themselves deem so sensitive that they feel they cannot possibly communicate it transparently? What are important ethical issues here, since talent status is an important predictor of internal career advancement opportunities—that is, a lack of clarity about one’s talent status can interfere with an employee’s career decision-making process (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2013)? In addition, what are the implications for talent management practices if the secrecy phenomenon implies that the status of ‘talented’ versus ‘less talented’ employees cannot be *visibly* different?

The above paradox becomes even more apparent when comparing the strategic human resource management literature to the careers literature. The management literature identifies talent management as 'strategic imperative' (Ashton & Morton, 2005, p. 28), whereas the careers literature refers to talent management as *"at best an anachronism, and at worst a false promise used to keep valuable employees in organizations"* (Baruch & Peiperl, 1997, p. 356; De Vos & Dries, 2013). So where does the truth lie? Should talent management be buried alongside the traditional view of the organizational career, which, according to some voices in the careers literature is 'dead' (Hall, 1996)? Or can talent management (still) offer added value to organizations and individual career actors alike, even in today's 'postmodern' career context?

The goal of this chapter is to compare and contrast the assumptions about talent management held in the talent management versus the career management literature, highlighting areas of overlap and contradiction, and their implications for research and practice. The chapter is organized as follows. First, we discuss the history of careers and how present-day theories of career create a possible paradox with prevailing assumptions about careers in the talent management literature. Second, we discuss three features of talent management that distinguish the phenomenon from career management more generally—i.e., talent management creates status differences; talent management creates labeling effects; and talent management creates highly specific social exchange dynamics. We conclude with some specific suggestions for further research based on all of the above.

IS THE TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER PATH 'DEAD'? IMPLICATIONS FOR TALENT MANAGEMENT

"The career is dead, long live the career!" is the title of Douglas (Tim) Hall's seminal 1996 book on postmodern careers. Indeed, the careers literature more generally appears to

actively sponsor the idea that the notion of the traditional-organizational career has been replaced by more 'boundaryless' forms of career—broadly defined as a range of possible career forms that defy traditional employment assumptions such as working for one employer, in one location, following a linear career path, for most of one's life (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 6).

A Brief History of Careers

The historical evolution of the global economy, from being centered mostly around agriculture to the postmodern information era, has strongly shaped the framework and the boundaries within which individual careers can be enacted today. Around the onset of the 19th century, the industrial revolution marked the end of the agricultural economy, in which the dominant social institution was the family and young people simply inherited their parents' occupations (Savickas, 2000). The dawning of the industrial economy was characterized by the appearance of large, bureaucratically structured organizations providing careers for life. Job security was all but guaranteed to employees, who reciprocated by offering their employers their loyalty and dedication. Since the typical organizational structure was hierarchical, 'career' implied vertical movement, and career success was defined by upward advancement on the corporate ladder (Savickas, 2000; Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2019; Van Esbroeck, 2008). Even today (and problematically so), the notion of hierarchical advancement within an organization remains associated with career success, although the organizational structures at the origin of this association have changed considerably (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Spurk et al., 2019; Sullivan, 1999).

In the second half of the 20th century, society was transformed through globalization, and many organizations grew into multinational corporations. Scientific and technical evolutions brought societies worldwide into the information era. The postindustrial economy, characterized by the declining importance of manufacturing relative to information

technology and knowledge management, was a fact (Van Esbroeck, 2008). As a result, organizational and societal structures changed dramatically. Economic globalization and the restructuring of organizations (through downsizing, delayering, outsourcing and offshoring) have fundamentally altered the structure and nature of jobs and careers (Maranda & Comeau, 2000).

As many organizations have been flattening their hierarchical structures, the traditional premises upon which careers relied appear to be fading. Organizations can no longer promise a career for life, as they could before when the economy was more stable and predictable (Savickas, 2000). Careers in today's postmodern society are thus believed to no longer be *"logical, stable, depictable and predictable"* (Van Esbroeck, Tibos & Zaman, 2005, p. 6). Instead, they have become a more or less unpredictable series of small steps made by individuals who are continuously negotiating work and non-work aspects of life throughout their lifespan. As careers are no longer 'owned' by organizations, the responsibility for career management is now placed primarily in the hands of the individual employee, who must develop transferable skills and adaptive strengths to cope in an environment without definite securities (Savickas, 2000; Spurk et al., 2019). Instead of being depicted as a ladder (the typical metaphor for steady upward movement), careers can now be described as a 'lattice', enabling multiple career paths and possibilities for lateral job enrichment, rather than upward movement alone (Iles, 1997).

Based on these historical evolutions, the recent careers literature strongly advocates the belief that more and more employees—especially those who are most high-performing and high-potential—are acting like 'free agents' (Tulgan, 2001) and moreover, that this is a *favorable* evolution, liberating employees from the paternalistic practice of having an organization manage their careers (Van Buren, 2003). Consequently, several authors have

called into question the sustainability of the concept of talent management (e.g. Baruch & Peiperl, 1997; Pannell & Mendez, 2019; Tulgan, 2001; Kuznia, 2004).

A Talent Management Paradox?

Contrasting the literature on talent management with the postmodern careers literature, a ‘talent management paradox’ seems to emerge, in that talent management is simultaneously depicted as utterly outdated (in the careers literature; e.g. Baruch & Peiperl, 1997; Crowley-Henry, Benson, & Al Ariss, 2018), and as more pivotal than ever for the competitive advantage of organizations (in the management literature; e.g. Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001; Pannell & Mendez, 2019). Specifically, the careers literature advocates that organizations—facing the economic pressures of the 21st century world of work—can no longer promise long-term employment to their employees, let alone a rapid progression along the organizational ladder (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), leading some authors to conclude that *“there is no future for hipos [high potentials], at least not as we have known the phenomenon…. There are quite a few hipos, and very few places at the top”* (Baruch & Peiperl, 1997, p. 354). As such, the premise underlying talent management programs—that hard work and the display of exceptional talent will be rewarded by a steady progression in the organizational hierarchy—is seemingly undermined (Baruch & Peiperl, 1997; Crowley-Henry *et al.*, 2018). The talent management literature, on the other hand, refers to the ‘war for talent’ as the number-one people management challenge of the early 21st century (Michaels *et al.,* 2001; Pannell & Mendez, 2019).

A first possible way to interpret the talent management paradox is by assuming that talent management practice is (hopelessly) lagging behind the realities of current-day careers (Baruch & Peiperl, 1997; Pannell & Mendez, 2019). However, despite the fact that both talent management and the organizational career have been declared dead repeatedly over the last few decades, a volume of research indicates that claims about the speed and inevitability of

the shift from organizational-traditional to more boundaryless career types have to be put into perspective (e.g. Forrier, Sels, & Verbruggen, 2005; Granrose & Baccili, 2006; Sullivan, 1999; Walton & Mallon, 2004). Guest and Mackenzie Davey (1996) wrote: *"It is never quite clear whether those writing [about 'new careers'] are describing current developments, identifying outliers as illustrations of inevitable trends or prescribing the shape of things to come which any organization that wishes to survive should heed"* (p. 22). European studies, especially, have found that to date only a small percentage of employees are actually in a boundaryless career (in which employees change employers and long for change and flexibility) whereas over half of employees still report being in 'bounded' careers (in which employees stay with their employer and aspire stability; see Forrier *et al.* 2005; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010; Rodrigues, Guest, Budjanovcanin, 2016).

Moreover, the postmodern careers literature seems to assume that organizational-traditional career types are no longer *wanted* by employees (Tulgan, 2001). Recent empirical work has come to the conclusion, however that the majority of employees continue to desire more traditional career types (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). Forrier *et al.*'s (2005) study, for instance, found that although respondents set career goals relating to career self-management, continuous learning and autonomy, they still regarded these aspects of careers mostly as a means to achieving objective career outcomes such as promotions. Walton and Mallon (2004), in their study of boundaryless careers, concluded that *"although the boundaries of career have shifted, they have not melted into thin air"* (p. 77). These and other authors have questioned the portability of the boundaryless career concept to other than US settings, the value people place on job security and the unionization of organizations (two cultural and institutional elements that tend to reinforce the 'old' psychological contract) being at the heart of the discussion (Dries, 2011).

A second take on the talent management paradox involves assuming that traditional-organizational careers can, in fact, still exist, but only for ‘privileged’ groups such as employees identified as talents. In fact, it is quite likely that exactly *those* employees who are still in a position to receive internal career benefits such as job security and upward advancement opportunities are *also* those who are most likely to thrive in the postmodern career landscape—because they have the highest levels of employability and the best transferable skills (Dyer & Humphries, 2002; Tulgan, 2001). Indeed, studies of organizational career management practices targeted specifically at talents have found that there are many practices that are reserved for talents only (e.g., Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Organizations want to know who their talents are (identification practices), grow and advance them strategically (development practices) and prepare them for upward job moves (succession planning practices). As career investments in this group of employees are higher than average, more resources are allocated to preventing them from making inter-organizational moves (retention management practices) (see Table 1).

-- Insert Table 1 about here –

In sum, ‘talents’ are still eligible for traditional-organizational careers if they want them, simply because organizations prefer to engage internal successors for top management positions, and are willing to invest heavily in those that demonstrate the talent and the drive to progress within the organization. The need for a stable core of talented employees who genuinely know the organization and its background is probably far from evanescent. It seems talents are still getting ‘the old deal’ as they are promised long-term career perspectives and upward advancement. One could wonder about all other employees, who are less likely to receive promotions and be targeted for retention, but apparently also less likely to get proper training—are they getting neither the old career deal, nor the new (Dries *et al.*, 2014)?

DISTINGUISHING TALENT MANAGEMENT FROM CAREER MANAGEMENT

With its focus on individual career outcomes (e.g. Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), personal accountability for career management (see the literature on the 'protean' career; e.g. Hall, 2004), inter-organizational mobility (see the literature on the 'boundaryless' career; e.g. Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), and its decreased interest in formalized organizational career management practices (De Vos, Dewettinck & Buyens, 2009), the recent careers literature—at least at first glance—seems to be grounded in a number of assumptions that run diametrically opposite to those in the talent management literature (see Table 2).

-- Insert Table 2 about here --

While most authors position talent management as part of the broader set of career management practices in an organization, some have stated that talent management is a 'mindset' and thus, an all-encompassing characteristic of an organization much like organizational culture (e.g., Chuai, Preece, & Iles, 2008). In fact, many organizations seem unwilling to explicitly define what talent management does and does not cover, calling it a mindset because they like to use the term 'talent' as a euphemism for 'people' in light of their employer branding (Dries, 2013). The operationalization of talent management as a mindset is generally advised against, however, as it is difficult to translate into workable practices (Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

The tendency of the talent management literature to slide off into vague but appealing rhetoric is causing commentators to question whether talent management is not just a management fashion. Management fashions are characterized by conceptual ambiguity, combined with an underlying sense of urgency created by fashion setters (e.g., consultants, business schools, management gurus) which is yet to be legitimized by sound evidence and robust theory (Iles *et al.*, 2010). As the characteristics of a management fashion seem to apply to talent management—at least at first glance—in recent years several groups of authors have

examined whether talent management is just ‘old wine in new bottles’ (e.g. Chuai *et al.*, 2008; Huang & Tansley, 2012; Iles *et al.,* 2010; Tansley, 2011). Unequivocally, however, they concluded that talent management does in fact add value over career management practices more generally.

Talent management differs from career management in that it is believed to be less egalitarian, and more elitist by definition (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Some have said that talent management is to career management what gifted education is to education (see Gagné, 2004)—implying that the needs of talented employees are notably different from those of the ‘average’ employee (Ledford & Kochanski, 2004). More inclusive approaches to talent management are found in the literature as well (e.g., Swailes, Downs, & Orr, 2014; Warren, 2006); several authors have stated, however, that workforce differentiation is the key differentiating principle between talent management and career management more generally (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

More often than not, the practice of leaving room for interpretative flexibility about talent management (Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010) results in discrepancies between organizational discourse and practice (Gill, 2002). In a study involving eight in-depth case studies, Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern & Stiles (1997) found that although organizations prefer to adopt a soft, humanist talent management discourse (focusing on the ‘H’ in HRM), their actual *practices* are typically more reflective of a hard, instrumental approach (focusing on the ‘R’ in HRM), aimed at improving the bottom-line performance of the organization with the interests of the organization prevailing over those of individual employees. Gill (2002) argues that this type of observable discrepancies between discourse and practice pose a serious threat to the reputation of talent management practitioners as legitimate business partners—and that although a hard discourse is generally less attractive, it is certainly to be preferred over a talent management credibility debate.

In what follows, we discuss three core features of talent management that distinguish it from career management more generally: first, talent management is status-organizing; second, talent management creates labeling effects; and third, talent management creates highly specific social exchange dynamics.

Talent Management Creates Status Differences

One way of looking at talent management as a unique phenomenon is to reframe our understanding of what it means to be identified as a 'talent' as a specific form of status. Status can be defined as an individual's consensually acknowledged social worth relative to other individuals, as manifested in the differential deference individuals enjoy in the eyes of others (Piazza & Castelluci, 2014). Status issues permeate organizational life, as the attainment of status is a fundamental motive for organizational actors, and determines the resources they can marshal in aid of a favored cause (Chen, Peterson, Phillips, Podolny, & Ridgeway, 2012). Four core features of status distinguish this construct from related constructs such as reputation (which is about being known) and power (which is about being in control) (Piazza & Castellucci, 2014). First, status is differentiating, in that it leads to the unequal distribution of privileges such as deference and resources. Second, status is hierarchical, in that it orders actors according to their social worth, based on their characteristics or abilities. Third, status is socially constructed, in that it is based on subjective judgments. And fourth, status is consensual, in that it is based on socially agreed-upon judgments (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Status-organizing processes, then, are defined as *"any process in which evaluations of and beliefs about the characteristics of actors become the basis of observable inequalities in face-to-face social interaction"* (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980: 479).

Three basic principles central to talent management—workforce differentiation, artificial resource restriction, and interpersonal excellence (defined below)—bridge the

constructs of talent and status theoretically (Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014). First, the principle of workforce differentiation (i.e., "*the investment of a disproportionate amount of resources in employee groups for which disproportionate returns are expected"*; Becker, Huselid, & Beatty, 2009, p. 3) refers to how, according to the talent management literature, organizational resources should be distributed among employees. This practice results in *"heterogeneity in aspects of the employment experience, through, for example, differential investment in development, rewards or career opportunity, within and between workgroups"* (Becker, Huselid, & Beatty, 2009; Collings, 2017)—a segmentation of the workforce, into more and less talented individuals, based on the strategic value a given employee is expected to contribute (Huselid & Becker, 2011). Talent identification, indeed, is formally defined as the identification of a talent pool comprised of high-potential, high-performing incumbents capable of contributing to their organization's sustainable competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Legitimized by its (assumed) disproportionate contributions to team and organizational performance, this elite group enjoys increased deference and resources (Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2014).

Second, it is important to note that the unequal allocation of resources in talent management is not due to resource scarcity necessarily, but that the size of the talent pool (typically between 1 and 10 percent of an organization's employees), in itself, is arbitrarily and artificially restricted. There is no specific reason why organizations would be unable to identify 25, 50, or even 90 percent of their employees as talents, especially considering the fact that many organizations do not offer career guarantees, or even a formal development program, for their talents (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Artificial resource restriction is defined as *"[organizations artificially restricting] the distribution of a certain benefit to employees (even when the scarcity of a resource is not caused by physical limitations to the amount of benefits available), for instance accounting or law firms that limit the number of associates*

who make partner" (Ho, 2005, p. 121). Again, this principle corresponds perfectly to the status construct, which entails the granting of membership to a group with distinctive characteristics or abilities that enjoys positional advantages (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

Third, the principle of interpersonal excellence dictates that talent should be operationalized as "*the outstanding mastery of systematically developed abilities and knowledge in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top ten percent of age peers who have attempted to master the specific skills of that field or fields as well, and who have learned and practiced for approximately the same amount of time"* (Gagné, 2004, p. 120). Status, as well, captures hierarchical relations among individuals, with status differences being rooted in relative assessments of individuals compared to referent others (Piazza & Castellucci, 2014). In work organizations, talent is typically evaluated by giving performance ratings to people on a set of predefined domains (Silzer & Church, 2009), which are then forced-ranked to identify top-tier employees (Nijs *et al.,* 2014).

Organizations are typically afraid that the status differences caused by talent management will result in arrogance in those selected for the program, and jealousy in those not selected (De Boeck, Meyers, & Dries, 2018). Consequently, studies estimate that 70 to 80 percent of organizations do not communicate openly about their talent management policies and decisions to employees (Church *et al.*, 2015), although 83 percent of organizations report to desire increased talent management transparency in the future (Bravery *et al.*, 2017). This secrecy inherent to talent management programs sets in motion a highly unique and interesting phenomenon whereby a new form of status—highly sensitive due to the 'talent' label— is first created, and subsequently concealed from employees using strategic ambiguity tactics (Dries et al., 2017).

Therefore—and highly uniquely so—talent status is both liminal and ambiguous. It is liminal since, rather than implying a status with immediate tangible benefits, being labeled talent is a promise for status attainment in the future (Beech, 2011); and it is ambiguous since, more often than not, organizations adopt an approach of strategic ambiguity (Dries et al., 2017), secrecy (Costas & Grey, 2014), or rhetorical obfuscation (Huang & Tansley, 2012) in communicating about their talent management practices and decisions to employees.

This not only creates a very unique type of status (i.e., liminal and ambiguous) but also a very unique type of organizational secrecy. First, although there is some literature on status non-disclosure (Phillips, Rothbard, & Dumas, 2009), status ambivalence and ambiguity (Zielyk, 1966), and prototype ambiguity (Bartel & Wiesenfeld, 2013), to our knowledge there has hardly been any research on the effects of forms of status where the focal person is not aware *of their own status*. Second, although quite a lot is known about the effects of secrecy on high- and low-status employees from the pay secrecy literature, its theoretical assumptions cannot be directly applied to talent management secrecy for one simple reason: under conditions of pay secrecy, even when employees are not aware of their coworkers' salaries, they are at least still aware *of their own* (Colella, Paetzold, Zardkoohi, & Wesson, 2007).

Talent Management Creates Labeling Effects

In the US literature—much more so than in the European literature—the talent management phenomenon is typically equated to performance management, in particular the management of 'star performers' (Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2014) or 'A-players' (Becker, Huselid, & Beatty, 2009). Although it is true that there are clear linkages between talent management and performance management—since the identification of employees as 'talents' is commonly based on performance and potential scores given by supervisors (Collings & Mellahi, 2009)—one very specific feature of talent management sets it apart from other, related phenomena: the use of the 'talent' label itself. Labeling theory states that the identity

and behavior of individuals is determined or influenced by the terms used to socially categorize them (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995).

First of all, the identification and labeling of people as talented is believed to produce Pygmalion effects, in that the positive affirmation of being assigned the 'talent' label, through heightened self-confidence and role commitment, might lead to increases in performance (Eden, 1984). As a consequence, the criterion used to evaluate the predictive validity of the identification of a person as talented—i.e., his or her performance at a later point in time—is, at least partly, an artifact of self-fulfilling prophecy (Larsen, London, Weinstein, & Raghuram, 1998). It is conceivable, for instance, that talents who are aware of their status achieve a higher performance level as a result of the positive feedback encapsulated in the label itself. Research on the Pygmalion effect has repeatedly demonstrated that high expectations conveyed by a credible, authoritative source motivate employees to do even better in the future. This effect is expected to be self-perpetuating; once set upon a high performance track by the positive leadership of a supervisor with high expectations, subordinates have been found to sustain high performance on their own (Eden, 1984; Kierein & Gold, 2000). We thus expect that differences in performance between talents and non-talents will be more pronounced when they are aware of their respective status. If this is true (and there has been a lot of experimental research implying that it is; see Eden, 1984), one implication *might* be that organizations should expand their talent pools to include as many employees as possible rather than engaging in exclusive selection procedures (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001).

A second type of self-fulfilling prophecy is the occurrence of 'success syndrome' (McCall, 1998)—a phenomenon whereby early career sponsorship of employees identified as talented leads to exceptional success for that cohort, without being able to separate whether the success is attributable to the employees' talent, or the additional organizational support

they have received because of their talent label (see also the literature on sponsored career mobility; e.g. Ishida, Su, & Spilerman, 2002; Larsen *et al.*, 1998; Vinkenburg, Jansen, Dries, & Pepermans, 2014).

In stark contrast to the literature on the Pygmalion effect is the (equally widespread) assumption of talent identification resulting in 'crown prince syndrome' (Dries, 2013). The crown prince syndrome describes the phenomenon whereby people who believe they are assured a spot in their organizations' senior management (much like crown princes) lose their motivation to work for it (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Among HR practitioners, this type of assumption has led to the belief that it is better to hide from people whether or not they are seen as talented (Roussillon & Bournois, 2002). Although there is much more empirical support for Pygmalion-type effects than for crown prince effects, beliefs of the talent label leading to arrogance and complacency are widespread among organizational decision makers (Larsen *et al.*, 1998). In the academic world, as well, some department heads are known to be hesitant to award tenure to young professors as they believe it will lead to a decrease in achievement motivation and productivity (e.g., Yining, Gupta, & Hoshower, 2006).

Talent Management Creates Highly Specific Social Exchange Dynamics

To date, the talent management literature has not yet offered any real theory of what the experience of being identified as a talent by one's organization feels like, although empirical studies *have* been done on the topic, often adopting a relatively shallow social exchange framework—being granted talent status by one's organization is 'good' and can be expected to lead to 'positive' reactions in return (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018). Social exchange implies that one party provides a service to another party and, in doing so, obligates the latter to reciprocate by providing an unspecified but valued service to the former (Blau, 1964). According to Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005), the generally agreed upon essence of social exchange theory is that *"social exchange comprises actions contingent on the rewarding*

reactions of others, which over time provide for mutually and rewarding transactions and relationships" (p. 890). Thunnissen, Boselie, and Fruytier (2013), Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, and Sumelius (2013), and Tiwari and Lenka (2015), among others, propose that organizations that invest in their employees will reap the benefits of that investment because employees are likely to return the favorable treatment. A similar, social exchange-inspired assumption is found in empirical studies claiming that organizational investments in the employment relationship (e.g., by selecting an employee into a talent pool) induce talented employees to reciprocate (Björkman *et al.*, 2013; Gelens *et al.*, 2014; Khoreva & Vaiman, 2015; Du Plessis, Barkhuizen, Stanz, & Schutte, 2015). In sum, talent management scholars tend to assume that the exchange relationship between employers and their talented employees can be almost entirely understood through the norm of reciprocity (e.g., Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2015). Some important elements of social exchange theory have so far been largely neglected in the talent management literature, however—i.e., uncertainty, social identity, social comparison, and power (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018).

First of all, the talent management literature so far has largely neglected the fact that status liminality and ambiguity create a large amount of uncertainty in the exchange relationship between talents and their organizations (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018). Outside of the talent management literature, however, there has been some discussion of the role of uncertainty in social exchange. According to social exchange theory, the main difference between social and economic exchanges is that the resources exchanged in the former are unspecified and subjective (Cook & Rice, 2003). Such uncertainties about the basis of the exchange relationship can furthermore be expected to intensify employees' emotional responses (Cook & Rice, 2003). Consequently, the ambiguous communication about talent management practices by organizations towards their employees may create negative affective reactions in their talents, as well as increase the risk of psychological contract breach

(Dries & De Gieter, 2014). Several (experimental) studies have also found, however, that high uncertainty can lead to *higher* levels of commitment among exchange partners, which they explain through the theoretical assumption that increases in commitment might serve as compensation mechanisms with a view of mitigating risk in the exchange relationship (Savage & Bergstrand, 2013).

Second, several qualitative studies in which employees identified as talents were interviewed uncovered identity struggles in this group (Dubouloy, 2004; Tansley & Tietze, 2013). In general, the talent management literature would greatly benefit from a deeper discussion of the relationship between social identity and talent status (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018). Social identity theory was in part developed to counter the perceived focus on purely instrumental considerations in social exchange theory (Restubog, Hornsey, Bordia, & Esposo, 2008). Specifically, the theory proposes that employees do not only react to how their organization treats them objectively, but that their reactions are also determined by identity-relevant information communicated by this treatment—e.g., whether they are valued in-group members or marginalized out-group members. In that sense, talent management practices are not just practices, but also symbolic carriers of meaning (see also signaling theory, Dries et al., 2014; King, 2016). Feeling excluded (as might be the case for non-talents; Swailes & Blackburn, 2016) is predicted to lead to psychological withdrawal from the organization. Employees who feel valued by their organization, on the other hand, over time integrate more and more of its perceived attributes into their self-concept—which explains Tansley and Tietze's (2013) observations of experienced conformity pressures in talents. De Boeck *et al.* (2018) proposed that the literature on employee reactions to talent management would benefit from a closer examination of the optimal balance between organizational identification and authenticity (for talents) and of the effects of feeling excluded on social identity (for non-talents).

Third, in addition to social identity, the related process of social comparison is likely crucial in understanding group-level reactions to talent management. Social comparison theory refers to the natural tendency of people to compare themselves to close others (‘targets’) in figuring out who they are themselves—based both on upward comparison to targets who are perceived as better, and downward comparison to targets who are perceived as less well off than themselves. Interestingly, social comparison theory states that potential threats to a person’s self-image as a result of upward comparison can be buffered by attributing the difference (for instance, in performance) to exceptional qualities on the side of the target, thereby increasing the distance between the focal person and the target, and making comparison less meaningful (Alicke, LoSchiavo, Zerbst, & Zhang, 1997). The implication of this latter theoretical assumption for talent management is that extremely exclusive talent management practices may in fact evoke less negative reactions in non-talents than moderately exclusive talent management practices (Swailes *et al.,* 2014). Put in very simple terms, what would *you* find the less favorable scenario: not belonging to a talent pool that comprises 1 percent of your organization’s population (meaning that you are among the 99 percent not identified as talents), or not belonging to a talent pool comprising 30 percent of the population? Interestingly, this directly contradicts the implications of self-fulfilling prophecy research as to the optimal ‘exclusiveness’ of talent management (see earlier in this chapter; e.g., Larsen *et al.*, 1998; van Zelderen, Dries, & Marescaux, 2019).

Power, finally, refers to the inequalities resulting from ongoing relations of social exchange, as some actors control more highly valued resources than do others (Cook & Rice, 2003). In the context of TM, such inequalities can be found at two different levels—the inequality between management and employees (e.g., in access to information), and the inequality created between talents and non-talents (e.g., in access to career investments). Interestingly, power is also a function of the dependence of one actor on another (Cook &

Rice, 2003). As the core tenet of the talent management literature is that organizations rely on their talented employees to create value (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013), we can assume that talented employees to some extent hold power over their organizations—their organization's performance 'depends' on their discretionary effort. Although the topics of power and inequality are implicitly discussed in the talent management literature—especially in the more recent stream on more inclusive forms of talent management (Swailes *et al.,* 2014)—a more deliberate examination of these concepts and their potential role in talent management research is probably needed to fully understand the unique effects of talent management on employees.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although 'careers for life', admittedly, are a reality from a distant past (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), the organizational career is far from dead. In its enthusiasm to advocate self-directedness and personal agency (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Dries, 2011) the recent careers literature may have lost sight of the fact that careers still serve strategic purposes for organizations, especially now that 'war for talent' dynamics are becoming more pressing (Guest & Mackenzie Davey, 1996; Michaels *et al.*, 2001). In fact, current economic conditions may warrant a renaissance of (research into) organizational careers and organizational career management practices, as the careers of many people are still enacted more often than not within the context of an organization (Hall & Las Heras, 2009). It appears that the careers literature and the talent management literature are complementary, at least in some respects (Table 2).

The careers literature might take lessons from the talent management literature by acknowledging careers as an organizational concern that relates to its broader strategic human resource management practices (De Vos & Dries, 2013). The talent management literature, on the other hand, might do well to acknowledge career actors' free agency—as Inkson (2008)

pointed out, humans do not act as rationally and predictably as other resources. Therefore, studying talent management from a resource-based view (RBV) perspective alone may not advisable. Insights from the careers literature—for example, from the work on subjective career success (e.g. Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008) and career orientations (e.g. Gerber, Wittekind, Grote, & Staffelbach, 2009)—might help talent management researchers formulate recommendations on how organizations might achieve continuity as a result of their career management practices (Table 1).

-- Insert Table 3 about here --

Table 3 offers a concrete roadmap for future research on talent management, adapted from Dries (2013). Methodologically, there are three main limitations in existing research that need to be addressed in future research. First, the limitation of not being able to demonstrate *causality*. If we want to study the effects of talent management on employees' careers, we need to be able to exclude the reverse causality hypothesis that the projected outcomes of talent management (e.g., increased performance motivation of 'talents') are actually predictors of talent status. To date only cross-sectional studies on talent management exist, at least on the quantitative end. There have, however, been two qualitative studies that have followed talents over time (i.e., Thunnissen, 2016; Dubouloy, 2004). Another issue related to causality is that some quantitative studies claiming to study the effects of talent status lack control groups of non-talents (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018). Pretest-posttest intervention studies, longitudinal field studies, and lab experiments are all potential designs that would help rule out reverse causality explanations for our review findings, and distinguish between short- and long-term effects of talent management on employees' careers.

The second limitation is that of existing research adopting a single *measurement level*. To date, quantitative research on talent management has either used employees as respondents, or HR managers (although some qualitative studies have interviewed both

employees and HR managers; e.g. Dries & Pepermans, 2008). If we want to understand how talent management practices are shaped by industry and organizational culture, for instance, and how these trickle down into perceived HR practices and individual employee outcomes, finally amounting into group-level and organizational-level effects in terms of morale and performance, we need multilevel studies. Future research could look into the effects of organizational size, sector, structure and culture on talent management programs and their links to internal career opportunity structures (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Also, future studies should go beyond predicting outcomes of talent management at the individual level (such as career satisfaction)—and take a multilevel approach, also including outcomes at the team and organizational level, such as team and organizational morale, climate, and performance (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

The third limitation is *fragmentation* in terms of operationalizations and measures of talent management and talent status, which hinders accumulation of knowledge across studies (De Boeck *et al.*, 2018). Clearly, talent management covers a much broader range of management practices than the mere assignment of employees to talent categories (Dries *et al.*, 2008; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). In addition, in existing studies it is quite difficult to disentangle the effects of TM practices and talent status on employee outcomes, so that we cannot conclude with certainty which of them is causing the effects (Gelens *et al.*, 2013). Qualitative approaches may be better suited than survey studies for studying talent management in all its breadth. One specific avenue for further research on the relationship between talent management and careers would be to dig deeper into what people with a more ‘boundaryless’ career orientation actually want from their careers. Several authors have suggested that organizational careers can potentially also accommodate the needs of boundaryless career actors, on the condition that they are characterized by sufficient internal career transition opportunities and gradual job enrichment (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

Furthermore, in order to study 'truly boundaryless' careers it might be interesting to look specifically into the careers of self-employed people, project workers, and entrepreneurs (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

References

Aguinis, H., & O'Boyle, E. (2014). Star performers in twenty-first century organizations. *Personnel Psychology, 67*(2), 313-350.

Alicke, M. D., LoSchiavo, F. M., Zerbst, J., & Zhang, S. (1997). The person who outperforms me is a genius: Maintaining perceived competence in upward social comparison. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(4), 781-789.

Arnold, J. & Cohen, L. (2008). The psychology of careers in industrial and organizational settings: A critical but appreciative analysis. In G.P. Hodgkinson & J.K. Ford (Eds.), *International review of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1-44). London, UK: Wiley.

Arthur, M.B. & Rousseau, D.M. (1996). *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for new organizational era*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ashforth, B. E., & Humphrey, R. H. (1995). Labeling processes in the organization. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 17*, 413-61.

Ashton, C. & Morton, L. (2005). Managing talent for competitive advantage. *Strategic HR Review, 4*(5), 28-31.

Bartel, C. A., & Wiesenfeld, B. M. (2013). The social negotiation of group prototype ambiguity in dynamic organizational contexts. *Academy of Management Review, 38*(4), 503-524.

Baruch, Y. & Peiperl, M. (1997). High-flyers: Glorious past, gloomy present, any future? *Career Development International, 2*(7), 354-358.

Becker, B., Huselid, M., & Beatty, D. (2009). *The differentiated workforce.* Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA.

Beech, N. (2011). Liminality and the practices of identity reconstruction. *Human Relations, 64*(2), 285-302.

Beechler, S., & Woodward, I. C. (2009). The global "war for talent". *Journal of International Management, 15*(3), 273-285.

Berger, J., Rosenholtz, S. J., & Zelditch, M. (1980). Status organizing processes. *Annual Review of Sociology, 6*, 479-508.

Björkman, I., Ehrnrooth, M., Mäkelä, K., Smale, A., & Sumelius, J. (2013). Talent or not? Employee reactions to talent identification. Human Resource Management, 52(2), 195-214.

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Transaction Publishers.

Boudreau, J.W. & Ramstad, P.M. (2005). Where's your pivotal talent? *Harvard Business Review, 83*(4), 23-24.

Bravery, K. *et al.* (2017). *Global talent trends study 2017: Empowerment in a disrupted world*. Mercer, Hong Kong.

Buckingham, M. & Vosburgh, R.M. (2001). The 21st century human resources function: It's the talent, stupid! *Human Resource Planning, 24*(4), 17-23.

Chen, Y., Gupta, A., & Hoshower, L. (2006). Factors that motivate business faculty to conduct research: An expectancy theory analysis. *Journal of Education for Business, 81*(4), 179-189.

Chen, Y., Peterson, R. S., Phillips, D. J., Podolny, J. M., & Ridgeway, C. L. (2012). Introduction to the special issue: Bringing status to the table—attaining, maintaining, and experiencing status in organizations and markets. *Organization Science, 23*, 299–307.

Chuai, X., Preece, D. & Iles, P. (2008). Is talent management just ‘old wine in new bottles’? The case of multinational companies in Beijing. *Management Research News, 31*(12), 901-911.

Church, A. H., Rotolo, C. T., Ginther, N. M., & Levine, R. (2015). How are top companies designing and managing their high-potential programs? A follow-up talent management benchmark study. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 67*(1), 17.

Colella, A., Paetzold, R. L., Zardkoohi, A., & Wesson, M. J. (2007). Exposing pay secrecy. *Academy of Management Review, 32*(1), 55-71.

Collings, D.G. (2017). Workforce differentiation. In D.G. Collings, K. Mellahi, and W.F. Cascio (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Talent Management.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Collings, D. G., & Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 19*(4), 304-313.

Collings, D.G., Mellahi, K., & Cascio, W.F. (2019). Global talent management and performance in multinational enterprises: A multilevel perspective. *Journal of Management, 45*(2), 540-566.

Cook, K.S. & Rice, E. (2003). Social Exchange Theory. In J. Delamater (Ed.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 53-76). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Costas, J. & Grey, C. (2014). Bringing secrecy into the open: Towards a theorization of the social processes of organizational secrecy. *Organization Studies, 35*(10), 1423–1447.

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management, 31*(6), 874-900.

Crowley-Henry, M., Benson, E. T., & Al Ariss, A. (2018). Linking talent management to traditional and boundaryless career orientations: Research propositions and future directions. *European Management Review, early online*.

De Boeck, G., Meyers, M.C. & Dries, N. (2018). Employee reactions to talent management: Assumptions versus evidence. *Journal of Organizational Behavior (IRIOP Annual Review Issue), in press*.

De Cuyper, N., & De Witte, H. (2011). The management paradox: Self-rated employability and organizational commitment and performance. *Personnel Review, 40*(2), 152-172.

De Vos, A. & Dries, N. (2013). Applying a talent management lens to career management: The role of human capital composition and continuity. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24*(9), 1816-1831.

De Vos, A., Dewettinck, K., & Buyens, D. (2009). The professional career on the right track: A study on the interaction between career self-management and organizational career management in explaining employee outcomes. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 18*(1), 55-80.

Deephouse, D., & Suchman, M. (2008). Legitimacy in organizational institutionalism. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (pp. 49–77). London, UK: Sage.

Dries, N. (2011). The meaning of career success: Avoiding reification through a closer inspection of historical, cultural and ideological contexts. *Career Development International, 16*(4), 364-384.

Dries, N. (2013). The psychology of talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 23*(4), 272-285.

Dries, N., & De Gieter, S. (2014). Information asymmetry in high potential programs. *Personnel Review, 43*(1), 136–162.

Dries, N., & Pepermans, R. (2008). 'Real' high-potential careers: An empirical study into the perspectives of organisations and high potentials. *Personnel Review, 37*, 85-108.

Dries, N., Forrier, A., de Vos, A., & Pepermans, R. (2014). Self-perceived employability, organization-rated potential, and the psychological contract. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 29*, 565-581.

Dries, N., Schleicher, D., Tierens, H., Hofmans, J., Gelens, J., & Pepermans, R. (2017). *Secrecy, status ambiguity, and power in organizational talent management programs*. Presented at the 33rd Colloquium of the European Group for Organization Studies in Copenhagen, Denmark on July 7th.

Dries, N., Pepermans, R., & Carlier, O. (2008). Career success: Constructing a multidimensional model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 73*(2), 254-267.

Dries, N., Van Acker, F., & Verbruggen, M. (2012). How ‘boundaryless’ are the careers of high potentials, key experts and average performers? Journal of Vocational Behavior, 81(2), 271-279.

Du Plessis, L., Barkhuizen, N., Stanz, K., & Schutte, N. (2015). The management side of talent: Causal implications for the retention of generation Y employees. *Journal of Applied Business Research, 31*, 1767.

Dubouloy, M. (2004). The transitional space and self-recovery: A psychoanalytical approach to high-potential managers' training. *Human Relations, 57*, 467-496.

Dyer, S. & Humphries, M. (2002). Normalising work-place change through contemporary career discourse. In L. Morrow, I. Verins, & E. Wills (Eds.), *Mental Health and Work: Issues and perspectives.* Australia: Common Wealth of Australia.

Eden, D. (1984). Self-fulfilling prophecy as a management tool: Harnessing Pygmalion. *Academy of Management Review, 9*, 64–73.

Finkelstein, L. M., Costanza, D. P., & Goodwin, G. F. (2018). Do your high potentials have potential? The impact of individual differences and designation on leader success. *Personnel Psychology, 71*(1), 3-22.

Forrier, A., Sels, L. and Verbruggen, M. (2005). *Career counseling in the new career era: A study about the influence of career types, career satisfaction and career management on the need for career counseling*. KU Leuven Research Report.

Gagné, F. (2004). Transforming gifts into talents: The DMGT as a developmental theory. *High Ability Studies, 15*, 119–147.

Gelens, J., Dries, N., Hofmans, J., & Pepermans, R. (2013). The role of perceived organizational justice in shaping the outcomes of talent management: A research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 23* (4), 341-353.

Gelens, J., Dries, N., Hofmans, J., & Pepermans, R. (2015). Affective commitment of employees designated as talent: Signalling perceived organisational support. *European Journal of International Management, 9*, 9 - 27.

Gerber, M., Wittekind, A., Grote, G., & Staffelbach, B. (2009). Exploring types of career orientation: A latent class analysis approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 75*(3), 303-318.

Gill, C. (2002). Two-dimensional HRM: Limitations of the soft and hard dichotomy in explaining the phenomenon of HRM. *RMIT working paper, n° 04/2002*.

Granrose, C.S. & Baccili, P.A. (2006). Do psychological contracts include boundaryless or protean careers? *Career Development International, 11*(2), 163-182.

Guest, D. & MacKenzie Davey, K. (1996). Don't write off the traditional career. *People Management, February*, 22-23.

Hall, D. T., & Las Heras, M. (2009). Long live the organisational career. In A. Collin, & W. Patton (Eds.), *Vocational psychological and organisational perspectives on career:*

Towards a multidisciplinary dialogue (pp. 181–196). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Hall, D.T. (1996). *The career is dead, long live the career: A relational approach to careers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ho, V. T. (2005). Social influence on evaluations of psychological contract fulfillment. *Academy of Management Review, 30*(1), 113-128.

Huang, J., & Tansley, C. (2012). Sneaking through the minefield of talent management: The notion of rhetorical obfuscation. The International *Journal of Human Resource Management, 23*(17), 3673-3691.

Hughes, J. C., & Rog, E. (2008). Talent management: A strategy for improving employee recruitment, retention and engagement within hospitality organizations. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 20*, 743-757.

Huselid, M. A., Beatty, R. W., & Becker, B. E. (2005). ‘A players’ or ‘A positions’? *Harvard Business Review, 83*(12), 110-117.

Iles, P. (1997). Sustainable high potential career development: A resource-based view. *Career Development International, 2*(7), 347-353.

Iles, P., Preece, D., & Chuai, X. (2010). Talent management as a management fashion in HRD: Towards a research agenda. *Human Resource Development International, 13*(2), 125-145.

Inkson, K. (2008). Are humans resources? *Career Development International, 13*(3), 270-279.

Ishida, H., Su, K. & Spilerman, S. (2002). Models of career advancement in organizations. *European Sociological Review, 18*(2), 179-198.

Khoreva, V., & Vaiman, V. (2015). Intent vs. action: Talented employees and leadership development. *Personnel Review, 44*, 200-216.

Kierein, N.M. & Gold, M.A. (2000). Pygmalion in work organizations: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 21,* 913-928.

King, K. A. (2016). The talent deal and journey: understanding the employee response to talent identification over time. *Employee Relations, 38*, 94-111.

Kuznia, K. (2004). *The rhetoric and reality of fast track management development programs*. Mid-West Academy Proceedings 2004.

Larsen, H. H., London, M., Weinstein, M., & Raghuram, S.. (1998). High-flyer management-development programs: Organizational rhetoric or self-fulfilling prophecy? *International Studies of Management & Organization, 28*(1), 64-90.

Ledford, G. & Kochanski, J. (2004). Allocation training and development resources based on contribution. In L. Berger & D. Berger (Eds.), *The talent management handbook: Creating organizational excellence by identifying, developing and promoting your best people* (pp. 218-229). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Lewis, R.E. & Heckman, R.J. (2006). Talent management: A critical review. *Human Resources Management Review, 16*(2), 139-154.

Marescaux, E., De Winne, S., & Sels, L. (2013). HR practices and affective organisational commitment: (When) does HR differentiation pay off? *Human Resource Management Journal, 23*(4), 329-345.

McCall, M.W. (1998). *High flyers: Developing the next generation of leaders.* Harvard Business School Press, Boston.

Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., & Axelrod, B. (2001). *The war for talent*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Nijs, S., Gallardo-Gallardo, E., Dries, N., & Sels, L. (2014). A multidisciplinary review into the definition, operationalization, and measurement of talent. *Journal of World Business, 49*(2), 180-191.

Pannell, M., & Mendez, A. (2019). Reimagining talent management. *HR Future,* Jan. 2019, 24-25.

Phillips, K. W., Rothbard, N. P., & Dumas, T. L. (2009). To disclose or not to disclose? Status distance and self-disclosure in diverse environments. *Academy of Management Review, 34*(4), 710-732.

Piazza, A., & Castellucci, F. (2014). Status in organization and management theory. *Journal of Management, 40*(1), 287-315.

Restubog, S. L. D., Hornsey, M. J., Bordia, P., & Esposo, S. R. (2008). Effects of psychological contract breach on organizational citizenship behaviour: Insights from the group value model. *Journal of Management Studies, 45*(8), 1377-1400.

Rodrigues, R. A., & Guest, D. (2010). Have careers become boundaryless? *Human Relations, 63*(8), 1157-1175.

Rodrigues, R., Guest, D., & Budjanovcanin, A. (2016). Bounded or boundaryless? An empirical investigation of career boundaries and boundary crossing. *Work, Employment and Society, 30*(4), 669-686.

Roussillon, S. & Bournois, F. (2002). Identifying and developing future leaders in France. In C.B. Derr, S. Roussillon & F. Bournois (Eds.), *Cross-cultural approaches to leadership development* (pp. 51-60). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Savage, S. V., & Bergstrand, K. (2013). Negotiating the unknown: The role of uncertainty in social exchange. *Sociology Compass, 7*(4), 315-327.

Savickas, M.L. (2000). Renovating the psychology of careers for the twenty-first century. In A. Collin & R. Young (Eds.), *The future of career* (pp. 53-68). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Silzer, R., & Church, A. H. (2009). The pearls and perils of identifying potential. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 2*, 377-412.

Silzer, R. & Dowell, B.E. (2010). *Strategy-driven talent management: A leadership imperative*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sonnenberg, M., van Zijderveld, V., & Brinks, M. (2014). The role of talent-perception incongruence in effective talent management. *Journal of World Business, 49*(2), 272-280.

Sullivan, S.E. & Arthur, M.B. (2006). The evolution of the boundaryless career concept: Examining physical and psychological mobility. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 69* (1), 19-29.

Sullivan, S.E. & Baruch, Y. (2009). Advances in career theory and research: A critical review and agenda for future exploration', *Journal of Management, 35*(6), 1542-1571.

Sullivan, S.E. (1999). The changing nature of careers: a review and research agenda. *Journal of Management, 25*(3), 457-484.

Swailes, S., & Blackburn, M. (2016). Employee reactions to talent pool membership. *Employee Relations*.

Swailes, S., Downs, Y., & Orr, K. (2014). Conceptualising inclusive talent management: potential, possibilities and practicalities. *Human Resource Development International, 17*(5), 529-544.

Tansley, C. (2011). What do we mean by the term 'talent' in talent management? *Industrial and Commercial Training, 43*(5), 266-274.

Tansley, C., & Tietze, S. (2013). Rites of passage through talent management progression stages: An identity work perspective. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24*, 1799-1815.

Thunnissen, M. (2016). Talent management: For what, how and how well? An empirical exploration of talent management in practice. *Employee Relations, 38*(1), 57-72.

Thunnissen, M., Boselie, P., & Fruytier, B. (2013). Talent management and the relevance of context: Towards a pluralistic approach. *Human Resource Management Review, 23*(4), 326-336.

Tiwari, B., & Lenka, U. (2015). Building and branding talent hub: an outlook. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 47*, 208-213.

Truss, C., Gratton, L., Hope-Hailey, V., McGovern, P., & Stiles, P. (1997). Soft and hard models of human resource management: A reappraisal. *Journal of Management Studies, 34*(1), 53-73.

Tulgan, B. (2001). Winning the talent wars. *Employment Relations Today, 23*(1-2), 37-51.

Van Buren, H.J. (2003). Boundaryless careers and employability obligations. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 13*(2), 131-49.

Van Esbroeck, R. (2008). Career guidance in a global world. In J.A. Athanasou & R. Van Esbroeck (Eds.), *International handbook of career guidance* (pp. 23-44). London, UK: Springer.

Van Esbroeck, R., Tibos, K. & Zaman, M. (2005). A dynamic model of career choice development. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 5*, 5-18.

van Zelderen, A., Dries, N., & Marescaux, E. (2019). *Using Social Comparison Theory to explain why a manager should remain secret about talent status.* Presented at the 34th Annual SIOP Conference in National Harbor, Maryland on April 4th.

Vinkenburg, C. J., Jansen, P. G., Dries, N., & Pepermans, R. (2014). Arena: A critical conceptual framework of top management selection. *Group & Organization Management, 39*(1), 33-68.

Walton, S., & Mallon, M. (2004). Redefining the boundaries? Making sense of career in contemporary New Zealand. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 42*(1), 75-95.

Warren, C. (2006). Curtain call: Talent management. *People management, 24-29,* March.

Zielyk, I.V. (1966). On ambiguity and ambivalence. *The Pacific Sociological Review, 9*(1), 57-64.

Table 1

Career Management Practices Targeted Specifically at High-Potential Employees

TM domains	CSM	OCM
Identification	Performance	Performance appraisals
	Initiative	Bottom-up nomination
	Visibility	Talent review meetings
	Drive and ambition	Development centres
Development	MBA	Management skills training
	Projects and task forces	Challenging assignments
		Early leadership experiences
	International assignments	Job rotation
	Information networking	One-to-one coaching
Succession planning	Internal job applications	Job interviews
		Assessment centres
	Personal development plans	CV database of all employees
	Political networking	Nomination by Board members
Retention management	Critical contributions	Workforce segmentation
		Reward policies
	Perseverance	Career opportunities
	Realistic goal setting	Expectations management
	Open communication	

Notes. TM = Talent management; CSM = Career self-management; OCM = Organizational career management; Adapted from Dries, N. & Pepermans, R. (2008). ‘Real’ high potential careers: An empirical study into the perspectives of organisations and high potentials. *Personnel Review, 37*(1), 85-108.

Table 2

Conflicting Assumptions in the Career and Talent Management Literature

	Career management literature	Talent management literature
Credo	*"Build a career in which I can use and develop my talents in view of my personal career drivers and goals"*	*"Detect, develop, and deploy employees' talents in order to obtain superior performance at the individual, group, and organizational level"*
1. Importance attached to continuity	Low	High
2. Focus of career management	Individual (Psychology)	Organizational (Strategy)
3. Accountability for career management	Self (Protean)	Organization (Paternalistic)
4. Mobility preference	Inter-organizational (Boundaryless)	Intra-organizational (Bounded)
5. Number of formalized CM practices	Low (Focus on CSM)	High (Focus on OCM)

Notes. CM = Career management; CSM = Career self-management; OCM = Organizational career management; Adapted from De Vos, A. & Dries, N. (2013). Applying a talent management lens to career management: The role of human capital composition and continuity. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24*(9), 1816-1831.

Table 3

Avenues for Further Research on Talent Management

Type of study	Suggestions for topics
Literature reviews	• The identification of relevant constructs and theories for the study of talent management • The development of psychometrically valid talent management scales • The development of testable theoretical frameworks and hypotheses
Critical discourse analysis	• The examination of talent management discourse to distinguish talent management from other constructs • The development of contrasting hypotheses based on conjectural assumptions about talent management • The examination of different conceptions different (categories of) people have of 'talent'
Interview studies	• The managerial rationale behind different approaches to talent management • The psychological reactions of individual employees to talent management practices • The perspectives of different stakeholders in the talent management process
Biographical studies	• The retroactive examination of the processes through which talents make sense of their careers
Cross-sectional studies	• The prevalence of different types of talent management practices in a diverse sample of organizations • The relationships between talent management practices and other characteristics of organizations (e.g., culture, strategy, size, core business)

Longitudinal studies	• The predictive validity of different talent identification criteria and assessment methods over time • The growth curves (i.e., malleability) of different aspects of talent over time • The career transitions following the identification as a 'talent'
Diary studies	• The longitudinal examination of the effects of talent management on employees' careers • The shortitudinal examination of the effects of talent management on employees' careers
Multilevel studies	• The interaction of organizational (e.g., culture, communication climate), team-level, (e.g., person-team fit, homogeneity/heterogeneity, implicit person theories) and individual (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, performance) variables • The development of a talent management systems typology and optimal-fit hypotheses linking TM approaches to organizational characteristics
Intervention studies	• The effects of changes in talent management strategy (e.g., from an inclusive to an exclusive approach; from ambiguous to transparent communication) on individual- (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, performance) and organizational-level (e.g., profit, market position, reputation) outcomes
Experimental studies	• The interaction of rater and ratee characteristics (e.g., ability, knowledge, personality, mindset) in assessments of talent

- The reactions of employees (e.g. fairness, intention to quit, envy) to systematic variations in fictitious talent management scenarios

---

Adapted from Dries, N. (2013). The psychology of talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 23*(4), 272-285.