Career Crafting: Working during the Ages of 69-75 Years

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Abstract: The aim of the study was to examine successful participation in working life in the ages of 69-75 years. A further aim was to elucidate socioeconomic and psychological processes surrounding successful participation. Focus groups were used to collect the data, and seven different focus groups met in four different towns in the western region of Sweden. Each group consisted of five to eight participants, and the groups met two to four times each to allow the participants to develop recollections and reflections on the topic. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. It was found that from middle age onwards the participants transformed their working lives and created their ideal professional situations. This process took place in a context of embracing social support and large psychological resources. These findings suggest structural facilitation of career crafting in work life and working conditions that can reinforce psychological resources such as positive affect and continuous learning throughout one's working life.

Key words: older workers; working conditions; career crafting

JEL code: J14, J49, J62

1. Introduction

The European workforce is getting older than ever before. The OECD estimates that in 2050 the proportion of men and women aged 60 years or older will be 33% and 38%, respectively. In the year 2000 the corresponding figures were 18% and 24% within the EU25 (OECD, 2007). This situation of demographic change parallels even more rapid changes in technology, work content, and work organization. The dynamics of demography and the ongoing transformative processes in working life need to be understood and thus thoroughly examined. Consequently, knowledge on both recent and current exclusion and inclusion of older employees in the workforce is needed.

Important qualities in an exclusion and inclusion dynamic of working life may be identified from a cohort with a majority of men (79%) where health improved after retirement at age 55 (Siegrist, Wahrendorf, Von dem Knesebeck, Jürges, & Börsch-Supan, 2007; Westerlund et al., 2009). Unlike work performance (Ng & Feldman, 2008) so-called functional capacity decreases with age, for example, by 20% between the ages of 40 and 60 years, and therefore senior employees more often work closer to their maximal performance level (Ilmarinen, 2006). From the perspective of health it could be hypothesized that an increased but insufficiently completed need for recovery from effort in aging workers plays an important part in improved health after retirement. In favor of this

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reasoning is the result from a study on equivalent occupational exposures in younger and older workers, where workers over the age of 45 years reported a significantly higher level of functional fatigue after work than workers under the age of 45 years and "there were significantly more subjects with a high need for recovery in the group of ageing workers" (Kiss, De Meester, & Braeckman, 2008). In addition to age, full-time work, female gender, and musculoskeletal disorder contributed to an increased need for recovery, as did work tasks characterized by work pressure and monotony. Social support from superiors and contacts with close relatives and friends outside work had a positive influence on fatigue after work. A comparatively high need for recovery in the age category of 25 years or younger was explained by the lower level of work experience. A recorded increase in health in the form of decrease in functional fatigue after work, after the age of 54, was explained by an effect from selection of those healthy enough to maintain employment, the so-called healthy worker effect.

A pattern of health predicted by a good balance between work and life, as well as low stress outside work among women, and by low stress at work among men was documented by Håkansson and Ahlborg (2010). As well, Westerlund et al. (2009) discovered a subgroup in the above-mentioned cohort who did not gain from retirement, health-wise. This group distinguished themselves by having a high occupational grade and working conditions with low demands, and high satisfaction at work. Psychosocial working conditions relates to physical (Karasek, 1990) and mental health status (Zoer, Ruitenburg, Botje, Frings-Dresen, & Sluiter, 2011). From a review of the longitudinal impact of psychosocial working conditions on cognitive functioning and dementia, Then et al. (2014) identified a protective effect from high job control and high work complexity.

Work or retirement as instrumental in meeting important needs is the focus of motivational researchers. Higher joy at work was found in a Belgian study to be related to job resources such as job control and social support, and also to making workers less prone to wanting to retire early (Schreurs, Cuyper, Emmerik, Notelaers, & Witte, 2011). The effect of resources on willingness to stay seemed to be more pronounced in blue-collar than in white-collar workers (Schreurs, Van Emmerik, De Cuyper, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2010). Robson and Hansson (2007) showed that a deepening of social relationships and of job content might contribute to an intention to stay at work. Motivation for postponing retirement may thus be promoted by the availability of job resources.

The willingness and ability of first-line managers to coach older workers was regarded as almost essential for inclusion in the workforce in a study by Leisink and Knies (2011), but only 41% of the managers in a Swedish study were interested in keeping their older workers until 65 years of age, and only 14% after 66 years of age (Nilsson, 2011). This excluding dynamic seems to exist even though no straightforward relationship between age and actual level of performance has been found. On the contrary, a review of the literature revealed that age was largely unrelated to core job performance, creativity, or performance in training programs (Ng & Feldman, 2008). Instead, performance, work attendance, attitudes to work, and health and well-being were found to be negatively influenced by work-life imbalance (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). In addition, reviews have ascertained that the provision of effective work-life balance policies have both organizational benefits and individual employee benefits, such as health outcomes and work satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000).

Based on labor law and pension systems in Sweden, the retirement age is in practice continuous from 61 to 67 years. In the age group 50-69 years in 2012 the mean age for starting to collect the national old-age pension was 64 years. In parallel, almost one in three expressed that they had wished to continue working, potentially mirroring factors relating to both health and motivation. Moreover, this wish was more frequent among women than men (Statistics-Sweden, 2016).

A recent database (PubMed) search using the keywords *older workers older employees*, and *qualitative method* did not find any studies that portrayed successful work life participation after the age of 50 years. To contribute to filling this gap, we explored the experiences of a minority of individuals who have "crossed the threshold" of the conventional retirement age and also maintained a career until or above age 69. This kind of knowledge could shed light upon not only successful participation in work life, when this takes place, but also hindering or excluding conditions and processes when this does not occur.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study was to examine the lived experience of current, successful participation in work life during the ages of 69-75 years. A further aim was to elucidate socioeconomic and psychological processes surrounding successful participation.

2. Method

In collaboration with the University of Lund and the research project "Enabling participation, health and well-being of ageing workers: towards a sustainable and inclusive working life", this study was made possible.

Focus groups provide an opportunity for "concentrating" observation (Morgan, 1997) in that two eight-person groups are able to generate as many ideas as 10 individual interviews. Kitzinger (1995) argued that focus groups are especially useful when exploring the experiences of people or their knowledge in a specific area, including health and medicine. As a method, "focus groups" capitalize on the communication between the participants in the group. Instead of the researcher having to ask questions, these are instead asked by the members of the group. Dissent or consensus can be used to explore cultural values. Furthermore, focus groups may prove to be valuable in examining the complexity of motivations and behaviors, since during the communication process the participants actively compare their experiences and opinions. In the present study groups members were encouraged to talk to one another, exchange anecdotes, and comment on each other's contributions. To deal with the participants' unawareness of emotions or motives driving behavior, questions about assumed latent qualities were also put forward as projective questions (e.g., asking about what kind of advice could be given to other people). Implicit attitudes could also be uncovered through humor.

2.1 Participants

In a public health cohort of 17000 members, 2500 were born in the years 1939-1945. In 2011, 263 of them stated that they worked at least half-time. This group was contacted by the researchers in 2014 by letter asking if they still worked half-time or more. If the answer was affirmative, the individual was invited to participate in a series of group interviews on the topic of participation in work life after the age of 67 years. Forty-seven presumptive participants agreed to take part in the study, and 43 subsequently participated in the group interviews.

2.2 Procedure

The focus groups that explored successful, sustainable participation in work life were organized as *not* being natural groups. The seven groups consisted of five to eight participants aged 69-75 years and met in four different cities in the VästraGötaland region in Sweden. Data were gathered from 43 participants during a total of 18 sessions. To explore the topic of successful participation, the groups met on two to four occasions each. The interview schedule was used as a guide and contained open questions on psychosocial work characteristics, recovery from work, work-family conflict, health, economics, and laws and regulations. Examples of open questions included: *The median retirement age in Sweden is 64 years. What do you think of this? Who can work*

after age 65? Between interview sessions the interview guide was complemented or reshaped. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed before the upcoming meeting of the groups. Themes from the particular group as well as those from other groups were presented by the researchers at the next meeting of the group.

2.3 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. The main reason for using thematic analysis was that a theory on successful participation focused on a single phenomenon or circumstance could not be assumed beforehand. Instead, different but frequently occurring induced themes grounded in data could be presented and transformed into the tale or tales of successful participation The analysis of interview data mainly corresponded to the description by Braun and Clarke (2006) of how the inductive approach reveals that themes identified are linked to the data, thereby also showing similarity to grounded theory (Strauss, Corbin, & Niewiarra, 1996). In a first step the transcribed interviews were "paper and pen" coded, line by line, separately by the two authors. From this first set of codes more abstract patterns or preliminary themes were condensed for each interview. In a next step the authors compared these preliminary themes interview by interview. The final data pattern concerned all interviews and was formed through condensation of interview-specific themes and comparison to the whole interview dataset, sometimes raising the level of abstraction of themes. The formation of themes was made in a synthesizing spirit, trying to fully employ the true resources of the authors and acknowledging the richness in data.

3. Result

The inductive analysis resulted in identification of two successive themes and one "overall" theme or framing pattern in the data: Process to ideal situation, Ideal professional situation, and Framing resources. A visualized overview of these themes may be seen below (Figure 1).
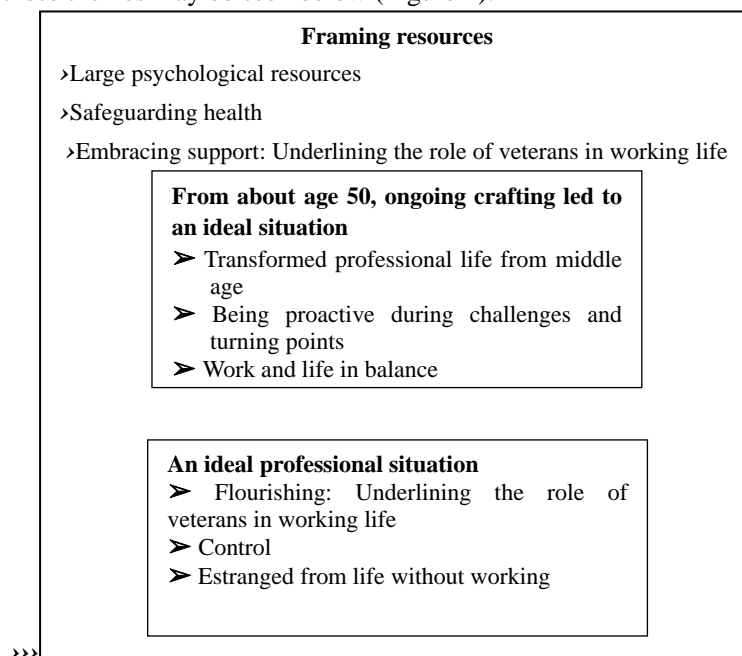

Figure 1   The Successive Themes Process to an Ideal Situation and an Ideal Professional Situation, within the "Overall" Theme Framing Resources

3.1 An Ideal Professional Situation

The current way of life was labeled *an ideal professional situation* and was marked by affirmation of needs, including an almost paradisiacal work-life balance.

Flourishing meant that the informants experienced work as personally fulfilling and also constantly marked by personal growth. In their professional lives they were in demand for their expertise and acknowledged.

> And what we do is appreciated by those we work with. And yes, we have the knowledge… and there are customers that appreciate what we do, and that is why we can continue.

> When I had my glazing company I was a specialist in car windows. Especially classic American cars. So I am still helping people with that. The guy who fixes car windows today, he does not even know how to pull a rubber strip, because it is all glued today. He knows everything relating to glue but he does not know rubber strips… So sometimes [outside steady employment] I get to help the guy who is working with car windows.

Working also meant that life was eventful and stimulating, and delivered interesting topics for everyday conversations.

> What I experience is that when we [the participant and her husband] see each other in the evening and have dinner together we have been to different places and have different things to talk about… It can be fun to come home and tell him about some experiences.

The ideal professional situation also comprised qualities of ***to have, or seize, control and create freedom***. The ability to cherry-pick and to reject many cherries meant choosing the work tasks or the clients that were most desirable.

> I have pupils from grade one to grade six now, precisely the ones I want to have. The pupils I don't want to have I don't have.

To have control further meant deciding not to do certain work tasks that were heavy or demanding.

> A hospital bed with a patient is heavy to push, and it takes its toll on your shoulders and back, so I don't do that anymore. I can choose, and you know, now I have the privilege to choose.

> I think of myself 10 years back… We sold many curtains … and now I am worn in my hands, thumbs, and such so I drop things… And this period [before Christmas] used to be very busy … so I used to sew day and night... But I don't take home such fabrics anymore.

Control and freedom also meant choosing work hours in terms of "I decide myself when I want to work". A predominant pattern in the data was of working part-time and being in total charge of the calendar.

> When I can't fill my day with recreational activities then I work. I feel like it's not a burden; it is fun.
> The flexible working hours is very important, I think. It is the most important thing.

To control one's own working time was viewed as an important prerequisite for being able to continue to work after the pension age.

> This demand that many companies have, that you have to work between eight and five… It is not suitable when you get older. Then you want to control your own time and not be stuck. So I think that this is the reason why it is very suitable to be self-employed after pension age.

Another aspect of control and freedom in work life was that the interviewees had not felt "locked in" to their job roles but had been able to leave bad situations:

> I have never had a job that I didn't like. I would have quit right away. Even if I was working, abroad I always had more [financial resources], so I could leave if it didn't work out.

Moreover, other kinds of measures were also taken to create a good working environment. The choice not to wait to receive an old-age pension created an economic basis for control, freedom, and independence.

Estranged from life without working. However, a quality of uncertainty or worry of what would happen once one stopped working was also expressed in the group interviews. There was worry about losing one's abilities and also of decay":

> Work after the age of 65 prevents you from licentious living.

And there were horror stories about what had happened to individuals who had stopped working.

> A friend's father was a sales manager in a large company and then retired. He didn't have any hobbies, nothing, and it took a year and then he was senile. He was sitting at home staring into a wall, and I am scared to death to end up like that.

3.2 From about Age 50, Ongoing Crafting Led to an Ideal Situation

The ideal professional situation was preceded by ongoing crafting from middle age or sometimes earlier in life. This meant a process of the participants flexibly crafting their professional lives based on necessity or on successive sets of desires.

A *transformed professional situation from middle age* meant a migration from being employed to self-employment, professional development mainly within the original profession, and in some cases a re-entry into the work force after the age of 65, thereby flourishing. These processes held qualities of semi-short term goal setting. Interview data showed a process of migration from employment represented by 15 out of 27 professions to self-employment in terms of 17 out of 24 professions. Employment in the ideal situation might mean being an assistant nurse, a doctor, or an engineer. Self-employment meant being a farmer, a builder, an accountant, a consultant, a manager, a wholesaler, a psychotherapist, or a writer.

> In my background there was no entrepreneurship at all; rather, it has developed during my work as an accountant at companies and those things, and then it has developed. I can just as well work with this myself as doing it for big companies.

Being proactive during challenges and turning points. Necessity as the mother of invention could in the focus groups be highlighted by the changes that took place during the economic recession in the 1990s. Due to layoff, some participants were forced to make a decision to become self-employed.

> I was an engineer in construction… In 1991 the construction industry collapsed. I looked for jobs, but hmm … started to get grey hair and was turning fifty… Then I became self-employed… and since then I have had a big customer.

Other participants instead described their turning points in terms of a developmental process whereby they had "outgrown" specific conditions at work and were feeling dissatisfied or frustrated.

> One had to bill a certain number of hours each day … and I was very controlled, so when I had enough clients I thought that I should leave … and that happened to coincide with the financial crisis at the beginning of the nineties… So it was probably quite good timing that I resigned and … the clients came with me.

> After being a housewife for 8 years I studied to become an economist. Then I got a job in a firm. I worked there for 10 years… Then you felt very controlled…. so when I had enough clients of my own I thought I'll leave. The customers followed me.

Others were contacted after their retirement by their former employers. In this situation they "crafted" the

working conditions on their own terms.

> After my retirement I got to start a consultancy business and continued to work with the same things I did previously, although I got made redundant and was at home for a year, and then they wanted me to start work again. But, because I had been made redundant previously they could not hire me again so then I got to start my own business.

As well as informants' being proactive during challenging times, a very flexible pattern of semi-short-term goal setting regarding the work situation emerged from the data.

> And my plan is now to sell my company and work there three, four days a week… And they are forced to keep me working there, because they don't have the knowledge that I have. So they have said that the condition for buying is that you stay. Then I said: One year at a time.

Work and life in balance. Furthermore, in life as a whole the role of work as a splash of color among the other splashes on the palette potentially facilitated recovery from work demands.

> Law firm, 1979: There was this new law on working six hours per day — having children under the age of 8 — so, then I went to my boss and said that that is what I want to do … and he said that that was an idiotic idea… But then I told him, "But you are a Liberal... and it is the Liberal Party that has launched this idea…" "Not now," he said, and like dismissed the idea… But I stood firm... And then I worked six hours per day during just about a few years.

This exemplified also a data pattern of pronounced personal autonomy (see below).

For the participants, work was one of their areas of self-fulfillment, but interesting hobbies were also portrayed.

> I spend a lot of time doing photography; I think that is terrific relaxation. Ehh, and it is fun, although I am not that interested in taking selfies, which is popular now (laughs). It is mostly pictures from nature and that means that one is out in nature watching birds, elks, and deer and what not. Out in the mornings and late at night taking evening pictures, and I think it is a really nice hobby to have apart from my computers.

3.3 Framing Resources

The ideal professional situation and ongoing crafting from middle age leading up to the ideal situation were framed by a number of strengths and resources, such as *large psychological resources*, *safeguarding health* strategies, and *embracing the need for support* including *underlining the role of veterans of working life*.

Large psychological resources. Most narrations and discussions during the interviews were characterized by positive effect, including self-promoting hedonism. This also applied to the current work life in terms of the different professions being depicted with love.

> So there is a lot in it. And it also rubs off to have fun... Others get fun. And if you are a businessman then it is easier to make a deal, too.

> I think it is fun — to work — and I won't quit.

The participants themselves observed the hedonic tone and commented on it. The psychological stance of the working life veterans was further marked by integrity and autonomy.

> I was 50 years of age and I started my own business, and then many people told me that I was crazy.

> So it is really fun… When you are 50 years old... then you dare… The children have grown up … and … it works, jumping into it.

Among the psychological resources was the ability to adapt and genuinely employing one's own resources in

new situations. One participant told of the importance of listening to his employees when he became a manager in a government agency:

> I got to become the manager for the department because nobody else wanted to (short laugh); it was a coincidence. And the thing is… I managed to do this very well, eh… and I didn't know I could do it, but it was as you say, it is an ability that one does not always know one has. And I discovered that if you are going to be a manager, then it is important to have an ear.

Humility was another example of a psychological resource.

> [About the members of the group] — We have had the privilege not be worn out, and that is important.
> And I think that we are a generation that have been lucky.

During the interviews the need to continuously learn new things and to follow developments in one's own line of business was emphasized. Some participants told of the necessity of attending professional training courses "or you will have trouble with the insurance" — "when using a chain saw". Another pattern was of education or further education. An accountant talked about the necessity to continuously educate oneself.

> As an accountant there are high demands on continuous education. So even if I work less now, I have to educate myself as much as previously...You could say that as an accountant people buy my knowledge. I can't say that I have old knowledge.

Safeguarding health. Having or having crafted health-promoting working conditions during regular working years was described. One way of safe-guarding health was through relying on a tradition of recovery:

> I think that had a very good balance there… recovery… I learned through all those years to use all the time available to relax. I slept in airplanes, and slept in the back of the car — behind the chauffeur — I had the ability to fall asleep in 5 minutes, sleep 10 minutes and then feel alert.
> For me it started early, in my mid-twenties. But it (power naps) started as a gimmick, this is my thing… and then it has become a routine. I have not let it go; it has always been that way. I want that 20-minute nap.

Physical exercise was another strategy to safeguard health. Some of the participants described how exercise had been a natural part of life for many years.

> Playing football till age 57.

> Exercising all through life.

Age was no barrier to being physically active.

> I have someone that I exercise with — she is 86 years old.

For many, the retirement age of 65 years was reached with intact resources in terms of health and well-being. The participants described with gratitude their psychological and physical vitality and an experience of enrichment from their working lives.

Embracing the need for support. In their professional roles the participants had often given support: As the accountant you are often the only support system to the CEO. Acknowledgement of the human need for support when also having expertise in finance might mean giving advice and support to immigrant business owners.

> I am helping a number of immigrants with work, and that is not something that I get paid for… I do it because I think it is a charitable thing to do and because I think it is fun.

In addition, the participants repeatedly during the interview sessions highlighted the need for support from others. An often discussed topic was the absence of a support network for those working after retirement age to

counteract prejudicial attitudes and envious comments faced by the informants.

The framing resources were evidenced also as a permissive home situation and as few "irreparable" setbacks or "losses" in the private sphere. The participants described how they received support from family to be able to continue to work.

> It is the most important part, almost, that the family supports you [to be able to work after 65 years of age].
> They [the family] support me… and they say, Keep on working a bit longer, we will help you."

The form of support the participants received from their families and partners varied, with cooking as one example.

> Actually I have a husband who is at home at the stove.

> I have a lot of support from my husband. He thinks, oh, yes… continue to work if you want to, so he has taken over more and more of the cooking… He encourages me and is set on the fact that I will continue to work. It would have been harder if he had said, "Do you have to go to work today again?

Healthy relationships were also described.

> I think we have been… generally quite good at helping each other. Quite calmly and peacefully

The theme *underlining the role of veterans of working life* contained both the qualities of *embracing the need for support* and *flourishing* in the current ideal professional situation. Consequently, the knowledge and experience of the informants were resources that could be beneficial to society.

> There is so much that one has learned during a working life that you cannot read in a manual. The things that fall between the lines, if that is the best way to describe it… you can be a sounding board to the people who should do the hard work. It is not me that should stand on my toes… but I can be a sounding board.

Mentorship was a concrete example of the role of veterans of working life.

> A function that I experience that I have at my work is to be a mentor. The younger members of staff are coming to ask me because I am… I am not a manager, and they don't want to go and ask the manager but they can ask me, and in that way I can do some good, I think.

> Something else that there is a lack of in Sweden, I think, is mentors, older individuals that work as advisors for younger individuals.

4. Discussion

The above interpretation of focus group interview data concerns a "lifelong work" career-crafting process that landed in an ideal working situation. This process in turn seemed to make prolonged participation possible. Crafting was framed by resources such as a high level of psychological functioning, including self-promoting hedonism. Resources such as these were in turn accompanied by health-preserving strategies and a profound understanding of their own and others' need for support in many dimensions of life. Furthermore, during the process the high level of psychological functioning was evidenced as proactivity, as a "semi"-moderate commitment to work (i.e., also having other commitments or activities in life) and ongoing crafting of the work situation, aiming at job control. As a part of the process, recovery opportunities such as breaks were created, thereby also implementing a tradition of recuperation. Moreover, resources such as support and a permissive home situation contributed. The current professional situation of flourishing held obvious qualities of job control,

flexible working hours, part-time arrangements, and cherry-picking among work tasks and clients.

In line with the findings of Schreurs et al. (2011) the present result underlines control over both the job content and working hours as elements in the ideal professional situation, as well as confirming previous findings that job content and meaningful social relationships contribute to an intention to keep on working (Robson & Hansson, 2007). Moreover, during the crafting process the participants in the present study enjoyed different hobbies outside work and had a balance between work and other parts of life, thereby promoting good health (Håkansson & Ahlborg, 2010). In the ideal situation part-time work and having flexible work hours were important. In parallel, the participants also described a tradition of recovery from work.

The result from the present study bears great similarities to the process of job crafting that involves employees making changes in order to balance their job demands and resources with their individual needs and abilities (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Job crafting can lead to a positive work identity, job satisfaction, and better well-being, because the workers may experience that they have job control. Indeed, the participants in the present study described a high level of job control and job satisfaction.

Regarding psychological functioning, it has been suggested that positive affect can broaden individuals' thought — action repertoires, which in turn helps to build a person's psychological, physical, and social resources. The capacity to experience positive emotions can be viewed as a fundamental human strength that plays an important role in the study of human flourishing and well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). In the present study positive affect was present both in the participants' descriptions of their work lives and during the group interviews. The participants also exhibited related psychological resources such as the ability to act in a proactive manner in challenging situations, the ability to continuously develop and learn new things, and also a tradition of taking care of themselves physically by taking time for recovery from work and physical exercise. It could be suggested that being innovative and proactive, constantly developing new skills, and learning are all parts of this human strength cluster.

The qualities of continuous development suggested from interview data could in wider settings be staged or translated into facilitation of career crafting through structural means, such as sufficient resources at the workplace, legislation, and social security systems actively supporting employees trying out new jobs, work tasks, or education. The age limit for student loans could be raised. The legal system in Sweden presently secures employment while an employee is on leave to further educate him- or herself but not to try a new job. Another implication for the professional situation could be an individual evaluation at age 45, asking the employee what he or she is interested in regarding his or her future work life. Different forums for transition could also be created. In these forums lectures, seminars, workshops, counseling, and group discussions could in different ways inspire personal growth that could in turn become career crafting. Indeed, new research has corroborated press reports on a large tendency in the elderly to become self-employed, also confirming the present result of both individual resources and a role of unemployment (Sundin, 2015).

Based on the quality of positive affect in this and other situations, there is also an obvious need for personal growth, and role models could be very important. Consequently, the role of veterans of working life should be made much clearer in terms of, for example, mentors, support persons in complex decision-making, hosts of social and professional networks, or simply professional experts. The veterans may also personalize fruitful social interplay at the workplace, as documented by Ng and Feldman (2008), in terms of citizenship behaviors and safety-related behavior, and also less counterproductive work behaviors, including workplace aggression. The participants in the present study appeared to possess a vast array of psychological resources, including the ability

to be proactive in new situations and to continuously keep themselves updated and learn new things. Moreover, they described how they had used strategies to promote health, such as embracing the need for recovery and exercise. Through structural means, working life could reinforce psychological resources, creating working conditions that promote health strategies and continuous learning and development.

Transferability is important to consider in qualitative studies. Issues such as the sample and number of groups and interviews need to be considered. The sample consisted of individuals who had previously taken part in a public health cohort study. It is our estimation that a good proportion of the individuals in the cohort who worked and were over the age of 69 years took part in the study, and the findings can have wider implications for both individuals and work places regarding sustainable working conditions.

Regarding limitations, it may be that the participants were unaware of emotions driving their behavior, wanted to portray themselves in a good light, or found it hard to disagree with others in the group. However, in non-natural focus groups the participants don't have to place much focus on caring for a future good relationship. However, what is not mirrored in the present study is the influence of pure "luck" in the chain of events leading to a prolonged participation in working life.

In conclusion, the present study explored the experiences and strategies of a number of individuals who successfully participated in working life after the age of 65. From around the age of 50 years these individuals transformed their work life and created an ideal professional situation. They appeared to possess large psychological resources and good support. Suggested implications of these findings include structural facilitation of career crafting in work life and working conditions that can reinforce psychological resources, such as positive affect and continuous learning throughout the working life.

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