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Chapter 5

CAREER CAPITAL AND CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING: REVEALING THE BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES AND THEIR EMPLOYERS[13]

Abstract

This study aims to explore the career capital individuals develop through corporate volunteering experiences and their consequences for both individuals and organizations. A growing number of organizations around the world offer short-term corporate volunteering opportunities to its employees. While business and public benefits of such activities are well known, some authors claim that corporate volunteering can also serve as a source of career development. Interviews with twenty-two employees from a large Dutch financial service organization showed that corporate volunteering helps individuals to advance their psychological, human and social capital. However, in spite of earlier suggestions that corporate volunteering has potential to contribute to the employing organization, we found that the organization has only benefited from advancing organizational culture upon corporate volunteers' return.

Keywords: Career Capital; Corporate Volunteering; Core Competencies; Organizational Culture.

[13] An adapted version of this paper will appear as a book chapter in the forthcoming *Handbook of Sustainable Careers*.

Introduction

Increased legal, political and social pressures to behave more socially responsible prompted many companies to engage in sponsoring corporate volunteering programs (Marquis, Glynn, & Davis, 2007; Maignan & Ralston, 2002). Corporate volunteering is defined as "giving one's time, knowledge, or skills as part of a community service, outreach, or social responsibility activity during company time without additional compensation or direct personal remuneration" (A. M. Grant, 2012, p. 592). A recent study showed that today more than 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies engage in employee volunteering programs (Boccalandro, 2009). As a form of corporate social responsibility, corporate volunteering is directed mainly at external stakeholders and supported by corporate resources (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Yuan, Bao, & Verbeke, 2011), and involves cross-boundary activities performed outside of the work environment with contribution of time without coercion or remuneration (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Corporate volunteering can take different forms and may include, among other activities, organizing and supervising events, delivering food and clothes to the needy, providing support and healthcare, campaigning and fundraising, and protecting the environment and wildlife (Schugurensky & Mündel, 2005). One increasingly interesting volunteering activity concerns the undertaking of voluntary work in the community at the costs of their work time (A. M. Grant, 2012).

At the same time, recent research started to uncover that volunteering is not only about "giving" behavior. It is also about "taking" back or gaining learning experiences, knowledge and many other psychological benefits that contribute to the volunteers' development. Consequently, since the individual learning and organizational learning are interrelated (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999), we can expect that organizations, which offer corporate volunteering programs, also benefit from the learning experiences acquired by their employees. Nevertheless, little research attention has been given to the individual and

organizational consequences of corporate volunteering. Most of the extant research on corporate volunteering has focused on reasons to volunteer, mainly capturing the "marketing" and strategic sides of corporate volunteering (de Gilder, Schuyt, & Breedijk, 2005; Van Schie, Guentert, & Wehner, 2011).

The limited knowledge available on the individual and organizational consequences of corporate volunteering suggests that this is a highly relevant and "desperately in need of theory...[and]…rigorous scholarship" research area (Tschirhart, 2005, pp. 25–26). Specifically, research shows that participation in corporate volunteering programs helps employees to acquire additional career capital (i.e. psychological, human and social capital; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). For example, the new challenges offered by volunteering provide opportunities for developing employees' morale, identity and motivation (psychological capital) (A. M. Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008; A. M. Grant, 2012; Quirke, 1999; Tuffrey, 1997). Volunteering is also important for gaining job experience (Haski-Leventhal, Meijs, & Hustinx, 2010) and knowledge (Schugurensky & Mündel, 2005). Schugurensky and Mündel (2005) further argue that while some of the skills gained through volunteering work can be directly applied to one's careers, others, more generic skills, are also important for the formal workplace (human capital). Recent studies also revealed that employees' participation in corporate volunteering may contribute to building their networks and social capital (Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009).

In turn, research shows that for organizations, corporate volunteering also bears many positive implications (Rodell, 2013). For example, Marquis, Glyn and Davis (2007) found that corporate volunteering is an opportunity to develop and maintain a favorable corporate image. If appropriately managed, this can be further leveraged to increase firms' visibility and reputation (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002; Porter & Kramer, 2002). Indeed, employees appear to be attracted to socially responsible companies which offer volunteering programs

and companies that are involved in the community (Deloitte, 2007; Peterson, 2004b; Turban & Greening, 1997). Consequently, organizations have promoted corporate volunteering as a vital tool in attracting, recruiting and retaining highly qualified workforce (Bussell & Forbes, 2008; LBG Associates, 2004; Peterson, 2004b). Past research has also suggested that involving employees in volunteering can save costs on corporate training, as acquiring work-related skills during volunteering can be much more extensive than other educational courses (Geroy, Wright, & Jacoby, 2000; Peterson, 2004b; Schugurensky & Mündel, 2005).

While the research findings regarding the potential consequences of the corporate volunteering for individuals and organizations are highly encouraging, they are also insufficient for developing a comprehensive understanding and future theory building around this phenomena. As Grant notes (A. M. Grant, 2012, p. 610) :

> *"Until very recently, research on corporate volunteering was dominated by practitioners… we [scholars] have a responsibility to catch up and contribute to the conversation. In the wake of pressing social problems and rising expectations for organizations to help, the time is ripe to study corporate volunteering as an increasingly widespread form of corporate social responsibility."*

The current chapter aims to contribute to filling this gap. Drawing on careers theory, this chapter attempts to explain the benefits of corporate volunteering for individuals, as well as for their organization, by addressing two questions. On the individual level, we are interested to explore: *How does corporate volunteering contribute to employees' career capital development?* And on the organizational level, we seek to unravel: *How and for what purposes do employees apply their accumulated career capital upon return from volunteering*?

We draw on the career capital concept (Arthur et al., 1995; Inkson & Arthur, 2001), suggesting that through volunteering experiences individuals develop important career

resources, which has potential to benefit both the career actors as well as their employers. This suggestion is in line with the Bird's definition of careers as 'repositories of knowledge', which positions the development of career capital as non-financial resources embodied "in skills, expertise, and relationship networks that are acquired through an evolving sequence of work experiences over time" (Bird, 1996, p. 150). As a freely chosen activity, corporate volunteering provides employees with an opportunity to engage in career episodes that are in line with their needs and aspirations, yet at the same time to align these with organizational objectives (Shantz, Saksida, & Alfes, 2013).

Individual consequences of corporate volunteering

In light of the above, we propose that the accumulated career capital can be distinguished into three types of non-financial capital: psychological, human and social capital (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). This is in line with other career frameworks, such as for example Arthur, Claman and DeFillippi's (1995) the "three ways of knowing" framework which captures the three career competencies individuals develop through their career: knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom.

Psychological capital reflects an individual's response to essential questions concerning *"Why you work'"*, *"Who you are"* and *"Who you are becoming"* (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). It is characterized by confidence and self-efficacy, optimism about succeeding now and in the future, hope and perseverance, and lastly, resiliency (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006). As such, the development of psychological capital drives motivation, confidence, and self-assurance to pursue career goals (Inkson & Arthur, 2001), and shapes one's career values, meanings, and interests (Jones & Lichtenstein, 2000). In a broader sense, it involves ones' openness to explore new professional opportunities (such as volunteering), through which a person develops attitudes towards his or her profession and work (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; H. R. Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010;

Peloza & Hassay, 2006, 2007). Researchers have argued that psychological capital and associated constructs are related to ambition, proactiveness, engagement, commitment and identification (Crant, 2000; Eby et al., 2003; Larson & Luthans, 2006; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

Human capital (G. S. Becker, 1964) covers the repertoire of knowledge, skills, and expertise acquired and developed through learning, reflecting the response to the question *"How do you work"* (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Tharenou, 1997). It incorporates tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and includes work-related, as well as, generic skills. Researchers have pointed out that human capital can be derived both from formal learning (e.g., education and training), as well as informal learning such as work and non-work experience, for instance volunteering (Booth, Park, & Glomb, 2009; P. Parker et al., 2009; Peterson, 2004a).

Social capital reflects an individual's response to the question *"With whom do you work*" and it captures the value embedded within, available through and derived from one's social networks (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). It spans relevant intra- and inter-firm, occupational and professional relationships, which one can draw upon or accumulate through experience (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). As such it incorporates developmental relationships and career communities, which are key sources for psychosocial and career support (Higgins & Kram, 2001; P. Parker, Arthur, & Inkson, 2004). These accumulated networks can potentially be useful for a person's career development, as well as for any work or non-work related experience such as volunteering activities (Muthuri, Moon, & Matten, 2006; Raider & Burt, 1996b; Singh et al., 2009).

We believe that through their corporate volunteering experiences individuals develop career competencies along the aforementioned three capital areas. As we discussed, the

applicability to one's career suggests that this career capital can also be used at work directly upon their return from volunteering.

Organizational consequences of corporate volunteering

While the extant literature provides ample evidence of the career capital accumulation by individuals, it is less observable how this accumulated capital can be brought back and even be of value to the employing organization. This is particularly important if we recognize that a career is "an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside of organizations, that form a unique pattern over the individual's life span" (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009, p. 1543). Thus, one's career comprises not only specific job positions, but also the accumulation of career capital through experiences across employer's boundaries (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Given the limited evidence covering this topic in volunteering literature, we now turn to reviewing other streams of career literature capturing the effects of cross-boundary experiences on employers This includes effects of expatriation and inter-organizational mobility on home and host organizations.

Research on expatriation involving prolonged work stays abroad, suggests that such stays contribute to developing inter-firm networks (Dickmann & Harris, 2005), knowledge creation and exchange (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005; Thomas et al., 2005), and talent development (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010; Schuler et al., 2011). Furthermore, empirical studies show that repatriation has consequences for organizational commitment (Gregersen & Black, 1996; Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 1998), retention and turnover intentions (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; H. W. Lee & Liu, 2006; Stroh, 1995; Van der Heijden, van Engen, & Paauwe, 2009), recruitment of future expatriates (Bolino, 2007), knowledge and competencies transfer (Furuya et al., 2009; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005; Oddou et al., 2009), flow of innovation (McAusland & Kuhn, 2011), efficiency and learning (Hocking et al.,

2007), the development of competitive expertise (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007), and generation of social and intellectual capital (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009).

In turn, research on inter-organizational mobility shows positive effects of employees' mobility on their former and new organizations. For example, employees' mobility has been found to be a useful vehicle for inter-firm transfer of technologies (Rosenkopf & Almeida, 2003; Song, Almeida, & Wu, 2003), organizational resources and routines (Phillips, 2002; Wezel, Cattani, & Pennings, 2006), production capabilities (Bidwell & Briscoe, 2010; Groysberg, Lee, & Nanda, 2008; Groysberg & Lee, 2009), and innovative expertise (Agarwal, Echambadi, Franco, & Sarkar, 2004; Rao & Drazin, 2002). It is also proven to be essential for social capital that comprises relationships with key external stakeholders across organizational boundaries (Collins & Clark, 2003; Leana & Pil, 2006). Further research shows that employees' mobility can strengthen the social ties between source and destination firms, as well as lead to exchange of external relationships among competitors (Corredoira & Rosenkopf, 2010; Dokko & Rosenkopf, 2010; Somaya et al., 2008).

Despite these ample contributions on how individuals' cross-boundary experiences impact organizations, it is important to remember that most corporate volunteering projects entail short-term activities (ranging from a few days to several months). Even if a volunteering project spans a longer period of time, it typically requires involvement of only several hours a week. By viewing careers as "repositories of knowledge" (Bird, 1994), we can therefore expect that each employee brings a unique combination of individual motivation, expertise and personal relationships back to the workplace upon their return from a volunteering experience (Arthur, Defillipp, & Lindsay, 2001; Kanter, 1989). This calls for a fresh perspective on the organizational consequences of employees' external volunteering experiences. In what follows we address this gap through studying the contribution of career

capital development to organizational development in the context of corporate volunteering in the Netherlands.

Methods

Research context: Corporate volunteering in the Netherlands

Volunteering is highly popular in the Netherlands, which makes it an interesting context for studying corporate volunteering. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Better Life Index, almost 60% of the Dutch population reports having helped a stranger. In fact, Dutch people spend on average about 5 minutes per day in volunteering activities. For a matter of comparison, the OECD average is 4 minutes per day (OECD, 2013). This and other indices, which examine the giving behavior trends around the world, have continuously placed the Netherlands in one of the top 10 countries ranking (e.g., CAF, 2011). These numbers, which are only growing, are an example of how the sense of social and community responsibility is instilled in the Dutch society. It is not surprising then that many people in the Netherlands are willing to take part in volunteering programs through their employer. Finally, as marketing and corporate philanthropy visibility are not the primary triggers for Dutch management, it revitalizes the "pure" focus and understanding of corporate volunteering as an experience, and the effects it may have on the organization (de Gilder et al., 2005; Meijs, 2003). Within the service sector, which accounts for over 50 percent of the Dutch GDP, banking and consultancy organizations have been most involved in corporate volunteering (Meijs & Van der Voort, 2004).

Research design

The current chapter reports on a study conducted in a multinational organization in the financial service sector. This global organization has 84,000 employees worldwide and is present in more than 40 countries. The organization's sustainable objective is to make a

positive contribution to the many communities it operates from around the world. This is derived from the idea that a strong and healthy community has far-reaching benefits – to its businesses, inhabitants and future generations. The company's activities in the field of sustainability are led and coordinated by a dedicated functional department, which is based at the headquarters in the Netherlands. Their main task is to facilitate and promote volunteering within the organization, as well as monitor and evaluate different volunteering projects. The department measures the firms' performance in the ethical, social and environmental field since 1995.

In 2012, more than 15,000 employees, or almost 26% of its total staff worldwide, participated in various volunteering initiatives. These projects, which take place mostly during work hours, can be grouped into two main categories of community work; Children & Education and Financial & Business Literacy. The employees have the opportunity to choose in which volunteering projects they would like to participate and when.

To explore the benefits of the accumulated career capital during the corporate volunteering experiences for both employees and their organization, we interviewed 22 employees who participated in one or more volunteering projects. We opted for this design (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2003) for two main reasons. First, existing literature on corporate volunteering is still very limited and mainly descriptive, thus lacking more depth concerning 'how' questions (e.g., Bussell & Forbes, 2008). Consequently, this current affair of theoretical perspectives has encouraged us to employ qualitative methods (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Eisenhardt, 1989). Second, recognizing volunteering as a social activity, previous studies have called for rigorous research capturing individual's thoughts and experiences (e.g., O'Neill, 2001; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008). Following up on these recommendations, we conducted in-depth interviews, which helped us to gain insights

into participants' work and career experiences before, during, and after their participation in corporate volunteering.

Data collection

Access to participants was procured through the managing coordinator of the sustainability department. Initial meetings and interviews with three managers were held to gain more insight about the organization, its corporate volunteering approach project, and activities. Given our research questions' analytical framing of the key features of career capital (i.e. psychological, human and social), we purposefully focused only on the knowledge-intensive volunteering projects. This type of projects focus on leveraging employees' learning and experience, and link them with the community and service programs (C. Bell, 2007; Corporation for National and Community Service, 2013; Deloitte, 2009). To increase the validity of our findings, several projects fitting these criteria were selected, ensuring the results are generic, and not project based. In our case, these projects included mainly activities of teaching and coaching of students or nascent entrepreneurs (Table 5.1).

The managing coordinator was requested to send a list with potential participants representative of the case. Before personally inviting them to participate, all of the potential participants were directly informed by the department about the study. The first step included filling in a short survey with background information about their volunteering experiences and current job positions. This provided us with essential information necessary to prepare for each interview. We arranged and conducted semi-structured interviews with employees, who participated in one or more of the chosen volunteering projects. The structured and flexible nature of the research questions was explanatory, thus allowing us to explain the complex causal link between career capital development and organizational core competencies, which otherwise would not be visible through a survey (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003).

Project	Main tasks	Total duration	Intensity
Project 1	Teaching high school students about financial topics focusing on their personal situation; how to deal with money and having a bank account	One month	Four half days
Project 2	Teaching and mentoring high school students about their future careers	One month	Four half days
Project 3	Coaching high school students with setting up their own business	Three months	Seven trainings
Project 4	Virtual coaching of entrepreneurs in Asia, Africa of South America by helping to develop a business proposal	Three months	Once a week
Project 5	One-on-one coaching of a student who's facing difficulties at school	18 months	Once a week
Project 6	Virtual teaching project with high school students abroad to improve their English	10 weeks	Once a week
Project 7	Teaching English to high school students	Three months	Seven trainings
Project 8	Coaching high school students with applying for a job and doing presentations.	Three months	Seven trainings

Table5.1 Overview of volunteering projects

The interview protocols involved three main parts and covered various themes. First, participants were invited to share their motivations to volunteer as well as prior career and volunteering experiences. Then, participants were asked to reflect both on their volunteering work, as well as on their work environment with emphasis on learning opportunities, work dynamics, social relations and meaningful related events. During the final part of the interview, participants were asked to express their individual perspectives on the meaning of (corporate) volunteering in relation to their professional and personal development, colleagues and work, and society.

Interviews took place at the employees' work location, or when inconvenient over the phone or Skype. The interviews lasted approximately 45 – 60 minutes and, in agreement with participants, were recorded. Interviews were then transcribed (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) and sent to participants for comments or additions. All in all, we solicited information from 15 male and 7 female, current as well as former, volunteers participating in 8 different volunteering projects. We interviewed 6 (senior) managers and 16 professionals, with an

average age of 39 years old. The raw material generated through the 22 interviews was sufficient enough to achieve data saturation (Francis et al., 2010; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), on which we base the arguments presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Data analysis

We analyzed our empirical data following a thematic content analysis, which involves iterative steps of going back and forth between the data and emerging theoretical arguments (Locke, 2001; Pratt, 2009). This analysis encompassed three main steps. First, an open code analysis was based on the main interview protocol. During this phase we identified shared statements, which formed interim categories and first-order codes. The next step involved integrating the first-order codes to generate higher order thematic concepts. By collaboratively discussing and reflecting among the authors, these concepts materialized into theoretical categories. To elucidate the underlying story, in the final step we aggregated the categories into theoretical dimensions and cogitated alternative conceptual frameworks by considering the relevant organizational theories (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). Figures 5.1-5.2 portray this inductive process (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) and include the first-order categories, theoretical concepts, and aggregated theoretical dimensions. Following this inductive process, we identified relevant text excerpts and explored the links among the categorizations to develop the argument that volunteering experiences facilitate employees' career capital development and their consequent contributions to organizational development. In the next section we present selected 'power quotes' by the interviewees illustrating our statements.

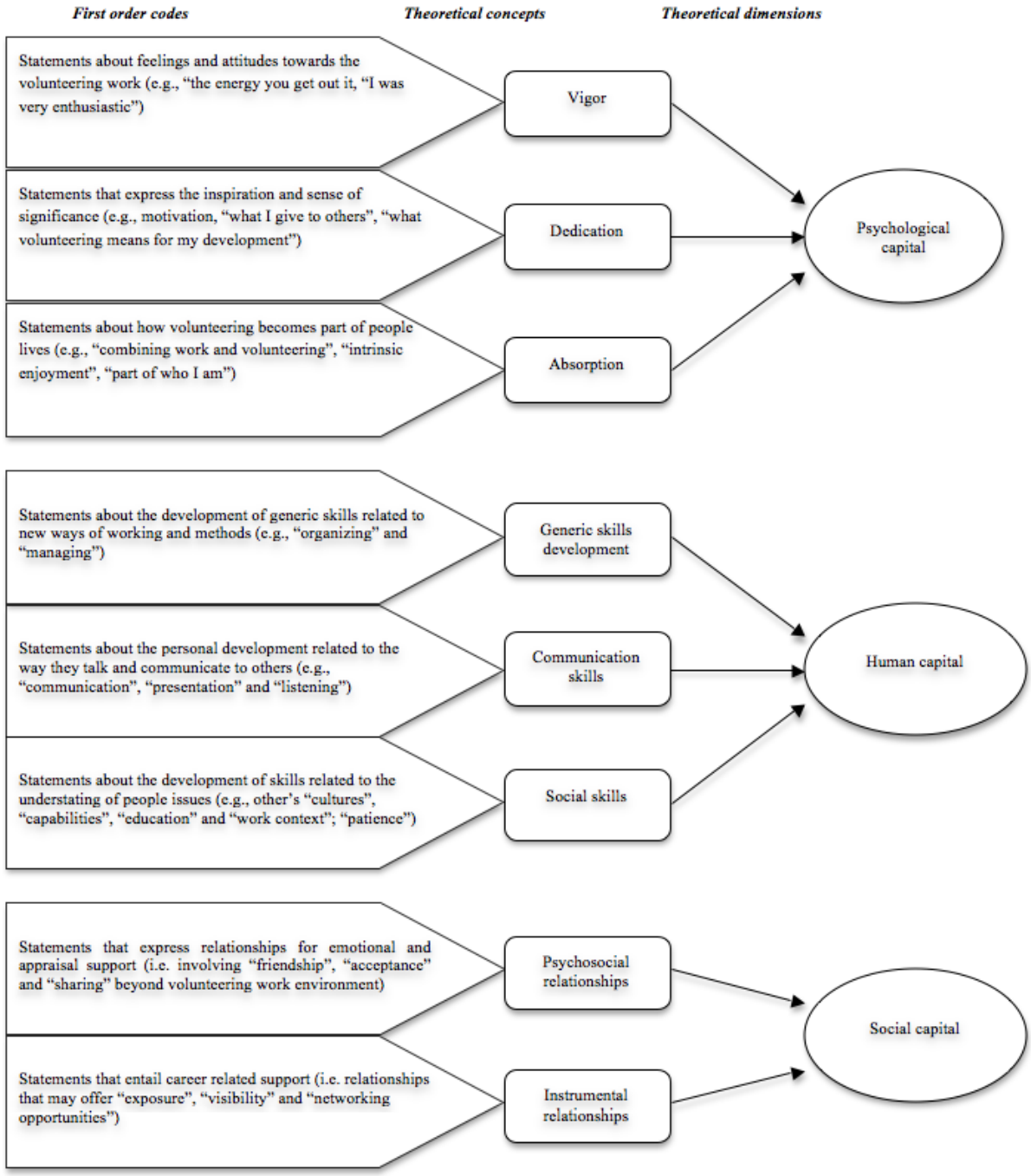

Figure 5.1 Overview of data analysis process: Career capital development

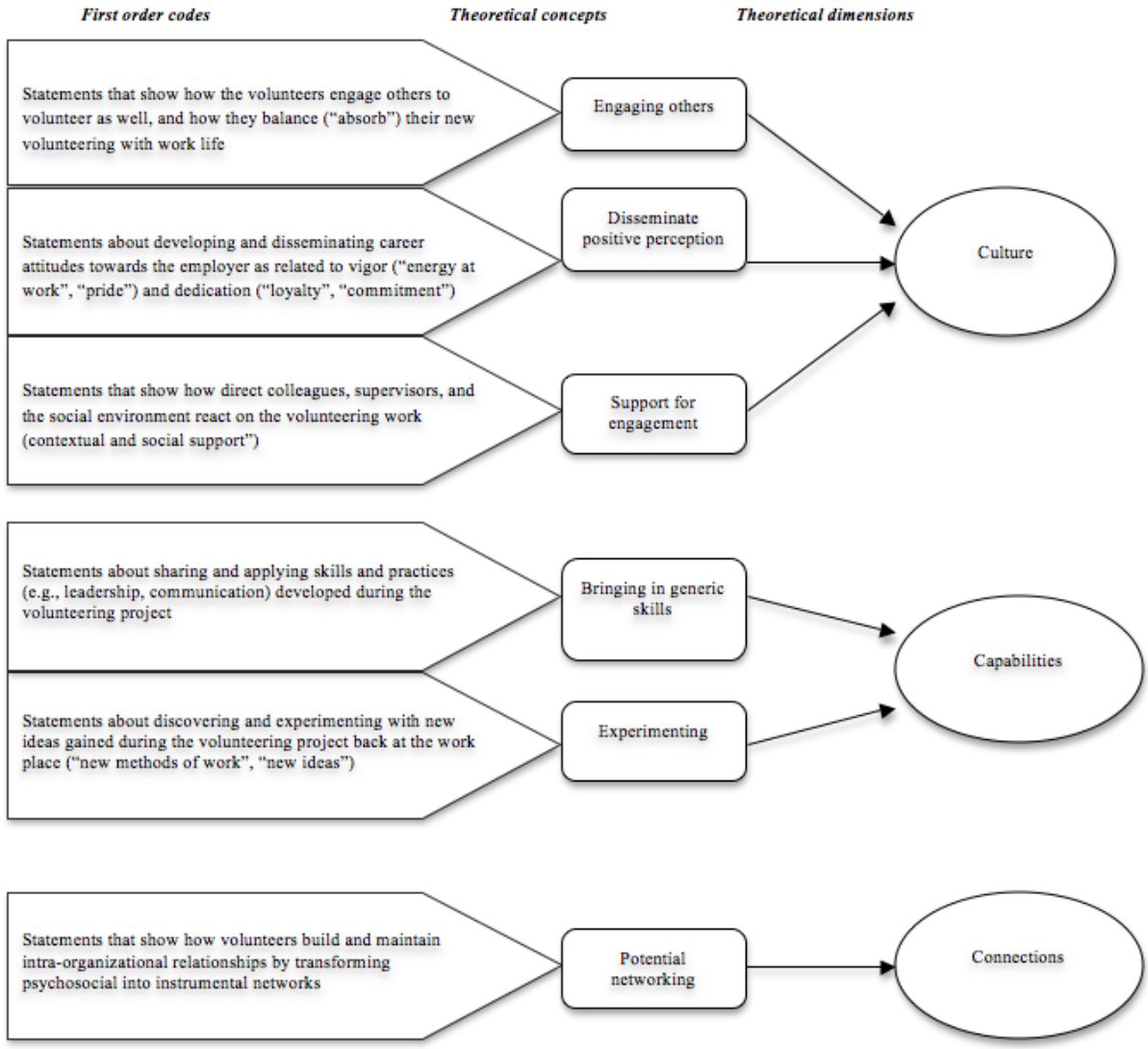

Figure 5.2 Overview of data analysis process: Contributions to organization's core competencies

Findings

Corporate volunteering and career capital development

Psychological capital. One of the prominent factors emerging from the data is the psychological attitude that participants developed through participation in corporate volunteering. Particularly, the interviewees spoke about their motivations and engagement, which not only changed their perception about themselves, but also towards their profession and work. Our data shows that volunteers describe this renewed psychological engagement in different ways. As reflected in one of the interview excerpts, they developed positive levels of energy and vigor:

> *You are getting so much back from [the volunteering](...) you get a lot of energy out of it. It gives you energy to do something for other people. [Whether] in the company or at the project, it gives you more value. [2]*

The data further reveled that by dedicating themselves to a meaningful cause through volunteering, participants experienced a greater sense of significance and inspiration in both their personal and professional life. As one interviewee explained:

> *You are changing the world for the better. [Volunteering as part of a project] is more than about one specific person or topic, it's really small contribution but it is still very significant to do. So the idea is that you are changing the world by changing one specific person. If we all try to adopt this perspective, we will build a better world. [10]*

Our interviewees further described how captivating the volunteering experience was to them. As shown in the following interview excerpt, the participants became so absorbed in

being a volunteer that the majority was willing to stay involved in the same or in other projects, even past the official end date:

> *When I have more spare time after this summer, I will reinvest into the [volunteering] organization again to see if they have improved. I will, in the same way as I do now, try to help them to get better organized. Something is missing and that can put the whole concept in danger. This would be a shame, because I think it is a very good concept. [6]*

Human capital. Our data analysis also reveals the importance of volunteering for developing human capital. We identify three main sets of skills and competencies, which employees mentioned they acquired and improved while volunteering. Firstly, as illustrated by the following two interviewees, working with people in a volunteering project facilitated the development of generic management and organizing skills:

> *[I learned] to be stricter about what and how you agreed to do something together. You have to set up appointments in merely one week of time, you want to see the progress and it's not like you will bump into each other the next day. That's why you have to make strict appointments together. [6].*

> *[At work] I'm used to people doing things by themselves. What you learn from [this volunteering] experience is that you have to be much more directive and clear about your expectations and what's going to happen. [8]*

The second skill relating to human capital concerned the development of communication competencies. These competencies appear to be an imperative part of the volunteer work. As illustrated in the following examples, it involved presentation and listening skills that participants would otherwise not have the opportunity to develop in their work environment:

I learned to listen, to receive feedback, ask questions and then in turn get some answers that you can work with (...) more the social way of how to listen to people, and especially to younger people. [2]

I learned a lot from it because when you're giving a presentation, you're explaining things on a completely different level than you're used to in your general work. The most important example is how to explain things in a very different, simple and clear way, than you are used to within your job. Because you have to explain what you are doing in a daily job to someone who is not completely familiar with it. It's very different. [9]

Thirdly, participants developed their human capital by acquiring distinct social skills. The interviews offer evidence that developing social skills was facilitated through the unique social context provided by the volunteering projects. Our data shows that through social interactions with people in the community, participants developed (a) social and cultural awareness, (b) understanding of others' capabilities and socio-economical background, (c) and patience.

It gives more insight into people of other cultures, how to deal with them, and how they respond to you. I don't know if this is really learning but it is more about gaining insight about their world and how they deal with certain things. I'm happy that I did it because it gave me insight in a different world of people who also live in the Netherlands and in Amsterdam. You learn about the things they are confronted with as foreigners, the barriers they are confronted with. [15]

You are in a completely different working field. You see that there are families like these, with fewer opportunities (...) Usually you don't get to know these kinds of families. It [The volunteering] gave me new insight and made me realize that it could

have been different (…) Maybe I also learned about perseverance, how some coaches deal with heavy cases, it impressed me. [7]

I learned really to be more patient. Because, I think over here in the Netherlands, when you work in the business sector, things go fast: either you get quick feedback or you call somebody you know about how things develop. That's if you work at a great distance. I really learned to be patient, try to rephrase what I want to achieve. Then in the end, somebody will pick it up or not, it is up to them. But you can [always] discuss it together. [6]

Social capital. Finally, the data unveils the way employees built and maintained their social capital. Our analysis shows that these relations provided a different source of support. As one interviewee pointed out, some of these relationships involved friendship, acceptance and sharing experiences beyond the volunteering work environment, thus offering "emotional" (i.e. psychosocial) support:

I met some co-coaches and there were a few people I knew from the company. And because we met at this coaching project, we went for a drink together where we actually got to know each other better. [11]

Other relationships, on the other hand, entailed career related support, and thus may have offered instrumental assistance such as exposure, visibility and networking opportunities. As explained by another interviewee, although these relations were not necessarily utilized right away, they could potentially become useful in the future:

I think the relationships are a bit shallow within the network itself also because I think I am the only one who is not based in Amsterdam of that pool of coaches. I think I met three of them over the past years for lunch, to exchange ideas and projects. The best relationships are still with the people I coached, three of them I have regular

> *contact to see how they are doing. I don't see it [the potential] now, but that is always with a network. It is very important to keep in touch with each other, you never know if you can help each other [in the future]. [6]*

Corporate volunteering and organizational benefits

With respect to the organizational benefits of corporate volunteering experiences, the data analysis further reveals that upon their return, participants brought back and disseminated their acquired career capital. It therefore supports existing literature showing that by enacting their career capital, individuals shape their work environment (Weick, 1996).

In what follows, we provide support to our earlier assertions that corporate volunteering in turn facilitates individuals' contributions to their employing organizations. Particularly, we identify Quinn's (1992) organizational core competencies model to constructively frame our findings. As we argue below, these core competencies can be recognized in terms of culture (organizational purpose, mission and core values), capabilities (knowledge and skills embodied in organizational activities), and connections (organizational internal, and external social capital, such as suppliers, customers, and alliance partners) (DeFillippi, Arthur & Lindsey, 1996; Quinn, 1992).

Culture. Our data also illustrates how the participants specifically utilized their newly developed psychological capital (i.e. engagement, pride and commitment) to (a) engage others in volunteering work, and (b) disseminate positive perceptions (i.e., pride and commitment) toward their employer:

> *I got a lot of energy from those trainings and I feel that when I talk about it to my colleagues, for example, they are really enthusiastic - "oh this is great doing this [volunteering project], can I also join? I also would like to do something like that". (...) I think it also helps a lot of people to become enthusiastic for volunteering. [9]*

Our data analysis also confirms that by engaging colleagues and disseminating positive perceptions, the participants developed what other scholars have described (e.g., Wenger, 1998) as a deeper sense of shared commitment and identification among organizational members. Thus, they contributed to the organizational culture. Indeed, interviewees raised the point that sharing their volunteering experiences allowed them to show their pride and identify with their employer in a way that is visible to others:

> *You know I never thought about that. But maybe yes, [I feel] a little bit more proud. It's nicer to work for a bank that is known for supporting such sustainable initiatives; not banks where I know bankers cheat the system. I thought this involvement in a social environment would be one of the least things I actually cared for. Because what I cared for was my own team, my own direct environment, my direct colleagues and what is most important for me. But I think if you have a nice challenging job and nice colleagues and your company is socially responsible, it's a very nice extra. And gives you pride - yes. It has a higher impact on job stickiness, so you are more loyal to a company like that. In my case it makes me more loyal to my employer, it makes me more proud. [11]*

> *I was, and still am, proud of doing it [volunteering] because it is nice in ways that I tell it to friends and family. [Having done all these volunteering activities] makes me more satisfied about my job and work place, and I tell it to people. [4]*

Although participants were proud and eager to apply their psychological capital upon their return from volunteering, evidence suggests that shaping organizational culture through engaging, motivating and sharing may be contingent to employees' perceptions of contextual and social support (Caligiuri, Mencin, & Jiang, 2013). The empirical analysis shows that the work and non-work context played an important role in facilitating the individual

contribution of psychological capital to organizational culture, as one of the interviewees explained:

> *They [my colleagues] were happy that I did it and they were supportive! So I tried to bring other people in. Some people did. In my department there is one guy who does projects, but there are no other people who are participating in any volunteering project. And I was talking about it with the head of private banking here in the Netherlands, and he said -"It's really good for you to do it! And I was really interested in it as well! How do you do it, when do you do it? What are these projects?" - I told him it's really fun to do, and he should join. And he picked it up and first time we did together the training how to apply for a job, and it was really fun to do because you are with each other in the classroom. He continued doing it. [21]*

Furthermore, this contextual and social support appeared to have an even stronger effect on participants' contributions to organizational culture when it directly involved senior managers, such as CEOs. As one of the participants described:

> *Twice I sat in class with someone from the Board, and I felt proud of the company, that they have people and other colleagues from all levels and corners of the bank to join in the [volunteering] project, [13]*

Capabilities. Research has suggested that sharing knowledge (tacit or explicit) and practices from personal experience, can create a collective understanding regarding new ways of working. This may evolve into routines and coherent actions, especially if the human capital that individuals bring can be applied in the work environment (Geroy et al., 2000). However, our data analysis shows that generic skills, such as leadership and communication skills, could also be employed at work and potentially translated into organizational capabilities. As one of the interviewees explained:

I think I developed more in teaching (...) And that of course helps in my work, when you are, for example, in a meeting and you try to relay a message to the team, that sometimes requires you to go into details, or deeper, it depends on the team. That's one thing that definitely helps. In a meeting when someone sits in front of you, [and he] is clearly not on a same level, or doesn't receive the message; sometimes you have to go into too greater detail. These aspects of communication that you get from the volunteering work help dealing with the daily work. [14]

Furthermore, the data shows that in some cases the newly acquired human capital allowed participants to discover and experiment with new ideas and working methods. The wide acceptance of these new activities by other colleagues could lead to these being further developed and institutionalized. For example, upon his return, one interviewee applied the skills he developed during volunteering, by self-initiating a coaching practice for colleagues regarding working at the company. Below he described how this initiative was widely accepted by others:

I use it [the coaching] in my daily work. I coach one of the employees at the bank and that is one of the things. Actually that's expanding a little bit. I also give some people advice on how things work in the company. I didn't do it before, and if somebody asks me - "can you help me?" - for example, I'll make the time to help him or her. [2]

Connections. As we found earlier with regard to social capital development, the volunteering experiences provided employees with opportunities to develop networks, which could potentially support one's career and work. At first glance, the psychosocial-friendly relationships, contrary to the instrumental relations, may be less useful for organizational connections, as the first focuses on the personal psychological and emotional level. Consequently, as the analysis suggests, most of these relationships did not appear to evolve beyond the friendship level. However, in some cases what started as a 'casual' friendship to

exchange thoughts and ideas may potentially be transformed into a more instrumental relation. This could be useful in connecting departments and business units, and thus could contribute to organizational connections, as one interviewee described:

> *We [participants in the tutors' project] are in touch and sometime when we need something from the related department, I email them and ask them – "can you help me out?" - Because this is a very big organization, so when you need something done, it's often very complicated to get it done or get the right person. So that really helps, because we are people with very different backgrounds and different departments. It's a good opportunity to widen your network and get to know other people [within the company]. [16]*

Nevertheless, our data analysis shows that examples such as described above are scarce. These findings may suggest that corporate volunteering provided very limited opportunities for employees to develop networks in the intra-organizational level. Therefore, it appears that none of the acquired social capital was applied to contribute to organizational connections.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore effects of corporate volunteering on individual career capital development and its consequences for organizations. Based on qualitative data gathered from 22 employees from a large financial service firm who participated in a corporate volunteering program, we identified that through participation in volunteering experiences, employees acquired career capital (psychological, human and social) and applied it in the work place upon their return. Expanding on previous work on the link between individual and organizational resources (e.g., DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Glynn, 1996; Ichijo & Nonaka, 2006; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), we further found that by employing a range of social-cognitive behavior and tactics, employees contributed to the

organization's culture, capabilities and connections. However, the findings of our study question the assumption that individual career capital contributes to all organizational core competencies equally. In spite of earlier suggestions regarding cross-organizational experiences, we found that in the context of corporate volunteering the organization has primarily benefited from advancing organizational culture (through psychological capital development). Below we reflect on our findings to elucidate how our study makes important theoretical contributions.

First and foremost, our findings contribute to the research on career capital acquisition (DeFillippi et al., 2006; Inkson & Arthur, 2001). Career capital, which draws from the intelligent career framework (Arthur et al., 1995), is accumulated through career and other experiences, and has been found to be broadly related to the accumulation of motivation, professional identity, skills and expertise, and networks (Inkson & Thorn, 2010; P. Parker et al., 2009). Scholars in this area have been persistently engaged in efforts to understand how career capital relates to career development, but less on what it entails (e.g., De Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Eby et al., 2003; Kuijpers & Scheerens, 2006; P. Parker, 2006). We address this gap by identifying and refining further the components of career capital in the context of career experiences across organizational boundaries (Lamb & Sutherland, 2010). More specifically, our findings show that corporate volunteers in the Netherlands develop important intangible career capital, which broadly comprises three distinct categories, namely psychological, human and social. As our data revealed, psychological capital involves vigor, dedication and absorption participants developed through their engagement in volunteering experiences (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Data further showed that human capital entails the development of three main sets of skills and competencies (including generic and volunteering-specific): communication, organizing and managing, and social skills. Finally, we found that social capital involves the development and maintenance of relationships,

which provide psychosocial and instrumental support for the participants (Chandler & Kram, 2007; Higgins & Kram, 2001). Overall, our findings confirm that these capital resources appear to be not only essential source for one's career development, but also to enable one's contribution at the workplace.

Additionally, this study contributes to the research on the consequences of context in career development. While this line of research takes interest in careers in different cultural and environmental settings (Khapova, Vinkenburg, & Arnold, 2009), it has predominantly emphasized the impact on the conceptualization and operationalization of careers in these contexts (e.g., Khapova & Korotov, 2007). Recent studies have found that the cross-boundary organizational context (such as self-initiated and organizational expatriation or international volunteering) in which individuals operate have much influence on the type and content of learning they accumulate (e.g., Dickmann & Harris, 2005; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; Jokinen et al., 2008; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). In that respect, it seems that although corporate volunteering is a short-term activity with somewhat limited leverage on work experience, it provides unique opportunities for personal career development. The relative significance of corporate volunteering thus is related not to the length and proximity of the experience, but rather to the ability of individuals to reflect on these cross-boundary experiences and to take action upon accordingly.

In a related note, participation in corporate volunteering allows employees to step out of their "comfort zone" and experience new situations in a different context with relatively low costs compared to expatriation or international assignments (e.g., no relocation, flexibility). Meeting people from different backgrounds and the energy they draw from these experiences, change their perceptions about themselves, their work and society. Our findings show that in particular motivational energy (psychological capital) and social skills (human capital) are leading competencies of career capital developed through corporate volunteering.

These two competencies appear to be prevalent as they allow a person to gain better understanding of him or herself while exploring different possibilities, and to adapt to the changing work-volunteering context (Arthur et al., 1999; Ibarra, 2003). In this context social capital seems to be less relevant, and it mainly revolves around building or maintaining social support rather than developmental learning (Chandler & Kram, 2007). The study findings thus suggest that the particular context in which the career experience is embedded might affect which components of career capital will change (cf. Cappellen & Janssens, 2008; Lamb & Sutherland, 2010; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2013), thus responding to recent calls to understand careers from a contextualist perspective (Savickas, 2005). This opens new window of opportunities for research about the impact of context on opportunities for career capital development, in particular in the nexus between work and non-work environment.

Furthermore, our study contributes to existing notions about the link between individual and organizational resources (e.g., Nonaka & Toyama, 2005). The data analysis showed how each core organizational competence emulates a distinct area of individual career capital, in such a way that individuals contribute to organizational culture through psychological capital, to organizational capabilities through human capital, and to organizational connections through social capital (Arthur, DeFillippi, et al., 2001; DeFillippi et al., 2006; Inkson & Arthur, 2001). By taking a broader view on careers to include non-work experiences we are able to identify distinct social-cognitive behaviors and tactics which employees employ to apply their acquired career capital back at their workplace. Consequently, we extend the extant literature that has thus far underscored cross-organizational experiences solely in the professional work context (i.e., expatriation and global careers). As shown here, participation in corporate volunteering provides a range of developmental opportunities, which most likely employees would not have experienced in a business setting and are further useful in the workplace. This is in line with previous research

that recognizes the value of non-work related experience not only to individuals, but also to their employers (e.g., Hudson & Inkson, 2006; Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997; Inkson & Myers, 2003; L. Lee & Higgins, 2001).

Participants from this research seemed to acknowledge the significance of their newly developed career capital, and provided insight on the way they engage and disseminate positive attitudes at work (contributing to organizational culture), apply newly acquired skills and experimenting with new working methods (contributing to organizational capabilities), and build inter-organizational relationships (contributing to organizational connections). With these findings we contribute to recent evidence of both strategic and management scholars, who have elucidated the link between individuals' career behavior and contribution to organizations (e.g., Dahl & Pedersen, 2005; Gratton, 2007; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Kang, Morris, & Snell, 2007). The employees' volunteering experiences inspired them to get involved in self-initiated change behaviors at work, suggesting corporate volunteering could be used to engage and motivate employees' contributions to organizational development. We hope that the results of this study will encourage others to further investigate the ways management could employ corporate volunteering to facilitate related change behavior such as job crafting (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012) and work engagement (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009).

While we cannot provide ranking of which one of the individual contributions to organizational core competencies is more significant, the results may indicate the primacy of contribution of psychological capital to organizational culture. One reason is that the dominance of a career capital contribution may depend largely on the sample being studied (cf. Cappellen & Janssens, 2008). In this case, professional employees who participated in corporate volunteering along side their work activities. Psychological capital, and subsequently also contribution to organizational culture, was important as participants

considered the volunteering experience as a vehicle to explore career values related to prosocial behavior, engagement, professional and organizational identification. This is further supported by the fact that these individuals shared their engagement and pride with other people in their environment upon return from volunteering. As such, participation in corporate volunteering provided an opportunity to manifest and prioritize their career meanings and interests (D. Brown, 2002; Schein, 1996).

Another reason for the dominance of the psychological capital-organizational culture link might be related to the relatively strong contextual and social support perceived by the participants. Indeed, the results suggest that individual's attitudes towards the employer (i.e. pride and commitment) have been positive, in particular when management was directly involved in the volunteering activities. This is in line with previous studies, which suggest that such involvement sets an example for others and provides legitimation for the employees (e.g., P. B. Carroll, 1990). Furthermore, the supportive attitude from managers and colleagues towards volunteering facilitates a safe environment where employees could engage and to share these experiences (Caligiuri et al., 2013). This is not to say that the contribution to organizational capabilities and connections are less important, but in this study they are less prominent. Further research therefore should address the following; does corporate volunteering is the appropriate tool to facilitate contributions to organizational capabilities and connections, and if yes, in which cases and under which contextual contingencies.

It is particularly noticeable that in our context, social capital led to very limited intra-organizational relationships. Scholars have already stressed the importance of individuals' contribution to organization's connections. The access to further knowledge individuals bring from outside their organization, through outside contacts, is highly useful for organizational innovation and development (Chesbrough, 2003). Employees can also contribute to organization's connections through their relations with suppliers, customers, alliance partners

and other external contacts (Gulati, 1999; Walker et al., 1997). Through this social capital, individuals can disseminate an image and reputation of their employing organization (Burt, 2000; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005), though it requires employees to proactively engage in such network opportunities. As the findings suggest, recognizing the value of individuals' social capital does not always take place immediately. Future research therefore needs to take a closer look at the long-term consequences of how, and when social capital developed through corporate volunteering benefits organization's connections.

Limitations

As with any empirical study, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings to other settings. In particular, this study focuses on professional employees in a Dutch financial firm and thus limits the applicability of the findings to other types of organizations, industries and cultures. While the financial sector may be an interesting context for studying employees' participation in volunteering in light of social responsibility (see for example Brewis, 2004; de Gilder et al., 2005), we see potential in future studies exploring corporate volunteering in other sectors. Furthermore, opportunities to extend theory lies in conducting similar research in other national settings. This comparative endeavors could provide insights on whether our findings are applicable in other countries.

Another limitation concerns the limited perspective we have on the societal context. While this study focused on the career capital individuals develop through corporate volunteering experiences and its consequences for organizations, we were unable to shed light on the consequences for the community and the non-governmental agencies involved. Recent studies suggest that giving attention to a particular target group (e.g., NGOs, community), may limit our efforts to advance theory (e.g., Caligiuri et al., 2013). To gain a comprehensive picture of the story, future research would benefit from including various groups when studying corporate volunteering and career development.