Within-Person Relationships between Daily Individual and Job Characteristics and Daily Manifestations of Career Adaptability

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Abstract

Previous research showed that daily manifestations of career adaptability fluctuate within individuals over short periods of time, and predict important daily job and career outcomes. Using a quantitative daily diary study design ($N = 156$ employees; 591 daily entries), the author investigated daily job characteristics (i.e., daily job demands, daily job autonomy, and daily supervisory career mentoring) and daily individual characteristics (i.e., daily Big Five personality characteristics, daily core self-evaluations, and daily temporal focus) as within-person predictors of daily career adaptability and its four dimensions (concern, control, curiosity, and confidence). Results showed that daily job demands, daily job autonomy, daily conscientiousness, daily openness to experience, as well as daily past and future temporal focus positively predicted daily career adaptability. Differential results emerged for the four career adaptability dimensions. Implications for future research on within-person variability in career adaptability are discussed.

*Keywords*: career adaptability; diary study; job characteristics; personality; temporal focus
1. Introduction

Career adaptability, a core construct in the field of vocational psychology and in career construction theory (Brown & Lent, 2016; Super & Knasel, 1981), refers to “the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions” (Savickas, 1997, p. 254). Career adaptability is a higher-order construct that is composed of four dimensions: concern (i.e., preparing for future career tasks), control (i.e., taking responsibility for development), curiosity (i.e., exploring possible future selves and opportunities), and confidence (i.e., believing in one’s ability to solve problems and to succeed; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

While most empirical research so far has investigated inter-individual differences in career adaptability, result of two recent daily diary studies demonstrated that career adaptability and its dimensions can manifest behaviorally on a daily basis (as career adaptability “states”; cf. Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Roberts & Jackson, 2008), and that these manifestations of career adaptability fluctuate substantially within persons across one work week (Zacher, 2015). The studies further showed that daily career adaptability and some of its dimensions positively predicted daily job and career satisfaction, as well as daily task and career performance, thus confirming previous results at the between-person level (Chan & Mai, 2015; Ohme & Zacher, 2015; Zacher, 2014a; Zacher & Griffin, 2015). However, it remains unknown why behavioral manifestations of career adaptability fluctuate within individuals over time in the first place.

The goal of the present study was to investigate within-person relationships between daily individual and job characteristics and daily career adaptability using a quantitative diary study design. Consistent with prior research at the between-person level (Li et al., 2015; van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012; Zacher, 2014b), I examined daily manifestations of the Big Five personality characteristics, daily core self-evaluations, and daily temporal focus as person-related
predictors. Previous research showed that these individual characteristics fluctuate substantially within-persons over short periods of time (Debusscher, Hofmans, & De Fruyt, 2015b; Foo, Uy, & Baron, 2009; Judge, Simon, Hurst, & Kelley, 2014). Moreover, I examined daily job demands, daily job autonomy, and daily supervisory career mentoring as job-related predictors. Previous research showed that these job characteristics also vary considerably within persons across work days (Butler, Grzywacz, Bass, & Linney, 2005; Daniels & Harris, 2005; Garrick et al., 2014).

Importantly, both between- and within-person approaches to studying career adaptability are consistent with career construction theory, which suggests that stable and dynamic person and contextual factors influence employees’ career adaptability, and that career adaptability itself is malleable over time (Savickas, 2013; see also Zacher, 2015). Within-person relationships may be similar or differ from well-established between-person relationships; daily person states and daily job characteristics influence daily behavioral manifestations of career adaptability (and daily job and career outcomes) at the within-person level, whereas relatively stable individual differences (“traits”) and job characteristics predict people’s average level of career adaptability (and relevant long-term outcomes) at the between-person level (Dalal, Bhave, & Fiset, 2014; Fleeson, 2004). Finally, it is important to study within-person variability in career adaptability because dynamic behavioral states and more stable inter-individual difference characteristics associated with career adaptability influence each other reciprocally over time (Roberts & Jackson, 2008).

2. Development of Hypotheses

2.1. Daily Job Characteristics and Daily Manifestations of Career Adaptability

I first propose that on days on which employees face high job demands (i.e., having to work hard and fast; Spector & Jex, 1998), they will show more behavioral manifestations of career adaptability, and particularly higher confidence. Demonstrating high levels of career adaptability and confidence in the face of high job demands should generally constitute adaptive
responses, as they allow employees to effectively cope with their job demands (Savickas, 1997). Specifically, daily confidence entails behaviors such as performing tasks efficiently, taking care to do things well, learning new skills, overcoming obstacles, and solving problems (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Thus, the presence of high job demands is likely to encourage employees to modify their behavior (i.e., show adaptability) to meet their job demands. In contrast, on days with low job demands it is neither necessary nor beneficial for employees to show high levels of career adaptability and confidence. In relevant research at the between-person level, Zikic and Klehe (2006) argued that involuntary job loss – a negative external demand – is “a blessing in disguise,” as it can trigger career adaptability behaviors among unemployed individuals that are vital for adjustment to a stressful life situation and for gaining re-employment.

**Hypothesis 1:** Daily job demands relate positively to (a) daily career adaptability and (b) daily confidence.

Daily job autonomy, defined as the amount of freedom and independence employees have during their work day to make decisions regarding their work (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006), should positively relate to daily career adaptability and its four dimensions. Employees require job autonomy on a daily basis to think about and plan for their future tasks and career while at work (daily concern), to make independent decisions and take responsibility for their actions (daily control), to explore their surroundings and look for opportunities for personal growth (daily curiosity), and to perform their tasks efficiently, learn new skills, and solve problems (daily confidence; cf. Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Overall, high compared to low levels of daily job autonomy should enable employees to take the time to prepare for and participate in their work role and to adjust to changes in their work (daily overall career adaptability; Savickas, 1997). Consistent with these assumptions, previous research at the between-person level found that a sense of personal control related positively to career adaptability (Duffy, 2010).
**Hypothesis 2:** Daily job autonomy relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, (c) daily control, (d) daily curiosity, and (e) daily confidence.

I further expect that daily supervisory career mentoring relates positively to daily career adaptability, daily concern, and daily curiosity. Supervisory career mentoring is conceptually and empirically distinct from leadership behaviors such as leader-member exchange (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Scandura & Williams, 2004). It involves supervisors promoting their subordinates’ careers by, for instance, taking a personal interest in subordinates’ careers, devoting time and consideration to their careers, and by helping them to coordinate professional goals (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). These supervisory mentoring behaviors should be particularly relevant for daily employee behaviors associated with career concern, such as thinking about their future career, preparing for the future, and planning the achievement of career goals, as well as daily behaviors associated with career curiosity, such as engaging in exploration, observing different ways of doing things, and probing deeply into one’s questions (cf. Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Consistently, previous conceptual work suggests that supervisory support should enhance employees’ personal sense of adaptability at work (O’Connell, McNeely, & Hall, 2008).

**Hypothesis 3:** Daily supervisory career mentoring relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, and (c) daily curiosity.

### 2.1. Daily Individual Characteristics and Daily Manifestations of Career Adaptability

The Big Five personality characteristics (conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness to experience) are frequently investigated in relation to career-related outcomes (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Previous research at the between-person level found that all five personality characteristics relate positively to career adaptability (Li et al., 2015; Teixeira, Bardagi, Lassance, Magalhães, & Duarte, 2012; van Vianen et al., 2012; Zacher, 2014a). Moreover, Zacher (2014b) showed that some of the Big Five characteristics predicted
career adaptability and its dimensions assessed six months later.

A number of recent studies examined within-person variability in Big Five personality characteristics. Based on whole trait theory (Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015), Judge et al. (2014) demonstrated in a diary study that daily manifestations of the Big Five personality characteristics had both stable and variable components. In another diary study, Debusscher, Hofmans, and De Fruyt (2015a) found that state conscientiousness related positively, and state neuroticism related negatively to employees’ momentary task performance at the within-person level.

Consistent with Zacher (2014b), I propose that daily conscientiousness and daily openness to experience relate positively to daily career adaptability at the within-person level. More specifically, daily conscientiousness should positively relate to daily concern, as being in a conscientious state should motivate employees to plan and prepare for their future career tasks. Moreover, a conscientious state should benefit employees’ daily control and confidence, due to its association with attributes such as self-discipline, need for achievement, personal responsibility, problem-solving, and the demonstration of effort and persistence. Daily openness to experience should relate positively to daily curiosity, as a state of openness should facilitate the exploration of possible future career selves, opportunities, and career outcomes.

**Hypothesis 4:** Daily conscientiousness relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, (c) daily control, and (d) daily confidence.

**Hypothesis 5:** Daily openness to experience relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability and (b) daily curiosity.

The construct of core self-evaluations describes people’s fundamental appraisals of themselves (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). Previous research showed that core self-evaluations positively predict career adaptability at the between-person level (Zacher, 2014b). In two experience sampling studies, Debusscher et al. (2015b) found substantial within-person
variation in state core self-evaluations, and that state core self-evaluations predicted momentary task performance, citizenship behavior, and counterproductive work behavior. Consistent with Zacher (2014b), I propose that daily core self-evaluations relate positively to daily control, daily confidence, and daily overall career adaptability at the within-person level. Experiencing high core self-evaluations on a given day should make it more likely that employees take an interest in, and take personal responsibility for, their career development and their influence on the work environment on the same day (i.e., daily control). Furthermore, a state of high core self-evaluations should make employees feel more confident about their abilities to successfully address work-related challenges and to realize their career goals (i.e., daily confidence).

Hypothesis 6: Daily core self-evaluations relate positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily control, and (c) daily confidence.

The multi-dimensional construct of temporal focus describes the level of attention that employees allocate toward thinking about past experiences, present situations, and future expectations (Karniol & Ross, 1996; Shipp, Edwards, & Lambert, 2009). An experience sampling study found substantial within-person variability in entrepreneurs’ daily future temporal focus, and showed that it mediated the relationship between daily positive affect and proactive venture effort (Foo et al., 2009). Consistent with previous research at the between-person level (Zacher, 2014b), I propose that daily future temporal focus relates positively to daily career adaptability and its four dimensions, which all require an orientation toward the future.

Vocational psychologists have argued that future temporal focus constitutes “a fundamental dimension in career choice attitudes and competencies” (Marko & Savickas, 1998, p. 106). Super and Knasel (1981) suggested that “being forward-looking” (p. 199) enables employees to adapt successfully to career tasks and transitions. Finally, Savickas (1997) proposed that high levels of career adaptability require an orientation toward the future. On days on which
employees adopt a high future temporal focus, they should be better able to explore and foresee their potential future work roles, environments, and career outcomes. Moreover, they should more successfully master the career planning, career preparation, decision-making, and problem-solving aspects that are part of the broader career adaptability construct (Savickas, 1997). In contrast, on days on which employees focus their attention primarily on the past or present, they should not demonstrate more daily manifestations of career adaptability.

_Hypothesis 7:_ Daily future temporal focus relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, (c) daily control, (d) daily curiosity, and (e) daily confidence.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants and Procedure

Participants in this quantitative daily diary study were 159 employees from various jobs and occupations in the United States. Of the participants, 57.1% were female and 42.9% were male. Employees’ ages ranged from 24 to 64 years, with a mean age of 45.08 years (SD = 10.10). In term of highest educational level attained, 10.9% of participants had completed high school, 19.3% indicated some college, 44.5% held an undergraduate degree, and 25.2% held a graduate university degree. Job tenure ranged from one to 48 years, with a mean job tenure of 12.02 years (SD = 8.81). Participants’ job descriptions included analyst, care coordination specialist, consultant, foreman, librarian, office paralegal, and software engineer.

Participants were recruited for a daily diary study (e.g., Beal, 2015) with the help of a professional survey panel provider (ClearVoice Research). This survey panel provider recruits participants primarily online and pays them small monetary incentives for taking online surveys created by social and behavioral science researchers and marketing professionals. On five work days starting on a Monday, a convenience sample of 300 employees from the panel provider’s database received an e-mail every day in the late afternoon with a link to a daily survey to be
completed at the end of the work day, which included measures of daily career adaptability and
daily individual and job characteristics. Before the first daily survey, participants also responded
to a baseline survey which included questions on general career adaptability, as well as
demographic and employment characteristics. In total, 159 employees completed at least two
daily surveys (response rate of 53%), with a total of 591 completed daily surveys (out of 795
possible completed daily surveys; response rate of 74%). On average, each employee responded
to 3.79 daily surveys. These response rates fall within typical ranges of response rates for survey
research with employees (average response rate = 52.7%, $SD = 20.4$; Baruch & Holtom, 2008)
and of response rates in experience sampling studies ("typically in the 70-90 percent range,
ocasionally lower"; Fisher & To, 2012, p. 873). Moreover, the current sample sizes at the
between- and within-person levels provide sufficient statistical power (> .80) to detect medium
sized effects using multilevel modeling (Scherbaum & Ferreter, 2009).

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Daily Manifestations of Career Adaptability

Daily manifestations of career adaptability and its four dimensions (concern, control,
curiosity, and confidence) were measured using an adapted version of the Career Adapt-Abilities
Scale (CAAS; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), which was developed based on career construction
theory (Savickas, 1997). In each daily survey, participants were asked to indicate the extent to
which they had engaged in several specific behaviors associated with career adaptability on that
day (cf. Zacher, 2015). The wording of the 24 items of the CAAS (six items for each of the four
dimensions) was changed to past tense and the word “today” was added such that the items
referred to the past work day, for example “Today I thought about what my future will be like”
(daily concern), “Today I made decisions by myself” (daily control), “Today I explored my
surroundings” (daily curiosity), and “Today I overcame obstacles” (daily confidence).
Participants rated the extent to which they had engaged in each of the behaviors on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Cronbach’s alphas were .95 (daily career adaptability), .92 (daily concern), .90 (daily control), .94 (daily curiosity), and .86 (daily confidence).

The baseline survey included the original CAAS (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Participants first read the following instructions provided by the scale authors: “Different people use different strengths to build their careers. No one is good at everything, each of us emphasizes some strengths more than others. Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities.” Subsequently, they provided their answers on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest). Alphas were .97 (career adaptability), .89 (concern), .91 (control), .92 (curiosity), and .89 (confidence). Consistent with previous research (Zacher, 2015), employees’ averaged daily career adaptability scores (from the daily surveys) correlated positively at the between-person level with their general career adaptability scores measured in the baseline survey. Specifically, the convergent validity coefficients were .66 (career adaptability), .61 (concern), .66 (control), .60 (curiosity), and .66 (confidence; all rs significant at p < .001).

3.2.2. Daily Job Characteristics

All items were answered on 5-point rating scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree today) to 5 (strongly agree today). Daily job demands were measured in each daily survey with three items adapted from the quantitative workload inventory by Spector and Jex (1998). An example item is “Today there was a great deal to be done.” Alpha for the scale was .87.

Daily job autonomy was assessed with three decision-making autonomy items adapted from Morgeson and Humphrey’s (2006) work design questionnaire. An example item is “Today my job allowed me to make a lot of decisions on my own.” Alpha for the scale was .88.

Daily supervisory career mentoring was measured with three vocational support items adapted from the short-form of the mentoring functions questionnaire (Castro & Scandura, 2004;
Scandura & Ragins, 1993). An example item is “Today my supervisor took a personal interest in my career.” Alpha of the scale was .95.

3.2.3. Daily Individual Characteristics

Daily Big Five personality characteristics were assessed with 40 adjectives (eight for each of the five dimensions) from Saucier’s (1994) mini-makers inventory. The focus of this study was on daily conscientiousness and openness to experience; in the analyses I controlled for daily extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability (cf. Zacher, 2014b). Based on research by Judge et al. (2014), participants were instructed to “Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself today, not as you are in general, or as you wish to be in the future” (p. 204). Participants provided their answers on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (very inaccurate today) to 5 (very accurate today). Example items and alphas are “organized” (daily conscientiousness; α = .90), “talkative” (daily extraversion; α = .81), “cooperative” (daily agreeableness; α = .85), “relaxed” (daily emotional stability; α = .84), and “imaginative” (daily openness to experience; α = .83).

Daily core self-evaluations were measured with 12 items adapted from the core self-evaluations scale (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). An example item is “Today I was confident I get the success I deserve in life.” Participants provided their answers on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree today) to 5 (strongly agree today). Alpha was .88.

Daily temporal focus was measured with 12 items (four for each of the three dimensions) adapted from Shipp et al. (2009). The focus of this study was on daily future temporal focus, and I controlled for daily past and current temporal focus in the analyses (cf. Zacher, 2014b). Previous research has successfully adapted the future temporal focus scale to assess people’s state temporal focus (Foo et al., 2009). The 5-point scales ranged from 1 (strongly disagree today) to 5 (strongly agree today). Example items and alphas are “Today I replayed memories of the past in my mind” (daily past temporal focus; α = .95), “Today I focused on what is currently happening
in my life” (daily current temporal focus; $\alpha = .87$), and “Today I thought about what my future has in store” (daily future temporal focus; $\alpha = .94$).

### 3.2.4. Demographic and Employment Characteristics

In the baseline survey, participants indicated their age (in years), gender (1 = *male*, 2 = *female*), highest level of education (ranging from 1 = *some high school* to 6 = *graduate university degree*), job tenure (in years), and their job description. As all of the analyses in this study were conducted at the within-person level with person-mean centered predictor variables (see section 3.3 on Statistical Analyses below), I did not control for between-person variables such as age, gender, education, and job tenure because person-mean centering “removes all between-cluster [i.e., between-person] variation from the predictor and yield a ‘pure’ estimate of the pooled within-cluster (i.e., Level 1) regression coefficient” (Enders & Tofighi, 2007, p. 128).

### 3.3. Statistical Analyses

The data collected in this daily diary study had a multilevel structure (i.e., daily survey entries nested within employees). Therefore, I used hierarchical linear modeling software for conducting multilevel regression analyses (Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000). In the models, I included only within-person predictors of daily career adaptability and its four dimensions. The daily job and individual characteristics were centered at each participant’s mean.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Variance Components

Descriptive statistics and within-person correlations based on person-mean centered variables are shown in Table 1. Daily career adaptability dimensions were moderately positively inter-correlated at the within-person level ($r$s ranging from .33 to .49, $p < .001$). Moreover, daily career adaptability and most of its dimensions correlated positively with daily job and individual characteristics, except for daily emotional stability (see Table 1).
Table 2 shows the multilevel variance components and the proportions of between- and within-person variance in the daily variables. For daily career adaptability, 24% of the total variance (and between 25 and 36% of the total variance in the daily career adaptability dimensions) resided at the within-person level. Figure 1 illustrates this within-person variability in the four daily career adaptability dimensions using “spaghetti plots” of data provided by the first ten employees in the data file who responded to surveys on all five days. The proportions of within-person variance in the daily job characteristics were 47% (daily job demands), 38% (daily job autonomy), and 30% (daily supervisory career mentoring). For the daily individual characteristics, between 22% (daily conscientiousness) and 44% (daily current temporal focus) of the total variance resided at the within-person level. Overall, these findings suggest that daily career adaptability, career adaptability dimensions, as well as job and individual characteristics varied considerably within persons across five work days.

4.2. Daily Job Characteristics as Predictors of Daily Career Adaptability

Table 3 presents the results of the multilevel analyses predicting daily career adaptability and its dimensions. Together, the daily individual and job characteristics explained 30% of the within-person variance in daily career adaptability, as well as 14% of the within-person variance in daily concern, 16% of the within-person variance in daily control, 19% of the within-person variance in daily curiosity, and 26% of the within-person variance in daily confidence.

According to Hypothesis 1, daily job demands relate positively to (a) daily career adaptability and (b) daily confidence. As shown in Table 3, daily job demands positively predicted daily career adaptability (γ = .10, p < .001) and daily confidence (γ = .14, p < .001). Thus, Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported. Unexpectedly, daily job demands also positively predicted daily concern (γ = .16, p < .001).

Hypothesis 2 states that daily job autonomy relates positively to (a) daily career
adaptability, (b) daily concern, (c) daily control, (d) daily curiosity, and (e) daily confidence. In support of Hypotheses 2a and 2c, daily job autonomy positively predicted daily career adaptability ($\gamma = .08, p = .009$) and daily control ($\gamma = .14, p = .001$). In contrast, Hypotheses 2b, 2d, and 2e were not supported (see Table 3).

According to Hypothesis 3, daily supervisory career mentoring relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, and (c) daily curiosity. As shown in Table 3, daily supervisory career mentoring negatively predicted daily concern ($\gamma = -.08, p = .040$) and positively predicted daily curiosity ($\gamma = .12, p = .002$). In contrast, daily supervisory career mentoring did not significantly predict daily career adaptability and the other career adaptability dimensions. Thus, only Hypothesis 3c was supported, whereas Hypotheses 3a and 3b were not supported.

4.3. Daily Individual Characteristics as Predictors of Daily Career Adaptability

Hypothesis 4 states that daily conscientiousness relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, (c) daily control, and (d) daily confidence. Table 3 shows that daily conscientiousness positively predicted daily career adaptability ($\gamma = .21, p < .001$), daily control ($\gamma = .21, p = .003$), and daily confidence ($\gamma = .26, p < .001$), but not daily concern. Moreover, unexpectedly, daily conscientiousness positively predicted daily curiosity ($\gamma = .23, p = .004$). Thus, Hypotheses 4a, 4c, and 4d were supported, and Hypothesis 4b was not supported.

In support of Hypotheses 5a and 5b, daily openness to experience positively predicted daily career adaptability ($\gamma = .13, p = .002$) and daily curiosity ($\gamma = .14, p = .024$). Unexpectedly, daily openness also positively predicted daily confidence ($\gamma = .26, p < .001$; see Table 3). Of the other daily Big Five personality characteristics, only daily extraversion positively predicted daily confidence ($\gamma = .11, p = .030$). In contrast, daily extraversion did not significantly predict daily career adaptability and the other career adaptability dimensions. Moreover, daily agreeableness
and emotional stability did not predict daily career adaptability and its dimensions (see Table 3).

According to Hypothesis 6, daily core self-evaluations relate positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily control, and (c) daily confidence. Contrary to expectations, daily core self-evaluations only positively predicted daily concern ($\gamma = .20, p = .006$). Thus, Hypotheses 6a, 6b, and 6c were not supported (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 7 states that daily future temporal focus relates positively to (a) daily career adaptability, (b) daily concern, (c) daily control, (d) daily curiosity, and (e) daily confidence. Daily future temporal focus positively predicted daily career adaptability ($\gamma = .11, p = .001$), daily concern ($\gamma = .14, p = .004$), and daily curiosity ($\gamma = .20, p < .001$), but not daily control and daily confidence. Thus, Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7d were supported, whereas Hypotheses 7c and 7e were not supported. Unexpectedly, daily past temporal focus positive predicted daily career adaptability ($\gamma = .06, p = .008$), daily concern ($\gamma = .10, p = .001$), and daily control ($\gamma = .06, p = .024$), but not daily curiosity and confidence. Finally, daily current temporal focus did neither significantly predict daily career adaptability nor its dimensions (see Table 3).

5. Discussion

5.1. Summary and Interpretation of Results

The aim of this daily diary study was to contribute to an emerging line of research on career adaptability, a core construct in vocational psychology (Brown & Lent, 2016). Similar to two previous daily diary studies on career adaptability (Zacher, 2015), the current study found substantial proportions of within-person variance in daily overall career adaptability (24%) and its four dimensions (between 25% and 36%). Consistent with propositions of career construction theory (Savickas, 1997, 2013), this study further showed that several daily individual and job characteristics related to daily manifestations of career adaptability at the within-person level. In other words, when certain individual or job characteristics were higher or lower on a given day...
compared to individuals’ average scores across days, their daily career adaptability also deviated positively or negatively from their central tendencies in career adaptability behaviors across days. Overall, daily job and individual characteristics explained 30% of the within-person variance in daily overall career adaptability, and between 14% and 26% of the within-person variance in the four daily career adaptability dimensions.

With regard to daily job characteristics as predictors, daily job demands related positively to daily concern, daily confidence, and daily overall career adaptability, suggesting that employees adapt their behavior to focus on future tasks and plans, and they strive to manage their tasks and work-related changes effectively when they face high job demands. Daily job autonomy related positively to daily career adaptability and daily control (e.g., making independent decisions, taking responsibility for one’s action) but, contrary to expectations, it did not significantly relate to the other career adaptability dimensions. This suggests that other factors than daily job autonomy, such as daily job demands and daily individual characteristics, are more important triggers of daily manifestations of these career adaptability dimensions.

Daily supervisory career mentoring related positively to daily curiosity (e.g., exploring opportunities, observing different ways of doing things) but, contrary to expectations, it was not significantly related to daily overall career adaptability, and it related weakly negatively to daily concern. The latter finding might suggest that daily supervisory career mentoring can alleviate employees’ career concerns by providing them with emotional and instrumental social support (e.g., listening, sharing information). Consistently, Creed, Fallon, and Hood (2009) hypothesized that social support from sources outside of the workplace (e.g., family, friends) would relate negative to individuals’ career concerns and positively to their self-regulation capacity.

With regard to daily individual characteristics as predictors, several findings from the current daily diary study were consistent with research by Zacher (2014b) at the between-person
level. Specifically, Zacher (2014b) found that conscientiousness positively predicted confidence across six months. In the current study, daily conscientiousness related positively not only to daily confidence, but also to daily control, daily curiosity, and daily overall career adaptability. Thus, being in a conscientious state should not only facilitate behaviors such as making independent decisions, taking personal responsibility, performing efficiently, and demonstrating effort and persistence; it should also motivate employees to plan, prepare for, and thoroughly explore potential future tasks and opportunities. Zacher (2014b) further found that openness to experience positively predicted curiosity, confidence, and overall career adaptability. The same pattern of results emerged in the current study at the within-person level. It appears that daily openness to experience is not only important for the exploration of future selves and opportunities, but also for the belief in one’s ability to solve problems and to succeed at work.

The findings for daily core self-evaluations were only partially consistent with Zacher’s (2014b) findings at the between-person level. Specifically, daily core self-evaluations only related positively to daily concern but not – as in Zacher’s (2014) study – to overall career adaptability and the other dimensions. Even though it was not hypothesized, it seems plausible that daily core self-evaluations relate positively to behaviors related to the preparation of future work and career tasks. However, additional research is required to understand why daily core self-evaluations did not relate to the other behavioral manifestations of career adaptability. Vocational psychologists consider future temporal focus to be one of the most important predictors of career adaptability, as focusing one’s attention one the future provides the basis for career exploration, planning, and mastering career transitions successfully (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004; Marko & Savickas, 1998). Future temporal focus positively predicted career adaptability and all of its dimensions in Zacher’s (2014b) study. In the current study, daily future temporal focus only related positively to daily concern, daily curiosity, and daily overall
career adaptability, but not to daily control and confidence. It may be that, on a daily basis, focusing on the future is less relevant for taking responsibility and performing effectively at work, and more important for planning and exploration activities (such as the investment of effort beyond what is immediately required; see Foo et al., 2009). In contrast, at the between-person level, a future temporal focus appears to be more relevant for employees’ effort investment and effective work performance (Zacher, Heusner, Schmitz, Zwierzanska, & Frese, 2010).

Unexpectedly, but partially consistent with Zacher’s (2014b) findings (for control and overall career adaptability), daily past temporal focus related positively to daily concern, daily control, and daily overall career adaptability. Future theoretical and empirical work is necessary to understand why a focus on the past may relate positively to career adaptability and some of its dimensions. A useful starting point for this work are Karniol and Ross’ (1996) observations that “The past can come to the mind uninvited, color the present, and push individuals into action; people can use their memories to guide their selection of goals and plans; and people can use their memories to help them achieve their chosen goals” (p. 607).

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

Important strengths of daily diary studies are that they offer the possibility to “capture life as it is lived” (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003) and to explain within-person variability in work-related variables (Beal, 2015). However, the current daily diary study also has a number of limitations. First, causality could not be established with the current design; it may be possible that employees’ daily career adaptability behaviors impact on their perceptions of daily job and individual characteristics. To overcome this limitation, future research could adapt the experimental vignette methodology to investigate predictors of daily career adaptability (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Ohme & Zacher, 2015). Second, as is common in daily diary studies, all constructs were assessed using self-reports. This may be particularly problematic with regard to
“objective” job characteristics such as job demands, job autonomy, and supervisory career mentoring, as individual attributes such as daily affect, personality, and career adaptability may bias perceptions of the work environment. Future research could rely on peer or supervisor reports to measure job characteristics. Moreover, due to similar concerns, future research on daily career adaptability behaviors may benefit from observations of “actual behavior” as compared to employees’ self-reports of their behavior (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007).

Third, to be able to draw more substantive conclusions, future research could employ mixed method designs (i.e., combinations of quantitative and qualitative approaches) and collect data over longer time periods (e.g., 10 work days). Finally, future research could examine the mechanisms and boundary conditions of relationships between daily job and individual characteristics and daily career adaptability, including moderators at the between-person level (e.g., demographic characteristics, personality traits, personality variability; cf. Debusscher et al., 2015a). For instance, employee age may moderate links between daily autonomy and career adaptability (Ng & Feldman, 2015). More generally, to further improve understanding of the concept of daily career adaptability, researchers could attempt to develop a comprehensive theoretical model that includes multiple predictors, moderators, and outcomes at both within- and between-person levels, as well as team, organizational, profession, and societal levels.

5.3. Practical Implications

Explaining within-person variability in daily behaviors associated with career adaptability is practically important (cf. Dalal et al., 2014; Zacher, 2015). Based on the findings of this study, employees could, on a daily basis, seek work environments and proactively put themselves into certain individual states (e.g., being conscientious, paying attention to the future) in order to enhance their career adaptability. Organizations could support employees by providing them with motivational job demands, job autonomy, and supervisory career mentoring on a daily basis.
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Figure 1

Illustrations of Within-Person Variability in Daily Career Adaptability Dimensions ($N = 10$)
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

| Variable                      | M    | SD   | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Daily career adaptability     | 3.38 | 0.78 | (.95) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily concern                 | 2.94 | 1.04 | .72 (92) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily control                 | 3.83 | 0.79 | .75 (.40) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily curiosity               | 3.05 | 1.03 | .80 (.43) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily confidence              | 3.69 | 0.82 | .75 (.33) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily job demands             | 3.58 | 0.96 | .33 (.24) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily job autonomy            | 3.79 | 0.91 | .37 (.23) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily supervisory mentoring   | 2.72 | 1.21 | .18 (.03) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily conscientiousness      | 4.16 | 0.76 | .33 (.15) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily extraversion            | 3.56 | 0.78 | .25 (.11) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily agreeableness           | 4.01 | 0.74 | .24 (.10) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily emotional stability     | 4.01 | 0.79 | .07 (-02) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily openness to experience  | 3.40 | 0.79 | .36 (.20) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily core self-evaluations   | 3.82 | 0.73 | .22 (.18) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily past temporal focus     | 2.97 | 1.18 | .15 (.16) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily current temporal focus  | 3.81 | 0.81 | .23 (.16) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily future temporal focus   | 3.43 | 1.01 | .29 (.23) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Note. Correlations represent within-person (level 1) relationships of person-mean centered variables (N = 156 participants provided 591 daily survey responses). Reliability estimates (α) are shown in parentheses along the diagonal. 
* p < .05; ** p < .01.
Table 2

*Variance Components and Proportions of Between- and Within-Person Variance in the Daily Variables*

| Variable                                      | Null Model $\tau_{00}$ | Null Model $\sigma^2$ | Proportion of Between-Person Variance | Proportion of Within-Person Variance |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Daily career adaptability                   | 0.47                    | 0.14                   | .76                                   | .24                                  |
| Daily concern                               | 0.82                    | 0.27                   | .75                                   | .25                                  |
| Daily control                               | 0.42                    | 0.21                   | .67                                   | .33                                  |
| Daily curiosity                             | 0.81                    | 0.29                   | .74                                   | .26                                  |
| Daily confidence                            | 0.44                    | 0.25                   | .64                                   | .36                                  |
| Daily job demands                           | 0.50                    | 0.44                   | .53                                   | .47                                  |
| Daily job autonomy                          | 0.52                    | 0.32                   | .62                                   | .38                                  |
| Daily supervisory career mentoring          | 1.06                    | 0.46                   | .70                                   | .30                                  |
| Daily conscientiousness                     | 0.45                    | 0.12                   | .78                                   | .22                                  |
| Daily extraversion                          | 0.42                    | 0.20                   | .68                                   | .32                                  |
| Daily agreeableness                         | 0.37                    | 0.17                   | .69                                   | .31                                  |
| Daily emotional stability                   | 0.46                    | 0.16                   | .74                                   | .26                                  |
| Daily openness to experience                 | 0.47                    | 0.19                   | .71                                   | .29                                  |
| Daily core self-evaluations                 | 0.40                    | 0.13                   | .76                                   | .24                                  |
| Daily past temporal focus                   | 0.82                    | 0.61                   | .57                                   | .43                                  |
| Daily current temporal focus                | 0.37                    | 0.29                   | .56                                   | .44                                  |
| Daily future temporal focus                 | 0.76                    | 0.29                   | .72                                   | .28                                  |

*Note. $\tau_{00} =$ between-person variance component, $\sigma^2 =$ within-person variance component. The proportion of between-person variance is computed as $\tau_{00} / (\tau_{00} + \sigma^2)$, and the proportion of within-person variance is computed as $1 - (\tau_{00} / [\tau_{00} + \sigma^2])$.***
Table 3

Results of Hierarchical Linear Modeling Analyses Predicting Daily Career Adaptability and Career Adaptability Dimensions

|                          | Daily career adaptability | Daily concern | Daily control | Daily curiosity | Daily confidence |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Intercept                | 3.39 (0.06)**             | 2.94 (0.08)** | 3.84 (0.05)** | 3.07 (0.08)**   | 3.71 (0.06)**   |
| Daily job demands        | 0.10 (0.03)**             | 0.16 (0.04)** | 0.06 (0.04)   | 0.02 (0.04)     | 0.14 (0.04)**   |
| Daily job autonomy       | 0.08 (0.03)**             | 0.07 (0.05)   | 0.14 (0.04)** | 0.06 (0.05)     | 0.07 (0.04)     |
| Daily supervisory career mentoring | 0.02 (0.03) | -0.08 (0.04)* | 0.00 (0.03)   | 0.12 (0.04)**   | 0.02 (0.03)     |
| Daily conscientiousness | 0.21 (0.05)**             | 0.12 (0.08)   | 0.21 (0.07)** | 0.23 (0.08)**   | 0.26 (0.07)**   |
| Daily extraversion       | 0.06 (0.04)               | 0.01 (0.06)   | 0.04 (0.05)   | 0.08 (0.06)     | 0.11 (0.05)*    |
| Daily agreeableness      | -0.00 (0.05)              | -0.08 (0.07)  | 0.09 (0.06)   | 0.02 (0.07)     | -0.05 (0.06)    |
| Daily emotional stability| -0.03 (0.04)              | -0.09 (0.06)  | -0.03 (0.06)  | -0.00 (0.06)    | 0.01 (0.06)     |
| Daily openness to experience | 0.13 (0.04)** | 0.10 (0.06)   | 0.01 (0.05)   | 0.14 (0.06)*    | 0.26 (0.06)**   |
| Daily core self-evaluations | 0.08 (0.05) | 0.20 (0.07)** | 0.11 (0.06)   | -0.00 (0.07)    | 0.03 (0.06)     |
| Daily past temporal focus | 0.06 (0.02)**            | 0.10 (0.03)** | 0.06 (0.03)** | 0.05 (0.03)     | 0.01 (0.03)     |
| Daily current temporal focus | 0.01 (0.03) | -0.03 (0.05)  | -0.00 (0.04)  | 0.01 (0.05)     | 0.04 (0.04)     |
| Daily future temporal focus | 0.11 (0.03)**          | 0.14 (0.05)** | 0.04 (0.04)   | 0.20 (0.05)**   | 0.05 (0.04)     |

\[
\tau_{00} = 0.48 \\
\sigma^2 = 0.30 \\
R^2_{\text{within}} = 0.30
\]

Note. \( N = 156 \) participants provided 591 daily survey responses. Unstandardized multilevel modeling coefficients (\( \gamma \)) with standard errors (\( SE \)) are shown. \( \tau_{00} \) = between-person variance component, \( \sigma^2 \) = within-person variance component. \( R^2_{\text{within}} \) = proportion of variance explained in dependent variable by predictors at the within-person level; calculated as (null model \( \sigma^2 \) – predictor model \( \sigma^2 \) ) / (null model \( \sigma^2 \)).

* \( p < .05 \); ** \( p < .01 \).