

# Theoretical Foundations of Career Development

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## **PRE-READING QUESTIONS**

1. Consider your own career as you read this chapter. Which theories or models seem to fit your own career development? Which do not fit as well? Why?
2. Consider a client whose career path has been quite different from your own. Which theories or models seem to best fit him or her? Which do not fit as well? Why?

## **Introduction and Learning Objectives**

Through reading, reflection, and responding to questions and activities in this chapter, students will:

1. Recognize the importance of gaining a theoretical understanding of career development.
2. Be equipped with a variety of traditional and emerging theories and models to support case conceptualization and interventions with diverse clients.
3. Understand careers from a variety of theoretical perspectives.
4. Gain the versatility needed to support the career development of all Canadians

- regardless of geographic region or individual characteristics.
5. Recognize and accommodate the impact of change and chance on career development.
  6. Become familiar with Canadian contributions to career theories and models.

## Overview

The role of work in people's lives has changed over generations. Similarly, theories of career development have changed to accommodate the diverse client base that counsellors currently serve. In this chapter, several career development theories and models are briefly introduced. Some will resonate with you more than others; however, all have been found useful for conceptualizing the career journeys of individuals and groups.

The *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners* (National Steering Committee, 2004) specify core career development knowledge, including the ability to describe how human development models relate to career development (C3.1.1), major career development theories (C3.1.2), and how change and transition affect clients moving through the career process (C3.1.3). Although there are comprehensive textbooks available on career development theory, the goal of this chapter is to provide an overview that will inspire you to read more about the theories and models that seem to fit best for your clients.

## Vignette

*Kim lives in a rural community — about a two-hour drive from the nearest city. The local town has limited employers (a grocery store, bank, several restaurants, pub, coffee shop, medical clinic, and a few independently owned retail stores and salons). There is a mill, a mine just outside of town, and a small industrial park with a variety of businesses focused on services for local residents. Kim is on medical leave from the mine, recovering from a back injury, and won't be able to return to work.*

As you read through this chapter, use various theories and models as frameworks for understanding Kim's current career situation. How might the theory or model you choose impact the kind of background information you consider important?

## Introduction to Career Counselling Theories and Models

**Theories** help to explain why careers develop as they do, whereas **models** help show us how to work more effectively with our clients. This chapter briefly introduces some traditional and emerging theories and models that influence our understanding of career development.

Theories and models tend to reflect the eras in which they were introduced. In the early years of vocational psychology, for example, Parsons (1909) was tasked with matching individuals to jobs in the newly industrialized workplace. By the 1950s, Ginzberg and colleagues (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951), as well as Super (1957), were moving beyond job-matching to considering how career development was influenced by life stages and significant roles. In the 1970s and 1980s, theorists including Krumboltz (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976) and Gottfredson (1981) were examining the impact of context and culture on career development. As post-modern reasoning emerged, many career theorists began to explore how to work collaboratively with clients to construct meaning (Cochran, 1997; Hansen, 2001; Peavy, 1997; Savickas, 1997; Young & Valach, 2004).

Many adults currently seeking career support are in the midst of major **life transitions**. Career practitioners will need theories of change and transition to help frame effective interventions for them (Bridges, 2009; Krumboltz, 2011; Schlossberg, 2011). Career theories and models emerging in the early years of the 21st century reflect the rapid shifts of our labour market and the cultural diversity of our clients (Bright & Pryor, 2011; Pope, 2011). In recent years, several Canadian researchers and theorists have made significant international contributions and this chapter will introduce some of their work (Amundson, 2009, 2011; Arthur & Collins, 2010; Cochran, 1997; Magnusson & Redekopp, 2011; Neault & Pickerell, 2011; Peavy, 1997; Peruniak, 2010; Young & Valach, 2011 — of these co-authors, Young is the Canadian). There has also been significant Canadian career development literature published in French and a few francophone authors have also published in English (e.g., Limoges, 2003; Riverin-Simard, 1995).

Theories and models are organized in this chapter into three major clusters.

1. Career Matching theories — focus on placing individuals into jobs.
2. Career Development theories — acknowledge different career issues and needs at various ages and stages of human development.
3. Career Responsiveness theories — recognize the complex interaction of diverse individuals finding and maintaining work in an ever-changing global economy.

All three types of theories influence our understanding of career issues that clients hope to resolve.

### Career Matching Theories

Many career theories, particularly some of the earliest ones, focused on matching people to jobs. Sometimes referred to by critics as “test and tell” approaches, such theories help people choose careers by systematically comparing personal characteristics to job requirements or workplace roles.

Frank Parsons (1909) has long been recognized as the father of vocational guidance. In the early years of vocational counselling, Parsons was tasked with helping immigrants and young people to find work. To facilitate this process, he introduced a fundamental understanding of career choice that still influences our work today. There were three parts to Parsons' "trait-factor" framework: (a) self-understanding (e.g., abilities, interests, resources, limitations); (b) knowledge about the workplace (e.g., opportunities, compensation); and (c) understanding the relationship between these two factors (i.e., "true reasoning"). To extend the services provided by his organization, Parsons established the first training program for career and employment counsellors (Hartung & Blustein, 2002).

Parsons' contributions are still often cited. Hartung and Blustein (2002), for example, used his work in making a case for a return to the social justice roots of our field. Parsons' trait-factor focus is also foundational to many of today's career assessment tools, employee screening assessments, job development programs, and work placement initiatives. Tools like our **National Occupational Classification System (NOC)**, for example, have been developed to support the career matching process.

Another theorist, Holland (1997), identified six distinct personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional; RIASEC). Since it was first introduced in 1959, Holland's theory of person-environment fit has generated more research than any other in the field. Holland's six types can be arranged in a hexagon — such a distribution places Realistic, for example, directly opposite from Social, suggesting that there is little commonality between those two types. (See the spotlight on Holland's Theory of Vocational Types.)

Aside from rich descriptions of six personality types and corresponding work environments, Holland introduced the notions of congruence (i.e., the similarity between an individual's most preferred types and the work environment type), consistency (i.e., how similar an individual's two most preferred personality types are, as arranged on the hexagon), and differentiation (i.e., the degree of similarity or difference between an individual's highest and lowest type scores). Holland's theory is foundational to many of the career interest assessment tools in use today (e.g., Holland Self-Directed Search, Majors Career Exploration Survey, Strong Interest Inventory).

Identifying career goals and securing employment are two major areas of focus for many career programs and services in community-based settings, educational institutions, and even corporate career centres. Although career professionals have moved away from the test-and-tell approach of the last century, career matching theories are still relevant in helping individuals find career direction and are foundational to many of the computer or Internet-based career-planning programs (e.g., CHOICES, Career Cruising). It's not uncommon, however, for matching theories to be used in combination with the career development and career responsiveness theories presented in the following sections.

❖ *Stop and Reflect*

Thinking about the vignette, how might identifying Kim's traits and characteristics help to generate alternate career paths that involve less strenuous physical activity?

**SPOTLIGHT: HOLLAND'S THEORY OF VOCATIONAL TYPES**

by Lara Shepard

The basic premise of John Holland's Theory of Career Choice (RIASEC) is that our behaviours are determined by an interaction between personality and the characteristics of our environment. In choosing a career, individuals search for work environments that allow them to express their interests, skills, attitudes, and values. Therefore, work environments tend to become populated by individuals with related occupational personality types.



Holland's theory is centred on the notion that most people fit into one of six personality types:

1. **Realistic:** are good at working with tools, mechanical or electrical drawings, machines, or animals. This type often works outdoors (e.g., in construction).
2. **Investigative:** are precise, scientific, and intellectual. This personality type is good at understanding and solving science and math problems. They are open to new ideas and often have a wide range of interests.
3. **Artistic:** are creative, preferring to express themselves with ideas and materials. They enjoy ambiguous, unsystematic activities and work best in an aesthetically pleasing environment, responding positively to recognition. Vocations are in music, art, literature and drama.
4. **Social:** are drawn to working with, nurturing and helping others with their verbal, interpersonal, and educational skills. They like to inform, train, develop, cure, or enlighten others.
5. **Enterprising:** prefer competitive environments, leadership, influence, selling, and status. This type can be ambitious, energetic, and self-confident. Example professions include management, marketing, and sales person.

6. Conventional: are precise, rule-regulated, orderly, and unambiguous. This type can be conforming, efficient, practical, unimaginative, and inflexible. Example professions include accountant, clerk, and editor.

Just as there are six personality types, there are six basic types of work environments each directly related to a personality type. People who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied.

### Career Development Theories

Theories of human development (e.g., Maslow, Skinner, and Erikson as cited in the S&Gs, C3.1.1; S&Gs, 2004) help to explain stages that humans go through in terms of basic needs, behaviours, and identity development. Similarly, career development theories help to explain typical career progression, as well as what happens to individuals when their anticipated career journey is interrupted.

Although there are several theories of career development, the best known and most widely used is Super's (1980) life-span life-space approach to careers. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explain Super's approach in depth but his 14 propositions of career development are described in detail by Super, Savickas, and Super (1996).

Super, similar to the trait-factor theorists, acknowledged how individual differences impact career qualifications. However, different from the trait-factor theorists, Super added a focus on life stages, identifying a "maxi-cycle" through which most individuals progress sequentially from growth in the early years (aged 4 to 13) to disengagement in senior years (over 65). (See Figure 1.) Although typical ages can be assigned to each stage, Super recognized that life circumstances such as job loss may result in individuals revisiting earlier stages, a process he referred to as "mini-cycles."

Life Stage	Growth	Exploration	Establishment	Maintenance	Disengagement
Age	4–13	14–24	25–44	45–64	65+

Figure 1: Super's Life Stages.

Super was ahead of his time in recognizing the impact of environmental factors on career development (e.g., socioeconomic status of parents) and in introducing the notion of "career maturity" to explain why some individuals seem to cope better than others with career decision making and attachment to the workforce.

He also highlighted the importance or “salience” of a variety of life roles that he named child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, homemaker, or parent. Super believed that the salience of roles changes across one’s lifespan and that sometimes, work may not be the most important life role. This concept is essential for career counsellors to understand because life-role conflict is a career issue many Canadians face (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003; Neault, 2005).

The *Career Development Assessment and Counseling* model has its roots in Super’s theory (C-DAC; Super et al., 1996). This model takes a developmental approach, beginning with an intake interview to identify the client’s career concern(s). Next, the model proceeds through four phases: (a) systematically considering life- and work-role salience; (b) career development to date; (c) personal characteristics (including values, interests, and abilities); and (d) self-concepts and life themes. Formal and informal assessment data is then integrated with interview information to produce a comprehensive career narrative and the beginning of a collaborative career development plan. Many assessment tools have been developed to complement Super’s theory, including the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI), Salience Inventory (SI), Career Development Inventory (CDI), and Work Values Inventory (WVI). Several of them are available through Vocopher, the learning “collaboratory” available online at <http://vocopher.com/>.

Career development theories such as Super’s have particular relevance when counselling members of age-related cohorts (e.g., high school or college students, recent graduates, mid-career changers, or individuals contemplating retirement). The notion of “mini-cycles” is useful in normalizing the experience of individuals whose career trajectory has been temporarily or permanently disrupted (e.g., through job loss, injury, or returning to school as an adult). The construct of salience plays a particularly important role in understanding the career issues faced by single parents, dual career couples, mature students, people juggling work with community commitments or semi-professional sports careers, and adults faced with elder-care responsibilities.

A Canadian tool, the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (Haché, Redekopp, & Jarvis, 2000) is a comprehensive framework for career counsellors, incorporating a developmental approach. Each of 11 competencies has different tasks across four developmental levels. The model also accounts for four stages of learning for each cell in the framework: acquisition, application, personalization, and actualization.

### ❖ *Stop and Reflect*

The vignette at the beginning of this chapter doesn’t mention Kim’s age or other life roles. How might age and life responsibilities beyond work impact Kim’s career situation? How might you proceed if Kim were 23? 55? A mother of one preschooler? A father of three children in college? Juggling elder-care responsibilities?

## Theories and Models for Career Responsiveness

Most of the newer theories and models acknowledge the interaction between individuals and their environments. The focus of career counselling in the 21st century is no longer solely on an individual's personal characteristics and goals. The term **career responsiveness** was originally introduced to describe effective career management in times of significant change and transition — “a proactive, yet adaptable, approach to navigating career journeys” (Neault, 2000, p. 7). Over the years, several metaphors have been used to illustrate career responsiveness (e.g., the Machu Picchu model, in Neault, 2000; kayaking vs. riding a log raft down a river, in Neault, 2002; and most recently, career flow, in Niles, Amundson, & Neault, 2011). The notion of career responsiveness seems to fit many current career theories and models and has been used as a framework for a special issue of the *Journal of Employment Counseling — Thoughts on Theories* (Neault, 2011).

Although introducing every recent or emerging theory is far beyond the scope of this chapter, as is covering any one of them in depth, a few examples will be used to illustrate the general direction that theories seem to be heading towards in the early decades of the 21st century. Themes include **cultural complexity**, change and transition, **collaborative meaning-making**, systems, workplace career development, and **quality of life**.

For the purpose of organizing this chapter, somewhat arbitrary divisions have been made between types of theories and models. However, many of the theories and models introduced could just as easily fit into a different subsection — such is the complexity of career counselling today.

At the end of each subsection, relevant Canadian contributions to theory will be highlighted. As this textbook is written in English, selected theories have been drawn primarily from English publications. It's important to acknowledge, however, that there is exceptional career-related research being conducted in French-speaking Canada and a few examples are included to inspire you to read more.

### Cultural Complexity

It is now generally accepted that culture comprises far more than ethnicity; all counsellors and all clients are culturally diverse and bring cultural traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviours to their work together (Arthur & Collins, 2010). Several theoretical approaches facilitate career practitioners and counsellors to engage in culturally appropriate assessments and interventions. Leong and Lee (2006) introduced a *Cultural Accommodation Model* (CAM), identifying a three-step approach to counselling that includes (a) identifying cultural gaps in existing theory, (b) filling in those gaps with culturally specific constructs drawn from other sources, and (c) testing the culturally accommodated theory for incremental validity above the

original theory. Pope (2011), in his *Career Counseling with Under-Served Populations* (CCUSP) model, has focused his attention on traditionally underserved populations. He presented a fascinating keynote address at Cannexus 2009 in Toronto, identifying 13 keys for successful career counselling with ethnic, racial, and sexual minorities.

Canadian authors Arthur and Collins (2010) have developed a *Culture-Infused Counselling Model*, comprising three essential components: (a) the counsellor's cultural self-awareness; (b) awareness of the client's cultural identities and worldview; and (c) establishing a culturally sensitive working alliance. Other Canadians have focused their attention on models and strategies to support Aboriginal career development (McCormick, Amundson, & Poehnell, 2002; Poehnell, Amundson, & McCormick, 2006); their *Guiding Circles* workbook and resources have been widely used in Aboriginal career programs and services throughout Canada and beyond.

### Change and Transition

During periods of change and transformation, theories to help explain the transition process are important. Career practitioners use several such theories and models to guide their work. A few will be introduced here: *Bridges' Transition Model*, Schlossberg's *4S Model*, Porot's *One Step at a Time Model*, and Prochaska and DiClemente's *Stages of Change Model/Transtheoretical Model*. Riverin-Simard (1995), a Canadian, has also written extensively about career transitions, primarily in French.

Bridges' (2009) transition model identified several "zones." Those most relevant to career practitioners are the ending zone, the neutral zone, and the new beginning. In the ending zone, individuals have tasks to complete before they will reach a sense of closure after a change (e.g., after being laid off, the individual may need to sign a letter agreeing to accept a severance package, complete forms to apply for employment insurance, or empty out his or her office and return property that belongs to the organization). Between the ending and new beginning, individuals find themselves in the neutral zone — a place of uncertainty that has been compared to being "between trapezes" or "walking on quicksand." In the neutral zone, nothing seems stable or routine. It can be disconcerting, but it is also a creative time for hopes and dreams to surface. Eventually, individuals become established in the next phase of life — the new beginning. The individual may have started a new job or returned to school; new routines are established and life feels "normal" again.

Schlossberg's (2011) transition model helps to explain why some people navigate through the same transition very differently than others. She identifies "4 S's" that impact transition: situation, self, supports, and strategies. Her research has considered a wide range of transitions, including those that were anticipated, unanticipated, and what she terms as "non-events" (i.e., expected transitions that failed to occur, such as not receiving a long-awaited promotion or needing to postpone retirement). Career practitioners can help clients navigate transitions by considering their

unique situation (e.g., health, significant others, location), self (e.g., inner strengths or challenges, optimism, resiliency), supports (e.g., social, financial), and coping strategies.

Porot's *One Step at a Time Model* (as cited in Bolles, 2011, p. 142) offers another useful way to conceptualize change. Porot acknowledged that making dramatic career changes is challenging. He recommended that individuals consider jobs as comprising two components (i.e., the job title and the field). Shifting only one of those elements at a time (e.g., changing job titles but staying in the same field, or applying for the same type of job in a different sector) can maximize one's chances of a successful transition.

Originally used in health behaviour change (e.g., drug and alcohol counselling), but now widely used within career services, Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) *Transtheoretical Model of Change* acknowledged that change is a process. They identified that change readiness begins at a precontemplation stage and then moves through contemplation, planning, making the change, and maintaining, sustaining, or relapsing.

Riverin-Simard (1995) summarized her career transition model in an ERIC Digest. She emphasized that transitions:

- are continuous and cyclical;
- involve interaction between people and their environments, resulting in redefinition of relationships;
- require consideration of four dimensions (i.e., analogical, relational, organismic, transactional);
- are completed through analysis, recognizing relationships, preparation, achieving stability, and judging multiple inter-related factors.

These theories address the impact of change and transition on career development. The next section focuses on how career development practitioners and counsellors work together to conceptualize careers within such dynamic environments.

### Collaborative Meaning-Making

Increasingly, individuals are being recognized as the experts on their own lives. Many current approaches to career counselling focus on collaborative meaning-making. Savickas (2011) encouraged counsellors to listen for a client's career story from multiple perspectives in order to offer an appropriate intervention. Such perspectives include the actor (i.e., who someone identifies with or resembles; what traits and characteristics are most pronounced), agent (i.e., how someone sets and seek goals), and author (i.e., how someone's identity is unique). Canadian Cochran (1997) also promoted a narrative approach to career counselling that focuses on composing

narratives to articulate and understand the main character of a specific career plot.

Another Canadian, Peavy (1997), introduced *Sociodynamic Counselling*, a constructivist perspective, grounded in a philosophy of helping. Using this theory, career counsellors focus on four key factors:

1. Relationship — forming a strong co-operative alliance with the client;
2. Agency — facilitating the client's self-helpfulness;
3. Meaning-making — co-constructing an understanding of key elements of the career decision; and
4. Negotiation — constructing meaningful and realistic career plans.

### Systemic Influences on Career Development

Another important approach to conceptualizing career development in the 21st century acknowledges the systemic interactions of individuals and their environments. Gottfredson's (1981) work on *Circumscription and Compromise* was one of the earliest attempts to conceptualize systemic influences on career development. Gottfredson described two key elements: *circumscription* (i.e., the process people use to systematically eliminate career possibilities, often due to what careers are perceived as available to their gender or class), and *compromise* (i.e., the ongoing process of adjusting career choices due to labour market realities, family responsibilities, and access to training).

Similarly, Krumboltz's (1996) early work, the *Learning Theory of Career Counseling*, acknowledged that career decision making is impacted by a complex combination of genetic endowment (e.g., sex, race, disabilities, and special talents), environment (e.g., socioeconomic status, access to education, family influences, culture, and shifts in the economy), formal and informal learning, and something he called "self-observation generalizations" (SOGs; i.e., the comparison of one's perceived abilities with an outside standard). More recently, Krumboltz (2009) has focused on the impact of happenstance on career development, refining his earlier work to become the *Happenstance Learning Theory*. To facilitate career development in the midst of uncertainty, Krumboltz emphasized four elements: (a) accepting that uncertainty is natural, (b) pursuing opportunities for learning, (c) actively creating chance, and (d) identifying, then overcoming, career barriers.

*Social Cognitive Career Theory* (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) was built upon Bandura's Social Cognitive foundations, incorporating a focus on such individual characteristics as culture and social context, gender, genetics, and life events. The theorists recognized the impact of individual beliefs on career choices, regardless of whether or not those beliefs were grounded in actual accomplishments, learning from others, cultural influences, or physiological responses to the situations they encountered.

## SPOTLIGHT ON HAPPENSTANCE

by Lara Shepard

In recent years, Krumboltz has developed ideas around supporting (even encouraging) career indecision (Krumboltz & Levin, 2004). Indecision can be sensible and desirable as clients can create and benefit from unplanned events.

The National Guidance Research Forum summarized the key ideas and implications as follows:

- Open-mindedness should be celebrated, not discouraged.
- Benefits should be maximized from unplanned events.
- Lifelong learning is essential.

Some of the implications for practitioners from this new dimension of the theory are discussed and include:

- Career counselling should be a lifelong process, not a one-off event.
- The distinction between career counselling and personal counselling should disappear.
- “Transitional counselling” is a more appropriate term than career counselling.
- Professional training should be expanded to ensure practitioners are properly supported in this extended role.

### Reference

Bimrose, Jenny. (2004) Learning theory of careers choice & counselling, National Guidance Research Forum. Retrieved from <<http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/imprac/ImpP2/traditional/learning-theory/>>.

*Integrative Life Planning* (Hansen, 2011) offers another holistic approach to conceptualizing career development. Embedded within an advocacy-based social justice perspective, Hansen has identified six critical life tasks: (1) finding work that needs doing; (2) attending to our physical, mental, and emotional health; (3) connecting family and work; (4) valuing pluralism and inclusiveness; (5) exploring spirituality and life purpose; and (6) managing personal transitions and organizational change.

Patton and McMahon (2006), in their *Systems Theory Framework* (STF) of career development, have addressed the dynamic and complex nature of career development through the idea of three interconnecting systems (i.e., individual, social, and

**SPOTLIGHT: *Te Whare Tapa Wha MODEL FOR HOLISTIC MENTAL HEALTH***

by Seanna Quressette

Drawing on wellness traditions of the Maori in New Zealand, Dr. Mason Durie proposed the Te Whare Tapa Wha as a model for holistic mental health. The basic premise is that well-being is like a meeting house: In order for the house to stand strong each wall of the structure must be strong and balanced. In this metaphor the four walls of the house are: te taha hinengaro (psychological health), te taha wairua (spiritual health), te taha tinana (physical health), and te taha wh nau (family health). This framework invites career professionals to move outside the traditional mechanistic view of the individual with skills, attributes, interests, and values that match with labour market needs to a view where the individual is a dynamic, whole, strong structure that can be resilient to shifts in the landscape.

Te Whare Tapa Wha is an optimistic, strengths-based theory that allows for client experiences of success along broad life domains. “To increase the likelihood of making successful transitions, career education and guidance needs to build on clients’ knowledge of themselves and their potential for development” (Careers New Zealand, 2012). Given the increasingly dynamic and global labour market, a theoretical frame that provides many options for strategy development and is applicable across a wide range of career development settings is a welcome addition to the career theory landscape.

**Reference**

Careers New Zealand (2012). Te Whare Tapa Wha. Retrieved from <<http://www.careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/career-practice/career-theory-models/te-whare-tapa-wha/>>.

environmental-societal). They’ve also highlighted several process influences (e.g., change over time, chance), emphasizing how ongoing interactions between systems and processes result in complex, ever-changing career development.

Another systems approach, the *Chaos Theory of Careers* (CTC), has been recently developed by Bright and Pryor (2011). Similar to other current theorists, they emphasize complexity, change, and chance, while acknowledging the importance of engaging individuals in “constructing” their careers. Borrowing from the original chaos theory, their work introduces to career development such terms as “attractors,” “fractals,” and “phase shifts” to help explain many of the career issues that individuals encounter in today’s somewhat chaotic work environment.

Several Canadians have also taken systemic approaches to their work. *Action Theory* was developed by a Canadian, Young, and his co-author, Valach (Young &

Valach, 2004; 2011); it is grounded on the premise that career development is, in essence, an interaction between individual intention and social context. They focus on co-constructed “projects,” recognize that the most effective career interventions may occur in natural settings such as the workplace or home, and welcome the involvement of the clients’ significant others throughout the process. Similarly, Amundson’s (2009) *Active Engagement Model* promotes taking career counselling out of sterile offices.

Two other Canadians, Magnusson and Redekopp (2011), have created a model of *Coherent Career Practice*. They have identified four core elements:

1. Career literacy (the fundamental skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to successfully manage one’s career).
2. Career gumption (the energy and motivation to engage in career development activities).
3. Career context (the relationship between an individual’s immediate environment and the larger world of work).
4. Career integrity (the balance between personal, social, economic, and community factors, that supports finding meaningful work).

Further expanding upon the systems theories, Canadians have led the way in highlighting the importance of hope and optimism to successful career development. Neault’s (2002) research identified optimism as the single best predictor of career success and job satisfaction and, in the *Career Flow* model (Niles et al., 2011), hope is acknowledged as the centre of a career development system that involves the ongoing interaction of individuals with their environments. Similarly, Poehnell and Amundson (2011) have recently written about *hope-centred engagement*.

### Career Development at Work

Clearly, one system that is inextricably connected to career development is the workplace. Some researchers have bridged the silos of career development and **human resource management** with a specific focus on career development within the workplace. Dawis and Lofquist (1984) introduced the *Theory of Work Adjustment* (TWA), which described the dynamic, ever-changing relationships between individuals and their environments. More recently, Canadian career and human resource consultant, Pickerell (Neault & Pickerell, 2011) identified four essential elements of employee engagement (i.e., alignment, contribution, commitment, and appreciation) and introduced career management as an employee engagement strategy.

## Quality of Life

Building on the systems notion of the interaction of work with other life roles, several current theories and models address overall quality of life. Although not specific to career development, Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) work on *Flow* helps to explain "optimal experience" (i.e., when an individual is so absorbed in work, and it's going so well, that he or she loses track of time). Csikszentmihalyi found that optimal flow could be attributed to a good match between skills and challenge. For highly skilled individuals, too little challenge could result in boredom. On the other hand, individuals who lack sufficient skills to handle challenging situations are likely to feel overwhelmed and anxious. Both extremes (i.e., any significant mismatch between skills and challenge) could also result in apathy.

Influenced by Csikszentmihalyi's work and other positive psychologists, Niles and Amundson developed the *Career Flow Model* (Niles et al., 2011). Optimal career flow is grounded in hope and strategically aligned with environmental influences. Canadians Neault and Pickerell's (2011) *Career Engagement Model* similarly acknowledges the importance of aligning capacity (i.e., individual competencies and organizational resources) to challenge; too little challenge results in individuals feeling underutilized, too much challenge or too little capacity results in feeling overwhelmed, and extremes in both directions result in disengagement. Another Canadian author, Limoges (2003), has written extensively about work-life balance, or maintenance. He suggested that balance results from strategic decisions about what tasks, activities, or activities to hold on to and what to let go of.

Another Canadian, Peruniak (2010), has articulated a *Quality of Life Approach to Career Development*, warning that "quality of life has not yet captured the imagination of career development theorists but it is too important and central to our work to leave to the exclusive attention of other disciplines" (p. 192). He conceptualized quality of working life as influenced by numerous factors including job conditions, leadership, employability, and job security. However, he also recognized that, as a value-based construct, quality of life will be defined uniquely by each individual. All these approaches suggest that quality of life can be enhanced through strategic career and life management — taking on new challenges as skills develop and reducing challenges when resources are stretched too thin.

### ❖ *Stop and Reflect*

In the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, Kim's culture is not revealed. What cultural-related information would help you customize your support for Kim? How can taking a systems perspective help you understand Kim's career situation? Imagine if the best work opportunities for Kim require relocation — how might this impact quality of life (both Kim's and her significant others')?

## Summary

Some of these theories and models may stand the test of time and, at some point, be referred to as influential. Others may just serve for today as current models illustrating effective approaches for working with clients.

Career theory will continue to be dynamic. We need new theories for exploring the unique social, cultural, and economic circumstances that form the context of our clients' lives and careers. Today is a time of unprecedented technological change, environmental crises, and global interconnectedness. Recent theories and models tend to acknowledge the impact of constant changes, how the meaning of career is co-constructed by individuals and their counsellors, and the central importance of strengthening hope.

Although each client's story will be unique, career practitioners can use theories and models to understand and explore the career issues that trouble their clients. Theories and models equip us with effective starting places to begin to understand what has already happened, what is happening now, and what needs to happen next. Working from a theoretical foundation removes the randomness of an atheoretical approach to career practice and increases our effectiveness as practitioners.

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## Glossary

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**Career responsiveness** involves a constant interaction between individuals and their environments.

**Collaborative meaning-making** is a social activity that is conducted jointly by a community to generate a shared understanding of a process, outcome, and/or future goal.

**Cultural complexity** allows helpers to consider a number of dimensions that comprise an individual's understanding of cultural identity (gender, ethnicity, and age).

**Human resource management (HRM)** is the function within an organization that focuses on recruitment of, management of, and providing direction for the people who work in the organization. Human Resource Management is the organizational function that deals with issues related to people such as compensation, hiring, performance management, organization development, safety, wellness, benefits, employee motivation, communication, administration, and training.

**Life transitions** is both a process and a stage that occurs throughout our lives and is associated with a discontinuity with the past (e.g., the transition from high school to work).

A **model** symbolically represents a set of concepts or ideas which is created to depict relationships. Models are useful in showing the process or steps involved with working with clients.

**National Occupational Classification (NOC)** is a national, standardized reference on occupations in Canada. Over 30,000 job titles have been organized into 520 occupational group descriptions that can be used for defining and collecting statistics, managing information databases, analyzing labour market trends and extracting practical career-planning information. Also, it provides statisticians, labour market analysts, career counsellors, employers and individual job seekers a consistent way to collect data that describes and understands the nature of

work. The NOC is updated according to five-year Census cycles, reflecting the evolution of the Canadian labour market.

**Quality of life** refers to individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, and their relationship to salient features of their environment.

A **theory** is a set of interrelated concepts, which together create a systematic view of phenomena for the purpose of explaining or predicting.

## Discussion and Activities

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### *Discussion*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the purpose of taking a theory-based approach to career services.
2. Compare and contrast one theory or model from each of the broad types introduced in this chapter: Career Matching, Career Development, and Career Responsiveness. Consider the years when each theory was first developed and the characteristics of the clients or students that the theory or model was likely based on. How do your selected theories or models fit for the clients you work with (or will work with) today?
3. Some program mandates fit more closely with one type of theory (e.g., age-related programs may take a developmental approach whereas return-to-work programs may focus on finding work that fits individual characteristics). Discuss how you could use theories and models to make a compelling case for changing some of your programs or services.

#### Personal Reflection

Briefly describe your own career development story, reflecting on how you got where you are today as a career practitioner. Consider how perceived gender roles, socioeconomic status, chance, interests, and failures have impacted your career. Identify themes and patterns within these factors. Apply insights from your career experiences to your work as a career practitioner. Assuming that other people may make career decisions in ways similar to you, what implications does this have for career practitioners? How can you more effectively facilitate your clients' career exploration?

### Career Practitioner Role

Watch a movie such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Working Girl*, *Office Space*, or *the Pursuit of Happyness*. Take a theoretical approach (e.g., Social Cognitive Career Theory) and conceptualize the client's concerns, using the terms and concepts from the selected theory. What interventions might be helpful?

### Activities

1. Reflect on the vignette provided at the beginning of this chapter.
  - a) Choose one of the theoretical approaches to examine Kim's career dilemma. How does this theoretical perspective impact your understanding of the situation? What interventions might you choose to support Kim's next career steps?
  - b) Choose a different theory or model to use with Kim. How does shifting your theoretical perspective impact your understanding of the career issues? What additional interventions does this new perspective suggest?
  - c) Choose a third theory or model that seems relevant to Kim's situation. Does it bring other possible interventions to mind?
2. Reflect on your own career journey.
  - a) Draw a lifeline to date, identifying at least five developmental milestones that impacted your career.
  - b) Add contextual elements to your lifeline. What external factors have influenced your career journey?
  - c) Identify at least three personal characteristics that have remained relatively constant throughout your career to date. What have you been known for, wherever you have worked?

### Resources and Readings

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#### Resources

#### Websites

Career theory and models <<http://www2.careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/career-practice/career-theory-models/>>.

Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF). E4. Understanding the career development big picture. *Big picture view of career development theory* <[http://ccdf.ca/ccdf/NewCoach/english/ccoache/e4a\\_bp\\_theory.htm](http://ccdf.ca/ccdf/NewCoach/english/ccoache/e4a_bp_theory.htm)>.

Life Strategies. 10 Key Concepts in Career Theory <<http://www.lifestrategies.ca/docs/10-Key-Concepts-in-Career-Theory.pdf>>.

### Supplementary Readings

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