

## **Introduction: Rethinking Career Development**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter introduces readers to the *Oxford Handbook of Career Development*, and to the field of career development. The origins of the field are discussed in relation to vocational guidance, differential psychology, interactionist sociology, and life course development. The selection of the term career development for this volume is explained with regard to three interlocking themes: the broader contexts of career development including government policy; the wide range of career development theory relating to experiences, phenomena, and behaviour; and the broad spectrum of helping practices including one-to-work and group work. The inspiration and aims for this volume are set out, and challenges associated with terminology within the field are acknowledged. The editors seek to provide a state-of-the-art reference point for the field of career development, but also create a transdisciplinary and international dialogue that explores key current ideas, debates, and controversies. The volume is divided into three sections. The first explores the economic, educational, and public policy contexts for practice. The second section focuses on concepts and explores the rich theoretical landscape of the field. The third section turns to practice, and the translation of ideas into action to support individuals and groups with their career development.

Keywords: Career; career development; career theory; transdisciplinary; vocational guidance.

### **Origins of the Career Development Field**

The field of career development has multiple roots. It has different origins in different nations and indeed there is a need for further exploration of its history outside the Anglophone world and Western Europe. Its academic roots lie primarily in psychology and sociology, and in the dialogue between these disciplines. The origins of its policy and practice lie in the drive to respond to major societal and economic challenges.

Throughout history, individuals have experienced the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of life, supported each other through them, and reflected on this process. This process has generally taken place within specific family, educational, religious, work, and community contexts, and played a key role in the preservation and evolution of societies. For example, the ancient universities in India provided students with guidance and pastoral support for post-university life (Sharma & Sharma, 2004). There is also an extensive classical literature that appears to connect with career-related themes. For example, Plato's *Republic*, a Socratic dialogue from ancient Greece, proposes a threefold division of labour based on guardians, auxiliaries, and producers (Plato, 1974). It also contains the wonderfully rich 'Myth of Er' which tells of the allocation of souls and life patterns. To take a further example, the *Tao Te Ching*, an anthology of wise sayings dating from fourth century BC China, advocates a quiet life of action through inaction, contemplation, and discernment (Lao Tzu, 1961). There are countless other examples in ancient literature. Many of the great religious and philosophical traditions contain teachings which address career-related topics such as right living, service, and calling.

In addition, there are novels, plays, poems, and art with rich connected themes. For example, the novels of Miguel de Cervantes, George Eliot, Leo Tolstoy, and Henry James are saturated with career-relevant topics such as situation, relations, vocation, culture, social impact, and the passage of time. And, as Sultana (2014) points out, the limitations and possibilities of career development were exercising the young Karl Marx in his 1835 essay 'Reflections of a Young Man on the Choice of a Profession'.

Whilst such cultural practices and written texts brim with what we can now see as career-related themes, it would be anachronistic to claim them for the field of career development. It is in the context of changing societal beliefs and practices taking place in the last 150 years that the modern, formal evolution of the career development field can be traced in detail. In this section, we identify four important early strands to that process: vocational guidance, differential psychology, interactionist sociology, and life course development.

### ***Vocational Guidance***

The origins of the vocational guidance movement can be found in the late 19th century and early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and the emergence of

state education systems presented formidable social challenges. Occupational choice had become more complex, and the transition from school to employment raised novel problems. Individuals had to navigate the new forms of social organisation that emerged around the growing industries and cities. Modernity had also questioned the once comforting religious, political, and psychological verities of earlier times. Vocational guidance emerged from the pragmatic and intellectual responses to these challenges. Its pioneers were social reformers and innovators.

In the USA, Frank Parsons started a vocational guidance centre in Boston, and wrote a landmark text on the topic: *Choosing a Vocation* (Parsons, 1909). This advocated a three-fold matching process of occupational choice: understand yourself, understand the requirements of different lines of work, and ‘true reasoning’ on the relationship between them. The influence of this text on the vocational guidance movement in America is well documented (Savickas, 2009). It is evident that Parson’s work was motivated by a passion for social activism on behalf of disadvantaged groups (Mann, 1950; O’Brien, 2001). Many of Parson’s concerns, such as the assessment of individuals, use of occupational information, and the promotion of social justice, continue to be central themes in current writing and practice in the field. For some, the role of Parsons as the ‘father of vocational guidance’ represents a satisfactory origin myth. The story is, of course, more complicated; and the vocational guidance movement has multiple origins, with independent contemporaneous roots in different countries.

Some of the earliest attempts at public policymaking in vocational guidance were made in the UK. In 1904, Maria Ogilvie Gordon made a proposal for local education authorities and school boards across Britain to set up ‘Educational Information and Employment Bureaux’ to support school leavers to find suitable work (Heginbotham, 1951). She published: *A Handbook of Employments: Specially Prepared for the use of Boys and Girls on Entering the Trades, Industries, and Professions* (Ogilvie Gordon, 1908). Around this time the UK Government created a public employment service, bringing job seekers and employers together, but its network of ‘labour exchanges’ failed to adequately meet the needs of young people. So subsequent legislation, notably *The Education (Choice of Employment) Act* (1910), sought to implement Ogilvie Gordon’s vision. This began a long dialogue between employment and educational policy, and the involvement of both national and local government in providing specialist employment support services for youth. In time, career

services would emerge from these roots with a distinct and separate identity from the UK's public employment service.

Worldwide developments are less well documented in the English language literature but are equally important to acknowledge. These developments took place largely independently and can be illustrated with the following examples. In Norway, vocational bureaux were opened in 1897 (Kjærgård, 2020). In Austria, over 30 child guidance clinics were established between 1898 and 1934, drawing from the psychoanalytic theories of Alfred Adler (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). In Germany, a vocational counselling department was opened in 1908, making support for information seekers available to schools (Savickas, 2008). In India, the first vocational guidance laboratory was opened in 1915 at the University of Calcutta (Sharma & Sharma, 2004). Finally, vocational guidance functions were also introduced in Japan between 1910 and 1915 (Watanabe & Herr, 1983).

### ***Differential Psychology***

The growing influence of differential psychology offered the matching approach to vocational guidance the promise of a scientific basis. The technology of psychometrics emerged from intelligence testing by educational psychologists, underpinned by developments in statistics. Psychometricians applied their methods to questions of occupational choice at an early stage. There were pioneers of this scientific rationalist approach to vocational guidance in the UK (notably Burt, 1924), where the creation of the National Institute for Industrial Psychology by C.S. Myers in 1921 became a focus for this work (Peck, 2004). In the USA, the scientific approach combined with and complemented Parson's approach. At Harvard, the German applied psychologist Hugo Münsterberg, addressed issues of occupational choice, and in 1910 developed an early theory of vocation incorporating thought, feeling, and behaviour (Porfeli, 2009). The technology of psychometrics further developed through its use in military recruitment during the First World War (and later during the Second World War). In addition, the University of Minnesota engaged in large scale testing and placement of jobseekers in the 1920s and 1930s, using tests of arithmetic, practical judgement, dexterity, and vocational interests (Moore, Gunz, & Hall, 2008).

### ***Interactionist Sociology***

Arguably, the formal study of career began in earnest in the 1920s and 1930s in the pioneering Sociology Department at the University of Chicago. Clifford Shaw's *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (1930/1966) and *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career* (1931) were perhaps the first academic texts to use the term career in an organised and intentional way. Shaw expanded the popular meaning of career, as a middle-class job, to include the non-work roles of individuals at the margins of straight society. Shaw focused not on paid, middle class work but on the social phenomenon of what was then called delinquency. His research also featured the rich and extensive use of life history. This enabled the unfolding process of career to be seen through the interpretive lens of the occupant.

Linked to this, Everett C. Hughes in two articles entitled *Personality Types and the Division of Labour* (1928) and *Institutional Office and the Person*, (1937), developed the first explicit career theory i.e. the beginnings of a conceptual grammar for the critical interpretation of career development. This technical vocabulary included: collective life, culture, ecology, group, interaction, contingencies, call/mission, patterns, roles, meaning, rituals, offices, stages, status, and forms. In the latter article, Hughes (1937, pp. 64-67) provided one of the first systematic definitions of career asserting that career is made up of the work and non-work activities ('vocations' and 'avocations') of both men and women of all social classes. He referred to career as the 'the moving perspective' in which persons orient themselves with reference to other people, institutional forms, and social structures, and interpret the meaning of their lives. He further argued that the study of career could help understand the nature and 'working constitution' of society.

Shaw and Hughes were influenced by their fellow Chicago sociologists Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, George Herbert Mead, and Herbert Blumer (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934/1967; Park, 1915; Park & Burgess, 1921; see also Barley, 1989). Through this, they drew on the interpretivist approach of the German sociologist Georg Simmel whose influence can be seen in their view of career as a continual process of social interaction involving themes of otherness and marginality, and use of career theory to construct an interpretive grammar of social life. They also gained from the work of scholars linked to the School of Social Service Administration at the University such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelly, and Edith Abbott, who were pioneers in social work, methodology, knowledge of the city, and the integration of theory and practice (Shaw, 2010). Their influence can be detected in Shaw and Hughes' use

of the case history, concern for social welfare, and contact with people at the margins of society.

The significance of Shaw and Hughes' work for the career development field is threefold. First, career was reimagined in egalitarian terms as the 'moving perspective' through which all individuals interpret the meaning of their lives. Second, the scope of career was extended from micro-sociology to the constitution of society and thereby considerably expanding its organisational and political reach. Third, another wave of Chicago scholars built on their work and mobilised career as a key interactionist term crossing conventional boundaries of subjective/objective, individual/society, private/public, success/failure, work/non-work, and familiar/strange (e.g. Becker, 1966; Goffman, 1961/1968). The innovative scholarship of 'Chicago School Sociology' has occasionally suffered from neglect but is now acknowledged as one of the central traditions within career theory (e.g., Barley, 1989; Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018; Hodkinson, 2009; Law, 2009; McCash, 2018; Moore, Gunz, & Hall, 2008; Roberts, 1980; Savickas, 1996; Super, 1980).

### ***Life Course Development***

The study of the life course has preoccupied philosophers, playwrights, and artists since earliest times. It first became formalised by psychologists and sociologists in the early part of the twentieth century. This section focuses on four contributions of particular relevance to the origins of the career development field. The first relates to the German psychologist, Charlotte Bühler, who pioneered a whole of life approach to psychology in reaction to what she saw as the reductive approaches then prevalent in psychology. In an article entitled *The Curve of Life as Studied in Biographies*, Bühler (1935) systematically analysed hundreds of biographies featuring a wide range of individuals from business owners to factory workers. She postulated different stages in the life span from an expansionist preparation phase, to a stable specification phase, a results testing phase, and finally, a relinquishing phase where activities and positions were given up. She saw career in holistic, life span terms and argued that these ideas could enhance the support of career development. The second example relates to one of the first career pattern studies. In *Occupational Mobility in an American Community*, the sociologists Percy E. Davidson and H. Dewey Anderson (1937) reported on an extensive study of people living in San Jose, California. They developed a visual and theoretical representation of career patterns as contrasting patterns of participation in family, education, and work i.e. temporal pathways through family environment, elementary school,

senior school, college, first job, and more regular job. Thirdly, in their book *Industrial Sociology*, Delbert Miller and William From (1951) developed a more extensive approach to career patterns. They identified alternating phases of trial and stability, and four main types of career pattern: stable, conventional, unstable, and multiple trial. Finally, all the above mentioned psychological and sociological approaches were synthesised by the social psychologist, Donald Super, who designed a further, even larger career pattern study. He developed the first comprehensive theory of career development and linked this to the practice of vocational guidance (Super, 1954, 1957).

The significance of these studies lies in their emphasis on the temporal, lifelong nature of career development. They distinguished between the experience of multiple individual jobs versus an overall career. This career was interpreted in relation to contrasting patterns of family experiences, educational participation, and job roles. These studies broadened the scope of vocational guidance practice from matching clients with jobs, to helping clients learn to prepare for and engage with an overall career consisting of multiple roles, situations, experiences, and life themes.

### ***Summary***

This brief review of the literature locates the origins of the career development field in four contrasting strands: vocational guidance, differential psychology, interactionist sociology, and life course development. Understandably perhaps, some of the literature in the field focuses on only one strand, or even one element thereof, and this has led to questions about whether it really is a field at all. The extent of fragmentation and isolation can, however, be overstated. There are a number of important texts dating from the early (e.g. Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951; Super, 1957) and contemporary eras (e.g. Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Gunz & Mayrhoher, 2018; Patton & McMahon, 1998) that seek to integrate and make sense of the various strands in the field. This volume is intended as a further contribution to that process of integration.

### **What is ‘Career Development’?**

In this volume, we use the term ‘career development’ as a key organising concept. Such a terminology, as with all terminology, is imperfect and requires further discussion and

explanation. Career development is seen as a transdisciplinary field that draws originally from the disciplines of sociology and psychology. It has developed significant links with education and organisational studies, and also connects with aspects of economics, literary studies, cultural studies, history, geography, philosophy and a number of other disciplines. Strictly speaking, career development is neither a discipline in its own right, nor is it a subsection of another discipline. Rather, it is a transdisciplinary field within which a range of different traditions, topics, theories, epistemologies, and ontologies intersect. In different countries, different disciplines and traditions hold sway. One of the aims for this volume is to try and increase the amount of transdisciplinary dialogue and bring the varied discussions within the field together.

The term career development has been selected because it allows for discussion of three interlocking themes: the wider contexts of career development including government policy; the wide range of career development theory relating to experiences, phenomena, and behaviour; and the broad spectrum of helping practices including one-to-work and group work. In this section, the field is briefly discussed in relation to those three themes: contexts, theory, and practice.

### *Contexts*

Career development is seen in context rather than viewed in individualistic terms. All individuals are regarded as part of an extensive career development system. This wider context includes geography, political decisions, labour markets, socioeconomic status, education, and the media. For example, career is not just about choosing what we want from an unlimited occupational and lifestyle menu. Our careers are also shaped by the place and communities in which we live. Geographical and family ties define the opportunities that are open to us, shaping where we can career and what responsibilities and expectations we need to consider as we develop our careers. We make career decisions, but we do not make them entirely within circumstances of our own choosing. Opportunity structures are shaped by the political economy. Career development is not just an individual series of choices, it is where the individual interacts with society. It is where our psychology intertwines with the social, and relates to how we interact with social institutions such as the education system, businesses, organisations, and the state.

## ***Career Development Theory***

Career development theory attempts to interpret the wide range of career development experiences, phenomena, and behaviours. This includes negative experiences such as the experience of bullying, precarity, or racism. It also relates to positive experiences such as helping others and personal achievements. Career theory seeks to link the wider context with the felt experience of career development. While the word ‘development’ has a problematically normative association with improvement and enhancement, it can also mean, as in photography, to emerge or come into being. So, while individuals do not necessarily see their careers steadily and progressively improving, they do undoubtedly see them developing in the sense of emerging and coming into being. Not everyone encounters the same experiences, or moves through stages in the same order, but we are born and ultimately die, and, in between, most of us will grow up and grow older, experience setbacks, and find new opportunities.

Our careers are the pathway that we take through life and the concept of time is therefore critical to career. Our careers operate on at least two temporal dimensions. We have career choices to make every day. Should I stay at the office later or go home to my family? Should I finish my coursework or go to the pub? Should I stay in bed or get up and go to work? These are all *cross-sectional* career decisions where we play off one activity against another. But, the concept of career also adds in another set of decisions, as well as cross-sectional decisions, we also have *longitudinal* career decisions to make. Working harder now might open more opportunities in the future. Using our time and suspending our capacity to earn when we are studying, may ultimately increase our long-term earning power and capacity to control our lives. Enacting our career is a conversation between the present and the future, and our pasts frame the way in which this conversation can happen. In this volume, we discuss a wide range of career development theories reflecting contrasting traditions within the literature. We also ask authors to integrate existing ideas into new approaches that help advance the field.

## ***Practice***

Purposeful helping interventions, including one-to-work and group work, form a rich and important literature in the career development field. Such interventions are variously described as ‘career counselling’, ‘career coaching’, ‘career guidance’ in other texts.

However, we have opted, throughout most of the book, to avoid using this terminology because it is sometimes associated with one-to-one interventions rather than work with groups. We use terms such as ‘career development services’ to encompass work with individuals and groups. This wrangling with nomenclature raises a wider issue for anyone seeking to access career development support. Citizens seeking help with their career will encounter a bewildering array of terms such as career counsellor, career coach, career adviser, career guidance adviser, career teacher, career development professional, guidance worker, counsellor, coach, life coach, work coach, psychologist, and so on. One report, drawing on UK job specifications, found more than a 100 job titles in use for career development workers (Neary, Marriott, & Hooley, 2014). This complexity is further increased by the fact that career development services are also provided by individuals in a wide range of further occupations including managers, trainers, learning and development professionals, teachers, and lecturers, to name but a few. In addition, career development support is provided on an informal basis as part of ordinary life. Because career is so central to all our lives we inevitably speak to our friends, family, colleagues, and passing acquaintances about it. And they, despite their ‘lack’ of professional qualification or formal role, offer us information, advice, and ideas that form a kind of career development help.

In this volume, we have encouraged using terminology as inclusively as possible in the hope that each chapter speaks to any individual engaged in career development support regardless of job title or role. As indicated, the contributors to this volume have been encouraged to use terms such as ‘career development support’ and ‘career development service(s)’ when referring to purposeful helping interventions. In some cases, contributors have opted to use alternatives, for example, career enactment, career counselling, career guidance, or career education, and in these cases they have been encouraged to explain their terminology and reflect on why this terminology is appropriate.

### **Why We Created This Handbook**

Career is not a single moment of decision when we choose one job over another. It is the ongoing fabric of our lives. Our careers are conducted continuously and they develop in social and political contexts that provide contrasting opportunities and limitations. Career is all around us and there is no escape from it as it describes the coming together of our life, our learning, and our work. Career is important to the lives of individuals across the world and to the societies in which they live. As the editors of and contributors to the *Oxford Handbook of*

*Career Development* we are no different. We are researchers, writers, and thinkers who are interested in career development and we experience our own careers alongside the theories, research, and models that can be found in this book. Since everyone has a career, and it matters for both individuals and societies, it is critical that we understand how careers work and consider how we can usefully intervene. That is why we are so glad to be able to present this volume.

The decision to edit a volume like this emerges from the belief that career development is central to our understanding of social experience. Career acts as a framework for interrogating social realities and the place of individuals within them. It also acts as a framework for more specific action, i.e. practical interventions to help individuals. Career development work is an active practice informed by research and scholarship. This volume therefore aims both to deepen our understanding of career development, but also provide insights and inspiration to drive forward career development interventions.

The volume has been conceived and put together amidst our teaching, research, conference travel, and all the other aspects of our personal and professional lives. It is therefore related to our own personal journeys, statuses, and career aims. It is also a social act undertaken as part of our interaction with both the learned society of which we are all fellows, the National Institute of Career Education and Counselling (NICEC), and the wider field of career development (see Watts, 2014 for a history of NICEC). The handbook is intended as an intervention and a continuation of a bigger conversation about the past, present, and future of career development.

In this section, we describe the inspiration for this volume in relation to existing scholarship. We then proceed to discuss our central underpinning assumptions in relation to career development. These relate to: inclusivity, the centrality of learning, internationalism, engagement with contemporary debates, transdisciplinarity, and pluralism

### ***Inspiration***

The inspiration for the volume emerged out of a conference organised by NICEC in 2016. All the editors of this volume, and many of the contributors, attended this event where we

challenged ourselves to ‘rethink career development for a globalised world’. The conference commemorated *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance: Theory, Policy and Practice* (Watts, Law, Killeen, Kidd & Hawthorn, 1996) which for many of us had long served as a touchstone for the field. The current volume began as an attempt to update *Rethinking* and to build on the discussions that had taken place at the NICEC conference. But it quickly became something more, as we recognised the need to make the *Oxford Handbook of Career Development* more international, more multi-disciplinary, and to recognise the multiple traditions and perspectives that now characterise the field.

*Rethinking* was a landmark text in the UK in the 1990s and it gave voice to over twenty years of thinking, research, and activism that had been conducted by the scholars involved in NICEC. It was a powerful attempt to resituate career development work beyond the sub-discipline of counselling psychology. *Rethinking* drew on education, organisational studies, economics, management, sociology, and political economy. It also found a central role for learning at the core of career development work and developed new career learning theory to underpin this (Law, 1996a).

In *Rethinking*, it was recognised that career development is unavoidably political and that individuals act in ways that are framed by their environment, and by social and public policy systems (Killeen, 1996a, Watts, 1996a, 1996b). Furthermore, in drawing together a variety of different disciplinary traditions, *Rethinking* also recognised the lifelong and multi-context nature of career development. Career development activities are always situated, for example, they take place in schools (Law, 1996b), colleges (Hawthorn, 1996), universities (Watts, 1996c), businesses (Kidd, 1996), and career and public employment services (Killeen & Kidd, 1996). In each of these contexts, career development work is fighting for time, resources, and priority against a range of other functions. Yet, in each place, it also offers individuals and society huge benefits if its potential can be realised (Killen, 1996b). We feel that *Rethinking* made a unique contribution to the field when it was published as it was able to simultaneously summarise the state of play in the field and point the way forwards. It is exactly this kind of contribution that we hope the current volume will make.

At the same time, we also acknowledge the huge contributions made by the many other multi-author volumes on career development. There have been various impressive attempts to

draw together the field both before *Rethinking* (for example, Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Brown & Brooks, 1990; Watts, Super, & Kidd, 1981) and after (for example, Arthur & McMahon, 2019; Arulmani, Bakshi, Leong, & Watts, 2014; Athanasou & Perera, 2019; Collin & Young, 2000; Gunz & Peiperl, 2008; Lent & Brown, 2013; Maree, 2019). We have drawn on all of these volumes, and many more, as we have planned and written the *Oxford Handbook of Career Development*. There are also important texts focusing on discrete issues, for example, social justice (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018a, 2019), and key geographies (Cohen-Scali, Nota, & Rossier, 2017, Sultana, 2017). The current volume seeks to build on all this work by bringing together a wide variety of scholars and summarising the state of the art in career development as we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century.

Within the Oxford Handbook series itself there are also a number of important and relevant contributions which intersect with the current volume and the field of career development including volumes focusing on meaningful work (Yeoman, Bailey, Madden, & Thompson, 2019), participation in organisations (Wilkinson, Gollan, Marchington, & Lewin, 2010), personnel psychology (Cartwright & Cooper, 2009), skills and training (Warhurst, Mayhew, Finegold, & Buchanan, 2017), the psychology of working (Blustein, 2013), and lifelong learning (London, 2011). The existence of these authoritative Oxford Handbooks in related thematic areas creates the ideal context for the current volume. Oxford Handbooks assemble a series of specially commissioned essays from leading figures in the discipline, critically examine key concepts, and shape the future of the relevant field. This volume seeks to do this in relation to the field of career development, examining both how individuals develop and enact their careers in context, and the kind of interventions that may be used to support them.

### ***Career Development as an Inclusive Term***

We see career development as an inclusive term that relates to all individuals regardless of class, gender, sexuality, ability, geography or ethnicity. Career development does not just relate to individuals preparing for middle class, vocational, paid work and advancing within it. Career, as Watts (2015, p. 31) once noted, is ‘richly ambiguous’. It is a concept not limited to hierarchical progression within an organisation or occupation. It encompasses a very wide range of activities including formal or informal paid work, study, housework, caring work, voluntary or community work, political activism, and so on. It also includes other activities such as religious practices, leisure interests, health maintenance, family time, and relaxing. Career development is a key concept because it draws together and integrates all these

important activities. In our sense, individuals have only one career within which they engage in a wide range of activities, situations, and roles throughout their lives.

### ***The Centrality of Learning***

We see learning as central to career development both in theory and practice. Learning helps us to understand career experiences both good and bad. It also helps us see career development work, in all its forms, as a broadly educational enterprise within which the career learning of participants is a core concern (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen; 2018b; Krumboltz, 2009; Law, 1996a; Patton & McMahon, 1998). This provides a unifying vocabulary for understanding and framing the spectrum of helping activities including one-to-one work and group work.

### ***International Perspectives***

We seek to adopt an avowedly internationalist perspective throughout the volume. For example, avoiding what Ribeiro & Fonçatti (2018) describe as top-down ‘globalised localisms’ i.e. taking a local practice from one context, such as North American career counselling, and imposing it without adaptation globally. We have drawn authors from 14 countries across the world and asked them to write for an international audience, acknowledge an international context, and recognise the situated nature of career development.

### ***Engaging with Key Debates and Controversies***

In the current volume, we seek to acknowledge and engage in current debates and controversies. For example, discussions about: the nature of career development (Arulmani, 2014; Blustein, 2013; Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018); the future of work and career (Hooley, 2019); the variety of competing theoretical traditions which inform the field (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018b; Juntunen, Motl, & Rozzi, 2019; Leung, 2008); the evidence on the efficacy of different interventions and approaches (Hooley, 2017; Kashefpakdel, & Percy, 2017; Whiston, Mitts, & Li, 2019); and the intense political debate around the level of public policy commitment to the field (The Inter-Agency Working Group on Work-based Learning (WBL), 2020; International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy, 2019).

## ***Transdisciplinarity***

This volume sits within the psychology subject area in the Oxford Handbook series. We seek to fully recognise the psychological nature of career development but do so in the context of a transdisciplinary approach to the subject. Psychology being just one of the disciplines that contribute to our understanding alongside sociology, organisational studies, education, and other disciplines. We therefore encouraged authors to approach career development from any relevant discipline and acknowledge other disciplinary influences. Linked to this, whilst some similar volumes present a list of distinct theories and approaches, we have asked authors to be integrative and to engage with a range of disciplines, ideas, and traditions.

## ***Pluralism***

Whilst the *Oxford Handbook of Career Development* hopes to drive the field forwards, it does not aim to resolve every debate and issue. Partly, this arises from our own experiences as editors. We recognise shared aims and objectives for this volume, but we also have our own distinctive agendas, traditions, epistemologies, preoccupations, and so on. Broadening this out, we felt it was appropriate for a volume such as this to recognise a diversity of positions and viewpoints. We therefore took a consciously pluralist perspective which recognised and respected different theoretical, national, and cultural traditions. However, we have attempted to bring these different perspectives into robust dialogue with each other. We have asked authors to weigh in on crucial debates, advocate specific opinions, and construct new arguments.

## **The Structure of the Book**

This volume is divided into three sections: contexts, concepts, and practice. *Contexts* refers to the way in which careers are shaped by interaction with the environments they inhabit. *Concepts* refers to the rich theoretical landscape of this field. *Practice* refers to activities to support individuals and groups with their career development. Here we provide an overview of each section in turn.

## ***Contexts***

Context is important in any study of career development. Career experiences are not universal; rather they are shaped and constrained by their environments. Here we are primarily concerned with economic, socio-political, and institutional contexts.

Careers can be understood as a key point at which the activity of an individual intersects with the economy. Our first chapter (Gutowski et al., this volume) highlights concerns about the growth of economic inequality, and the decline of decent work. It is argued these are international pre-occupations, and concerns that pervade all parts of the world. Gutowski et al. draw a direct line from concern about the quality of paid employment opportunities to concepts that can be used in understanding career development. Percy and Dodds (this volume) explore the contribution that career development interventions make to the economic life of a country. They lay out the challenges and evidence for this way of thinking.

An important political dimension of career development is its position in relation to public policy. In developed nations, many career interventions are undertaken directly or indirectly by the state. Yet, ensuring sufficient citizen access to career development services remains a challenge in all countries, despite the widespread belief that supporting the careers of individuals is a 'public good' with wider societal benefits. McCarthy and Borbély-Pecze (this volume) chart the evolution of public policy for career development services. In spite of its promotion by influential international bodies, they find that public policy specifically targeted on career development support remains marginal – an adjunct to the main thrust of policymaking. Robertson (this volume), focuses more closely on the goals for public policy. Most studies have found that government intervention in careers is intended to promote the effective functions of the labour market, to support the operation of the education system (and its links to employment), and to promote social equity. Robertson suggests a broad framework of potential socially desirable goals for public policy, and highlights the potential of well-being, criminal justice, and environmental goals.

Careers are enacted within and between institutions, and institutions mediate the influence of government policy. Three chapters explore the importance of the education system and its links to employment for career development. Hooley (this volume) questions the way in which the education system embeds career development work as part of a highly political human capital development project which renders the individual's career as primarily an

economic contribution to society. **Sultana (this volume)** picks up similar themes and asks how career development learning engages with the current political economy and what possibilities might exist for more critical and authentic forms of career development education. **Percy and Kashfekpadel (this volume)** situate this discussion about career learning, by exploring in detail the variety of ways in which employers interface with educational institutions, and co-operate to promote career development learning.

### *Concepts*

The second section of the book explores the concepts and theories that underpin the career development field. For those entering the field, the wide range of theory now available can appear bewildering. **Yates (this volume)** provides a sound starting point by offering a survey of around forty theoretical approaches to career development. Rather than the traditional chronological account, she identifies four key recurring concepts: identity, environment, career learning, and psychological career resources.

One of the strongest streams of career theory focuses on career experiences of professionals and managers within (and beyond) organisations. **Mackenzie-Davey (this volume)** explains the evolution of this literature from its origins in the work of psychologists in business schools and provides a critique of its limitations. Organisational career theory continues to evolve and to be a fertile source of ideas. **Gunz and Mayrhofer (this volume)** provide one example of a direction of travel for this tradition and offer a social chronology framework that seeks to integrate the spatial, temporal, and ontic dimensions of career.

Much career development theory wrestles with a recognition of change and complexity within the individual, in the labour market, and in wider society. But, whilst this starting point is widely shared, it can lead theorists in a variety of directions. **Rossier, Cardos and Duarte (this volume)** present one of the most currently influential approaches to individual career development – the application of narrative counselling – with strong roots in the work of Mark Savickas and Jean Guichard. This approach is intended to enable individuals to reimagine their careers, and to adapt to change. In contrast, **Irving (this volume)** takes an explicitly political approach to critical social justice in response to workplace inequality and instability. For Irving, the required response is a form of critical education which empowers individuals to challenge the limitations in their context rather than merely adapt to it.

In the last decade, one of the most striking developments in career thinking has been a growing sensitisation to culture. For this reason, we feature this emerging area strongly. Many authors from different parts of the world see career as a fundamentally cultural phenomenon, and one that looks very different depending on where you are standing. **Stead & Poklar (this volume)** critique the use of Western frameworks of thought in studying careers across cultures. **Ribeiro (this volume)**, makes a case for the value of career theories emerging from the ‘Global South’ to add to, rather than replace, existing dominant theories. **Arulmani, Kumar, Shrestha, Viray & Aravind (this volume)** apply the cultural preparedness perspective to understand the experiences of traditional craft workers in India adapting to a globalised economy. **McCash (this volume)** takes an integrative approach to career and education studies and argues for a cultural learning theory of career development. He links this to innovative practice in the form a cultural learning alliance.

### ***Practice***

Whilst informed by contextual understanding, and a theoretical underpinning, the practice of career development requires its own focus. Perhaps we should speak of practices in the plural – because career development interventions can come from a wide variety of professional contexts including organisational development, human resources, counselling, education, employment support, and social and youth work. Indeed, the notion of ‘professional’ needs to be examined. **Gough and Neary (this volume)** look at the challenges facing career development practitioners as they seek to define themselves collectively as a profession, and to establish the kind of relationship with the state that underpins this identity.

**Bimrose (this volume)** addresses a key issue for career development practitioners as knowledge professionals and focuses on the role of labour market information. She argues that many of the generic helping skills used by career development professionals are shared by many professions, and so it is the skills used for handling knowledge of the labour market that represents the distinctive contribution that career development practitioners can bring to the table.

Much career development practice operates within a counselling paradigm. For this group of practitioners, Rogerian approaches to the relationship between service user and helper have been highly influential. **Bassott (this volume)** examines this tradition of 'client-centredness' and provides a critique of it informed by culturally and contextually sensitive theories.

**McIlveen, Perera, Brown, Healy, & Hammer (this volume)** look at another key aspect of career development practice, the process of assessing individuals to understand their career development needs. They argue that career assessment needs to be understood as a skilled and integral element of career development practice, but also one which can be approached in a variety of ways.

Another important strand to career development practice lies in educational approaches.

**Barnes (this volume)** focuses on career education in schools and colleges by drawing on the links between career development theory and transformative learning theory. He explores the potential to achieve radical and progressive outcomes from more ambitious programmes of career education, and describes effective pedagogical approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment which can assist learners in transforming their self-understanding, their relation to others, their potential to act, and their world view.

Increasingly the contact between career development service providers and their service users, irrespective of whether it is conceptualised as counselling or education, is mediated by digital technology. **Hooley and Staunton (this volume)** provide a review of the different metaphors through which the role and potential of technology is understood in this field. They argue there are three pedagogical positions that guide the choices of practitioners in their use of new technology.

Of course, all of these diverse approaches to career development practice only have value if they are effective. Questions of efficacy are essential both for the choice and design of approaches and for negotiations with policymakers and funder about the provision of career development services. **Whiston (this volume)** examines the evidence on the effectiveness of individual career counselling. She discusses the evidence from meta-analysis, which she argues offers one of the compelling syntheses of research in the field. **Robertson (this volume)** provides a broader overview of approaches to evaluating career development interventions and the formidable conceptual, definitional, and methodological challenges to

be overcome. He presents an approach to evidence-based practice that seeks to integrate research evidence with local, contextual, and pragmatic practitioner understandings.

### **Final words**

Career development policy, theory, and practice are dynamic and in a process of continual change. In this volume, we have tried to capture the state of the art as we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century. Our aim has been to provide a stronger, more integrative platform for future discussion and debates. We hope that we have achieved this by bringing together such an international array of scholars and writers. Career development certainly matters to us, and, wherever you are, we hope that this volume helps you move forward in your life and make a positive difference in the lives of others.

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