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Introduction

By way of background to this chapter, I begin by considering the question: *What is a theory?* A simple explanation is offered by Krumboltz (1994) who has explained that “a theory is a way of explaining what we observe. It is a way of making sense of our experiences. It is a way of summarizing a large number of facts and observations into a few general principles” (p. 9). Thus, a theory may be regarded as a guide, a model, an explanation, or a hypothesis that helps us to explain or understand particular phenomena (Brown, 2002a; Krumboltz, 1994; Solmonson, Mullener, & Eckstein, 2009).

Good theory, however, is well founded on research-based evidence. Brown (2002a) has presented criteria for judging a theory. He suggests that well-developed theories have clearly defined constructs and are parsimonious. He contends that good theories are comprehensive in their ability to account for the career development of diverse populations throughout the world and concludes that many theories fail this criterion. Further, Brown suggests that good theory explains what happens and why, assists our understanding of past, present, and future events, and may be applied in practice. Brown

concluded that no career theory meets all of his criteria.

Brown’s (2002a) criteria, however, that theory should account for diverse populations is also open to question in view of recent critiques of career theory and discussion about globalization, internationalization, and indigenization of career theory and practice (e.g., Arulmani, 2010; Leong & Pearce, 2011; Leung & Yuen, 2012; McMahon & Yuen, 2010; Mkhize, 2012; Watson, McMahon, Mkhize, Schweitzer, & Mpofo, 2011). For example, Leung and Yuen (2012) have cited four limitations of career development theory, specifically its focus on: (a) personal variables rather than contextual and cultural variables, (b) self-actualization and job-satisfaction as goals of career choice, (c) high levels of free choice and opportunities to make several decisions over time, and (d) developing practices and resources that are culture based and cannot easily be transported to other contexts. In this regard, Arulmani (2011) has explained that “a given culture has been already prepared in a certain way to engage with work, occupation and career” (p. 92) and has urged career guidance and counseling practitioners to learn from other cultures in order to move closer to delivering context resonant interventions. Thus, consideration must be given to the cultural base of the theoretical trends presented in this chapter and this will be revisited later in the chapter.

At first glance, the theory base of career psychology may be confusing because “the domain of career psychology . . . is characterized

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by a plethora of theories, philosophical positions, and research camps” (Savickas & Lent, 1994, p. 1). Two decades since this observation was made, the position of career psychology could be similarly described although the plethora of theories has widened as new theories have emerged.

In approaching the topic of *new trends in theory development in career psychology*, I became intrigued about what actually constitutes a *trend*, and in particular, what constitutes a *new trend*. Dictionary definitions told me that a trend is a general course, a general direction, or a style or fashion (e.g., Butler, 2009). Further dictionary definitions described *fashion* as a prevailing custom or conventional usage (Butler, 2009) and *style* as “a particular, distinctive, or characteristic mode or form of construction or execution in any art or work” (Butler, 2009, p. 1254). Against this background, I then wondered what duration or lead-in time is needed before a general direction or general course or a trend is recognized. I then wondered at what point is a new theory development regarded as a new trend.

With these thoughts in mind, I considered the diverse theory base of career psychology and how I would select the new trends in theory development for inclusion in this chapter. While possible options may have been to identify theories developed within a particular timeframe or theories which have amassed substantial evidence bases comparatively recently, I chose to identify the new trends according to the philosophical positions underlying the extant body of career theory. From when the first career theory was proposed in the early 1900s (Porfeli, 2009) to the present time, the dominant philosophical position underlying it has been logical positivism which emphasizes the importance of logical proof, objective measurement, and linear progression (Brown, 2002a). Thus, for the purposes of this chapter, because of the longstanding and pervasive influence of logical positivism, I consider the theory base informed by it as a pervasive trend in theory in career psychology.

More recently, however, theories informed by the philosophical positions of constructivism and social constructionism have become more

influential since being first recognized as a new trend by Savickas in 1989. Such was the influence of this new trend that Young and Collin (2004a) coedited a special issue of the Journal of Vocational Behavior that focused specifically on constructivism, social constructionism, and career. Theories informed by these philosophical positions emphasize narrative discourse, subjectivity, personal agency, meaning making, and connectedness between individuals and their broader contexts. In this regard, Mkhize (2012) has suggested that worldview is important in counseling African, indigenous, and other non-Western clients because of the value they place on connectedness and interdependence; this is reflected in the African construct of *Ubuntu* which refers to “our common humanity, our interconnectedness, and our spiritual connectedness” (Watson et al., 2011, p. 282). Watson et al. (2011) have indicated that approaches informed by constructivism and social constructionism and social justice may have some potential to accommodate non-Western cultural considerations. This is, however, yet to be tested. In this chapter, I consider theories informed by constructivism and social constructionism as new trends in theory development in career psychology.

The intention in this chapter is not to debate the merits of, or to advocate for, either philosophical position or particular theories. All have a place in career psychology and offer different and valuable contributions. Rather, the intention of this chapter is to focus on new trends in theory development in career psychology.

I begin this chapter by overviewing longstanding and pervasive trends in career psychology to provide necessary background for contextualizing the chapter’s focus on new trends in theory development in the field. Subsequently, I discuss new trends in theory development and briefly introduce four theory developments, specifically, contextual action theory (Young et al., 2011; Young & Valach, 2008), the chaos theory of careers (CTC) (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Pryor & Bright, 2011), career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), and the Systems Theory Framework (STF) (McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 1999,

2006) of career development. I have also included the relational theory of working (Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2011a) as an emerging theory underpinned by propositions that, if adopted, could have a profound influence on career psychology. I then consider the possible futures of the new trends and influences from the field of career psychology that may contribute to these possible futures.

Pervasive Trends in Career Psychology

Parsons (1909) pioneering work in assisting people with their career decision-making gave rise to career theory. Essentially, Parsons believed that self-understanding in combination with knowledge of the world of work would result in sound career decision-making. He applied his tripartite model to assisting young, poor, and disadvantaged people find employment in cities at the beginning of the 20th century. Subsequently, Münsterberg developed the first vocational theory using Parsons' tripartite model as a foundation (Porfeli, 2009). Parsons' collaboration with Münsterberg also established vocational guidance, as it was then known, in the field of applied psychology (Porfeli, 2009) and in the traditions of logical positivism (McMahon & Watson, 2006). Thus, Parsons' early work spawned the trait and factor approach, predicated on assessment and its interpretation by career practitioners, which remains deeply entrenched in career psychology to the present day (Savickas, 2008).

Parsons (1909) work gave rise to two distinct and pervasive trends in the field of career psychology. The first and most significant pervasive trend is that of a discipline underpinned by a logical positivist philosophy. Career assessment is a distinct feature of theories informed by logical positivism and to this end a myriad of assessment instruments has been developed. Many of these instruments serve the dual purposes of facilitating research that provides an evidence base for its parent theory and also providing practitioners with a means of assessing clients. Indeed, the use of career assessment

instruments has been foundational to career development practice for much of its history. Criticism has, however, been leveled at many of these instruments in relation to their Western orientation and their application to diverse and non-Western populations within their own Western countries of origin and internationally (e.g., Leong & Pearce, 2011).

The second pervasive trend in career psychology that emerged out of the work of Parsons was the emergence of a discipline underpinned by social justice values. Yet, since the days of Parsons, career psychology has paid little attention to this underlying core value and has been criticized for its middle-class focus (Blustein, 2006, 2011b).

A further pervasive trend is also evident in the critique of career psychology where many calls have been made for the field to revise itself to remain relevant (e.g., Blustein, 2011b; Savickas, 2001, 2011; Savickas & Lent, 1994; Walsh, 2011). For over two decades, theorists have considered the future of the field. For example, in 1994, a group of researchers and theorists convened to discuss the diversity of the theory base and the issue of convergence (Savickas & Lent, 1994). In 2001, in a special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Savickas proposed a mission and objectives for vocational psychology. A decade on, Walsh (2011) edited a special issue of the *Journal of Career Assessment* that considered "big questions facing vocational psychology."

Across these three milestone publications in career psychology, the themes considered were similar, have remained largely unchanged for decades, and are reflected in Savickas's (2001) mission for vocational psychology:

Vocational psychology, a specialty within applied psychology, conducts research on vocational behavior among all groups of workers, at each life stage, in order to advance knowledge, improve career interventions, and inform social policy. It is characterized by innovative theorizing to comprehend the diversity of human experience and the changing world of work; the use of diverse epistemologies and research strategies; an emphasis on programmatic and longitudinal studies; and the translation of research findings into models,

methods, and materials for career education and intervention. (p. 286)

Pervasive themes in the critique of career psychology include: lack of consensus with regard to key terms and their definitions; the Western and increasingly middle-class focus that has seen the field lose touch with its core value of social justice; the changing nature of society, globalization, and the internationalization of career psychology; the need for more diverse research methodologies; and the disciplinary isolation of career psychology from other fields that also share an interest in work and employment such as sociology, developmental psychology, and management and organizational psychology. Each of these themes warrants brief consideration to contextualize the new trends in theory development which will be discussed next in this chapter.

Lack of Consensus with Regard to Key Terms and Their Definitions

The lack of consensus with regard to key terms and their definitions has long been an issue for career psychology. For example, terms such as career development, career psychology, vocational psychology, career development, career guidance, and vocational guidance are widely used. Internationally, the terms career development, career psychology and vocational psychology have tended to be more widely applied in the American context and the term career guidance has tended to be more widely applied in the European and British contexts. In 1994, when convergence in career theory was debated, the term career psychology was used (Savickas & Lent, 1994). In 2001, Savickas proposed a mission and objectives for vocational psychology, and more recently a special issue of the Journal of Career Assessment (Walsh, 2011) also used the term vocational psychology. Of interest, many of the same researchers and theorists have contributed to all of these debates. Does this lack of consensus with regard to key terms and definitions matter? When we use the terms *career psychology*, *vocational psychology*, or *career guidance*, are we referring to the same discipline?

Are there nuanced differences in meaning between these terms that should be taken into account? This lack of consensus regarding terminology remains unresolved in the field and thus, remains a point of confusion within the field and more broadly with key stakeholders and clients.

Western Middle-Class Focus and Social Justice

Since Parsons (1909) emphasis on vocation, the field has moved increasingly toward the use of the term career in response to changes in the world of work and corresponding changes in theory and practice. Richardson (1993, 1996, 2000) has however, been critical of the use of the term career for its perceived middle-class bias. She has advocated use of the term *work* as a more inclusive term that can take account of paid, unpaid, volunteer, and caring work. Similarly, Blustein (2001, 2006, 2011a, 2011b) believes that work is a more inclusive term and has advocated a psychology of working which addresses the limitations of our field in relation to the way in which gender, social class, family background, and cultural characteristics impact on individuals' career development. In this regard, Blustein (2011b) has urged the field to broaden its base to consider unemployment and poverty.

As evidenced in the thoughts of Richardson (1993, 1996, 2000) and Blustein (2001, 2006, 2011a, 2011b), although social justice underpinned Parsons (1909) work, it has been marginalized over time. A pervasive trend in critiques of career psychology relates to a perception that it is a Western white middle-class discipline that does not cater well to women and minority groups and may not translate well across countries and cultures (Blustein; Richardson). In this regard, Stead and Perry (2012) have contended that "career psychology needs to focus less on its largely individualist, reductionist, and positivist focus toward research and practice and address inequities in communities through ethically-based social justice and community work." (p. 68).

Similarly, Watson and McMahon (2012) have observed that “the pendulum of career development has swung to and remained too long at the privileged end of the continuum” and that the field has “moved radically away from the roots of the discipline at the start of the last century” (p. 152). They have strongly advocated “revisiting that end of the continuum” in order to meet the challenges of career psychology in a globalized society (p. 152). In this regard, the development of theoretical accounts that are contextually and culturally sensitive to non-Western and indigenous people are still urgently needed in the field. While several non-Western authors have made important contributions to the field (e.g., Arulmani, 2007, 2010, 2011; Leong & Pearce, 2011; Mkhize, 2012) that can inform theory and practice, no major theoretical position has yet been offered although Arulmani’s (2011) cultural preparedness approach offers potential in this regard.

Changing Society, Globalization, and Internationalization

In many ways globalization and internationalization of career psychology have magnified the challenges presently facing career psychology. Globalization has resulted in more diverse client groups within both the traditional Western home of career psychology and internationally as the discipline is increasingly internationalized. Internationalization, however, has largely seen a one-way flow of theory and practice from Western countries, predominantly the United States of America, to other countries and cultures. Further, by their nature and origin, the discipline of career psychology is “anchored in a Western cultural context” (Leung & Yuen, 2012, p. 76) and its translation beyond Western cultures remains uncertain. In reflecting on this issue in the South African context, Watson and Stead (2006) asked “What should our theory base be? Are our theories sufficiently sensitized to local cultural, socioeconomic, and social conditions? What should our role be and who are the clients? What values should be promoted?” (p. 8).

Indigenization of career theory has been proposed as a possible solution (e.g., Leong & Pearce, 2011). Hou and Zhang (2007), however, have expressed concerns about the “voicelessness” (p. 47) of authors who are less proficient in the English language in disseminating their research to a wide international audience. Thus, a challenge remains in achieving a “multi-directional flow of philosophy, theory, practice, and research” (McMahon & Yuen, 2010, p. 103).

Diversifying Research Methodologies

In keeping with the dominant logical positivist philosophy, research in career psychology has been conducted primarily using quantitative methodologies. Qualitative methodologies have had a very limited profile in career psychology. Stead et al. (2012) who conducted a content analysis of articles published in 11 key journals between 1990 and 2009 found that only 6.3 % of the 3,279 articles they analyzed used qualitative research methods. Importantly, these authors also highlighted the need for greater academic rigor in qualitative research. Looking through the lens of systems theory, McMahon and Watson (2007) have offered some insight into the complexity of this issue in terms of the history of career psychology, the dominant voices evident in training new entrants to the field, and publication.

Disciplinary Isolation

A further theme in critiques of career psychology concerns the need for interdisciplinary collaboration with other fields who also share an interest in work and employment such as sociology, developmental psychology, management, organizational psychology, and education. In this regard, discussion about interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., Collin & Patton, 2009; McCash, 2010) and multidisciplinary collaboration (Leung & Yuen, 2012) has begun. Arthur (2008) has perceived “an urgent need for interdisciplinary careers research in the emerging global

knowledge economy” (p. 163) and the term *career studies* has been proposed as a way of overcoming boundaries between disciplines (Arthur, 2010; Collin, 2010; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). Indeed, Gunz and Peiperl (2007) published the first text focusing on career studies. The tenet behind the move to greater interdisciplinary collaboration is that a more unified discipline may have greater capacity to address issues that have not been traditionally well attended to within more narrowly defined disciplines.

While the issues presented in this section have been discussed as pervasive themes in critiques of career psychology, they could also be viewed as potential trends should they be addressed.

New Trends in Theory Development in Career Psychology

It is against this background that new trends in theory development in career psychology are now considered. New trends in theory development in career psychology could, to some extent, be regarded as responses to the questions generated by critiques of career psychology and massive changes in society as a result of globalization and dramatic changes in technology. In many disciplines, responses to societal change have been informed by constructivism and social constructionism which have greater capacity to accommodate the complex and dynamic processes of a rapidly changing society than theories underpinned by the logical positivist worldview which offer narrow but detailed accounts of particular phenomena.

The new trend towards theories informed by constructivism and social constructionism was largely driven by trends in practice (Young & Collin, 2004b) as career practitioners sought ways to respond to complex client needs and issues. There are more similarities than differences between constructivism and social constructionism with the most commonly agreed difference being whether construction is understood as a cognitive process or as a social process (Young & Collin, 2004b). *Constructivism* is

sometimes used as a generic term and Raskin (2002) adopted its plural form, *constructivisms*.

Emanating out of the growing influence of constructivism and social constructionism and trends in practice, a number of theory developments in career psychology have emerged including contextual action theory (Young et al., 2011; Young & Valach, 2008), the CTC (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Pryor & Bright, 2011), career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), and the STF (McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 1999, 2006) of career development. The relational theory of working (Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2011a) is also included as an emerging trend. Each of these new and emerging trends could be regarded as responses to identified issues in the field of career psychology. Each of these new trends in theory development will now be briefly introduced. A detailed account of each theory is not possible within the scope of this chapter and is available in references to the theories cited in this chapter.

Contextual Action Theory

Contextual action theory (Young et al., 2011; Young & Valach, 2008; Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002) is focused on explaining the career process. With a history of over two decades, it has amassed a substantial evidence base focused on supporting adolescents in the complex transition to adulthood. Essential to this theory is an understanding of behavior as goal-directed action. Intentional goal-directed behavior of individuals is regarded as action. Goal-directedness is also regarded as intentionality. Action may be cognitively directed and regulated and is also subject to social influence. Action comprises manifest behavior (e.g., making notes, reading a textbook), internal processes (e.g., worrying, identifying a task to do), and social meaning (e.g., training to win a competition, achieving good results) (Young et al., 2002). Contextual action theory stresses a recursive relationship between career behavior and context.

The main constructs of action theory are action systems, perspectives on action, and levels

of action organization. Action systems include action, joint action, project, and career, each of which may be viewed from the perspective of manifest behavior, internal processes, and social meaning and defined as goals, functional steps, and elements. In attempting to understand action more fully, Young et al. (2002) adopted the constructs of *joint action* to understand action with others, *project* to understand action over time, and *career* to understand action containing goals. Where groups of actions have common goals, they are regarded as projects. In general, actions are short-term and projects operate over a mid-term timeframe. When projects come together over a longer period of time they are referred to as career.

Joint action is essentially co-constructed between two or more people and necessarily involves communication. In contextual action theory, the focus is on the action rather than interaction. Joint action recognizes the shared transition to adulthood and takes account of individual agency as well as the social and cultural influences of families. For example, adolescents may discuss and plan for their future with their parents. Action occurs over time during which contingencies and life circumstances may intervene, resulting in the need to define and redefine goals and actions. Project is a broader construct than action but it also has social meaning (Young et al., 2002). For example, adolescents and their parents may construct a project by deciding what information they need to make their decisions, and determining that they will go to a career fair together and that the adolescent will make an appointment to see a career counselor. Career extends over a longer time span than project and may encompass more actions. Thus, career becomes a complex interaction of goal-directed behaviors, social meaning, and internal processes.

Chaos Theory of Careers

The CTC (Bright & Pryor, 2005, 2011; Pryor & Bright, 2011) represents an application of chaos theory to the field of career development. It

views individuals as “complex, dynamical, nonlinear, unique, emergent, purposeful open systems, interacting with an environment comprising systems with similar characteristics” (Pryor & Bright, 2003, p. 123). Thus the process, rather than the content, of career development is central to CTC especially in relation to unpredictable and chance events. Pryor and Bright contend that chance events occur more frequently than individuals imagine.

Bright and Pryor (2011) regard complexity, change, chance, and construction as the cornerstone constructs of the CTC. Complexity recognizes the multiplicity of influences on the lives of individuals which are interconnected and may interact in unpredictable ways. In this regard, CTC argues that “people and environments cannot be reduced to static three- or four-letter codes, nor can they be slotted into programmatic stages and cycles” (Bright & Pryor, 2011, p. 163). CTC is a dynamic theory that emphasizes continual change and the need for individuals to continually adapt as they, their contexts, and society changes. Particularly noteworthy in this theory is its incorporation of chance as a pivotal element. To date, chance has not been widely incorporated into career theory with the notable exception of Krumboltz and his colleagues (Krumboltz & Levin, 2004; Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999) who considered the concept of planned happenstance, that is, the decisions individuals make in response to chance events.

CTC stresses that individuals are complex systems subject to a complex array of contextual influences. Pryor and Bright (2011) have argued that individuals are well placed to actively create their futures because of the unpredictability of such complex personal and contextually embedded systems. Within complex systems, there are limitations, termed *attractors* in chaos theory. Attractors tend to constrain functioning in some way by influencing behavior towards particular directions. Behavior may focus on goals (point attractors), move between two points (pendulum attractors), progress through a series of habitual steps (torus attractors), or demonstrate stability over time but also the possibility of change (strange attractors). Over time, patterns emerge

within systems. As individuals interact within these complex systems, their career behavior is characterized by fractal patterns, that is, ways of behaving that are similar. For example, a young person who is captain of his football team, chairperson of a student committee at his school, and a team leader in his part-time job in a fast-food outlet may reflect a pattern of behavior that demonstrates high levels of ability in communication, leadership, and organization. Constructivism proposes that individuals look for patterns in their lives. In CTC, looking for patterns of behavior in complex systems is termed emergence which in turn facilitates meaning making. CTC has been applied in career counseling and, similar to other theoretical developments described in this chapter, relies on the use of narrative.

Career Construction Theory

Career construction theory is essentially an “expanded and updated version of Super’s theory of vocational development” (Savickas, 2002, p. 154) underpinned by personal constructivism and social constructionism (Savickas, 2005). Critical to this theory is the notion that careers do not simply unfold but rather, they are constructed by individuals by “imposing meaning on their vocational behavior and occupational experiences” (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). Described by Sharf (2010) as a metatheory, career construction theory is founded on three key components, specifically, vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes (Savickas, 2005). The metatheoretical capacity of career construction theory is evident in the relationships between: vocational personality and vocational traits and their relationship to person–environment fit theory; life themes and Super’s notions about vocational preferences and occupational choice being the implementation of self-concept; and career adaptability as a psychosocial activity focusing on the process rather than the content of person–environment fit theory as individuals seek to implement their self-concept.

Vocational personality is defined as “an individual’s career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests” (Savickas, 2005, p. 47). This component of career construction theory draws on Holland’s (1997) RIASEC typology of interests. Career construction theory, however, views interests as relational and socially constructed and as a dynamic process rather than as stable traits. In practice, career construction theory suggests that assessment scores be used to generate possibilities rather than be used in traditional predictive ways.

Career adaptability is described as “the coping processes through which individuals connect to their communities and construct their careers” (Savickas, 2005, p. 48). Thus, vocational personality refers to the *what* of career construction whereas career adaptability refers to the *how*. Central to career adaptability are the developmental tasks of the stages described by Super (1990), specifically growth, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement (Savickas, 2002). The stages represent a structural account of career adaptability. Response readiness and coping resources are central to career adaptability (Savickas, 2005) and are conceptualized along the four dimensions of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Concern relates to having a future orientation and contemplating a vocational future. Control relates to *owning a career* and taking responsibility for constructing it. Curiosity relates to being inquisitive, wanting to learn, and exploring options and possibilities. Confidence relates to being able to face and overcome difficulties and problems. In this regard, an employee may become aware that staying in the same organization is not a long-term option for her because she is becoming increasingly unhappy as a result of the restructuring that has occurred in her workplace (concern). She begins to talk to friends from her network about her hopes to find a new job and to look through advertised positions (control). She identifies possible employers and investigates information from their websites (curiosity). She becomes increasingly more certain about the work she would like to do and the employers she would like to work for (confidence).

Life themes are described as the narrative component of career construction theory which “focuses on the why of vocational behavior” (Savickas, 2005, p. 57). This component imbues career construction with meaning and recognizes the dynamic process of career development. Career stories offer accounts of the decisions made by individuals and facilitate a coherence between past, present, and future. Further, they contextualize individuals in a way that is not possible through the constructs of vocational personality or career adaptability. In essence, life themes are the patterns that are present in the stories told by individuals. For instance, a life theme of the employee in the previous example, may concern helping people and be reflected in the stories she tells about caring for aged parents, volunteer work on weekends in a homeless shelter, and her employment as a social worker. Narration and life themes constitute essential elements of the career theme interview ([Savickas, 2002]; more commonly referred to as the career style interview [Savickas, 2005]) and life design counseling that is a practical application of career construction theory (Savickas et al., 2011).

Systems Theory Framework of Career Development

The STF (McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 1999, 2006) of career development was proposed in response to the convergence debate of the early 1990s. Unlike other theory developments in career psychology, the STF is a metatheoretical framework rather than a theory. It is the first such framework proposed in career psychology. Calls for a systems view of career development have been evident for over two decades (e.g., Osipow, 1983) and more recently there has been greater acknowledgement of systems theory in career development (e.g., McMahon & Patton, 1995; Patton & McMahon, 1999, 2006; Pryor & Bright, 2011; Young et al., 2011). While theories such as chaos theory and contextual action theory also assume systems perspectives, the STF is the only theoretical

development based solely on systems theory. Moreover, as an overarching framework, the STF values the contribution of other theories as they provide detailed accounts of constructs it depicts.

The STF (Patton & McMahon, 2006) is depicted as a series of interconnected circles, each representing a system of influence on the career development of individuals. At the center of the STF, the individual is located as the *individual system*. Within this system a range of intrapersonal influences are included such as values, personality, interests, disability, and sexual orientation. In career psychology, detailed accounts of many of the extant influences are provided by theories informed by the logical positivist philosophy. For example, Brown (2002b) has offered a detailed account of values whereas Holland (1997) has offered a detailed account of personality. Other constructs, however, such as disability and sexual orientation have not been well attended to in career psychology. From an STF perspective, such influences may be accounted for by subjective narrative accounts told by the individual themselves and by drawing on theory and research from other disciplines.

Surrounding the individual system of influences is the *social system* including family, peers, and schools and the broader *environmental–societal system* that includes influences such as globalization, socioeconomic circumstances, and geographic location. Influences contained in the social system and the environmental–societal systems have not been adequately researched or theorized in career psychology. Importantly, the metatheoretical orientation of the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2006) accommodates detailed accounts of such influences drawn from other disciplines. For example, Roberts (2005, 2012) from the field of sociology, has provided considerable insight into the influence of socioeconomic disadvantage on career development. The discipline of economics offers insight into labor market trends and organizational psychology may provide insight into the relationship between individuals and work organizations.

The STF (Patton & McMahon, 2006) acknowledges the dynamic nature of career development through the inclusion of three process

influences. *Recursiveness* is the process of interaction within and between influences. More specifically, recursiveness is about connectedness within and between all elements of the system and also between systems. Thus, it accommodates the individualism more evident in Western cultures and the collectivism more evident in non-Western cultures. *Change over time* at the macro level is the process by which the past influences the present, and the past and present influence the future. At the micro level, change over time relates to processes such as career decision-making. The third of the process influences is *chance*, the random occurrences that may irreversibly change the life and career of an individual.

At the macro level, the influences depicted in the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2006) apply to most people. At the micro level, the STF recognizes the personal and subjective nature of career development. Thus it is applied in practice through a storytelling approach (McMahon & Watson, 2010) which encourages individuals to identify and tell stories about their personal influences and to recognize themes that pervade these stories. Through storytelling, individuals position themselves in relation to their culture, families, and communities. Thus, an important contribution of the STF is its comprehensiveness and its application in diverse settings and with diverse populations. In this regard, Mkhize (2012) believes McCormick and Amundson's (1997) career-life planning model for first nations people echoes the STF approach. For example, the model offers a communal process that recognizes connectedness, especially with family and community; and balance, needs, and roles. Importantly, the model integrates culturally relevant practices that have been found beneficial to first nation's youth (Neumann, McCormick, Amundson, & McLean, 2000).

Relational Theory of Working

In 2001, Blustein urged the field to move towards a more inclusive and integrative psychology of working based on work in all its forms which he

subsequently published as a major text (Blustein, 2006). Derived from the psychology of working, Blustein (2011a) proposed his relational theory of working which focuses on the neglect of populations with limited choice and how career theory may also be inclusive of them as well as of those who do have choice. His particular concern was to propose a theory "relevant to those who work with little or no volition in their choice of market-based work" (Blustein, 2011a, p. 9). The relational theory of working, as the first theory to be proposed from the psychology of working, advocates a more inclusive notion of work.

The relational theory of working challenges career psychology in its present form. While Blustein (2011a) has commended the field of career psychology for its contribution to understanding people who have some degree of choice in their working lives, he also contends that for many people, self-determined choice about work is not possible. Thus, the relational theory of working is about "the lives of people with less than optimal choice in their educational and occupational lives as well as those with more choices" and stresses "the common element for all people who work—the relational context" with a view to creating "an integrative theoretical perspective that addresses working people across the spectrum of work-based privilege and volition" (Blustein, 2011a, p. 2).

Central to this theory is Blustein's (2011a) focus on how relationships are the basis of all life experience including work experience. Building on a social constructionist base, the relational theory of working assumes that individuals learn about themselves through their relationships with others and their environments. Further, work and relationships are considered central to the lives of most people around the world and are conceptualized as recursively influential. His theory is founded on seven propositions, specifically:

1. The centrality of work and relationships and their recursive relationships on our internal worlds and lived experiences
2. The internalization processes that influence emotions, cognitions, perceptions, and work experiences

3. The contextual location of work and relationships (e.g., in the market place and in caregiving)
4. The influence of relationships on work decisions, transitions, exploration, and training options
5. The relational nature of the formation of interests and values, and of meaning making
6. The influence of relational discourse on the meaning of work to individuals
7. The importance of culture in relationships and working

Blustein (2011b) believes that career psychology is at a “fork in the road” where it can maintain the status quo or “take the road less travelled” (p. 216). Specifically, Blustein claims that the options facing the field are to maintain its middle-class focus or to expand its focus to include the poor and unemployed. Essentially, Blustein is urging the field to reflect on its social justice origins and embrace a new direction. Importantly, the psychology of working is the only new trend in career psychology to focus specifically on the social justice origins of career psychology.

Relevance for Multiple Cultures: Sensitivity to the Universal and the Particular

Prior to considering the possible futures of the new trends in theory developments, I will briefly overview their similarities and differences and possible contributions to the field. In particular, their relevance to multiple cultures will be considered. Each of the theory developments has a capacity to accommodate complexity in people’s lives and in society because they take holistic, contextual perspectives of career development. Thus, all are concerned with the contextually embedded nature of career development and also the process of career development. Moreover, in practice, all value the notion of subjective careers (Collin, 1986) or personal experiences of career as well as the observable, objective career. In addition to subjectivity, other less tangible influences on individuals’ careers such as spirituality may be accommodated.

While career development theory itself has paid little attention to spirituality, more broadly in the field of career development, several authors have considered spirituality in relation to careers and work (e.g., Bloch & Richmond, 1997; Hansen, 1997). A capacity to consider intangible influences such as spirituality in career theory and practice may increase relevance to non-Western cultures. In practice, the subjective career is critical to the narrative practices emanating out of these theory developments. The features of the new trends in theory development set these theories apart from many extant career theories. It is not helpful to the field of career psychology, however, to polarize theories informed by different philosophical positions. Rather, it is more helpful to value the contribution of all theories (Sampson, 2009).

Taking Brown’s (2002a) criteria for good theory into account, it seems that none of these new trends yet fits his criteria. What is evident, however, is the focus of these newer theoretical positions on practical application and that the evidence bases being developed in regard to these theories are related to their practical applications. Thus, these new trends in theory development are responsive to Brown’s claim that good theory should apply in practice. However, taking the concerns about Brown’s criteria that were discussed earlier in this chapter into account, it remains to be seen whether these new trends will address issues of cultural relevance and appropriateness and be sensitive to the universal and also to the particular. Indeed, Stead and Perry (2012) have recommended that career psychology should be a “cultural enterprise” (p. 59). To this end, Arulmani (2011b) has proposed a cultural preparedness approach that contextualizes career interventions for local contexts.

In the special issue on big questions in vocational psychology (Walsh, 2011), Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, and Peterson (2011) posed three questions that warrant consideration in terms of the new trends in theory development in career psychology: “Where should new knowledge for vocational psychology come from? How do career theories and research find their way into practice? What is the nature of career

development and vocational choice in a global economy?" (p. 241). It is interesting that in this special issue, an invitation was extended to leaders in the field of career psychology yet there was little international representation. While not to diminish the contribution of these eminent researchers and theorists, it is curious that at a time when the global discipline of career psychology is faced with questions that concern its sustainability and relevance globally, input was sought primarily from one section of the globe. In this regard, three of the new trends presented in this chapter emanate from countries other than the United States of America and two (i.e., CTC and STF) have drawn their theoretical bases from other disciplines. Of these new trends, the STF has had its application tested to some extent in a non-Western culture (e.g., McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2005; McMahon, Watson, Foxcroft, & Dullabh, 2008). Further, career construction theory (Savickas, 2005) has stimulated investigation into the international application of its Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) in a process reminiscent of Leong's cultural accommodation model (Leong & Pearce, 2011).

Thus, the future of the new trends in theory development in career psychology needs to be considered in view of influences present in career psychology. For example, the voices of the new trends are very small in comparison to the voices of the pervasive trends which dominate psychology training, research methodology, publication in the field, and practice (McMahon & Watson, 2007). Further, the voices proposing these new theoretical trends remain Western and despite the potential capacity of these theories to be more culturally sensitive, there remains an urgent need to encourage and privilege voices from non-Western cultures.

much to offer. However, "theory, research and practice conceived in the 20th century have served career development well but they are not sufficient to strategically position career development in a global world and ensure a sustainable and relevant future" (McMahon & Watson, 2012, p. 7). Thus, it is hoped that the new trends in theory development towards more holistic and inclusive accounts of career development and closer links between theory, research, and practice may, in combination with the pervasive trends of the dominant theory base, contribute toward the construction of a richer and more sustainable discipline of career psychology that is culturally relevant in contexts beyond its traditional Western base. Further, it is hoped that new trends in theory development will emerge from non-Western contexts that may contribute to enhanced understanding of culturally relevant approaches.

Major commentary on career psychology seems to occur approximately every decade. How will such future commentary judge the contribution of these new trends in theory development in career psychology? What is the future of these new trends in career psychology and how will they coexist with the pervasive trends that have long been dominant? Will these new trends address issues that have been evident in the field for many years? Will history ultimately view them as enduring trends or as *fads*, "temporary, usually irrational pursuit, by numbers of people, of some action that excites attention and has prestige" (Butler, 2009, p. 437). Only time will tell therefore, whether the new trends of theory development in career psychology become general trends or whether in fact, they were only fads; and only time will tell what the contribution of the new trends of theory development in career psychology will actually be and whether they address longstanding concerns about cultural relevance.

New Concepts and Viewpoints: Charting New Directions

In the dynamic world of work of the 21st century where globalization is resulting in more diverse communities, career development services have

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