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Career: a systematisation of perspectives and theoretical premises

KEYWORDS

Career, career theories, content theories, process theories, life-cycle theories, prescriptive theories

ABSTRACT

The article offers various systematisations of career theories. In the most general spectrum of classification, two criteria can be found: the content of the theory: content theories; process theories; content-and-process theories, and the constitutive factors of career: prescriptive theories; life-cycle theories. The highlighted classifications of career theories integrate and synthesise accounts, whose structural contents indicate a variety of different sources and cognitive perspectives, constituting a review of the thought regarding the career development process in a particular historical context, as a time period in which they have been established. Various contexts of apprehending the career issue lead to changes in its “theorising”.

The phenomenon of career development can be examined analytically and interpretatively, from different theoretical perspectives of varying conceptual premises. Although the efforts towards a classification of these perspectives, have a well-established tradition, the task of classifying the variety of views unambiguously, in a systematic order proves difficult. The causes of this problem lie in the fact, that these views are hardly disjunctive, as they, in regard of their temporal dynamics, have generated mutual inspiration, allowing to distinguish universals and specific elements in the theoretical examination of the issue of career, as well as the possibilities of its empirical verification or practical implications.¹ While demonstrating the difficulties in formulating and testing of the theory of careers², John L. Hol-

¹ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 24-25.

² The narrative regarding the classification of career theories was presented by the author in her monograph titled *Academic Youth and Professional Career (Młodzież akademicka a kariera zawodowa)*, (Kraków 2013) situating the speculation in the light of the processes of change, taking place in the world of careers as well as an examination of university students in the world of “boundaryless” careers. The article is a part of wider speculation regarding the subject of career, published in the author’s monograph.

land, the leading career theorist, admitted in the preface to the 1997 edition of his book *Making Vocational Choices*, that: “this book is my sixth attempt to create a more satisfying theory of careers. I never seem to get it quite right”.³ Given this brief statement, which shows the researcher’s repeated reflection upon the problem, one shall recognise that the biggest difficulty lies in grasping the complexity of the career phenomenon.

The literature offers various systematisations of career theories. In the most general spectrum of classification, two criteria can be found: the content of the theory (*content theories; process theories; content-and-process theories*) and the constitutive factors of career (*prescriptive theories; life-cycle theories*). Considering an “entity” that initiates and shapes career as the criterion for classification, one can distinguish between two types of theories: individualistic (the individual is the main medium for career development) and structural (career development is an attribute of the organisational structure and is dependent on the organisational policy and the quality of the internal labour market).⁴ A certain vagueness that follows the inquiry regarding cause-and-effect relations between different aspects of an individual’s career development, however, does not imply an epistemological stalemate. Moreover, contemporary attempts to establish a holistic approach towards the “career” issue result in a crystallisation of new paradigmatic conclusions and require different presuppositions in articulating career as a “property” of an individual. Attempts to categorise and arrange career development theories show, using the term proposed by W. Patton and M. McMahan, their segmental nature. A variety of perspectives regarding the modes of systematisation of theoretical accounts shall be presented below.

Understanding the career development process required to refer to both psychological knowledge and experience of various other disciplines. One of the first attempts to categorise career theories, proposed by Crites, includes a reference to this criterion. The author suggested two categories: psychological theories and non-psychological theories.⁵

Considering the possible and terminologically adequate categorisation of career theories, E. L. Herr and S. H. Cramer commented that “the categories depicted are not mutually exclusive or independent, but they attempt to explain dif-

³ Cited in: Ch. J. Allison, *Person-Environment Theory of John L. Holland* [in:] *Proven Practices for Recruiting Women to STEM Careers in ATE Programs*, Lynnwood, 5/31/2007, p. 1

⁴ A. Miś, *Kształtowanie karier w organizacji* [in:] H. Król, A. Ludwiczynski, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 478-479

⁵ W. Patton, M. McMahan, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 10

ferential career behaviour and choice from somewhat different vantage points”⁶. The resulting classification by E. L. Herr and S. H. Cramer provided a distinction of four categories. The *trait and factor* theories, emphasising on the necessity of adjusting professions to the traits of an individual, mentioning F. W. Parson’s theory and referring to the research of the second half of the 20th century, especially regarding: skills and intelligence (e.g. Elton: 1967), needs and interests (Cambell and Holland: 1972), the adjustment phenomenon (Osipow and Gold: 1967), the risk theory (Witmer and Stewart: 1972) and the aspiration level (Gottfredson and Becker: 1981). The next group consists of *psychological and developmental theories*, emphasising on the role of personal work motivation and the need to analyse the process of qualitative changes, and the dynamics of individual change in each development phase. The category refers to theories such as: the psychodynamic theory (Bordin, Nachman and Segal: 1963), personality theories (Roe: 1956, Holland: 1973, Hoppock: 1976), developmental theories (Grinzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrad and Herma: 1951, Super: 1957, Tiedeman: 1961, Levinson: 1977). The third group consists of *decision* theories, including ones such as: the expectancy theory (Lawrer: 1973, Porter: 1975), the self-efficacy theory (Bandura: 1977), problem-solving theories (Clark, Gellat, Levin: 1965), and learning theories (Krumboltz, Mitchell and Gelatt: 1975). The categorisation ends with *situational or sociological* theories, that emphasise on the human-environmental relation dynamics, including research concerning social classes (Holingshead: 1949), and the chance theory (Bandura: 1983).⁷

A generalisation and systematisation of the perspectives regarding the theoretical approach towards career by D. Super, focuses on three groups of theories, namely: *matching* theories (Parsons: 1909, Holland: 1973), *developmental* theories (Roe: 1956, Grinzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrad and Herm: 1951) and *decision-making* theories (Krumboltz, Mitchell and Gellatt: 1975). The above does not imply, however, that D. Super, considering more than seventy years of career theory development, made no further theoretical conclusions. His contribution to the development of career theory is indisputable. D. Super is the creator of the differential-developmental-social-phenomenological model, that has been developed for fifty three years (1939-1992).⁸ A careful reading of D. Super’s theory allows to demonstrate, that many of his conclusions and premises are similar to conclu-

⁶ W. Patton., M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 10

⁷ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 25-26, See also: W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 10

⁸ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, p. 28

sions provided by previous researchers of the career theories. It's a natural fact: integrating the available knowledge regarding career theories, while doing so in isolation and disregarding the cognitive context on which they were founded, is hardly possible.

A classification by Sonnenfeld and Kottler distinguishes four types of career theories, at the same time revealing their structural oddity. The four theory types are: sociological theories, regarding the conditions of a social class and their career implications (e.g. Blau and Duncan, 1967; Chinnoy, 1955), psychological theories, focusing on personality differences and their career implications (e.g. Holland: 1973; Strong: 1943), psychological-sociological theories, focusing on phases of career, regarding the developmental context (Crites: 1981; Dalton and Thompson: 1986; Super: 1957), psychological theories that emphasise on the broad context of the human life-span, focusing on the relation between career and other significant activities in life (e.g. Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977).⁹

The conscious attitude towards the difficulties in establishing a disjoint classification of career theories, is visible in the expanded systematisation made by D. Brown and L. Brooks. The above-mentioned career theorists mention three groups of theories. First, the *theories of occupational choice*, where the focus on individual and social conditions (occupational environment) leads to explaining the reasons, for which individuals make particular vocational choices, including theories by Holland (1997), Roe (1984) and Bordin (1984). Another group of theories, included in the proposed systematisation, is the group of *theories of career development* that, emphasising on the fact that human life is divided into stages, focus on the description and explanation of the process of maturing towards vocational choices. The group is represented by accounts given by Ginzberg (1984) and Super (1981). The last group of theories listed, consists of *theories of career decision making*, as they focus on the analysis of conditions that are either favourable or impeding, regarding the development of occupational preferences. These theories include research regarding: social learning by Krumboltz and Mitchell (1984) and the interactions between individual development and environmental expectations by D. V. Tiedeman and A. Miller-Tiedeman (1984).¹⁰

⁹ Cited in: M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Generating New directions in career theory: the case for a transdisciplinary approach* [in:] M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall., B. S. Lawrence, *Handbook of career theory*, Cambridge 2004, p. 9

¹⁰ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 28-29

The systematisation established by Minor, dividing theories into a) content theories and b) process theories, is an example of a career theory classification, presented in the 1990s.¹¹ The classification by an American career theorist and researcher H. S. Osipow, deserves particular attention. Its purpose, seemingly, was to suggest a possibly disjoint classification of career theories. However convinced about the inevitability of joint sets between theories, Osipow along with Fitzgerald (1996), proposed a classification into four groups of theories. The first group consists of *trait-factor theories*, including: Parsons's theory (1909), the work adjustment theory by Dawis and Lofquist (1969), Holland's personality types (1959), and the theory of social learning by Mitchel, Jones and Krumboltz (1960). The following group consists of *developmental/self-concept theories*, that rest on three groups of premises, namely that "an individual during puberty becomes more self-aware and self-conscious, (...) constantly compares own notions of occupational options to a notion of self as an employee, (...) and adequate occupational results are based on the similarity between these two notions"¹² These category consists of research done by: Buhler (1933), Super (1957), Samler (1953), Ginzberg (1951), Dudley and D. V. Tiedeman (1977) as well as Knefelkamp and Sleipitz (1978). The third group consists of *vocational choice and personality theories*, joined by the following hypotheses: first, that there is a relation between the process of vocational choice and the expected ability to satisfy the needs of an individual; second, that the profession has a gradual impact on the personality of an employee, which in the long term, results in a similarity between the behaviour of people of the same profession, despite their varying personality traits. The last of the highlighted categories consists of *sociology and career choice theories*, founded on the assumption, that environmental factors have a predominant influence on the professional choices of individuals without their control, which makes it imperative for the individual to explore the methods of dealing with the environmental influence. S. H. Osipow mentions Hollingshead (1949), Miller and Form (1959) as well as Sewell and Hauser (1975) as representatives of this group;

The classification by S. T. Gladding (1994) provides us with further findings. It's no doubt, that the researcher followed his predecessors and, basing his work on similar criteria, listed the following theories: a) trait-factor theories (F. W. Parsons: 1909; J. L. Holland: 1973); b) psychodynamic theories (A. Roe: 1956); as well as

¹¹ W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 10

¹² A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, p. 29

c) developmental theories (D. Super: 1957) and Grinzberg: 1972); d) cognitive-social (D. V. Tiedeman and O'Hara: 1963), Knefelkampf and Sleipitz: 1976, Krumboltz: 1979)¹³; e) *Behavioural theories*, whose essence is the interaction between the individual and the environment and the focus on the phenomenon of learning. Here, the researcher mentions works by Thorensen and Ewart (1978) as well as, Mitchell, Jones and Krumboltz (1979).¹⁴

W. Patton and M. McMahon (1999) established a general classification of career theories with the aim to precisely apprehend their particular epistemological scopes. From a historical point of view, the career development theory was either content or process oriented. Minor (1992), mentioned earlier, shares a similar view. The authors established a more precise classification in order to finally highlight the following, coexistent theory types: a) content theories b) process theories c) content-and-process theories, followed by a broader explanation, allowing them to include additional contexts and areas of interest (see table). The inner structure of the set of theorems, acknowledged on the grounds of the content theory, specifies the influences (with content being the influences, determinants, e.g. values and interests) innate or context-based, in which the individual is set and which are imperative for career development. This group of theories focuses more on individual rather than contextual influences and link mainly with trait and factor theories, corresponding with work adjustment and personality theories. The process theory consists mostly of theorems that consider the interaction and occurring changes in regard of temporal dynamics. Developmental theories intend to describe the career development process, and proceed by referring to a cycle of steps, phases of individual development. Discussion concerning career theories, bound by the necessity of including theorems developed in content and process theories, has led to a formulation of theoretical accounts that included both the "content" and the "process". These accounts would put emphasis on both the "content" and "the process", therefore, focusing on the properties that characterised individual, developmental and contextual realms, as well as the interaction between them simultaneously.¹⁵

¹³ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, p. 30

¹⁴ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 29-30

¹⁵ M. Patton W., McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, pp. 7-12

Table. Career theories classification (according to W. Patton., M. McMahon, 2006)

Content theories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trait and factor theory 2. Theory of personality 3. Psychodynamic theory 4. Values-based theory 5. Work adjustment person-environment correspondence theory 6. Five factor theory 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parsons (1909) 2. Holland (1973, 1985a, 1992, 1997) 3. Bordin (1990) 4. Brown (1996a, 2002b, c) 5. Dawis and Lofquist (1984) Dawis (1996, 2002, 2005) 6. McCrae and John (1992)
Process theories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developmental theory 2. Life span life-space theory 3. Theory of circumscriptions and compromise 4. Individualistic approach 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ginzberg (1951); Ginzberg (1972, 1984) 2. Super (1953, 1957, 1980, 1990, 1992, 1994) 3. Gottfredson (1981, 1996, 2002, 2005) 4. Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990), Miller-Tiedeman (1999)
Content and process theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social learning career theory • Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) • Cognitive Information Processing Approach (CIP) • Developmental-contextual approach • Contextual approach to career • Personality development and career choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitchell and Krumboltz (1990, 1996) • Lent (1996, 2002), Lent and Brown (2002); Lent (2005) • Peterson, Sampson, Reardon and Lenz (1996, 2002) • Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986) • Young, Valach i Collin (1996, 2002) • Roe (1956); Roe and Luneborg (1990)
Wider explanations ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's career development • Racial and ethnic groups • Sexual orientation • Sociological or situational approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Astin (1984); Hackett and Betz (1981); Betz (2005); Farmer (1985, 1997); Betz and Fitzgerald (1987); Cook (2002) • Arbona (1996); Brown (2002); Hackett et al. (1991); Smith (1983) • Fitzgerald and Betz (1994); Morgan and Brown (1991) • Roberts (1977, 2005); Blau and Duncan (1967); Miller (1983); Hotchkiss and Borow (1996), Johnson and Mortimer (2002)
Constructivist approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STF • Career construction theory • Chaos theory • Ecological approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMahon and Patton (1995); Patton and McMahon (1997, 1999, 2006) • Savickas (2005) • Pryor i Wright (2003) • Conyne i Cook (2004)

Source: Patton W., McMahon M, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 11

Concerning the discussion regarding classification of career theories, references to major developmental theories are no rare exception. The fact has been mentioned by A. Bańka (2006), whose conclusions cannot be omitted. The author, in analogy to developmental theories, arranges classical career theories while

highlighting vocational choice and self-concept theories (D. Super: 1953, 1992; Grinzberg: 1951; D. V. Tiedeman, O'Hara: 1963; A. Miller-Tiedeman, D. V. Tiedeman: 1990) as well as organismic theories also called self-constructing theories (Piaget: 1951; Kohlberg: 1973; Levinson: 1978), and theories that utilise the terms from the field of personality theory (psychodynamic theories: A. Roe: 1956, Deci: 1999, Watkins and Savickas: 1990, trait and factor theories: Holland: 1985, 1996, Dawis, Lofquist: 1984; social learning and decision-making theories: Krumboltz, Nichols: 1990, Bandura, Lock: 2003, Brown: 1996).¹⁶

The highlighted classifications of career theories integrate and synthesise accounts, whose structural contents indicate a variety of different sources and cognitive perspectives, constituting a review of the thought regarding the career development process in a particular historical context, as a time period (the continuing decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century) in which they have been established.

Many accounts highlight the psychological legacy of the career theory. Coexisting systematisations, as emphasised by A. Bańka, clearly indicate how profoundly traditional personality theories, focusing on individual differences (among which we should list: psychoanalytic theories by Z. Freud or A. Roe; humanist theories by C. Rogers, trait theories by R. Cattell or H. Eysenck and cognitive theory by Kelley), appeared useful regarding career theories.¹⁷ Each theory has its own conceptual shades regarding career choice and the development process. Moreover, regarding the cognitive perspective, the earlier theoretical conclusions often serve as a base for contemporary constructions of career theories, e.g. M. L. Savickas's broadening of the theoretical perspective, regarding the subject of life span life-space theory by D. Super (while recognising the fact, that the theory is segmental and serves as an attempt to combine concepts from different branches of psychology¹⁸), in order to reach theoretical conclusions on the subject of career creation.¹⁹ One must mention, that the very creator of the career development theory pointed out its segmental nature, previously to other scholars. D. Super's explanations lead to believe, that there is a necessity of studying various segments of the career phenomenon that, once combined, will allow for a conceptualisation of the complete career development theory. Super gives testament to that claim, saying: "the notion

¹⁶ A. Bańka, *Psychologiczne doradztwo karier*, Poznań 2007, pp. 65-68

¹⁷ A. Bańka, *Psychologiczne doradztwo karier*, Poznań 2007, p. 65

¹⁸ See: W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 7

¹⁹ Ch. J. Allison, *Introduction to the Review* [in:] *Proven Practices for Recruiting Women to STEM Careers in ATE Programs*, Lynnwood, 5/31/2007, pp. 1-3.

was that a theory of anything as complex as career development has to have many aspects, many facets or many segments, which are parts of a whole. At first the theory was considered to be really too comprehensive (...). It had to be refined much more than it was in order to make it researchable.”²⁰ The results and conclusions however, that emerged from combining the segments during the first attempts of theorising by D. Super, confirmed, what he had done himself, that the structure of the general theory of a complete apprehension of career development was, to a degree, quite vague.²¹ Although the reflection upon the segmental structure of career theories dates back to their very beginnings, as S. H. Osipow states that it “seems to be moving towards a collection of miniature theories, each dealing with a circumscribed, explicit segments of vocational behavior...”²², in his opinion, it is still better to have an incomplete theory than no theory whatsoever. D. Super, supporting S. H. Osipow and J. Krumboltz’s views regarding the similarities in the career development theories, stated that he would publish an article, in which he would say: “Down with ‘Super’s’ theory of career development! Down with the theories of X and Y!” and added “I believe we will soon have one comprehensive theory of career development that will be of much more use than any existing formulation...”²³.

The above classifications of career theories show, that the essential problem is the need to generate new approaches that would cross the boundaries set by particular paradigms, so that they would remain relevant in the 21st century. An interdisciplinary discourse regarding the subject of career, according to Mitroff and Kilmann (1978), will be “taking us beyond the limitations and confines of disciplines as we currently conceive them”²⁴. To achieve that goal, the discourse requires a clear career theory, that will contribute to the creation of common points of reference for the career researchers environment. Numerous efforts are being undertaken in order to create a theoretical perspective rooted in a chosen perspective, while maintaining the acknowledgement of other perspectives (Rosenbaum’s perspective (1984) give testament to that approach “on career mobility, which

²⁰ S. Freeman, *Super D., A Perspective on Career Development* [in:] *Journal of Career Development*, vol 19 (4)/1993, pp. 255-256

²¹ S. Freeman, *Super D., A Perspective on Career Development* [in:] *Journal of Career Development*, vol 19 (4)/1993, pp. 255-256.

²² W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 7

²³ S. Freeman, *Super D., A Perspective on Career Development* [in] *Journal of Career Development*, vol 19 (4)/1993, p. 264

²⁴ M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Generating New directions in career theory: the case for a transdisciplinary approach* [in:] M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Handbook of career theory*, Cambridge 2004, p. 10

provides an alternate explanation for Berlew and Hall's (1966) psychologically grounded ideas on early career experience"). Moreover, a proposal is being made, to introduce and reinterpret the findings of one perspective, from the perspective of others (this notion is represented by the attempts made by Herriot (1984), who reinterpreted the "work of vocational psychology from a social psychological perspective") and above all, there is a notion of an interdisciplinary career theory, that would integrate previously separated levels of analysis and contribute to the evolution of new perspectives.²⁵

Over the last four decades, a multiplication and variety of coexisting theoretical premises regarding the subject of career development, proliferated. The value of the debate regarding career theories lies in the fact, that it is filled with a lively critique of the majority of theoretical perspectives. Commentators and critics, situating their critique on various levels of generality, most often address the theories' inadequacy, lack of comprehensiveness, and incoherence (Brown 2002; Brown and Lent, 2005; Savickas, 2002). The adequacy difficulty proves to be even more significant, when we ponder over the content of career theories. Ignorance regarding contextual matters (Brown, 2002, Collin and Young, 1986; Lent, 2001; Leung, 1995), the lack of attention towards the issue of social inequality and the overlapping of the conceptualisation of numerous elements (Borgen, 1991; Osipow, 1990; Patton and McMahon, 1999) as well as the segmental nature, both in terms of individual theoretical models (Super, 1990) and the whole field (Arthur, Hall and Lawrence, 1989; Brown and Lent, 2005; Hackett, Lent and Greenhaus, 1991)²⁶, reflect the given problems, defined in the context of the propositional structure analysis.

The conceptual complexity of the career issue, its multidimensionality (a correlate of biological, cognitive, behavioural, and social factors), multidirectionality (a continual, interchangeable progress and decline of career in the cycle of life), plasticity (potential multi-trajectory development), and contextual character (historical, environmental, geographical factors influencing the career development) all determine the need to integrate the micro-theory into the meta-theory.²⁷ In this

²⁵ M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Generating New directions in career theory: the case for a transdisciplinary approach* [in:] M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Handbook of career theory*, Cambridge 2004, p. 13

²⁶ W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 7. See also: M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Generating New directions in career theory: the case for a transdisciplinary approach* [in:] M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Handbook of career theory*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 14-17

²⁷ Bańka A., *Psychologiczne doradztwo karier*, Poznań 2007, pp. 70-71. In an impressive catalogue of micro-theories, having both potential and real applications, regarding career consulting, the author enumerates "theories of involvement, theories of attachment, theories of commitment, theories of social

context, a particular event is worth mentioning, the conference titled *Convergence in Career Development Theories* (Michigan University: 1992), which included the prominent founders of the career theory: J. L. Holland, E. S. Bordin, D. Super, R. V. Dawis, R. W. Lent, A. R. Spokane, D. L. Blumstein, B. Walsh, F. W. Vondracek. The participants discussed the key aspects of the career development in a specific language, searching for the possibilities of dialogue, creating a “bridge” between theories and placing career development theories in a wider context of the life career of an individual.²⁸ The conference showed the need for convergence, regarding career development theories and the significance of the trend leading to an emerging integrated career theory in order to, as Osipow (1990) stated, obtain a holistic perspective of the career development or, as Hackett, R. W. Lent and Greenhaus (1991) indicated, to develop a cross-perspective theory or, the notion on which W. Patton and M. McMahon (1999) expanded, to develop a systematic theory that would serve as ground for establishing the framework for a career theory, where one could identify common features and relations. One factor speaking on behalf of the necessity of a responsible reflection upon the similarities and differences between contemporary theoretical orientations, is the explicit multiplicity and variety of existing theories and the necessity of referring to more than one theory, in order to grasp, describe and interpret the complexity of career development.²⁹

Various contexts of apprehending the career issue lead to changes in its “theorising”. That way, as highlighted by Hartung (2002) and Jarvis (2002), the career development construct is subject to an important paradigm change: from speaking of the career development towards discussions emphasising on the development through work and different roles in life.³⁰ Theorists have clearly focused on the constructivist influences on the career theory. Guichard and Lenz (2005) identified three trends, prevalent in the international reflection upon the subject of the

and cultural competence, theories of self-disclosure, theories of autodetermination, theories of the flow of optimal experience, theories of resilience, theories of maturity and functional/dysfunctional immaturity, theories of indecisiveness and undecisiveness, theories of multiple role realism/maturity, theories of human agency, the theory of learned helplessness, theories of well-being, theories of gender role conflict and work-family conflict, theories of locus of causality and control, the Big five theory, theories of cultural conflict, theories of cultural self-identity, theories of separation, theories of acculturation and theories of individualism-collectivism”. Ibidem p. 69.

²⁸ A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Doradztwo zawodowe*, Warszawa 2009, p. 33

²⁹ W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 7

³⁰ W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 6

career theory, namely: “(a) emphasis on contexts and cultural diversities, (b) self-construction or development emphasis, and (c) a constructivist perspective”³¹.

The review of the career development theories systematisation clearly refers to a well-established tradition of the concerns regarding the career issue in the United States. As previously shown, a majority of the career development theories has been conceptualised and is empirically rooted in the social-cultural and occupational contexts of the United States reality, which makes them, in a sense, allochthonous. It's the United States that spawned *The Big Five Career Theories*³². A reflection upon the necessity of the cultural adaptation or modification of this epistemological legacy, would prove essential for being able to utilise it. As S. A. Leung highlights, there should “be more “indigenous” efforts to develop theories and practice that would meet the idiosyncratic needs in diverse geographic regions. (...) Indigenisation of career and guidance theory and practice should aim to identify the universals as well as the unique experience, constructs and practice that are specific to particular culture groups”³³. Studies regarding the autochthonous nature of career theories include three groups of conceptual premises. The first premise refers to the cognition of particular cultural phenomena and their specific nature, in order to answer the question: “how culture might intervene, moderate, or mediate the hypothesised career development and choice process”³⁴.

Activities that would increase the versatility and explanatory value of the theory are linked to their critical overview and the evaluation of the understanding and interpreting of chosen variables (e.g. adjustment to work, interests) in a particular cultural context, as well as using it as a ground for the clarification of universals and specific elements. The verification of the hypothetical premises is not without meaning, especially confirming the actuality of the relations between hypothetical variables and examining the influence of a specified cultural context in order to update the premises, determine a new configuration of variables, which in result should lead to constructing a theory and developing an indigenous conceptual framework. Another aspect, justifying the need for a critical reflection upon the quality (or, more precisely, the reliability) of theoretical perspectives, is the amount

³¹ W. Patton, M. McMahon, *Career Development and Systems Theory. Connecting Theory and Practice*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 3

³² See: S. A. Leung, *The Big Five Career Theories* [in:] J. A. Athanasou, R. Van Esbroeck, (eds.) *International Handbook of Career Guidance*, 2008, p. 127

³³ S. A. Leung, *The Big Five Career Theories* [in:] J. A. Athanasou, R. Van Esbroeck, (eds.) *International Handbook of Career Guidance*, 2008, p. 127

³⁴ S. A. Leung, *The Big Five Career Theories* [in:] J. A. Athanasou, R. Van Esbroeck, (eds.) *International Handbook of Career Guidance*, 2008, p. 128

of studies regarding the methodological instruments, including the different cultural shades of social and occupational aspects. Creating or adopting proper career measures for a particular cultural group should be combined with the elimination of cultural prejudice. The analysis of social-cultural-occupational conditions required for an indigenous career theory (considering the implementation of cultural adaptation) is also linked with hopes for the development of the cross-cultural career counselling.³⁵

The career theory, while alive, will always be engaged in a “struggle for viewpoints”, and only the “spirit behind the development of career theory can remain constant”.³⁶ The legitimacy of applying a chosen classification, is based upon, whether it is useful in arranging the multiplicity of career elements. In result, the scientific discourse develops towards presenting a flexible and adaptive career theory. One could presume, that the above theoretical discourse, referring to the legacy of career theories, indicates their inadequacy. The proposal to create an interdisciplinary career theory that would integrate previous, separated levels of analysis, proves otherwise. As highlighted earlier, the need to integrate the micro-theory into the meta-theory, creates an opportunity for an increased versatility and explanatory value of theoretical conclusions. This way, the career theory constantly evolves, maintaining its relevance as a central point, in an ever changing reality.

In the process of the career theory development, the career construction theory by M. L. Savickas deserves particular attention. Introduced at the beginning of the 21st century, the theory is an expansion and integration of segments of the highly structurally developed career development theory by D. Super (1957). Savickas’s effort of combining and integrating the three traditions of theories: the developmental approach, the narrative approach and the differential approach, establishing a theoretical perspective called the vocational behaviour theory, is an interesting cognitive perspective that allows for a further overview of the career issue. The theory includes the life structure and “thematic life stories”, career adaptability as well as a personality style (occupational) of an individual.³⁷ The author, as an integrator of the theory of content and the theory of process, considering the fact

³⁵ S. A. Leung, *The Big Five Career Theories* [in:] J. A. Athanasou, R. Van Esbroeck, (eds.) *International Handbook of Career Guidance*, 2008, p. 128.

³⁶ M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Generating New directions in career theory: the case for a transdisciplinary approach* [in:] M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Handbook of career theory*, Cambridge 2004, p. 20.

³⁷ J. G. Maree, *Brief Overview of the Advancement of Postmodern Approaches to Career Counseling* [in:] *Journal for Psychology in Africa*, 20(3)/2010, pp. 363-364

that the career theory development is a permanent process of a theoretical transformation of the career concept, highlights the importance of both a new look at the career issue (supporting new ideas), but also placing the existing accounts in perspective to others and re-evaluating them anew.³⁸

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³⁸ See: M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Generating New directions in career theory: the case for a transdisciplinary approach* [in:] M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, B. S. Lawrence, *Handbook of career theory*, Cambridge 2004, p. 20