



Career Theories and Models at Work:

Ideas for Practice

Nancy Arthur, Roberta Neault, Mary McMahon, Editors

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Preface

Who needs theory? Who uses it? What are some new theories and models? How do they apply to practice? Career practitioners may have had a little or a lot of theory in their training, but we invite you to consider which theories and models inform your career practices. Although we certainly value the contributions of our early theorists (e.g., Holland, Super), many classic theories have been updated and new and emerging theories and models have been developed in many different countries around the world. ***Career practice in contemporary times requires practitioners to be equipped with the latest developments in the field – this includes knowledge about current theories, and models and strategies for applying that knowledge in their work with clients who seek career support.*** We take this point further to emphasize that ethical career practice requires practitioners to be up-to-date with their knowledge about theory and how theory informs practice.

The impetus for this project came from several crossroads in our collective experiences. The three of us have been involved in curriculum development and instruction of pre-service and post-graduate education, through face-to-face and distributed learning, and we have practised for many years, directly in the field. Looking back, when we were students, we found that the theory texts assigned in our career development courses were very dense and difficult reading, and we were left wondering how to apply theory in practice. Some things have changed a lot since we were students and some things have changed very little! Students in our classes have also commented on the challenges that they have found in understanding and relating to career development theories. They have been keen to learn about how to apply concepts and ideas with their clients. We have also noted that the programs of most professional conferences in career development focus on strategies and techniques, with limited attention paid to theoretical perspectives, and theory-based practices. We wanted to address these gaps with a unique edited collection on the practical applications of career development theory and models.

In 2011, Dr. Roberta Neault led an initiative to update practitioners about theories and models through bringing together colleagues to contribute to the “Thoughts on Theories” special issue of the *Journal of Employment Counseling* – the result was a readable summary of the highlights of current theories and models in the developers’ own words. Since that time, contributors to that special issue, in various combinations, have presented their work on panels and workshops at several regional, national, and international conferences. The responses to the journal articles and “audience-packed” conference presentations were extremely positive – practitioners told us they were excited to hear from leaders in the field and to learn about the classic and emerging theories and models, and they appreciated the tips for practice that were included in the presentations. We heard from the feedback that *theory is interesting and useful!*

We were also aware of the tendency in the literature towards privileging some theorists and the lack of recognition given to others across many countries. Consequently, we intentionally sought to include colleagues' work from several different countries. To that end, we received overwhelming support as this edited collection presents the work of authors from four continents and nine countries: Australia, Canada, England, Finland, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States. These multi-country perspectives represent a major contribution to the internationalization of the field of career development. We are grateful to our colleagues for supporting the project and for lending their expertise, time, and commitment to writing about the practical applications of their work.

Time passes quickly and here we are in 2019, the year this edited collection was launched at the national career development conference, Cannexus, in Ottawa, Canada. We have compiled a resource with 43 chapters, each addressing a different theory or model relevant to a wide range of career development practitioners across diverse settings. The chapters are organized into three parts. Part I of each chapter provides an overview of the theory or model and the main tenets/principles that are important for practitioner knowledge. Part II of each chapter provides an original case vignette that the authors created to demonstrate the application of their theory or model. Part III of each chapter provides a 1-page summary of practice points, or "takeaway notes" for use in practice.

The format of the chapters allows for flexibility in the ways that readers might use the content (e.g., a comparison of theoretical premises for approaching a case; using the case studies as stimulus for examining presenting issues and approaches; trying out the practice example and comparing results or discussing how to adapt it to a local setting; comparing the practice points of one or several perspectives). The materials in the book can be used flexibly, selecting and customizing them for individuals, staff groups, or course curricula.

We look forward to hearing about the ways that you have applied the theories and models at work. We hope that you enjoy revisiting classic theories and models to see what is new and what has stood the test of time, being introduced to theories and models you may not have been exposed to, and gaining practical ideas to help you translate concepts from theories and models to your practice settings.

- Nancy, Roberta, and Mary

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Dedication

To clients, who have shared hopes, dreams, and possibilities in their lives. To practitioners, who have shared dilemmas, creative practices, and commitment to the field of career development.