

The Chicago School of Sociology and the origins of Career Studies

Phil McCash

Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Warwick, UK.

For correspondence:

Phil McCash: p.t.mccash@warwick.ac.uk

To cite this article:

McCash, P. (2024). The Chicago School of Sociology and the origins of Career Studies. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 52(1), 25-39. <https://doi.org/10.20856/jnicec.5203>

Abstract

This article troubles the origin myth of career development centred on the vocational guidance movement. It draws attention to the early theorisation of career undertaken mainly, although not exclusively, within the pioneering Chicago School of Sociology in the early and middle part of the twentieth century. It is argued that this interactionist tradition within sociology gives the field of career development a coherence and integrity that might otherwise be missed. In addition, it is suggested that its underpinning philosophy is particularly suited to embracing theoretical innovation from other disciplines. The formal study of career starts in sociology, perhaps, but it continues to expand as a transdisciplinary field of enquiry.

Keywords: Career Studies; Career Theory; Interactionism; Sociology; Transdisciplinary

Introduction

This issue of the NICEC journal focusing on career development and disciplinary perspectives is very timely as it is now recognised that career studies has become a transdisciplinary field (Arthur et al., 1989a; Moore et al., 2007; Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018). There is a wide range of career development theories drawing from psychology, sociology, education, organisational studies, and other disciplines. This testifies to the existence of a vibrant and productive research culture, but it also poses challenges in terms of coherence and ease of use. The field is therefore witnessing a number of important attempts at taking an integrative approach to understanding career theory (for example, Gunz & Mayrhofer,

2018; McCash, 2021; Patton & McMahon, 2021; Savickas, 2021; Yates, 2021). These integrative approaches recognise that any one individual career theory is unequal to the task of fully understanding the richness and depth of career. In some respects, the field is experiencing something of an integrative turn, although, there have been several earlier contributions in this direction (for example, Savickas & Lent, 1994; Super, 1992).

Integration sounds like a neat solution but it poses its own set of problems and challenges. Questions arise as to how to 'do' integration and each approach attempts the task in subtly different ways. A key challenge is how to retain coherence, rigour, and intelligibility when integrating perspectives underpinned by quite markedly different philosophies.

To address this challenge, this article takes a deep dive into the intellectual history of the field and the birth of career studies in the pioneering Chicago School of Sociology in the early and middle part of the twentieth century. It starts by describing the background to the Chicago School and tracing the early intellectual influences on the interactionist philosophy that is closely associated with it. Five key contributions are then discussed in relation to career; namely, the work of: William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, Frances Donovan, Clifford Shaw, Everett Hughes, and Erving Goffman. Following this, it is shown that their interactionist conception of career has profoundly shaped contemporary career theory including the developmental, community interaction, careership, and career construction theories. This means that the field of career studies has an underlying coherence and rigour that may not be obvious at the surface level. Based on this solid foundation, the interactionist view of career is well-positioned to assimilate relevant concepts from other theories and disciplines. It therefore offers a rich way of understanding career that is valuable for the future of the academic field and the career development profession.

The Chicago School of Sociology

The 'Chicago School of Sociology' is a popular term for the Department of Sociology founded in 1892 at the University of Chicago, and the ideas or approaches associated with it. It was the first sociology department in the USA and became one of the leading centres in the world. The department took a particular interest in researching the city due to its location in Chicago, then a fast-growing city with a considerable immigrant population. It also benefitted from the work of the related School of Social Service Administration at the University which focused on training social workers and possessed deep knowledge of Chicago through fieldwork and detailed maps of the city and its constituent districts.

Two leading lights in the department in the period 1913-1934 were Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. They developed the initial intellectual frameworks that gave rise to the study of career in Chicago. In a paper on the contemporary city, Park (1915, pp. 610-612) argued, citing Freud, that the activities of work, sport, and play enable individuals to find symbolic expression for natural instincts and appetites. He stated, 'in the crowd...every moment may be said to be psychological' (p. 592). Cities were conceived as psycho-ecological phenomena consisting of moral regions and occupations where contrasting types of moral behaviour were either permitted or taboo. Following Simmel's (1908/1971) important essay on *The Stranger*, Park and Burgess argued that the study of delinquent or marginal careers, and those of other moral outcasts or strangers, lends insight to the processes of scapegoating and othering (1921, p. 559).

Intellectual background to interactionism

This section presents an outline of the intellectual background to the interactionist philosophy developed in Chicago. It focuses on the epistemology of Immanuel Kant and Max Weber; and the psychosocial theories of Georg Simmel, William James, and George Herbert Mead. For the purposes of this article, it is inevitably somewhat brief and much fuller accounts are provided by Rock (1979) and Bulmer (1984). Interactionism is used here as a general term to describe one of the main approaches relevant to the study of career developed at Chicago in this initial period. More specific, and perhaps better known, terms include symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), community interaction theory (Law, 1981, 2009), and cultural/critical interactionism (Jacobsen, 2019); however, these relate to later periods and/or authors from elsewhere.

Georg Simmel

Interactionism is informed by the social theory of Georg Simmel. Society, and its components, are seen as events that are produced through an ongoing process of social life termed *sociation*. Sociation arises when people meet each other and engage in mutually responsive behaviour. It is through apparently routine and ordinary phenomena, such as the career, that social life can be understood. In addition, Simmelian sociology is formalist as it focuses on the analysis of recurrent social processes called forms (Rock, 1979). In these terms, career is seen as relational, and always in movement, because sociation is an ongoing and dynamic social process. The study of career is also a comparative art as it entails identifying recurrent patterns, similarities, and differences.

Immanuel Kant and Max Weber

Interactionism draws from the Kantian view that all knowledge is mediated by forms of experience which shape what we can understand. This synthetic form of reasoning precludes understanding objects as they are independent of the perceiving mind. It is also influenced by Weber in denying the possibility of any overarching system or theory because reality is simply inexhaustible in its richness and denseness. It is held that theories must inevitably be incomplete, provisional, open, and consist of interpretations rather than the depiction of a purported objective reality (Rock, 1979). On this basis, theories of career must be similarly provisional, interpretive, and open-ended in nature.

William James and George Herbert Mead

Interactionism is also shaped by William James' theory of the self. The self is conceived in terms of two elements termed the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'I' is the self that thinks, acts, and has experiences (the subjective self); whilst the 'Me' is the self as an object of knowledge, including the sum of a person's thoughts, feelings, social roles, and recognition from others (the objective self). Jamesian theory emphasises the dynamic and social nature of the self-concept. These ideas influenced George Herbert Mead, who worked in the philosophy department at Chicago, and further theorised the 'I' and the 'me'. Mead had a considerable influence on the sociology department and the later evolution of interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). James also emphasised the importance of understanding the meaning of other people's lives in order to ensure that our knowledge of the world is closely informed by how people experience it. He regarded the absence of this as

something of a blind spot in many approaches then current in academic research (Bulmer, 1984). On this basis, career is defined in terms of how the individual sees the world, the meaning they make of it, and their significant social roles and objects.

The above points may appear somewhat abstract, but they are relevant to understanding the underlying coherence of the interactionist world view and its importance for developing an integrative understanding of career. As will, hopefully, become apparent in the sections below, these aspects (sociation, comparison, interpretation, the self-concept, and the importance of meaning-making) permeate the study of career.

The study of career in the Chicago School of Sociology

Several researchers pioneered the study of career from the 1910s onwards and five significant examples are selected below. These studies often employed qualitative methods such as autobiography, life story, natural history, interview, and participant observation. These methods were selected in order to explore deeply the lifeworlds of participants.

William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki

The American sociologist William Thomas and the Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki researched the lives of Polish immigrants to the United States and their families. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, published in five volumes between 1918 and 1920, is considered a landmark in sociology particularly in its range of data collection methods such as use of life history. For example, Volume 3 contains an autobiographical life story with accompanying commentary. In this volume, Thomas and Znaniecki (1919) pioneered the concept of the individual 'life organisation' (p. 25) consisting of the individual's 'methods of adaptation and control of the social meanings in a particular domain' (p. 25) and linked this to 'the individual's social career' (p. 25) and 'life career' (p. 34).

Frances Donovan

In her neglected classic, *The Woman Who Waits*, Frances Donovan (1920) wonders about the lives of women who work in Chicago's central business district known as 'the Loop'. The secretaries, stenographers, office executives, typists, sales staff, bundle wrappers, masseuses, chiropodists, and garment workers who make up the 'great army of women workers' (p. 8). She employs participant observation methods to research one of these workers, their reasons for entering their occupational line, and style of life. One day, when shopping in Chicago, she notices the many restaurants in that part of the city and the waitresses working within, "I found myself saying again and again. 'Why not find out about the waitress?' And then suddenly another idea came to me. 'Why not be a waitress?'" (p. 11). She contacts the US Department of Labour to find out what is already known, in official terms, about waitressing and is informed that there has been no research into this occupation.

I merely wanted to see what other women, not in my world, were doing. I went on and explored until I felt that I had gone a long way. Then I sat down to try and give an account of what I had seen.

(Donovan, 1920, pp. 12-13)

In Donovan's (1929) next book, *The Saleslady*, she presents a related but different set of motivations. Donovan reveals that she is working as a teacher in a public school for girls in Chicago. Every year, she talks with around 200 of these school-leavers about their career goals. Most of them seem to aspire to work as stenographers (short-hand typists) and executive secretaries and get married. She wonders why they do not consider alternative occupations and sectors such as retail buyer, but then checks herself, and questions her ability to discuss such options with the girls due to her own lack of knowledge. Again, she researches the available career information and concludes there is nothing that would be accessible and useful for her pupils. So, she decides to spend her summer vacation finding out more about working in retail by getting a job in a department store in New York.

Clifford Shaw

Clifford Shaw worked as a part-time parole officer in Chicago in the 1920s. Two key influences on his work were his wife, Hetta Shaw, a trained social worker with experience in Boston and Chicago, and Jane Addams, who professionalised social work in Chicago and had links with the School of Social Service Administration and the Sociology Department (Blackman, 2021). Whilst working as a parole officer, he met a teenager called Stanley (a pseudonym). He was a survivor of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, who had been incarcerated 27 times by the time he was 17 years old, for crimes ranging from petty theft to street robbery. Shaw agreed to research Stanley's career using a life history approach. This was published as *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (Shaw, 1930/1966) (the term 'jack-rolling' was slang for street robbery). In the life history, Shaw and Stanley emphasised the central role of learning in his career. This was not a narrowly cognitive or school-based style of learning. The learning career included important relationships, emotions, situations, and stories, for example, Stanley's relationships with his parents, growing up in the slum district, incarceration, and the new location and caregivers of his post-prison life. Conversations between Shaw and Stanley enabled the latter to eventually make commitments in work and relationships. These led to transitions into a more settled kind of life, where violent episodes sometimes recurred, although less frequently (Snodgrass, 2012).

Everett Hughes

The studies identified above focused on fieldwork. In a series of groundbreaking papers, their fellow Chicago sociologist, Everett Hughes, provided the first systematic theoretical statements about the study of career.

One of Hughes's main contributions is to use theory to engage in the *comparative analysis* of career. As he put it, to develop a theoretical vocabulary which is as equally useful for understanding the careers of professors, pickle factory workers, and junk peddlers (Hughes, 1951/1971). So, in his terms, that is what career theory attempts to do. Following Simmel, it provides a critical vocabulary for the comparative interpretation of career. This technical vocabulary was gradually extended to include: marginality, culture, social system, calling, drama, roles, cycles, turning points, status change, interaction, learning, lines of interest, and rituals (Hughes, 1928; 1937; 1949; 1952/1971; 1961/1997).

Career theory is seen as a tool to explore the uniqueness, similarities, and differences between individuals. This involves seeing through the veils of prestige and stigma that

adhere to contrasting career areas and lends a critical edge to career theory. At the same time, following Weber, this cannot lead to a universal theory of career. Such a universalising approach might approximate to a kind of grand narrative of career and that is not what Hughes had in mind. He saw career theory as a cultural tool to open up and explore career in all its complexity and cultural richness. There could be no limit to the range of concepts employed as it delved ever deeper into the rich and inexhaustible complexity of career.

For Hughes, as it was for Thomas and Znaniecki, career is seen as a life career; 'a career is the moving perspective in which the person sees [their] life as a whole' (Hughes, 1937, p. 410). It could relate to working in a job, raising a family, engaging in civic life, or the pursuit of leisure activities. Following Simmel's concept of sociation, career is always viewed in movement, and this includes the various roles, occupations, organisations, people, objects, and actions relevant to the individual.

...a study of careers – of the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order...may be expected to reveal the nature and 'working constitution' of a society. Institutions are but the forms in which the collective behaviour and collective action of people go on. In the course of a career the person finds [their] place within these forms, carries on [their] active life with reference to other people, and interprets the meaning of the one life [they have] to live.

Hughes (1937, p. 413)

Seen in these terms, career involves the art of interpretation. Following James, it is intimately concerned with the meaning we make of the lives we lead. It is not wholly or narrowly subjective because its community-based, social, and relational nature inevitably brings us into contact with others. It is also situated as it occurs in a specific time, place, space, and context. Career connects the micro and the macro, the subjective and the objective, and lends insight into the wider society i.e. what Hughes termed the constitution of society. Career links to history, institutions, social systems, technology, the labour market, and the social groups to which we belong (racial, national ethnic, religious, class, and sexual) (Hughes, c. 1961/1997). Here, the wide scope and ambition of career studies becomes apparent.

Linked to its social and relational features, career is also seen as dramaturgical because it entails role playing, actors, relations with others, routines, and acts. It involves a range of players operating in an interactional system and situated on stages. The players use these stages to follow scripts but also engage in role extemporisation (Hughes, 1955/1971). Career involves rituals, stage managers, contingencies, and audiences (Hughes, 1937).

Erving Goffman

Erving Goffman formed part of a second wave of career researchers at Chicago (see also Becker, 1963; Strauss, 1975). In the collection of essays titled, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Goffman (1961/1968) does not seek to adjudicate as to whether mental patients are mentally ill or whether mental health professionals are sane. Rather, his focus is on exploring the 'career contingencies' (p. 126) and the changes in self, situation, and status that are central to career development. Goffman also provides a significant definition of career:

Traditionally the term 'career' has been reserved for those who expect to enjoy the rises laid out within a respectable profession. The term is coming to be used, however, in a broadened sense to refer to any person's course through life...Such a career is not something that can be brilliant or disappointing; it can no more be a success than a failure...

Goffman (1961/1968, p. 119)

In Goffman's usage, the career takes place over the course of an entire life. Following the similar work of Hughes, Thomas, and Znaniecki, it is a life career. It is not seen as exclusively synonymous with a job, paid work, or employment. For sure, it very often involves those activities, but it relates to a variety of others including, for example, studying, parenting, civic life, health, leisure, religious commitments, etc. Career is seen as democratic and egalitarian in the sense that everyone has a career from the moment they are born to the moment they die. In common speech, we may talk about having multiple careers but, strictly speaking, we only have one career. We can have many occupations, jobs, and other roles, but we only have one career just as we only have one life.

Goffman acknowledges stereotypical conceptions of career linked to middle class jobs and promotion but defines it in more open and egalitarian terms. He notes that career is sometimes connected with notions of prestige and success but seeks to decouple it from these rather restrictive and elitist meanings. Following Hughes, he intends that we should be critical and able to *see through* prestige, stigma, success, and failure.

Goffman further argues for the value of studying career:

One value of the concept of career is its two-sidedness. One side is linked to internal matters held dearly and closely, such as images of self and felt identity; the other side concerns official position, jural relations, and style of life, and is part of a publicly accessible institutional complex. The concept of career, then, allows one to move back and forth between the personal and the public, between the self and its significant society.

Goffman (1961/1968, p. 119)

Career is seen as an important integrative and critical concept. One that can bridge dualisms such as public and private, the individual and the social, the subjective and the objective. It includes, and makes space for, the emotional and affective aspects of life relating to 'felt identity'. It emphasises the importance of how individuals see themselves i.e., 'images of self'. Whilst, at the same time, it flags up the inherently social nature of career. It is, by definition, linked to position, status, and public life.

Links with later career theory

As can be seen from the above section, researchers at Chicago laid the foundations for career studies as a field of enquiry. This section advances the argument by showing how theories of career development from a range of disciplines continue to be shaped by the interactionist conception of career. It is argued that this lends the field an underlying coherence and rigour that might otherwise be overlooked.

Developmental theory (Super, 1957, 1980, 1992) is generally seen as a psychological theory, and this is understandable, as Super's life span theory drew heavily from the whole of life psychology pioneered by Charlotte Bühler. In another sense, however, developmental theory is intensely sociological and saturated with sociological references. The title of the landmark publication *The Psychology of Careers* (Super, 1957) was selected to differentiate it from *The Psychology of Occupations* (Roe, 1956) published the year previously. Career was employed as a holistic term to encompass a range of occupations throughout the life course. In so doing, Super intentionally used the sociological concept of 'career' and strove to link this more fully with psychology. Chicago School sociologists including Hughes, Shaw, and Becker were cited in the text as well as two significant sociological career pattern studies from other universities (Davidson & Anderson, 1937; Miller & Form, 1951). It is therefore a key moment in the transdisciplinary evolution of career studies and marks a movement from *vocational* guidance to *career* guidance.

Even more significantly, the influence of the 'I' and the 'me' (discussed previously in relation to James and Mead) can be detected in Super's later elaboration of the self-concept and visualisation. The self-concept is defined as, 'a picture of the self in some role, some situation, in a position, performing some set of functions, or in some web of relationships' (Super, 1963, p. 18). It consists of an overall self-concept system with interlocking role self-concepts (Super, 1992). In developing this approach, Super fully acknowledged the influence of the Jamesian and Meadian 'I' and 'me' (Super & Bohn, 1971, p. 106). The self-concept, in developmental theory, is always seen as a social and relational self. Despite some later criticisms (K. Roberts, 1977), Super's self is profoundly psychosocial. Also, note the deeply embedded visual metaphor, 'a picture of the self', which echoes the Hughesian definition of career, 'the moving perspective in which persons orient themselves with reference to the social order' (Hughes, 1937, p. 413).

Finally, the influence of the interactionist tradition can be seen perhaps most strongly in Super's (1980) later work on the life-span and life-space approach to career theory. The life career rainbow concept echoes directly the life career (as set out by Thomas and Znaniecki, Hughes, and Goffman). The concepts of roles, role salience, performance, and theatres mirror the dramaturgical view of career (Hughes, 1937; 1955/1971). In addition, Super's concept of minicycles can be linked with status passages, turning points, and cycles (Hughes, 1949; 1952/1971).

We can now read the opportunity structure argument mobilised by K. Roberts (1977) against developmental theory as reflective of a profound debate *within sociology itself* between structural and interactionist conceptions of social life. In this respect, it is telling, and productive for the further evolution of the field, that at least three interactionist critiques of opportunity structure emerged.

Robert Roberts's critique of opportunity structure theory was based squarely in the interactionist tradition and argued for a life career biographical approach to career education through which a relevant and appropriate curriculum would emerge (R. Roberts, 1980). Building directly on this critique, community interaction theory argued that career takes place in communities and is mediated by modes of interaction (expectations, support, information, feedback, and modelling) (Law, 1981, 1993, 2009) and a process of career learning (Law, 1996). A little later, the careership (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Hodkinson, 2009) and learning career theories (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000) drew directly from the

interactionist tradition in their conceptualisation of career (citing Hughes and Goffman) with an added Bourdieusian dimension.

In organisational studies, the publication of the *Handbook of Career Theory* led to a resurgence of interest in the interactionist tradition (Arthur et al., 1989a). This text contained an important chapter on career studies and the legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology (Barley, 1989). This chapter became a key point of reference for organisational understandings of career and beyond. Returning to the book as a whole, in arguing for a transdisciplinary approach to career theory, the editors adopted a Hughesian inflected definition of career (Arthur et al. 1989b). The definition of career used was influential and adopted in later publications in organisational studies including the *Handbook of Career Studies* (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007) and *Understanding Careers* (Inkson, 2014). More recently, organisational scholars have revised the Arthur et al. definition and anchored it even more strongly in the Chicago School tradition (Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018). Gunz and Mayrhofer argue that the four concepts of career in the social chronology framework (spatial, ontic, temporal, and pattern) relate directly to the interactionist conception of career.

The scholarship of the Chicago School is acknowledged in the narrative turn in the social sciences. In many respects, the life history method is seen as a precursor of narrative enquiry (Polkinghorne, 1988). It also influences the foundations of career construction theory where the work of Hughes and Shaw is acknowledged (Savickas, 1994; 2002).

The interactionist tradition has a significant place in educational studies. Gallacher et al. (2002) use Goffman's definition of career to anchor their concept of the learning career. Cultural learning theory (McCash, 2021) uses an interactionist conceptualisation of career focused on relationships, contents, learning, contexts, and story (drawing from Hughes, Shaw, and Becker). Gee (2023) uses Goffman's definition of career to enable university students and staff to critically interrogate employability.

Criminology has been informed by the concept of career both in its early days (Glueck & Glueck, 1930; Shaw, 1930/1966) and in its modern incarnation (Kvsvgaard, 2002). In the latter example, the interactionist tradition is drawn on to define the criminal career using the work of Shaw, Hughes, and Goffman.

Discussion

As can be seen above, the interactionist conceptualisation of career provides the foundation for a range of contributions in psychology, organisational studies, narrative theory, educational studies, and criminology. Viewed in these terms, the field of career studies is less fractured than it might appear. Some scholars have argued the field is fragmented and siloed (for example, Schein, 2005, as cited in Moore et al., 2007; McMahan & Arthur, 2019) but these readings may require some revision. There was productive dialogue between the early scholars of career in sociology and psychology. There is solid evidence that they read each other's work, and made positive remarks concerning it, whilst also establishing their own positions (Super, 1954, 1957; Hughes, c. 1961/1997). This level of integration provides a foundation for further transdisciplinary contributions to the field. It can be extended to other fields such as geography, philosophy, media studies, depth psychology, and professional studies; and other people-focused professions including social work, youth work, teaching, learning and development, probation work, coaching, and counselling.

As discussed earlier, the field of career studies is currently witnessing a number of important attempts at taking an integrative approach to understanding career theory (for example, Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2018; McCash, 2021; Patton & McMahon, 2021; Savickas, 2021; Yates, 2021). Integrative approaches need to deal with the complex and challenging issue of attempting to integrate theories with opposing epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions. The interactionist tradition is helpful in this respect as it acknowledges multiple realities (see Thomas & Znaniecki, Hughes, Goffman) and holds that they can be known through a process of interpretation (Weber, Hughes). It also has clear commitments to ethical values with a focus on understanding others and engaging in practical support (Donovan, Shaw). It is also constructed on a rich and coherent intellectual foundation (James, Mead, Weber, Simmel, Kant).

Many career theories are potentially congruent with the interactionist tradition provided their underpinning ideas are consistent with the above philosophy. Nevertheless, there are challenges. Some theories, which are otherwise highly valuable contributions, use alternative terms to career such as working (Blustein, 2006) and livelihood (Arulmani, 2014) because they see career as referring to middle class, privileged, volitional work. As can be seen, this takes us full circle, as it is precisely these stereotypes of career that the Chicago School dismantled a hundred years ago.

At the same time, it is important to retain a critical stance in relation to the interactionist tradition. The work of individuals from over a century ago cannot be uncritically idealised. For example, language was used in ways that are no longer considered appropriate and the current author has inserted gender neutral pronouns in some of the quotations used above. In addition, the important contributions of female and black researchers, whilst acknowledged at the time, have sometimes been underplayed in later historical accounts. These issues are being addressed by a range of scholars (for example, Blackman, 2023; Hart, 2010; Kurent, 1982). In addition, greater acknowledgement of issues such as power and culture is now reflected in a movement towards cultural and critical interactionism (Becker & McCall, 1990; Jacobsen, 2019).

Conclusion

This article provides an argument in favour of the interactionist conception of career. It is seen as an inclusive term that embraces those who are located at the margins of society. Career is defined as relational, social, cultural, and spatial, and mediated by a process of learning.

Career theory provides a critical vocabulary for the comparative analysis of career. Since reality is inexhaustible, there is no limit to the range of this vocabulary. Provided the underlying philosophies are consistent with the interactionist philosophy, there is no difficulty in embracing theories from a wide range of disciplines.

Career is a significant integrative concept in its own right. It connects the macro and the micro. It links individual lives, and how individuals see themselves, with the constitution of society. There is nothing outside of career and so it is through a deep understanding of career that the wider culture is revealed. It also integrates common dualisms such as the public and the private, the individual and the social, the subjective and the objective, the emotional and the cognitive.

Career means a life career that is dynamic and always in movement. It entails a process of making meaning and the art of interpretation. It is a critical term that we can use to see through veils of prestige and stigma, and explore, in ever deepening richness, the drama of life.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge many valuable conversations on career theory with staff and students at Writtle College, Reading University, and Warwick University, over the years. I would also like to thank the following individuals for their help: Clyde Thomas for introducing me to the work of Erving Goffman over 25 years ago; Phil Mignot for clarifying the social aspects of Super's work; Barbara Merrill for an introduction to the early pioneers of the Chicago School; and Ricky Gee for highlighting career in relation to criminology and the employability debate.

References

- Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T., & Lawrence, B. S. (1989a). (Eds.). *Handbook of career theory*. Cambridge University Press.
- Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T., & Lawrence, B. S. (1989b). Generating new directions in career theory: The case for a transdisciplinary approach. In M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, & B. S. Lawrence (Eds.), *Handbook of career theory* (pp. 7-25). Cambridge University Press.
- Arulmani, G. (2014). The cultural preparation process model and career development. In G. Arulmani, A. J. Bakshi, F. T. L. Leong, & A. G. Watts (Eds.), *Handbook of career development: International perspectives* (pp. 81-103). Springer.
- Barley, S. R. (1989). Careers, identities, and institutions: The legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology. In M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, & B. S. Lawrence (Eds.), *Handbook of career theory* (pp. 41-65). Cambridge University Press.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. Free Press.
- Becker, H. S., & McCall, M. M. (Eds.). (1990). *Symbolic interaction and cultural studies*. University of Chicago Press.
- Blackman, S. (2021). The jack-roller and the life history method: Notes on the Chicago School's Clifford Shaw and Howard Becker's humanistic narrative of young male and female delinquents in different ages. *Young*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11033088211046168>
- Blackman, S. (2023). Black ethnographic activists: Exploring Robert Park, scientific racism, The Chicago School, and FBI files through the Black sociological experience of Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier. *Symbolic Interaction*. 46(3), 287-310. <https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.628>

- Bloomer, M., & Hodkinson, P. (2000). Learning careers: Continuity and change in young people's dispositions to learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, 26, 528–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920020007805>
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. University of California Press.
- Blustein, D. L. (2006). *The psychology of working: A new perspective for career development, counseling, and public policy*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bulmer, M. (1984). *The Chicago school of sociology: Institutionalization, diversity, and the rise of sociological research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Davidson, P. E., & Anderson, H. D. (1937). *Occupational mobility in an American community*. Stanford University Press.
- Donovan, F. R. (1920). *The woman who waits*. Gorham Press.
- Donovan, F. R. (1929). *The saleslady*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gallacher, J., Crossan, B., Field, J., & Merrill, B. (2002). Learning careers and the social space: Exploring the fragile identities of adult returners in the new further education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21(6), 493-509. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0260137022000016172>
- Gee, R. (2023). Critical 'employability' within the realms of sociology – a movement toward 'social justice'. In T. Broadley, Y. Cai, M. Firth, E. Hunt, & J. Neugebauer, & Y. Cai (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of graduate employability* (pp. 359-372). London.
- Glueck, S., & Glueck, E. T. (1930). *500 Criminal Careers*. Knopf.
- Goffman, E. (1968). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Penguin. (Original work published 1961)
- Gunz, H., & Peiperl, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of career studies*. Sage.
- Gunz, H., & Mayrhofer, W. (2018). *Rethinking career studies: Facilitating conversation across boundaries with the social chronology framework*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hart, C. (Ed.). (2010). *The legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology*. Midrash.
- Hodkinson, P. (2009). Understanding career decision-making and progression: Careership revisited. *Career Research and Development: the NICEC journal*, 21(Winter), 4-17. <https://doi.org/10.20856/jnicec.2102>
- Hodkinson, P., & Sparkes, A. C. (1997). Careership: A sociological theory of career decision making. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18(1), 29-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569970180102>
- Hughes, E. C. (1928). Personality types and the division of labour. *American Journal of Sociology*, 33(5): 754-768. <https://doi.org/10.1086/214539>

- Hughes, E. C. (1937). Institutional office and the person. *American Journal of Sociology*, 43(3): 404-413. <https://doi.org/10.1086/217711>
- Hughes, E. C. (1949). Social change and status protest: An essay on the marginal man. *Phylon*, 10(1): 58-65. <https://doi.org/10.2307/272218>
- Hughes, E. C. (1971). Work and the self. In E. C. Hughes, *The sociological eye: Selected papers* (pp. 338-347). Transaction Books. (Reprinted from *Social psychology at the crossroads*, pp. 313-323, by J. H. Rohrer, & M. Sherif, Eds., 1951, Harper)
- Hughes, E. C. (1971). Cycles, turning points, and careers. In E. C. Hughes, *The sociological eye: Selected papers* (pp. 124-131). Transaction Books. (Original work published 1952)
- Hughes, E. C. (1971). Social role and the division of labour. In E. C. Hughes, *The sociological eye: Selected papers* (pp. 304-310). Transaction Books. (Reprinted from "Social role and the division of labour," 1955, *Bulletin of the Committee on Human Development*, pp. 32-38, University of Chicago Press)
- Hughes, E. C. (1997). Careers. *Qualitative Sociology*, 20(3): 389-397. (Original work privately distributed as teaching materials used at Brandeis University and Boston College from c. 1961 onwards) <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024731416961>
- Inkson, K. (2014). *Understanding careers* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Jacobsen, M. H. (Ed.). (2019). *Critical and cultural interactionism: Insights from sociology and criminology*. Routledge.
- Kurent, H. P. (1982). *Frances R. Donovan and the Chicago School of Sociology: A case study in marginality* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Maryland.
- Kyvsgaard, B. (2002). *The criminal career: The Danish longitudinal study*. Cambridge University Press.
- Law, B. (1981). Community interaction: A 'mid-range' focus for theories of career development in young adults. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 9(2), 142-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069888108258210>
- Law, B. (1993). Community interaction - a mid range focus for theories of career development in young adults - a postscript. In W. Dryden, & A. G. Watts (Eds.), *Guidance and counselling in Britain: a 20 year perspective*. Cambridge: CRAC. (Reprinted from Law, B. (2009) *Building on what know: community interaction and its importance for contemporary careers-work*, 26-29)
- Law, B. (1996). A career-learning theory. In A. G. Watts, B. Law, J. Killeen, J. M. Kidd, & R. Hawthorn (Eds.), *Rethinking careers education and guidance: Theory, policy and practice*. Routledge.
- Law, B. (2009). *Building on what we know: community-interaction and its importance for contemporary careers-work*. <http://www.hihohiho.com/memory/cafcit.pdf>
- McCash, P. (2021). Cultural learning theory and career development. In P. J. Robertson, T. Hooley, & P. McCash (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of career development* (pp. 193-212). Oxford University Press.

- McMahon, M. & Arthur, N. (2019). Career development theory: Origins and history. In M. McMahon, & N. Arthur (Eds.), *Contemporary theories of career development: International perspectives* (pp. 3-19). Routledge.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society: From the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. University of Chicago Press.
- Miller, D. C., & Form, W. E. (1951). *Industrial sociology*. Harper.
- Moore, C., Gunz, H., & Hall, D. T. (2007). Tracing the historical roots of career theory in management and organization studies. In H. Gunz, & M. Peiperl (Eds.), *Handbook of career studies* (pp. 13-38). Sage.
- Park, R. E. (1915). The city: Suggestions for the investigation of human behavior in the city environment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 20(5), 577-612. <https://doi.org/10.1086/212433>
- Park, R. E., & Burgess, E. W. (1921). *Introduction to the science of sociology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Patton, W., & McMahon, M. (2021). *Career development and systems theory: Connecting theory and practice* (4th ed.). Brill.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. University of New York Press.
- Roberts, K. (1977). The social conditions, consequences and limitations of careers guidance. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 5(1): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069887708258093>
- Roberts, R. J. (1980). An alternative justification for careers education: A radical response to Roberts and Daws. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 8(2): 158-174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069888000760181>
- Rock, P. (1979). *The making of symbolic interactionism*. Macmillan.
- Roe, A. (1956). *The psychology of occupations*. Wiley.
- Savickas, M. L. (1994). Convergence prompts theory renovation, research unification, and practice coherence. In M. L. Savickas, & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Convergence in career development theories: Implications for science and practice* (pp. 235-258). CPP Books.
- Savickas, M. L. (2002). A developmental theory of vocational behavior. In D. Brown, & Associates, *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 149-205). Jossey-Bass.
- Savickas, M. L. (2021). Career construction theory and counseling model. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (3rd ed., pp. 165-200). Wiley.
- Savickas, M. L., & Lent, R. W. (Eds.). (1994). *Convergence in career development theories: Implications for science and practice*. CPP Books.

- Shaw, C. R. (1966). *The jack-roller: A delinquent boy's own story*. University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1930)
- Simmel, G. (1971). The stranger. In G. Simmel, *On individuality and social forms* (pp. 143-149; D. N. Levine, Ed.). University of Chicago Press. (Reprinted from G. Simmel, *Der Fremde, Soziologie* (D. N. Levine, Trans). 1908, Duncker & Humblot)
- Snodgrass, J. (2012, Sept 5). *The appropriation of the jack-roller life-histories* [Paper presentation, revised 1 Aug, 2015]. Proceedings of the 17th International Oral History Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Strauss, A. L. (1975). *Professions, work, and careers*. Transaction Books.
- Super, D. E. (1954). Career patterns as a basis for career counselling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1*(1), 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0061989>
- Super, D. E. (1957). *The psychology of careers: An introduction to vocational development*. Harper.
- Super, D. E. (1963). Toward making self-concept theory operational. In D. E. Super, R. Starishevesky, N. Matlin, & J. P. Jordaan, *Career development: Self-concept theory (essays in vocational development)* (pp. 17-32). College Entrance Examination Board.
- Super, D. E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 16*(3): 282-298. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(80\)90056-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(80)90056-1)
- Super, D. E. (1992). Towards a comprehensive theory of career development. In D. H. Montross, & C. J. Shinkman (Eds.), *Career development: Theory and practice* (pp. 35-64). Charles C. Thomas.
- Super, D. E., & Bohn, M. J. (1972). *Occupational psychology*. Tavistock.
- Thomas, W. I., & Znaniecki, F. (1919). *The Polish peasant in Europe and America monograph of an immigrant group: Vol. 3. Life record of an immigrant*. Gorham Press.
- Yates, J. (2021). Career development theory: An integrated analysis. In P. J. Robertson, T. Hooley, & P. McCash (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of career development* (pp. 131-142). Oxford University Press.