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Section 3: Some key underpinning concepts

3.i Defining 'Career'

- *Career n*: 'way of making one's living, profession; course through life' (Oxford dictionary 1995)⁵
- The 'unfolding interaction between a person and society over time'. (Collin 1996 cited in Gothard et al 2001:97)⁶
- 'Career is defined broadly as an individual's progression through learning and work rather than more narrowly as a job or a series of jobs' (Andrews 2008)⁷
- 'There is no such thing as a career path - it is crazy-paving, and you have to lay it yourself.' Sir Dominic Cadbury.

Although career is traditionally defined as one's 'profession' it can be seen that some of the above definitions allow for a wider understanding of the term. People who may not be able to obtain paid work due to certain disabilities, learning needs, caring commitments or because they live in an area with few opportunities, may still benefit from career advice and guidance as they decide on how they wish to participate in and contribute to society. Such participation may involve voluntary work, community involvement and learning (formal and informal), all of which may be seen by some to fall outside the traditional definition.

3.ii The 'boundaryless' career

Traditional careers tended to have clear progression paths and people tended to stay with one employer and maintain a clear job role and identity. Increasingly job roles are less defined with more emphasis placed on transferable skills as people move through a number of posts, roles and employers. The key feature of the *boundaryless* career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996) is the independence of the individual from traditional organisational career arrangements.

Recommended reading on the boundaryless career



Arthur, M.B. & Rousseau, D.M. (1996). *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*. New York: Oxford University Press.



Arthur, M.B et al (2005) *Career success in a boundaryless career world*. Journal of Organizational Behavior. v 26, 177–202 (2005)
http://www.ncyu.edu.tw/files/list/family/1.%E6%A5%8A%E8%82%B2%E5%84%80%E8%80%81%E5%B8%AB_CareerSuccess.pdf Accessed 17/4/14

⁵ Oxford Popular dictionary (1995) Parragon

⁶ Gothard, B. Mignot, P. Offer, M. Ruff, M. (2001) *Careers Guidance in Context*, SAGE

⁷ Andrews, D. (2008) *Guidance and Careers Education*, The Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training, England and Wales. Issues Paper 5.

Section 5: Differentialist theories

5.i Matching or 'Trait and Factor' theories



According to Hodgkinson et al. (1996)²⁷, the 'technical rational' method, asserts that career decisions should be reached 'in a systematic way, moving logically from a consideration of their own strengths and achievements through to a decision about what they want to do'.

The Trait and factor model has in the past been referred to as 'square pegs into square holes'. At the heart of this theory is the notion that the characteristics of a person may be measured and matched to work opportunities to find the best possible fit. A typical matching process would entail assessing a client's interests, skills, personality and ability and matching this profile to a range of job profiles to arrive at a recommendation of the most suitable option. Psychometric tests may be used or less formal methods such as self-awareness checklists or computer matching programmes.

The Seven Point Plan (Rodgers 1952;1970)²⁸ and the work of Holland are perhaps the most well known models. Holland's latest work (1996)²⁹ places a greater emphasis on the relationship between the work environment and individual career satisfaction – these theories are known as '**person-environment fit**'. He claimed that people's career interests are an expression of their personality – similar personalities are drawn to similar jobs. He identified six personality types and corresponding occupational environments.

²⁷ Hodgkinson, P., Sparkes, A.C. and Hodgkinson, H. (1996) *Triumphs and Tears: young people, markets and the transition from school to work*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

²⁸ Rodger, A. (1970). *The seven point plan*. 3rd ed. NIIP paper; no 1. London: National Institute of Industrial Psychology.

²⁹ Holland, J.L. (1996) Integrating career theory and practice: the current situation and some potential remedies in Savikas, M.L and Walsh, W.B.(Eds) (1996) *Handbook of Career Counselling Theory and Practice*. Palo Alto, California: Davies-Black Publishing.

Recommended reading on differentialist models



- Kidd, J. (2006) *Understanding Career Counselling*. SAGE (this is useful for identifying the merits of the model)
- Savikas, M.L and Walsh, W.B.(Eds) (1996) *Handbook of Career Counselling Theory and Practice*, Palo Alto, California: Davies-Black Publishing.
- Killeen, J (1996) *Career Theory*, in Watts A.G et al (1996) *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance*. Routledge. Chapter 2



- Gothard, B. et al (2001) *Careers Guidance in Context*. SAGE. Chapter 2.
- Extracts of Arthur, M.B et al (1989) *The Handbook of career Theory* are available on the web (Search Google books then search Career theory). See chapter 2.
- Bimrose, J (2006). [The Changing Context of Career Practice: Guidance, Counselling or Coaching?](http://www.derby.ac.uk/icegs/publications) University of Derby. Derby: Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby. <http://www.derby.ac.uk/icegs/publications> This is a very useful/ accessible article on why the trait and factor model is dominant and summarises its limitations
- Extracts of Kidd, J. (2006) *Understanding Career Counselling*. SAGE are available on the web (search Google books then search Jennifer Kidd)
- Extracts of Killeen, J (1996) *Career Theory*, in Watts A.G et al (1996) *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance* Routledge are available on the web (Search Google books then Career Theory Watts – this will give you Chapter 2)
- Gelatt, H.B (1989) *Positive Uncertainty: a new decision making framework for counselling*. *Journal of counseling psychology*, vol 35(2), pp252-256. http://depts.washington.edu/apac/roundtable/10-23-06_positive_uncertainty.pdf
- Accessed 17/4/14. A classic article which criticises the reliance on rational decision making
- the NGRF is an excellent site for articles on career theory, providing accessible overviews and critiques of each theory <http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/imprprac/ImpP1/defining/ImpP1ii> Accessed 17/4/14.