

Chapter 29

Career Maturity Assessment in an International Context



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Abstract This chapter describes the development and adaptation of career maturity within the context of macrosystemic influences. The chapter initially describes the historical context within which the construct of career maturity was developed and the modernist times that the construct reflected. A review of research illustrates how this initial construct of career maturity has been challenged over time. In particular, the westernised and middle class foundations of career maturity have resulted in questions about the relevance and validity of the construct, particularly in relation to multicultural and post-modern contexts. In addition to issues such as cultural relativity and cultural validity, the chapter describes issues of cultural specificity and the psychometric issue of conceptual equivalence. The chapter concludes by considering how the construct of career maturity has adapted in recent decades as well as the need for it to further adapt.

Keywords Attitudinal career maturity · Career maturity · Cognitive career maturity · Cultural relativity · Cultural specificity · Cultural validity

The Xhosa-speaking people of South Africa have a saying, *xa umculo utshintsho nomduda uyatshintsha*, which means that when the music changes so does the dance. The saying provides an appropriate metaphor for describing the development of the construct of career maturity and its assessment since its introduction over 60 years ago (Super 1955). This chapter describes the development and adaptation of career maturity against the macro factors that changed the musical score to which it danced. The first section of the chapter describes the historical development of career maturity and its assessment within the modernist times in which it was conceived. The second section describes factors that changed the tune, with a specific emphasis on the relevance and validity of transporting career maturity from its westernised, middle-class, modernist roots into multicultural, post-modern contexts. This section raises issues of cultural relativity, cultural validity, cultural specificity,

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as well as psychometric issues concerning conceptual equivalence. The third section of the chapter considers how career maturity and its assessment will need to adapt if it is to stay in step with the present times within which individual career development takes place.

The Development of Career Maturity

Development of the Construct

The development of career maturity (originally termed vocational maturity) reflects the movement of career psychology from a pre-modernist to a modernist perspective of career behaviour. Within that perspective there was a shift over time from a singular, point-in-time definition of career readiness towards a more flexible, process-oriented definition that emphasised the developmental nature of an individual's career behaviour and the fact that different types and levels of readiness are appropriate for different developmental ages and stages. Thus, career maturity needs to be understood in terms of its systematic relationship to time (Vondracek and Reitzle 1998), with different stages of development requiring the successful completion of age appropriate tasks. Career maturity (or career developmental readiness) requires that an individual complete the following attitudinal and cognitive developmental tasks: gain an appropriate knowledge of self; gain an appropriate knowledge of careers; be able to integrate the knowledge of self and careers; demonstrate effective career decision-making; and be able to plan for a career.

To understand career maturity as a construct one needs to consider the historical context in which its conceptual development occurred. The construct of career maturity was by and large contextually sensitive to the times in which it was developed. As a construct it reflected the stable and orderly work world of the middle of the last century (Savickas 2005). It was a time when the Protestant work ethic was dominant, when the career choice process was largely defined as occurring in late adolescence, and when career research was predominantly focused on white, western, middle class and male samples. In short, it was an appropriate construct for the realities of the work world of that time. It was also a time in which modernist perspectives of career psychology were the norm, a time when it was believed that individuals' test scores represented a way forward in understanding their career development.

This meant that career maturity could be operationalised and assessed and that individuals could be compared with others in the same developmental stage. Super's (1984) extension of the construct of career maturity in later years allowed for this comparison to be made across the lifespan. It should be noted that Super (1955) also originally proposed that an individual could be interpreted ipsatively but, as Patton and Lokan (2001) pointed out, most research and development of career maturity has focused on a normed interpretation of the construct. As will be seen in later

sections, an ipsative comparison would allow for a more qualitative assessment and a contextualised exploration of an individual's career maturity.

If career maturity was appropriate for the work context of the last century, it has been increasingly criticised as less appropriate for the changing world of work in which individual career development now occurs. Vondracek and Reitzle (1998) made the important point that any stage-based model of career development that also has a matching component rests on at least two assumptions that are questionable for the present times: appropriateness and stability. A career development stage model implies that there are age-appropriate transition times between stages, while a matching model implies that there is sufficient stability both within the individual and the context. Both these assumptions are challenged by an increasingly complex and transient work world in which it has become harder to define universal transition points (Busacca and Rehfuss 2017a). This applies to westernised and non-westernised contexts. Rather than predefined normed changes, the construct of career maturity now needs to address constant change as a norm in itself.

Complicating this picture is the fact that for many cultural groups, opportunities, economic conditions and the cultural perspectives of the family can impact negatively on their career development. The conception of career maturity as representing what Vondracek and Reitzle (1998) refer to as “some internal clock, some timekeeper” (p. 7) fails to sufficiently accommodate factors external to the individual that may prescribe to such ontological development. As Savickas (1995) stated, “context not only matters, but it is an integral part of career development” (p. 34). Failure to be contextually sensitive emphasises another criticism of career maturity as a construct—that it is value-laden in that it prescribes what the norm for career maturity should be. Despite criticism of career maturity lacking universal meaning, Hackett and Watkins (1995) have noted that there has been consistent and often useful research of the construct.

Research and Measurement

Research on career maturity as a construct and on its assessment tools has been continuous for over half a century. There have been various reviews of this research (e.g., Niles 1998; Patton and Lokan 2001; Savickas et al. 1984; Swanson and D'Achiardi 2005) and the reader is advised to refer to these sources for greater detail. Much of this research has focused on construct validation and the correlation of career maturity with diverse variables. Research has focused on intrapersonal variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, vocational identity, career decision and indecision, work role salience (Patton and Lokan 2001) and personality (Raskin 1998).

There is a lack of consistency in both American and international research of the possible correlates of career maturity such as age, gender and socioeconomic status. Age differences in career maturity development may be dependent on the type of career maturity studied (i.e., attitudinal or cognitive) and by contextual factors such

as the prescribed decision points of formalised education. Thus, while career development theory would imply chronological career maturity development, Patton and Lokan's (2001) review suggests that this may occur more with attitudinal than cognitive career maturity. The relationship of age and educational level to career maturity is discussed further on in this section.

Similarly, the research on gender and career maturity has produced inconsistent findings dependent on the type of career maturity (i. e., attitudinal or cognitive) investigated. While most research indicates that females are more career mature than males, this gender difference may be more evident for cognitive than attitudinal career maturity (Patton and Lokan 2001). Age may be a moderating variable in gender differences in career maturity, with gender differences evident at high school level no longer evident at college or university level (Whiston and Brecheisen 2002).

The relationship between socioeconomic status and career maturity seems less significant, both in high school and college age populations (Patton and Lokan 2001). Again, where a relationship has been established, this may be dependent on the type of career maturity being researched. Thus, socioeconomic status has been reported as related to the cognitive scales of career maturity measures. The confounding of cultural variables with socioeconomic status is discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

The inconclusiveness of research findings on possible correlates of career maturity is generally recognised. Patton and Lokan's (2001) comprehensive review of research in this field concluded that the difficulty in establishing significant trends can be attributed to the lack of systematic research, the research methodology employed (most frequently cross-sectional) and the limited nature of the sampling (usually convenience samples of small size).

Understandably, given the sequential, developmental nature of career maturity, there have been several attempts to relate the construct to time, specifically to age and educational level. Savickas et al. (1984) concluded that time perspective is a critical variable in career maturity. Over a decade later, a special section of *The Career Development Quarterly* (Niles 1998) examined the issue of timing in terms of individuals' interactions with their context. This latter reference represents a movement from construct validation within a modernist perspective, with its focus on the interrelationship of theoretical variables, towards attempts to relate career maturity to the contexts (cultural, educational, historical and socioeconomic) that impact on the individual's readiness to make a career choice.

While Patton and Lokan (2001) noted the sustained momentum of career maturity research, they also criticised most of this research as being unsystematic and difficult to generalise because of limited sample sizes. There has also been consistent reinforcement for Super's (1990) earlier call for validation of the construct (Swanson and D'Achiardi 2005). It would seem that career maturity finds most support in maturational contexts, that is in contexts that provide individuals with the opportunities and stimulus for career development. Clearly, the more congruent the career culture is to the theoretical underpinnings of the construct the more supportive research findings are of the construct. It is a different matter when cultural

contexts differ considerably from the western, middle class roots of the construct as will be seen in the next section of the chapter.

Research that has focused on career maturity measures remains inconclusive and even controversial. Swanson and D'Achiardi (2005) concluded that over 40 years of such research using a wide variety of career maturity measures has largely been unsatisfactory. At the core of this concern is the construct validity of the career maturity measures. Swanson and D'Achiardi cited research that indicates that career maturity measures do not assess career development tasks and transitions but rather intellectual ability. Patton and Lokan (2001) expressed similar concerns in their review of research on several career maturity measures. They reported numerous psychometric issues related to Crites's (1965) original Vocational Development Inventory and its revision, the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites 1978). Further, Hackett and Watkins (1995) pointed to the fact that little has been done to address concerns raised by Savickas (1990) about the construct validity, criterion-related validity, convergent and discriminant validity of the Career Maturity Inventory's Attitude Scale.

There have been similar concerns raised about Super's Career Development Inventory (Super et al. 1981). Savickas (1990) called for research on the criterion-related validity of the inventory's scores as well as attempts to increase the scales' reliability. Hackett and Watkins (1995) concluded that the reliability and stability of the inventory's scales are questionable. This is particularly the case when career maturity measures are used in cultural contexts that differ from the ones in which they were developed, as will be seen in the following section. Since this chapter in the first edition of the International Handbook of Career Guidance in 2008, research on the concept and measurement of career maturity has lost momentum (Sharf 2013) or has evolved into other definitions of career readiness (Watson and Stead 2017). In a review of 25 years of the Career Development Quarterly annual reviews from 1988 through to 2012, Sampson et al. (2014) analysed the headings and sub-headings used in these reviews and established that 'career maturity/adaptability' was ranked bottom out of 25 headings and subheadings.

Cultural Challenges to Career Maturity

Cultural Challenges

Much has been written on the macro-changes that occurred in the world of work and their impact on career psychology as a discipline. This section describes how cultural factors have challenged the predominant modernist conceptualisation of career maturity whose definition and operationalisation as an assessment tool occurred at a time when the dominant cultural perspective in career psychology was western, middle class and largely male. This definition offered a singular interpretation of career developmental constructs to which all individuals were adapted—a "grand

narrative” (Savickas 1993, p. 211) for all. As such, the construct of career maturity was de-contextualised in terms of the diverse cultural groups to which it was applied. In this regard, Vondracek and Reitzle (1998) made the common-sense point that “career maturity, as well as career development in general, have meaning only in relation to the contexts and historical time in which they are observed” (p. 14).

Super himself was amongst those who recognised that the challenge of multiculturalism has not been adequately addressed. In an interview conducted in 1993 (Freeman 1993) he posed the question as to what career might mean within different cultures and reflected that:

Career development, for example, in some of the African and South Asian countries that I know is really a matter of fitting into what the family wants, what the family needs. But generally our notions of career development are somewhat different. (p. 263)

Super’s comment suggests that career counsellors and researchers who work in culturally diverse contexts need to explore the universality or not of the career constructs they might adopt and adapt. There are those who would argue that career constructs are not universal and that career assessment is a psychosocial process in which individuals are compared to externally defined criteria such as career maturity (Watson et al. 2005). This argument suggests that the generalisation and assessment of career maturity across different cultural groups may not be possible (Evans and Kelchner 2017). It raises the issue of construct equivalence; that is, whether a construct like career maturity is meaningful to an individual’s cultural perspective (Leong and Gupta 2008).

There has been considerable comment on the construct equivalence of career maturity. At a symposium that addressed the cross-cultural application of career maturity and other measures, delegates pointed out that construct equivalence should not be equated with linguistic equivalence (Watson et al. 2005). It seemed that the main focus in most countries adopting American career measures has been on normative, scale and linguistic equivalence. There was general agreement that construct equivalence was a primary and urgent psychometric issue but that it took a secondary, post-hoc position to other forms of equivalence.

Construct equivalence is not the only consideration. Leong (1991), Leong and Brown (1995), and Leong and Serafica (2001) provided structure to the discussion of career maturity assessment in different cultural contexts by identifying three more critical constructs: cultural relativity, cultural validity and cultural specificity. Cultural relativity suggests that career counsellors and researchers explore how cultural differences may impact on the understanding of what constitutes career maturity within a specific culture. When this exploration is psychometric in nature it requires differentiation between the two constructs of cultural validity and cultural specificity. Cultural validity can be defined as the process of validating the use of westernised career measures on other national groups by means of construct, concurrent and predictive validity. It is, in a sense, a post-hoc approach as one starts with an established measure and then explores its cultural goodness of fit. This has been the predominant approach in career assessment research in different cultural contexts. Cultural specificity, on the other hand, explores concepts and constructs

that may be specific to a cultural group. It is a more grounded approach as it seeks to explore the specific career perspectives of a particular culture. The lack of sufficient focus on cultural specificity may reflect on practical research issues such as the limited resources in most countries to address this issue (Watson et al. 2005).

There are several assumptions inherent in career maturity measures that are problematic when considered in different cultural contexts. One assumption is the conception of an age-related maturation process that does not accommodate some cultural beliefs in a specified point in time for maturation that is ceremoniously endorsed (Watson 2006). Before this time, adolescents are not expected to think of adult responsibilities such as future employment. A second assumption is that there can be linguistic equivalence for westernised constructs. This becomes problematic in cultures where there is no language to describe a construct or where there are several words that describe a construct differentially. Take, for example, the Xhosa-speaking people of South Africa who have four words that relate to the meaning of work alone. A third assumption in career maturity assessment is that independent thought and planning, individual achievement and a general self-sufficiency are valued aspects of career development readiness. These aspects all emphasise an individualistic perspective and become problematic in cultural contexts that emphasise a collectivist perspective.

This third assumption has been much discussed in the career literature, not only in terms of individualism and collectivism but also in terms of independence and interdependence (Hardin et al. 2001). While individualism and independence have been considered key terms in the definition of career maturity, many cultures promote a belief in collectivism and interdependence (Hartung et al. 2010). Clearly one needs to be careful of overemphasising (Savickas 2003) or oversimplifying (Stead 2004) this dichotomy. Nevertheless, this remains a consistent theme in the career literature. An example of this is Black South Africans, most of whom subscribe to a collectivist definition of self (Watson 2006). This is illustrated in the Xhosa saying, *intaka yakha ngoboya bezinye*, whose literal translation is that a bird builds with other birds' feathers. Thus, all people are interdependent; it takes a village to raise a child. This is evident in the reflections of a 20-year-old Xhosa-speaking female on her career decision-making process:

At the age of 18 I knew exactly what I wanted to become and my mind was made up. I remember talking to my uncle about becoming a psychologist. He was against it. In his view he told me that psychology and social work were the careers of white people. He said to me, "Do you know any black psychologist?", and at that time I did not know any. I said no. He said, "Have you ever asked yourself why it is like that?" and I said "Because black people were only allowed to do either nursing or teaching during the apartheid era". He told me that I should do medicine because it was the best.

A collectivist concept of self places the locus of self externally, as the point of contact with other people. This has implications for career development in that the decision-making process is much influenced by significant others, resulting in a decision that is more external than internal in its locus of control. While this belief could result in a low score on a career measure, Hardin et al. (2001) suggested that higher interdependence should not be viewed as an inherent deficit. Embedding

one's career identity within one's family and community may represent culturally appropriate career maturation (Akhurst and Mkhize 2006; Watson 2017) and collectivist decision-making may represent career maturity rather than developmental lag (Watson 2006).

This discussion on cultural contextualisation suggests that the prevalence of American career theories and measures remains a significant challenge to the international community (Watson et al. 2005). It has represented a mono-directional rather than an interactional influence. Yet career psychology could gain from exploring how counsellors and researchers from other cultures interpret and assess career constructs such as career maturity. As Watson et al. stated, such interaction could demonstrate that similar ends can be achieved in different ways.

Research and Measurement

The career literature identifies career maturity as a continuing source of controversy when applied in multicultural contexts (Worthington et al. 2005). The issue of cultural challenges to career maturity and its assessment has been identified by Patton and Lokan (2001) as contributing to the invigoration of career maturity research and the reader is referred to several reviews of this extensive body of research (Leong and Serafica 2001; Patton and Lokan 2001; Watson and Stead 2006; Worthington et al. 2005). Several themes emerge from these reviews. One theme is the limited nature of this research, with its predominant focus on American ethnic minority groups and its limited focus on cross-cultural comparison studies.

Another theme is the consistent finding that when non-westernised cultural groups are compared to westernised groups they invariably record lower career maturity scores. There is probably a confounding of socioeconomic status with culture in these studies. Most of the studies reviewed concluded by querying the validity of assessing career maturity on the cultural group sampled. Consistent with the theoretical discussion of individualism and collectivism, research suggests that the definition of independence is too unidimensional and does not accommodate the interdependence evident in collectivist cultures. Research has also found that cultural differences moderate the meaning of career maturity. This has led to the call for within-group research rather than comparative research in order to establish what the developmental trends in a cultural group are. Such a call also applies to career practice where Busacca and Rehfuss (2017b) and Patton and McMahon (2014) call for career counsellors to use clinical judgment and subjective interpretation of psychometric scores rather than the comparison of clients with normed and referenced groups. There has also been research that has established that career maturity is influenced by macro-contextual factors such as social and political systems and that career maturity may be influenced by the interaction of the individual with these contexts and circumstances.

Concomitant with this body of research has been psychometric research on career maturity measures. This has also been reviewed in the four reviews referenced

earlier. Most studies concluded that there is insufficient psychometric evidence to support the use of established career maturity measures on diverse cultural groups. Several researchers have pointed to additional developmental tasks that may be required in different cultures that westernised career measures do not tap. In short, the call has consistently been for the revision of what career maturity measures assess or the exploration of alternative forms of assessment.

Some researchers have suggested an ipsative and more qualitative interpretation of career maturity measures rather than their dismissal. Others have suggested that the reformulation of the item content within an interview structure may address concerns about construct equivalence. These suggestions do not seem to address the central issue that one may be starting from the wrong conceptual base. They raise the basic question as to why one would use test items that emphasise individualism when confronted with a collectivist client. This leads to the more critical question of whether the construct of career maturity as it is defined within modernist career theory can be adapted in a more culturally sensitive manner. The next section considers this issue and explores the significant work that Mark Savickas has written in this regard.

The Adaptation of Career Maturity

Changes in the Construct

A good starting point to this section of the chapter is Savickas's (1993) simple statement that "yesterday's solutions are today's problems" (p. 207). Clearly career maturity as a construct is out of step and there is a need to re-evaluate its usefulness and how it has been assessed. A singular understanding of career maturity is no longer possible in the multicultural contexts in which career counselling and assessment must occur. The present author also queries the adaptation of the standard items of career maturity measures for multicultural use. Such suggestions do not sufficiently tackle the core challenge to the construct; that is that it represents a modernist, normative perspective of individual career development that is no longer valid. In addition, the term maturity itself suggests a value-laden interpretation of career development that fails to address the meaning of what constitutes maturity within different cultural settings.

The Xhosa-speaking people of South Africa have a saying, *akukho nto itheni ebonga theni*, which means that there is nothing new under the sun. So it is with Savickas's (1997) proposal that the construct of career adaptability replace that of career maturity. It brings the construct of career maturity and its assessment full cycle, back to earlier formulations of Super's (1984) in which he called for the reconstruction of career maturity to career adaptability and the recognition of the influence of contextual factors. This proposal reflects on the present broader movement within career psychology from a modernist to a postmodernist perspective.

Thus it seems appropriate to consider the implications of replacing career maturity, specifically given the cultural challenges to its present utility. As Savickas (1997) stated: “the cultural climate for switching from maturity to adaptability seems right” (p. 255). There has been considerable endorsement of career adaptability as a more contextually rich construct than career maturity.

The challenge for career psychology has been to conceptualise what constitutes meaningful and mature behaviour in different contexts and whether there is a construct that can be applied across developmental ages, in different life roles and within different cultural contexts. Career adaptability describes a more holistic meaning to developmental career readiness. It suggests that an individual should be able to change in order to meet change; that career readiness represents an ongoing process of changing to meet contextual circumstances rather than a maturation of prescribed behaviours. This incorporation of adjustment to change helps move the earlier concept of career developmental maturation away from its linear roots and its predictable, formalised developmental tasks.

Savickas (1997, 2002, 2005, 2012) has argued that Super’s career developmental theory will become more integrated if career adaptability rather than career maturity becomes its central construct. Proposition 14 of career construction theory (Savickas 2002) provided a definition of career adaptability in terms of the individual’s readiness and available resources to cope with present and future tasks of career development. Career readiness still remains a central concept in this proposition but the definition also includes the concept of adaptive fitness in terms of an individual’s attitudes, beliefs and competencies. Watson and Stead (2006) have commented on the potential of the concept of adaptive fitness for use in multicultural contexts, particularly as it acknowledges that individuals need to construct their career development within multilayered macro and micro contexts that include, amongst other factors, their culture, race and ethnicity.

Research and Measurement

Patton and Lokan (2001) identified the debate around the reformation of career maturity as contributing to a resurgence of research in this field. This body of research focused on the middle part of the continuum described in the conclusion to the chapter in which career counsellors and researchers seek to renovate the construct of career maturity so that it better reflects on the post-modern perspectives that have developed within the discipline. The career literature on newer constructs that would replace career maturity, such as career adaptability and the embedded perspective of Blustein and Noumair (1996), remains more theoretical and conceptual, with the continuing development and refinement of these constructs for two decades (e.g., Savickas 1997, 2002, 2005; Savickas and Porfeli 2011). However, research on these alternative constructs and their assessment is still at a developmental stage. In addition, the subjective, qualitative and often narrative nature of post-modern concepts of career readiness do not translate as readily into formalised

research as objective, quantitative modernist career measures do. For instance, most major career texts devote space to the description of career narrative approaches but report little related research. The very nature of post-modern career theory, practice and assessment, as well as its present stage of development, calls for discussion at a process rather than a definable research level. In essence, post-modern career constructs will not be as measurable as career modernist constructs were, with the consequence that literature in this field often includes case study material. Perhaps post-modern shifts in the conceptualisation of critical concepts such as contextualised career readiness will result in less of the quantitative research which has dominated the career literature in the past and move the discipline towards more qualitative research and assessment in the future. If it does, we may not evidence the proliferation of research that quantitative assessment so readily stimulated.

Shifting the construct of career readiness towards a post-modern understanding has assessment implications. Career maturity is a modernist career construct whose assessment has provided structured boundaries and definition to the career counselling and research process. The construct has been used by career counsellors to help make objective what is increasingly being viewed as a subjective experience. The movement in career psychology towards postmodernism requires the counsellor to deconstruct the results of career measures within the realities of their clients' contexts (Watson 2006, 2017). An example of such deconstruction and indeed reconstruction is Savickas and Porfeli's (2011) revision of the Career Maturity Inventory in an adaptability form. The utility of deconstructing established career measures needs further debate in the literature. Career measures themselves are constructed within a certain cultural framework and the further that framework is from the career client, the greater the deconstruction that may be required. Watson (2006, 2017) questioned at what point deconstruction of a career measure invalidates the construct that the measure supposedly assesses.

What are the alternatives to psychometric assessment? One is that measurement becomes narrative. Savickas (2002) suggests a structured interview for the assessment of career adaptability. He has provided four questions for career counsellors to use that explore and assess the client's adaptability: career salience (the importance attached to the work role in relation to other life roles); decision-making strategies and career control (self-determination beliefs, decisional competence and compromise); career coping strategies (career convictions and decisional style); and problem solving skills and career confidence.

Conclusion

There seems to be broad consensus that career developmental constructs need to pay greater attention to contextual factors that may impact on them. There is less agreement on what to do with the specific construct of career maturity. Opinion seems to vary along a continuum from those who promote its continued use in diverse cultural contexts to those who call for its replacement (Savickas 1997, 2002,

2005; Vondracek and Reitzle 1998). In between are those who propose an eclectic compromise in which career constructs can be renovated and career maturity measures can be interpreted from a post-modern perspective. This chapter aligns itself with calls for its replacement rather than continued efforts at establishing the viability of career maturity. The music has changed, so should the dance.

There are, however, questions that need to be considered in the replacement of career maturity. One is the extent to which general career developmental principles would still hold in any reformulation of the concept of career readiness. Savickas (2005) would argue that certain competencies still determine any redefinition of career readiness. Similarly, Patton and Lokan (2001) believed that there are critical developmental principles that Super proposed that need to be accommodated in the reformulation of career readiness.

Reformulation needs to be considered at a theoretical and an assessment level. There are several innovative theoretical concepts and models that would assist in redefining career readiness and in integrating contextual factors such as culture with individual career development. Besides Savickas's reformulation of Super's construct of career adaptability, Blustein and Noumair (1996) suggested that an embeddedness perspective would help "nest psychological constructs into a broad context that combines social, cultural, historical, intraindividual, and organizational influences" (p. 437). The latter authors believe that an embeddedness perspective would encourage career counsellors and researchers to prioritise the relational and cultural aspects of an individual's career development. There are also theoretical models that place contextual factors at the centre of career development and, thus, individual career readiness. One such model is the developmental-contextual model of Vondracek et al. (1986). Another is the systems theory framework of career development of Patton and McMahon (1999, 2014).

While the construct of career maturity can be theoretically de-constructed and re-constructed in order for it to move from a modernist to a postmodernist perspective, it remains debatable whether the present assessment of career maturity will suffice in the multicultural contexts within which career development occurs. Such quantitative assessment contains item content that is firmly embedded in modernist thinking and which fails to sufficiently recognise contextual and systemic factors.

There is a need for career counsellors and researchers to constantly adapt their understanding of career readiness in order to be in step with the realities of the contexts within which their clients' and research participants' career development occurs. Savickas (2005) viewed career counselling as a safe place in which a client's career narrative can be edited. To change the metaphor, we need to see clients dancing on the realities of their own dance floors rather than put them through prescribed dance steps on a stage that we have created.

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