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Taylor McInnes, Charles P. Chen

This article seeks to explore chronic career indecision in light of career development theories and action research perspectives, aiming to delineate some intervention strategies. Firstly, the issue of career indecision in general is examined, and research in this area is then utilised to fuel a discussion of chronic career indecision in particular. Attention is drawn to the antecedents of chronic career indecision, including personality factors and social and situational factors, and the psychological, interpersonal, and general well-being of chronically undecided individuals is then examined. Secondly, concepts are reviewed from three career development theories, namely the life-span life-space theory, the cognitive information processing theory, and the narrative approach, as they relate to chronic career indecision. Finally, along with an action research perspective, several intervention strategies are proposed which career counsellors may find helpful when working with chronically undecided individuals.

Key words: chronic career indecision, career development theories, action research perspective, career counselling interventions

Introduction

As a critical manifestation of human action, choosing a career is an extremely important decision for most individuals. While some people fall easily into a job they like, or else work hard to attain a position they are passionate about, others stumble in self-doubt and indecision: sometimes for years. Individuals presenting with chronic career indecision are a particular and perennial

challenge for career counsellors (Salomone 1982), and it is reasonable to assume that the prevalence of this condition will rise as uncertainty grows in today's world of work, and individuals are exceedingly required to create their own career (Miejers 1998; Trevor-Roberts 2006).

This article seeks to explore chronic career indecision from the perspectives of several career development theories and action research, with the goal of delineating some intervention strategies. Firstly, the issue of career indecision in general is examined, and research in this area is then utilised to fuel a discussion of chronic career indecision in particular. Attention is drawn to the antecedents of chronic career indecision, including personality factors and social and situational factors, and the psychological, interpersonal, and general well-being of chronically undecided individuals is then examined. Secondly, concepts are reviewed from three career development theories: specifically, Super's life-span, life-space theory (Super 1953), the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) approach to career decision-making (Peterson/ Sampson/Reardon 1991), and Cochran's narrative approach to career development (1992, 1994, 1997), as they relate to chronic career indecision. Finally, along with an action research perspective, several intervention strategies are proposed which career counsellors may find helpful when working with chronically undecided individuals.

Career indecision

Career indecision is a construct with which career counsellors are intimately familiar. Indeed, one of the most common goals of career counselling is to assist a client in selecting an occupation (Sharf 2010). Career indecision can be conceptualised most easily as one end of a continuum of decidedness, where the opposite end encompasses individuals who are confidently decided on a career. In reality, however, career indecision is more accurately understood as a multi-dimensional construct in which individuals cluster in various complex ways (Hartman/Fuqua/Jenkins 1986; Larson/Heppner/Ham/Dugan 1988; Multon/Wood/Heppner/Gysbers 2007). Although it is generally acknowledged that career indecision remains in need of further theoretical conceptualisation (Tinsley 1992), there is a long-standing distinction between

at least two subtypes of indecision, namely, developmental indecision and chronic indecision (Dysinger 1950; Holland/Holland 1977). Studies have shown that while around half of college students are decided when it comes to career choice, approximately one quarter are developmentally undecided and one quarter are chronically undecided (Cohen/Chartrand/Jowdy 1995; Guay/Ratelle/Senecal/Larose/Deschenes 2006). Moreover, these subtypes have been shown to apply to adult populations as well (Slaney/Stafford/ Russell 1981; Callanan/Greenhaus 1992).

The Career Factors Inventory (CFI), developed by Chartrand, Robbins, Morrill/Boggs (1990), can be used for differential diagnosis of subtypes of indecision and consists of four scales: 1) Career Choice Anxiety 2) Generalised Indecisiveness 3) Perceived Need for Career Information, and 4) Perceived Need for Self Knowledge. The inventory can also be used to distinguish between affective (scales one and two) and informational (scales three and four) antecedents of indecision, a distinction which is important for working through decisional barriers and selecting appropriate interventions.

Developmental career indecision

Developmental career indecision refers to indecision resulting from a lack of information and, in the case of young people, is a natural state of adolescence (Salomone 1982; Chartrand/Nutter 1996). Individuals who score high on the two informational scales of the CFI, but low on the two affective scales, are likely to be developmentally undecided. These individuals are most often able to resolve their indecision, either with time and/or by acquiring additional information about themselves and the world of work. Counsellors can assist such individuals by facilitating career exploration, knowledge, and self-assessment, and by affirming resulting career choices (Salomone 1982; Multon et al. 2007). It is important to remember in this context that not all young people develop at the same rate in terms of cognitive ability and level of career maturity (Super 1955). Counsellors working in this area should remain cognisant of these developmental differences.

Chronic career indecision

In contrast to developmental indecision, chronic career indecision is a more permanent inability to make a career choice, even in the presence of adequate information, because of underlying personal qualities (Holland/Holland 1977; Callanan/Greenhaus 1992) or, as will be argued here, as a result of specific social and situational factors. Individuals who score high on the two affective scales of the CFI are likely chronically undecided (and can present with varying scores on the two informational scales). Due to the developmental aspects of career decision-making, mentioned briefly above, some have argued that the term 'chronic career indecision' be reserved for individuals 25 years of age and older (Salomone 1982).

Antecedents of chronic career indecision

Personality factors

Several antecedents of chronic career indecision have been identified within the domain of personality. For one, chronically undecided individuals have been shown to suffer higher levels of trait and generalised anxiety than those who are developmentally undecided. (Hawkins/ Bradley/White 1977). These individuals face high levels of anxiety surrounding any decision, not only surrounding vocational choices. These same individuals suffer from higher levels of general indecisiveness, most likely resulting from their excessive anxiety (Cooper/Fuqua/Hartman 1984; Chartrand/Nutter 1996).

Secondly, chronically undecided persons have been shown to have difficulty forming a coherent self-concept and identity (Galinsky/Fast 1966; Munley 1977; Cohen et al. 1995; Downing/Nauta 2010). These individuals have trouble assimilating knowledge about themselves and the world of work into meaningful cognitive structures (Meijers 1998). In terms of Erik Erikson's theory of pyschocosial development (1963, 1968), it can be said that these individuals have failed to achieve a sense of ego identity, and are thus hindered when making career decisions, because they do not possess a clear idea of who they are and how they fit into the world. Indeed, in their study of

career indecision subtypes in undecided college students, Cohen et al. (1995) found that the chronically indecisive group reported the least successful resolution of Erikson's first five stages (trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, and identity versus identity confusion) of ego identity development.

Thirdly, certain personality traits have been linked to the development of chronic career indecision. For example, Sweeney and Schill (1998) found that individuals exhibiting self-defeating personality characteristics also showed a self-defeating pattern of behaviour with regards to career decision-making. They were passive, lacked confidence, and had poor coping strategies. Very interestingly, in this same study, self-defeating women reported high levels of anxiety surrounding career decisions, but also a reduced need for self-knowledge. This was explained by positing that individuals with substantial career indecision have an external locus of control, and therefore do not appreciate the benefit of self-assessment and introspection, a finding that aligns with results from other studies (e.g. Fuqua, Blum/Hartman 1988). Other personality traits, including low self-esteem, maladaptive perfectionism, fear of commitment, and high level of irrational beliefs, have also been linked to chronic career indecision (e.g. Stead/Watson/Foxcroft 1993; Germeijs/Boeck 2003).

Situational and social factors

Specific situational and social factors also influence the presence of chronic career indecision. Firstly, changes in our education systems are having a profound effect on career development for young people. Youth are finding it increasingly difficult to imagine a career. There is a growing disconnect between education and the world of work and the reduction in stream-lined traditional jobs makes the career decision process much more complicated (Meijers 1998). Additionally, universities have become increasingly competitive: in order to be accepted into the programme of choice, students need exemplary marks, outstanding extracurricular activities, and must exude a jubilant passion for the work. In their study examining an action research-based intervention to the "work" of university, Leclerc and Maranda (2002)

found that students struggled under the demand for perfection and conviction. As the authors noted, "authenticity and the idea of projecting perfection cannot be easily reconciled" (Leclerc/ Maranda 2002: 203). In straining for perfection, there is no time or opportunity to explore other avenues of interest, or to develop a more comprehensive theory of self and identity. Moreover, many students "thought that if they were seen to be ambivalent about their choices, they could lose the support of others" (p. 204). With the need to exude such conviction, students are afraid of asking real questions about the nature of the work and for guidance in their academic and career choices: they are afraid such questions will be viewed as a lack of commitment and will negatively affect their applications for admission.

Secondly, the changing world of work also influences the rate of chronic career indecision. Changes in production, the rise of knowledge work, and the growth of alternative work arrangements all amount to a greater degree of uncertainty in today's labour market (Trevor-Roberts 2006). Frequent corporate downsizing, outsourcing initiatives, and other such factors also play a key role. Employees can no longer rely on hard work and loyalty to climb the career ladder, and there may not be a ladder to climb at all (Niles 2003). Some have argued that these changes represent a veritable crisis in employment and work (Leclerc/Maranda 2002; Niles 2003). It is no wonder that in facing these challenges, individuals find it difficult to commit to or train for one career. It is certainly the case as well that the changing nature of work provides a greater number of possible career choices: in this case, "chronic" career indecision could be conceived more positively as a method that allows for exploration of all possible avenues. Our current discussion yields necessary when the decision making task becomes troubling or debilitating for the individual (for example, when he or she would like to settle down into a career but is unable to make the necessary career decisions).

Thirdly, social factors such as immigration status and socioeconomic realities are also important. Immigrants may find themselves facing a different notion of career than that which they were familiar with from back home. For example, one study examining the workforce integration process of new immigrant nurses to Canada (Blythe/Baumann/Rheaume/McIntosh 2009), found that many of these nurses found it difficult to adapt to a different work

environment and style of nursing (e.g. different conception of doctor-nurse/patient-nurse relations). These types of differences can alter the career decidedness of immigrants, as their ideas of career and career identity shift to accommodate this new reality. Additionally, socioeconomic realities may play a role in career indecision when financial concerns and familial responsibilities take priority over career exploration or career choice.

Well-being of chronically undecided individuals

Chronic career indecision has been associated with various forms of psychological distress including depression (Saunders/Peterson/Sampson/Reardon 2000) and interpersonal difficulties (Felsman/Blustein 1999). As well, in their study of career indecision in managers and professionals, Callanan and Greenhaus (1992) found that the chronically indecisive group reported the highest level of life stress in general and had less positive work attitudes. Moreover, they postulated that lack of career focus may result in deteriorated levels of performance, thus putting these individuals at risk for losing out on an organisation's reward system (e.g. raises, advancement). Obviously, poorer employee performance affects an organisation's productivity and profitability as well. Finally, individuals who cannot decide on a career face intense social pressures to both make a decision (any decision!) and to make a socially prestigious decision. Krumboltz discusses both these issues in his paper "The Wisdom of Indecision" (1992), and laments the fact that in today's society, there is absolutely no tolerance for ambiguity: an observation he notes as unfair, and which automatically casts a negative shadow and stigma over undecided persons.

Applying career development theories to chronic career indecision

Super's life-span, life-space theory

Self-concept and career decidedness

Super's life-span, life-space theory describes vocational development as the process of developing and implementing a self-concept (1953). It is no wonder then that those who have had difficulty forming a coherent self-

concept have stalled in terms of career decidedness, and are unable to proceed to a sense of planfulness about their future. Attachment anxiety toward family and peers has been cited as a reason for a diffuse self-concept, as the lack of a secure base prohibits the career and self-exploration requisite for identity formation (Felsman/Blustein 1999; Downing/Nauta 2010). Another possible contributing factor is the presence of role-conflict within an individual: especially in adults who experience chronic career indecision. For example, working mothers may have difficulty integrating their work and family roles into a coherent self-concept (Slan-Jerusalim/Chen 2009).

Furthermore, one interesting study (Donahue/Robins/Roberts/John 1993) found that self-concept differentiation, i.e., viewing oneself as having different personality traits in separate social and life roles, was a sign of fragmentation of the self-concept, and was related to poor adjustment, low self-esteem, and anxiety. Along these same lines, it is also possible to view chronic career indecision as the interplay between different sub-identities in one's self-concept, where each sub-identity refers to a different career possibility (Meijers 1998).

Career maturity and career decidedness

Chronic career indecision can also be conceptualized as a breakdown within Super's person-environment interactive model of the bases of career maturity (Watts/Super/Kidd 1981). Career maturity is a measure of an individual's readiness for career decision-making, and the model illustrates how various factors interact to produce this readiness. In addition to difficulty in forming a self-concept, as outlined above, chronically undecided individuals have been shown to have an external locus of control (Cooper et al. 1984; Bacanli 2006). Both self-concept and locus of control are levels within the model, and breakdown at either point affects development of career maturity and thus career decidedness. Adolescents and young adults may develop career maturity with time as their cognitive processing abilities mature, and as they gain experience. However, when individuals fail to develop in this way after some time, it is important to examine these additional factors.

Marcia's concept of "identity status"

As an extension and broadening of the notion of self-concept within a developmental-contextual framework, Marcia (1966, 1980) developed the notion of "identity status" wherein an individual could occupy any one of the four stages of identity development: diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure, and achievement, at any time. Chronic career indecision can be viewed as an extended moratorium in which trait anxiety (Hawkins et al. 1977) and exploratory indecisiveness (Bacanli 2006) may diminish the effectiveness of efforts to explore options. A moratorium is a stage in which individuals want a direction but do not have one. Adults who, although working, are afflicted by chronic career indecision, could be viewed as having foreclosed on options due to societal pressure or personal and financial obligations. Foreclosure refers to making a choice without exploring all options. These adults, even though working, remain undecided and have to deal with constant doubts and anxiety about their career progression (Krumboltz 1992; Callanan/Greehaus 1992).

CIP approach to career decision-making

Chronic career indecision can be conceptualised as continuous computational errors in the decision-making and executive domains of Peterson et al's (1991) hierarchical cognitive information processing (CIP) model. Because of difficulties in these two areas, population of the lower-level knowledge domain (both self and occupational) with information is insufficient for effective decision-making. The high level of choice anxiety found in chronically undecided individuals can be seen as reflective of deficits in the analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution skills of the decision-making domain. The high levels of general indecisiveness in these individuals can be understood as difficulties with the meta-cognitions, self-talk, and self awareness that represent the executive domain (Chartrand/Nutter 1996). Moreover, this model recognizes the importance of affective processing and allows for the careful examination of how things like anxiety, depression, emotions and other personality traits can impede career decision-making. For example, this model can accommodate Chartrand, Rose, Elliott, Marmarosh, and Cald-

well's (1993) finding that neuroticism significantly predicts both inhibited problem-solving skills and a dependant decision-making style, which in turn predict career indecision. The changing world of work and nature of career may also affect this processing system, by overloading the two knowledge domains (self-knowledge and occupational knowledge), and by impeding efforts to integrate the two.

Cochran's narrative approach to career development

Cochran's narrative approach to career development (1991, 1992) presents a unique framework in which to view chronic career indecision. Narrative approaches in general, having their roots in constructivism and postmodernism, emphasise the individual's ability to create their own meaning from life experiences, and in this way distinguish themselves from rationalist approaches (Sharf 2010). In Cochran's narrative approach, career is seen as a story, and career indecision is seen as a *wavering* back and forth between career goals. Chronic career indecision is indicative of an individual's having lost sense of where they are. In contrast to the protagonist having to collect information in order to overcome an obstacle (i.e., career choice), chronic career indecision is when the protagonist has completely lost the thread of narrative in his or her own career story, and is unable to orient toward future chapters and events. In essence, it represents a breakdown and stoppage of the story. Additionally, narrative and other constructivist approaches are able to accommodate additional layers of relevance in career decision-making (or themes in the career story), such as those outlined in Amundson, Borgen, Iaquinta, Butterfield, and Koert's (2010) study on career decisions from the decider's perspective. This study found that career decisions often centered on relational life, personal meaning, or economic realities, rather than simply on congruence or fit between person and career/work environment.

Counselling implications from career theories and action research perspective

The preceding discussion and integration of concepts from career development theory has illuminated chronic career indecision as a multi-dimensional

and complicated problem. It is because of this complexity that many re-searchers recommend a combination of career and personal counselling with chronically undecided clients (e.g. Salomone 1982; Trevor-Roberts 2006; Multon et al. 2007). Indeed, one could argue that given the relationship between anxiety, decision-making skills, and identity as antecedents to chronic career indecision, it would be a *disservice* to such clients not to offer some sort of personal counselling. However, counsellors should not be afraid to use standard assessment tools and inventories with these unique clients, once underlying personal and psychological issues have been addressed. With this in mind, some specific counselling interventions are proposed below.

Learning to cope with anxiety and developing decision-making skills

When working with chronically undecided clients, counsellors should always check for anxiety-laden issues as a precursor to career decision difficulties. Anxiety, and the general indecisiveness that often accompanies it, can lead to a state of extreme confusion regarding career choice. Time and resources permitting, career counsellors should address anxiety directly, not only as an adjunct to career issues. Relaxation and meditation techniques can also be taught to reduce stress and to encourage calm.

In terms of decision-making, counsellors can draw clients' attention to their decision-making style, and can examine how things like negative self-talk, emotions, or anxiety disrupt the process at various levels. Reviewing and practicing the generic information-processing skills of CASVE: commu-nication, analysis, synthesis, valuing, and execution, will also be valuable, and will leave clients better able to compare options and evaluate outcomes (Sampson/Reardon/Peterson/Lenz 2004). Additionally, the counsellor can help the client to organise available knowledge about the self and the world of work into manageable groupings, in order to reduce anxiety related to information overload. At this point, career assessment tools such as Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory (1985) and Tyler's Vocational Card Sort (1961) may be useful in order to explore and conceptualize key career values and interests.

Enhancing self-concept and identity

Enhancing the self-concept, identity, and self-awareness of chronically undecided clients should be an important goal for career counsellors. Firstly, counsellors can explore the amount and quality of the client's previous work experience. It is possible that concomitant anxiety, and an external locus of control, have prevented positive exploratory behaviour in this area. If this is the case, once the anxiety and locus of control issues have been addressed, counsellors can encourage clients to gain additional experience. For example, they can suggest part-time or volunteer work, or they can help clients find a role model in a particular career. This exploration of self can help with identity formation. Secondly, counsellors can use the Salience Inventory (Neville/Super 1986), which measures the relative importance of roles across the life-space, to help determine the presence of role-conflict and role over-load. Counsellors can then work with clients to find ways of balancing life roles which more accurately reflect the value attributed to them, and which are less threatening to the self-concept.

Learning new skills for the changing world of work

Career counsellors should also consider helping clients develop skills that will help them navigate the changing and increasingly uncertain world of work. For example, some have argued that "career adaptability rather than decision-making should become the focal concept of career theory and practice" (van Vianen/De Pater/Preenen 2009: 307). Such a focus would increase an individual's ability to cope with career uncertainty. Career counsellors could teach practical skills such as money-management (as protection against the uncertainty of contract or freelance work), networking, self-promotion, and emphasis on and marketing of transferable skills. Moreover, they can assist clients in conceiving of career as a more process-oriented rather than task oriented endeavour, by encouraging continual learning, mental flexibility, and active positive use of happenstance.

Interventions rooted in narrative and spiritual approaches

Cochran's narrative approach (1997) allows counsellors to explore chronic career indecision with their clients through the medium of story. Story may be particularly helpful with chronically undecided clients as it offers a new way of looking at themselves; in contrast to the standard and ubiquitous trait and factor theories which dominate pop-culture. When clients tell their personal and career stories, they automatically bring settings, characters, plot points, patterns, and themes to the table. The counsellor can guide the client in identifying these elements and in re-examining the meaning behind them. Completing activities like the Lifeline, where clients are asked to record important life events chronologically along a line drawn on paper, or the Life Chapters, where clients are asked to think about their life as a book, and to delineate significant chapters and come up with titles (Sharf 2010), can help the chronically undecided client uncover values, interests, and experiences fundamental to their identity. Counsellors can also make use of activities designed to elicit a future narrative, in order to get the client thinking about possible career directions. Furthermore, narrative allows for exploration of how a client makes sense of uncertainty; an increasingly important variable in career decision-making in a changing world.

Narrative interventions can also pull from spiritual perspectives such as Miller-Tiedeman's lifecareer theory (1988, 1989, 1997). The idea that an undecided client already has a career, in that life itself is career, fits naturally into the means of narrative, and may help ease anxiety resulting from career indecision. The theory's emphasis on the personal reality of the client, as opposed to the social reality, can also be helpful in confronting the stigma of being undecided in today's world. Both narrative and spiritual perspectives emphasise an individual's own agency toward their life and career – this view can be particularly helpful with clients who are chronically undecided, by bringing the focus to themselves, their agency, and autonomy, rather than on anxiety-provoking external stimuli. Furthermore, it is possible that some individuals view career indecision as a philosophical position: for example, they may view the setting of career goals as limiting to the overall experience

of life (Krumboltz 1992). Lifecareer theory is able to accommodate such positions (Chen 1997, 2001).

As a final study of note, Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) found that students searching for a calling (which can be loosely defined as the 'work one was meant to do') tend to be less decided about career choice, more uncomfortable with career decisions, and less clear on abilities and interests. In other words, students searching for a calling fit the profile of the chronically undecided individual. Narrative and spiritual counsellors can encourage clients to not give up on their search for a calling and can provide strategies for balancing this search with other life responsibilities. For example, they can suggest ways to explore areas of meaning in one's free time, through involvement with one's community or through creative endeavours.

An action research perspective

Action research, with its emphasis on engaged action in the field, may be particularly suited to combat some of the social and situational factors contributing to chronic career indecision. Action research encourages active problem-solving, whereby individuals and communities work together to plan, act, review, and revise actions in a spiral of steps towards improving a given situation (Kemmis/McTaggart 2000). Action research moves beyond traditional approaches of knowledge-building led by outside observers to an active moment-to-moment theorising, data collection, and analysis paradigm, which is undertaken alongside the individuals most affected and involved by the topic in question (Huang 2010).

An action research perspective has the potential to be a powerful method both on a micro-level between counsellors and clients, and on a macro-level within institutions and communities. On a micro level, career counsellors can work with clients to spur goal-directed, intentional action in the career arena: action that goes above and beyond both the counsellor's own advice and the information available from various career assessment tools. Counsellors can train clients to critically examine how actions, both immediate, i.e. updating a resume, and long-term, i.e. a collection of immediate actions resulting in qualification to return to school, can change the meaning and direction of

their career story. This in-depth, "street-level" data-collection and career research can empower the client in question to create "tailor-made" solutions that will be effective in their particular situation (i.e., culture, country, social situation, personal reality). Moreover, as noted in Chen's article integrating action theory and human agency in career development (2002), the action-theoretical approach provides a more holistic view of career decision-making than most theories, and is able to reflect the multiple layers of a career action: manifest behaviour, internal processes, and social meaning (Young/Valach 2005). The action theory approach also emphasises additional perspectives on action, such as joint action (Young/Valach 2005), which offer a more comprehensive picture of an individual's career decision-making processes and development. Counsellors who can conceptualise client needs from an action theory perspective will be better prepared to support their clients at all levels of career action and development. Emphasising joint action, for example, can help the client feel more connected to his or her world and to the counsellor, thus easing any anxiety or sense of alienation that may arise in the career decision-making process.

On a macro level, action research can be used to combat chronic career indecision through programmes, workshops, and other such public initiatives and activities. The study, already mentioned earlier, by Leclerc and Maranda (2002) is an excellent example of what such action research programmes might look like. Leclerc and Maranda recruited students across several disciplines to attend group meetings over a period of three years. Students were encouraged to speak about their university experience, struggles, and career concerns in an open and inclusive manner. The researchers worked on categorising the issues revealed in the group meetings, and then the categorisation document was discussed and refined with the students themselves, until all participants felt comfortable with its content. Above and beyond the increased awareness surrounding training and career issues developed by individual students who participated, this research project ultimately resulted in heated discussion surrounding the resulting report in student committees and in several academic departments. These discussions led to concrete action in many cases, including one department producing a document outlining career opportunities for students and a general "reorganisation of courses

and timetables to break anonymity and foster a sense of belonging" (Leclerc/ Maranda 2002: 208). Programmes like this in universities, community colleges, private training institutes, high schools, and even community centres could go a long way to combating chronic career indecision, by opening up a dialogue surrounding the process and by encouraging and refining group and individual action. Moreover, such programmes could incorporate the teaching of new career adaptability skills discussed earlier. Finally, corporations could embrace principles of action research to foster positive career motivation and development in employees, by actively involving employees in career related decisions and programmes.

Conclusion

Chronic career indecision is a complicated and multi-dimensional problem requiring an eclectic approach to intervention. Counsellors need to be aware of a great number of possible antecedents to the problem along with the fact that clients may present with concurrent psychological issues. Personality factors such as high trait anxiety, perfectionism, and an external locus of control comprise essential contextual variables affecting individuals' action and behavior on career decision making. Similarly, a range of other critical social and situational factors such as a changing world of work, changes to educational systems, and socioeconomic realities, among other things, all contribute to the broad context of individuals' propensity to chronic career indecision. Future research should examine how these factors jointly and independently influence career decidedness. Until more is known, career counsellors should strive to conceptualize their clients' career concerns as part of a bigger system of personality and environment and should move beyond traditional theories that simply attempt to match personal interests with career or job requirements. Career counsellors should draw on techniques from diverse theories of career development including Super's lifespan, life-space theory (Super 1953), the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) approach to career decision-making (Peterson/Sampson/Reardon 1991), and Cochran's narrative approach to career development (1992, 1994, 1997). Moreover, they should familiarize themselves with more general

theories of personality and mental health in recognition of the influence of such factors on career decision-making.

As the world of work continues to change, this need to conceptualize career development in a more holistic and contextual manner and the need for a comprehensive theoretical model of chronic career indecision will become ever more apparent. Individuals will change jobs and career direction often, flexible work-arrangements will become more prevalent, and security will depend on career adaptability rather than merely on hard work and loyalty. The once sharp boundaries of "career" or "work" will become increasingly diluted and will begin to blur with other aspects of an individual's life. To be responsive to this fast-changing, complex, and dynamic reality of life-career integration (Chen 2001), intentional human actions within their contexts appear to hold the key toward more meaningful and effective life-career decisions.

Therefore, an action research approach may be particularly suited to address chronic career indecision within this new landscape in that it can assist individuals and groups to affect the social and situational milieu in which they live and which contribute to career development and decision-making. Moreover, an action research approach could work as a conduit for increased involvement of educational systems, communities, and corporations in the career development and decision-making of their stakeholders.

In connecting research, especially the action research perspectives, to career development theory in the current discussion, we have attempted to offer a clearer picture of chronic career indecision. Future research will aid in this clarification and should focus on the integration of personal and career counselling, on fleshing out the relative influence of personality versus social and situational factors on career decidedness, and on action research oriented career programs within educational systems, community organizations and the corporate world.

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