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The Life-Span, Life-Space Approach to Careers

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The life-span, life-space theory of career development evolved over a period of sixty years through empirical research, conceptual reflection, and feedback from practitioners. Today it stands as an eminently useful model for comprehending vocational development and organizing career education and counseling.

Background

The construction and elaboration of this developmental self-concept theory of careers was led by Donald E. Super (1910–1994), who began his study of occupational guidance while working in the 1930s as an employment counselor in Cleveland, Ohio. His early studies of work, occupations, and psychometrics (Super, 1939, 1940), as well as his reading of Buehler's (1933) developmental studies and Davidson and Anderson's (1937) study of occupational mobility, stimulated him to synthesize what was known about occupational choice and vocational adjustment (Savickas, 1994a).

Super's syntheses of the existing literature, or compilation projects as he called them, resulted in two books. The first, *The Dynamics of Vocational Adjustment* (Super, 1942), completed while he was on active duty in World War II, was a vocational guidance textbook that focused attention on the social context and personal needs of

clients who face a career choice. In it, Super espoused a developmental perspective in viewing occupational choice as an unfolding process, not a point-in-time event. The benefits of adding a longitudinal view of careers to supplement the cross-sectional view of occupations was Super's single most important idea. Throughout his own career, the idea repeatedly prompted him to research how careers unfold and to design educational and counseling interventions that foster vocational development and occupational adjustment. The second book, *Appraising Vocational Fitness by Means of Psychological Tests* (Super, 1949; Super & Crites, 1962), rendered an encyclopedic review of psychometrics applied to vocational counseling. Although the sections that describe specific tests are now outdated, the conceptual insights presented in that book remain relevant today.

From Occupations to Careers

Following the publication of his testing book in 1949, Super began what he thought would be another compilation project. He decided to review the literature about the psychology of careers rather than occupations (Roe, 1956). This commitment to learning about how careers unfold led Super to shift his attention from the practical applications of psychology to vocational guidance and personnel work to concentrate on theory. Super centered his theory-building efforts on the life course of vocational behavior and its development to supplement trait and factor theory's attention to initial choice of an occupation upon leaving school.

In due course, the shift to theory produced three of Super's major contributions: the Career Pattern Study, a classic book, and a theory of career development. The momentous Career Pattern Study (CPS) (Super, 1985) followed the careers of one hundred ninth-grade students for more than twenty years and produced four books, numerous journal articles, and three psychometric inventories. The second major product was the authoritative *The Psychology of Careers* in which Super (1957) documented conclusions that he

formed from his literature review. The book refocused vocational psychology by expanding its attention to occupational choice as an event to include career decision making as a developmental process within occupational choice. The third product of Super's study of careers was his most frequently cited journal article, "A Theory of Vocational Development," which had been his presidential address to the Counseling Psychology Division in the American Psychological Association and was published a year later in *American Psychologist* (Super, 1953). This article states, in a series of ten propositions, a theory of career development that emphasizes continuity in human development and focuses on the progression of choice, entry, adjustment, and transition to new choice over the entire life cycle.

Theoretical Propositions

The ten propositions in the original statement of career development theory (Super, 1953) have since been modified several times for clarity and expanded to incorporate new research (Super & Bachrach, 1957; Super, 1981; Bell, Super, & Dunn, 1988; and Super, 1990). Currently, fourteen propositions constitute the theory:

1. People differ in their abilities and personalities, needs, values, interests, traits, and self-concepts.
2. People are qualified, by virtue of these characteristics, each for a number of occupations.
3. Each occupation requires a characteristic pattern of abilities and personality traits, with tolerances wide enough to allow some variety of occupations for each individual as well as some variety of individuals in each occupation.
4. Vocational preferences and competencies, the situations in which people live and work, and hence their self-concepts change with time and experience, although self-concepts as products of social learning are increasingly stable from late

adolescence until late maturity, providing some continuity in choice and adjustment.

5. This process of change may be summed up in a series of life stages (a "maxi-cycle") characterized as a sequence of Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement, and these stages may in turn be subdivided into periods characterized by developmental tasks. A small (mini) cycle takes place during career transitions from one stage to the next or each time an individual's career is destabilized by illness or injury, employer's reduction in force, social changes in human resource needs, or other socioeconomic or personal events. Such unstable or multiple-trial careers involve the recycling of new growth, reexploration, and reestablishment.
6. The nature of the career pattern—that is, the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency, and duration of trial and stable jobs—is determined by the individual's parental socioeconomic level, mental ability, education, skills, personality characteristics (needs, values, interests, and self-concepts), and career maturity and by the opportunities to which he or she is exposed.
7. Success in coping with the demands of the environment and of the organism in that context at any given life-career stage depends on the readiness of the individual to cope with these demands (that is, on his or her career maturity).
8. Career maturity is a psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's degree of vocational development along the continuum of life stages and substages from Growth through Disengagement. From a social or societal perspective, career maturity can be operationally defined by comparing the developmental tasks being encountered to those expected based on the individual's chronological age. From a psychological perspective, career maturity can be operationally defined by comparing an individual's resources, both cogni-

tive and affective, for coping with a current task to the resources needed to master that task.

9. Development through the life stages can be guided, partly by facilitating the maturing of abilities, interests, and coping resources and partly by aiding in reality testing and in the development of self-concepts.

10. The process of career development is essentially that of developing and implementing occupational self-concepts. It is a synthesizing and compromising process in which the self-concept is a product of the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical makeup, opportunity to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role-playing meet with the approval of supervisors and peers.

11. The process of synthesis or compromise between individual and social factors, between self-concepts and reality, is one of role-playing and of learning from feedback, whether the role is played in fantasy, in the counseling interview, or in such real-life activities as classes, clubs, part-time work, and entry jobs.

12. Work satisfactions and life satisfactions depend on the extent to which an individual finds adequate outlets for abilities, needs, values, interests, personality traits, and self-concepts. Satisfactions depend on establishment in a type of work, a work situation, and a way of life in which one can play the kind of role that growth and exploratory experiences have led one to consider congenial and appropriate.

13. The degree of satisfaction people attain from work is proportional to the degree to which they have been able to implement self-concepts.

14. Work and occupation provide a focus for personality organization for most men and women, although for some individuals this focus is peripheral, incidental, or even nonexistent. Then other foci, such as leisure activities and homemaking, may be

central. Social traditions, such as sex-role stereotyping and modeling, racial and ethnic biases, and the opportunity structure, as well as individual differences are important determinants of preferences for such roles as worker, student, leisurite, homemaker, and citizen.

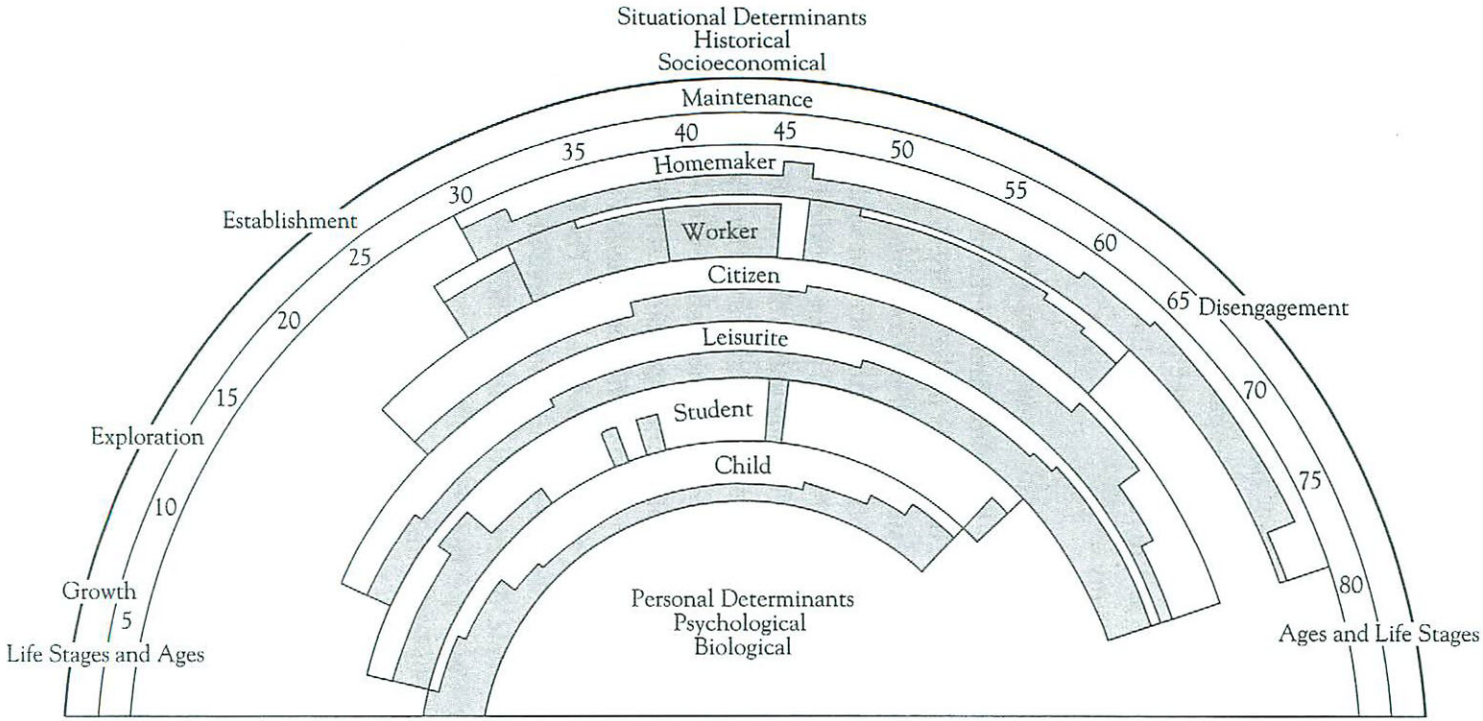
Super chose to elaborate the theory stated in these propositions by focusing in turn on circumscribed segments of vocational behavior. As Crites (1969), Borow (1982), and Super (1969) himself observed, life-span, life-space theory is still a "segmental theory," meaning a loosely unified set of theories that deal with specific aspects of career development. In due course, the segments will be integrated to yield a comprehensive theory.

The Theory

The life-span, life-space approach to career development (Super, 1980) brings together life-stage psychology and social role theory to convey a comprehensive picture of multiple-role careers, together with their determinants and interactions. It uses a picture called the Life-Career Rainbow (Figure 4.1) to graphically portray life-span, life-space career development. The rainbow has two primary dimensions, life span and life space or, more simply, time and space. The life-space, or latitudinal, dimension of the rainbow depicts life theaters and roles. The space dimension addresses the social situation in which an individual lives. The life-span, or longitudinal, dimension of the rainbow depicts life stages and demarcates them to coincide with childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middlessence, and senescence. The time dimension adds a developmental perspective that focuses on how people change and make transitions as they prepare for, engage in, and reflect upon their life roles, especially the work role.

Together, life span and life space can be used as coordinates with which to recognize an individual's current status and from which to project the individual's career trajectory. A person lives

Figure 4.1. The Life-Career Rainbow: Six Life Roles in Schematic Life Space.



in the intersection of the two dimensions. As the integrator of experience, the individual's self is the third major segment in life-span, life-space theory. The theory uses self-concepts to account for individuals' subjective views of their careers and to supplement objective views of their occupationally relevant values, interests, and talents. The following three parts in this section of the chapter describe in turn the life-space, life-span, and self-concept segments of the theory.

Life Space

Portrayed as the latitudinal arch of the rainbow, life space provides the contextual dimension in the theory, denoting the constellation of social positions occupied and roles enacted by an individual. Too many career theories ignore the fact that while making a living people live a life. The work role, albeit a critical role in contemporary society, is only one among many roles that an individual occupies. A person's multiple roles interact to reciprocally shape each other. Thus, individuals make decisions about work-role behavior, such as occupational choice and organizational commitment, within the circumstances imposed by the constellation of social positions that give meaning and focus to their lives. The same job holds different meanings for two individuals who live in different situations. For example, dedication to work may differ between two individuals in the same job because one is also active as a spouse, parent, and Girl Scout leader while the other is also active as a daughter, sister, and swimmer.

Life Structure

The social elements that constitute a life are arranged in a pattern of core and peripheral roles. This arrangement, or life structure, forms the basic configuration of a person's life: a design that organizes and channels the person's engagement in society, including occupational choice. Usually two or three core roles hold a central place and other roles are peripheral or absent. For example, a medical student

indicated that her major roles were student, child, and sibling. These three roles constitute the core of who she is and will become; they are fundamental to her identity and essential to her life satisfaction. She values and finds meaning in her peripheral roles as a friend, lover, and church member, yet she can vacate these minor roles and sometimes does when her core roles require more of her time.

Role Interactions

As explained in Super (1980) and Cosby (1987), the various life roles interact. These interactions among roles can be extensive or minimal, and supportive, supplementary, compensatory, or neutral. Role interactions can also be conflicting if they make inroads into time and energy needed elsewhere. Multiple roles can enrich life or overburden it. To understand an individual's career, it is important to know and appreciate the web of life roles that embeds that individual and her or his career concerns. Sometimes examination of the life structure will reveal that a career problem is not simply occasioned by a work-role transition, such as college graduation, but that the problem is spun in another strand of the web. For example, some students' indecision problems are wrapped in their role as children because they cannot make a choice for fear of disappointing a parent (Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, & Palladino, 1991). More often than not, career clients seek counseling when they are changing elements in a life structure or rearranging the pattern of the roles. During such a transition, individuals adopt new roles, drop outdated roles, and modify continuing roles as they redesign their lives.

Life Redesign

The occasion for life redesign may be predictable or novel, developmental or traumatic. As Levinson (1978) showed for men and Gallos (1989) described for women, life structures progress through a relatively ordered sequence of structure-building and structure-

changing periods. For example, Levinson characterized the period from seventeen to twenty-two years of age as an "early adult transition" in which the individual builds a life structure with which to enter the adult world. Relative to the work role, this early adult transition involves the school-to-work-transition, and the resulting life structure initiates the career establishment stage. Accordingly, life-span, life-space theory views implementing and stabilizing the first adult life structure as developmental tasks that society expects of each individual. Developmental tasks such as these help to demarcate the career stages to be described in the next section of this chapter.

Because it can be foreseen, negotiating the school-to-work transition by effectively implementing an occupational choice is a developmental task. In contrast to predictable developmental tasks, some tasks are traumatic in that they are unpredicted and even unwanted. For example, a displaced homemaker may seek career counseling to redesign his or her life while in the throes of divorcing a spouse, losing friends, and changing communities. Such an individual sometimes must first deal with the situations and feelings that precipitated the breakdown of the old life structure before rebuilding a new one. Although career counseling is a major intervention in its own right, it should be embedded in the larger intervention of life-design counseling or life planning so that it responds to the particulars of a client's concerns and circumstances (Savickas, 1991a).

Life Span

Life structure once designed is not static; it runs a developmental course and then needs redesign. To account for the predictable series of choices and changes in structuring a life over time, Super elaborated the "life-span" or developmental perspective on an individual's career in the work role. This theory segment focuses on career development—the life course of adapting to work and working conditions.

Careers develop as individuals master the challenges proffered by psychosocial maturation and cultural adaptation. The challenges, usually in the form of demands to change, can be prompted by predictable developmental tasks loosely associated with chronological age or by unpredictable adaptive tasks that bear no relation to age and do not occur in a linear progression. The outer band of the rainbow portrayed in Figure 4.1 shows the linear progression of the predictable and major life stages, their normal but not invariable sequence, and their approximate ages: Growth, or childhood; Exploration, or adolescence; Establishment, or young adulthood; Maintenance, or middle adulthood; and Disengagement, or old age. Note that the name for each period describes the nature of its principal life-stage task.

Each principal life-stage task can be further delineated as a sequence of three or four major developmental tasks, which may be described as societal expectations about preparing for, engaging in, and reflecting upon a productive work life. Success in adapting to each developmental task results in effective functioning as a student, worker, or retiree and lays the groundwork for mastering the next task along the developmental continuum. As Havighurst (1953) explained, and as some Career Pattern Study cases show (Bell, Super, & Dunn, 1988), skipping a stage in the normal cycle can result in difficulties at a later stage (for example, failure to explore often leads to a poor choice of occupation or job).

Growth

The life stage of Growth (ages four to thirteen) includes four major career developmental tasks: becoming concerned about the future, increasing personal control over one's own life, convincing oneself to achieve in school and at work, and acquiring competent work habits and attitudes. During elementary and junior high school, students grow in their capacity to work by learning productive work habits and attitudes. They also increase confidence in their ability to do well at tasks and to make their own decisions. During this

same period, children are expected to learn to get along with others and to balance this cooperation with a competitive attitude aimed at becoming the best that they can be. Slowly, they acquire an adult concept of time and near the end of the Growth stage become more aware of and concerned about the long-term future. Super (1990) included these elements (future-orientation, autonomy, and self-esteem) in a web model of the Growth stage yet realized that the model was structural rather than developmental. Shortly thereafter, Savickas and Super (1993) revised this structural model into a truly developmental one characterized by a sequence of tasks denoted as developing career concern, control, conviction, and competence.

Exploration

During the life stage of Exploration (ages fourteen to twenty-four), individuals encounter the career development tasks of crystallizing, specifying, and implementing an occupational choice. When habits of industriousness, achievement, and foresight coalesce, individuals turn to daydreaming about possible selves they may construct. Eventually, these occupational daydreams crystallize into a publicly recognized vocational identity with corresponding preferences for a group of occupations at a particular ability level. Through broad exploration of the occupations in this group, individuals eventually complete the task of specifying an occupational choice by translating the privately experienced occupational self-concept into educational/vocational choices. In due course, individuals implement an occupational choice by completing the necessary training and securing a position in the specified occupation.

Super concentrated much of his research and writing on investigating the Exploration stage, particularly studying how high school and college students grow in readiness to make educational and vocational choices (Phillips & Blustein, 1994). Super (1955) invented the construct of *career maturity* to provide a basis for describing and assessing the stage of career development reached by

students of differing ages and grades and their readiness to make educational/vocational decisions. He viewed maturation as the central process in adolescent career development because career choice readiness clearly increases with chronological age and school grade (Crites, 1965). Having chosen a term from biology forced Super to repeatedly explain that although career maturity increases with age, the impetus is not biological; the impetus is psychosocial in the form of expectations, in the curriculum and in the minds of family and teachers, for students who are approaching the end of their schooling. Once out of school, the psychosocial impetus for individual career development shifts to changes in work and working conditions. Thus, in studying adult career development, Super concentrated on adaptation, not maturation, as the central process and *career adaptability*, not career maturity, as the cardinal construct (Goodman, 1994; Savickas, 1994b).

Establishment

The life stage of Establishment (about twenty-five to forty-four) involves the career development tasks of stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing in an occupational position. Stabilizing consists of making one's place in the organization secure by assimilating the organizational culture and performing job duties satisfactorily. The midphase of Establishment involves consolidating one's position by demonstrating positive work attitudes and productive habits along with cultivating good co-worker relations. The third task, skipped by many workers, is advancement to new levels of responsibility. Individuals who succeed in "getting along" often, but not always, turn their attention to "getting ahead" by climbing to higher-level positions in the organization.

Maintenance

Before entering the Maintenance stage, many individuals encounter the midlife question "Do I want to do this for the next twenty-five years?" Essentially, they ask themselves and their family and friends

if they should hold on or let go. If they decide to stay in the established occupation and organization, then they enter the Maintenance stage. However, if they decide to change organizations, occupations, or fields, they must recycle through Exploration and Establishment by crystallizing and specifying a different choice and then securing a new position and advancing in it (Williams & Savickas, 1990).

The life stage of Maintenance (forty-five to sixty-five) includes the career development tasks of holding on, keeping up, and innovating. If the renewal period results in the decision to hold on, then the individual maintains what he or she has achieved, updates skills and knowledge, innovates new ways of doing routine tasks, or discovers new challenges. An individual who barely copes with the tasks of Maintenance is sometimes viewed in the popular press and professional literature as being on a career plateau.

Disengagement

The life stage of Disengagement (over sixty-five) involves the career development tasks of deceleration, retirement planning, and retirement living. After a long period of Maintenance, workers eventually experience a decline in energy for and interest in their occupation. Accordingly, they start to disengage from it by decelerating—slowing down on the job, starting to turn over tasks to younger colleagues, and contemplating retirement. In due course, retirement planning becomes a central activity that leads eventually to separation from the occupation and commencement of retirement living with its challenges of organizing a new life structure and different life-style.

Transitions

Life-span, life-space theory has sought to make it clear not only that the ages of transitions between the stages are very flexible but also that each transition itself involves reexploration and reestablishment. Having secured a new role, the individual typically recycles,

a mini-cycle, through one or more of the life-stage maxi-cycles. Thus, the high school graduate entering her first job usually goes through a period of growth in the new role, including exploration of the nature and expectations of that role. She becomes established in it, maintains the role if successful, and then experiences disengagement if with further growth she becomes ready to make a job or occupational change. Similarly, the established worker, frustrated or advancing, may experience new growth and explore new roles and seek to get established in one of them. Table 4.1 illustrates the construct of recycling. It shows the sample tasks, most typical of other life stages, being appropriately encountered at atypical life stages.

The Grand Narrative

This story of the stages articulated by Super and others, with its maxi- and mini-cycles, tells a grand narrative about psychosocial maturation and cultural adaptation. Maybe no one individual ever lived all of it, yet the narrative, written at midcentury, portrays the then current societal expectations for a life, especially a male life. Today, society is revising this grand narrative, but the new storylines for contemporary lives are far from being clear, coherent, and complete.

Self-Concepts

The life-span component of the theory concentrates on the *process* of choosing and adjusting to roles in the life space, especially the work role. In addition to the process by which one develops a career, a comprehensive theory must deal with the *content* involved in choices and the *outcomes* of the choices. Choice content denotes abilities and interests, both those possessed by an individual and those required by the occupation or other environment. The fit between the traits of the person and the traits required in the environment predict adjustment outcomes. The primary outcomes of a good fit between a person and an occupation are job success,

Table 4.1. The Cycling and Recycling of Developmental Tasks Through the Life Span.

	Age			
Life Stage	*Adolescence 14–24*	*Early Adulthood 25–44*	*Middle Adulthood 45–64*	*Late Adulthood over 65*
Disengagement	Giving less time to hobbies	Reducing sports participation	Focusing on essential activities	Reducing working hours
Maintenance	Verifying current occupational choice	Making occupational position secure	Holding own against competition	Keeping up what is still enjoyed
Establishment	Getting started in a chosen field	Settling down in a permanent position	Developing new skills	Doing things one has always wanted to do
Exploration	Learning more about more opportunities	Finding opportunity to do desired work	Identifying new problems to work on	Finding a good retirement spot
Growth	Developing a realistic self-concept	Learning to relate to others	Accepting one's limitations	Developing nonoccupational roles

Source: Adapted from Super & Thompson, 1981.

satisfaction, and stability. In life-span, life-space theory, choice content and adjustment outcomes are addressed by a segment that deals with conceptions of the self, from the objective perspective on vocational identity and from the subjective perspective on occupational self-concept.

Vocational Identity

The seminal paradigm applied in models of occupational choice and work adjustment focuses attention on one component of the self, namely the self-as-object, which the individual experiences as the "me." In recent times, career researchers have used the terms *occupational identity* (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989) or *vocational identity* (Savickas, 1985) when referring to the individual's understanding of the self-as-object. Vocational identity is best defined as "possession of a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, and talent" (Holland, 1985a, p. 5). From this and other definitions, it is clear that occupationally relevant traits such as abilities and interests constitute the substance of vocational identity, whereas a sense of continuity and distinctiveness construct it (Damon & Hart, 1988, p. 125–126). Occupationally relevant traits consist of conceptions of the individual formed by observers or by the self based on feedback from others. Individuals use these traits primarily to assess themselves and other people, "specifically to evaluate their potential as resources for the group" (Hogan, 1983, p. 60). Interest inventories and ability tests have a long and productive history of use in vocational psychology because they operationally define the cardinal traits in vocational identity. In simple terms, these measures produce an objective picture of the individual and then profile this portrait on a normal distribution or continuum. These profiles provide researchers and counselors with an objective perspective on an individual's vocational identity, one ready to use in making matching choices and predicting adjustment outcomes.

Earlier in his career, Super had concentrated much of his effort on trait and factor models that deal with objective conceptions of the self, especially in his books about guidance (1942) and testing

(1949). Super's major contribution to the trait and factor model was the convincing argument that a measure of values, or what one wants, should be added to the traditional test battery for vocational appraisal, which has been dominated by measures of abilities and interests. Super defined values as desirable ends or means to an end. "They are the qualities which people desire and which they seek in the activities in which they engage, in the situations in which they live, and in the objects which they make or acquire" (Super, 1970, p. 4). Values provide a sense a purpose. They serve as stars to steer by in guiding individuals to specific places within life spaces, places that can be the center of meaning, locales for need satisfaction, and venues for the expression of interests. Values are more fundamental than interests because values indicate qualities or goals sought whereas interests denote activities or objects in which values are sought (Super, 1970, p. 4). For example, social values embody and generate an interest in counseling or social work whereas economic values lead to business interests.

Later in his career, although he continued to study values, Super accepted and incorporated into life-span, life-space theory the models and measures of the objective self devised and developed by Holland (1985a) for occupational choice and by Dawis and Lofquist (1984) for work adjustment. Super then focused his own reflection and research about self on studying models for and measures of subjective conceptions of the self.

Occupational Self-Concept

Life-span, life-space theory supplements the objective view of self, or vocational identity, with a subjective perspective on the self, one that apprehends the individual's conceptions of the self. The subject's own perspective on and private meaning for the "I" complements the objective perspective and public meaning of the "me" as portrayed by test data and seen by the counselor. To focus on the individual's understanding of the "self-as-subject" in career development, Super (1963) adopted and elaborated self-concept theory.

Career self-concept theory concentrates on the personal meaning of abilities, interests, values, and choices as well as how they coalesce into life themes. This subjective perspective helps clients to understand facts and experiences in their own terms. Purpose, not traits, is the emphasis of the subjective approach to conceptualizing the self.

Objective measures identify a person's similarity to others, whereas subjective assessment reveals the person's uniqueness. Consider interest assessment as an example. Objective measures of interests identify the strength of an interest relative to some comparison group, whereas subjective stories reveal the origins of that interest in a life history, the contemporary expression of the interest, and the possible future use of that interest in pursuing goals and values (Savickas, 1995a).

Subjective congruence, or fit, between purpose and possibilities parallels and complements the objective congruence between traits and occupations. Used in tandem, objective and subjective perspectives provide deeper and broader understanding of clients' situations and options. Comparisons within the two dimensions produce estimates of objective congruence (that is, objective self versus objective environment) and of subjective congruence (subjective self versus subjective environment). Moreover, comparisons between the two dimensions (Harrison, 1978) produce estimates of "realism" (objective environment versus subjective environment) and "accuracy of self-appraisal" (objective self versus subjective self).

Self-Concept Implementation. Life-span, life-space theory conceptualizes occupational choice as implementing a self-concept, work as a manifestation of selfhood, and career development as a continuing process of improving the match between the self and situations. Viewing occupational choice as an attempt to implement a self-concept (Super, 1951) was a simple formulation, yet the notion of translating one's idea of oneself into occupational terms and then seeking to prepare for and pursue an occupation had and still has widespread appeal. It fits the developmental model, with a

series of changing preferences for changing situations being expressed in successive approximations that lead to better matches. Matching the self-concept to educational and vocational options should be treated as a series of successive approximations and as a sequence of matches made, sometimes gradually and sometimes abruptly, as people and situations change. A career can be viewed as the life course of a person encountering a series of developmental tasks and attempting to handle them in such a way as to become the kind of person he or she wants to be. With a changing self and changing situations, the matching process is never really completed.

Self-Concept Dimensions. Super worked to make more precise and operational the overly mystical language of phenomenology used in traditional discourse on self-concept. Developing a more scientific lexicon for self-concept theory made the theory more useful to practicing counselors because it identified the different aspects of self-concepts that had been considered by theorists and researchers and organized them into a taxonomy. Super (1963) started by defining self-concept and then constructing a taxonomy of self-concept dimensions and metadimensions. He defined the self-concept as a "picture of the self in some role, situation, or position, performing some set of functions, or in some web of relationships" (p. 18). An occupational self-concept means "the constellation of self attributes which the individual considers vocationally relevant; these may or may not have been translated into a vocational preference" (p. 19).

One important outcome of this taxonomical work was the distinction between, on the one hand, concepts of personality traits or attributes of the self (for example, gregariousness and dogmatism), referred to as *dimensions* of a self-concept, and, on the other hand, the characteristics of these dimensions (for example, clarity, stability, self-efficacy, and self-esteem) individually or collectively, called *metadimensions*. The usage typical of writers on these subjects is open to criticism on the grounds that it confuses dimensions and metadimensions, a confusion that has resulted in use of the term *self-concept* as a synonym for, and even instead of, the term *self-*

esteem. Self-esteem is a metadimension of self-concept, as are stability, clarity, abstraction, refinement, certainty, and realism. The self-concept relates to the content of choice whereas the metadimensions relate to the process of choosing. For example, individuals with high self-esteem are better able to act on their interests. Individuals with clear, stable, realistic, and certain occupational self-concepts are better able to make career choices.

Systems

A second important outcome of the classification project was the distinction between a self-concept and a self-concept system. The former denotes the qualities of a self-concept in a single role such as worker or parent and the latter denotes the qualities of sets or constellation of role self-concepts. This distinction recognizes that people have not just one self-concept but rather a constellation of self-concepts. The self-concept system is the picture the person has of self in numerous roles and situations. In other words, people have one self-concept system that is general and inclusive; within this system, they have more specific and limited concepts of self in various roles (self as mother, self as teacher, self as partner, and so on). For example, Garfinkle (1958) showed that high school students' concepts of themselves as students are empirically differentiated from their general self-concepts. Contemporary studies of self-concept theory by personality psychologists confirm that individuals have distinct self-concepts that are (1) activated in different roles, (2) remain stable in particular types of situations and relationships, and (3) relate to efficient information processing during decision making (Tunis, Fridhandler, & Horowitz, 1990).

System Metadimensions. Self-concept systems, like self-concepts, also have metadimensions. The system metadimensions deal with differences in internal pattern (structure), variety of dimensions used (scope), consistency between self-concepts (harmony), ease of change given new information (flexibility), uniqueness of dimensions used (idiosyncrasy), and hierarchy of self-concepts (regency).

Each metadimension has theoretical implications for ease of life planning.

The dimensions and metadimensions have been shown to have practical as well as theoretical relevance to counselors who help clients develop and implement their self-concepts. Particularly useful are self-esteem, clarity, consistency, realism, complexity, and self-efficacy. Research (Super, 1982) has shown that self-esteem, for example, affects the role that the translation model plays in formulating occupational preferences; those who lack self-esteem are less likely to make good matches between self-concept and occupational concept. Similarly, it is difficult to see how people who have unclear self-concepts can see themselves adequately in any occupational role. A person whose self-concepts are not harmonious, who sees herself, for example, as both gregarious and solitary, or as friendly and hostile, must also have difficulty making a match to an occupation. One whose self-concepts are unrealistic is likely to make unwise choices, and one whose concept of self is simple (limited to a few dimensions or traits) seems likely to have a less adequate basis for matching than another whose self-concept includes a number of relevant dimensions. Finally, an individual who views him- or herself as low in decisional self-efficacy tends to avoid making choices and thereby remains undecided or indecisive (Betz & Taylor, 1994).

The self-concept segment of life-span, life-space theory serves as the fulcrum for understanding clients' public and private interpretations of their life roles and their developmental status. The focus on self leads to clear and coherent conceptualizations of clients and their developmental pathways. Evaluations of the life-span, life-space theory uniformly identify the self-concept segment as the theory's most unique contribution to vocational psychology.

Evaluation

This section evaluates life-span, life-space theory from the perspectives of researchers who study it as well as practitioners who apply it. The portion on researchers' evaluations examines the goals

of the theory, reviews scholarly critiques regarding how well the theory meets its goals, discusses the empirical evidence for the theory, and considers future directions for elaborating the theory. The portion on practitioners' evaluations discusses their critiques and describes how the theory has been subsequently revised to better address gender and cultural context.

By Researchers

Life-span, life-space theory is a *functional* theory, which according to Marx (1963, p. 16) denotes "the modest utilization of organized conceptualizations, with more explicit emphasis upon the provisional and tool character of theory." Functionalism concentrates on the relationship of the organism to the environment in asking two central questions: "What do people do?" and "Why do they do it?" (Marx & Hillix, 1963). To address these questions about adaptive processes and their outcomes, functionalists generally emphasize empirical research, focus on interrelationships among variables, and avoid constructing logico-deductive superstructures.

The strengths and weaknesses of life-span, life-space theory are those common to all functional theories. The strengths of the theory include its close tie to empirical findings, data-oriented propositions, and avoidance of premature attempts at logico-deductive explanatory postulates. The most serious criticism of life-span, life-space theory is that its propositions are really a series of summarizing statements that, although closely related to data, lack a fixed logical form that could make new contributions of their own. Does life-span, life-space theory contribute insights of its own sufficient to avoid being considered a technical eclecticism lacking in creativity? A review of critiques of the theory by leading scholars in vocational psychology addresses this question.

Critiques

Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996, p. 143) conclude that life-span, life-space theory "has the virtue of building upon aspects of the mainstream of developmental psychology and personality theory" and "it

has considerable utility for both practice and research in vocational psychology." Hackett, Lent, and Greenhaus (1991, p. 6) seem to agree with this last conclusion when they write that the theory is a "useful description of the process of vocational development, as providing a systematic examination of important components of vocational behavior, and as having considerable utility and empirical support."

Borgen (1991), in a review of milestones in the field of vocational psychology for a twenty-year period, notes these same features in calling Super a superordinate thinker whose theory reflects an encyclopedic approach to scholarship. He concludes that "Super's comprehensive conceptual work has splendidly stood the test of time. The power of Super's overarching thinking is apparent in how readily new ideas and trends are immediately compatible with his work" (p. 278). Consider, as an example of the wide-ranging applicability of the theory, Cohen's (1991) use of career stage as a moderator of the relationships between organizational commitment and job outcomes. Empirical studies had reported such low correlations between commitment and outcomes that researchers were questioning the importance of the commitment variable. Based on his meta-analysis of forty-one studies, Cohen concludes that career stage does indeed moderate the relationship between outcome and commitment, with the relationship of commitment to turnover being stronger in the Establishment stage and the relationship of commitment to performance and to absenteeism being stronger in the Maintenance stage.

Brown (1990) discusses the negative and positive features stemming from the theory's comprehensive scope. The broad scope allows consideration of the full complexity of vocational behavior in diverse groups across dissimilar settings. However, lack of integration among segments thwarts the formulation of parsimonious and succinct explanatory postulates suitable for empirical test. This may be why empirical investigations of life-span, life-space constructs have, more often than not, been performed without using

the theory as the specific source of hypotheses. Nevertheless, the authors of such studies, in the discussion section of the article, often link their results, after the fact, to the theory. It can be difficult, as stated by Hackett, Lent, and Greenhaus (1991, p. 8), to determine "whether studies examining concepts like self-concept, career stages, or career exploration actually tested Super's model or some alternative conceptual scheme," although, as illustrated by Cohen's (1991) meta-analysis, the life-span, life-space theory does provide a cogent framework for post hoc interpretation and integration of empirical facts.

Empirical Evidence

Most literature reviews of the empirical research on life-span, life-space theory present similar conclusions. The data generally support the model (Hackett & Lent, 1992; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996), the developmental segment is well documented, and data relative to the self-concept segment generally agree with the theory. The data about success in earlier tasks predicting success in later tasks have been viewed as more equivocal (Hackett & Lent, 1992), yet the problems in selecting appropriate predictive validity criteria for these studies suggest that the results are stronger than first believed (Savickas, 1993a). Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996, p. 144) express concern that "in recent years relatively few new empirical tests of the theory have been conducted."

Future Directions

Reviewers seem to concur generally in identifying future directions for theory elaboration and empirical research. Swanson (1992), who reviewed more recent research on the life-span and the life-space segments of the theory, notes that life-span research still focuses on the Exploration stage and initial choice whereas life-space research concentrates on the Establishment and Maintenance stages. She encourages more life-space research on adolescents and young adults and more life-span research on adults. A means for implementing

these suggestions appears to be the construct of career adaptability. This construct has improved the life-span segment of the theory in recent years, from envisioning mainly a maxi-cycle to involving mini-cycles of Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement, linked in a series within the maxi-cycle. With the addition of the adaptability construct, reexploration and reestablishment have attracted a great deal of attention, and the term *transition* has come to denote these processes. Research on adaptation to transitions, beginning with the school-to-work transition, naturally blends the life-space and life-span segments of the theory. The self-concepts segment of the theory could also be integrated into these studies if researchers were to examine how transitions affect vocational identity, occupational self-concepts, and life themes.

In addition to research that uses all three segments of the theory to investigate a career problem, other research could focus on the interdigitation of the three theory segments themselves. Empirically examining interrelationships among the constructs in the three distinct segments of the theory coincides with a central goal in the functionalist approach to theory building. A means for investigating the precise makeup of these interrelationships and for binding the theory segments together may lie in the career development processes of learning and decision making. Processes are the mechanisms of action; they are distinct from the developmental tasks that prompt them and the attitudes and competencies that condition them. The potential role of learning theory in advancing life-span, life-space theory has been highlighted by Krumboltz (1994) and by Lent and Hackett (1994), who have articulated the growing consensus that research on learning processes should be incorporated into life-span, life-space theory (for example, Hackett & Lent, 1992), especially if it focuses on how individuals acquire the attitudes and competencies central to career maturation and adaptation. The same would be true if the theory were to incorporate advances from the cognitive and decisional sciences (Brown, 1990;

Gati, in press), especially if it concentrated on decision making and dealt with nonrational factors such as intuition (Phillips, 1994).

Another direction for future work identified by most reviewers responds to the need for more theoretical and empirical attention to diverse groups as well as to socioeconomic factors. The careers of racial-ethnic minorities are clearly underrepresented in the research (Swanson, 1992). Recent publications by Leong (1995), Fouad and Arbona (1994), and Fouad and Bingham (1995) assess the current state of knowledge concerning career development among racial/ethnic minorities and indicate specific suggestions for theory and research. In a related vein, Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996, p. 144) state, as do Hackett and Lent (1992), that "still needed are better ways to integrate economic and social factors that influence career decisions more directly than the events described by the theory currently do." Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) have indicated some "better ways" rooted in the theory and methods of developmental-contextualism. It is to be hoped that they and others will soon put them to empirical tests because it is the theory's relative inattention to cultural context that has drawn the greatest criticism from practitioners who seek to apply the theory.

By Practitioners

Life-span, life-space theory has been widely accepted and creatively applied by career educators and counselors. The theory has benefited from the suggestions of practitioners who have elucidated it through use and extended its meaning by applying it to new situations. Among the important contributions to theory elaboration made by practitioners are those that address the theory's limitations in comprehending the careers of women and racial/ethnic minorities. The original statement of the theory (Super, 1953) was formulated at midcentury during an era when many men spent a career in a single company and many women worked as homemakers or in sexually segregated occupations (Siltanen, 1994). The Career Pattern Study, which helped to elaborate the initial statement of the

theory, investigated only the career patterns of men and focused for many years on just the Exploration stage. Accordingly, practitioners have on occasion criticized the theory for emphasizing white men to the neglect of women and racial/ethnic minorities. This criticism seems valid from our perspective at the close of the twentieth century (Richardson, 1993; Savickas, 1993b, 1995c). The original statement of the theory would seem to have utility for only a circumscribed portion of today's population, but since its first statement in 1953, the theory has been refined, elaborated, and renovated (as indicated by its name changes from "Career Development Theory" to "Developmental Self-Concept Theory" to "Life-Span, Life-Space Theory") to more completely address contemporary issues related to gender and to cultural context.

Gender

The addition of the life-space segment to the original theory, which included first the life-span segment and then the self-concept segment, responds to the gendered context of life (Cook, 1994) and better comprehends women's careers (Gallos, 1989). Although useful for understanding and intervening in men's lives, life space and role salience may be even more useful to women because of the "wider variety of life patterns that women actually experience today" (Gallos, 1989, p. 115). Life-span, life-space theory is now more comprehensive in that it addresses multiple roles and their demands and concentrates on how individuals negotiate their roles and increase their happiness with them and in them. Current research, for example, helps clarify when family and career create interrole conflicts for women and when, despite possible overload, the two roles provide complementary opportunities for the fulfillment of personal values (Claes, Martin, Coetsier, & Super, 1995; Nevill, 1995).

Cultural Context

The constructs of role salience and role values have improved the theory and increased its usefulness for multicultural and cross-

cultural research and counseling. Since 1978, life space has played a major part in the Work Importance Study (WIS) (Super, Sverko, & Super, 1995). This eleven-country project examined the structure and content of both life roles and values—and their interrelations—in large samples from Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. This research has established several important facts. First, the general (factorial) structure of life roles and values is remarkably similar in samples from industrialized and rapidly industrializing nations. Equally important is the second finding, that the particular values held, and the pattern of relationships between values and roles, vary significantly among cultural groups. Finally, a third finding is that particular groups also have, within the broadly similar structure, local variations; this includes, for example, a strong emphasis on spirituality or a highly valued notion of cultural identity in some groups, whereas these values cannot be reliably identified in other groups.

In general, the WIS project and related spin-off studies provide a strong demonstration of the life-span, life-space model and its ability to illuminate in various cultural contexts the meanings of work, as well as homemaking, leisure, study, and community service (Niles & Goodnough, in press). Nation-specific versions of the WIS instruments (Values Scale and Salience Inventory), unlike the cross-national research version, include some such variations as well as appropriate norms and are being introduced in the counseling context in several countries (Super, Sverko, & Super, 1995). Appreciation of these variations, as well as the commonalities, provides a helpful perspective for considering the needs of cultural and ethnic minorities within any single country.

In the United States, career development counselors have devised a "culturally-appropriate career counseling model" (Fouad & Bingham, 1995), which includes establishing a culturally appropriate relationship, attending to culturally specific variables during assessment—for example, by use of the Multicultural Career Counseling Checklist (Ward & Bingham, 1993)—and collaborating with

clients in performing culturally sensitive interventions. It is important to realize in this effort that one role of culture is to organize individual variation among its members, and the approach outlined herein is effective in acknowledging the cultural generalities as well as the particulars of an individual client. It also is open to the fact that in ethnically complex societies, such as the United States, many individuals belong to and form identities from elements belonging to a mixture of ethnic traditions.

Practical Applications

The prior two sections of this chapter described and evaluated the three major segments of the theory: life space, life span, and self-concepts. This section explains how to use systematically these theory segments in the practice of career intervention with individuals (other books deal with the important applications of the theory in school career education programs [Gysbers & Henderson, 1994; Herr & Cramer, 1992; Savickas & Crites, 1981] and in college and company career development programs [Hall, 1986; Montross & Shinkman, 1992]). The section is divided in two, with the first part describing the life-span, life-space model for assessment and the second part describing the use of assessment results in career counseling.

Assessment

The counseling theory stemming from the life-span, life-space theory of vocational behavior is called "Career Development Assessment and Counseling" (C-DAC) (Super, 1983; Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown, & Niles, 1992). The C-DAC model uses constructs from life-span, life-space theory to supplement the trait and factor model's attention to abilities and interests. Given the career immaturity of high school students and many college students (immaturity in the sense of lack of planfulness and lack of information about careers and occupations), trait and factor assessment methods are often misused. If a youth cares or knows little about the world of

work, then interest inventories that use occupational titles or activities may produce misleading scores for that individual. If a student or an adult has given little thought to occupational choice or to the unfolding of a career, he or she is not likely to be ready to use ability, interest, or value data in planning for the next career stage. Accordingly, the C-DAC model adds innovative dimensions to the trait and factor model for vocational appraisal: role salience and values, career maturity and adaptability, and occupational self-concept and life themes.

The sequence for developmental assessment starts with an intake interview that elicits a client's career concern. Following the interview, the counselor previews data available from school records and other sources. Then assessment itself proceeds through four phases that focus in turn on (1) life structure and work-role salience, (2) career development status and resources, (3) vocational identity with its work values, occupational interests, and vocational abilities, and finally (4) occupational self-concepts and life themes. A final step integrates the interview material and the assessment data into a narrative that realistically and sensitively portrays the client's vocational identity, occupational self-concept, and coping resources and then locates the individual in the context of multiple roles with their developmental tasks. Comparing this narrative to the client's career concerns begins the process of formulating, in collaboration with the client, a counseling plan designed to foster the client's career development.

Life-Space

The first phase in the assessment part of the C-DAC model focuses on a client's life structure and work-role salience. According to life-span, life-space theory, a counselor should initiate assessment by determining how important the work role is to a client. If the work role appears important, then further career development and occupational assessments will mean a great deal. In contrast, if the work role appears unimportant to a client, then an assessment of career

development resources and occupational self-concepts may not be meaningful or accurate because occupations and their roles play little part in that client's life. When circumstances suggest that the work role should be more important, then career orientation is called for (Savickas, 1991b); if not, counseling may concentrate on the choice of and preparation for other roles, such as those of leisurite, homemaker, and citizen active in community service.

Life-span, life-space practitioners use the Salience Inventory (SI) (Nevill & Super, 1986a) to map a client's life space and to assess work-role importance. The SI measures life structure by gauging an individual's *participation* in, *commitment* to, and *value expectations* for five life roles in the theaters of school, work, family, community, and leisure, thus producing three scores for each of the five roles. The participation score indicates amount of time and energy invested in a role, the commitment score indicates degree of emotional attachment to and identification with a role, and the value expectation score indicates the amount of satisfaction and sense of purpose sought from each role. The constellation of fifteen scores shows the client's life structure or more specifically the pattern of the client's activity in, attachment to, and hopes for five major life roles.

Life-Span

The second step in assessment concentrates on the work role in appraising career stage and concerns as well as coping resources for choosing or for adapting to an occupation.

Assessing career stage and career concerns. In determining a client's career stage, the counselor must identify the vocational development tasks that concern the client. These career concerns can be identified during the interview or by administering the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI) (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988). The ACCI measures planfulness or concern with the tasks of Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement. Amount of concern with each of these stages is measured by a fif-

teen-item scale, with the items equally divided among the three tasks in each stage. For example, the Exploration scale has three five-item subscales that measure concern with crystallization, specification, and implementation. Based on the profile of a student's or a worker's responses to the ACCI, counselors can identify the tasks that concern the individual. Again using the Exploration scale as an example, ACCI scores indicate whether an individual must broadly explore different fields and levels to crystallize a general preference, intensely explore an occupational group to specify a choice, or investigate opportunities and apply for training and a job.

The ACCI works well for measuring the developmental or adaptive tasks being faced by adults at midcareer who are recycling to a new occupational choice because the ACCI is sensitive to the minicycles involved in adapting to a role. Accordingly, adults at midlife who wish to reenter the work force or change occupational fields may score very high on the ACCI Exploration scale, not because they are still in the Exploration career stage but because as they recycle through the stages they become concerned with reexploring their life options. The ACCI scores for Joan, the client (whose case study appears at the end of Chapter One) to be discussed at the end of this chapter, aptly illustrate how a recycling adult can show great concern with crystallizing new preferences.

After identifying the tasks of concern to the client, the counselor turns to assessing the client's coping resources for dealing with that concern. Generally, resource assessment focuses on attitudes and competencies for dealing with the tasks involved in making educational/vocational choices (namely crystallizing, specifying, and implementing) or adapting to a position (namely stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing).

Assessing resources for choosing. Resources for coping with the tasks of making and implementing educational/vocational choices include positive attitudes toward career exploration and planning, an adequate fund of self-knowledge and occupational information, and skill at decision making. Some of these coping resources that

constitute career choice readiness are affective whereas others are cognitive, as shown in the CPS work (Super & Overstreet, 1960) and by research with the Career Development Inventory (CDI) (Thompson, Lindeman, Super, Jordaan, & Myers, 1984; Savickas, 1990). The CDI assesses two affective variables: career planning, or planfulness; and career exploration, or curiosity. The CDI also assesses two cognitive characteristics: information about work and occupations and knowledge of the principles for career decision making. The pattern of the four scores attained by individuals shows their readiness to make educational/vocational choices and reveals deficits that may delay their career development.

Counselors usually interpret the CDI scores in a set sequence (Jordaan, 1974; Savickas, 1990). First, they look to the Career Planning score to assess clients' awareness of the need to make choices, inclination to consider the future, and involvement in career planning activities. If the work role is important to a client yet that client scores low on Career Planning, then counseling needs to concentrate on the arousal of interest in the future, the world of work, and career planning (Savickas, 1991b). The Career Exploration score indicates willingness to use exploration opportunities and resources. Counselors help those with low scores by prompting curiosity, teaching information-seeking behaviors, and reflecting on the results of exploration (Blustein, 1992). The World-of-Work Information score shows amount of knowledge about work, occupations, and careers. Those who score low need to learn about the occupational structure, gather information on occupational fields that they prefer (based on even embryonic interests), and understand how careers unfold. The Decision-Making score indicates knowledge of the principles and practice of rational decision making. Low scores indicate that individuals need to learn and practice methods for appraising their fitness for various occupations. When all four CDI scores are high, the profile suggests that clients can make decisions based on an adequate fund of knowledge gathered from planful exploration. Thus, they are ready to make a career

choice and can fully benefit from interpretations of interest inventories that identify a few occupations for in-depth exploration.

Assessing resources for adapting. Personal resources for adapting to an occupational position can be assessed with the Career Mastery Inventory (CMAS) (Crites, in press), which measures coping with the tasks of assimilating an organizational culture, doing one's job well, forming good relationships with co-workers, maintaining productive work habits and attitudes, and planning for job and career advancement. The CMAS uses six fifteen-item scales to measure coping with each of these developmental tasks. Based on a client's scores on these six scales, a counselor can identify the client's current coping resources and achievements and then teach the client strategies that increase adaptability (Savickas, Passen, & Jarjoura, 1988; Dix & Savickas, 1995).

Having assessed life-space and life-span constructs, the first half of the assessment is finished. The counselor now has data about the client's life structure, work-role importance, career concerns, and coping resources. Attention then turns from the context and process of career development to its content as expressed by vocational identity and occupational self-concepts.

Vocational Identity

The third step in the C-DAC model involves traditional trait and factor procedures (Holland, 1985a; Lofquist & Dawis, 1991). The goal is to draw an objective picture of the client's vocational identity and then to sketch out how that identity may be expressed in work and other life roles. Thus, the test battery includes measures of interests, abilities, and values. Counselors who use the C-DAC model typically measure interests with inventories that provide estimates of RIASEC types (Holland, 1985a) such as the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1985b), Strong Interest Inventory (Harmon, Hansen, Borgen, & Hammer, 1994), or the Vocational Preference Inventory (Holland, 1985c). Talents are estimated with ability measures such as the Differential Aptitude Tests (Bennett, Seashore, &

Wesman, 1974) and college admission tests or from functional skills assessment of school transcripts and life experiences.

The C-DAC model recommends that the Values Inventory (VI) (Nevill & Super, 1986b) or the Work Values Inventory (WVI) (Super, 1970) be used to supplement the measures of ability and interests. The VI is an extensive measure of twenty-one values that individuals seek or hope to find in their life roles. When concentrating on the work role, the C-DAC model recommends the WVI, an intensive measure of fifteen intrinsic, extrinsic, and concomitant values that shape the motivation to work and structure occupational and career goals. The addition of a values inventory is particularly important for clients who still need to focus their exploration. Clients who face the crystallization task often judge the results from the WVI as more meaningful in guiding their occupational exploration than the results from an interest inventory. Clients who are ready for the specification task may not need the results of a values assessment to focus their exploration on a limited group of occupations. Nevertheless, results from the VI can often illuminate choices that arise in their other life roles.

Occupational Self-Concept and Life Themes

The fourth step in the C-DAC model assesses subjective self-concepts and life themes. In contrast to the assessment of vocational identity with quantitative measures, the assessment of occupational self-concept relies on qualitative methods (Goldman, 1992). Of course, appraisals of client self-concepts can be made directly from their verbal behavior during an interview using methods such as those devised by Mathewson and Rochlin (1956). The C-DAC model includes two ways to assess self-concepts, one cross-sectional and the other longitudinal. To obtain the cross-sectional perspective on self-concept, counselors may use adjective checklists (Johansson, 1975), card sorts (Slaney & McKinnon-Slaney, 1990), or the repertory grid technique (Neimeyer, 1989) to assess a client's self-schema—the way he or she organizes and makes meaning of the

self and the world. The techniques of cluster analysis, semantic space analysis, and multidimensional scaling seem particularly useful for analyzing the data that result from adjective checklist responses or client narratives (Tunis, Fridhandler, & Horowitz, 1990; Hart, Stinson, Field, Ewert, & Horowitz, 1995).

The second method for self-concept assessment takes the longitudinal perspective on the self. Instead of schema, this long view deals with thema in the client's autobiographical story of development. Each life can be characterized by a pattern that connects the past, present, and future (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979). Accordingly, life-theme assessment analyzes an individual's autobiography to find this thread of continuity and then uses it to make sense of the past, explain the present, and draw a blueprint for the future. Counselors can use autobiographies (Annis, 1967; Mumford, Stokes, & Owens, 1990) and genograms (Okiishi, 1987) to gather information on a life. To identify patterns and projects in this biodata, counselors use a method called "extrapolation based on thematic analysis" (Super, 1954; Jepsen, 1994). Instead of focusing on self-concept dimensions, thematic-extrapolation concentrates on self-concept system metadimensions in discovering and understanding the meaning of life themes. Paradigms for thematic analysis of career autobiographies have been elaborated by Cochran (1990), Jepsen (1994), Neimeyer (1989), and Savickas (1989, 1995a, 1995b).

Data Integration and Narrative Interpretation

As a transition from assessment to counseling, the counselor integrates the assessment data and interprets it to the client. Depending on the counselor's style, this interpretation may take the traditional form, which presents results from each test separately, or it may take an integrated form, which blends the test results into a narrative (Crites, 1981). We prefer an integrative interpretation, which narrates the client's life story. The narrative uses dramatic form and metaphoric language to describe the client's career

concern and situate it in the context of the client's life space. Having described the predicament and setting, the narrative then portrays the protagonist, balancing how others see the client (vocational identity) and how the client views the self (occupational self-concept). The history leading the client to the current predicament is presented as yet another example of the client's life theme. Finally, the predicament is linked to the life theme in speculating about the client's possible futures, always including at least three alternative scenarios. In the first scenario, the client remains the same by doing nothing—making no decisions or adjustments. In the second scenario, the client follows his or her life theme and does what he or she has usually done in the past. The third scenario depicts the client actively mastering the tasks being encountered and anticipated and thus better implementing the self-concept. This third scenario concentrates on self-development by specifically delineating the new attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that would be useful to the client in handling the developmental tasks. How counseling can develop these useful attitudes, beliefs, and competencies is described in some detail so that the client can make an informed decision when invited by the counselor to collaborate in creating a better future for the client.

Discussion of the assessment results, whether in narratives or in traditional test interpretations, necessarily leads to counseling. At their best, assessment and counseling blend into and overlap each other. Excellent presentation of the appraisal work involves the client in reflecting on self-concepts and life themes, considering life roles and developmental tasks, and estimating interests, values, and talents. When the client is so involved, she or he develops some self-understanding and even self-acceptance; thus counseling has begun and assessment has merged with intervention.

Counseling Goals

Career development counseling is the process of helping individuals to (1) develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of

themselves and their life roles, (2) test this concept against reality, and (3) convert it into reality by making choices that implement the self-concept and lead to job success and satisfaction as well as benefit to society (Super, 1957). In general, career counseling seeks to advance the client's career so that he or she may experience self-fulfillment at work and contribute to the welfare of the community. In particular, career development counseling fosters occupational self-concept clarification and implementation along with handling the developmental tasks. It assists clients to clarify and accept the actual and the ideal self-concepts, develop harmony among the traits of the personality and life themes, and increase realism in assessing their own traits and the opportunity structure. Relative to handling the tasks, career development counseling uses procedures devised to assist clients to form the specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies required to master the tasks being encountered and anticipated.

Procedures

Counselors who seek to learn career development counseling procedures pertinent to various career development tasks need look no further than Healy's (1982) comprehensive treatise, which describes in detail numerous procedures, classified by career stage and evaluated with research evidence. Healy's idea of using life stages and developmental tasks to create a taxonomy of techniques has been adopted by other authors, such as Montross and Shinkman (1992), who organized eleven chapters about adult career counseling around the stages of Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Disengagement.

For illustrative purposes herein, one example of a counseling procedure is presented. Super devised the incorporation technique for applying self-concept theory to decision making. Using this procedure, counselors ask clients to rate themselves, from 1 to 7, on fifty adjectives and then rate, on the same fifty adjectives, their conceptions of two occupations that they are considering. The self-ratings state an occupational self-concept and the occupational ratings

represent the personal meaning of the occupation to the client. As an assessment method, the three sets of ratings can be analyzed individually for clarity, consistency, differentiation, and so on. As a counseling procedure, the client and counselor, working together, compute difference scores between the fifty pairs of rankings for self and occupation A and then do the same for self and occupation B. Adding the fifty difference ratings squared (to eliminate plus and minus signs) produces a number that indicates how well each occupation incorporates the client's occupational self-concept. With the counselor using nondirective responses, the client examines the meanings of the incorporation scores for occupation A and for occupation B. Such discussions often induce confident decisions, particularly among individuals who have narrowed their choices to two or three, those who have chosen an occupation yet still need to select a specialty in it (for example, clinical versus counseling psychology), and those who, having succeeded in one occupation, wish to change fields (for example, from accountant to high school business teacher).

A useful demonstration of the incorporation technique involves having students training to be school counselors rate self and then the occupations of teacher and of counselor during their first and their last course. Typically, the first administration shows that teacher better incorporates the self-concepts of most students whereas the second administration shows that counselor better incorporates their self-concepts. Those students who at final administration still conceptualize themselves more as teacher tend not to seek a counseling job; instead, they continue to work as teachers, using their new skills to do classroom guidance.

Processes

The process of counseling for career development may be as complex as career development itself, for development takes place in many contexts and may be fostered in each of these. The interview is the counselor's prime means of directly fostering growth and

exploratory experiences. During the interview, career development counselors promote development by using generic counseling processes (Stone, 1986) such as coaching, educating, facilitating, guiding, influencing, mentoring, modifying, organizing, planning, and restructuring. These counseling processes should be selected and applied systematically because some counseling processes work better than others in preparing clients to cope with different developmental tasks (Savickas, in press). For example, guidance may work better for crystallizing a group of vocational preferences to explore, whereas coaching may work better for implementing a job search.

Interviewing in the counselor's office also has as one of its functions the identification of homework assignments and experiences that will help the client to form new attitudes, beliefs, and competencies. These assignments or experiences can include consulting pamphlets and books, viewing filmstrips, interacting with a computerized guidance system, talking with school or college officials, getting members of occupations to discuss or demonstrate their work, taking an exploratory course or becoming active in an occupationally relevant club or association, "shadowing" someone at work, performing volunteer work, and getting a part-time or vacation job.

In conceptualizing the counseling process, Super (1947) recommended the cyclical use of directive and nondirective approaches. Counseling interviews may at times be directive and in effect provide confrontations with reality. They may be nondirective at other times and help the client to see the meaning or evaluate the results of these confrontations and their implications for action. For this reason, the term *cyclical counseling* seems appropriate. Super (1957, p. 308) described an example of cyclical counseling as follows: "(1) nondirective problem exploration and self-concept portrayal; (2) directive topic setting, for further exploration; (3) nondirective reflection and clarification of feeling for self-acceptance and insight; (4) directive exploration, for reality

testing, of factual data from tests, occupational pamphlets, extracurricular experiences, and grades; (5) nondirective exploration and working through of attitudes and feelings aroused by reality testing; and (6) nondirective consideration of possible lines of action, for help in decision making."

Cyclical counseling offers a practical way to balance attention to the objective and subjective dimensions of self and career. Some additional examples of blending the objective and subjective perspectives in career intervention are described by Crites (1981) for test interpretation, Kurtz (1978) for group counseling, and Savickas (1989) for individual counseling. Three recent chapters are recommended to students of career development counseling: Jepsen (1990) on recent advances in career development counseling, Phillips (1992) on counseling for choice and implementation, and Myers and Cairo (1992) on counseling for career adjustment. Counselors who seek examples of career development counseling may consult case studies that illustrate the approach (Crites, 1976; Jepsen, 1992; Jordaan, 1974; Niles & Usher, 1993; Savickas, 1988; and Super, 1983, 1990).

The Case of Joan

In this section, the C-DAC model is used to comprehend the case of Joan. In meeting Joan, a life-span, life-space counselor would listen carefully to her first statement and then, assuming that the whole is in every piece, concentrate on fully understanding the personal meaning of that initial statement (Super, 1954). Joan began the first session by stating, "I'm feeling *very, very* stuck in my life. I need to find some work I enjoy but I just feel paralyzed whenever I even try to think about options. I'm hoping that you have some ideas for me. Can you suggest some books or articles I could read?" Concentrating on the verbs to reveal her movement in life, one can recognize that Joan is "stuck," "paralyzed," "cannot even try," "hoping," and asking "can you suggest?" She modified the verb "stuck"

by repeating the adverb "very, very"; this suggests that she exaggerates her movements and views the work in either/or terms; the middle position is not for her. A counselor can use Joan's signature introduction to new situations as a focal point for recognizing her blueprint for life and her prototypical way of moving in new situations. In considering the assessment data, counselors should keep these verbs and adverbs in mind because they structure the data. When a counselor understands fully what Joan means by her initial statement, that counselor can help her. Now, let us clarify the meaning of the assessment data by entering it into the sequence recommended by the C-DAC model, beginning as usual with life structure.

Life Space

What we learn about Joan's life structure concerns us deeply. She currently engages in only a few roles and finds little satisfaction in any of them. At the moment, she is not an employee; when she is an employee, she is a very, very unhappy one. Joan *hopes* life will be more satisfying if she can find work that she enjoys and that provides financial security and health insurance. She will "never be satisfied with any secretarial job." When she works as a secretary or administrative assistant, she becomes "disengaged" and "alienated." Her most satisfying work was editing, because she liked the variety, her input was important, and the supervisor valued her contributions. She "yearns for something interesting," meaning something intellectual and aesthetic, not focused on details, procedures, and methods. She is not a student; the last time she was one, she felt tortured when listening to uninspired teachers.

The leisure role offers more rewards to the limited degree that she engages in it. For the past twenty years, Joan has enjoyed choral singing. She also does calligraphy and creates greeting cards. The aesthetics of singing and the arts seem to express part of herself not manifested at work (Super, 1940). The romantic role may be currently inactive, although she is flirting and hoping. She has had at

least two significant relationships with men in the past. Joan never mentions the role of friend.

Her current family roles are daughter and sister. She has never found much joy in the role of daughter because her parents are *very* bossy, judgmental, opinionated, cautious, and fearful. They feel compelled to control situations, as well as her. They try to make her think like them. Unfortunately, their routinized approach to life has not worked well for them; according to Joan, her mother and father have low self-esteem and lead unfulfilled lives. Joan remains angry at her parents for forcing her, before she could defend herself, to become like them. Their attitudes have delayed Joan's career development and pushed her toward a library career because it would be her "ticket to security." Joan views her role as an older sister as unrewarding because her sister is also *very* controlling, opinionated, and argumentative, not like a younger sister should be.

Joan's life structure, with its sparse connections to the community, imprisons her in a small social space that limits her ability to cooperate and contribute. The results from the Life Values Inventory indicate that, at the moment, only her leisure role as a choral singer provides Joan with satisfaction, mainly gratifying her desires for affiliation and creativity. Her life structure does allow some gratification for her life values of solitude and independence but in a painful and self-denying way—through isolation and alienation. Fundamentally, her life structure does not allow her to satisfy her pressing needs to belong, be accepted and liked, and be loved by someone. Her complementary needs for solitude and love, to be an "I" and a "we," require a synthesis that her rigid boundaries and overwhelming anxieties continually thwart.

Career Development Status and Resources

Both the interview and the Adult Career Concerns Inventory reveal that Joan has difficulty stabilizing in a job (or intimate relationship). When she has a job, Joan can handle the first task of establishment. She can assimilate the organizational culture because

she selects jobs in intellectual and aesthetic work environments such as libraries and universities. It is failure to cope adequately with position performance, the second task of establishment, that causes her to destabilize. It appears that Joan has repeatedly occupied incongruent positions that demand a conventional approach that she experiences as boring and alienating. After working for a short time in a new position, Joan's work habits and job attitudes deteriorate. Although she can do the job well, these attitudes and habits elicit critical comments from supervisors. In response, Joan becomes paralyzed and must quit.

Why cannot Joan establish herself? The apparent answer, and the one that she offers, involves incongruence between the positions and her vocational identity. First, she feels unwelcome and unappreciated, and then she begins to act like a misfit who isolates herself and eventually quits. The more profound answer, however, does not lie in Exploration-stage tasks (finding a congruent occupation); instead, the answer can be traced to the first task in the Growth stage, career concern. She describes herself as short-sighted, wanting immediate gratification, and barely surviving the present. Thus, Joan still must complete the task of developing the hope and future orientation that could provide a schema for her occupational daydreams and faith that dreams can come true (Savickas, 1991b). She exhibits some hope that counselors will help and that the mess will go away. Yet, her hope repeatedly becomes discouragement, depression, and shame because it is vacuous and disconnected from effort. She says that if things are not easy, she gives up. She has learned to be helpless. An aphorism that captures the essence of Joan's predicament is "*If* you can dream it, then you can do it." Joan must first learn to dream it, then to will it.

Career counseling with Joan should follow the developmental sequence of moving from hope to willpower (Wolf & Savickas, 1985). To foster such hope and career concern, Joan's counselor might decrease Joan's hesitant approach to life by using encouragement techniques (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1980) and increase her

future orientation and optimism about the achievability of goals (Savickas, 1991b). After strengthening Joan's sense of hope and career concern, counseling must then cultivate Joan's willpower and career control by helping her learn to make decisions, increase her self-efficacy, act more assertively, attribute her successes and failures to her own efforts, and forgive her family while becoming autonomous from them. Without this self-empowerment, Joan will remain "very, very stuck" and unable to implement the fragile yet clear vision of her vocational identity.

Vocational Identity

The results from interest assessments portray an objective and coherent picture of Joan's vocational identity, a portrait that corresponds perfectly with Joan's self-report. During the initial interview, Joan expressed interest in writing, editing, acting, and psychology and reported skill at organizing, communicating, and editing. She maintains an "enduring interest" in information gathering and can "track down the facts." On the Missouri Vocational Card Sort (MVCS), Joan again shows her pattern of being a "very, very" person by not using any neutral responses. Constructing a RIASEC code by assigning types to the dozen occupational titles that she liked produces a code of AES (Artistic, Enterprising, Social).

Joan's response pattern on the Strong Interest Inventory (SII) indicated, similar to her interview, that for the present she does not like herself or the world in which she lives. Joan was again "very" on the SII in never using the indifferent response for any of the 269 items to which she responded. She liked only artistic people among the twenty types of people described on the SII. She liked only 15 of the 135 occupations; they also fit the AES code and coalesced into writing-related occupations such as author of children's books, novelist, freelance writer, editor, illustrator, photographer, and cartoonist. Her remaining occupational preferences seem to reflect potential or actual hobbies such as acting, art, gardening, singing,

and dancing. Joan endorsed only two of the twenty-nine leisure activities listed on the SII, namely writing a one-act play and reading art and music magazines. Ten of her preferred occupational titles on the MVCS and SII appear under the AES code in the *Occupations Finder* (Holland, 1994).

From the objective data, we can conclude that Joan's personality type is internally consistent, her vocational preferences are highly differentiated, her occupational aspirations are very coherent, and she has a clear and stable vocational identity. The jobs she has liked congruently fit her personality; those she has disliked do not. Her major in English (AES according to the College Majors Finder [Rosen, Holmberg, & Holland, 1989]) corresponded to her AES personality, whereas library science (SEC) and detective (SER) do not fit her. If her father fits the ISR code for dentists, then he and Joan possess incongruent personalities.

Counselors consider scores of 40 or less on the SII personal style scales to be extreme. Joan again displayed her "very, very" self by scoring 41, 38, 22, and 30 on the four scales. She prefers a work style that involves ideas/data/things rather than people. Her preference for working alone may both cause and result from her unstable job history. Scores on the other three personal style scales reinforce the conclusion that Joan prefers solitude, short-term commitments, and playing it safe.

Comparing Joan's self-reported vocational identity to the inventory data reveals great similarity. The problem lies not in Joan recognizing her own vocational identity but in her cultivating the willpower, commitment, and competence to enact and sustain congruent occupational positions and intimate relationships.

Occupational Self-Concept and Life Themes

Joan portrays her occupational self-concept succinctly: "I'm terrified of failure and I'm terrified of success." Given this description, how can she move without first increasing hope and will? Joan captures her life theme of being trapped in her own anxiety with the

dramatic image of a little girl imprisoned in a big bamboo cage, guarded by a machine gunner.

Joan's life theme shows a recurring pattern of hoping/getting stuck/quitting. Her prototypical feeling is anxiety. Note how often in the first session Joan used words that express her anxiety: paralyzed, depressed, sitting and crying, stuck, terrified, trapped, confined, scared, and restricted. Counseling must help Joan change her pattern from hope/stuck/quit to hoping/willing/staying. The key transformation involves changing the "stuck" (imprisoned by anxiety) to "stay" (established with commitment).

Her self-constructed bamboo cage represents a wall of anxiety about becoming independent and taking control of her own life. Willpower comes in "cans." Joan hopes to, yet cannot. Nevertheless, Joan displays great courage in refusing to give up. She will try and try again, because she is a "very, very" person. She will even drag herself by her fingernails if survival requires it. She needs help turning this self-denying discipline into a self-affirming willpower. With her final statement, Joan guides the counselor in setting this development as the goal of counseling: I need to make my own choices and be a free agent. When I am, I will even be able to do work that is *very* tedious.

Transition from Assessment to Counseling

We now understand, deeply, Joan's opening statement. We share her world for a moment when we realize that she feels "very, very" stuck, anxious about even thinking about possible futures, dependent on the counselor, and more comfortable with bibliotherapy. If we put the story of the bamboo cage on a left pole and then put Joan's initial statement on a right pole, we can stretch a lifeline between the two. All Joan's stories hang coherently on this lifeline constructed of repeating strands of hope/stuck/quit.

From the assessment, the purpose of the bamboo cage seems clear. It protects and distracts her and even makes her feel in control. However, its origins need checking before counseling com-

mences. Her counselor might ask Joan what traumas she experienced to identify any external traumatic event that could have imprisoned her away from her own feelings and dreams. Hearing none, the counselor could then consider the possibility that Joan just never learned to deal with anxiety. To investigate this clinical hypothesis, the counselor could ask Joan, "When you were scared as a little girl, how did you take care of yourself?" We wonder if she imitates what her parents did. Her description of them resembles Joan's self-described situation. Moreover, Joan states that she has anger toward her parents for transmitting their fear of self-expression to her before she could defend herself. She truly has taken to heart their advice to "just stick with the family, stick with the way we do things"; no one could be more stuck than she.

The counselor may start the transition from assessment to counseling with a narrative that explains the assessment. A counselor might prepare Joan to hear and edit the narrative by saying, "Joan, you have built a bamboo cage around yourself to protect you from a frightening world. It gives you the security you need but the cost is too high. There are other ways to feel safe. Let's work together to turn the bamboo crate into a cart that carries you safely out into the world. I won't quit on you; please don't quit on me. I know that you were right when you said that if you can hold on long enough you will begin to feel better." A counselor could assist Joan to recognize how her occupational aspirations are solutions to problems in growing up, to daydream about the future, and to make plans to convert her aspirations to reality. The counselor could also offer to help Joan learn the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that she can use to take care of herself outside the walls of her bamboo prison.

Summary

The dynamic evolution of life-span, life-space theory has kept it innovative and relevant to practice and research more than forty years after its initial publication by Donald Super in 1953.

Substantive advances are clear. During the past decades, the life-space model has been elaborated by attention to life structure, role salience, and values. The life-span model has been refined and extended. Operational definitions of career maturity have been modified, and the model has been modified with them. Understanding of recycling through stages in a mini-cycle has been added as has the construct of and measures for career adaptability. Ideas about how to assess self-concepts have evolved as research has thrown light on their measurement, and knowledge of how applicable self-concept theory is to various subpopulations has been extended. Life-theme assessment and counseling have benefited from innovations prompted by constructivist thought and by the cognitive sciences. Today life-span, life-space theory stands as a sophisticated framework for comprehending the full complexity of vocational behavior and its development in diverse groups in manifold settings. Its translation into practice by the model for Career Development Assessment and Counseling effectively guides interventions that foster maximal development. In sum, the preeminent theory of career development continues to develop.

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