

Super, Donald Edwin (1910-1994), Vocational Psychologist. In 1950, Donald E. Super began a program of research that eventually expanded the domain of vocational psychology from a narrow focus on choosing occupations to a broad vista on developing careers. During the first half of the twentieth century, vocational psychologists concentrated on a "matching model" for vocational guidance that emphasized the use of interest inventories, ability tests, and occupational information to help adolescents and young adults make initial occupational choices. Super contributed significantly to this model for matching people to positions, and his first two books codified existing knowledge about vocational guidance (Dynamics of Occupational Adjustment, New York, 1942) and vocational assessment (Appraising Vocational Fitness, New York, 1949). Following the publication of these books, Super initiated a program of research that would, in due course, extend vocational psychology's purview from matching adolescents with occupations to developing careers over the life span. Super's most cited journal article, "A Theory of Vocational Development" (American Psychologist, 1953), presented the initial statement of his career theory. His definitive book on The Psychology of Careers (New York, 1957) more fully expounded the theory and offered empirical support for its ten propositions. The theory was tested and revised in a myriad of manuscripts and measures resulting from the Career Pattern Study (CPS) in which Super and his colleagues investigated the natural history of careers as they unfolded in the lives of 100 men over a period of 40 years. In all of this work, Super's singular insight involved using models and methods from developmental psychology to conceptualize and

empirically study the life course of careers through stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. Super linguistically explicated and operationally defined each career stage by its characteristic vocational development tasks and coping behaviors. He coined the term "career maturity" to denote individuals' attitudinal and cognitive readiness to master the developmental tasks of their life stage. The CPS staff devised numerous measures of career maturity still used by researchers and counselors. Most notably, Super and his colleagues constructed the Career Development Inventory to measure adolescents' attitudes toward exploring occupations and making plans as well as their competence in using occupational information to choose from among educational and vocational options. After his retirement in 1975 from Teachers College, Columbia University where he worked for 30 years, Super dedicated the next 15 years to expanding once again the purview of vocational psychology, this time from careers to life roles. To address life roles across the life span, Super constructed a heuristic model which portrays work as a salient but single arc in a rainbow of roles in the community, at home, and with friends. In collaboration with colleagues from twelve countries, Super developed a life-span, life-space framework that is currently used to research and develop careers of diverse individuals in manifold settings (Super & Sverko, Life roles, values, and career: International findings of the work importance study, San Francisco, 1995). For these accomplishments, and many more, the American Psychological Association presented Super with the 1983 Distinguished Scientific Award for Contributions to Applied Psychology. 499 words.

Bibliography

Savickas, M. L. (Ed.) (1994). From vocational guidance to career counseling: Essays to honor Donald E. Super. Career Development Quarterly, 43, (1).

Includes Super's biography, a complete list of his publications from 1932 to 1994, and eight articles about his contributions to psychology.

Super, D. E., (1983). Assessment in career guidance: Toward truly developmental counseling. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 61, 5-562.

Outlines Super's career counseling model and methods.

Super, D. E. (1985). Coming of age in Middletown: Careers in the making. American Psychologist, 40, 405-414.

Describes the Career Pattern Study.

Super, D. E., Savickas, M. L., & Super, C. M. (1996). The life-span, life-space approach to careers. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (eds.) Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice (3rd ed.) (pp. 121-178).

San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Explains Super's life-span, life-space theory.

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HYPERTEXT TERMS for entry: Super, Donald E. (1910-1994)

ability tests

applied psychology

careers

career counseling

career development

career maturity

Career Pattern Study

interest inventories

life roles

occupational information

Super, Donald Edwin (1910-1994)

Teachers College, Columbia University

The Psychology of Careers (Super, D. E., 1957; New York: Harper and Row)

values

vocational development

vocational guidance

vocational psychology

1957 The Psychology of Careers by Donald E. Super (New York: Harper and Row)