Encyclopedia of Counseling

VOLUME 4

Editor-in-Chief
Frederick T. L. Leong
Michigan State University

Senior Editor
W. Bruce Walsh
Ohio State University

Associate Editor
Paul J. Hartung
Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine

A SAGE Reference Publication
SAGE Publications
Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore

See also Career Advancement (v4); Career Barriers Inventory (v4); Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (v4); Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (v4); Career Indecision (v4); Career Intervention (v4); Career Thoughts Inventory (v4); Krumboltz Happenstance Learning Theory (v4); Social Cognitive Career Theory (v4)

Further Readings

Krumboltz, J. D. (1999). *Career Beliefs Inventory: Applications and technical guide*. Palo Alto, CA: CPP.

Levin, A. S., Krumboltz, J. D., & Krumboltz, B. L. (1995). *Exploring your career beliefs: A workbook for the Career Beliefs Inventory with techniques for integrating your Strong and MBTI results*. Palo Alto, CA: CPP.

Career Construction Theory

The global economy of the 21st century with its digitalization and worker migration poses new questions about career, especially the question of how individuals can negotiate a lifetime of job changes without losing their sense of self and social identity. Career construction theory responds to the needs of today's mobile workers who may feel fragmented and confused as they encounter the restructuring of occupations and transformation of the labor force. The theory's response asserts that individuals build their careers by imposing meaning on vocational behavior. From a constructionist viewpoint, career denotes a moving perspective that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by patterning them into a life theme. It is the meaning contained in these biographical themes that will equip individuals to adapt to the social changes that are playing out in their work lives. This personal meaning replaces the holding environment once provided by organizations that contained the task of self-integration as it cared for, protected, and interpreted experiences to its employees. Today, it is the life story that holds the individual together and provides a biographical bridge with which to cross from one job to the next job.

Using social constructionism as a metatheory, construction theory views careers from a contextual perspective that sees people as self-organizing, self-regulating, and self-defining. Relying on its social constructionist epistemology, the theory reconceptualizes both vocational personality types and vocational tasks. It interprets personality types as processes that have possibilities, not realities that predict the future. It views developmental tasks as social expectations. Career construction theory then uses the concept of life themes to weave together its conceptualizations of vocational personality and career adaptability into a comprehensive theory of both vocational behavior and career counseling. Stated succinctly, the theory holds that individuals construct their careers by using life themes to integrate the self-organization of personality and the self-extension of career adaptation into a self-defining whole that animates work, directs occupational choice, and shapes vocational adjustment.

Vocational Personality

Career construction theory defines vocational personality as the constellation of an individual's career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests. The theory discusses personality using the nomenclature and framework of Holland's RIASEC (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) types because it offers a widely used language for describing the personological results of an individual's efforts at self-organization of his or her skills, interests, and abilities. While adopting Holland's language to articulate accounts of personalities and occupations, career construction theory reminds counselors and researchers that the traits constituting RIASEC types are completely decontextualized and quite abstract. It is easy to forget that the traits, especially when denoted with nouns rather than verbs, are really just strategies for adapting. They are dynamic processes that present possibilities, and they should not be reified into realist tools for predicting the future.

Career-related abilities, interests, and values are relational phenomena that reflect socially constituted meanings and categories that should not be considered as anything more than similarities. Therefore, career construction theory asserts that vocational personality types and occupational interests are simply resemblances to socially constructed clusters of attitudes and skills. They have no reality or truth value outside themselves because they depend on the social constructions of time, place, and culture that support them. While vocational personality deals with this self-organization, the second component of career construction theory, namely career adaptability, deals with self-regulation and self-extension of personality into the social environment.

Career Adaptability

Career construction theory conceptualizes development as driven by adaptation to an environment and integration into the community. From this perspective, an occupation is a mechanism of social integration, one that offers a strategy for sustaining oneself in society. Careers are constructed by adaptive strategies that implement an individual's personality in an occupational role. This adaptation brings inner needs and outer opportunities into harmony, with the harmonics of a good fit amplifying in present activity the individual's past preoccupations and future aspirations. Adaptation involves adjusting to occupational changes that include mastering vocational development tasks, dealing with work traumas, and negotiating job transitions. Career construction theory views adaptation to these changes as fostered by five principal types of coping behaviors: orientation, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement. These constructive activities form a cycle of adaptation that is periodically repeated as the individual navigates new transitions.

Career adaptability denotes an individual's readiness and resources for handling current and anticipated tasks, transitions, and traumas in his or her occupational roles that to some degree large or small alter his or her social integration. The adaptability dimensions of readiness and resources shape self-extension into the social environment because they condition the actual coping behaviors that constitute orientation, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement. They function as self-regulation strategies that govern how individuals engage the developmental tasks imposed by the communities with whom they co-construct their careers.

In considering the dimensions of psychosocial adaptability, career construction theory highlights a set of specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies—the ABCs of career construction—that regulate the coping behaviors for implementing vocational self-concepts into occupational roles. The ABCs are grouped into four dimensions of adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. According to this scheme, the adaptive individual is conceptualized as (a) becoming concerned about the vocational future, (b) increasing control over that future, (c) displaying curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and (d) strengthening the confidence to pursue one's aspirations.

Life Themes

The self-organization of personality and it adaptive self-extension into the community produces a self-defining story. The essential meaning of career and the dynamics of its construction are revealed in these self-defining stories about the tasks, transitions, and traumas an individual has faced. Unlike the RIASEC types and adaptability dimensions, career stories fully contextualize the self in time, place, and role and express the uniqueness of an individual. Furthermore, the separate career stories told by an individual are unified by integrative themes that make whole the individual's complex and contradictory experiences by inscribing them with a meaningful coherence and long-term continuity. The theme does not summarize past experiences; rather, it inscribes them with a sense of purpose that provides meaningful coherence and long-term continuity.

Stories are accounts that constitute the self. People talk themselves into existence as they describe what they like and what they are like. From this perspective on the self, occupational preferences express self-conceptualizations in vocational terminology. Accordingly, entering an occupation is viewed as an attempt to implement a self-concept and the work itself manifests the self-concept, giving it substance and story. Thus work provides a context for human development and an important location in each individual's life, a place that matters.

In listening for the theme in career stories, counselors can become disoriented in the numerous particulars of a life. To prevent this confusion, career construction theory suggests that career practitioners and researchers concentrate on the motif, or controlling passion, that arranges the separate stories into a coherent whole. Arranging the actions and incidents randomly portrayed in career stories into a plot can be done in many ways. Career construction theory proposes for this purpose using the narrative paradigm to organize biographical thinking. This perspective for understanding a story and illuminating a life highlights the challenge of the client's life, one that he or she cannot ignore or go around. Career construction theory, applying its narrative paradigm, assumes that the archetypal theme of career construction involves using work to turn preoccupation into occupation, thereby resolving the challenge. Simply stated, careers are constructed as individuals, using adaptability coping strategies, turn their personal preoccupations into

public occupations. The researcher or counselor listens to the stories to learn how the individual has used work to turn a personal symptom into a public strength and then even into a social contribution. Using the narrative paradigm as a biographical organizer enables the listener to draw out the silk thread of a life theme from the cocoon of autobiographical stories.

Counseling for Career Construction

Counseling for career construction begins with an interview that poses a uniform set of questions to a client. The Career Style Interview elicits self-defining stories that enable counselors to identify and appreciate the thematic unity in a client's life. In addition to revealing the life theme that threads through the client's life, data from a Career Style Interview also manifest the client's vocational personality and substantiate adaptive strategies. Responding to the interview questions enables a client to hear his or her own story in community. The counselor helps clients to increase the narratability of their stories and to relate their life themes to the choices that they must now make. In discussing the alternative choices and how each one might advance the client's story, the counselor retells the story in a manner designed to increase the client's career adaptability, consider what is at stake, and identify occupations can be used to write the next chapter in their story. Reflecting on and retelling their stories encourage clients to understand how they can use work to become more whole and participate fully in a work role that matters to both them and their community.

Mark Lee Savickas

See also Career Counseling (v4); Career Counseling Process (v4); Career Style Interview (v4); Constructivist Career Counseling (v4); Constructivist Theory (v2); Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (v4); Meaning, Creation of (v2); Narrative Career Counseling (v4); Personality Assessment and Careers (v4); Super's Theory (v4)

Further Readings

Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (3rd ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

Savickas, M. L. (1989). Career-style assessment and counseling. In T. Sweeney (Ed.), *Adlerian counseling: A practical approach for a new decade* (3rd ed., pp. 289–320). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development Press.

Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In S. D. Brown & R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (pp. 42–70). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

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* (3rd ed., pp. 1211–178). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Career Counseling

Most entries in this encyclopedia provide detailed treatments of precise topics. This entry illuminates the relations among these topics. It summarizes the development of career counseling, the most widely used career counseling interventions, the typical settings in which career counseling occurs, important differences among clients who seek career counseling services, the focal issues examined in career counseling, and the career counseling process. The entries appearing in this encyclopedia describe these topics in greater detail.

Development of Career Counseling

The theoretical underpinnings of career counseling were first recorded around 360 B.C. when Plato observed in *The Republic* that different jobs require different types of workers for optimal performance. Today we regard this as obvious; the jobs of elementary school teacher, truck driver, opera singer, and accountant each require a different set of skills and interests.

Frank Parsons formalized this theory of the relation between people and jobs in the late 19th century. He wrote that effective career placement requires knowledge of the special talents of the worker, the requirements of various occupations, and the relations between these sets of knowledge. Over time Parsons' ideas have been codified into the person-environment fit model and trait and factor counseling. The overlapping disciplines of counseling psychology, vocational psychology, and career counseling emerged from this beginning.

Three crises, World War I and II and the Great Depression, helped shape career counseling. Prior to

JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR

The *Journal of Vocational Behavior* (*JVB*) publishes empirical, methodological, and theoretical articles that expand knowledge about vocational choice and work adjustment across the life span. Studies of vocational choice typically examine topics such as career choice; occupational interests; the relation of abilities, needs, values, interests, and personality to occupational aspirations and the career decision-making process; vocational development tasks and career stages; the effects of culture, demographic variables, and experiential factors on career decision making and occupational attainment; career indecision and vocational maturity; occupational stereotyping; and career exploration and job search. Studies of work adjustment typically investigate topics such as job performance and success; job satisfaction; mentoring; work adjustment; organizational commitment and job involvement; work–family relations and multiple role management; work–leisure relations; midlife career change; occupational reentry; and transitions from work to retirement. *JVB* also publishes articles about career interventions and conceptual articles that address career theory. Psychometric research is also represented, particularly manuscripts that report the construction and initial validation of new instruments, but also studies that evaluate the reliability and validity of widely used instruments that measure central concepts in vocational choice and work adjustment. Articles that report meta-analyses and research integration of the topics noted above are highlighted in the journal.

JVB's distinctiveness arises from its emphasis on publishing research that deals with vocational behavior from the perspective of the individual rather than the perspective of the organization. Studies of organizational behavior and of variables more highly related to the welfare of organizations than to the individual ordinarily do not appear in *JVB*. Thus, *JVB* does not publish research on organizational topics such as leadership or management. Intermittently, the journal publishes special issues that explore a single topic in-depth. Often these special issues relate to significant anniversaries in the field of vocational psychology such as the 40th anniversary of John L. Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments (August 1999) and the 30th anniversary of *JVB*'s founding (October 2001). Special issues are also used to highlight emerging perspectives and to assemble articles on a single topic. Recent special issues have addressed technology and careers, careers in academe, social constructionism, career specialty choice, and longitudinal studies of development in context. The list of most downloaded articles reflects strong interest in the topics of emotional intelligence, person–organizational fit, work–family relations, organizational commitment, mentoring, career success, and career decision making.

JVB was founded in 1971 by Samuel H. Osipow, then a professor of psychology at the Ohio State University who sought an outlet for research on vocational psychology. Osipow has been succeeded by Lenore W. Harmon, Nancy E. Betz, Howard E. A. Tinsley, and since 1999 Mark L. Savickas. *JVB* publishes 1200 pages each calendar year in the form of six issues divided equally into two volumes. Originally published by Academic Press, *JVB* is now published by Elsevier. Abstracts and the full-text of all articles published in volumes 1–70 are available on Science Direct.

Mark Lee Savickas

See also Career Development Quarterly (v4); Career Indecision (v4); Decision Making (v4); Journal of Career Assessment (v4); Journal of Career Development (v4); Society for Vocational Psychology (v4); Theory of Work Adjustment (v4)

Further Readings

Savickas, M. L. (2004). Vocational psychology. In C. Spielberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of applied psychology* (pp. 655–667). Boston: Elsevier Academic Press.

Savickas, M. L., & Baker, D. B. (2005). The history of vocational psychology: Antecedents, origin, and early development. In W. B. Walsh & M. L. Savickas (Eds.), *Handbook of vocational psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 15–50). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Web Site

Science Direct: http://www.sciencedirect.com

on the Strong, each of the Personal Style Scales is presented as a bipolar continuum and describes the individual's preference for one style versus another in comparison to a reference group of men and women combined. Scores are labeled as *clear* when they fall toward either polarity of the continuum, and as midrange when they fall toward the middle. Descriptors are provided at each end of each continuum providing examples of a preference for one style versus the other. For example, the first Personal Style Scale, Work Style, describes scores toward the left pole as, "Prefers working alone; enjoys data ideas or things; reserved," and scores toward the right pole as "Prefers working with people; enjoys helping others; outgoing."

Profile Summary

A summary page is provided on the last page of the profile. This page summarizes the individual's highest themes, top five specific interest areas, top 10 occupations, and each Personal Style Scale preference. The areas of least interest to the individual also are summarized here. The purpose of this page is to help the individual focus on common interest themes that are consistent throughout the profile.

Research and Practice

The Strong is one of the most extensively researched inventories available. The developers engaged in significant research to support the current edition, and numerous scholars have published a large body of literature to support the instrument throughout its history. The *Strong Interest Inventory Manual* provides detailed descriptions of the research that led to item selection, scale construction, reference sample collection, and scoring. Evidence for both the validity and reliability for each set of scales on the Strong is impressive and provides strong support for confident use of the Strong with a variety of client populations. Used appropriately, it serves as a dependable tool for helping clients make informed career, academic, and life decisions.

Jeffrey P. Prince

See also Campbell Interest and Skill Survey (v4); Career Counseling, History of (v4); Career Counseling in Schools (v4); Expressed, Manifest, Tested, and Inventoried Interests (v4); Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment (v4); Jackson Vocational Interest Inventory (v4); Person Matching (v4); Unisex Edition of the ACT Interest Inventory (v4)

Further Readings

Donnay, D. A. C., Morris, M. L., Schaubhut, N. A., & Thompson, R. C. (2005). *Strong Interest Inventory manual.* Mountain View, CA: CPP.

Grutter, J., & Hammer A. L. (2005). *Strong Interest Inventory user's guide.* Mountain View, CA: CPP.

Prince, J. P. (2007). *Strong Interest Inventory college edition user's guide.* Mountain View, CA: CPP.

Prince, J. P., & Heiser, L. J. (2000). *Essentials of Career Interest Assessment.* New York: Wiley.

Super, Donald Edwin (1910–1994)

There are two grand paradigms in vocational psychology. The first perspective for understanding vocational behavior concentrates on how individual differences in ability and interests relate to occupational requirements, routines, and reward. This paradigm, called the *matching model,* asserts that the goodness of fit between an individual's abilities and a job's requirements determines the worker's occupational success. Furthermore, the match between the individual's interests and the job's rewards determines the worker's job satisfaction. Workers who are successful and satisfied with their routines, in other words adjusted, remain in the job for long periods of time, thus achieving occupational stability. This paradigm lies at the heart of professional activities such as vocational guidance, personnel selection, and military classification.

In the 1940s, Donald Edwin Super made two major contributions to the matching model for understanding vocational behavior. In 1942 he published *The Dynamics of Vocational Adjustment,* which described his views on vocational guidance. In 1949 he published an encyclopedic tome, *Appraising Vocational Fitness by Means of Psychological Tests* that analyzed the data on the use of tests in vocational guidance and personnel selection. These two contributions secured his stature as a prominent vocational psychologist, and accordingly in 1949 he was promoted to the rank of professor of psychology and education at Teachers College, Columbia University where in 1940 he had earned

his Ph.D. under the sponsorship of Harry Dexter Kitson and where he worked from 1945 to 1975.

Following his promotion to the rank of professor, Super became more interested in theory construction than in the application of psychology to personnel selection and vocational guidance. A stinging critique of vocational psychology had been published in 1951 by Eli Ginzberg who in effect asserted that the discipline of occupational psychology had been operating without a theory. This critique ushered in the theory building era of vocational psychology during which John Lewis Holland in 1959 consolidated the voluminous research and reflection on the matching model into an elegant theory of vocational personality types and work environments. Super took a different tact. He turned his attention away from how individuals differ from each other in abilities and interest. Instead he concentrated on how an individual differs from himself or herself across time, that is, how individuals develop their careers.

The 1950s was a decade during which hierarchical corporations rose in urban centers of America. The bureaucratic structure of corporations created career paths along which individuals could grow in occupational responsibility and income. Career came to be viewed as the value accompanying bureaucratic form. Rather than remaining in one job for life, many individuals could envision progressing along a predictable sequence of positions. Super became the leading architect of vocational psychology's response to the new social arrangement of occupational lives into career patterns. He added a career development model to the longstanding occupational matching model. His developmental model of how a career progresses over the life cycle became the second major paradigm in vocational psychology, one that paired with Holland's theory, dominated the field of vocational psychology during the second half of the 20th century.

The first major statement of Super's career development model appeared as a 1953 article titled "A Theory of Vocational Development." This article published in the *American Psychologist* presented 10 propositions in what would become known as Super's theory of career development. The conclusions sketched in that article were elaborated in Super's celebrated 1957 textbook titled *The Psychology of Careers,* a title he purposefully selected to highlight the contrast with Anne Roe's 1956 book titled *The Psychology of Occupations.* Dedicated to Kitson, the 1957 book documented the conclusions that Super drew from his decade-long study of the careers.

One seminal contribution reported both in his 1953 article and in his 1957 book was a model of career as a sequence of stages. Super conceptualized careers as unfolding in an orderly sequence that begins with a growth stage (ages 4–13) during which an individual formulates a vocational self-concept and rehearses relevant abilities and interests. During the exploration stage (ages 14–25), these occupationally relevant traits are first crystallized during adolescence and then translated into a specific occupational choice that is tried on during early adulthood. After several years of trial and tentative moves, the individual stabilizes into an occupational position. During the establishment stage (ages 26–44), the individual first stabilizes in the position, then consolidates that position through productive and dependable work. If opportunities present themselves, the individual may advance to positions with more responsibility and income. At some point, advancement slows or even terminates, and the individual maintains the success and stature he or she has achieved. During the maintenance stage (46–65), the individual holds onto the position, hopefully by updating and innovating how it is done. The final stage in the sequence is called disengagement because the individual decelerates work activity and gradually turns responsibilities over to younger colleagues as he or she prepares for retirement and in due course begins retirement living.

Implicit in Super's stage model of career development lies the construct of maturity. Career maturity means possession of the readiness and resources needed to cope with the developmental tasks inherent in each career stage. Mastering these tasks, which can be viewed as social expectations, develops the individual and leads to increased success and satisfaction. Difficulties in adapting to these tasks result in failure and frustration. Super conducted a 30-year longitudinal investigation called the Career Pattern Study to examine how adolescents cope with the career development tasks of the exploration stage.

He conceptualized three tasks to linguistically explain the exploration stage. The first task was to crystallize general preferences for a group of occupations at a similar ability level and within similar fields of work. After broad exploration of these general preferences, the individual must select a few for in-depth exploration and finally specify an occupational choice that implements his or her self-concept in a work role. The third task of the exploration years is to convert that occupational choice into a reality by securing a position in the chosen occupation. The initial years in

the chosen occupation are considered a period of trial because the choice is still tentative until the individual decides to stabilize in a position. During the trial period individuals may drift between positions and even flounder in a job or two before stabilizing. This movement is preferable to stagnating, which means stabilizing in a poorly fitting position.

Progress through the tasks of crystallizing preferences, specifying a choice, and implementing that choice can be used to index an adolescent's career maturity. Super conceptualized maturation as dealing with age-appropriate tasks. He viewed career maturity as handling the tasks as well as one's peer group. To examine how well individuals handle the tasks, Super crafted a model of career maturity during adolescence. He operationally defined this model with an instrument known as the *Career Development Inventory*.

Super's model of career maturity, or career choice readiness, has five components. The fifth component is called realism and occurs later in adolescence or early in adulthood. Thus, he does not use realism in indexing the career maturity of adolescents. The other four dimensions of maturity are divided into two groups. The first two dimensions are attitudinal, and the second two dimensions are cognitive. Super viewed looking ahead and looking around as two critical coping behaviors. Therefore, he conceptualized attitudes toward planning for the future and toward exploring possible selves and occupational opportunities as the two key dimensions in his model of maturity. Knowing what choices need to be made and having explored self and occupations, the individual must apply the resulting fund of information in making life-shaping decisions. Accordingly, the two cognitive dimensions or competencies in the maturity model are information about occupations and skill at making decisions. Stated simply, the idea is that individuals who have planned ahead and explored possibilities have the information required to make a fitting decisions in choosing an occupation. Typical variations in the development of these attitudes and competencies lead to predictable problems including unrealism and undecidedness, whereas atypical deviations in their development lead to severe difficulties including apathy and indecisiveness.

Near the end of his own career, Super realized that the social organization of the work was radically shifting as the world began the age of globalization and digitalization. No longer can an individual expect to work 30 years for one employer, progressing along a predictable career path until it is time to draw a pension. Contemporary workers can expect to occupy 10 or more positions during their careers. Super addressed the decline of organizational careers by explaining that his model of career stages, with minimal modifications, fit the postindustrial career if it is viewed as a sequence of tasks through which individuals recycle as they move from organization to organization and from job to job. Thus, an individual at age 45 who, after working in a job for 10 years, loses that position to outsourcing then needs to recycle through the tasks—not stages—of growth in awareness of new opportunities, exploration of these possibilities, transition to a new position and stabilization in it, followed by a some period, say 5 to 7 years, of maintaining or managing that position before disengaging from it and recycling through the tasks once again.

Mark Lee Savickas

See also Adult Career Concerns Inventory (v4); Adult Development (v1); Aging (v1); Career Construction Theory (v4); Career Development Inventory (v4); Career Exploration (v4); Career/Life (v4); Career Maturity (v4); Career Maturity Inventory (v4); Crites, John O. (v4); Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (v4); Super's Theory (v4)

Further Readings

Savickas, M. L. (1994). Donald Edwin Super: The career of a planful explorer. *Career Development Quarterly, 43,* 4–24.

Savickas, M. L. (2001). A developmental perspective on vocational behavior: Career patterns, salience, and themes. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 1,* 49–57.

Super, D. E. (1996). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (pp. 197–261). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Super's Theory

Beginning with the first documented vocational counseling attempts of Frank Parsons in 1909, vocational counseling and research focused for nearly half a century on vocational choice—not on how or why one made a particular vocational decision, but rather on what that decision was. Donald Super's theory of