

Establishing a Career: Developmental Tasks and Coping Responses

JANET E. DIX

Western Reserve Psychological Associates, Inc.

AND

MARK L. SAVICKAS

Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine

The present study identified coping responses that effectively address the six developmental tasks in the career establishment stage. The critical incident technique was used to make explicit the tacit knowledge about task coping used by fifty workers who were successfully coping with the developmental tasks of the establishment stage. The workers were systematically selected to represent different phases in the establishment stage and diverse occupational fields and levels. The workers described the major coping behaviors that they used to deal with each of the six development tasks of the establishment stage. Personnel specialists identified and principal component analyses organized the pattern of coping responses pertinent to each of the developmental tasks. This information is useful in designing anticipatory guidance and psycho-educational programs for students about to face the school-to-work transition and for workers in different phases of establishing their careers. © 1995 Academic Press, Inc.

The present study identified specific coping behaviors that deal with developmental tasks of the establishment stage in a career. Although the developmental tasks of career establishment have been catalogued and studied since the early 1960s (Super, 1963), similar attention has not been devoted to investigating the coping responses that lead to mastery of these tasks. In theoretical terms, researchers have explicated only the first of the two dimensions of career adaptability as these pertain to the establishment stage tasks. This first dimension of career adaptability denotes the relation of an individual's degree of development in relation to chronological age. This dimension is assessed by comparing the developmental tasks that an individual is encoun-

Address reprint requests to Janet E. Dix, Ph.D., Western Reserve Psychological Associates, Inc., Pointe View Professional Park, 4833 Darrow Road, Suite 101, Stow, OH 44224.

tering to tasks that the individual is expected to be dealing with based on chronological age. In contrast to this first dimension of development, which concentrates on developmental tasks, the second dimension concentrates on coping responses. This rarely studied dimension denotes the behaviors instrumental to satisfactorily responding to the developmental tasks. The appraisal of this dimension consists of comparing an individual's methods for coping with a task to the typical behaviors of a group coping with that same task.

A complete understanding of career development during the establishment stage requires knowledge about both the task and the response dimensions. Before theoreticians and researchers can concentrate on individual differences in how people adapt to establishment stage tasks, they must first identify and then classify the typical coping responses that address these developmental tasks. If the coping responses can be organized into a coherent taxonomy, it may be possible to empirically determine the attitudes and competencies that structure the effective coping responses. These attitudes and competencies could then be incorporated into a structural model of establishment stage coping responses similar to the one that Super (1974) constructed to model the structure of exploration stage coping responses.

To identify and define coping responses that address establishment stage tasks, the present study made explicit the tacit knowledge of individuals who were successfully mastering those tasks. Tacit knowledge, which is acquired in the absence of direct instruction, relates well to real-world performance, job competence, and career success (Wagner, 1986). According to Wagner and Sternberg (1985), in real-world domains experts differ from novices in having acquired domain-specific tacit knowledge and this tacit knowledge explains the expert's better performance in that domain. Career development is a domain with its own specific tacit knowledge. Thus, the present study elicited and organized tacit knowledge about mastering the establishment stage from workers who were expertly coping with the developmental tasks that characterize the establishment stage of a career.

The establishment stage of a career consists of three periods and six developmental tasks. Super (1963) conceptualized the establishment stage as including the periods of stabilization, consolidation, and advancement. Crites (1982) further defined these periods by linguistically explicating two major vocational developmental tasks that characterize each period. During the stabilization period, a worker must adapt to the organizational culture and achieve a satisfactory level of position performance. After stabilizing in a position, the worker then spends the next period consolidating that position by relating effectively to co-workers and by maintaining productive work habits. Crites conceptualized the twin developmental tasks of the advancement period as moving toward the next promotion within the current organization and planning future career moves, including reflection about changing organizations or fields.

Early in the process of studying the establishment stage tasks, Crites (1976)

recognized the need to conduct investigations to identify and define the specific coping responses that lead to task mastery. In the first systematic study of coping responses, Super, Kowalski, and Gotkin (1967, p. 1–8) defined coping responses as “actions taken by people in dealing with developmental tasks which have direct vocational implications or which are clearly vocational in nature.” In the Career Pattern Study, Super and his colleagues (1967) identified five types of exploration stage coping responses: floundering, trial, instrumentation, establishment, and stagnation. They counted the number of behaviors in each coping response category to measure career development. Coping behaviors were defined as those that moved the individual between two positions or actions that might eventually produce movement. This first study of establishment stage coping responses defined coping responses as the outcomes that they produced. For example, the coping response of stagnation is really the outcome of ineffective coping behaviors rather than actual instrumental behaviors. Future work, such as the present study, must concentrate attention on the actual behaviors and not equate adaptation outcomes with the responses that produced these outcomes. If the present study can identify coping responses, this information may eventually lead to a structural model of career adaptability for the establishment stage as well as produce practical knowledge for use in career interventions.

METHODS

Participants

The 50 participants for the present study varied in work experience and in education. They had a mean age of 37 years (median = 38; mode = 43) and had been in their current positions for a mean of 5.5 years (median = 4 years; mode = 1 year). Thirty percent had high school graduation or some college as their highest level of education. Another 26% had a bachelors degree. An additional 22% had a masters degree and 22% had a professional terminal degree. With regard to marital status, 78% were married, 18% were single, and 4% were divorced.

Creating a participant pool. For participation in the present study, we sought successful employees who showed high practical intelligence in dealing with the tasks of career establishment. The participants were identified and selected using two steps. First we created a participant pool by collecting nominations from supervisors. Because we did not want to focus on coping responses used to succeed in a particular occupation or specific organization, letters that asked supervisors to nominate participants were widely distributed to business and education leaders throughout a community in northeast Ohio.

The letters asked supervisors to nominate male workers between the ages of 25 and 45 who were expertly coping with career establishment tasks. Only males were studied because males and females appear to differ in the process, not content, of mastering career development tasks (Hackett, Betz, & Doty,

1985; Horgan & Simeon, 1990; Roberts & Newton, 1987). Moreover, many females seem to face the traditional career tasks plus additional tasks related to managing a home and family. We plan to study the coping responses used by females. The age range from 25 to 45 years was specified because theorists typically use these two chronological ages to demarcate the establishment stage. Supervisors used the following six descriptions to identify an employee who was mastering career establishment tasks: (a) adjusts to and fits into the organization, (b) performs job satisfactorily, (c) exhibits good work habits and job attitudes, (d) gets along well with co-workers, (e) knows how to advance in the organization, and (f) has definite career plans.

The letters resulted in supervisors nominating 200 individuals who, in turn, served as the participant pool for the present study.

Selecting participants from the pool. Despite occupation-specific demands and novel, non-maturational problems that people confront, career development tasks appear to be generally similar across occupational fields and levels, and in most organizations (Super & Kidd, 1979, Super & Knasel, 1981). Nevertheless, we sought participants from diverse occupational fields and levels and organizations because occupational field or organizational culture may make certain kinds of specific content relevant to some persons but irrelevant to others. To assure occupational diversity, we used the eight fields and six levels in Roe's (1956, p. 151) occupational classification schema to guide selection of 50 participants from the 200 nominees. The study included ten participants from each of five ability levels in the schema: (a) professional and managerial I, (b) professional and managerial II, (c) semi-professional, (d) skilled, and (e) semi-skilled. The number of participants from each of the eight fields was organization (11), service (8), business contact (8), general cultural (8), technology (5), outdoor (4), arts and entertainment (4), and science (2). Also, at least one African-American participant was included at each of the five ability levels. Overall, 44 participants were White and 6 were Black. This balance was built into the study to reflect the 12% African-American population in the community where the study was conducted.

Data Collection Procedures

The 50 participants who were selected for inclusion in the study were each telephoned and asked to volunteer one hour for an interview. Everyone agreed to participate without prompting or promise of any stipend or reward. Judging from the results of the study, this 100% participation rate might be attributed to the fact that these successful individuals believed in extending themselves to other people and in promoting open communication. Informed consent procedures were followed as were procedures to protect the anonymity of the participants. During a 6-week period, the first author conducted and audio-taped the interviews, which took from 60 to 90 min each.

Structured interviews. The interviews followed the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954), to identify the behaviors that the interviewees used

or were using to cope with the six establishment tasks. The interviewer began by asking about name, age, place of employment, occupation, position title, job description and responsibilities, length of time in current position, and prior positions. Polanyi (1966) explained that through the proper line of questioning an individual is able to make tacit knowledge explicit. In inquiring about coping behaviors for each of the six developmental tasks, the interviewer did three things to help the participant express his tacit knowledge. First, she explained a developmental task using Crites' (1982, p. 20) definitions. Second, she asked the participant: "What was the most important thing that you did in terms of (specific developmental task) which helped you become successful?" If clarification was needed or the participant offered two or more exemplars, the interviewer asked the participant to share his best piece of advice regarding how to deal with that task. In this manner, only one response was recorded for each task from each respondent. And third, if a coping behavior seemed vague, the interviewer asked the participant to describe an example from his everyday work life.

Data Analysis Procedures

Preliminary analyses. Flanagan (1954) noted that the card sort process is a crucial step in the critical incident technique for it requires "insight, experience, and judgment" (p. 344). The process is more subjective than objective and no simple rules are available to guide the sorting process. Instead of the typical procedure of having a small group of judges sort the incidents together, we used a large number of expert judges (15) to attain thorough and comprehensive sorting. We then submitted the subjective sortings of the individual experts to the statistical technique of latent partition analysis to achieve an intersubjective consensus that, we believe, more closely approximates an "objective" sorting.

To prepare for this sorting process, participants' coping behaviors were typed on separate index cards and then arranged in six sets corresponding to the six developmental tasks. Each set contained 50 cards, one for each participant's coping behavior for that task.

Fifteen expert judges were recruited from regional businesses and universities. The seven male judges and eight female judges were specialists in personnel work. All of the judges were proficient in the training, assessment, and management of employees. Nine were managers in personnel or human resources departments, one was a company president, two were professors, two were executive search consultants, and one was an organizational consultant.

We met individually with each judge to explain the study, the nature of the card sort and labeling process, and to demonstrate the process to assure that each expert judge understood the task. The judges were instructed as follows.

- (1) Your task is to work on one set of cards at a time, for example, Set A: Organizational Adaptability. Read the fifty responses in that set and sort them into mutually exclusive groups or categories based on job-related skill behaviors. Use your judgment in regard to which behaviors or strategies appear to cluster together. No limits exist on the number and/or type of categories you wish to create. You could virtually have one group of 50 cards or 50 groups with one response each based on your perception of how they cluster together.
- (2) After your initial card sort, I would like you to re-examine your categories and refine them to assure that all your groupings are homogeneous.
- (3) Then, I want you to name or title each category or cluster. Please clip each group together.
- (4) Repeat the process with the remaining sets of cards.

Following these instructions, the six sets of cards were each sorted by 15 expert judges who organized the coping behaviors on the cards into primary categories or types of coping responses. Working independently and on one set of cards at a time, the judges sorted the cards into mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive categories. They used as many coping response categories as they deemed necessary. After sorting a set, they re-examined their coping response categories and refined them to assure the homogeneity of all the coping behaviors in each coping response category. Finally, they titled each category of coping responses.

Main analyses. The data produced by the judges was submitted to latent partition analysis (Wiley, 1967). For each set of 50 coping behaviors, this statistical technique revealed the latent categories which structured the 15 groups of manifest categories produced independently by the 15 judges. The first step in the analysis was to create a matrix of proportions of joint occurrence for all possible pairs of the 50 behaviors for each group. The elements of the 50-by-50 matrices represented the percentage of the 15 judges who put a particular pair of coping behaviors together in one category. Principal components analysis extracted a single set of latent categories from each correlation matrix.

Although principal components analysis is a statistical technique, its application can be ambiguous when determining the number of components that will compose the single set of latent categories for each of the six matrices. We used discontinuity and parallel analysis in tandem to decide the number of components retained (Coovert & McNelis, 1988). Discontinuity analysis examines the slopes of the lines that connect each pair of graphed eigenvalues to objectively identify points of discontinuity (if more than one are present) and then parallel analysis solves the regression equation for each random eigenvalue and compares it with the obtained eigenvalue to compute the critical point of discontinuity and thereby identify the number of components to retain.

The components were rotated to simple structure using varimax criteria. The item correlations with the rotated components were treated as latent category membership coefficients. To be retained in a component, an item

had to correlate at least .30 with the component and have the highest correlation with that component. The components, or latent categories, were each named by examining the titles of the judges' manifest categories for each item that loaded on that component. The component titles denote the coping responses that the 50 successful employees used to deal with an establishment task. This procedure was repeated for each of the six developmental tasks.

RESULTS

The results for each of the six career establishment tasks will be presented in turn.

Organizational Adaptability

The 15 judges used from 4 to 16 categories (mean = 9.0; $SD = 3.6$) to sort the 50 coping behaviors. Principal components analysis of the judges' categories extracted 14 components with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 75.7% of the variance. Discontinuity and parallel analyses led to retention of eight components, accounting for 60.5% of the variance. Table 1 lists the title assigned to the coping response represented by each component, the number of items included in the component, the percent of variance explained by the component, and three representative behaviors that characterized the coping response.

The first task of the establishment stage requires that individuals adapt to the organization's culture. Eight coping responses addressed this task (see Table 1). To adapt, the participants established themselves as team players, acquired job knowledge and expertise, and learned about the informal procedures used in the organization. The respondents made quality contacts with people to earn their trust and respect, and attempted to learn from experts such as a mentor, father, supervisor, teacher, and predecessor. As a result of the ensuing relationships, the participants increased their own visibility in the organization. Even the most reserved participants actively sought contacts with and learned from senior co-workers. Respondents also focused on the big picture as a means for better fitting into the organization, and they were willing to change self to fit into the organization. Based on astute observation of the organization's needs, and an assessment of their own styles, the participants made personal changes without feeling a sense of loss or resentment. One participant explained that "The organization does not need me. I want to be here." The seventh coping response involved a willingness to do any task to get the job done. The participants, ranging from a custodian to a company president, did whatever seemed necessary to complete a task or achieve an end. Finally, participants attempted to establish credibility with others by proving their own competence.

Position Performance

The 15 judges used from 3 to 11 categories (mean = 7.06; $SD = 2.71$) to sort the 50 coping behaviors. Principal components analysis of the categories

TABLE 1
Components/Coping Responses, Number of Items, Percent Variance Explained,
and Sample Behaviors

Coping response	No. of items	Explained variance (%)	Sample behaviors
Developmental task: Organizational adaptability			
Establish self as a team player.	9	18.3%	-deemphasize formal titles -do not rock the boat -try to be on the same wavelength
Acquire job expertise.	6	12.5%	-be on top of everything -increase job knowledge -learn from mistakes
Make quality contacts with people.	7	6.4%	-make quality contacts with people -earn trust and respect -be honest, flexible, cooperative
Learn from experts.	8	5.9%	-query experts -listen to advice -learn from experienced subordinates
Focus on the big picture.	5	4.8%	-avoid getting bogged down in details -develop a global outlook -take a broad perspective
Change self to fit the organization.	5	4.5%	-learn to be diplomatic -fit prevailing norms -dress appropriately
Do small tasks that help get the job done.	6	4.1%	-no task beneath dignity -volunteer to help achieve a goal -avoid saying "That is not my job."
Establish credibility with others.	4	4.0%	-take responsibility -reliably follow through on tasks -prove competence
Developmental task: Position performance			
Establish high internal standards.	23	34.3%	-impose high standards for own performance -personal standards exceed the norm -strive to meet and maintain standards
Set measurable goals.	12	12.2%	-plan ahead by setting goals -goals are specific and measurable -keep a "scorecard" on how you do
Seek feedback from multiple sources.	13	9.4%	-get feedback from those above and below -solicit feedback from peers -do frequent self-evaluations
Developmental task: Work habits and attitudes			
Be organized.	11	19.9%	-leave little to chance -use specific methods to be organized -use time-management techniques
Work hard.	12	12.6%	-believe in hard work\be persistent -work long hours as needed -do not avoid unpleasant tasks

TABLE 1—Continued

Coping response	No. of items	Explained variance (%)	Sample behaviors
Be early.	6	8.9%	-prepare the night before and arrive early -complete assignments ahead of schedule -do not procrastinate
Promote open communications.	4	6.9%	-be candid -extend self to others -keep work moving forward
Work quickly and intensely.	5	6%	-accomplish things quickly -have a fast turn around time -use early hours productively
Experience pleasure from work.	6	4.6%	-enjoy working hard -do exciting tasks -have fun at work
Strive to perfect skills.	5	4.3%	-master job tasks -continually improve -take responsibilities seriously
Developmental task: Co-worker relations			
Take time to listen.	8	22%	-listen more than you talk -attend to co-workers' needs -focus on non-verbal communications
Respect co-workers as people.	13	12.9%	-treat people fairly and equally -get to know co-workers at personal level -be nonjudgmental and concentrate on good
Mind to the needs of others.	14	7.4%	-find ways to tune into other people -apologize for mistakes -avoid being offensive or overbearing
Enjoy people.	7	4.7%	-enjoy people -be friendly -like co-workers
Acknowledge strengths and efforts of others.	5	4.6%	-compliment co-workers -focus on work behaviors not personalities -encourage other people
Developmental task: Advancement			
Keep current in field.	24	30.2%	-learn about new developments -read books and take continuing education -set annual goals for self-development
Network with colleagues.	9	11.6%	-active in committees and leadership roles -network with colleagues in other firms -talk with those who have been promoted
Seek new challenges on the job.	14	10.1%	-devise different ways of doing same thing -volunteer for new projects -take calculated risks

TABLE 1—*Continued*

Coping response	No. of items	Explained variance (%)	Sample behaviors
Developmental task: Career choice and plans			
Set specific career goals.	18	25.5%	-orient self to the future -map out a clear career path -set a time line for goal attainment
Maximize current rewards.	9	14.4%	-be excited about current position -see new opportunities in current position -envision future in current position
Formulate plans.	8	8.6%	-take time before moving to new position -when at crossroads do not act impulsively -consider moving to new organizations
Strategize to achieve goals.	6	5.8%	-intertwine personal and company goals -grow with company -form strategy to attain long-term goals
Explore options.	10	5.2%	-consider new occupations within field -investigate new fields -reflect on your role in society

extracted 9 factors with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 77.9% of the variance. Further analyses led to retention of three factors, accounting for 55.9% of the variance (see Table 1).

The second establishment stage task requires that individuals adequately perform the duties and tasks of the occupational position. Three coping responses addressed this task. The most widely used coping response for achieving and maintaining position performance involved establishing, meeting, and maintaining high internal standards. The second response involved setting measurable goals for both the intermediate and distant future. The third response involved evaluating one's own performance by seeking multiple levels of feedback from co-workers who occupied positions above, below, and equal to their own. Three coping behaviors that focused on personal satisfaction did not fit into the three coping response patterns. It seemed that if these participants met their personal standards, they were satisfied regardless of what anyone else thought. They did things that "felt right." These responses may reflect the creativity required in their occupational positions in that one was a chef and one was a hairdresser. The third was a business manager who liked to make changes that "felt right."

Work Habits and Attitudes

The 15 judges used from 5 to 20 categories (mean = 10.8; *SD* = 4.98) to sort the 50 coping behaviors. Principal components analysis of their responses extracted 11 factors with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 74%

of the variance. Further analyses led to retention of seven components which accounted for 63.3% of the variance (see Table 1).

The third establishment stage task requires that individuals consistently exhibit good work habits and positive job attitudes. Seven coping responses addressed this task. The most widely used coping response involved being well organized. The participants seemed to leave little to chance and used specific methods for keeping things in order so they always knew what needed to be done and when. Respondents also were motivated to be early. The participants prepared the night before, came to work early, and completed their assignments ahead of schedule. The fourth coping response involved promoting open communications because it helps information flow, eases decision making, and keeps work moving forward. The respondents reported working quickly and intensely, and working hard while still having a good time. One participant stated that "About half the things I do because I have to and the other half I do because they are exciting." The seventh coping response involved striving to perfect skills. The participants who emphasized this response had chosen jobs in which their lives or the lives of others were at stake (e.g., police officer, firefighter, school bus mechanic). Thus, they felt a deep sense of responsibility to master and continually improve their job skills. One coping behavior did not fit into the seven coping response patterns: "I don't bring my problems to work. I don't worry about anything when I am at work."

Co-worker Relations

The 15 judges used from 4 to 19 categories (mean = 9.37; $SD = 4.98$) to sort the 50 coping behaviors. Principal components analysis of the categories extracted 13 principal components with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 74% of the variance. Further analyses led to retention of five components, accounting for 51.6% of the variance (see Table 1).

The fourth establishment stage task requires that individuals maintain good interpersonal relationships with co-workers. Five coping responses addressed this task: (a) maintaining co-worker relationships by taking time to listen, attending to their needs, and caring for them; (b) exhibiting true respect for their co-workers as individuals and as human beings; (c) sensitivity to the needs of others; (d) enjoying being around their co-workers; and (e) acknowledging the strengths and efforts of others. Some participants kept co-workers at arms length because of their own personality, value system, position, or priorities. Rather than demonstrating sensitivity to the needs of others, these participants recognized co-workers' contributions with compliments, participatory management, and encouragement. Three coping behaviors did not fit into the five coping response patterns: compromise, be honest, and do not confront people.

Advancement

The 15 judges used from 3 to 19 categories (mean = 8.6; $SD = 4.07$) to sort the 50 coping behaviors. Principal components analysis of the categories

extracted 11 factors with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 77% of the variance. Further analyses led to retention of three components, accounting for 51.9% of the variance (Table 1).

The fifth establishment stage task requires that individuals strive to advance along a career path in their organization. Three coping responses addressed this task: (a) maintaining their expertise and keeping abreast of new developments in their fields; (b) making key contacts through networking; and (c) seeking new challenges on the job. The participants kept active on committees and in leadership positions for local, state, and national organizations. They also gave speeches to the public. Three coping behaviors did not fit into the three coping response patterns. These behaviors seemed to reflect "no plans" because the participants had reached a plateau in their current organizations. They sought personal development through outside interests such as pursuing a degree in another field, managing rental properties, and moving into supervision.

Career Choice and Plans

The 15 judges used from 3 to 12 categories (mean = 7.06; $SD = 2.88$) to sort the 50 coping behaviors. Principal components analysis of the categories extracted 12 factors with eigenvalues greater than unity, accounting for 78.8% of the variance. Further analyses led to retention of five components, accounting for 59.6% of the variance (Table 1).

The sixth establishment stage task requires that individuals look toward the future and set long-term career goals. Five coping responses addressed this task. Unlike the previous sets of coping responses, several of the behaviors were incompatible with each other. For example, some participants were planning to remain in their current positions until retirement while others were changing positions soon. The most widely used coping response involved setting specific career goals for the future. In contrast, the second coping response involved staying put. Some participants continued to be excited by their current position or organization and did not plan to leave it. They talked about their jobs as they would about a good marriage. They envisioned endless opportunities within the same basic position and planned to grow along with the company until retirement. Some of these participants were ready for the maintenance stage of career development. The third coping response involved crystallizing career goals or formulating plans. These participants were now at a crossroads. They were satisfied with their occupational field and were being offered promotions in their organizations. Despite this success, they felt a need to move on but they were uncertain about where to go. Their career goals were indefinite so they were taking their time before making a move. The fourth coping response involved strategizing to achieve long-term organizational goals rather than focusing on personal goals. These participants intertwined personal and organizational plans. They wanted to move the organization to the next rung, and in turn, they also would move up a rung. They

felt no need for promotion or new jobs. The fifth coping response involved exploring options for changing fields. These participants were successful and, to an extent, satisfied. Nevertheless, they wanted to change occupations, perhaps even into unrelated fields, for a number of reasons. They wanted to move in the near future and were currently exploring options. These participants were not yet satisfied with their roles in society.

DISCUSSION

The critical incident technique used in this study to elicit tacit knowledge identified six sets of effective instrumental behaviors used by workers who were successfully dealing with the vocational development tasks of the establishment stage. The expert judges and the data-analytic techniques organized these task behaviors into coherent and credible patterns of coping responses. The coping responses identified in the present study seem to be efficient, practical, and ubiquitous means of mastering the establishment stage tasks.

The 31 coping responses identified in the present study, although coherent and credible, may not necessarily be comprehensive. Further research on males may identify additional coping responses that effectively address establishment stage tasks. Certainly the planned investigation of females coping responses for establishment stage tasks should reveal important lacunas in the initial taxonomy of coping responses. Furthermore, the taxonomy should be expanded by research that investigates the additional tasks and unique responses required of groups who encounter additional barriers to career establishment due to their gender, race, class, or sexual orientation (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Hackett, Betz, & Doty, 1985).

The results of the present study show that the coping dimension of career adaptability can be characterized by instrumental behaviors that conform to a developmental continuum. The results do not address the question of whether these coping responses can be distilled into a structural model of career adaptability for the establishment stage. An examination of the 31 coping responses does suggest, however, that common denominators can be abstracted into a small group of attitudes and competencies that might be organized into a structure that models the coping response dimension of adaptability for the establishment stage.

Eventually, it will become important to merge the results of the present study and related research on establishment stage developmental tasks and coping responses with the research on work adjustment and occupational stress. The adjustment and stress literature also deals with coping responses, but the coping responses in this domain address adjustment rather than development. The line of research that concentrates on coping for adjustment has emphasized problems that arise in the workplace, presumably from failure to master career development tasks. For instance, adjustment research deals with how to handle interpersonal problems that arise rather than how to act to avoid problems by mastering the co-worker relations task. Three examples

of adjustment research illustrate this point. Crites (1982) distinguished among three general types of coping responses that deal with thwarting conditions in the workplace: integrative, adjustive, and maladjustive responses. Osipow and Spokane (1984), identified four categories of responses for coping with occupational strain: recreation, self-care, social support, and cognitive coping. Menaghan and Merves (1984) identified three responses for coping with problems at work: optimistic comparison, selective attention, and restricted expectations. Eventually, the investigation of the career establishment stage will need to meld the literature on coping responses to comprehensively address responses that foster career development, improve work adjustment, and reduce job strain.

Fortunately, practitioners do not have to await future research results to consider the practical applications of the findings in the present study. Apparently, the same set of developmental tasks and coping responses can be used in fostering the career development of workers in positions across the full range of an organization, from semi-skilled through president. This feature of the results allows counselors to use the list of coping responses along with the behavioral examples for designing anticipatory guidance interventions with students who face the school-to-work transition and with workers who are encountering problems in establishing themselves in occupational positions. Converting the tacit knowledge of workers who are mastering the developmental tasks of establishing themselves in the world-of-work into worksheets and lesson plans for deliberate career education may prove to be a particularly effective intervention.

One of the ideas that guided the design of the present study concerned the intervention of mentoring or career coaching. It is widely believed that individuals who have a mentor are more successful in negotiating the tasks of career establishment (Gray & Gray, 1986). Mentoring and career coaching may be a venue for the transmission from mentors to proteges of tacit knowledge about coping (Horgan & Simeon, 1990). Future research can investigate the relation of the coping responses identified in the present study to the content of the dialogue between mentors and proteges. If coping responses are indeed the main content about which mentors and proteges communicate, then this line of research could produce computer-assisted simulations of the content, not relationship, dimension of the mentor-protege interaction.

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