

Relationships Between Career and Psychosocial Development  
During Early Adolescence

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### During Early Adolescence

The career development of adolescents has traditionally been studied by investigating their occupational aspirations, decision-making processes, and coping with a predictable sequence of educational and vocational tasks. This research has produced an empirical literature that addresses circumscribed issues such as the assessment of occupational interests, difficulties in choosing a major or occupation, and readiness to make educational and vocational decisions. Unfortunately, vocational psychologists have paid minimal attention to the literature in developmental psychology. For example, the leading theory of vocational interests (Holland, 1985) does not include a developmental perspective, relying primarily on the perspectives provided by the psychology of individual differences and models of person-environment fit. The leading theory of career development (Super, 1990; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) starts to conceptualize developmental processes during adolescence, beginning to chart developmental trends at about age 14. Nevertheless, prompted by works such as Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1988), there is an emerging realization among vocational psychologists that adolescent careers develop conjointly with other dimensions of development and, as such, career development must be studied in relation to other major dimensions of development.

Initial work linking career and psychosocial development has focused upon the construct of identity, building on Super's contention that occupational choice expresses a self-concept. Holland,

Gottfredson, and Power (1980) proposed that researchers use Erikson's (1959) formulation of the identity construct to examine the relation between vocational behavior and personality. To facilitate such research they linguistically explicated and operationally defined a new construct--vocational identity. They described vocational identity as "the possession of a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, and talents" (Holland, Gottfredson, & Power, 1980, p. 191). and devised an 18-item, self-report scale (Vocational Identity Scale) to measure vocational identity (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980). A substantial literature using the Vocational Identity Scale, and other similar measures, clearly shows strong links between vocational identity and traditional career variables such as career maturity and decidedness about college major and preferred occupation. This literature has been interpreted to indicate that occupational choice certainty is a major component of psychosocial identity. Conversely, adolescents who are undecided or indecisive about their careers probably have not yet crystallized an identity.

Given the success of Holland's approach to vocational identity, I decided to explore whether there are other apparent links between Erikson's model of psychosocial development and the processes of career maturation. As Holland had already successfully linked psychosocial identity to career decidedness, I decided to attempt to link the antecedents of career decidedness to the psychosocial antecedents of identity achievement as portrayed in Erikson's model. The pertinent antecedents of psychosocial identity are hope, will, purpose, and competence. The pertinent antecedents of vocational

identity are described in two models of career maturation proposed by Super (1955, 1990) and by Crites (1971). Both models are structural rather than developmental. Moreover, the variables included in each model are atheoretical. Rather than flowing from a coherent theoretical rationale, the variables arise from scholarly integrations of relevant empirical findings.

In Crites' (1971) model, two variables appear to be linked to Erikson's construct of hope: orientation and involvement. Orientation deals with an individual's awareness of the process of making educational and vocational decisions. Individuals with more mature attitudes usually familiarize themselves with how people choose occupations and develop careers. Involvement addresses the degree to which individuals relate themselves to the process of making a choice and actively participate in it. Individuals with more mature attitudes tend to think about alternative careers and try to relate their present behavior to future goals. Super's model includes two variables that seem closely related to Erikson's hope and Crites' orientation and involvement: future-orientation and planfulness.

Three variables in Crites' model appear to be linked to Erikson's construct of will: independence, decisiveness, and compromise. Independence deals with self-reliance in making career choices. Decisiveness deals with commitment to making career choices. Compromise deals with willingness to acknowledge and concede to the demands of reality. Super's model addresses constructs similar to willpower with the variables of internal locus of control and autonomy.

Two variables in Crites' model seem to be linked to Erikson's construct of purpose: conceptions about choosing and criteria for working. Conceptions deal with individuals' ideas about how to make a career choice. Criterion for working refer to whether one seeks intrinsic or extrinsic rewards from work. Super's model addresses Erikson's dimension of purpose with the variables of work role salience, curiosity, and identification with key figures.

In Crites' model the variable of choice bases seems to relate to Erikson's construct of competence. Choice bases refer to the desire to implement one's self-concept (especially, self-perceived interests, abilities, and values) through work. Competence even more clearly aligns with the variable of self-esteem in Super's model.

This linking of the antecedents of vocational maturity as identified by Super and by Crites to the antecedents of psychosocial identity achievement explained by Erikson led to formulation of a potential developmental model to explain problems in formulating a vocational identity and making occupational choices. The model groups career concerns and antecedents of vocational identity indecision into four developmental tasks or important thematic issues: confidence, control, convictions, and competence. Each of these four career concerns highly relate to a particular dimension in Erikson's model. Hope, arising from successful resolution of the crisis of trust versus mistrust, seems to sustain the emergence of career confidence, defined by a future-oriented time perspective, involvement, orientation, and planfulness. In similar fashion, willpower, arising from successful resolution of the crisis of autonomy versus shame and doubt, seems to



sustain the emergence of career control, defined by independence, internal locus of control, autonomy, decisiveness, and willingness to compromise. Purpose, arising from successful resolution of the crisis of initiative versus guilt, seems to sustain the emergence of career convictions, defined by work role salience and intrinsic work values. Competence, arising from successful resolution of the crisis of industry versus inferiority, seems to sustain the emergence of career competence, defined by a sense of self-esteem and desire to implement one's self-concept through work. Of course, a substantial body of empirical literature already supports the relations between ego-identity status and vocational identity.

Having devised a model of concerns that thwart achievement of a clear and stable vocational identity using Erikson's model of psychosocial development as an overarching framework, the next step was to construct a measure of the new model, the Student Career Concerns Inventory (SCCI; Savickas & Super, 1992; Savickas, 1996). To date, research on the SCCI has been psychometric, focusing on its construction, reliability, criterion validity, and validity for use in counseling. The scales in the SCCI are clearly linked to vocational identity in cross-sectional studies and preliminary results from a still in-progress longitudinal study show the same relationships. Exploratory use of the SCCI in career education and counseling has shown its usefulness in identifying barriers to career choice and commitment, concerns that can be addressed by counseling systematically linked to the psychosocial issues implied by the concerns.

The purpose of the present study was to examine how the four career concerns, identified and organized by linking Crites' and Super's models to Erikson's framework, relate to the psychosocial constructs of hope, will, purpose, and competence. In particular, I was interested in determining whether each of the four career concerns relate more generally to identity achievement or more specifically to the psychosocial crisis with which each is associated. For example, I wanted to investigate whether career confidence relates more to trust or identity. On the one hand, if career confidence relates more to trust, then it may be redundant with Erikson's construct of trust. To me, this would mean that career indecision may be rooted in a more basic developmental delay or deficit. On the other hand, if career confidence relates more to identity, than it may be a recycling through trust issues when one encounters the need to declare an educational or vocational choice. In this case, issues of career confidence may arise as a new developmental challenge to an already firmly established sense of hope. Accordingly, this study tested the hypothesis that career concerns relate more to identity than to hope, will, purpose, and competence.

#### Methods

##### Measures

The career variables were measured by the Student Career Concerns Inventory (SCCI) which contains nine 5-item scales. The four areas of career concern identified above are addressed by five scales; one each for career confidence, control, and competence and two for

career convictions. Concerns about career convictions are addressed by two scales, one having to do with separating oneself from others by setting personal goals and the other having to do with connecting oneself to other people by working cooperatively with them. The remaining four scales in the SCCI address career exploration and commitment. The two exploration scales, meant to address the career development task of crystallizing preferences for occupational fields and levels, measure concerns about self-exploration and occupational exploration. The two commitment scales, meant to address the career development task of specifying an occupational choice, measure concerns about making occupational choices and implementing plans. Participants rate the 45 items on scale that ranged from "no concern" (1) to "great concern" (5). Two unpublished factor-analytic studies have shown nine factors corresponding to the nine scales. Criterion validity evidence indicates that the nine scales correlate as expected with scores on Holland's Vocational Identity Scale. For the participants in the present study, alpha coefficients ranged from .83 to .90 (see Table 1).

The first five stages in Erikson's model of psychosocial development were operationally defined with the Measures of Psychosocial Development (MPD; Hawley, 1988). The MPD purports to translate the constructs in Erikson's theory into objective measures. For each construct in Erikson's theory there are two seven-item scales, one positive and one negative. For example, for the first task, there is a scale for trust and another scale for mistrust. The positive and negative scales show how an individual sees himself or



herself in relation to the positive and negative attitudes which describe that dimension. All items are rated on a five-point scale ranging from "very much like me" to "not at all like me." Separate norms are provided for males and females in four age groups: 13-17, 18-24, 25-49, and 50+. The manual (Hawley, 1988) reports an acceptable amount of initial information about the reliability and validity of the instrument. Alpha coefficients for participants in the present study ranged from .71 to .84 to the positive scales and from .55 to .76 for the negative scales (see Table 1).

#### Participants

The participants in the present study consisted of 413 tenth-grade students (194 male, 213 female, and 6 who did not indicate sex), enrolled at an urban high school in a small Midwestern city. In groups of 60 to 80 students, they responded to the Student Career Concerns Inventory and to the Measures of Psychosocial Development along with the Self-Directed Search, a measure of occupational interests. Following the administration of the inventories, the students were provided with group career guidance consisting primarily of a group interpretation of their own interest inventory results and career education based on the class profile on the SCCI and MPD.

#### Analyses

After calculating descriptive statistics, the hypothesis was tested using a canonical analysis of the pattern of association between the nine career concern scores (confidence, control, convictions about self and others, competence, exploration of self and occupations, choice, and planning) and the five psychosocial scores

(hope, will, purpose, competence, and identity).

### Results

Table 1 presents the alpha coefficients, mean scores, and standard deviations for each scale. The participants seemed to have the greatest concern about career confidence and envisioning an occupational future. The second strongest concern dealt with the issue of formulating personal goals. For the measure of psychosocial development, the participants scored highest on the trust and industry scales and showed more concern about issues of shame and inferiority.

Table 2 reports the zero-order correlation coefficients. The career concerns appeared to be unrelated to the positive pole of each Eriksonian dimension. However, the concerns did have a pattern of modest correlation to the negative pole of the each dimension. The correlations were fairly uniform, they did not show a pattern of correlations in which, for example, concerns about confidence correlated more highly to issues of mistrust than to other psychosocial issues. This pattern of correlation suggested that the concerns relate more strongly to the dimension of psychosocial identity than to early psychosocial crises.

The canonical analysis correlated the nine career concern scales with the five psychosocial scales. Accordingly, the analysis produced five canonical roots, two of which were significant:  $R_c = .43$  ( $p < .001$ ) and  $R_c = .29$  ( $p < .01$ ). The first pair of canonical variates showed that all the variables loaded highly on their respective variates. Psychosocial confusion did seem to relate

strongly to all the career concerns, especially those dealing with convictions about the self, self-exploration, and making choices and plans. The second pair of canonical variates showed that concern about the willingness to work cooperatively with other people associates particularly with issues of mistrust and shame. The weaker, second canonical root seems to be tapping the interpersonal issues that distinguish convictions about working with others as the most unique of the nine career concerns.

#### Discussion

The results seem to indicate that career concerns identified by Crites' and by Super's models of career development, and organized using Erikson's construction of psychosocial development, represent recycling of previously resolved psychosocial issues occasioned by encountering the need to making educational and vocational choices. The concerns do not seem to chart the terrain of an earlier stage of development, usually referred to as the growth stage (ages 4-13). Rather they constitute unique concerns pertinent to the exploration stage (ages 14-25) of career development. The results also suggest that organizing the diverse variables in Super's and in Crites' model into four general thematic groups of barriers to, antecedents of, and concerns about making career choices and crystallizing a vocational identity may have merit and should continue to be explored.

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Table 1

Scale means, standard deviations and alpha coefficients

Scale	M	SD	Alpha
Confidence	13.38	4.83	.83
Control	11.45	5.18	.87
Convictions (Self)	12.32	5.22	.88
Convictions (Others)	10.71	5.18	.89
Competence	10.88	5.18	.86
Explore (Self)	11.08	4.85	.86
Explore (Occupations)	11.03	4.71	.85
Choice	11.35	5.30	.88
Plan	12.71	5.28	.90
Trust	26.16	4.26	.71
Autonomy	25.56	4.72	.77
Initiative	23.76	4.83	.74
Industry	26.97	4.96	.84
Identity	24.72	4.99	.78
Mistrust	16.90	4.74	.70
Shame	17.94	4.40	.63
Guilt	17.26	3.82	.55
Inferiority	16.18	4.30	.67
Confusion	17.13	5.03	.76

Table 2

Correlations between career concerns and Psycho-social dimensions

	Confidence	Control	Convictions			Exploration		Commitment	
			Self	Others	Competence	Self	Others	Choice	Plans
Trust	-.07	-.02	-.05	-.01	-.01	-.03	.00	.02	-.04
Autonomy	-.07	-.03	-.04	.07	.03	.01	.02	-.01	.00
Initiative	.00	.03	-.02	.13	.02	.03	.00	-.02	-.04
Industry	-.05	-.03	-.04	.07	.03	-.03	.00	.02	-.04
Identity	-.10	-.03	-.06	.06	.00	-.04	.00	-.04	-.07
Mistrust	.20	.21	.22	.23	.27	.30	.19	.19	.20
Shame	.18	.23	.22	.22	.27	.34	.21	.23	.24
Guilt	.15	.21	.22	.17	.26	.28	.20	.23	.23
Inferiority	.15	.23	.26	.19	.28	.31	.22	.22	.25
Confusion	.23	.26	.30	.20	.29	.35	.26	.34	.34

r = .11 significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

r = .16 significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3

Canonical correlations between the variables and their canonical variate

Variables	Canonical Variate 1	Canonical Variate 2
<u>Career</u>		
Confidence	.52	.17
Control	.65	.15
Convictions (Self)	.72	0.00
Convictions (Others)	.50	.44
Competence	.71	.32
Exploration (Self)	.86	.36
Exploration (Occupation)	.63	.05
Choice	.78	-.19
Plan	.80	-.12
<u>Psycho-social</u>		
Mistrust	.63	.65
Shame	.79	.46
Guilt	.72	.15
Inferiority	.80	.26
Confusion	.95	-.11
Canonical Correlations	.43	.29
Alpha Level	.001	.01