

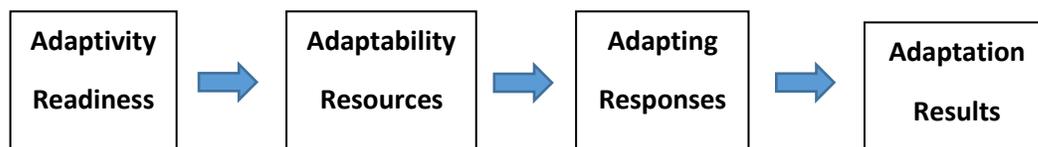


Career Adaptability: Model and Measure

Adaptive people are believed to draw from their strengths (adaptabilities) to shape adapting behaviors that resolve significant career challenges and changes including vocational development tasks, job stress, occupation transitions, and work traumas. Higher levels of **adaptation** (outcome) are expected for those who are willing (**adaptive**) and able (adaptability) to perform behaviors (**adapting**) that address changing conditions. An analogy to airline travel may help to clarify the distinctions between readiness, resources, responses, and results. In preparing for departure, flight attendants ask passengers seated in an exit row whether they are “willing and able” to assist in an emergency. This assistance, should it be needed, requires performance of actions that fit the situation. Passengers are asked about willingness and ability because action in an emergency requires both. Some people may be willing yet unable while other people may be unwilling yet able. In the language of career construction theory, the attendant is asking the passengers whether they have the willingness and resources that may be needed to act in an emergency. Career construction theory views “willing and able” as “adaptivity and adaptability” or as “readiness and resources.” To continue the analogy, the airplane emergency might require performance of some life-saving

actions. Those that perceive themselves as willing and able may respond by performing the tasks needed to save lives should the situation present itself. This adapting or “doing” involves the behaviors that function to accomplish orientation, exploration, establishment, management, and disengagement. The adapting responses, in turn, lead to some resulting outcome or adaptation, which may be judged by injury or death. In career construction, the outcome is not usually life or death, rather it is goodness of fit or harmony as indicated by development, satisfaction, success, and stability. In a dynamic of reciprocal interaction, the passenger who performed well in an emergency may increase in adaptivity and adaptabilities and may be even better prepared for the next crisis.

Career Construction Model of Adaptation



In career construction theory, adaptability resources help to form strategies and actions aimed at achieving adaptation goals. The ensemble of adaptability resources themselves condition the actual adapting behaviors and shape an individual’s self-extension into the social environment. In sum, career adaptability resources should be viewed as self-regulatory, psychosocial competencies that shape adapting strategies and when activated condition the actual adapting behaviors.

Career construction theory organizes career adaptability resources in a multi-dimensional and hierarchical model. The first level consists of specific attitudes, beliefs,

and competencies – the ABCs of career construction – which shape the actual problem-solving strategies and coping behaviors (i.e., adapting) that individuals use to adapt to changing demands. At the second level of the hierarchy, these ABCs are grouped into four dimensions of career adaptability resources called *adapt-abilities*: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Together, these four dimensions of career adaptability resources combine at the third level into a global indicator of career adaptability.

Individuals use these four transactional and psychosocial resources to navigate successfully through unfamiliar and complex environments. Thus when vocational tasks, occupational transitions, or work traumas occur, the adaptable individual is conceptualized as (a) becoming *concerned* about the vocational future, (b) taking *control* of shaping one's vocational future, (c) displaying *curiosity* by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and (d) showing the *confidence* to pursue one's aspirations. Increasing a client's career adaptability resources or career adapt-abilities is a central goal in career education and counseling. Strong adaptability is linked -- through adapting behaviors -- to adaptation results, that is, adjustment or goodness of fit, as indicated by outcome variable such as decidedness, commitment to a choice, academic achievement, job search success, identity achievement, success, satisfaction, well-being, and development. Each of these variables indicate that some new equilibrium has been reached.

Adaptabilities Measured by the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale

Adaptability Dimensions	Descriptive Adjectives
Concern – extent to which an individual is oriented toward the future and inclined to anticipate and prepare for career moves.	aware, anticipating, involved, planful, preparing

Control - extent to which an individual assumes responsibility for building a career	conscientious, responsible, assertive, reliable, disciplined
Curiosity -extent to which an individual tends to imagine possible selves, explore opportunities, gather information.	open, inquiring, probing, searching, investigative, aspire
Confidence – extent to which an individual has faith in her or his ability to make wise career decisions and succeed in reaching occupational goals.	resilient, innovative, problem solver, efficient, persistent