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Contemporary Issues and Trends in Career Development

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Abstract

There is increasing recognition that career development is a complex process that unfolds over the entire life-span of the person. Moreover, it is readily apparent that the world is changing more rapidly and dramatically than it did for our parents and grandparents. These rapid changes affect our lives in general, but especially the means and circumstances of work and careers. This has led to numerous calls for the development of more change-sensitive, complex, comprehensive, integrative, and multi- and trans-disciplinary theoretical and conceptual frameworks in the field of career development. The present paper describes some key features of such a conceptual framework, which is the "Developmental-Contextual Model of Life-span Career Development" of Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg(1986). Special attention is given to how this framework is uniquely suited to account for the career development of culturally and otherwise diverse groups of individuals, and how it deals with career development issues of an aging population.

Key words : interdisciplinary integration, developmental-contextual, life-span, diversity, "population aging", comprehensive model

抄 録

キャリア発達は、個人の全生涯にわたって展開する複雑な過程であるとの認識が増大している。さらに、世界が、われわれの両親や祖父母に対してであったよりも急速にそして劇的に変化していることは明白なことである。これらの急速な変化は、われわれの生活に全般的に、しかし特に労働とキャリアの手段と状況とに、影響を及ぼしている。このことは、キャリア発達の領域において、より変化に敏感で、複合的で、包括的で、統合的で、そして諸学問分野を結集した、そして諸学問分野を越えた理論的そして概念的な枠組みの開発への数多くの要求を導いている。本稿は、Vondracek, Lerner と Schulenberg (1986) の「生涯キャリア発達の発達的一文脈的モデル」であるそのような概念的枠組みのいくつかの主要な特徴を記述する。いかにこの枠組みが文化的にそしてその他の点で異なった集団の個々人のキャリア発達を説明するのに唯一適切なものか、そしていかにこれが人口の高齢化に関するキャリア発達の問題点を取り扱うのか、ということに特別な注意が払われる。

キーワード：学際的統合、発達的一文脈的、生涯、多様性、「人口の高齢化」、包括的モデル。

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The decade of the 80's has been a period of unprecedented growth and progress in the area of vocational behavior and development. In a recent review of "Megatrends and Milestones in Vocational Behavior", Borgen (1991) reported that the number of articles related to vocational behavior that are published annually (presumably in English language journals only) is about 700. In addition, dozens of books and monographs on this subject appear every year, as well. Although this kind of productivity attests to the vitality and dynamic nature of the field, it also creates problems for those wishing to review current developments and advances. One way to deal with this problem is to selectively review what appear to be the most important trends and issues, and to evaluate their likely impact as we move toward the year 2000. This is what I shall attempt to accomplish in the following pages. My selectivity will be guided, in part, by the life-span, developmental-contextual approach to career development that was introduced in 1986 (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg), and which was selected by Borgen (1991) as one of the important and pivotal publications of the past two decades.

Increased Use of Multidisciplinary Perspectives

Although individuals from a number of different disciplines have made major contributions to the field of career development theory and intervention, serious efforts at integration are so rare that writers continue to feel compelled to urge the field to produce more multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary work. For example, Garbin and Stover (1980) stated that "the complexities of vocational behavior are of such enormity that a fuller understanding is more likely if interdisciplinary studies are undertaken" (p. 124). Osipow (1983) has noted that "the fruitful career development theory will take shape within the larger context of human development..." (p. 324; which itself is a multidisciplinary field). More recently, Krumboltz, best known for his Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976; Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990), has added his voice to calls for a broader and more integrative perspective by proposing the use of Ford's (1987) Living Systems Framework as a means for understanding the complexities of career behaviors (Krumboltz and Nichols, 1990). In particular, they state:

The fundamental determinants of career choice and career progression are the same as those that determine choice and development in other domains of human involvement. Although one's thoughts, actions, and objectives will be uniquely a function of their current context and of their past experience, certain basic person processes can be identified that have the potential to influence behavior in every context. (p. 173)

Additional calls for the development of integrative theory have come from many sources, in one case with the well-placed admonition to researchers to avoid reinventing and duplicating concepts and approaches that have been published previously, perhaps with different labels (Betz, 1991).

In an effort to encourage convergence and integration in career theory, Osipow has noted that "... the theories have remarkable similarities. At the same time, each theory possesses features that are distinctive and lend themselves to different problems and populations with differing effectiveness" (1990, p. 129). Additionally, he suggested that theories may be differentially useful with populations at different life stages. In a similar vein Super (1990) has long maintained that career development theory would eventually be an integrated, comprehensive theory, but only after segmental theories, dealing with specific features of career development, had been tested and refined.

Partly in response to Super's and Osipow's calls for convergence, a remarkable conference was held at Michigan State University in April of 1992, which brought together the original authors of the major, established theories of career development (Edward Bordin, Rene Dawis, John Holland, John Krumboltz, and Donald Super), as well as many other prominent researchers and theoreticians. Organized by Robert Lent and Mark Savickas, the conference offered a forum for presentations and discussion centered on commonalities and differences among the major theories and the advantages and disadvantages of working toward some form of convergence. At one extreme, Holland presented arguments to support the notion that different theories serve different purposes, and that convergence is not only unnecessary but also undesirable. Others, including Krumboltz and Dawis, argued that their theories were compatible with major features of other theories and could be used to provide much-needed detail about the mechanisms by which people learn and adjust in relation to career and work. Other researchers presented their views on how certain constructs, such as "identity" and "person-environment fit" might be useful in serving as unifying variables, connecting key aspects of various theories with each other.

Whether the conference will succeed in bringing about greater convergence among career theories may not be known for some time. The fact that it was held, however, and attracted a cast of career theory "allstars", clearly demonstrated the vitality of the field and the willingness of the major actors, some of whom have been active in the field for more than 40 years, to listen to others and to engage in constructive exchanges. The sub-

stance of the conference will be published so that it can be shared with others who are involved in the field but could not attend the conference itself (Savickas & Lent, in preparation).

At the risk of sounding a discordant note, it must be pointed out, however, that in spite of such broad efforts to be integrative, an entire branch of career theory has existed for about 20 years and continues to flourish without much more than a passing acknowledgement of the major, historical approaches to career development represented in Osipow's (1983) classic book on theories of career development and an occasional call for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to career theory (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989). This branch of career theory is usually associated with the study of career development in organizations (Hall, 1976, 1990; Schein, 1971, 1978; Van Maanen, 1977). Hall has suggested that the two branches of career development theory are distinguishable in terms of the period of the life-span considered, although he acknowledged that Super had "looked at" adult career issues (1990, p. 422). Hall apparently chose to ignore well-known life-course approaches, such as those by Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & Mckee (1978), and Vaillant, (1977), as well as relatively more recent, but by no means new, life-span approaches (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1983, 1986).

Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989), in their proposal for generating new (transdisciplinary) directions in career theory, suggested that a good starting point for advancing toward this goal would be a shared definition of career. To them, a "... career is *the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time*" (p. 8), and "career theory... is the body of all generalizable attempts to explain career phenomena" (p. 9). Unfortunately, this suggested definition of career theory ignores the fact that there are important developmental antecedents of work experience, and that these antecedents may play a major role in subsequent career behaviors. This shortcoming is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Arthur (1984) and Hall (1990) specifically acknowledge their indebtedness to the theoretical formulations of Erikson, who has often stressed the fact that (vocational) identity has precursors in infancy and continues to evolve through the life-span, i.e., even after a person's work experiences have been terminated.

Arthur, et al. lament the predominance of psychological and sociological perspectives in career theory and cite Sonnenfeld and Kotter's (1982) classification of career theories as an example. They fail to report, however, that Sonnenfeld and Kotter presented a framework for studying career development that anticipated many of the concerns issued

by Arthur, et al., such as accounting for the entire life space of the individual, including the individual/personal space (ontogenetic development) and the work and nonwork contexts within which the individual functions. Moreover, Sonnenfeld and Kotter preceded Arthur, et al. in stressing the need to study complex interrelationships within the life-space, preferably by integrating concepts from all existing theories of career development.

The central feature of Arthur, et al.'s proposal for generating new directions in career theory is their proposal to abandon the overreliance on psychology and, to a lesser extent, sociology, and to recognize and utilize the contributions of other disciplines, notably anthropology, economics, political science, history, and geography. In this way, they suggest, career theory will serve as a meeting point, a nexus, for transdisciplinary debate. Although it is unquestionably useful to have career theory contributions from all of these different disciplinary perspectives, it is also clear (and acknowledged by Arthur, et al.) that such contributions may not be simply additive. As a matter of fact, it is my view that they can be most significant only if they are integrated within the framework of a *comprehensive* career theory that is capable of accounting for career development in its full complexity. Moreover, it is very likely that there are important issues in career development where research guided by a comprehensive, multidisciplinary theoretical approach is much more likely to produce advances in our understanding of careers than research guided by the theories or paradigms of a single discipline.

The key point to be understood is that a *combination* of theoretical models may be useful at this point in the development of our field in testing hypotheses about and explaining vocational development and career behavior. It is unnecessary for the field to make a choice of one model over another at this time (e.g., Hackett, Lent & Greenhaus, 1991). Arthur, et al. are correct in suggesting that many disciplines can help us to gain a better understanding of the phenomena we study. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the concept of *career* is a sufficient framework for bringing together the viewpoints from different disciplines into anything resembling a coherent, integrated, and comprehensive theory of career development. Ultimately, such a theory will be necessary to accommodate the findings from diverse disciplines and viewpoints. It has been my position that the basic framework for such a theory already exists in the literature on human development. My colleagues and I have presented what we have called a life-span developmental or developmental-contextual approach to career development (Vondracek, 1990;

Vondracek, et al., 1983, 1986) that, in my view, represents a framework for the development of a comprehensive and integrative theory of career development.

A Developmental-Contextual Model of Life-span Career Development

It is not my intent to describe our theoretical approach in detail at this time. That has been done elsewhere, as noted above. However, in keeping with the emphasis on contemporary trends in career theory, it may be useful to further explicate some key points of the developmental-contextual approach that seem to have been misinterpreted, misunderstood, or ignored by some writers. This is important in view of the fact that this approach has been identified as an “emerging perspective” (Hackett, Lent, & Greenhaus, 1991), and a “milestone” in the vocational behavior literature of the last two decades (Borgen, 1991). I should note here that I have been reluctant to use the term “theory” in referring to the developmental-contextual approach because it is really a model and does not meet the requirements of a formal theory. When we first introduced our approach we were explicit about the fact that we thought it could serve as a useful guide to theory development. Moreover, we suggested that it could be used to “... guide the selection of individual and ecological variables in one’s research and to provide parameters about the generalizability of one’s findings...” (Vondracek, et al., 1986, pp. 79-80).

Scope of the Model. In examining and critiquing major theories of career development, Brown (1990) suggested that a good theory should be comprehensive, and that it should predict and explain the behavior of diverse individuals across the life-course. He further suggested that Super’s theory is the most comprehensive theory available, but that it is deficient, primarily because it is segmented and not fully integrated. Super (1990) has readily accepted this criticism and referred to his approach as “... a loosely unified set of theories dealing with specific aspects of career development...” He went on to note that “... there is no ‘Super’s theory’; there is just the assemblage of theories that I have sought to synthesize” (p. 199). That leaves the life-span developmental-contextual model of career development as the only approach that is truly comprehensive and that is capable of accommodating all aspects of career development from infancy to old age within a single, integrated (and integrative) framework. Parenthetically, I would like to note that this comment should not in any way be interpreted as being disparaging of Super’s work, which is continuing at this time. His work and the breadth and depth of his contributions, which span 50 years, will not be equalled by anyone for a long time to come.

Being comprehensive, however, can be a mixed blessing, because it almost invariably means also being complex. It is well known that relatively simple models are appealing for a variety of reasons. The popularity of Holland's (1973, 1985) theory is evidence for this phenomenon. The problem is that for all its elegant simplicity a price is paid, which in the case of Holland's theory consists of a limitation in the range of career development phenomena that can be explained. The developmental-contextual model has been criticized as being too complex, in part because it is clearly too complicated and involved to be tested in its entirety. In 1986 we stressed that it would not be useful, or even possible, to test the model in its entirety. This caution seems to have been overlooked, at times.

Contextual Focus of the Model. The positive aspects of the model's complexity should be readily apparent to anyone who examines Figure 1, which was originally presented in Vondracek, et al., (1986, p. 79), and which had been adapted from Lerner (1984). While the individual is at "center stage", either as child (e.g., in the process of developing a vocational identity; see Vondracek, in press), or as an adult, functioning in the world of work, the important interpersonal contexts of vocational development clearly share this central importance. Thus, major recognition is given to the importance of the family (e.g., Grotevant and Cooper, 1988; Schulenberg, Vondracek, and Crouter, 1984), as well as the child and adult extra-familial interpersonal networks. It also should be especially noted that the child extra-familial network includes socialization-to-work experiences, such as part-time work (e.g., Mortimer, 1990); the adult extra-familial network includes the contexts of work, including the organizational context (e.g., Hall, 1990).

The outer circle of the model contains features of the macro-context, which are too numerous to specify in detail. It should be clear, in addition, that the salience of these features differs from one person to the next, and for the same person it may differ from one situation to another. Note, however, that macro-contextual features have usually been addressed by sociologists, economists, demographers, political scientists, and anthropologists, while those features contained on the inside of the circle are usually associated with the various sub-specialties of psychology and, to a lesser extent, certain areas in sociology, biology, and education. Thus, one obvious implication of the model is that it *requires* multi-, trans-, and inter-disciplinary collaborations if it is to be useful in theory building and research design.

One important and often misunderstood feature of the developmental-contextual model of life-span career development is its use of bidirectional arrows to indicate

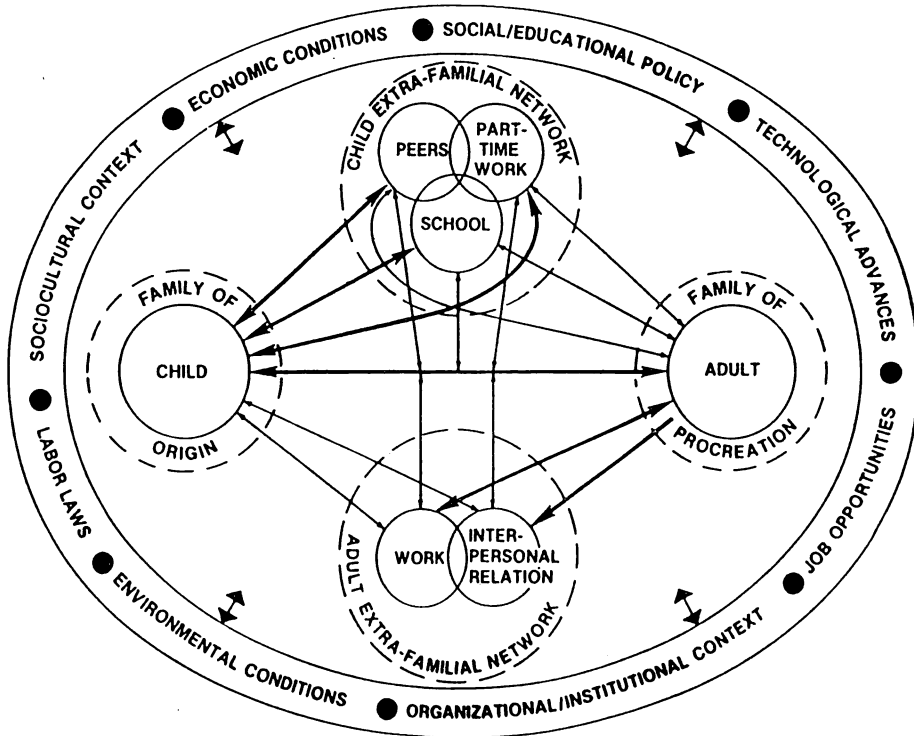


Fig. 1 A dynamic interactional model of career development. (Adapted from Lerner, 1984)

relations that have been found between various components and reported in the research literature. Most importantly, the arrows signify the *relational* focus of the model: Bronfenbrenner, whose work on the ecology of human development (1979) has been influential in our thinking, refers to this relatedness as the *principle of interconnectedness*; Lerner (1978) has preferred the concept of *dynamic interaction*, which was adopted for our model. Thus, we stated that “dynamic interaction assumes that the most important phenomena of human development occur at multiple, interrelated levels of analysis and that development can be understood only by examining the interaction among the various levels as they impact the person’s developmental trajectory” (Vondracek, et al., 1986, p. 42).

Although the foregoing demonstrates the central focus of the model on “individual *and* context in dynamic interaction”, it is a fact that the “developmental” orientation in career development theory continues to be (erroneously) associated with a nonenvironmental focus that is stuck on individual processes (e.g., Brown, 1988, cited in Brooks,

1990; Hall, 1990). That is particularly surprising because, in addition to the obvious importance of the context in a model named “developmental-*contextual*”, Super (1957, 1980) has always extensively addressed political, social, and economic factors in his developmental career theory. Yet, he was recently moved to complain about the fact that there seems to be a tendency among researchers to equate developmental approaches with an individual/psychological focus and to overlook any corresponding contextual emphasis.

Goodness-of-Fit. Another feature of the developmental-contextual approach that is frequently misunderstood or overlooked is its goodness-of-fit model of person-context relations. In part, this may be due to the fact that person-environment fit approaches are commonly associated with trait-and-factor theories, most notably that of Holland (1985), and not with developmental approaches (Rounds & Tracey, 1990). This is true in spite of the fact that Pervin (1987) has argued that what we need are dynamic, interpretive, and process-oriented models of person-environment fit. The goodness-of-fit model of person-context relations represents such a model. A brief review of its key features may illustrate this point.

Our model is based on the notion that individuals are continually engaged with their context in an act-reaction-act-reaction sequence which Lerner and Lerner (1986) have called circular functions. Those circular functions describe the way in which persons with unique characteristics of individuality deal with the unique contexts in which they are functioning. They include four key components: (1) the action of the person on the context; (2) the reaction of the context to the action of the person; (3) the action of the context on the person; and (4) the reaction of the person to this feedback, which may then start the cycle anew.

The person’s characteristics of individuality provide a basis for the feedback the person obtains from the environment because these characteristics provide differential stimulation to significant others, who then react differentially and individually and thus provide differential feedback. Just as each individual brings unique characteristics to any social situation, the social situation (context) places unique demands on the individual by virtue of its unique social and physical characteristics. These demands exist because of (1) attitudes, values, or expectations held by others regarding the physical or behavioral characteristics of the person; (2) the behavioral characteristics of others in the context; and (3) the physical characteristics of the environment (Lerner and Lerner, 1986).

Vondracek (1987, p. 344) has summarized these notions in the following way:

Any conceptualization of person-environment interaction that includes this circular function notion results in the proper appreciation of the contextual significance of a person's characteristics of individuality. It also takes account of the fact that a person may or may not display the same repertoire of personal attributes across situations, and that different situations may impose contrasting demand characteristics (Lerner, Baker, & Lerner, 1985). Clearly, the circular function notion represents an approach that does not give primary emphasis to either the person or the environment: It focuses instead on the interaction between the two or on what each does to the other and vice versa.

Obviously, the implicit assumption of the model is that adaptive functioning occurs when the person's characteristics of individuality "fit" the demands of a particular environment or setting.

When applied to the domain of vocational functioning, it should now be clear that this model can be used to account for vocationally relevant behaviors, ranging from processes involved in the acquisition of a sense of industry in an eight year-old to the career behaviors of an executive in a multinational corporation. The developmental-contextual approach to life-span career development, including the goodness-of-fit model of person-context relations, may be particularly useful in serving as a dynamic, comprehensive, and integrative framework for new developments in the field of career theory. I shall now turn my attention to some of these recent developments.

Career Development Themes for the 90's

The 90's are certain to be a period of exciting advances in the field of career development. Already in this decade several important books have been published (Brown & Brooks, 1990; Brown & Lent, 1992; Gelso & Fretz, 1992; Spokane, 1991; Walsh & Osipow, 1990; Watkins & Campbell, 1991). The number of articles published in the field of career development by English language journals will easily exceed 1000 per year before the end of the decade. With this tidal wave of information descending on researchers and practitioners alike, it is virtually a necessity to try and discern some pattern, some emerging trends. As noted previously, developmental contextualism and an emphasis on life-span career development are already recognized as vibrant and growing emphases within the field. There are two additional trends that, in my view, will occupy central positions in career development theory and practice by the year 2000: They are a "Focus on Diversity" and the "Aging of the Population."

Focus on Diversity. Although in the United States the term “diversity” has come to be associated almost exclusively with the concerns of women and minorities, there are additional diversity issues that will need to be addressed by the field of career development. This is important in view of the fact that Hoyt (1988) has projected that between 1986 and 2000, five-sixth of new workforce entrants in the U.S. will be women, minority persons, and immigrants. Clearly, this represents a constraint on the applicability of career theory because of its tendency to focus on the careers of middle-class, employed individuals (Gottfredson, 1982; Harmon, 1991; Osipow, 1991). Super (1990) has recently commented that there is a natural middle-class bias in a generally upwardly mobile society, but pointed out that much of his early research was based on working-class subjects. Nevertheless, it is important to ask ourselves about the generality of our models of career development. Do unskilled laborers, who often move from one job to another, have “careers”? Do they have the opportunity to contemplate their careers or are they simply too busy trying to earn enough money to support themselves and their families? How can less skilled individuals be developed to fill more demanding positions (London and Greller, 1991)?

Some theories are less likely to help us understand the unskilled, the underemployed, or the unemployed. The work of those concerned with career development in organizations (e.g., Hall, 1990; Schein, 1978) is less likely to apply to such groups than more general developmental approaches like those of Super (1980) and Vondracek, et al., (1986). Nevertheless, as Harmon (1991) points out, virtually everyone in the field of career development must acknowledge that too little has been done to understand the vocational behavior of underprivileged and untrained individuals. Moreover, with a shrinking pool of available workers in many industrialized societies, it makes economic sense to discover and explore ways in which this underclass can be helped to participate in the kind of work that can build careers.

Gender represents another important issue of diversity in career development. Unlike the issue of the unskilled underclass, this issue has received a great deal of attention in both theory and research. Fitzgerald and Crites (1980), Farmer (1985), and Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) contributed significantly to the emergence of an important focus on women’s career behavior during the last decade. One major finding in the ensuing stream of research has been the discovery that gender differences alone do not adequately account for the differences found between the career behaviors and careers of men and

women. This has led to the realization that complex factors, including gender-role socialization (e.g., Astin, 1984) and the specific sociocultural environment (e.g., Farmer, 1985; Vondracek, et al., 1986) must also be taken into account. Once again, the prevailing view is that more comprehensive and complex models, like the developmental-contextual model of life-span career development, may be the most satisfactory conceptual framework for advancing this area beyond its current status.

Another area that is of concern is the career development of individuals who represent an ethnic minority in a given society. In the United States these concerns have been focused primarily on the two largest minority groups, African-Americans and Mexican Americans, although other significant ethnic minorities exist, including native Americans (American Indians) and Asian-Americans. The cultural heritage, socioeconomic background, and socialization practices of these different groups vary widely, as does their participation in the overall workforce and in different occupations. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to review findings in this area. It should be noted, however, that relatively little research exists on the career development of ethnic minorities, a circumstance that needs to be addressed (London & Greller, 1991).

The other thing that should be emphasized is that the research that does exist has invariably found that ethnic minority membership alone does not *explain* very much about differences that exist in the career development of individuals. Research on career variables has typically shown small differences between various ethnic groups and fairly large individual differences within groups (Cook, 1991). Thus, “to understand the role of race and ethnicity in career behavior, we need to ask what these categories mean in the context of the individual’s life experience” (Cook, 1991, p. 110). Again, the proper framework for the study of such issues is one that is comprehensive and capable of conceptualizing the broad array of individual and contextual factors that are likely to play a role in career development.

A final comment on the issue of diversity has to do with the transferability of theory and research from one culture to another. Here, the question is whether theory formulated in one culture at one particular time in history can be simply translated into another language, perhaps even in a different historical time; whether research conducted in one country and one culture can be translated and applied to another country, another culture. This is obviously not a serious issue in such fields as chemistry and engineering. In those fields, however, where culture and the social context play central roles, either in

the theory or research directly, or in the phenomena addressed by the pertinent theory and research, the issue of translatability and transferability is of potentially great significance.

Obviously, language differences, errors or disagreements in translation, and various related technical issues, particularly with respect to test translation (e.g., see Hambleton, 1991, for a recent review), need to be attended to in any serious translation effort. There are more fundamental problems, however, when a concept that is basic to understanding one culture does not even exist in another. One such concept appears to be the Japanese concept of *amae*. Takeo Doi (1981) has proposed that it is not only a concept that is absolutely essential to any real understanding of Japanese personality, but that it is peculiar to Japan. Moreover, since there is no corresponding word in the English language, — it is most commonly translated as “dependence”, — it cannot be translated with its full meaning intact. Doi asserts that while *amae* may exist (as an emotion) in American culture, for example, “it is, nonetheless, the existence or nonexistence of the word that makes all the difference” (p. 171). Takahashi (1990), in studying the development of affective relationships, takes a slightly different approach, suggesting that there are both universal and culture-bound aspects that need to be recognized when comparing American (U.S.) studies and concepts with those of Japan.

Although there are many additional issues related to diversity that cannot be discussed here, it is certain that those who formulate theory and do research in the area of career development will be more concerned with such issues in the future. Ultimately, this will result in greater tolerance for and appreciation of racial and cultural difference, as well as in more effective utilization of the manpower available to a given society. It will also result, by necessity, in the increased application of theories and models that are not static, but dynamic and capable of accounting for both individual and contextual change.

Aging of the Population. “The notion of progression or development in ones (sic) career becomes particularly important in light of changing demographics. If age determines what one wants from work or what one is willing to contribute, the industrial democracies are locked into a fate dictated by their aging employees” (London and Greller, p. 142). Indeed, in the United States (and probably in all other industrialized democracies) the percentage of 16-24 year-olds will decline significantly between now and the year 2000, while the percentage of 25-54 year-olds will increase correspondingly (Hoyt, 1988). This means that soon these countries will be in a situation where the largest group of potential (and actual) workers is in late career stages (Greller and Nee, 1989).

These demographic changes, as was observed earlier, are likely to enhance the importance of women in the workplace, and the continued economic well-being of these countries may hinge on how well they integrate workers into the workforce who may have been viewed traditionally as marginal. A strong commitment to education and training may be helpful in bringing such workers into the mainstream of occupational life, but it is likely that in many places more fundamental social and cultural changes will also be required in order to maintain the economic growth that has produced such unprecedented wealth in the postwar period. The implementation of such changes may be particularly difficult at a time when organizational (company) commitment to workers appears to be declining, which is evident in the United States in a doubling of part-time, temporary, and contract employees between 1980 and 1987 (London and Greller, 1991). Similar changes have been observed in other countries as a consequence of “downsizing”, mergers, and shifts in the strategic focus of companies. Whether these forces will have similar consequences in Japan remains to be seen.

The challenge to career theory and research is formidable. The gradual shift from an earlier emphasis on initial career choice to a lifespan perspective, observed by Osipow (1991), must certainly continue. Career development theory must not only deal with the whole life-span, but it must also gradually move from what Super (1990) has called segmental theory to a more integrated and comprehensive approach. Super’s (1980) emphasis on the differential salience of multiple life roles represents a bold step in that direction. Indeed, there has been an increasing amount of research examining the impact of multiple roles on both work and non-work functioning, but, as Hackett, et al. (1991) conclude, this research has perhaps raised more questions than it has answered.

Nevertheless, the voluminous literature on multiple roles has served to sensitize researchers to the fact that work can only be understood within the total context of a person’s life (Cook, 1991). Much of the research has focused on the multiple roles of women (e.g., homemaker and worker outside of the home), but relatively little research has been done on the multiple role demands of men, although there are notable exceptions (Gilbert, 1988; Rosin, 1990). Cook (1991, p. 119) may have captured the emerging reality best with the following statement: “Today many women, and men as well, organize their days, make occupational decisions, and see into the future in a manner that pictures work as inextricably blended with other life joys and responsibilities.” The days when people are either able or willing to view and treat work and non-work aspects of their lives as

separate appear to be numbered. Optimally, the consequence will be nothing less than a circumstance in which the work and nonwork roles of people complement and enrich each other.

Finally, it should be noted that the aging of the population has resulted in increased attention being given to transitions. London and Greller (1991) have suggested that better understanding of important transitions may be of great importance. Moreover, they suggested that four kinds of transitions will be increasingly important in the 1990's: Career transitions occurring at mid-life, role transitions affecting women and older workers (including retirement), transitions caused by organizational (company) changes, and the initial transition (socialization) into the work culture. Much more needs to be learned, however, about the health implications of these transitions (cf. Vondracek, et al., 1986, pp. 145-151), and about how to mobilize organizational, societal, and individual resources in order to support transitions and make them successful for all involved.

Conclusions

My goal in writing this paper has been to examine contemporary issues and trends in career development. This is a formidable task, indeed, and there is little question that I have failed in some respects. The field of career development is simply too complex and extensive to allow anyone to do justice to it in one brief paper. Perhaps I have succeeded, however, in identifying some of the major issues and in explaining how the developmental-contextual approach to life-span career development may offer a means to address them.

The most important message that stems from this approach is that research and theory must cross levels of analysis (i.e., the individual, the organization, the culture), rather than focus on one level alone. "Sociological variables (e.g., culture) interact with organizational conditions (e.g., structure, job design, and personnel practices) creating a need for individual development (e.g., counseling and training) and affecting personal well-being and organization effectiveness" (London and Greller, 1991, p. 152). Hackett, et al., have suggested that this would "... advance our knowledge of vocational issues in a way that continuing loyalty to one level of analysis cannot." They go on to note that "this is not an issue of method per se, but rather one of interdisciplinary, multilevel conceptualization and theory-building" (1991, p. 28).

Calls for more complex and global conceptualizations have been issued by virtually

every reviewer who has examined any aspect of the field of career development. People who have attempted such conceptualizations have quickly discovered, however, why the number of people calling for such developments has far exceeded the number of people attempting to produce them. The main problem lies in the fact that research opportunities and the professional careers of researchers in the field are generally tied to their specific disciplines. Moreover, interdisciplinary theorizing and research are more difficult than discipline-bound endeavors, and they are usually not appropriately rewarded. In addition, broad, interdisciplinary conceptualizations are, by necessity, very ambitious, thus opening the door to (sometimes inappropriate) criticism (e.g., Gottfredson, 1983).

The second important message that I have tried to communicate is that the field of career development will continue to flourish only if it succeeds in addressing real issues of real people. That means that career theorists and researchers must be in touch with, and understand the people whose careers they are trying to understand, regardless of whether the issue involves the successful integration of minorities or women into the workforce or the utilization of newly arrived immigrant workers. The other side of the equation requires that these same theorists and researchers be in touch with, and understand the contexts within which people are functioning.

For Japanese researchers it may be particularly important to discover for themselves how Japanese culture influences career development in Japan. Simply applying models and conceptualizations developed in different cultures is unlikely to do justice to the complex phenomenon of career development. And while we can certainly learn much from each other, the most important lessons are learned sometimes when we learn to appreciate and value our differences, rather than when we try to proceed as if these differences did not exist.

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