

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CAREER COUNSELING AND ITS  
SIGNIFICANCE IN EDUCATION

by

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**ABSTRACT**

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For the past century career counseling has changed and evolved in response to world events. Theories have been postulated, published and revised with continued research within the field of career counseling. This review of literature outlines pivotal concepts and findings in order to help educate counselors and instructors about historical and current trends in career counseling. It is important that counselors have a proper understanding of career counseling history and theory in order for them to be competent counselors.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Assumptions.....	6
Limitations .....	7
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	8
Historical Overview.....	8
Theories.....	12
Holland’s Theory .....	12
Theory of Work Adjustment.....	15
Life Span, Life Space Theory .....	17
Theory of Circumscription and Compromise .....	18
Social Learning Theory.....	20
Social Cognitive Career Theory.....	23
Chapter Three: Summary, Critical Analysis and Recommendations .....	26
Summary.....	26
Critical Analysis and Recommendations .....	32
References.....	38

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Career counseling has existed for over a century and has changed and evolved with the trends of society. Currently, career counseling is defined as an interpersonal process aimed at helping individuals with career development problems in the area of choosing, entering, adjusting to and advancing in an occupation (Brown & Brooks, cited in Stewart, 1999). Career counseling is different from other areas within the field of counseling, as it focuses on the specific process of career development and career issues and not on areas such as mental health issues, family concerns, et cetera. Ultimately, career counselors enable individuals to answer the all-important question of “Who am I?” (Greene, 2002).

To answer the question, of “Who am I?”, it is important for counselors to work with students at a young age. School counselors may work with students as young as four years old to introduce them to a variety of careers. It has been shown that career counseling is beneficial when started at a young age, because it helps students have a better understanding of what careers are and prepares students to become employable. When addressing career development at school, counselors may focus on career exposure, work preparation and basic skill development (Pitts, n.d.).

Career counselors do not fit into one distinct role or work in one particular area. Career counselors are many different people, attempting to guide diverse individuals through the often-frustrating process of obtaining, changing or quitting a job. Career counselors are found in elementary, middle and high schools as school counselors.

Colleges and universities have career advisors and counselors, usually located in a central career center on campus. The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has career counselors who provide services for individuals with exceptional needs. Mental health counselors also work with clients who are having career problems and need support working through job employment concerns. Finally, there are counselors who specialize specifically in career counseling. These counselors work with people who have been referred to them by a corporation or work with individuals who are seeking individual counseling on their own. No matter what role a career counselor chooses, the literature shows a need for career counselors in the United States and abroad.

“Only one-third of adults in the United States were in their current jobs as a result of conscious planning” (Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p. 1). Isaacson and Brown (2000) found that only fifty percent of subjects sampled were satisfied with their jobs. There are a large number of unsatisfied workers employed in fields they did not plan to enter. The above statistics are glaring evidence that the system of career education is insufficient.

There is a need for career counselors in a variety of realms. In recent history, the United States has seen an increase in the number of students planning to attend college and post-secondary training programs. In research done by Rothstein (2001), it was found that ninety percent of high school students state they will go to college. Realistically, not all these students will enter an institution of higher education, but with the amount of students wanting to attend college, it is clear how important the role of career counseling can be. Changes need to be made in career counseling in order to provide the best resources to individuals as they enter school or work. High school students are at a critical stage in life where they need to make decisions that have lasting

ramifications for their futures (Mau, Hitchcock, & Calvert, 1998). While this is a decision that parents do not want students making without education, an increasing number of students have been observed seeking guidance in selecting a career or post-secondary education (Parsons, 1997).

Rothstein (2001) found that many high school students are choosing professions similar to those chosen by their peers. Thirty-five percent of students reported wanting to become an architect, engineer, health professional, or social or natural scientist (Rothstein, 2001). While it is refreshing to see so many students reaching to achieve high standards, it also shows that many students do not know what career choices are available or what certain career choices involve.

While it appears that a high percentage of students are choosing the same professions, there has been a shift in the type of careers society can expect in the future (Arnold, 1997). It has been predicted that careers in the future will be less secure, and there will be more movement between jobs (Ross & Shillington, cited in Cahill & Martland, n.d.). In the future people will also have to be more flexible about the kind of work they do. The need for continual education will also become more important, especially in the field of technology (Arnold, 1997).

Another purpose of this study is to address the ethical and legal obligations that career counselors have to know. Career counselors must understand the subject matter and have the skills to provide effective career counseling services. Counselors are ethically and legally bound to only counsel in areas in which they feel competent and in which they are trained. Engaging in untrained career counseling would be the same as a

counselor trying to counsel someone with bipolar disorder if he/she were not competent or had not had training in that area. This would be ethically unacceptable.

The study also addresses the growing need for career counseling, as many more individuals are seeking career guidance (Herr, 1997). Career counseling is no longer only for a few people, but now hundreds of thousands are seeking and using career counselors. With more individuals using career counselors, it is important that these counselors have a complete understanding of the numerous theories to counsel the diverse number of clients. Along with the greater numbers seeking career counseling, there have been studies suggesting that the career counseling provided by counselors in schools is not effective in the minds of the client, thus showing a need for quality counseling (Blanton & Larrabee, 1999). This lack of satisfaction may also show that the client's expectations are different than what the career counselors provide as services.

This study is important because it deals with the many barriers that counselors face while in the field of career counseling. With a better understanding of career counseling, counselors will be able to avoid setbacks and problems that past counselors have experienced. Counseling should be a process that is efficient, effective, and facilitated by a counselor who has a strong understanding of the client and the process that the individual is experiencing. Counselors also need to have a diverse understanding of career counseling in order to adapt to the ever-changing job market. Today's job market is drastically different from that of ten or fifteen years ago, and counselors need to be able to adapt to these changes (Arnold, 1997).

Another reason for this paper and a general understanding of career counseling is that the field is so diverse that it is difficult to find a unifying theory or perspective. With

the multitude of perspectives on career counseling, it has been difficult for many to develop a set process for career counseling. Understanding of a multitude of theories will allow the counselor to adapt to the clients' specific needs and to use specific theories to facilitate change in the client (Cochran, 1994). Understanding a basic framework of career theories and putting them into practice allows counselors to conceptualize and develop creative and effective career interventions (Lent & Brown, 1996).

It is also important that career counselors have an understanding of past research, so they avoid mistakes made in the past. Without knowing and understanding the past, one is destined to make the same mistakes as his or her predecessors. The purpose of career counseling is to help an individual who is having difficulties related to employment, and to explore careers that best fit an individual's needs, personality and interests. It is important that career counselors have a strong understanding of the theories surrounding career counseling to best work with clients.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Counselors and educators need to have a thorough understanding of career counseling, its theories and trends. To counter a lack of information by many education professionals, this study will better help counselors and educators about the different theories to use while career counseling. By providing more extensive information on career theories and strategies, counselors are better able to serve students. Understanding the evolution of career counseling will enable counselors to have a complete and holistic view of career counseling.

#### *Definition of Terms*

For the clarity of understanding, the following terms are defined:



*Vocation* – the particular occupation for which one is trained

(<http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/vocation>, downloaded November 14, 2003)

*Career* - one's advancement through life, especially in a profession (Abate, 1997).

*Career Counseling* – an interpersonal process aimed at helping individuals with career development problems in the area of choosing, entering, adjusting to and advancing in an occupation (Brown & Brooks cited in Stewart, 1999)

*Dictionary of Occupational Titles* – reference guide to explore occupation options

*Government Issue (GI) Bill of Rights* – was passed into law in June of 1944 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The bill provided benefits for veterans of World War II. Benefits included education and training, loans, unemployment compensation, job-finding assistance, priority on building materials and military review of dishonorable discharges (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/education/GI-Bill.thm>, downloaded July 7, 2003).

### *Assumptions*

There are several assumptions evident in this research. First, career counseling is a valid branch of counseling directly supported by research and is needed across age groups. Another assumption made is that career counseling is an evolving and constantly changing field, where counseling for any person needs to be individualized. Other assumptions made by the author are that career counseling is appropriate in several environments, including school curriculums.

*Limitations*

There are limitations associated with this research. First, career counseling is diverse in theory and practice, and there is no coherent way to judge theoretical or practical progress (Cochran, 1994). Second, the focus of this study has been on career counselors and has not explored extensively other professions like mental health counseling that counsel people in career exploration and development.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### *Historical overview*

Career counseling is a field where there has been a multitude of changes during the past century. Numerous social and economic factors have forced the United States and other countries to reevaluate their practices of guiding individuals into various professions. Pope (2000) explains that there have been six stages in the development of career counseling in the United States.

According to Pope (2000) the first stage in the development of career counseling took place around the turn of the twentieth century. Original career counselors (previously called vocational counselors) came into existence due to the mass migration from the fields and farms of America to the large urban centers where heavy industry required more workers. The focus of this stage in career counseling was job placement. With the onset of child labor laws, many industries lost cheap available labor. Large businesses looked to career counselors for replacements. Due to the importance of career counselors at this time, the first organization of counselors was formed. This organization was known as The National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA).

During this stage Frank Parsons introduced his revolutionary work involving career counseling. Parsons helped clients develop an understanding of themselves and of the world of work. This led to a client's realization about the true reasoning about one's self and work (Engels & Minor, 1995). Parsons established the Vocation Bureau as the

first career counseling center in the United States (Hartung & Bluestein, 2002). Parsons' work during this period formed the basis of contemporary career counseling.

At the end of World War I, the United States entered the second stage in the history of career counseling. This stage spanned from the end of World War I until the onset of World War II. During this period, the United States and the world entered into the Great Depression. Educational counselors emerged during this stage, with reformers such as Jesse B. Davis in Detroit, who helped students with educational and career issues. Along with the new reformers, the first publication of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles came into print (Pope, 2000).

While the Great Depression was the major social factor affecting the second stage, the third stage faced the return of hundreds of thousands of World War II veterans into the workforce. With the influx of men and women who spent the last few years in the military, America had to figure out where to place these newly arriving workers. The GI Bill of Rights helped many of these soldiers pursue a college degree, instead of directly entering the workforce. With the increase in nontraditional students enrolling at universities, the role of career counselors was again forced to evolve (Pope, 2000).

In 1957, the Soviet Union launched two satellites into space. Sputnik and Lunik II were the first man-made objects launched into space and onto the moon. These events made the United States rethink its stance on education and career placement. At this time in history, there was an enormous push for students to enter the fields of mathematics and science, because people feared that the Soviet Union was going to get the upper hand on the United States. Counselors were asked to streamline students into fields that would best benefit the nation (Pope, 2000). It was during that time that schools began to hire

school counselors to make the students' transitions from high school to career or college more smooth.

The 1960's and 1970's were a very tumultuous time in United States history, with Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and economic highs dominating the headlines. Americans were aware that they needed to work in order to live, but the idea of holding a job that was meaningful and allowed them to help make global change was a new philosophy. In order for workers to find jobs, they looked towards career counselors to guide them (Pope, 2000).

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy took the lead in the 1960's and appointed a committee to research the field of career counseling. The committee suggested that counselors were to be first and foremost professional. Each counselor should also be well educated about pupil services, occupational information, vocational guidance and counseling. This committee laid the foundation for what modern school guidance counselors should be (Pope, 2000).

The fourth stage was a time of economic highs, while the fifth stage saw the economy slant in the opposite direction. The world was in transition from the Industrial Age to the technological age. This transition caused many people to lose their jobs in industrial areas. With the economy in recession, there were fewer jobs and more people looking for employment (Pope, 2000).

As a result of the changes occurring in the United States, a call came for more career counselors. These counselors were not just for students, but also for people who had been laid off or unemployed. With this new trend came the emergence of private practice career counselors. Private practice counselors are part of a burgeoning industry,

where new companies are entering to take advantage of the limited competition (Paul, 2000). These new organizations offer assistance to adults and to students. Many companies have attempted to break into the public school system in order to offer students a better college counseling experience than high school counselors can offer (Ganeshanathan, 2000). With the increased competition in the career counseling field, the National Vocational Guidance Association developed a set of credentials for practice (Pope, 2000). These credentials were developed in order for career counselors to have set guidelines for professional practice.

The final stage Pope (2000) described encompasses the decade of the 1990's. In this stage, career counselors have evolved to help outplaced senior executives, the homeless and poverty-stricken, and schools. Ultimately, career specialties developed to best help the diverse group of people seeking career counseling. With downsizing taking place in many large businesses, top-level executives have been forced to reenter the job market. Private business headhunters have taken many of these highly skilled workers and provided services to them. Headhunters will work with high level employees to help them find a new job.

While the nation has top level workers seeking jobs, it also has individuals who are poor and need assistance to recover from personal downfalls. People who have been able to collect federal assistance are being forced to seek employment due to federal laws limiting the time a person may collect public assistance. This is an area where career counselors are asked to take a more active role.

Schools have also continued to need counselors since John F. Kennedy set forth the committee to research career counseling in schools in the 1960's. School guidance

counselors have a responsibility to provide career counseling programs for students as they prepare to enter either the workforce or an institution of higher learning. Schools in many areas are providing these services to students from kindergarten through high school.

Finally, a more recent trend in career counseling has been to specialize in a particular area. Areas may include working with multicultural populations, senior executives, and international relocation. Since countries are becoming more reliant on each other, a new breed of career counselor has emerged, focusing on providing skilled workers to countries other than the United States.

### *Career Theories*

Intertwined within the history and stages of career counseling are common theories introduced and reworked by a multitude of scholars in the field. It is important for career counselors to have a clear, conceptualized theoretical orientation in order to best serve those with career concerns (Osipow & Fitzgerald, cited in Beale, 2001). A review of the most influential career theories is in the following sections.

### *Holland's Theory*

John Holland's theory has been extremely influential since it was introduced in 1959; many researchers enjoy the simplicity and intuitiveness that Holland based his theory on. Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment aims to answer three fundamental questions. These questions are: What characteristics of a person and his/her environment lead to a positive vocational outcome? What characteristics of a person and his/her environment lead to career stability or change over

a lifetime? What are the most effective ways to assist people with career concerns?

(Holland, 1973; Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

The premise for Holland's theory is that career choice is an expression of one's personality and that people in similar occupations will have similar personality characteristics and life histories. Holland introduced four working assumptions in his career theory. The first assumption is that people's personalities can fit into six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional (Holland, 1973; Isaacson & Brown, 2000). Individuals are not restricted to one personality type, and will often be a combination of several personality types (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Someone may, for example, be CES (conventional, enterprising and social). Holland placed the six personality types in a hexagonal structure with similar personalities being closer to each other on the hexagon (Figure 1). An example would be the personality type of RI which stands for realistic investigative.

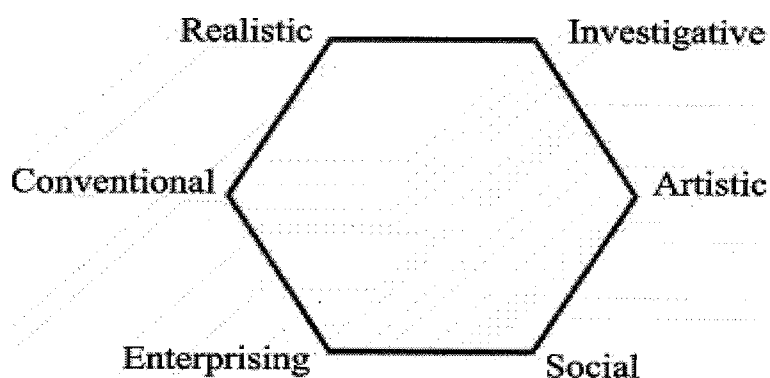


Figure 1



The second assumption of Holland's theory builds off the six personality types in the above assumption, suggesting that environments can be categorized into one of six model types. These types are identical to the personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. The dominant individuals in the environment characterize each environment. For example if a person has a conventional realistic personality, the environment will have a tendency to be conventional realistic. Holland's theory argues that people who have similar constellations (personality types) will congregate in certain work environments (Holland, 1973; Isaacson & Brown, 2000).

Holland's third assumption combines his first two assumptions by stating that people pursue work environments that allow them to use their unique personality traits. Environments also seek individuals who have similar traits to the people in a given work environment. An environment makes its selection by such activities as social functions, and the interview and selection process (Holland, 1973; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

The fourth assumption of Holland's theory is that personality and environment interact to produce behavior. Thus, if we know someone's personality and environmental type, we can make assumptions on vocational choice, achievement, job tenure, job turnover and job satisfaction. This is an extremely useful tool in career counseling when matching an individual to a career (Holland, 1973; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Holland also discusses four constructs, which describe the relationships between a person's personality type or environment types and between people and environments. These four constructs are congruence, differentiation, consistency and identity. Congruence is a match between personality and environment. If there is a match between personality and environment, a person is likely to have job satisfaction and job tenure.

People who work in environments similar to their personality type will have the freedom to express their ideas in a friendly environment (Holland, 1973; Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Another construct is differentiation. Differentiation deals with how distinct a person is with his or her likes and dislikes. Consistency is the third construct and addresses personality types in close proximity to each other on Holland's Hexagon. According to Holland, a consistent person would have personalities types close together on the hexagonal structure. Finally, identity is a measure of how clear someone is in regards to his/her interests and talents. The above four constructs are used in conjunction with a person's personality and his/her environment types. Individuals who are congruent, differentiated, consistent and have a strong identity are more likely to experience job satisfaction and be well-adjusted (Swanson & Fouad, 1999; Holland, 1973).

#### *Theory of Work Adjustment*

The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) has been researched by many different authors, with a lion's share of the work being done by Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1965). TWA is very similar to Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment, except TWA emphasizes vocational adjustment, while the emphasis of Holland is on vocational choice. The constructs of TWA help predict if a person will be satisfied at a job and how long that person will remain at the job. If a person is not satisfied at a job, TWA will try to match an individual with an environment in which that person will succeed (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

The basic assumption of TWA is that people have two types of needs, biological (e.g., food) and psychological (e.g., social acceptance). Another assumption of TWA is that individuals and environments both have needs, and that people find a way to satisfy such needs. When the needs of the environment and the individual are met, there is correspondence or harmony (Isaacson & Brown, 2000).

TWA explores two dimensions. The first dimension is an individual's ability in relation to the abilities required by a job. TWA looks at this based on an individual's level of satisfactoriness or how well individuals' abilities and skills meet the occupation or organization requirements. The second dimension of TWA is an individual's needs and work values, in relation to rewards associated with the occupation. This is discussed in regard to satisfaction, or how well needs are met by a job. It is essential that a person realizes that satisfaction and satisfactoriness are equally important predictors in work adjustment (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

TWA also attempts to predict how long someone will stay at a job. Length of stay at a job depends on an individual's level of satisfaction and his/her ability to meet the job requirements. TWA emphasizes the measurement of abilities and values to facilitate the match of an individual to a work environment. TWA proposes two questions that can help a person predict whether he/she is a match for a particular job. First, does the individual have the needed abilities to succeed at the occupation? Second, are the rewards offered by the job enough to keep the individual at the job? If a person can answer yes to the above two questions, the tenure at a place of employment should be long and satisfying (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

If there is dissatisfaction in an occupation, either on the part of the individual or the environment, there will be disequilibrium. There are four areas where disequilibrium may occur: individual skill, individual needs (rewards), environmental ability requirements and environmental rewards. An individual can change the disequilibrium in either an active mode or a reactive mode. In an active mode the individual would try to change the work environment. If, for example, the individual believed s/he were overworked, s/he may ask the employer to adjust his/her responsibilities, or assign him/her to another associate. If the individual were to change something about him/herself, it would be in the reactive mode. An example would be for an individual to improve his/her organizational skills in order to keep up with the work assigned to him/her (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

#### *Super's Life Span, Life Space Theory*

Donald Super had written extensively on career development before his death and has made many changes in his theory over the last half century. Life Span, Life Space theory has many segments that branch off from the original theory. Super has stated that his theory is not well-constructed and that there is no cement to hold all the pieces together. The following review will look at some of the most important aspects of Super's theory (Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Super, 1949; Super, 1957).

Life Span, Life Space Theory is based on the premise that vocational development is a process of making several decisions, which culminate in vocational choices that represent an implementation of a person's self-concept. Each individual is different, resulting in some occupations being a good fit for some, while not at all a good fit for others. Two of the most important parts to Super's theory are the life stages and

life roles, which are discussed in detail below (Super, 1949; Super, 1957; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

According to Super there are five life stages: Growth, ages four to thirteen; exploration, ages fourteen to twenty-four; establishment, ages twenty-five to forty-four; maintenance, ages forty-five to sixty-five; and disengagement, over age sixty-five. At each stage, there are developmental tasks. If a person is successful at these tasks, s/he is considered to function normally at the specified stage. Not everyone progresses through each stage in the same manner or at the same rate. A person may get stuck and progress through the stage slower than another. An example of this at the establishment stage is not being sure what he or she wants to do for his or her career. Career maturity is the term given to children and adolescents who effectively master the developmental tasks of a stage. Developmental tasks can be attitudinal or cognitive. For adults career adaptability is the readiness to cope with changing work and changing work conditions (Super, 1949; Super, 1957; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

While there are five stages in life, Super explains that there are six roles a person experiences through life. These include the roles of child, student, homemaker, worker, citizen and leisurite. At any given time, a person could identify with multiple roles, such as child and student or homemaker and worker. Super uses the Life-Career Rainbow to illustrate the relationship that life-space (life-roles) has on life span (life stages) in his theory (Super, 1949; Super, 1957; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

#### *Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise*

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise is similar to Super's Life Span Life Space Theory in many ways, but it differs in that Gottfredson views

vocational choice first as an implementation of social self and second as an implementation of the psychological self. Gottfredson also focuses on cognitive development as children grow aware of themselves and their place in society.

Gottfredson also addresses the concept that children begin to eliminate vocational options at a young age (Gottfredson, 2003; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Gottfredson's theory is based on four basic assumptions of how career aspirations are developed: 1) Career development begins in childhood; 2) career aspirations are attempts to implement self-concept; 3) career satisfaction is dependent on a career that is congruent with self-perceptions; and 4) people develop career stereotypes that assist them in selecting a career. An emphasis of Gottfredson's theory is the process of circumscription. Circumscription is the process narrowing the possibilities of career choices. Gottfredson believes that the elimination of alternatives is progressive and irreversible. (Gottfredson, 2003; Isaacson & Brown, 2000).

Gottfredson divides circumscription into a four-stage model where she feels that children have a greater ability to think abstractly. The first stage of circumscription takes place from ages three to five, when children are able to recognize the differences in size and power. At this time children are also able to recognize simple gender differences. At this stage children use a simple categorization to note differences. An example of this would be for a child to note that bigger people have more power (Gottfredson, 2003; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

In stage two (ages three to five) children continue to observe gender differences and are able to recognize sex roles. At this stage children also believe that their gender is superior to the opposite gender. In stage three (ages nine to thirteen) children are able to

distinguish careers that are more prestigious and the social status that accompanies some careers. For example, a doctor is viewed as more prestigious than a garbage collector (Gottfredson, 2003; Isaacson & Brown, 2000). At this point, children begin to eliminate careers that are not challenging enough and careers that they feel to be too challenging (Gottfredson, 2003; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

In stage four (ages fourteen and older) adolescents have an understanding of their unique selves and are able to internalize concepts without difficulty. At this stage, interests, values and abilities are specified and personalized. Stages one through three eliminate occupations, while in the fourth and final stage adolescents are identifying what occupations are most acceptable to them. Stage four also addresses the process of compromise and the three areas of compromise: sex type, prestige and field of interest. Gottfredson notes that field of interest is the area most likely to be compromised (Gottfredson, 2003; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

#### *Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory*

Social Learning Theory has its roots in Albert Bandura's behavioral theory that also emphasizes reinforcement theory. Krumboltz believes that people are intelligent problem solvers, and that they strive to control their environment (Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Krumboltz, 1983). While they strive for control of their environment, they make choices that lead them to a career.

Krumboltz postulates that there are four factors that influence a person's career path. The first factor is innate genetic factors and special abilities. Some examples of genetic factors are race, gender and physical appearance. Special abilities include talents such as artistic or musical ability (Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Krumboltz, 1983). The

above factors may be restrictive in nature or may help an individual choose a career path. For example, for many years women have had difficulty breaking into such areas as the management of Fortune 500 corporations.

The second factor Krumboltz believes influences career path is environmental conditions. Environmental factors are outside the control of the individual. There are twelve categories of environmental conditions, including social policies and job opportunities. An example of a social policy is affirmative action. Affirmative action is an environmental condition that an individual has no control over, but it may affect his or her career path (Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Krumboltz, 1983).

The third factor is leaning experiences, which is considered the most central factor according to Krumboltz. Social Learning Theory breaks learning experiences into two areas, instrumental learning and associative learning. Instrumental learning is where a person is either reinforced or punished for behaviors. Associative learning is where a neutral stimulus is paired with an emotionally laden stimulus. With this pairing the neutral behavior either becomes positive or negative (Krumboltz, 1983; Swanson & Fouad, 1999). An example of this when discussing careers is a television show like "COPS." Someone might see the excitement the police officer faces and want to become a police officer. Another person may see the danger that may be involved in being a police officer and decide that this is not a profession s/he wants to be a part of.

The fourth and final factor that influences career decision making is task approach skills. Task approach skills are a result of an interaction of innate abilities, environmental conditions and learning experiences. Task approach skills are the skills individuals bring



to a task (Krumboltz, 1983; Swanson & Fouad, 1999). An example of a task approach skill would be an individual's work habits. A person could be or not be a hard worker.

Social Learning Theory believes that the above four factors interact to form generalizations. There are self-observation summarizations, which are observations about oneself. An example of this is an elementary school student coming to the conclusion that she does not have good penmanship because of the grades she has received in handwriting class. There are also worldview generalizations, which are generalizations an individual makes about his/her environment (Krumboltz, 1983; Swanson & Fouad, 1999). For example, a person will believe she will never be able to play professional hockey because she is a woman. These generalizations may be correct or misconceptions.

Krumboltz also states that there are six testable propositions for his career theory. The first three propositions suggest that the subject will like the occupation: 1) S/he has succeeded at tasks similar to the occupation; 2) role models reinforce the occupation; and 3) someone spoke positively about the occupation. The second three propositions suggest the subject will not like the occupation: 1) The person has failed at the task in the past; 2) a role model has not positively reinforced the occupation; and 3) a person has spoken negatively about an occupation (Krumboltz, 1983; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Krumboltz's theory has not been highly researched since the time it was published and is not practiced as often, when compared to other theories. It appears that Krumboltz's theory will continue to be used, but to what extent is unknown. Portions of Social Learning Theory have been borrowed and are used in other researchers' work.

### *Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)*

Social cognitive career theory is based on the research of Albert Bandura and is similar to Krumboltz's theory in some ways. Lent and Brown (1996) are leaders in the field of SCCT (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). SCCT is used as a framework to understand career and academic interests, career choices and level of performance as a result of these choices.

SCCT has a triad of variables that help individuals regulate their career behavior: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals. Self-efficacy beliefs are formed and altered by four primary informational sources: 1) personal performance accomplishments, 2) vicarious learning, 3) social persuasion, and 4) physiological states and reactions. Successful experiences tend to raise self-efficacy beliefs within a given performance domain, while failures will lower self-efficacy (Lent & Brown, 1996).

Outcome expectations are personal beliefs about the future outcome of a behavior. Outcome expectations can play an important role in motivating a certain behavior and can be viewed on a physical, social and self-evaluative level. Outcome expectations deal with the expected results of a specific behavior if an individual goes through with it (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Lent & Brown, 1996).

The third variable is personal goals, which is the intention to engage in a certain activity or to produce a particular outcome (Lent & Brown, 1996). By setting goals, individuals organize and guide their behavior even in the absence of external reinforcement. The goals an individual sets are affected by self-efficacy and outcome

expectations. SCCT suggests that there is a strong interplay between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Lent & Brown, 1996).

There are three other segments in SCCT that need to be discussed in order for this theory to be clarified. The first is the interest segment, which suggests that outcome expectations and self-efficacy beliefs predict interests. Interests predict goals, which lead to behaviors related to choosing and practicing activities, which finally lead to performance attainments. Background and contextual variables help explain why a person does not pursue an interest (Lent & Brown, 1996; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Second, choice proposes that a person's input and background context influence learning experiences, which then influence self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies. An example of this would be a student who is encouraged to study at a museum by her parents and that reading and writing will help develop a strong sense of ability in the science field. The process of making a career choice involves a goal, acting to implement the goal and subsequent consequences to those actions (Lent & Brown, 1996; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

The final segment of SCCT deals with performance, which predicts persistence in pursuing goals. Past performance influences the making of performance goals. A person who has grown up playing basketball and has won numerous awards for his/her success in basketball is an example of how performance may affect career choices (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Interests and choices involve making a career choice, while performance predicts persistence (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). It is important to note that people with the highest level of ability and the strongest self-efficacy beliefs will perform at the highest level

(Isaacson & Brown, 2000). Finally, in making career decisions, people must come to grips with uncertainties, the prospect of other occupations and the type of identity they seek to construct (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

## Chapter III

### Summary, Critical Analysis and Recommendations

#### *Summary of Chapter Two*

Chapter Two is broken down into three sections to help the reader understand the evolution of career counseling. The first section is career counseling; the second section is committed to a historical overview, and the final section deals with various significant career counseling theories. Each of these sections is reviewed below to give the reader a better understanding of career counseling and how it developed into what it is today.

In this first section, career counseling is defined by encompassing four main aspects: choosing a career, entering a career, adjusting to a career and advancing in the career (Brown & Brooks, cited in Stewart, 1999). Section one also addresses in what environment career counselors can be found. Career counselors are employed in schools from kindergarten through post-secondary, vocational rehabilitation departments and mental health fields. Many businesses may also use career counselors. All the above may have individuals who are considered career counselors or who function in the capacity of career counselors.

The career counseling section explains in detail why there is a need for counselors. The research shows that many people are not interested in their jobs and are actively seeking new employment. There has also been research that states eighteen-to twenty-five-year-olds are dissatisfied with the counseling services they receive. Compounding the need for career counselors is the fact that many individuals are applying for the same jobs.

The second section of the chapter describes the history of career counseling from the original research done by Frank Parsons. Parsons has discussed three main topics in career development: understanding one's self, understanding job requirements and the choice based on true logic. This section is divided into six stages involving the evolution of career counseling. The first stage took place around the turn of the twentieth century and included the mass migration of workers from the farm to the urban industrial meccas. Frank Parsons did some of his original work involving career placement during this time.

The second stage took place from the end of World War I to the beginning of World War II. The Great Depression was a major event in this stage, and educational counselors emerged because of the struggles of mass unemployment. The third stage took place from World War II to the end of the 1950's. During this time, Americans suffered a major shock when the Soviets sent the first two man-made objects into space. This affected career counselors because there was a new focus on moving the most qualified individuals into certain careers involving mathematics and sciences.

The fourth stage took place during the 1960's and 1970's, when major social reform was abundant in the United States. President Kennedy supported a study done on what career counselors should be. This research found that the most important quality was professionalism. The fifth stage was during the 1980's when the economy had gone into recession, and there was again an increase in unemployment. There was a need for more counselors and for counselors to work with a more diverse population, not just students.

The final stage was during the 1990's when there was a new clientele for career counselors. Many businesses were downsizing at this time, which led to the phenomenon

of headhunters. Headhunters are people who help upper level executives find new employment opportunities. Career counseling over the last one hundred years has been transformed because of various events in our history. Along with the transition in career counseling has come a multitude of theories on counseling.

The final section deals exclusively with career counseling theories most often used or discussed. Six widely used career counseling theories were explored. The first theory discussed is Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment. This theory is based on six personality and environmental types along with Holland's hexagonal structure (see Figure 1, p. 16). The hexagonal structure of Holland includes realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional personality and environmental types. According to Holland individuals may be more than one personality or environment type, but they are usually similar or next to each other on the hexagon (Holland, 1973; Isaacson & Brown, 2000).

Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment is one of the most widely used theories in career counseling. One reason for this is that Holland's Theory has an extensive library of research done and being done on it. Holland's theory is also thought highly of because many of the instruments used are easy to administer and to interpret. This theory has been tested on special populations and is mostly supported for women and racial/ethnic minorities. Finally, this theory identifies jobs for the different codes (i.e. Realistic Investigative) on Holland's hexagon (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). While Holland's theory is thought of very highly among many career counselors, because of the ease of its use, this may cause its misuse by untrained personnel. It is important that untrained individuals do not attempt to use Holland's approach.

The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) which focuses on predicting work satisfaction and work tenure is also reviewed. According to TWA, people and environments have two types of needs, biological and psychological. When the needs of the individual meet those of the environment, there is harmony. If these needs do not match, it will result in a lack of work satisfaction and a natural movement towards another job or career (Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist, 1965; Swanson & Fouad, 1999; Isaacson & Brown, 2000). While TWA was well-constructed, defined and has been researched quite extensively, it is not being used very often. This is because it parallels Holland's theory so closely. TWA has not been fully examined empirically, which makes it a weaker theory than Holland's.

The next theory reviewed was Donald Super's Life Span, Life Space Theory. Super postulated that vocational development was based on decisions, which led to vocational choices and finally self-concept. Super explains that individuals go through five life stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. People progress through the stages at different speeds because of decisions that need to be made. Super also explains that people may have a number of different roles as they progress through life, including child, student, homemaker, worker and citizen (Super, 1949; Super, 1957; Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Super wrote extensively on his theory before his death, and admitted that the various parts are not tied together well. With Super's passing, other researchers will have to take up the torch for Life Span, Life Space Theory. Another negative for Super's theory is that there has not been much research done on special populations, including ethnic and racial groups. Finally, on the negative side of Super's theory he focuses so



much on later life stages (i.e. career change and retirement) that it may not be as applicable for schools and individuals making their first career choice. On the positive side of this problem having the focal point on later stages in career development makes it a strong theory to use with individuals who have been in the work force for a number of years. In addition, while Super has passed away, he has left a large number of published articles on Life Span, Life Space Theory (Swanson & Fouad, 1999; Isaacson & Brown, 2000).

Fourth, Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise discusses the process of narrowing career choices. Gottfredson states that the elimination of alternatives in regards to career choice is progressive and irreversible. The process of narrowing career choice is broken down into four stages. Stage one includes children noticing simple gender differences. In stage two children are able to recognize sex roles and believe their gender is superior to the opposite gender. Stage three children are able to recognize the more prestigious careers and the status that follows these careers. Finally, in stage four children are able to understand their unique selves and have the ability to internalize concepts with little difficulty (Gottfredson, 2003).

When using Gottfredson's theory, it is important to notice that the focus is on the early stages of career development. This makes the theory very applicable in the school settings, but for later career development, it may not be so useful. Gottfredson has little empirical support for her ideas, which leaves a lot of room for testing to see if her ideas are useful (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). One of the most important things Gottfredson's theory has done has been to stimulate programs that reduce sex typing in occupations. This is due to the breakdown by Gottfredson, of the stages of developing an

understanding of reachable jobs, and the idea of that an individual's gender is the superior one. Individuals believe that their gender is superior to the other gender. This egocentric view is seen in society with comments like; “anything you can do I can do better.”

The fifth theory looked at was Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory. In this theory individuals form generalizations which in turn help them make a career decision. According to Krumboltz, there are four factors that influence career selection: innate genetic factors and abilities, environmental conditions, learning experiences and task approach skills. These four factors interact to form generalizations about an individual that help him or her make decisions on a career (Krumboltz, 1983).

While Krumboltz's ideas are published and explained, the research has not been completed on his idea to prove the effectiveness of his work. There is also limited research done with special populations, which causes concern with working with different groups of people. One of the most difficult pieces in Krumboltz's theory is the process of measuring concepts such as beliefs, thoughts and thinking. These ideas are often difficult to measure.

Finally, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent and Brown (1996) looks at academic interests, career choices and level of performance in regards to career development. According to SCCT, there are three variables that help individuals with career choice: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals. Self-efficacy is increased or lowered in regards to successes and failures in a certain area. Outcome expectations pertain to results of an individual going through with a behavior. Finally, personal goals help an individual organize and guide his or her behaviors to reach his or her ultimate goal (Lent & Brown, 1996).

SCCT is the newest theory in career counseling, so there has not been major support for it at this time. SCCT is thought of highly while working with special populations, including women. While there has been support for working with special populations, due to newness of the theory there are many areas that need to be researched more extensively, including personal characteristics and how they affect career barriers (Albert, 1999).

### *Critical Analysis and Recommendations*

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, there is a distinct need for career counseling to help support individuals in the process of obtaining, changing and quitting from a job. The difficulties that individuals have with obtaining, changing and quitting/retiring from a job will be discussed in the proceeding paragraphs. Holland's theory will be the first one to be discussed.

Holland's theory looks primarily at career choice, which makes it highly useful for individuals looking to obtain their first job. While it is very useful with individuals looking to make the all-important first decision on a career, it is also useful in making transitions from one career to another. Holland's Hexagon (see Figure 1, p.16) and the use of different inventories such as Strong's Interest Inventory are extremely useful in making career change. Along with the results from Strong's Interest Inventory, Holland is able to match careers with a person's personality type. Holland's theory is most pertinent in career exploration and not necessarily in the transition from one job to another. Holland's theory helps the client find what other careers are out there, but it does not necessarily help in the movement from one to another.

TWA does not look at career choice as much as Holland's theory, but focuses on the transition from one job to another. TWA looks at the satisfaction an individual will have at a job and how long the individual stays at that job. This theory really makes sense when working with individuals making career changes and matching them up with a career that they will be happy at.

Super's Life Span, Life Space Theory focuses more on the later stages in life, those being career change and retirement. Super looks at life in stages from growth to disengagement. This theory is one of few that discusses the process of retirement or quitting one's job. Because of this, Super's theory is more suited for individuals already in a career and not so much for that initial exploration.

While Super's theory is often used with individuals who are in a job or retiring from a job, Gottfredson focuses more on early aspirations a child may have and how those affect career choice. Gottfredson's focus makes this theory applicable to young people and the initial decision and formation of career decisions. Gottfredson, like many of the theories already discussed, has her own niche in the career counseling process.

Krumboltz's theory focuses on the process of making career choices to ultimately lead a person to a career. These choices are influenced by genetic factors, environmental conditions, learning experiences and task approach skills. Many of the decisions that Krumboltz talks about are made at a young age, but this theory can also be used with more than just young people.

SCCT focuses on career choices similarly to Krumboltz's theory. This makes it especially useful with individuals making the initial career choice, but also with working with individuals making career transitions. SCCT does not look at the process of

retirement as much as Super's theory, but is more focused on the process of making a career decision.

Career counseling continues to be researched by numerous individuals who are constantly coming up with new ideas and theories of how best to counsel individuals with career concerns. Unfortunately, there is yet to be a theory or practice that has won majority allegiance in the career counseling field. Due to this fact there are a myriad of counseling techniques used to help individuals with career concerns. It would be useful for individuals seeking help to be able to go to different counselors and be able to begin where a prior counselor left off.

Allegiance to one theory has not been made at this time, with many counselors using different theories or a combination of a number of them. Each theory focuses on different areas of career counseling. Holland and TWA look primarily at career choice. Super and Gottfredson look at how careers develop over time, with Super looking at the later stages in career development, and Gottfredson looking more at the early stages in life. Krumboltz believes that career choice is made by an interaction between environment and an individual. Finally, SCCT looks at how career and academic interests develop to form career choice and level of performance. All these theories involve understanding career development, but each one has its own niche that makes it useful in counseling different individuals. This is also the reason that many counselors will use different parts of a number of theories to counsel an individual.

For a career counselor to have knowledge in just one area would make it more difficult for that counselor to be flexible enough to help his or her client in the best way possible. According to Swanson and Fouad (1999) when they looked at different clients

from only one perspective, they found themselves asking very different questions and taking noticeably different approaches to career counseling.

Both Swanson and Fouad (1999) were trained in TWA, but both used approaches from many of the different theories. This helped them best facilitate change in their clients. It is also important for counselors to have a proper understanding of each theory they use in order to explain the reason for the counselor's approach. If they do not have a proper understanding of a theory, they may be misusing it, to the detriment of their client. The importance of being able to use a variety of approaches is only as important as having a proper understanding of the theory to use it effectively.

Upon analysis of individuals practicing career counseling, it was discovered that there are a number of people doing career counseling in a number of different fields. This can create a problem, as many of these counselors have not been trained in career counseling techniques. There are counselors who are not qualified to be working with individuals with career issues. As a result of counselors who are not qualified counseling individuals with career concerns, there are clients who are not being properly serviced, and the counselor is breaking ethical standards by practicing outside of his/her competency. A good example of this would be a counselor discussing the importance of a student taking a college entrance examine like the ACT or SAT in order to get into a technical college in Wisconsin. It is known among competent counselors that the ACT or SAT is not required for technical college admission.

According to Isaacson and Brown (2000) there are seven points that career counselors need to demonstrate to be working ethically as career counselors. First, knowledge of the ethical standards of the American Association for Counseling and

Development is very important. Second, knowledge about current ethical and legal issues pertaining to career counseling needs to be known. Third, knowledge about career counseling issues regarding special populations, i.e. women, should be learned. Fourth, knowledge of current ethical and legal issues in relation to computer-assisted career guidance should be kept up with. Fifth, an ability to apply ethical standards to career counseling and consulting situations should be understood. Sixth, an ability to recognize situations where consultation is needed is very important. Finally, knowledge of state and federal statutes regarding client confidentiality is important for career counselors.

Ethically, a counselor must have a strong understanding of these seven points in order to protect his or her client. An example of this would be a counselor who does not have an understanding of the needs of special populations of students. Another example of this would be the career counseling being provided to immigrants to the United States. In recent years there has been an influx of immigrants from Somalia in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. There is no doubt that career counseling for these individuals is going to be substantially different than that for native Midwesterners.

It is important that career counselors make an effort to understand the various career counseling theories in order to better provide services for their clients. It is with this effort that individuals seeking career counseling will be best served. With a better understanding of career theories, counselors will be able to continue the career work started by another counselor with a client who wants or needs to address career concerns.

Training for counselors involved in career counseling needs to be further explored. With a multitude of counselors doing career counseling, it is important that they have proper training in the field. It is important for counselors who have not had

adequate career counseling training to refer clients to a qualified counselor, so clients get accurate career information and the support they need.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

Recommendations for future research include research on the newer theories that are coming to the forefront. A theory like SCCT is a recent theory where there has not been a lot of time to evaluate and research the different aspects of how effective SCCT is. There also needs to be more research done on theories like Super's where after his death no one has taken up the gauntlet to continue where he left off. Each theory can always be examined more or broken down in a different way to gain a better understanding of its effectiveness and usefulness.

One of the areas in which all of these theories could be more researched would be their use with special populations. While some theories have shown support in use with special populations (TWA), others, like Krumboltz's theory, have little research done to support the use of the theory with different populations. It is important for research to be done in order to provide support for individuals from diverse groups, not just one specific population.

While there has been research done on specific theories, there is a need for research to be done on the use of multiple theories in the effort to career counsel. Many counselors do not use just one theory, but use a combination of theories to support a client. It would be interesting to see research or more case studies done on counselors as they use a more eclectic approach to facilitate change in a client.



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