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Tracing the Historical Roots of Career Theory in Management and Organization Studies

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Contemporary career theory, from within organization studies and management, is commonly traced back to the late 1970s (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989b). These years saw not only the publication of three seminal books on career (Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978; Van Maanen, 1977) but also an abundance of discussion and collaboration among organizational scholars. A series of informal seminars and meetings—one a "Mobile Career Seminar" (in which the third author participated) organized and led by Donald E. Super in the early 1970s,

others held by academics in the Boston area[1]—as well as some informal exploratory sessions at Academy of Management meetings later led to the formation of an interest group at the Academy in the late 1970s. The group became a full-fledged division in the early 1980s. However, this inaugural phase says very little about the long intellectual history that informs that seminal 1970s work. In addition, although there have been a number of review pieces on the state of career theory in the past 25 years (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989a; Savickas, 2000; Schein, 1989;

Sonnenfeld & Kotter, 1982) as well as histories of its various strains (Betz, Fitzgerald, & Hill, 1989; Dalton, 1989; Hall, 2004; Maranda & Comeau, 2000; Super, 1983), career theory, like most organizational scholarship, tends toward ahistoricism (Weiss, 1990). This is an exaggeration, of course, but the core of the criticism remains true. People have been thinking and theorizing about the purpose of work in their lives since long before the inauguration of the informal group organized by Donald Super in the 1970s.

With constant impatience to be moving on to the next, new, "cutting-edge" theory, it can become easy not only to forget (or ignore) the past but also to reinvent the wheel. Certainly, it is true that the contemporary careers field within organization studies did find its feet as a result of that group of researchers collectively defining the field 30 years ago.[2] However, accepting this birth date as specific rather than as a serendipitous catalyst that allowed the careers field to find a home within managerial theory makes likely the rediscovery and false authorship attribution of old ideas. Though the specific use of the term *career* within the sociological and psychological literatures does seem to have a short history—the word itself did not commonly appear in reference to one's professional life or life course until the early 20th century (*Oxford English Dictionary [OED]*, 1933)—theorists have been investigating the hows and whys of individuals' occupations and life courses for centuries.

This chapter takes an explicitly long-range, historical view of the roots of organizational career theory and attempts to trace back its early influences until that catalytic period of the late 1970s. First, it endeavors to "rediscover" the influences—direct and indirect—of early theorists on the nascent careers literature within the three main tributaries of career theory, which we will identify shortly. Second, it attempts to clarify how those influences speak to the early work in the careers field. At the conclusion of the chapter, we will outline a series of intellectual tensions within the history of career theory highlighted by this long-range overview of the field and comment on how these early works, both within the careers field and prior to its existence, may continue to provide inspiration to contemporary career theorists.

THE TRIBUTARIES OF CAREER THEORY

The relative newness of careers as an identified area of study and the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the field has meant that there is rarely consensus about the main intellectual tributaries that feed into career theory's core writings. That so many fields have the potential to inform career theory works against a coherent history of the area, and dissatisfaction with the current siloed nature of the careers field has been lamented in earlier commentaries (Arthur et al., 1989a; Schein, 1989).

Overviews of the field tend to fall into one of two general trends regarding the main influences on career theory. The first trend is to stick to the disciplines that most directly inform the area: sociology and psychology. Barley writes that a comprehensive history of career theory would require an intellectual history of both sociology and psychology (Barley, 1989), calling both disciplines important branches in career theory's "genealogical tree" (Barley, 1989, p. 60). In a similar vein, an early historic overview of the field identified four main, and predominantly siloed, areas of study within the careers literature: (1) a sociological perspective, focused on the social and class determinants of career; (2) an individual differences perspective, focused on predicting how static dispositional differences influence career choice and success; (3) a developmental perspective, focused on a dynamic understanding of career stages; and (4) a life cycle perspective, focused on the individual psychology behind a dynamic vision of career over the life course (Sonnenfeld & Kotter, 1982). The second trend takes a more expansive view of the historic threads of career theory. An example is a later overview of the field (Arthur et al., 1989a), which invited career theorists to attend to the transdisciplinary influences of anthropology, economics, political science, and history on career studies, as well as the more traditional influences of psychology and sociology.

In an effort to create a manageable scope for this chapter, we have decided to take a longer-range view than the main overviews of the field thus far but to retain the more narrow focus on the psychological and sociological roots of career theory's genealogical tree. Tributaries

from philosophy, history, anthropology, and literature are noted as they relate to these psychological and sociological roots, though they deserve a more comprehensive treatment elsewhere. When one looks back on the early theory from these disciplines, which helped inform the genesis of the careers field of study, what does one find? How ought the main areas of influence be categorized, and how can their intellectual histories be traced? Recognizing that all boundaries are by necessity somewhat arbitrary, the chapter is divided into three sections, which, for the most part, conform to the general categories developed in Sonnenfeld and Kotter's (1982) review. A fourth, concluding section develops a series of tensions that we have identified as themes across the disciplinary histories and comments on how they remind current career theory of where it has been and might go.

The first section focuses on career theory from a sociological perspective, discussing the theoretical roots that attend to the structural influences over one's working life and the interplay between individuals and institutions; ethnographic and anthropological influences are also relevant here. The second section focuses on career theory from a vocational perspective and details the early theory around "matching men [*sic*] with jobs"; this section taps into the individual differences tradition in psychology and also dovetails with early educational history in the United States and around the period of the World Wars. The third section focuses on career theory from a developmental perspective and encompasses a wide range of psychological perspectives on human adaptation to work over the life course.

Though both the second and the third sections are predominantly psychological in perspective, early vocational theory tends to have a more static view of human nature, with a view to predicting how well individuals will perform in different occupations or jobs, while developmental career theory maintains an intentionally dynamic view of human nature, with a view to understanding how careers and individuals change and adapt over the life course. Finally, while realizing that true transdisciplinary work remains an important goal for the careers field, we believe that it is justified here to leave the three streams separate, as they each derive from different intellectual traditions; yet to help, in future, mitigate against the siloed present, we close the chapter with a commentary about how a long-range view across disciplines can reinvigorate career theory in general and transdisciplinary work in particular.

It is important to note that taking a long-range, historic view of career theory necessitates understanding a point that is often missed while glossing over the potential history of this field: The term *career*—as "a course of professional life or employment, which affords opportunity for progress or advancement in the world" (*OED*, 1933)—is relatively recent (Chapter 1). There is evidence that it was beginning to be used in this sense in the 19th century, in Britain at least, but it is likely that this usage did not become common until the 20th century. The original meaning of *career*—a course on which a race is run or the speed or trajectory of the course of the race—was the only definition discussed in Samuel Johnson's early dictionary of the English language (1755/1979). The *OED* (1989) cites a number of 19th-century British sources that pick up a sense of a passage through a working life, while the first major American dictionary (Hunter et al., 1895) echoes Johnson's definitions and only briefly adds "a course or line of life" as a "figurative" definition of *career*.

It is not until the first *OED* (1933) that we begin to see the modern development of *career* to mean one's professional life course. Therefore, understanding the importance of earlier terms used to describe one's professional or occupational choices or path, including having a "calling" or a "vocation" as well as work on moral or religious education on the proper course one ought to take in life, is critical to appreciating the roots of career theory. In tracing back the roots of career theory, it is important to remember that to have contemporary relevance, the use of terms similar to those in common usage is not required (see Giddens, 1971, p. viii).

CAREER THEORY FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The sociological perspective on careers is characterized by theory and research that focus on

broader levels of analysis: It is concerned with the social structures, cultural norms, and institutions that define, direct, and constrain people's actions at the societal level as well as how those structural forces shape the cultural norms around how individuals are employed and find their course through life and determine and shape individuals' behavior as they navigate through institutions, professions, and occupations. For example, career theories of occupational and professional boundary definition, mobility, status assignment, and constraints on occupational choice all have roots in early sociology. A number of early sociological theorists—most important, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and Max Weber (1864–1920) in particular—both directly or indirectly contributed to the early work in the careers field, most notably that of Everett Hughes (1928–1956/1958) and also the work of Erving Goffman (especially Goffman, 1959), Howard Becker (1952; Becker, Geer, Strauss, & Hughes, 1961), and Edgar Schein (1971, 1978), among others.

Durkheim

A number of Durkheim's theories are directly relevant to the study of careers, though the "explicit recognition that career could be fruitfully studied as a formal concept" was not directly made in sociology until Hughes' work almost half a century later (Barley, 1989, p. 44). Indeed, it might seem odd to return to Durkheim as an early inspiration for career theorists, especially since his work never explicitly mentions careers nor has a focus on the individual's navigation through institutions (he is much more a sociologist of the community than of the individual). Instead, Durkheim's contribution to the careers literature focuses on the nature of the relationship between the individual and societal structure, the importance of the division of labor to collective and individual identity, and the importance of occupational identity and association to the organization and integration of society.

Durkheim most directly addressed concerns related to individuals' working lives in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893/1964), the thesis of which is that individuals tend toward increasing functional specialization as society becomes increasingly industrialized, and these shifts change the foundation of social solidarity. Where social solidarity used to be rooted in individuals sharing broad and similar functions within a community, in an industrial age, it instead needs to be maintained through individuals' dependence on one another within a highly organized division of labor. This division of labor then strongly determines cultural norms and values as well as individuals' occupational lives and identities.

This preoccupation with the division of labor in industrial society echoed similar preoccupations in the work of both Karl Marx (1834–1894/2000) and Adam Smith (1776/1994) but with a rather different focus from those theorists' more economic frame (Giddens, 1971). Durkheim did not moralize that the effect on workers of the division of labor under capitalism was necessarily degrading or implied class conflict, as Marx did, and his understanding went far beyond applauding its economic efficiency, as Adam Smith had (though Smith was certainly more ambivalent about the societal effects of capitalism than one would assume given his image in contemporary memory).

Durkheim's work on the division of labor informs career theory because his ideas on the subject translate well from the societal to the organizational level. He does focus on the organizational level as well as the societal level (though he terms it the "corporative" rather than the organizational level) and sees it as an important secondary source of social cohesion, which can mediate between the societal level and the individual level. His work reminds organizational theorists to pay attention to how career boundaries and job scope within organizations play an important part in determining the cohesiveness of organizational groups and in developing organizational norms.

Occupational groups play an important role in Durkheim's work; he actually intended to write a book on the topic of occupational associations, though we are left with only the 30 pages of the Preface of *The Division of Labour in Society* (Durkheim, 1893/1964) to explain his thinking on the matter. After industrialization, occupational groups gained in importance not only for their potential economic services but also for their capacity for moral influence: "What we see

in the occupational group is a moral power capable of containing individual egos, of maintaining a spirited sentiment of common solidarity" (Durkheim, 1893/1964, p. 14). Durkheim even writes that "the corporation [which can represent occupational groups] has been, in a sense, the heir of the family" (Durkheim, 1893/1964, p. 17), as a source of collective morality and group identity and as protection against the alienating aspects of postindustrial life. Unfortunately, at the time of his writing, there had been only "fragmentary and incomplete" attempts to build strong occupational associations (Durkheim 1893/1964, p. 5). However, as professional lives have overtaken so many other sources of individual identity in the last century, his work on occupational groups can be both directly and indirectly reflected in later careers literature on professional identity, occupational attachment, and professional ethics.

A final threat of industrialization noted by Durkheim is excessive specialization, in particular when accompanied by social inequality, because it undermines social cohesion (Durkheim, 1893/1964, p. 301). Division of labor can only encourage social integration when specialization is not accompanied by an unjust hierarchical status, which creates gulfs in individual advantage. This speaks more broadly to the literature on career development and growth by cautioning that overly predetermined and/or limited career paths for individuals within society, or even within organizations, have negative consequences for the collective. By requiring people to narrow the scope of their everyday professional activities to atomistic proportions, individuals begin to suffer from *anomie* (or alienation from one's social collective), which then undermines the stability of those collective wholes.

Durkheim's unacknowledged influence can be seen throughout many of the major strains of career theory. His understanding of how the division of labor shapes cultural norms and individual lives speaks to the literature on the meaning of work and careers to individuals. His recognition of the importance of occupational groups to collective morality speaks to the literature on occupational identity and attachment. By addressing the importance of the relationship between one's professional life and one's place in the community, Durkheim has the capacity to influence the careers literature on boundaries, and by attending to the negative consequences of overspecialization within occupations, Durkheim has the capacity to influence the literature on job scope and career development.

For example, Durkheim's focus on how macro-level structures direct and constrain individual behavior has directly and indirectly influenced the work of both Everett Hughes (1928–1956/1958) and Edgar Schein (1978), as they struggle with the inherent tension that arises between individual agency and social control. Durkheim's influence can be seen throughout their work: in thinking about how occupational status is assigned and differently constrained for different individuals, the relationship between institutions and the individuals navigating them, and how social structures help determine individuals' decisions about their working lives.

Weber

Max Weber, though also rarely mentioned directly in the careers literature, provides what continues to be an enduring portrait of the reasons for, value of, and dangers inherent in bureaucratic organizing (Weber, 1920/1947, 1904–1905/1958a, 1922/1958b). He was also the first to describe the characteristics and stages of the administrative or bureaucratic career, newly emerging within early industrialized commerce and the movement in the 19th century toward a public service. Along with Durkheim, Weber was also concerned with a central tension within society between the need for individual freedom and the need for social control, and their theorizing is remarkably consonant, though they maintain different main foci. Whereas Durkheim was concerned with how to maximize the individual freedoms made possible by industrialization, while simultaneously maintaining social integration and social order, Weber was more concerned with the value of individual freedom and humanity, which could be silenced within the efficient but depersonalized "iron cage" of bureaucratic organization (Tiryakian, 1981). Of course, Durkheim was also interested in the positive aspects of freedom, and Weber in the positive aspects of bureaucracy, but their biases were

toward slightly different sides of the individual freedom/social order tension.

There are three main ideas in Weber's work with relevance to early career theory. First are his views on bureaucracy and routinization, which include ideas on the commensurate benefits of these processes to organizations in terms of efficiency and reliability and the simultaneous danger of these processes to individual creativity (Weber, 1922/1958b). Charismatic authority is presented as one natural phenomenon that can provide a partial counterbalance to the dangers of bureaucracy's routinization. The second idea is his understanding of how the joint forces of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism require this process of bureaucratization (Weber, 1904–1905/1958a). Third are his ideas about class and status, which contribute to understanding how the process of assigning individuals to places within hierarchies helps form and support our social systems (Weber, 1922/1958c).

As is well-known, Weber defined a number of characteristics of modern bureaucracy, including (1) fixed and continuous offices covering different jurisdictions, which are (2) governed by rules and/or laws and operating within an (3) organizational hierarchy, managed by officials with (4) fixed sets of duties and (5) predetermined qualifications for office, including (6) specific training for that office (Weber, 1922/1958b, pp. 196–244). However, contrary to the popular understanding of Weber, which can confuse his theorizing about bureaucracy with a fondness for it, Weber was in fact profoundly ambivalent about the phenomenon and the rationalization of processes that it requires. It has been claimed that Talcott Parsons tempered this ambivalence in his early translations of Weber's work (Weber, 1920/1947), which stressed the positive aspects of Weberian descriptions of bureaucracy, whereas later translations of Weber's work by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Weber, 1922/1958b) highlighted this ambivalence (DiPadova, 1996).

Weber's concern about bureaucratic rationalization conjures Durkheim's similar concerns about occupational overspecialization:

> Its anonymity compels modern man to become a specialized expert, a "professional" man qualified for the accomplishment of a special career within pre-scheduled channels . . . Weber "deplored" this type of man as a petty routine creature, lacking in heroism, human spontaneity, and inventiveness. (Gerth & Mills, 1958, p. 50)

This vision describes a very particular type of career, in which office holders are ideally devoid of any personalizing qualities and career becomes a reward of security based on acceptance of the bureaucratic process and seniority but which has the detrimental outcome of decreasing opportunities for the ambitious and rewarding the administrative expert (see Weber, 1922/1958b). The outcome of this new professional ideal is the victory of the "specialist" over the "cultivated man," once the historical ideal of an educated person (see Weber, 1922/1958b, pp. 242–243).

Weber's discussion of the effect and efficiency of bureaucratization in the modern state and corporation speaks to the literature on career paths, job scope, occupational and organizational socialization, and occupational and organizational identification. However, much more interesting and potentially influential to career theory are his thoughts on the tension between the gains to efficiency, stability, and procedural fairness provided by bureaucracy and the dangers to individual freedom and growth extended by the same process. This tension translates into career theory as the relationship between an individual's need for growth and development and the organization's need for stability, reliability, and continuity (see Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

For Weber, the establishment of Calvinism provided a catalyst and turning point far beyond its original intentions. Before the Calvinist turn, it was not possible to have a "career" as we currently understand it, not only because economic systems at the time were not designed for any kind of individual occupational choice or mobility but also because religious systems didn't have room for individual volition in choosing a life course. Calvinism, in its prudish obsession with acting as if one were among the heavenly elect, paved the way for capitalism, because the hard work and self-sacrifice that resulted from acting *as if* one were already "chosen" allowed individuals to accrue capital that had no purpose

other than to be reinvested into new business ventures. The early development of the capitalistic requirements of mobile capital and voluntary labor then made the contemporary idea of careers possible: Individuals were no longer tied to the occupation they were born into and began to be employed by organizations that could offer career paths and advancement at the expense of less individual freedom and control. Think of the difference between one's professional life within an artisanal economic structure and a corporative one. The *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* therefore, challenges career theorists to look systemically at career and occupational motivation and choice, as well as career mobility and advancement issues (Weber, 1904–1905/1958a).

Finally, Weber has been credited with developing one of the earliest analyses of social hierarchy that could handle the nuances between status based on economic power and status based on other forms of social power by separating out "class" hierarchy, or the classification of individuals based on economic advantage, from "status" hierarchy, or the classification of individuals based on honor or occupation (Weber, 1958c, pp. 180–195). Separating the understanding of status and class allows one to conceptualize occupational attachment from both economic and prestige perspectives. Group identity can serve both to separate one group from another (economically or via prestige) and to help a group cohere internally (through commonalities in economic advantage or prestige). This understanding of the distinction between class and status helps inform career theory on occupational or career identity formation and attachment, echoed in Everett Hughes' understanding of the creation of "professions" (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958).

Hughes

Hughes occupies a unique space in the history of career theory. He is often designated as one of the founders of the field and was writing about the sociology of occupations as early as 1928 (Hughes, 1928). Methodologically, Hughes transformed the study of individuals within organizations. His general theoretical stance is not well defined or posited directly in his work, and

students of his work disagree about whether or not he had a general theory (Chapoulie, 1996; Helmes-Hayes, 1998). Helmes-Hayes characterizes Hughes' work as interpretive institutional ecology (1998, p. 633), a description that is useful in that it can help make sense of how sociologists of work became divided between those who studied, from a more macro perspective, situations and generalized cases within contexts, and those who predominantly studied, from a more micro perspective, the movement of and interaction between individuals, secondarily within contexts.

Using the institution as the central level of analysis allowed Hughes to continue to focus (in a Durkheimian sense) on the structural forces that constrain and shape human behavior, while remaining attuned to how individuals continually create the meaning and norms within those institutions. For Hughes, institutions serve both a regulatory and a moral function for individuals, providing a source of collective identity and, therefore, mitigating against the ever-present potential for anomie in postindustrial society, as well as serving a primary function for society, as an efficient way to organize resources in order to get things done.

Hughes takes on directly the division of labor and its importance to social relationships (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, chap. 2). For example, he writes that occupational mobility "implies a removal from the base of one's morals," which has the danger of undermining social stability (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, pp. 30–31). Like Durkheim, he was interested in the division of labor as a phenomenon with implications beyond the simple economic ones: "Division of labor is more than a technical phenomenon; there are infinite social-psychological nuances in it" (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, p. 73). Seeing the division of labor as a social phenomenon allowed Hughes to frame work as a crux between the individual and society, pointing out that the division of labor "implies interaction" and that "no line of work can be fully understood outside the social matrix in which it occurs or the social system of which it is part" (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, p. 75).

Weber also gets scant mention in Hughes's major papers, but his influence is evident throughout them. For example,

the trend toward . . . the bureaucratizing of careers does not do away with the struggle of the individual to find a place and an identity in the world of work or with the collective efforts of occupations to exert control over the terms of their work with and for others. (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, p. 8)

Hughes was similarly concerned with capitalism's potential for treating labor in a dehumanized way, reaffirming Weber's pessimism about the influence of administrative systems on the individual. He wrote that in mobilizing people and making work the central fact of one's life, capitalism "erase[s] the person's past so that he may be completely mobilized for carrying out his mission" (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, p. 32).

In "Institutional Office and the Person," first published in 1937 and one of his most famous essays, Hughes writes about the characteristics of formally held offices in much the same way that Weber writes about the characteristics of bureaucracy, including how offices define and prescribe one's role and, in so doing, determine and confer status on an individual. He also echoes Weber's understanding of status assignments by pointing out how offices can be communicated through a ritual, such as taking a vow (like the Hippocratic oath for doctors), that separates and defines office-holders from others (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, chap. 4). Hughes, too, was interested in how professions of different statuses are defined and circumscribed, repeating concerns with "the impermeability of professions to outside view and intervention" (Hughes, 1928–1956/1958, p. 86). This interest in professional or occupational boundaries created a culture at the University of Chicago, in which Hughes's students conducted some of the most important ethnographic studies of professions and occupations, including *Boys in White,* a classic study of the indoctrination of medical students into the profession of medicine (Becker et al., 1961), as well as studies of the careers of the taxi-hall dancer (Cressy, 1932), professional thieves (Sutherland, 1937), and the tubercular patient (Roth, 1963).

Ethnographic Work on Careers

Strains of this concern for the effect of bureaucratization on individuals can be seen directly in

some of the dystopias described in sociological investigations of the "modern corporation," such as *White Collar* by C. Wright Mills (1951), who also translated *From Max Weber* and focused a large section therein on bureaucracy. Weber's concern about bureaucratization was evident in Mills' concern that the hegemony of large organizations as employers was quickly eroding the possibility of autonomous and self-fulfilling work in the 20th century (Rytina, 2001). Weber's concern with the alienating effects of bureaucracy also foreshadows the corporate environment detailed in William Whyte's *Organization Man* (1956) and recalls Erving Goffman's (1959) work on the practice of impression management and the discrepancy between the individual and the face he presents to the outside world as a requirement of his role(s). This is just a small sample of the many theorists in whose writings one can trace the imprint of the theories of Durkheim and Weber.

Structure Versus Class and Status

There are two main trends in early career theory that grew from the sociological perspective. The first of these tended to focus on the social structural determinants of occupational choice and attainment, and a great deal of empirical work studied the effects of class background and parental occupational attainment on the outcomes for individuals. Classic work in this area includes the industrial sociology of Delbert Miller and William Form (1951) and Peter Blau and Otis Duncan (1967). The second trend draws more heavily on the ethnographic work of the Chicago school of sociologists; methodologically, it draws on the same qualitative techniques used to develop earlier work such as *White Collar* and *Organization Man* rather than depending on the heavily quantitative and survey-based techniques of industrial sociologists such as Miller and Form.

Edgar Schein is the most obvious representative of this second sociological trend. His work on career anchors[3] was developed organically through a series of interviews with executives and drew attention to the nature of the subjective career (Schein, 1978), as opposed to the work of sociological theorists following the first trend, who emphasize objective measures, such as

occupational attainment, as dependent variables (Sonnenfeld & Kotter, 1982, p. 23). It would be fruitful for current career theory to return to the undercredited influences of Durkheim and Weber for renewed inspiration on topics ranging from professional status to occupational mobility, to the balance between individual agency and social control, and the nature of subjective (vs. objective) careers.

The vocational perspective, to which we turn next, developed in virtual isolation from the sociological threads we have been tracing. Indeed, Schein notes,

> What is most amazing to me is that when I got into the field in the late 50's there was almost zero overlap between the psychologists (Strong, Super, Osipow, Holland) and the sociologists (Hughes, Becker, Goffman, White) . . . Hughes and the sociologists were working on careers as they are lived and had literally no overlap with Super, Osipow, and others who were completely focused on the Strong Interest Inventory and trying to predict, like good psychologists, who would be suitable for what kind of career and, based on psychometric and interview data who would succeed (usually measured narrowly by income). . . . Not a single reference in either group to the other group. This state of affairs led to my paper, "The Individual, the Organization and the Career," which I believe broke the ice and started some thinking about psychological contracts and how organizations (work) and individuals each have to take the other into account. (E. H. Schein, personal communication, January 13, 17, 2005)

We now turn to the genesis of this perspective.

CAREER THEORY FROM A VOCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Early Philosophers

One of the longest histories in career theory belongs to the vocational perspective (an excellent overview of which is provided by Brewer, 1942). However, how one ought to usefully, and often most morally or virtuously, employ one's time in life has been the subject of ongoing and open discussion since Plato. Plato's *Republic,* in many ways, can be read as an exposition on what positions or occupations in life are appropriate for different individuals within a nation. Book 1 of Cicero's *On Duties,* an important work of moral education from the 1st century BCE, is significantly about the best way in which individuals should find their way through life. He writes, "We must decide what manner of men we wish to be and what calling in life we would follow; and this is the most difficult problem in the world" (Book I, Section 32). Many centuries later, the idea that finding a vocation was a component of one's moral education continued with John Locke, who wrote in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1695/1989) that "children should well study their Natures and Aptitudes, and see, by often Trials, what Turn they easily take, and what becomes them; observe what their native Stock is, how it may be improved, and what it is fit for" (Section 66).

Often these early vocationally slanted writings took a kindly but prescriptive and paternalistic tone: Cicero wrote *On Duties* as a letter to his son, Marcus; Shakespeare, writing as Polonius to his son, Laertes, counsels "to thine own self be true" (*Hamlet,* Act I, Scene 3). These writings may have stressed the moral aspect in determining one's life course for religious or philosophical reasons; the paternalistic overtones may have been motivated because individuals' actual occupational choices at the time they were written were so limited. In mid-19th century England, for example, half of all men continued in exactly the same occupation as their fathers (Miles, 1999, p. 68). In many ways, the degree to which the sociological strain of career theory has been driven by great theorists such as Durkheim and Weber is matched by the degree to which the vocational strain of career theory has been driven by historical forces.

Industrialization and the Search for Predictors of Fit

Class and occupational mobility increased dramatically over the 19th century in Europe. With it, industrialization undermined the traditional artisan and guild-based organization of labor, and migration to cities and across the Atlantic made the placement of immigrants in productive positions in society more urgent

(Herr, 2001). This led Durkheim and Weber to theorize about the metatheoretical implications of this sea change for society. It also led to two more practical imperatives: how to most effectively place this newly mobile and unemployed labor into productive positions and how to help these new immigrants and displaced workers find gainful employment. For the most part, psychologists worked on the first problem, trying to develop effective ways for organizations to place individuals productively into positions, and civic reformers worked on the second, working with individuals to help them find their way in the world.

Psychologists approached the challenge of finding productive positions for this newly relocated and unemployed labor from a scientific perspective. Their methods focused on testing individuals to rank them according to ability or other relevant individual difference characteristics; these tests could then be used to place individuals in occupations that would prove to be the most productive for society. Alternatively, civic reformers grew out of the social welfare movements that prospered after the social disruption of early industrialization; they were more concerned with the interests and wishes of individuals, working with them to determine what type of career choices would offer them the best fit. Though both strains were concerned with "fitting" men—and it was basically men—to jobs, the psychologists tended to think of individuals in aggregate, taking the perspective of what was best for the organization, while the civic reformers tended to focus on the individuals themselves and take the perspective of what occupations might be most fulfilling for them.

This idea that there existed an occupation that would match or fit any individual man implies a static understanding of human nature: Once a correct choice was discovered, whether by expert testing (advocated by those on the scientific side of the equation) or journeys of self-awareness (advocated by those on the social welfare side of the equation), the correct shaped peg would have found a similarly shaped hole. The "pegs-in-holes" metaphor can be traced back to a moral philosophy lecture delivered by Reverend Sydney Smith between 1804 and 1806 at the Royal Institution in London, in which he claimed,

It is a prodigious point gained if any man can find out where his powers lie, and what are his deficiencies,—if he can contrive to ascertain what Nature intended him for: and such are the changes and chances of the world, and so difficult is it to ascertain our own understandings, or those of others, that most things are done by persons who could have done something else better. If you choose to represent the various parts in life by holes upon a table, of different shapes,—some circular, some triangular, some square, some oblong,—and the persons acting these parts by bits of wood of similar shapes, we shall generally find that the triangular person has got into the square hole, the oblong into the triangular, and a square person has squeezed himself into the round hole. The officer and the office, the doer and the thing done, seldom fit so exactly, that we can say they were almost made for each other. (Smith, 1850, pp. 109–110)

However, the two ways through which the peg could find the appropriately shaped hole developed for some time in parallel rather than in unison.

Psychologists and Individual Differences

Psychology as a scientific discipline was in its nascent stages in the 19th century. Psychologists such as Francis Galton (1822–1911), James McKeen Cattell (1860–1944), and Charles Spearman (1863–1945) were optimistic about the field's ability to empirically measure and quantify individual abilities and potential, avidly devising tests to determine the nature and extent of individual differences and using those differences to predict various outcomes. These early proponents of intelligence testing and of the notion that there is a measurable "general intelligence"—or g—that differentiates individuals paved the way for a number of other psychologists to develop their own vocationally relevant tests, resulting in a long list of tests that were either developed specifically for or became important to vocational guidance (for a detailed history of vocational tests, see Betz et al., 1989).

Historians have noted that the individual differences tradition in psychology intertwine with and have an influence on early vocational

guidance (Dawis, 1992); this connection has contributed a focus on the prediction made possible by quantitative measures involving multiple dimensions of a person. The side of vocational guidance that focused on selection and prediction mainly served organizational needs: How could one determine where an individual would be placed most advantageously with respect to the organization? Of the quantitative measures involved in making these decisions, three types were most important to vocational theory: ability or intelligence testing, aptitude or technical competence testing, and interest or personality testing.

Galton in England and Cattell in North America were the provenance of "ability," or IQ, tests. The early tests, devised around the turn of the 20th century, tested what could appear to be a set of arbitrary abilities, from an individual's judgment of 10 seconds of time to an individual's ability to correctly bisect a 50-cm line (Cattell, 1890). Alfred Binet and Theophile Simon advanced intelligence testing by improving on earlier tests and understanding that a wider range of testing improved their ability to predict outcomes (Binet & Simon, 1961). Historically, the advances in these types of tests became useful as military enlistment in World War I ballooned, so that within a very tight timeline the U.S. military needed to figure out how to most effectively place hundreds of thousands of personnel (Brewer, 1942).

The Committee on Classification of Personnel in the U.S. Army, chaired by E. L. Thorndike, embarked on one of the largest applications of intelligence and aptitude testing ever conducted, delivering intelligence tests to 1.7 million men and critically influencing the deployment of those military personnel (Army Psychologists, 1921/1961; Bingham, 1919). Belief in the importance of IQ and aptitude testing continued after the war, and Thorndike, Charles Edward Spearman,[4] and Lewis Terman, in particular, studied gifted children at Stanford for decades (Terman, 1925/1961). However, even though validity generalization studies have demonstrated a connection between intelligence and on-the-job performance (Gottfredson, 1986; Hunter, 1986), many of the potentially testable factors that could help predict later employment success remained unaccounted for.

Another huge realm of testing involved determining individual aptitudes for various forms of employment, with tests specifically developed for unskilled labor, skilled trades, secretarial work, nursing, teaching, and many others (Bingham, 1937). This area of testing progressed especially during the Depression, with large, university-based research centers engaged in the occupational placement of both the unemployed and new immigrants into industrial employment (Super, 1983). At the University of Minnesota, in particular, the Minnesota Mechanical Abilities Project (founded in the 1920s) and the Minnesota Employment Stabilization Research Institute (founded in 1931) employed more than 100 staff who endeavored to place thousands of laid-off workers and new immigrants in jobs, using tests of arithmetic, practical judgment, manual and mechanical dexterity, and vocational interests (Paterson & Darley, 1936). This research project became the Occupational Research Program of the U.S. Employment Service, who were the early developers of the technique of job analysis and the founders of the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (Dawis, 1992).

This exhaustive work on defining different occupations through job analysis led to the development of assessment centers, which used a range of techniques for evaluating people in the context of particular jobs or occupations to place them into the right career streams within organizations. Indeed, it was Douglas Bray's fascination with assessment centers, developed in the United States by the CIA's predecessor, the Office of Strategic Services, and in the United Kingdom by the War Office Selection Board (and adapted, ironically, from the Prussian Army), that led to his major study of the predictors of managerial success in AT&T (Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974; Howard & Bray, 1988) and similar studies in Exxon and GE by resident and academic psychologists (E. H. Schein, personal communication, October 23, 2003).

In the early years of the scientific approach to vocational guidance, the third major area of testing developed—personality or interest testing. Walter Bingham, while at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, developed an inventory of interests that later became the Strong Vocational Interest Blank, one of the most widely used tests of vocational preference

(Strong, 1943) along with the Kuder Preference Record (Kuder, 1966). The test predicted the occupations at which one would excel, based on the similarity of the individual's preferences to the preferences of individuals in various occupations.[5] The theory behind interest testing was conceptually different from the theory behind intelligence or aptitude testing, because it assumed that individual *volition* would determine performance at least as much as static, inherited ability. Though vocational testing and placement have moved beyond a static understanding of human ability and the idea that scores on ability or psychological tests are sufficient in themselves to understand at what occupations individuals will thrive, these early tests and theories continue to maintain some authority in the field (Gottfredson, 1986).

While theorists of individual differences continued to be interested in how testing could be effectively used by organizations for vocational placement, moral and educational concerns continued to drive the second stream of vocational theorists. Instead of being primarily concerned with how *organizations* could most effectively place and gain productively from their human resources, early vocational guidance theorists coming from the moral or educational perspective were propelled by an interest in understanding the *person* side of the peg-in-hole metaphor: In what type of employment would an individual find the greatest fulfillment? This possibly overstates the difference between the two traditions in vocational psychology: The reformers who helped place individuals in jobs throughout the Depression and the World Wars remained motivated by finding their clients employment rather than self-actualization (we address "psychological" fulfillment more explicitly in the next section). The idea of fulfillment here is limited to a social context within which, though career mobility was greater than it had been historically, most individuals remained uneducated and most jobs remained manual and unskilled. Yet the framing within the moral or educational perspective of vocational theory remained more focused on the individuals making productive career choices for themselves rather than on the organization deciding on the most productive placement for itself.

Parsons

Systematic advice books about how best to choose an occupation for oneself were first published as early as 1747 (Brewer, 1942), mixing Horatio-Alger-myth-driven "How to be a success" advice with more moral tracts about how best to conduct oneself through life (e.g., Smiles, 1859/1958; see also Scharnhorst, 1980). A number of early works in this area follow a similar pattern: One ought to (1) find out about oneself; (2) find out about different jobs; and (3) match the knowledge about oneself with knowledge about professions and, thus, make appropriate vocational choices (see, e.g., Proctor, 1933). These types of books proliferated in the early part of the 20th century, but it was the work of Frank Parsons (1854–1908) that had the most important influence on career theory. Parsons played a catalytic role similar to the one played by Everett Hughes within the sociological tradition of career theory (Davis, 1969), though Parsons' interest in careers started in the very late stages of his own career, and his only published work on the subject, *Choosing a Vocation* (Parsons, 1909), appeared posthumously.

A lawyer by training, Parsons became concerned in the later stages of his career about the effects of industrialization on workers, especially on those most vulnerable from an employability perspective (the young, the poor, and new immigrants). He was critical of a social system that ignored its human capital:

> Society is very short-sighted as yet in its attitude towards the development of human resources. It trains its horses, as a rule, better than its men. It spends unlimited money to perfect the inanimate machinery of production, but pays very little attention to the business of perfecting the human machinery, though it is by far the most important in production. (Parsons, 1909, p. 160)

It is important to remember that his work came before the acknowledgment that an important part of organizations' capital investment resides within their trained and educated workforce—"human capital"—as well as in their factories, real estate, and other tangible investments (Becker, 1975). At the time, more thought

was going into locomotives than into human resources.

Parsons began volunteering at Civic Service House in Boston, delivering a set of lectures that highlighted how contemporary youth need better assistance before making lifelong employment decisions. The demand of students for private sessions to help them with their vocational choices encouraged him to establish the Vocation Bureau (later run by Bloomfield; see Bloomfield, 1942), a service to help youth choose, prepare for, and succeed in employment. Following the same three-step model that had proliferated in the early self-help works of vocational guidance, he solidified the model that has been credited to him to this day, though he was possibly only more effective at disseminating it rather than being the first to conceive it:

> In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts. (Parsons, 1909, p. 6)

Even though what he started in terms of vocational guidance may have been taken up by the more simplistic and instrumental peg-in-hole administrators who wanted to ensure that immigrants and returning soldiers had jobs to go to, the ideas behind his method were much closer to vocational *discovery* as a process of self-actualization: "A thorough study of oneself is the foundation of a true plan of life" (Parsons, 1909, p. 6).

Though consistently credited as the founder of this area of career theory, Parsons was not a typical theorist and never held a university teaching position. However, he was a true revolutionary in the field, passionate about social justice (O'Brien, 2001) and concerned that workers chose how they labored carefully and with a view to finding their own fulfillment. This is especially relevant given that Parsons' work took place in a context in which the ratios of primary school graduates who went on to

high school were as low as 1 in 16 (in Boston) to 1 in 30 (in Philadelphia) (Parsons, 1909).

Holland

It is possible to see the influence of both the individual differences tradition and the vocational education tradition in some of the earliest works on career theory. Thorough overviews of many of these early vocational theories, including Ann Roe's personality theory of career choice (Roe, 1956), the work adjustment theory of Lofquist and Dawis (1969), and John Holland's Career Typology (Holland, 1966, 1973), can be found in the overviews by Samuel Osipow (1968, 1983). The inherent tension in the vocational placement and guidance traditions within career theory involves the twin desire to predict people's "best-fit" profession while acknowledging that prediction is, at best, probabilistic, and the fact that person-environment fit involves many interacting variables, which can all potentially change.

John Holland's theory of vocational choice is perhaps the most representative career theory that explores the tension between the need for individuals to continually develop and the priority within vocational guidance to (statically) "fit" individuals to jobs (Holland, 1966, 1973). The continued popularity of employment testing in the prediction of human resource outcomes speaks more to the current research traditions of human resource management than it does to career theory. A major shift in career theory over the last half of the 20th century was toward the consensus that individuals continue to develop over the course of their careers; the notion that individuals could statically be pegged in a hole had been eclipsed by a more dynamic understanding of individual careers. This is addressed in the next section.

Career Theory From a Developmental Perspective

The developmental perspective in career theory encompasses some of the most lyrical writings in the literature on careers. In contrast to most vocational theory, which tended (at least in the

early years) to view careers as a static, choice-based, or "fit" phenomenon, the developmental perspective understands career as a dynamic and maturing process that evolves over time. The key theorists usually identified with this perspective traditionally build stage-based models of career. Gene Dalton has provided a good overview of many of these theories (1989), which includes the life-span model provided by Donald Super's work on the self-concept in career development (Super, 1990); the individual differences model provided by Edgar Schein's (1978) work on career anchors, which bridges the sociological and developmental divide; and the career pattern model provided by Michael Driver (1982; see also Sullivan and Crocitto, Chapter 15). However, Dalton's overview explicitly excludes more general theories of human development, such as those of Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) and Erik Erikson (1902–1994), as well as theorists of adult development, such as Daniel Levinson, Paul Baltes, and George Vaillant, on the grounds that the developmental *career* theorist has a specific responsibility to attend to one's work life as well as the unique interplay between individual and organization that career theory implies.

This section extends back to these earlier and not exclusively *career* (in Dalton's terms) theorists, since most of the developmental career theorists were influenced by these earlier and more general theories of individual and adult development. The primary and most obvious sources of early theory that influenced developmental career theory are Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Carl Jung (1865–1961); yet they can be traced back much further. In a very detailed and thorough early history of developmental psychology, Guenther Reinert discusses relevant work as far back as Democritus, but stresses the 18th century work of Dietrich Tiedemann (1748–1803) on childhood development and Johann Nicolaus Tetens (1736–1807) on life-span development (Reinert, 1979).

It is important to understand how novel it was at the time to consider childhood, or even the whole life course, as a period over which profound individual change could take place. Tiedemann is considered the founder of child study and wrote one of the first works on childhood development, *Observations on the Development of Mental Capacities in Children,* based on a series of diary studies (Mateer, 1918). Before this time, childhood was not generally considered a rich ground for research. Tetens theorized about the "perfectibility and development of man" (Reinert, 1979, p. 211), becoming one of the first major theorists to understand that adult human development could be considered separately from either religious or secular education, such as in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1762/1911) *Emile.* Though these works have mostly disappeared from history, they actually bring us around to Freud and Jung, since Freud focused on childhood development, as Tiedemann did, while Jung represents theorists of adult life development, as did Tetens.

The new contribution to developmental psychology provided by Freud and Jung was the understanding of the implications of the unconscious to human development. Freud focused on the influence of major childhood events on later psychological development, while Jung focused on adult development and had a specific interest in the influence of midlife experiences. Both also built stage-based models, which understood human development to be dynamic and progressing. These stage-based models represent a shift from the early vocational stream of career theory, which tended to view careers as a static phenomenon. Instead, Freud, Jung, Maslow, and Erikson all contributed different visions of dynamic individual change and growth over the life cycle, which helped expand career theory beyond "choice and fit" models. However, Baltes, in a chapter on the history of developmental psychology, has noted the continuing (persistent though restrictive) tendency for developmental models to assume that developmental stages are "sequential, unidirectional, moving towards an end state, irreversible, and universal" (1979, p. 262).

Freud

Freud's legacy is perhaps both underrepresented and diffused in the academic literature on careers. Strains of it can be seen in the work of Clayton Alderfer, who pointed out how Freud's work on transference was relevant to understanding how needs from other realms could be sublimated through work (Alderfer, 1972). It is also

woven though the work of George Vaillant, whose *Adaptation to Life* (1977) owes a great deal to Freud's theories on the ego mechanisms of defense as well as Anna Freud's later exploration of these ideas (see A. Freud, 1937). Even when not cited directly, the writings of Freud influence heavily our understanding of the interrelationship between love and work (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). A quote commonly attributed to Freud—"Love and work are the cornerstones of our humanness"—does represent an accurate reflection of a sentiment throughout his work, though the common attribution is likely a paraphrase from Erikson's characterization of Freud rather than a direct quotation (Erikson, 1950, see p. 265).

Freud (1930/1961) did claim that life has a twofold foundation: "the compulsion to work, [and] the power to love" (p. 55). In particular, the key role that work plays in a well-adjusted personality and the unhealthy role it can likewise play in a less well-adjusted personality are ongoing themes throughout his writing. Work can represent the most positive achievement in individual life: "Professional activity is a source of special satisfaction if it is a freely chosen one" (p. 30). It can also represent attempts to avoid negotiating the unconscious: Work offers a major potential to "[displace] a large amount of libidinal components" (p. 30). Unfortunately, not only does the difficulty of subjecting most Freudian theories to empirical testing undermine their influence on organizational theory, but Freud's continued priority of childhood influences over the potential for seminal experiences in adult life leaves him with less to contribute to career theory than other developmental theorists. That Freud's developmental stages begin and end in childhood spoke little, at least directly, to later career theorists, who were more interested in the stages of development among and within adults.

Jung

In contrast, Jung presents himself as one of the first theorists of midlife. An early follower of Freud, his work later developed in many new directions, including integrating the study of comparative religion and mythology with psychology and understanding the unconscious as a collective, shared set of archetypes. Most relevant to the study of careers is his focus on the important changes that occur in midlife and his late-career interest in alchemy (Storr, 1983). In contrast with Freud, who tended to see all adult transitions as ultimately originating in childhood experiences, Jung's own midlife crisis, in 1913 at the age of 38, triggered a new understanding of the period between 35 and 40, which he termed a "phase of life [during which] an important change in the human psyche is in preparation" (Jung, 1931/1969, p. 395, 1971, p. 72). During this phase, individuals tend to shift from a primary focus on the external world to a more internal, reflective state, opening the possibility for profound change and positive growth as well as for withdrawal from "the second half of life" if the tasks of midlife change prove too "unknown and dangerous" (Jung, 1931/1969, p. 396).

Alchemy, though commonly understood as the process through which base metals might be changed to gold, has a broader meaning: to "perfect everything in its own nature" (Storr, 1983, p. 19). This was Jung's ideal prescription for a well-lived life: Individuals ought to persist in the journey toward individuation, the only route to "synthesis between conscious and unconscious, a sense of calm acceptance and detachment, and a realization of the meaning of life" (p. 19). This form of teleology, with the perfection of one's own nature representing the ultimate goal to which individuals should strive in life, can be seen in much of developmental psychology and can be traced back to Jung.

Career theorists who develop stage models of career progression, however, owe a more direct intellectual debt to Maslow and Erikson—Maslow for helping us understand that individuals have a hierarchy of needs that helps explain the differences in human motivation (1954) and Erikson for helping us understand that, over the life course, individuals generally proceed through a series of developmental stages, which will factor heavily in the progress of any individual's career (1950). Both theorists present hierarchical stage-based models that are highly attractive and transportable to theorizing about careers (though they remain frustratingly uncooperative to empirical testing; see Hall & Nougaim, 1968). In particular, Erikson's eight stages of life extended notions of development from childhood through old age in a very accessible way; his model has been taken up by a number of career theorists,

though perhaps more superficially than it should have been (Vondracek, 1992).

Maslow

Maslow's theory of motivation rests on a five-step hierarchy of needs, beginning with physiological needs; progressing through safety needs, affiliation needs, achievement and esteem needs; and finally culminating in the need for self-actualization (Maslow, 1954, chap. 5). Individuals are motivated by whatever set of needs are most personally salient to them and are unmet at the time. Once a set of needs has been met, the next higher level of needs assumes greater salience and acts as an individual motivator. An early review of relevant (though predominantly cross-sectional) studies did generally indicate that individuals with lower-level positions within organizations tended to emphasize security needs, individuals with midlevel positions tended to emphasize affiliation and esteem needs, while individuals in senior-level positions were more concerned with self-actualization needs (Vroom, 1964). Self-actualization has remained a popular goal of career counseling, representing a psychological proxy for career "success" (Sackett, 1998). However, more rigorous empirical analysis has had little luck in confirming that individuals are motivated by a hierarchical series of needs; instead, Maslow's work has been reinterpreted by career theorists as speaking to a series of sequential career stages, representing "regularized status passages [rather] than lower-order need gratification" (Hall & Nougaim, 1968, p. 12).

Erikson

Erikson's eight-staged developmental theory contains a number of progressive tasks that are of direct interest to career theory (Erikson, 1950, chap. 7). The stage of "industry versus inferiority" requires that the school-age child integrates an understanding of the importance of work and accomplishment while mitigating against a sense of inadequacy as he or she grapples with learning new technologies. This stage gives way to the stage of "identity versus role confusion," during which the main task is to ensure the development of a strong sense of self,

a key factor in developing a strong vocational identity (Vondracek, 1992). In fact, Erikson claimed that the inability to resolve an occupational identity is a primary cause of disturbance in youth (Erikson, 1959). The "intimacy versus isolation" stage, which occurs in early adulthood, requires individuals to commit both to intimate relationships and to stable employment or career (toward midlife) and builds toward the final two stages of life (both after midlife). During the stage of "generativity versus stagnation," individuals are to guide and teach the next generation, while the final stage, "ego integrity versus despair," represents the culmination of a life's journey toward maturity, during which one has accepted the limitations of one's individual life but remains an enlightened leader and legacy builder. Though Erikson's theory suffers from the same weaknesses as the metatheories of Freud and Jung—that they are overgeneral and difficult to test empirically—the notion of the life cycle as a set of progressive tasks continues to inform the literature on career progression and status passages.

Life Course Psychology

Developmental career theory also owes a debt to the broad field of life course psychology, an extension of the early psychological theories of Freud, Jung, and Maslow, geared specifically toward developing models of change in adulthood. Traditional life-span developmental psychology examines human development throughout life, with the perspective "that developmental processes, whatever their age location, can be better understood if they are seen in the context of the entire lifetime of individuals" (Baltes & Brim, 1979, p. xi). Work, or career, figures in many of these theories, such as Alderfer's existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory (1972), Vaillant's work on adult adaptation (1977), and Levinson's work on midlife (1978), but they remain predominantly theories of adult development rather than career theories per se.

Alderfer's ERG theory represents a fusion of theories from a number of different disciplines, though the work is most seriously indebted to Maslow's theories of motivation (Maslow, 1954). Alderfer posed his theory as a more parsimonious and less rigid alternative to Maslow's,

though his work is ambivalent about whether it was intended to be an improvement on Maslow's theory or simply inspired by Maslow but more specifically focused on careers. ERG theory posits that individual needs can be characterized by "existence," or the importance of finding equilibrium in the satisfaction of human needs; "relatedness," or the importance of human interactions in social environments; and "growth," or the need of any system to increase in order and differentiation over time.

Alderfer's influences ranged far beyond Maslow, however. His understanding of existence needs was also inspired by anthropological work on material needs and deprivation, from studies of the Siriono Indians of Eastern Bolivia, and from studies of the conditions of soldiers in Vietnam (Holmberg, 1960; Moskos, 1969). His ideas on relatedness needs drew from psychoanalytic theorists such as Bowlby (1965), and Allport's work on open systems theory influenced his understanding of the individual's continued growth needs (Allport, 1960). Just as Erikson had provided a more accessible model for life stages than either Freud or Jung, Alderfer's ERG theory provided a staged model of motivation that was more accessible and had better potential for empirical tests than that of Maslow.

Vaillant's study of successful adult adaptation also represents a theoretical stepping stone between the work of Freud and Jung and that of the early career theorists. In a 35-year cohort study of "people who are well and do well" (Vaillant, 1977, p. 3), Vaillant took Freud's work on the ego mechanisms of defense and arranged them in an evolutionary process, to range from the least to the most adaptive defense mechanisms, based on Freud's premise that individuals with the most mature defenses are best able to both love and work. His study demonstrated that individuals who are most successful are able to change their needs and priorities as they navigate the life cycle and that they demonstrate growth over time. Vaillant believed his longitudinal study also supported the theories of Erikson, finding that subjects at early midlife were more interested in their own careers (conforming to Erikson's stages of industry and identity), while by their 50s they were more interested in their colleagues and staff (conforming to Erikson's stages of intimacy and generativity). He also noted that individuals could get stuck, never fully completing adolescence, living their adult lives as if they were teenagers, and harkening back to Jung's concerns about unsuccessfully meeting the challenge of complete individuation, which one faces at midlife.

Levinson is a third theorist and represents an intermediate between the psychoanalytic theorists' early developmental career theory and current developmental strains of career theory. Seeing his study, *The Season's of a Man's Life,* as a parallel to *Adaptation to Life,* Levinson focused on this midlife decade, which had caught the imagination, in particular, of Erikson and Jung. This decade has historically been rich for career theorists, since at 40, the individual "must deal with the disparity between what he is and what he dreamed of becoming" (Levinson, 1978, p. 30). Levinson distinguished himself from the more purely intraindividual theorists by stressing the interaction between the individual and his or her environment. This joint interest led to theorizing about occupations, since work, as "a major part of individual life and of the social structure" (Levinson, 1978, p. 45), provides a useful framework through which to view this interaction. Levinson posited the universal stages through which most individuals pass, each of which is connected to either structure-building or structure-changing periods. The midlife transition, the point at which individuals become disillusioned with their current reality, involves confronting and reintegrating the polarities that define their lives and represents the most important structure-changing phase of life. Erikson referred to this as the stage of generativity; Jung first proposed it as the turning point between the first and the second half of life.

The difficulty of developing truly dynamic theory that remains open to empirical testing has meant that much of the developmental theorist's ideas have not been explicitly taken up by traditional career theorists. An exception to this is Donald Super, who, influenced by both life stage theorists and social role theorists, built a staged model of careers that posited that career development occurred along a set of phases during which individuals continually implement and then revise self-concepts (e.g., Super, 1990). Super's life-span, life-space approach to

careers charges that individuals' developmental tasks and requirements change over time, as do their social roles, both of which influence career development recursively. Work and life satisfaction depend on the ability of individuals to implement their self-concepts in a fulfilling way, appropriate to their life stage and social role at the time. Like Schein, Super believed that the driving self-concept becomes more stable as individuals mature.

There have been serious criticisms of these life course theorists that highlight the need for any theorist of adult development to attend to both intraindividual processes and processes of individual-society interaction. These criticisms, which reached a pinnacle in the debate between Dale Dannefer on the one side and Paul Baltes and John Nesselroade on the other in the *American Sociological Review,* centered on a tension that returns us again to the concerns of sociology (Baltes & Nesselroade, 1984; Dannefer, 1984a, 1984b). Dannefer accused developmental psychology of "ontogenic reductionism—the practice of treating socially produced and patterned phenomena as rooted in the characteristics of the individual organism" (Dannefer, 1984b, p. 847)—and called on developmental psychology to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual and his environment, while Baltes and Nesselroade defended life course psychology as adequately accounting for the societal effects on the individual (Baltes & Nesselroade, 1984). The debate highlights, from the outskirts of career theory, the longstanding and continuing need for multiple disciplines to better communicate in the development of new theory, a call that remains ill answered to the present day (see Collin, Chapter 32; Schein, Afterword).

TENSIONS IN THE
HISTORY OF CAREER THEORY

It is hard to find a history of the careers field that does not have a call for greater interdisciplinary integration (Arthur et al., 1989a); however, efforts at either successful integration or successfully attending to the richness of past theories are hindered by both the norms of science within individual disciplines and the

ahistoricism of much of organizational behavior theory in general. How might we use this overview of the roots of career theory to best inform future theoretical efforts and protect ourselves from repeating the past? In an attempt to synthesize the history presented in this chapter, we have identified five metathemes that cut across the disciplinary boundaries that tend to separate career theorists. The metathemes are dialectic, in the sense that they are best described as tensions between two opposing concepts (Astley & Van de Ven, 1983). They are (1) individual agency versus social determinism in the shaping of career, (2) career as process versus career as achieving fit, (3) fit for the benefit of the individual versus fit for the benefit of the collectivity, (4) career as a social phenomenon versus career as an individual life story, and (5) career scholarship as theoretical prediction versus career scholarship that provides help for individuals living their careers. Each theme will be examined in turn.

Individual Agency
Versus Social Determinism

Running through the entire literature on career is the tension between individual agency, the notion that we are what we make of ourselves, and social determinism, in which "individual behavior is seen as determined by and reacting to structural constraints that provide organizational life with an overall stability and control" (Astley & Van de Ven, 1983, p. 245). The former, agency, perspective is most evident in the vocational literature, which, as we argued above, is founded on the precept that the individual should find out about his or her individual capacities and match them to the occupation that best suits those capacities. It emerges most forcefully in the 19th-century self-help literature typified by Horatio Alger (see Scharnhorst, 1980) and Samuel Smiles (1859/1958). But it is arguably also evident in the Weberian concept of the Calvinist struggle to succeed and thereby demonstrate that one is a member of the chosen.

Social determinism is a strong component of the sociological tradition we traced above. In their different ways, the early sociologists described how macrosocial structures constrain and enable life chances, such as Durkheim's

division of labor or Weber's bureaucracy and status and class hierarchies. These themes were picked up by Hughes and his colleagues and seen in the dystopian writing of Mills and others. The determinism is of two forms, which might be labeled "benign" and "malign." The benign version points to the way in which social systems structure the opportunities that people are presented with—for example, the precise form that a particular bureaucratic structure might take, which in turn shapes the careers that are possible within that bureaucracy (Gunz, 1989). The consequences are neither necessarily good nor bad for the people making their careers. The malign version, in contrast, worries about the dystopic effects of social structure on people's life chances—for example, in terms of the alienating effects of bureaucracy.

Anthony Giddens takes the dualism of agency and structure an important step further by pointing out that the actions of individual agents create and reproduce the structure within which they act: "Structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25; see also Whittington, 1992). This provides a theoretical linkage between the two poles—agency and social determinism—by showing how they are not independent of each other. Horatio Alger's heroes, for example, can only experience the rewards of their hard work in societies in which the rules allow them to own the means of production. But in so doing, they reinforce and reproduce the rules that made their success possible.

Process Versus Fit

The tension between career as a dynamic process and career as a choice or fit phenomenon has been continuously apparent throughout the early history of career theory. Most obviously, vocational psychology has tended to view careers statically, as an issue that can be resolved through proper attention to vocational choice and placement. Much of Holland's work on person-environment congruence (Holland, 1966, 1973), for example, is a legacy from the early vocational work that advised individuals to learn about themselves, learn about different jobs, and make appropriate choices with that

knowledge (Parsons, 1909; Proctor, 1933). Round pegs, in other words, tend to stay round and are best fitted into round holes.

On the other hand, developmental psychology, and theories of adult development in particular, invites theorists to understand careers as a dynamic and changing process, in which different needs, values, and motivators are prioritized at different stages over the life course. Here, the peg changes shape as it ages. The ideas of a number of major career theorists incorporate this perspective: Super (1990) integrates life stages with different developmental tasks into his life-span approach to careers; Driver's (1982) typology of career concepts outlines different ways of navigating through careers; and Hall's (1976) model integrates the developmental tasks of career stages with the stages of traditional family development. The general trend in current career theory is toward dynamic models and away from static models, though staged developmental models remain criticized for overgeneralizing their applicability and often assuming unidirectionality and sequentiality, as well as overemphasizing intraindividual processes to the detriment of attending to individual-environment interaction (Dannefer, 1984a). However, the bulk of the empirical work in career theory remains tied to static models, which are easier to design, operationalize, and model statistically.

The Function of Career: Fit for Whom?

Even though dynamic models have generally replaced static models of career processes, the concept of fit remains central to career theory: It continues to be important that individual decisions about career choices result in effective placement, both for the individuals involved and for the productivity of the organization. This leads to the recurring tension: fit for whom? Sociologists have historically emphasized the importance of large swaths of the population being fit successfully in employment to reproduce the social order in a stable way; later industrial sociologists as well as the civic activists involved in placing the huge waves of new immigrants and workers displaced by the Depression remained concerned about the

importance at this societal level of the effective placement of individuals in jobs.

More meso-oriented researchers have emphasized the more individual-level factors of appropriate person-job fit as a mutual goal of both individuals (for job satisfaction, needs fulfillment, and personal growth) and organizations (for work group and organizational productivity). Again, Schein's view of the importance of integrating individual and organizational needs in the career process speaks to this mutual goal as an important outcome of fit (Schein, 1971). Finally, micro-oriented psychologists have shied away from considering the organization's needs and have instead focused sharply on the importance of good person-job fit to meet the goal of personal self-expression and/or growth. Many of the developmental theorists, such as Alderfer or Levinson, represent this side of the tension around "fit for whom?" (Alderfer, 1972; Levinson, 1978).

Interestingly, though there are different priorities and ways of answering this question, each answer essentially revolves around finding order in some way. At the macro-level, fit facilitates the stability of the social structure; at the meso level, fit facilitates both individual satisfaction and organizational effectiveness; at the micro-level, fit facilitates the development and potential self-actualization of the individual.

Social Phenomenon or Individual Life Story?

Another theme running through all three disciplinary perspectives relates to the *function* of the career: Who benefits from the career? In the sociological writings, the beneficiary is the social order. Occupational groups are seen as a source of moral influence, and the work role is a method for integrating the individual into his or her social environment. Having individuals settled into stable jobs is a way of preserving order in a chaotic society (so thought Durkheim and Weber) as opposed to having wandering bands of the unemployed, with much free time and little to occupy their minds except thoughts of mischief. Division of labor and occupational specialization are a way of creating an investment in one's craft, and this provides stability and reward in the person's life. A society made

up of people who are so invested in and focused on their work is, in all likelihood, not a restive society.

In the vocational perspective, the order is provided by fit between the person and his or her work role. But in this perspective, there are two beneficiaries: society and the individual. And for society, the goal is not so much security and order as it is efficiency and productivity, the harnessing of its human capital. For the individual, the benefit is being in a position that allows expression of one's individual interests and talents. The work of the early psychologists (e.g., Spearman & Jones, 1950) represented an era of optimism that the principles of science could be as well applied to human nature and behavior as to engineering. Finding good fits for individuals was also a way of helping unemployed people and new immigrants find new work and bright futures. There was a spirit of hopefulness of mutual gain for the individual and society, just as large-scale engineering projects, such as the Hoover Dam, would benefit individuals (workers, customers) as well as society (the country's economy).

In the developmental perspective, the career was seen as providing an avenue for individual self-expression and self-actualization. When a person's job and career experiences were positive, the person would be growing and would be excited about and satisfied with this growth. Although this positive energy in its cumulative effects would presumably provide employing organizations and society with high-performing members, the truly important benefit, as seen by the development theorists, would be the individual's psychological growth. Thus, the value was primarily individual rather than societal.

Theory Versus Practice

The final tension that runs through the three disciplinary branches centers on the goal of theory and how theory is to be generated. In much of the sociological tradition, there seemed to be a focus on theory *qua* theory. For example, Durkheim and Weber generated their theory by observing large-scale social movements at a high level. There were no empirical studies and first-hand observations in their writings. The theory was developed inductively rather than with the use of formal deductive reasoning.

There was a difference within the sociological tradition between these theorists and Hughes. The work of Hughes and his colleagues was highly empirical, and they took pains to stay very close to their data and to develop constructs that could be seen clearly in their observations and interviews.

The approach of the vocational researchers was the exact opposite: They were strongly focused on solving problems, such as developing accurate methods of predicting which "round pegs" would end up in which "round holes" and which "square pegs" would wind up in which "square holes." Most of this development in research and theory was driven by the needs of practice: to predict who would end up where and to assist people in making these vocational choices. Whether it was helping unemployed workers find work in the Great Depression or helping military organizations and their personnel make good staffing decisions, the central focus was on meeting a pressing practical human resource problem, and theory-building was done in the service of improving the success of vocational choices.

As for developmental scholars, their point of departure also tended to be in the realm of practice. In their case, the practical issue was how to help individuals achieve a satisfying adjustment as their career evolved over time. Since the theoretical models had a normative basis (i.e., one direction of development is "good" and the opposite direction is "bad"), the ultimate purpose of the theory was to help the person develop in the valued direction. For example, in the case of Maslow, this would be in the direction of self-actualization and away from concern for physiological and safety needs, whereas for Freud or Jung it would be in the direction of greater psychological health.

CONCLUSION

We began this chapter with the observation that the present-day careers literature typically traces its origins to the U.S.-based group of scholars, largely working in business schools, who convened in the late 1970s, decided that they had identified a field of study, and initiated an impressive stream of research and writing in that field. Yet that group was very clear about the intellectual debt that it owed to its predecessors. Schein, for example, admired Everett Hughes' work greatly and used it as a model for his own approach to research (as did Hall, 2004, who was Schein's student). And it was equally clear to them that there were major areas of careers scholarship and research, for example, in the sociological and vocational literatures that we have briefly examined here, which were parallel streams in the classic sense of never—or rarely—meeting.

The 1970s Mobile Career Seminar left its successors an important set of institutional artifacts: groups such as the Careers Division of the Academy of Management. An unintended side effect of this legacy is the impression it seems to have left with present-day careers scholars that the field began with the contributions of that group. Yet as we have shown in this chapter, and as the members of the 1970s group were well aware, the roots of careers scholarship go very much further back into history than this. This is the first of two major reasons that stimulated us to write the present chapter: To adapt Santayana's aphorism that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (1905/1936, p. 284), those who are unaware of the historical roots of their discipline risk wasting their, and everyone else's, time reinventing concepts and remaking observations.

But, arguably more seriously, the risks inherent in being unaware of the origins of a field are also that one stays unaware of the many streams in careers writing that also descended from the same historical roots and that thrive within different disciplines and different institutions. There is a great deal that we can learn from each other in complex areas of enquiry such as careers, but only if we know of one another's work. As Zerubavel points out, boundaries are double-edged (1995). No scholarly progress is possible without at least some sense of structure, but there is a point at which the boundaries that emerge from this structuring become defensive barriers to understanding and intellectual growth. We offer this chapter as a contribution to a broadening understanding of the nature of careers scholarship and its contributions to the broader field of organization studies.

NOTES

1. Two examples that stand out in the mind of the third author, who was a participant in the forming of the Careers Division of the Academy of Management, were a Boston Area Careers Group that met at various colleges and universities (Harvard Business School, Boston University, Bentley College, MIT, etc.) and an invited conference organized by Edgar Schein and C. Brooklyn Derr at MIT's Endicott House.

2. Please note that we are talking about the study of careers in management and organization studies, not necessarily the study of careers in disciplines such as psychology or sociology. As we will discuss, career studies go back much farther in those disciplines.

3. E. H. Schein (personal communication, January 17, 2005) adds,

When I published the research on career anchors I also designed a booklet that would teach managers how to do a better job of analyzing work. Pfeiffer [the publisher] mistitled it *Career Survival: Strategic Job/Role Planning.* It was the job/role planning that was the critical element. The booklet had little to do with careers per se, though one could argue that if career occupants had better information on what a job would actually involve by being given better information by the organization, they could plan their careers better . . . the career anchor concept took hold, but the job/role planning has not caught on, though I think it is as or more important for organizations to understand work requirements as individual motives and competencies.

4. Though a lifelong advocate of intelligence testing, Spearman actually backpedaled his belief in a measurable, causally relevant notion of general intelligence shortly before his death, questioning both whether "ability" could be accurately described as causal and whether it could be accurately measured (Gould, 1981; Spearman & Jones, 1950).

5. Interestingly, he found that predicting who would excel as executives was more challenging than predicting success for engineers, lawyers, ministers of religion, or artists; because executives have a broader and more catholic set of interests, it is more difficult to use the inventory to predict who will be successful (Strong, 1927).

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