



# *White Paper: Career Guidance & Its Implementation in the United States*

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## A Rationale for Career Guidance for Youth and Adults

The rationale for providing career guidance services is built on two foundations: a) the desire for individuals to have satisfying work, or in a more lofty statement, to implement their self-concepts through work; and b) the need for nations to have a sufficient number of trained, skilled individuals to fill the positions that employers have to offer and produce the gross national product that a healthy economy needs. Sometimes these goals are at odds with each other because there are not sufficient jobs to match the interests of all individuals, and a country may need more workers in specific fields than there are individuals who want to work in those fields or are trained to do so. This pull results in the compromise that many need to make in career choice.

Nonetheless, these are the two foundations upon which career guidance is built. American theorists, such as Donald Super and Mark Savickas, have focused on the critical nature of individual choice and satisfaction. Super indicates that “the choice of an occupation is the implementation of a self-concept.” Savickas speaks of career choice as an expression of deep-seated life themes. Holland indicates that those who find this match between personality type and work tasks/environment are likely to be satisfied in their work and productive. These are lofty self-actualization goals that many do not accomplish either because they do not know how to do so or because the distribution of jobs in their environment does not support this ideal state for everyone.

The second rationale for career guidance involves providing a structure through which to guide young people and adults toward the acquisition of skills that outfit them to fill the jobs offered in the nation and needed to grow the economy and be competitive in the global society. If this is not accomplished effectively, a large percentage of people may be unemployed or underemployed, the economy will not be as strong as it could be, and workers will have to be imported or work exported.

The challenge of career guidance is to attempt to meet these two goals – personal and societal – at the same time. Especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it seems inevitable that a significant proportion of the population will have to work at tasks that they may not enjoy because those are the jobs that are available and for which workers are needed. Donald Super, the eminent international career development theorist, has addressed this issue in his Life-Career Rainbow. This “rainbow” which he calls *career* is made up of the life roles which we choose to play at any given point in time – such as Spouse, Parent, Worker, Citizen, and Leisurite. Super proposes that life satisfaction comes from the combination of these roles and that our values, interests, and skills, can be distributed across them. Thus, some will enjoy much or most of life satisfaction from the Worker Role while others will have to work in areas they do not enjoy while seeking that satisfaction in other life roles.

## The Structure of Career Guidance in the United States

Career guidance and counseling services are widely offered in the United States in schools, universities, public career centers (“one-stop” centers), corporations, government agencies, and in private practice. In some cases career guidance services are mandated by legislation (such as by the federal Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and the state of South Carolina Education and Economic Development Act). School counseling, which may or may not include some focus on career counseling and guidance, is mandated (see <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/careers-roles/state-school-counseling-mandates-and-legislation>) in many of the states. In states where school counseling is not mandated, individual school districts determine whether or not to offer school counseling and guidance services and at what grade levels. In states where school counseling is mandated, the ratio of counselors to students is also mandated.

## Guidelines for Career Guidance Content

Though the specific content of career guidance services offered to young people and adults is not mandated, there are both national guidelines with very specific detail (see <http://acrn.ovae.org/ncdg.htm>) as well as state guidelines (see <https://ed.sc.gov/agency/ac/Career-and-Technology-Education/documents/EEDAGuidelines.pdf> and <http://dese.mo.gov/ccr/cemodelcurriculum/documents/guidematerial/Manual.pdf> as examples) which are often modeled after the national guidelines. These guidelines are typically developed under the auspices of professional associations, especially the American School Counselor Association (see <http://www.schoolcounselor.org>) and the National Career Development Association (see [www.ncda.org](http://www.ncda.org)). Especially the latter organization is very proactive in providing guidelines, standards of ethics, and ongoing professional development for its members through its website, professional publications, conferences, webinars, and face-to-face workshops.

## Qualifications for Career Counselors, Facilitators, and Advisors

In the United States there are three levels of training for those who assist young people and adults with career choice and planning: a) a professional master’s degree or doctoral degree level; b) the career development facilitator level; and c) the career advisor level.

Most secondary schools in the United States have full-time counselors on their staffs who deal with a variety of tasks related to their students: academic planning, selection of postsecondary school, behavioral problems, crisis counseling, and career planning. Due to their many assigned duties and the ratio of one counselor to as many as 500 or more students, insufficient time is spent in providing career guidance and counseling. Many elementary and middle schools have counselors as well, who also provide some career guidance services. All school counselors must have a master’s degree in school counseling, must conform to national standards monitored by the

National Board for Certified Counselors (see [www.nbcc.org](http://www.nbcc.org)), and must pass a national certifying examination. Some states require additional courses and state licensure. Career counselors who work in college and university settings or private practice typically have a doctoral degree in vocational psychology or a related field.

A second level of service provider is called a *career development facilitator*. These individuals study a curriculum based on the same 12 competencies that professional career counselors study. Upon completion of a curriculum that may be as lengthy as 120 clock hours, they become certified through an affiliate organization of the National Board for Certified Counselors, called the Center for Credentialing and Education (see <http://cce-global.org>). These individuals are paraprofessionals who deliver many valuable services to youth and adults in schools and workforce development agencies, though they are barred from in-depth career counseling and interpretation of certain types of psychological tests.

A third level of service provider is called a *career advisor*. These individuals study a 30-clock-hour curriculum that is based on the same 12 competencies (see [http://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news\\_article/37798/\\_self/layout\\_ccmsearch/true](http://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/37798/_self/layout_ccmsearch/true)) as professional counselors and career development facilitators. These individuals are qualified to work with students and adults in school and agency settings with specifically-defined roles related to the support of use of web-based career planning systems.

## Accreditation of Institutions and Providers of Education and Training

In order to monitor the quality of the course work and field experience that professional school and career counselors have, institutions of higher education that offer graduate degrees in this field must be accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (see [www.cacrep.org](http://www.cacrep.org)), which specifies the courses and field experience that certified professional counselors must successfully complete. The programs of member institutions are constantly monitored for quality and conformity to the standards. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredits counseling programs in mental health counseling, school counseling, career counseling, and other counseling emphasis areas. Currently, 640 programs in universities and colleges across the U.S. are accredited. The CACREP Standards address the training of counselors; and to be accredited, programs must show that their students meet several competencies in multiple areas, one of which is career development counseling. In addition to Core Standards that every master's-degree counseling student must meet, there are Emphasis Area Standards specific to counselors' work settings (e.g., schools, career centers, mental health agencies). Although the Emphasis Area Standards are more specific and elaborated, they are derived from the Core Standards.

Following are the CACREP Core Standards for career development counseling, indicating what graduates of programs should know and be able to do.

1. Career development theories and decision-making models.
2. Career, avocational, educational, occupational and labor market information resources, and career information systems.
3. Career development program planning, organization, implementation, administration, and evaluation.
4. Interrelationships among and between work, family, and other life roles and factors, including the role of multicultural issues in career development.
5. Career and educational planning, placement, follow-up, and evaluation.
6. Assessment instruments and techniques relevant to career planning and decision making.
7. Career counseling processes, techniques, and resources, including those applicable to specific populations in a global economy.

The curriculum for the training of career development facilitators is specified and monitored by the Center for Credentialing and Education, mentioned above, which also certifies career development facilitators upon successful completion of an approved curriculum. Further, the training must be offered by instructors who have completed a defined curriculum.

In summary, the content of career guidance services in the United States is guided by career theory, which is translated into measurable objectives, then published by individual states and/or the federal government as guidelines both for content and evaluation of services. The quality of those services is controlled through very detailed specification and monitoring of curriculum by governing bodies. Individual adherence to standards is controlled by the process of national certification, licensure (in some states), and successful completion of a national examination (for professional counselors only).

Of course, guidelines for the content and structure of career guidance have been developed for other parts of the world as well. Notable among these would be the European Union model for lifelong learning and career guidance available at these links:

- [http://www.um.edu.mt/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/39501/PES-Guidance-DG-Sultana-Watts.pdf](http://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/39501/PES-Guidance-DG-Sultana-Watts.pdf)
- <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCUQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FblobServlet%3FdocId%3D6767%26langId%3Den&ei=uTImU5uHM6PZ2QWCioHwBA&usg=AFQjCNGjAZbKfmBXHxmfE8vT-fyt2Ua3w>

## Career Choice and Development Theory in the United States

Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a significant body of theory about what influences the career choices that people make has been developed and researched. This body of knowledge has been used to develop objectives for career guidance interventions, guide methods of intervention, and specify desired outcomes from these interventions. Through the development of these theories and research about their validity, psychologists have described career development and choice as a complex process that is influenced by myriad forces, including the following:

- Self-concept (understanding of one's interests, abilities, skills, personality traits, and values).
- Genetic endowment.
- Self-efficacy (internal locus of control and belief in one's ability to perform specific tasks).
- Decision-making skill and style.
- The economy and the opportunities it offers or does not offer.
- Racial-ethnic background.
- Parental/family/peer influence.

These theories are described briefly in the PowerPoint presentation titled "[From Super to Savickas: A Review of Career Theory and its Application](#)" and in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of the textbook authored by two members of Kuder's research faculty, Dr. Spencer Niles and Dr. JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, titled *Career Interventions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, published by Pearson.

Of the theories that have been proposed and studied in the United States, Kuder has chosen those of Dr. Donald Super and Dr. John Holland on which to base its systems. The fact that Kuder offers a sequence of systems (Kuder<sup>®</sup> Galaxy<sup>™</sup>, Kuder<sup>®</sup> Navigator<sup>™</sup>, and Kuder<sup>®</sup> Journey<sup>™</sup>) that serve individuals from kindergarten through adulthood is documentation of our belief that career development is a lifelong, developmental process and that each stage of that process (awareness, exploration, implementation) requires different kinds of information and career intervention. The centrality of self-information; that is, knowledge of one's interests, skills, and values, in that process is also a basic tenet of Super's theory as well as the acknowledged influence of culture, economy, and family. Kuder's assessment of work values is an updated version of Super's Work Values Inventory.

Kuder's assessments of interests (the Kuder<sup>®</sup> Career Interests Assessment<sup>™</sup>) and skills (the Kuder<sup>®</sup> Skills Confidence Assessment<sup>™</sup>) are based on the work of John Holland. Since it is central to Holland's theory that individuals be able to relate what they learn about themselves (summarized as a Holland code) to occupations, work environments, and programs of study, each occupation and program of study is also assigned a Holland code.

Kuder has placed Holland's theory and methods of career intervention in this focal position for two very important reasons:

1. Of all the theories proposed in the United States, Holland's has been most extensively researched and cited in the literature; and the research has, on the whole, supported the theory and its application. Links to important research are provided in the next section of this paper.
2. The theory offers tools and methodology that makes it possible to use it in interventions, such as web-based systems, that can be large scale and cost-efficient. In other words, it is totally feasible to provide a short, high-quality assessment (such as the Kuder Career Interests Assessment), provide its interpretation, and then identify occupations and programs of study that are in sync with the user's interests, all online. If desired, support from trained career advisors can also be provided through video- or audio-conferencing. Implementation of many other theories in an online mode would be impossible because it is necessary to have one-on-one interviewing to identify deep-seated life themes, for example, as a basis for identifying career options. Methods that require individual interviewing are not amenable to implementation in a large-scale, cost-effective way.

## Holland's Theory

Holland developed his theory while he was vice president of research at ACT, Inc., a large nonprofit organization in the United States that develops and administers multiple tests, including the ACT college entrance examination. In that position, Holland had access to hundreds of thousands of college students and the capability to track their choices from secondary school through the college years. His theory is based on several propositions:

1. Individuals can be described as a combination of six personality types. This description is typically summarized as a three-letter "code" in which the first letter describes the most dominant personality/interest type, the second letter the next most dominant type, and the third letter the third most dominant type.
  - a. The concept of *differentiation* is important. Differentiation is the numerical difference between the highest area of a person's interest and the lowest. A person with a well-differentiated profile (one or more areas high and one or more areas low) has more clarity of career interest than one with a "flat" profile.
  - b. The concept of *constancy* is important; that is, that there is stability in individuals' codes over time.
2. There is a solid research-based circular ordering of these six types which he depicts as a hexagon. These types are in the order of R, I, A, S, E, and C and
  - a. Those types that are adjacent to each other are most alike.



- b. Those types that are across from each other are most unlike.
  - c. The concept of *consistency* is important; that is, that the top two letters of an individual's code be adjacent or at least not more than one hexagon point away from each other. Individuals with the lowest level of consistency (first two letters of code opposite each other) experience a "pull" of the two opposite kinds of work tasks and environments and typically have more difficulty in finding work that combines these two opposites.
3. Environments (occupations, programs of study, for example) can be described by the same six definitions/types.
  4. Individuals seek environments that "match" their personality type (called *congruence*), i.e., where they can perform tasks that they like to perform, use their skills, and be rewarded for doing so.
  5. To the extent that individuals are able to engage in work tasks and be in a work environment that matches/supports their personal code, they are likely to enjoy job satisfaction.

According to Holland, one's personal code is the result of activities positively reinforced by parents and others through childhood and into adolescence. The personal code is quite stable by the adolescent years, though it can change over the life span if new experiences and positive reinforcement from them cause such changes. Typically, says Holland, individuals strive to develop skills in areas of their interest. Values, later in development, emerge from adopting the values inherent in the work environment selected by an individual.

## How the Holland Typology and Theory Can be Used

Though Holland does provide an explanation of how individuals develop a personal code, he does not dwell on that aspect. His focus is on capturing an individual's interests/skills at a given point in time and using that snapshot to help an individual find focus for planful exploration. In other words, the assessment of a personal code allows an individual to explore occupations, jobs, and programs of study that relate to that code rather than exploring the total universe of options. Then, from that focused and informed exploration, choice can be made.

Thus, Holland's work can be used for a variety of career planning interventions for individuals from secondary school level through adulthood, as follows:

- Teach the Holland six-group circular/hexagonal model as a structure for young people and adults to understand the organization of the world of work.
- Organize secondary school and higher education curriculum by the Holland structure.

- Administer a Holland-based interest assessment to young people in order to define for them a specific area of the world of work to explore.
- Use the results of a Holland-based interest assessment to specify postsecondary majors that would be appropriate for students.
- Administer a Holland-based skills assessment to adults as one measure of the skills they have acquired that may be transferrable.
- Code the work environment of specific positions in order to match applicants' interests/skills with those of the position.

## Use of the Holland Theory in a Multicultural Context in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Some scholars and practitioners are critical of using any 20<sup>th</sup> century theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, arguing that the characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are so different from those of the 20<sup>th</sup> that the same processes cannot work. Thus, there are new theories that stress the influence of cultural and economic factors, constructivism (the effort of an individual to create personal meaning), chaos (our lack of ability to control decision making), and happenstance (making choices by seizing unplanned opportunities). While the 21<sup>st</sup> century has these forces, the utility of Holland's theory is still intact. The world of occupations and educational programs can still be organized by Holland's six types and their multiple three-letter combinations. The personality and interests of individuals can still be assessed by reliable, valid instruments, thus helping an individual gain a clearer self-concept and find focus in a vast sea of options. Doubtless in the 21<sup>st</sup> century individuals will change from one job related to their type to another related to their type with greater frequency. Due to myriad new influences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the codes of individuals may be less stable over the life span than in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to new learning and new experience.

Without doubt, the theory of John Holland has been more extensively researched and supported by that research than any other career choice or development theory – perhaps even more than any other theory in the social sciences. The following links provide access to many of the studies done with American subjects:

- [http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news\\_article/6521/PARENT/layout\\_details/false](http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/6521/PARENT/layout_details/false) (Holland's life and work with an extensive list of references at the end)
- <http://www.choixdecariere.com/pdf/5873/6.pdf> (Holland's contribution to vocational psychology)

The question then arises as to whether the theory itself and the circular ordering of occupations is relevant in other cultures. The following documents offer some insight into this question:

- <http://jca.sagepub.com/content/9/2/115> (a comparative study of American and Singaporean college students that provides evidence of validity of the Holland

configuration of occupations and of Holland's hypothesis that individuals of a given Holland code seek work environments/occupations of the same or similar code, but does not support a significant correlation between interests by Holland types and values inferred from Holland types)

- [http://www.academia.edu/778647/Cross-cultural\\_validation\\_of\\_Hollands\\_interest\\_structure\\_in\\_Chinese\\_population](http://www.academia.edu/778647/Cross-cultural_validation_of_Hollands_interest_structure_in_Chinese_population) (a study of the fit of the Holland model in mainland China and Hong Kong)
- <http://www.career.fsu.edu/documents/technical%20reports/TR50.pdf> (an extensive review of research related to Holland's theory and the international context)

## In Summary

The United States and other countries have developed guidelines and standards related to the content and delivery of career guidance interventions. This structure is based upon a wealth of theory in the career development area; measurable objectives derived from it; strict criteria for curriculum and programs that train career counselors and facilitators; and codes of ethics, certification requirements, and licensure for those who deliver career interventions.

Thus, it is the responsibility of state and local school districts, universities, public agencies, and private practitioners to build local programs on this foundation. This task requires careful planning, commitment to the value of career development interventions, structuring ways to make these programs accountable and sustainable, and selecting the most cost-effective ways of delivery. Research indicates that the most cost-effective model is one that combines the use of technology (i.e., carefully designed, web-based career guidance systems) and counselor/facilitator support via one-on-one interviews, group sessions, curricular units, email, and/or videoconferencing. Kuder is a major source for acquiring either standard or highly customized career planning systems, all of which feature valid and reliable assessments of career interests, skills, and values. It also offers high quality training for both career development facilitators and career advisors who can provide the necessary human support to use of the web-based systems.