A New Epistemology for Vocational Psychology

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The present chapter examines the epistemology used by vocational psychology to produce knowledge during the twentieth century and then describes the nascent development of new epistemic guidelines for knowledge production in the twenty-first century. The first third of the chapter describes the modern philosophy of science that structures contemporary vocational psychology and considers contemporary challenges to it. The middle third explains new epistemic guidelines that offer an alternative to the modernist guidelines. The concluding section of the chapter discusses how the new epistemic guidelines can prompt innovations in vocational theory, research, and practice as well as foster a major transition in the scientific enterprise of vocational psychology.

Central to this discourse will be the subject of philosophy of science as "the study of how science works, or should work" (Runes, 1983, p. 191). A philosophy of science provides the formal schema for constructing theories and conducting research as well as a disciplined and public self-consciousness in communicating concepts and conclusions. This chapter deals with the concept of science assumed by vocational psychology and how changes in philosophical stance can alter the epistemic guidelines that vocational psychology uses to produce knowledge about vocational development and adjustment. Let us begin the discourse by considering how the transition from the industrial age to an

information age may prompt a philosophical shift.

Vocational Psychology and the Postmodern Turn

The world is about to enter the postmodern era, probably using the turn of the millennium to identify its formal birth. We see the gestation of the new era all about us. Around the globe, newspapers report stories about companies offering day-care and parental leave; increasing numbers of families require dual earners; more and more people work at home; and industrial jobs disappear. In addition to the increasing intertwining of work and family roles, work itself involves evermore symbolic problem solving. All workers must become better communicators. Middle class workers, especially are being challenged to work effectively with symbols or be left behind. Countries seem to be moving toward two-class societies that pit those comfortable working with symbols against those who can only labor with their hands. Workers will compete in a global economy that is driven by research, development, and innovation.

To adapt to the new era, postindustrial societies are revising their cultures by changing the meaning of knowledge, science, authority, and diversity. As a culture changes its patterns and stories, individuals in that culture must adopt new views. To better serve clients who will view the world differently than our generation, vocational psychologists are starting to transform their outlook and skill repertoire.

The philosophical stance of modernity along with its

procedures for knowledge production have served vocational psychology well. In fact, the history of contemporary vocational psychology is intertwined with the scientific method. The relationship is so strong that, historically, vocational psychologists have concerned themselves only incidently with philosophy of science. Modern vocational psychology was established by Parsons (1909) and developed under the influence of logical positivism. The early tradition of "dustbowl empiricism" promulgated by proponents of the Minnesota point of view such as Paterson, Williamson, and Darley (Patterson, 1966) eschewed theory construction and concentrated on measurement and prediction as the modus operandi for establishing the "matching model" in both vocational choice and adjustment. After being virtually unchallenged for much of the twentieth century, the logical positivist stance is being harshly criticized for its "attitude of colonization," attacked as insufficient for comprehending social life and organizing a society (e.g., the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989), and interrogated regarding its biases. These challenges produce greater self-consciousness among vocational psychologists concerning the philosophical assumptions that structure their theory, research, and practice.

At stake is what counts as knowledge. The positivist researchers who dominate vocational psychology do not yet have sufficient reason to discard or significantly modify the objectivist methods that have produced and effectively applied

modern interest inventories, aptitude tests, career maturity scales, and computer-assisted counseling. Nevertheless, as times change, more and more compelling reasons enjoin a reconsideration of the objectivist stance in vocational psychology. Before examining pressures on modern vocational psychology to change, let us consider the philosophical standpoint that orients modern vocational psychology.

Vocational Psychology in the Modern Era

Vocational psychology is a creation of twentieth century science. As such it reflects the science of its time. The field cites its birth with the publication in 1909 of Parson's book on Choosing a Vocation. In this book, Parsons established vocational guidance as a scientific enterprise by presenting methods for objectifying individuals and occupations and then matching the two using "true reasoning." Parsons did not invent the matching model itself, he scientized and thus legitimated it for the twentieth century.

Lysander Richards had proposed in 1881 the establishment of a field called Vocophy in his book of the same name. Richards (1881, p. i) described this field as a new profession that systematically enabled "a person to name the calling or vocation one is best suited to follow." Thus, Richards sought to found the discipline of vocational psychology upon the bedrock of the matching model. Nevertheless, he is a forgotten figure because his methods for matching people to positions remained rooted in

the Romantic conceptualism of nineteenth century philosophy. He implemented the matching model by extracting meaning from inside the person with methods such as physiognomy and phrenology. These methods became outmoded when people moved from farms and small towns to occupy industrial jobs located in big cities. Accordingly, Richards suggestions may be considered the pinnacle of nineteenth century vocational guidance, not the foundation of twentieth century vocational psychology.

Twentieth century modernism no longer looked for meaning within the individual, instead it sought meaning in the world. Positivism proclaimed that objective facts exist and that they can be discovered by researchers who "control" their bias and use the scientific method to empirically test theory. Truth was conceived of as being singular. Language was to be used to mirror "the truth" discovered in reality.

Parsons (1909) founded modern vocational psychology by applying the tenets of modern science to the matching model. His major contribution was to infuse vocational guidance with the stance of logical positivism. By using rational methods, Parsons showed his colleagues how to (1) objectify individuals by categorizing their interests, abilities, and values, (2) systematically describe the traits needed in particular occupations, and (3) use "true reasoning" in matching people to fitting positions.

The modern stance of positivist science has served

vocational psychology well because it fit the spirit of twentieth century modernity. Psychologists were able to use the scientific method to study vocational behavior using reliable measures, theoretical validity, statistical significance, and broad generalizability. The tools of modern science extracted abstract, generalized principles from studies of large groups of individuals. Today, principles regarding occupational decision making and congruence constitute foundational knowledge for vocational psychology. In practice, counselors apply these principles in matching people to positions. These theoretical principles and associated counseling methods may have achieved their pinnacle in the work of Holland (1985), an intellectual prodigy of Darley and the Minnesota point-of-view and the most elegant spokesperson for the positivist contributions to understanding vocational behavior.

The only major transition in modern vocational psychology occurred at midcentury when Super (1953) encouraged vocational psychologists to refocus their attention from matching people with positions to the career development of individuals. He suggested that vocational psychology augment the individual differences perspective of how people and occupations differ with the life-span perspective of how people develop their occupational lives over time.

Super's call to shift from occupation to career prompted a strong movement within vocational psychology. This movement

produced a substantial literature on career development, numerous measures of career maturity, and innovative methods for developmental counseling. It never replaced vocational guidance and its matching methods, rather it expanded the realm of vocational psychology to include adults and children. Moreover, career development theory, research, and practice continued to use the philosophical stance of logical positivism.

As we approach the new millenium, the companies that people build careers around are downsizing or disappearing. The global economy and development of information technologies has moved us from industrial to post-industrial societies. People can no longer count on stable companies to provide life-long employment and a clear career path of advancing positions from initial employment through retirement. There is even the question, to be examined later in the chapter, of whether or not the construct of career has a future. Because of rapid changes in society, the vocational psychology of the twentieth century may be losing contact with the real-world concerns of the individuals who it serves.

To make matters more challenging, the twentieth century investment in the scientific method that built vocational psychology has soured. Certainly people appreciate the contributions of science to modern life - air travel, television, medical technology, automobiles, and home appliance. However, science has also brought nuclear weapons, thalodamine babies,

disintegrating ozone layers, and polluted environments. At one time, science was able to take credit for the successes of modernity and excuse itself from responsibility for its great tragedies. Scientists did this attribution ploy by claiming that the politicians and industrial leaders caused these catastrophes when they misused scientific knowledge. Now, many people in society argue that the objective, value-free position of modern science has outlived its usefulness. We are entering the postmodern era, and society needs to experiment with a new philosophical stance, one that coincides with the spirit of the times like positivism corresponds to modernity. This stance has new epistemic guidelines to offer vocational psychology, yet before describing these new guidelines for knowledge production let us consider the general philosophical stance postured by postmodern scholars.

The Postmodern Turn

The new philosophical stance being elaborated in disciplines such as architecture, physics, literary criticism, women's studies, and critical pedagogy is generally referred to as perspectivism, interpretivism, or constructivism. Herein, this group of terms will be referred to as perspectivism. Perspectivism denotes a post-structural approach to science. The structuralists believe that the human mind is the same everywhere and, therefore, crosscultural factors or structures explain commonalities in culture and behavior. Anthropologists,

sociologists, and psychologists study these structures to identify universal properties of the human mind. Postmodern thought is post-structuralist because it seeks particular knowledge situated in local contexts and eschews the search for universal principles.

Postmodern thought can also be explained as a renunciation of the modern belief in the singular capacity of science and objective reasoning to improve community life. Instead of subscribing to this Enlightenment hope, postmodern thought subscribes to the belief that knowledge is socially produced, that truth depends on one's social standpoint, and objective science produces knowledge from a standpoint not the standpoint. Facts are never independent of the observer who reports them nor of the definitions and categories provided by the observer's culture. Accordingly, postmodern thought emphasizes particulars over principles, useful practices over general theories, and contextualized knowledges over abstracted essences.

Decentration lies at the heart of postmodern thought. Recall from Piaget's (Gruber & Vonéche, 1977) work that when adolescents decenter from a singular perspective to multiple perspectives, they experience a new world view that extends their intellectual horizons and empowers them to better understand life. By analogy, the postmodern decentering from "them to us", from "self to context," and from "singular truth to multiple realities" enables post-positivist scholars to envision old problems in new ways and empowers them to approach problem solving with a new

philosophical stance.

Table 1 presents, for easy comparison, three columns that list the dominant elements of the philosophical stance toward work during traditional, modern, and postmodern eras. The Romantic conceptualism of the nineteenth century viewed meaning as in the person and correspondingly valued feelings. The revolution of modern science portrayed meaning as in the world and accordingly values facts. Now, postmodern perspectivism claims that meaning resides in the word, because the linguistic interchange between subjects constructs meaning. Thus, postmodernism values perspectives. The goal for knowledge is not to be romantically creative or scientifically reasonable, the new goal is to be useful by a community. Because knowledge is produced in diverse interpretive communities that share a local perspective, there are multiple realities not singular truths. Knowledge is not validated in relation to theory but legitimated by its usefulness in action. The romantic question was "How does it feel?" The modern question asks "Is it true?' The postmodern questions will be: "Why did she say that?" "How is true?" "For whom is it useful?" "Could it be otherwise?"

Insert Table 1 About Here

New Epistemic Guidelines

This middle section of the present chapter describes four

new epistemic guidelines that express the philosophical stance of perspectivism. The four guidelines represent central tenets of postmodern thought. The guidelines deal with issues of multiple perspectives in knowledge production, legitimation of knowledge by praxis, and everyday life as the context for meaning.

Objectivity versus perspectivity

Postmodern thought besmirches innocent belief in reality independent of an observer and in value-free science. Modern positivism acts as if scientists can "control" their biases in producing objective knowledge. Positivism seeks to discover "the truth" by formulating rational theories and then using the scientific method to confront external reality. The scientific method claims to exclude from research experiments and journal reports the actual presence of researchers and their world views. The philosophical stance of perspectivism assaults the pretense of value-free science. Rather than continue to pretend that they produce objective truth, vocational psychologists must now announce their own presence in the research they conduct. They must interrogate their biases to reveal how these inclinations conditioned topic selection, conceptual and operational definitions, type of research participants, data analyses, and interpretation of results. Furthermore, the implication of the knowledge for race, class, and gender need to be interrogated. In addition to announcing their presence and interrogating their biases, researchers must also explain the intended use of the

knowledge. For whom did they produce the knowledge and how is it meaningful to that group. In short, researchers must report by whom and for whom the knowledge was produced.

A corollary of the belief in value-free observation is the belief in a reality independent of the observer. Postmodern perspectivism subscribes to standpoint theory (Harding, 1991), that is, where you stand shapes what you see. Knowledge is socially produced and reflects the socio-historical conditions that define what counts as knowledge and how knowledge is legitimated. Observation of reality cannot be independent of an observer or free from the observers standpoint. Even physics, the most rational of all sciences, accepts this new epistemic guideline. Gergen (1991, p. 89), in explaining the principle of uncertainty named after the physicist Werner Heisenberg, wrote that "the very attempt to measure the position and velocity of a particle will knock the particle about in unpredictable ways. In effect, there is no basic unit of matter to be observed independent of those who make the observation. Subject and object are inextricably linked."

The postmodern turn away from commitment to value-free science and belief in a reality independent of an observer has produced great intellectual controversy and some personal tension between those who wish to maintain positivist science against those who wish to overthrow the domination of knowledge production by the procedural rationality of modern science. Apologists for

positivist science argue that perspectivist science amounts to radical relativism: if all knowledge is socially produced, then everyone's view is equal. This charge of epistemic relativism leads quickly to an additional charge of moral relativism.

In responding to charges of radical relativism, we can argue that knowledge is relational not private because meaning is between people. A theory of knowledge situated in perspectival social constructionism is by definition a relational theory of knowledge but not necessarily a relativistic theory of knowledge (Grosz, 1988; Luke, 1992). Perspectivity does not mean that everyone's standpoint produces knowledge of equal usefulness. We can have espistemological relativity (i.e., all views are socially produced) without degenerating to moral relativity if we acknowledge that all views are not equally valid (Bhaskar, 1989). In matters that require action, an interpretive community must make commitments to what works best.

Another defense against the charge of radical relativism concerns the goal of perspectivism. Perspectivism seeks to augment objectivism, not replace it. Perspectivism recognizes and appreciates objectivism as <u>one</u> approach to knowledge production, but not <u>the</u> only approach. Identifying and interrogating the social standpoint or perspective of the researcher who applies positivist methods for knowledge production actually increases the rigor of objectivism. Research, recognized as socially situated, can be made more objective although it cannot be made value free.

Harding (1991) refers to socially-situated objectivism as strong objectivity, in contrast to the weak objectivity of the value-free stance toward knowledge production. We need this strong objectivity to rationally distinguish more partial and less distorted truth. The rigors of empirical knowledge seeking lead to maximal objectivity and usefulness. This coincides with the original goal of the modernist project, namely Descartes' aim to use reason as the guide to praxis (Cascardi, 1992, p. 29).

Generality versus particularity

The postmodern project re-emphasizes the goal of science as a guide to praxis. It engenders a new type of pragmatism (Gavin, 1992) based on developing one's values in the real world, not efficiency. Accordingly, the postmodern philosophical stance insists that researchers make sure that their ideas work. The search for socially constituted and maintained knowledge shifts research from the generality of testing theoretical principles to the particularity of examining locally situated practices that are useful in specific circumstances. Rather than empirically testing principles to validate abstract theories, perspectivism shifts attention to generating instructive accounts from which we can extract effective practices. To avoid solipism, postmodern thought requires a new criterion against which to legitimate knowledge. Positivist science validates knowledge in reference to theory. Perspectivist science legitimates knowledge by its usefulness when implemented in action.

Applying the guideline of emphasizing particular knowledge and legitimating it through usefulness greatly increases the value of vocational psychology research to practitioners who work with a diversity of clients. This type of research serves as a type of practice, albeit practice at a distance (Nespor & Garrison, 1992; Latour, 1987). Rather than trying to figure out how to apply theory to practice after accumulating facts, researchers could design studies with practice and social usefulness in mind. Moreover, this second guideline reinforces the first guideline of accompanying research reports with explicit statements that explain for whom the research was produced and how it could be useful for them.

The emphasis on useful knowledge can heal the growing rift between vocational psychology as the basic science and career counseling as the applied science (Savickas, in press, a). In developing theories of career choice and development, the search has been for principles to guide practice. These principles are usually abstracted from local circumstances, that is decontextualized, and presumed to be almost universally applicable. Examples of these principles include abstract concepts such as vocational identity, congruence, career maturity, and intrinsic motivation. The notion has been that counselors can use these principles to guide their interventions with every individual client. The intervention becomes developing within the client those prescribed attitudes and competencies associated with

the principles of rational and realistic decision making. Of course, counselors encounter some difficulty in using these abstract concepts with all their clients. The concepts are especially hard to use in societies experiencing economic recession and corporate downsizing. The concepts are even more difficult to apply with individuals who differ in ethnicity, race, religion, and sex from the theorists who discovered and researched the concepts.

Part of the problem in trying to apply general principles to particular clients rests in the fact that the scientific concepts may not comprehend the authentic accounts which clients narrate about their experiences. Positivism and modern science "leaves inaccessible to judgment the entire range of phenomena associated with values, desire, and will" (Cascardi, 1992, p. 36). Postmodern thought can enrich the objective conceptualization of vocational behavior by adding an understanding of the actor's subjective purpose.

In privileging general theories, positivist vocational psychology focuses on objective and normative conceptions of the individual using concepts such as traits and aptitudes. Trait theory attributes recurring uniformities in a person's social behavior to personality structure. The underlying dimensions that structure behavioral clusters are called traits. Scientific and lay observers of an actor encode their impressions of the actor's social conduct in trait vocabularies. For example, an observer

might attribute a person's behavior to the trait of honesty. According to Hogan (1983, p. 60), "the primary function of trait ascription is to evaluate other people, specifically, to evaluate their potential as resources for the group." Thus, in a group that divides labor among its members, traits can be used to assign work roles.

In identifying particularities, postmodern vocational psychology operates from the subjective perspective. It seeks to understand vocational behavior from the actor's own point of view and within the context of local circumstances and context. The behavioral clusters, which from the objective perspective are explained by traits, are explained by actors as intentional action. Individuals do not use differences between themselves and others to explain their behavior to themselves. In fact, individual difference variables do not exist for individuals. Without objective feedback from counselors about their relative position on the normal curve, people do not ordinarily sense their position relative to other people across a taxonomy of traits. What they do sense is their own needs and goals. Individuals comprehend these needs and goals as the reason for their behavior. Purpose, not traits, structure actors' causal explanations.

Part of the actor's particular point of view arises from the context in which the person is situated. Therefore, in privileging particularities over generalities, postmodern thought emphasizes socially-situated, local knowledges rather than

decontextualized, abstract principles.

Essence versus context

Rather than impose general concepts on the world, postmodern scholars seek to learn how communities construct and maintain meaning in local sites. Accordingly, they emphasize decentration from abstract definitions and essentialized selves toward social context and unique circumstances. The recent dramatic changes in socio-historic conditions serve to sensitize vocational psychologists to the importance of culture. Culture is not a variable, like ethnicity or social class, culture is the context of meaning. Two recent contributions to the discourse about vocational behavior seek to follow the postmodern epistemic guideline of placing context in the foreground - one deals with embeddedness, the other deals with affordances.

Vondracek and Fouad (in press) inscribe the construct of embeddedness as a perspective for postmodern vocational psychology. "The basic idea of embeddedness is that the key phenomena of human life exist at multiple levels of analysis (e.g., biological, individual-psychological, dyadic, organizational, social, societal, cultural, physical-ecological, historical)." These variables and processes constantly interact in reciprocal loops; none of them cannot be identified as the cause of vocational behavior. As Vondracek and Fouad (in press) assert, using constructs such as embeddedness contextualizes vocational behavior and "facilitates the study of diverse people

in the real world."

Gibson's (1979) construct of affordance has also been identified (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986; Spokane, in press) as having the potential to refocus the perspective of vocational psychology from self to context. Gibson defined affordances as functional utilities or action possibilities offered by the physical and social environment. Walsh and Chartrand (in press) suggested that vocational psychologists reconceptualize person-position congruence by matching multiple goals and routes (plans) selected by an individual to the affordances offered by the social opportunity structure.

When using constructs such as embeddedness and affordances, psychologists focus on the ordinary activities of everyday life. Featherstone (1992, p. 160-161) characterized everyday life as "repetitive taken-for-granted experiences, beliefs, and practices," especially the activities of reproduction and home maintenance that sustain other worlds such as occupational and educational workplaces. He, of course notes, that women perform much of these activities, in contrast to the epic work of the hero who leaves home, conquers dragons, and returns home. Schutz (1973) described the commonsense world of everyday life as one of social action.

What action in the ordinary activities of everyday life pertains to the realm of vocational psychology? In a persuasive article, Richardson (in press) answered this question by asserting

that the new location for vocational psychology should be the study of work in the everyday lives of individuals. She argues persuasively that vocational psychology, if it wants to remain relevant to the real-world concerns of people, needs to make a "transition from the study of careers predominantly located in the occupational structure, to a focus on the study of work in people's lives in which work is considered to be a central human activity that is not tied to or solely located in the occupational structure." Richardson argued that studies conducted at this location can redress problems of career studies; in particular, the middle class bias in defining careers as developmental progression over time and the marginalization of "women's work" performed in the home and community but outside of the occupational structure. She likened the transition from careers to work to the transition Super (1953) wrought at midcentury when he turned vocational psychology from occupations to careers. The transition advocated by Richardson emphasizes perspectivity, particularity, and context. In so doing, she makes career studies a subspecialty within the broader psychology of work. Richardson also endorsed the postmodern concern of contesting the meaning of critical words and definitions that vocational psychologists first defined in another socio-historical context yet continue to use today.

Concepts versus constructs

Postmodern thought instructs us in the power of language or,

stated more dramatically, the tyranny of words. For example Gavin (1992, p.72) wrote that "there is a sense in which a person creates reality by naming it, by molding it linguistically. This may pose new problems, but it renders inadequate the doctrine that the only purpose of language is the impartial description of events." We now realize that linguistic concepts and their definitions do not mirror reality, they inscribe meaning. We thought that we were using our mastery of language to "name the animals and thereby establish dominion over them." However, it turns out that language also masters us, maybe more than we master it.

Postmodern scholars use the term "hegemony" to denote the use of language to establish the commonsense by defining social situations and needs. According to Fraser (1992, p. 53), hegemony expresses "the advantaged position of dominant social groups with respect to discourse. This power affects the production and the circulation of social meaning." Postivitist science, as the dominant philosophy of science, expresses a type of hegemony in how it chooses and then defines and classifies its concepts.

The word <u>concept</u> denotes that something in nature was discovered and named. But, postmodern scholars warn us that concepts do not reflect reality directly, they re-present it through the filters of our self-chosen vocabulary. Postmodern scholars use the term "construct" to denote this personal and cultural component of meaning making. The constructs (as opposed

to concepts) that we use sensitize us to notice certain things and not notice other things. We see what we know and do not see what we have not defined. Ideas and feelings not conceptualized remain inexpressible. Thus, language encapsulates us, words insolate us from experience, and concepts constrain us within our own culture.

Language shapes more than thought, it predispose action. The constructs that we use present behavioral alternatives and build possible line of action. For example, in the USA gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals combat homophobia and sexual oppression by fighting to change words from sexual preference to sexual orientation. Preference and orientation inscribe different meanings - the former connotes choice whereas the latter implies biology. Also, Alcoholics Anonymous combats prejudice against alcoholism by labelling it as a disease; when they succeed those who call it a disease do not get embroiled in controversies over lack of "willpower" or "just say no."

In vocational psychology words like career and definitions of work have mastered us for too long. Consider, the recent social analysis of the definition of work offered by Richardson (in press). She revealed the androcentrism in modern definitions of work. Richardson made the analogy to definitions of moral reasoning that Gilligan (1982) and others revealed as androcentric because the definitions privileged justice and autonomy. Gilligan was able to inscribe an alternative interpretation of moral reasoning from a relationship basis, her definitions privilege

caring and connectedness. By way of analogy, Richardson uncovered something that had been obscured by male-biases toward work and its meaning. Work is more than effortual achievement by individuals or a sublimination of aggression in pursuit of future outcomes. Richardson marshals thinkers who view work as a community contribution and social activity that creates interpersonal relationships between people. She inscribes "caring work", analogous in some ways to relational morality, that does not achieve goals for individuals but maintains the very fabric of society. In thinking about this, I have been sharply challenged to reconsider my own definition of work (Savickas, 1991), a definition that now seems too individualistic, abstract, decontextualized, and universal.

Postmodern thought problematizes concepts and definitions that have formed the assumptive structure of vocational psychology by calling them constructs. It seeks to deconstruct these definitions and concepts, meaning destruct them and reconstruct new meaning out of the debris. Accordingly, postmodern scholars in different fields deconstruct key concepts that dominate typical discourse within that field. Following the epistemic guideline challenging hegemony of language means, in the words of Lather (1991), making unities into multiplicities, clarities into ambiguities, and univocal simplicities into polyvocal complexities.

Let us consider for example the concept of "career."

Career, as defined in Eurocentric cultures, implies both a future orientation and the freedom to choose an occupational path. This definition fit well the corporate culture of the twentieth century as populated by homogeneous group that had been created by the "melting pot" of the USA society. Societies are no longer univocal. They consist of multiple cultures, each with a distinct voice. The new metaphor that replaces the melting pot is the salad bowl, in which many elements blend yet each retains it unique identity. When past or present oriented culture look at career as we define it, they are puzzled. Why delay gratification for the future, why even focus on individual gratification rather than the good of the group. Members of collectivist cultures score low on career maturity inventories that give points for emphasizing autonomy, achievement, and success rather than connectedness, cooperation, and contribution. Yet are they to be diagnosed as immature? This is a good example of hegemony through controlling definitions. Yes, they clearly have been diagnosed as immature or to use a gentler word, delayed in their development. They will continue to be so assessed by those who refuse to reconsider the meaning of career in response to the postmodern plurality of perspectives.

Implications of a New Epistemology for Vocational Psychology

This concluding section considers possible implications of the new epistemic guidelines. To recap, the four guidelines address:

* PERSPECTIVITY - in seeking strong objectivity by stating for whom and by whom knowledge is produced.
* PARTICULARITY - in emphasizing useful practices for particular circumstances.
* CONTEXT - in privileging the individual's embeddedness in and affordances from context.
* CONSTRUCTS - in problematizing central concepts and definitions.

The implications of these guidelines will be articulated for theory, research, and practice in vocational psychology. As we move to the new century, positivism will continue to dominate our field. However, perspectivism is now starting to make an impact. Currently this impact is not to challenge the philosophical stance of the field but to enrich it. I predict that in the coming decades, perspectivism will eventually stand as an equal with positivism in our field, and may eventually replace it as the dominant philosophical stance.

Theory

Career theory is at a crossroads. On the one hand, career theory has lately been observed to have converged in several key ways and could proceed to become a unified science, like the rest of psychology seeks (Staats, 1991). Osipow (1990) has identified specific ways in which career theories have converged and his view resonated in the work of theorists such as Super (1992) and Krumboltz and Nichols (1990) and has been well received by

commentators such as Borgen (1991). A conference on convergence in theory produced many useful ideas for continuing to advance the modernist project of studying career development (Savickas & Lent, in press).

On the other hand, some individuals question whether the concept of career has a future. As large organizations that support careers disappear, the concept of an occupational career path within a single organization will pertain to fewer people. Placed in context, career is a life structure that emerged in tandem with the bureaucratic form of large organizations. Concepts in the nomological network of career have retained androcentric and middle class biases; they originated and still best fit middle class males. The last two decades have seen theorists stretch the concept of career to comprehend work in the lives of middle class women. To some degree, the concept of career accommodates their experiences. Yet the concept falters when applied to dual career couples, balancing work and family roles, and a cooperative ethic for human development. When trying to stretch the construct beyond the Eurocentric middle-class, it gets less useful. The very notion of a subjective career among underprivileged groups seems trivial if not meaningless. It is not that they do not work, they just do not have the moving perspective on their vocational past, present, and future that uses an occupation to articulate an integrative theme and enact a life project.

If the construct of career is so tightly linked to twentieth century modern society, what could replace it within vocational theory for postmodern era? Two tentative answers have emerged. The first answer comes from the modernist position and broadens the definition and contextualizes it. The second answer comes from the postmodern standpoint and attempts to constrict the definition and maps a new context for it.

Super (1953), who led vocational psychology to concentrate on career, provided the broadening answer. Super (1992, p. 35) realized that "societies, like careers, develop" so "what else can one do but accept, adapt, and contribute to change in the hope of making the future better?" (p. 35). He adapted the concept of career for postmodern vocational psychology by broadening the definition of career to encompass nine life-career roles, not just occupational activities. This allowed him to ask: How salient is the work role in the rainbow of life roles? If the work role is not salient for an individual or group, then the concept of career and its operational measures of career maturity do not pertain in the same way. In addition to prominence given to the new construct of role salience, this contextualization of the work role allowed him to revise his notion of maturity. Before his retirement, Super spent much time elaborating the new construct of career adaptability. Super's writings provide a clear vision of how to give the concept of career a future in postmodern times, namely by redefining and placing it amongst other major life

roles.

An alternative answer to the question about the future of career theory refuses to shore up the concept and its central position in vocational theory. Instead, Richardson (in press) demotes the concept of career to a peripheral position in theorizing about work in people's lives. Focusing on work activities, rather than occupational roles, emphasizes "the multiple contexts of any one individual's life." Richardson argued that vocational psychology has to take this new direction because expanding the "conceptual umbrella of career" like Super does still equates work with an occupational role. She warned that ignoring work performed outside of the occupational structure (e.g. work in the home and volunteer work in the community) perpetuates a bias that privileges work accomplished in the occupational structure while devaluing work performed in other role domains or environments. Regardless of the reader's preference for the two positions, clearly the concept of career has been problematized by discourse that has demythologized, delegitimated, and deconstructed it. If we are to inscribe a new meaning for a construct of career, then career theorizing will need to be informed by the wisdom provided in both Super's modernist re-vision and Richardson' postmodernist redirection.

Implications for Research

Following the new epistemic guidelines described herein would completely refocus the research thrust of vocational

psychology. The modernist project in vocational psychology seeks to empirically test career theories to produce decontextualized, abstract principles and universal knowledge about the core structure of career. This project has produced tremendous knowledge about career principles such as congruence, consistency, coherence, vocational identity, and developmental tasks. These elegant principles and concepts comprehend the vocational behavior of large segments of the population. Nevertheless, they do not comprehend the vocational behavior of many diverse groups, especially those in other cultures and those within Western societies who live the effects of the oppressive triad of sexism, racism, and poverty. Instead of universal knowledge validated by theory, postmodern scholars seek research that produces local knowledge legitimated by its usefulness in specific situations.

Accordingly, the new epistemic guidelines for knowledge production start by encouraging topic selection that attends to the ordinary activities in the everyday work lives of individuals in particular locales, not by testing a general theory with randomly selected subjects. Accordingly, the emphasis on particularity and context transforms the relationship between researcher and subjects to a collaboration between investigator and informants. The investigator functions like a participant observer in seeking to understand and learn from the informant. Rather than examining and looking at subjects, investigators get in touch with informants and the specific details of their daily

activities (Shotter, 1992). Typically, this qualitative research involves asking informants for accounts or stories about their experiences and coping techniques. Investigators process these instructive accounts to extract themes and important points that characterize the narrative knowledge of an interpretive community. The informants and other community members then edit the distilled knowledge for accuracy and clarity.

The embryonic literature that studies work and career from this perspective describes adaptive tasks and techniques inherent in the fabric of everyday work. Examples of this research can be found in articles that deal with "practical intelligence." For example, Wagner and Sternberg (1985) investigated practical intelligence or tacit knowledge in the workplace. They sought to understand why individuals with exceptional performance in schooling sometimes attain only moderate success in an occupation. Wagner and Sternberg reasoned that intelligence tests have modest predictive power, and that tacit knowledge explains the remaining variance. Consequently, they studied practical intelligence on the job by collecting instructive accounts concerning the tacit knowledge that makes for career success in two occupations. They asked highly successful business managers and psychology professors "to describe typical work-related situations and their responses to them." From these accounts they empirically extracted tacit knowledge. Having produced knowledge about practical intelligence in a particular type of circumstance, they

then turned their attention to how other people in the same occupation could acquire this useful knowledge.

A study inspired by Wagner and Sternberg (1985) identified the knowledge used by 50 individuals within one interpretive community to address six tasks of vocational development during the career establishment stage. Dix (1992) produced useful knowledge about how to successfully cope with these tasks in a particular community. Her goal was to develop mentoring programs to transmit the knowledge to other people in the same community and to investigate whether this knowledge was useful to them in their own careers, not to generalize to career theory.

Similar studies deal with the "most important moments" in career counseling sessions, "best practices" for optimal career intervention, and "effective strategies" in specific types of organizations. These studies share an interest in providing local knowledges about everyday work life that will be useful in specified sites and circumstances.

Practice

Vocational psychologists are adapting and expanding career assessment and counseling to position themselves cultural workers in the twenty-first century. Looking at contemporary innovations in positivist career assessment and counseling through the filter of the new epistemic guidelines reveals some innovations that make positivism more responsive to the everyday lives of actual clients. With regard to career assessment practices, I will take

interest inventories as an example. They remain one of the most useful products of positivist vocational psychology. To remain useful in the postmodern era, they are being adapted and enriched.

In response to changes in society, interest inventory constructors are changing their ways. Consider two widely-used inventories: the Strong Interest Inventory and the Kuder Occupational Interest Inventory. Kuder built his career upon the objectivist technology of modern science in constructing interest inventories that match individuals to groups employed in selected occupational groups. Nevertheless, late in his career, Kuder (1977) proposed that individuals be matched to other individuals. This person-to-person matching particularizes and contextualizes interest assessment. The syncritic (Seling, 1980) matching model identifies individuals who appear similar to the client and then provides that client with narrative reports about the life stories and career paths of these similar individuals.

Prominent researchers associated with the Strong Interest Inventory are also moving it in new directions. The Strong now includes an optional topical report that explains the importance of leisure and then suggests hobbies and recreational activities that implement the client's leisure interests (Hammer, 1991). The reports can be used by counselors who realize that interests pertain to more than the occupational role. Other researchers are helping practitioners learn how to interpret the Strong Interest Inventory with clients from diverse cultures (Carter & Swanson,

1990; Fouad & Hansen, 1987). Campbell (1993), long responsible for the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, has recently announced an integrated battery of psychological surveys that assess central constructs in postmodern career counseling such as skill, teamwork, and the community.

At the same time as interest inventory constructors revise their measures in ways that coincide with the postmodern turn, other psychologists are devising new counseling techniques that intentionally implement perspectivism. These new counseling models seek to reform career counseling into an interpretive discipline in which practitioners help individuals to relate their quest for meaning to the division of labor in their community (Savickas, in press, b).

This transformation finds counselors engaged in developing new counseling techniques rooted in biography, hermeneutics, and constructivism. Working with the narrative paradigm, psychologists (Cochran, 1991; Savickas, 1989) are designing new counseling methods that authorize clients to act as agents in writing their career stories. This approach shares with the novel, as a literary form, the claim to truth through the particularization of experience (Cascardi, 1992, p. 85). While narrative psychologists emphasize meaning making and life themes, other postmodern psychologists are developing counseling models that emphasize context (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986) because they view career development as a social process (Young,

Valach, Dillabough, Dover, & Mattes, in press). For example, Young and Collin (1988 & 1992) view career development as an action system that achieves social meaning through an interaction between individual intention and social context. A third postmodern model for career counseling follows constructivist psychology. Neimeyer (1992) and his colleagues are developing counseling methods that focus on how clients construe their actual vocational experiences. They seek to resolve client problems by reconstructing meaning through countering assumptions, breaking dichotomies, and challenging generalizations. Although the effort has begun, vocational psychologists must continue to innovate career assessment and elaborate new models for career counseling to position themselves as cultural workers in the postmodern era.

Conclusion

As we approach the turn of the millennium, our societies moves to a new vantage point from which to view the work role and career development. Hallmarks of the modern era such as logical positivism, objectivist science, and industrialization are being questioned as we decenter from an "us versus them" modern perspective to the postmodern multiplicity of perspectives. All indicators suggest the move from a search for the truth to participation in conversations.

The present chapter examined the postmodern turn that results in a new philosophical stance toward science and knowledge

production. Four new epistemic guidelines were identified as expressions of perspectivism that could enrich vocational psychology: (1) seek strong objectivity by saying by whom and for whom knowledge is produced, (2) emphasize useful practices for particular circumstances, (3) privilege the individual embeddedness in and affordances from context, and (4) deconstruct accepted concepts and definitions to decrease social hegemony. The implications of these four guidelines for theory, research, and practice in vocational psychology were articulated as essentially emphasizing particular knowledges about useful practices in specific contexts and shifting from propositional logic to the narrative paradigm, hermeneutics, and constructivism.

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Table 1: Occupational Ethics Across Three Eras

	TRADITIONAL VOCATIONAL ETHIC	MODERN CAREER ETHIC	POSTMODERN WORK ETHIC
EMPLOYMENT	SELF-EMPLOYED FARMERS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE	EMPLOYED BY ORGANIZATIONS	WORK IN TEAMS
PHILOSOPHY	ROMANTIC CONCEPTUALISM	LOGICAL POSITIVISM	POSTMODERN INTERPRETIVISM
KNOWLEDGE	MEANING IN THE PERSON	MEANING IN THE WORLD	MEANING IN THE WORD
VALUE	VALUE FEELINGS	VALUE FACTS	VALUE PERSPECTIVE
GOAL	BE CREATIVE	BE RATIONAL	BE IN COMMUNITY
PATH	SUCCESS THROUGH SELF-EXPRESSION AND INDIVIDUAL EFFORT	SUCCESS THROUGH CLIMBING SOMEONE ELSE'S LADDER	SUCCESS THROUGH COOPERATION AND CONTRIBUTION