

CHAPTER ONE

Current Theoretical Issues in Vocational Psychology: Convergence, Divergence, and Schism

Mark L. Savickas

Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine

The word *issue* denotes some opposition or differing points of view. Several important theoretical questions or problems in vocational psychology are currently *at issue*, meaning in dispute and to be decided. In this chapter, I concentrate on two issues that seem to be of overriding importance. Each issue involves a substantial intellectual problem to be resolved, and both arouse more than the usual excitement engendered by a scholarly challenge. Because the fundamental direction that the discipline will follow is at issue, each problem elicits strong emotional responses from individuals who are deeply involved in vocational psychology and creates personal tension among colleagues who advocate opposing positions on an issue. I invite the reader to *join issue* in the sense of entering the argument and supporting one of the conflicting beliefs about each topic or even to *take issue* with the existing opinions and to state another conviction about the matter. Eventually, every vocational psychologist will participate in courses of action strongly influenced by his or her views about the two theoretical issues examined herein.

The first issue examined in this chapter deals with *convergence*, that is, whether or not vocational psychologists should work to unify existing theories of career choice and development. The second issue examined addresses *divergence*, namely, the efforts by vocational psychologists to use postmodern thought to move beyond logical positivism as *the* philosophy of science for theory and research about vocational behavior.

I identify convergence and divergence as the two fundamental issues in contemporary vocational psychology because they structure and maintain the most frequently debated questions in vocational psychology. These two

underlying theoretical issues give rise to and prompt vocational psychology's central schisms, those splits in beliefs that separate theory from practice, vocational psychology from basic psychology disciplines, career counseling from psychotherapy, and vocational research agendas from others. Much of the material included in this volume can be characterized as shaped by or directed at these four theoretical schisms.

FOUR THEORETICAL SCHISMS IN VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

The schism between theory and practice has a long history of generating discussion. Currently, these discussions resemble heated debates. Polkinghorne (1992) concluded that counseling psychology now has two sciences: a science of theory and research performed by academicians and a science of practice. Practitioners need knowledge of how to produce beneficial results in clients. They obtain that knowledge, not from theory and research, but from experience with clients, oral tradition, and emerging research on the process of psychotherapy. A series of studies has confirmed the belief that theory is little used by practitioners (Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1992). Practitioners accuse theorists and researchers of ignoring their concerns and dismissing the real-world challenges that their clients routinely encounter. Practitioners demand to know if practice will ever inform theory, as they know it must. Theorists counter that they construct theories to deal with selected practical problems. When practitioners apply the correct theory to an amenable problem, they enact counseling psychology's best practices. When theories are misapplied, theory cannot be blamed for the inability to comprehend the problem at hand. Recent publications are evidence of attempts by theorists and practitioners to narrow the schism: theory textbooks that address counseling practice (Brown & Brooks, 1990; Sharf, 1992) and case studies published in the *Career Development Quarterly* (Jepsen, 1986) that demonstrate how master practitioners apply theories to the problems of individual clients.

A second schism separates career theory and research from the other psychological sciences. Vocational psychology remains remarkably isolated from disciplines such as developmental psychology, social psychology, cross-cultural psychology, personality psychology, and gender studies. On the one hand, vocational psychologists continue to lament that their theories and research are undervalued and not discussed in textbooks on adolescent and adult development. On the other hand, they could do more to foster this integration by studying and applying innovations in closely allied specialties of applied psychology. Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) have been in the forefront of those calling for this integration. They are not alone. For example, Osipow (1993) recently identified two reasons for this isolation and undervaluation. First, vocational psychologists "do not expend sufficient energy in both deriving our concepts and methods from the basic discipline

of psychology, and we do not loop back with our findings sufficiently to the basic discipline. . . . A second problem concerns our general inability to extrapolate from our work to larger social problems and issues" (p. 2). The current literature on career self-efficacy exemplifies the benefits that can accrue from the alignment of vocational psychology with related disciplines. Not only has career theory been enriched by Bandura's (1982) construct of self-efficacy, but vocational psychologists who have elaborated the construct in the career development domain find their studies discussed in the psychology literature.

A third schism exists between career counseling and psychotherapy. Vocational psychologists have traditionally employed a dichotomy between career counseling and personal counseling to differentiate prevention from remediation and adaptive crises from psychopathology. These dichotomies create a wall of words between two aspects of helping. Some scholars have accepted the dichotomy and have argued about which takes more skill, career counseling or psychotherapy (Crites, 1981). Others have argued that career counseling could be made more attractive to practitioners if it adopted some models and methods from psychotherapy (e.g., Hackett, 1993; Slaney & MacKinnon-Slaney, 1990). Today, many psychologists view career counseling as a subdiscipline of psychotherapy and teach and practice it as such (e.g., Blustein, 1987, 1990). A few counseling psychologists have even claimed to have stopped practicing career counseling as a distinct service. They provide each of their clients with brief psychotherapy, which, in some cases, includes career intervention. A current assessment of the schism between career counseling and psychotherapy can be garnered from journals that have published special issues on this topic, for example, *Journal of Career Development* (Loughead, 1989) and *Career Development Quarterly* (Subich, 1993).

A fourth schism separates research camps from each other. The traditional approach to research in the career domain involves the identification of a construct, the operational definition of that construct, and the implementation of a program of studies that specify the construct's nomological network and sensitivity to intervention. In short, prominence results from distancing oneself from one's colleagues and their research programs. Groups of researchers have coalesced into loosely defined camps, for example, such as those known for taking the developmental, differential, or decisional perspective on vocational behavior. With each individual and camp pursuing distinct agendas, the collection of a critical mass of research studies on many of the important problems in vocational behavior has been difficult. Even a comparison of the results of studies that do address the same problem is difficult because, in investigating the problem, researchers use different operational definitions to characterize the variables involved in the problem. Examples of the problem in research integration are apparent in the meta-analyses and literature reviews concerning the occasional topics that have

amassed more than a few studies: career education (Baker & Popowicz, 1983), career counseling (Oliver & Spokane, 1988), congruence (Edwards, 1991), and career indecision (Slaney, 1988).

These four schisms in vocational psychology reflect the underlying theoretical issues of convergence and divergence. The following discussion of these two issues is meant not only to provide information but also to explicate the fundamental differences that prompt and maintain theoretical schisms between and among researchers and practitioners. This chapter concludes with a brief reconsideration of the four schisms in light of this discussion.

CONVERGENCE IN CAREER THEORIES

Alarm about the “crisis of disunity” (Staats, 1983, p. 1) in psychology has prompted vocational psychologists to consider fragmentation, redundancy, diverse philosophical stances, and inconsistency among theories of career choice and development. Advocates for unifying theories in psychology, such as Staats (1991), have argued that science is progressive. Early in the development of a particular science, theorists and researchers typically study different phenomena using different approaches. They seek to produce novel ideas and unique positions that distinguish their theories from other theories. At a later stage in the development of a scientific discipline, some individuals begin to notice relationships among the various theories. This recognition leads them to attempt to integrate the diverse findings into a gestalt rather than to distinguish themselves by establishing unique positions and generating novel ideas. Staats (1991) characterized this late developing endeavor as an effort to stop “artificial diversity” and “untreated redundancy” (p. 905).

Steps Toward Unification

The transition from an early emphasis on uniqueness to a later search for commonality includes the phases of rapprochement, convergence, and unification. Rychlak (1988) believed that the first step in the search for commonality in theories entails widespread agreement throughout a disciplinary community that scientists with disparate views each have something valuable to say.

Rapprochement

Beitman, Goldfried, and Norcross (1989) used the term *rapprochement* to describe the establishment of a state of cordial relations within a particular scientific community. At the start of rapprochement, scholars must deal with what really is at stake—the allocation of resources. Those with long and successful histories of competing for recruits and resources for their theories must adopt new approaches. They must contend with the mistrust engendered

by prior efforts to advance conceptual hegemony and with hidden agendas that benefit a particular school. If trust can be instilled and a new spirit of community and collaboration established, then theorists and researchers can feel comfortable looking for common principles and concepts across theories. As rapprochement strengthens, the goal for knowledge production broadens to include not just the discovery of the novel but the interrelation, organization, and simplification of existing knowledge. Rapprochement encourages scholars to view theoretical differences as problems to be resolved, not as errors.

Convergence

Rapprochement and a common language can lead to *convergence*, or growing alike and developing similarities. Beitman et al. (1989) emphasized that “convergence refers, however, to emerging similarities of distinct orientations rather than to their integration per se” (1989, p. 139). According to Staats (1991), “unifying theory analysis” (p. 905) facilitates convergence among theories by establishing a common language by which common constructs can be identified. Different theories incorporate their own technical vocabulary or language to denote the same constructs (e.g., three terms denote person–environment fit: Holland’s, 1985, congruence; Dawis & Lofquist’s, 1984, correspondence; and Super’s, 1963, incorporation). Insiders use their distinctive vocabulary as a shortcut in communication and, in so doing, show that they are informed, that is, an active member of the theory’s knowledge–constituent network. Establishing a common language allows for cross-theoretical communication and facilitates the identification of convergence among theoretical concepts and principles. The simple identification of common and unique features across theories produces an agenda of problems to be resolved and offers prospects for cohesive, cross-theoretical projects. Nevertheless, convergence is not really unification.

While theorists consider convergence, practitioners of the discipline engage in their own version of theory convergence, usually under the rubric of *eclecticism*. To meet their needs in applying theories to practice, practitioners construct a technical, atheoretical synthesis of clinical methods (Lazarus, 1967). They use models and methods that work, regardless of which theoretical group generated the materials. In vocational psychology, this approach also means that career counselors select interventions based on client needs, not the counselor’s orientation to differential, dynamic, or developmental theories.

Bridging

Following the phases of rapprochement and convergence, the third phase in the transition from a discipline’s early search for the novel to its later search for unification involves the application of “interlevel framework the-

ory" (Staats, 1991, p. 908). Unification eventually emerges from studies that bridge theories and reduce redundancy. Obviously, the design of bridging studies requires a cross-theoretical framework that organizes major aspects of the discipline and implicitly prescribes the basic principles that need examination. Specialists in a particular theory cannot be expected to relinquish that theory easily. Thus, the bridging framework must promise advances to specialists who continue to emphasize a particular theory as well as to researchers who investigate theoretical commonalities (Staats, 1981). The movement from the convergence phase into the bridging phase ordinarily starts with modest efforts, such as incorporating two similar theories (e.g., in vocational psychology perhaps Holland's, 1985, theory and Dawis & Lofquist's, 1984, Theory of Work Adjustment) into one internally consistent statement of essential elements; complete unification is unnecessary.

Following the phases of rapprochement, convergence, and bridging, the final step in a discipline's transition from early to late science involves the actual unification of diverse theories into a conceptual synthesis, a synthesis that uses a new "superordinate umbrella, coherent theoretical gestalt, metatheoretical framework or conceptually superior" theory (Beitman et al., 1989, p. 139).

Convergence in Career Theory

Evidence of the efforts toward convergence abounds in the psychotherapy literature and indicates that such efforts are starting to spread throughout most of the subspecialties in psychology, including vocational psychology. Three pivotal publications early in the 1990s highlighted convergence efforts within vocational psychology. The authors of these publications viewed unification from the different phases in the transition from early to late science. A chapter by Super (1992) encouraged rapprochement, an article by Osipow (1990) contributed to convergence, and a chapter by Krumboltz and Nichols (1990) offered a bridging framework.

Super (1969) frequently referred to his theory as *segmental*. He devised separate models around topics such as self-concept, career maturity, life stages, life roles, and work values. In one of his last formal statements regarding career theory, Super (1992) addressed the issue of integrating the segments of his theory into a truly comprehensive theory. He concentrated on integration within his own work, not between his work and that of other theorists. Nevertheless, in the concluding section of his chapter, Super wrote that the understanding of careers requires three theories: one dealing with development, another with matching, and a third with decision making. He viewed unified theory as emerging from some integration of (a) developmental views such as his own (Super, 1980), (b) trait-and-factor views such as those espoused by Holland (1985) and by Dawis and Lofquist (1984),

and (c) decision-making models such as the one designed by Mitchell, Jones, and Krumboltz (1979). Super's set of prospects for unification seems essentially the same as the set proposed by Osipow (1990).

Responding to an invitation to write an article celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Osipow (1990) published an influential article on convergence in theories of career choice and development. Osipow asserted that four major theories had remained influential over the last 40 years and seemed to dominate current thinking about careers because of their empirical base, operational usefulness, or widespread appeal: person-environment typology (Holland, 1985), the theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), social learning theory (Mitchell et al., 1979), and developmental theory (Super, 1980). Osipow described how these theories had come to resemble each other in important ways. Examining these four theories for common constructs and other similarities, he compared them across constructs such as the outcomes that they try to predict, their views of personality, and their descriptions of life stages. Osipow (1990) concluded that each theory included unique elements yet all seemed to be "building on what appears to be a relatively common base of concepts" (p. 129). On the basis of this analysis, Osipow concluded that vocational psychology may be "further along toward the creation of a unified theory of career decision and development than we have thought" (p. 123).

In presenting the case for convergence, Osipow (1990) did note that the theories, despite their similarities, retained important differences. These distinctive features make each theory most appropriate for sets of distinct applications. For example, Holland's (1985) theory is particularly suited for comprehending educational and vocational choices, Krumboltz's (1994) social learning theory conceptualizes the decision-making process, Super's (1980) developmental theory specifies attitudes and competencies that foster adaptation to life-stage tasks, and Dawis and Lofquist's (1984) theory explicates adjustment at the workplace. Osipow directed attention to a convergence idea that is discussed later, namely, that different theories address different problems.

In their chapter about the bridging level of science, Krumboltz and Nichols (1990) contended that the major career theories differed in emphasis and vocabulary yet were not in fundamental disagreement. To make their point, Krumboltz and Nichols likened a theory to a map. A map and a theory both "give us the big picture about a certain area of interest. They both help us understand the most essential characteristics of that area" (Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990, p. 159). They extended the metaphor by explaining that theories and maps both omit nonessential information, distort the reality that they represent, deal with the unobservable, and vary in their purpose. This last point resembles Osipow's reminder that a theory is constructed to serve a specific purpose and thus can be useful for its intended purpose but useless for other purposes.

Krumboltz and Nichols (1990) set for themselves the task of describing how selected theories employ similar concepts and overlap in fundamental principles yet map different terrains. They then suggested that the concept of purpose serve as the superordinate cross-theoretical construct and that the Living Systems Framework (Ford, 1987) serve as the bridging framework with which to organize the structures, processes, and functions involved in vocational behavior. They concluded that the Living Systems Framework could be a heuristic framework if researchers embedded career theories into it.

Given the prodding by Super, Osipow, and Krumboltz and Nichols, the Vocational Behavior and Career Intervention Special Interest Group of the Counseling Psychology Division in the American Psychological Association held a conference in 1992 to debate the merits of a unification agenda for theories of career choice and development (Savickas & Lent, 1994). The group aimed to reinforce evolving rapprochement and disciplinary unity as well as to advance convergence by prompting unifying analyses. Although rapprochement was welcomed, the desirability of convergence and a unification agenda for theories of career choice and development proved to be at issue during the conference—proponents of unification encountered advocates of separation in theory development.

Advantages and Disadvantages of a Unification Project

Advantages. Proponents for unification of career theories asserted three main reasons for examining theoretical convergence and bridging frameworks. First, they highlighted the inadequacy of any single career theory for comprehending the full range of problems and situations that clients bring to career counseling. Lacking a comprehensive theory, counselors have turned to technical eclecticism.

Second, they pointed to the equality of outcomes among career interventions that implement different theories. Most observers have concluded that all treatments have similar effects. The consensus regarding equivalence of outcomes in career counseling suggests that the identification of shared components in theories and interventions may be more fruitful than continued research on differential diagnosis and treatment.

Third, proponents for unification argued that vocational psychology must improve the manner in which it allocates its research resources. With the emphasis on being novel, independent researchers and small research teams focus on identifying new variables and exploring their meaning. Each group uses distinct outcome measures, often author-made measures with little evidence of validity. Because of this diversity in direction, vocational psychology has not accumulated substantial bodies of empirical literature on many important topics. Even in problem domains that have accumulated a critical

mass of studies (e.g., career indecision, career exploration, congruence), research integration reviews and meta-analytic studies are thwarted because the measures and operational definitions used in these studies are not the same. Oliver and Spokane (1988) concluded that "we can at this point think of no greater contribution than for a group of researchers to engage in the development of a set of standard measures to be used in career-counseling research" (p. 459). Their conclusion could be extended to include research on vocational behavior. A unification project for vocational psychology could make a major contribution. The central phenomenon and core variables converging from different theories could be identified, and then a standard set of corresponding measures that are useful across all major career theories could be constructed.

Disadvantages. On the other side of the issue, many prominent theorists and researchers think that a unification project is a bad, or at least a premature, idea. They fear that such a project will result in theory construction by committee that could only produce an ungainly theoretical model, which they liken to a camel. Holland (1994) spoke for many who avoid convergence when he argued that theorists espouse divergent beliefs about aims, human development, philosophy of science, political agendas, and career interventions. In strongly opposing a unification agenda, Holland recognized that there may be some convergence, as noted by Krumboltz and Nichols (1990), Osipow (1990), and Super (1992), yet only "a very weak convergence" (p. 45) and only in similarity of background principles assumed by all theories for the last 80 years. Holland (1994) succinctly stated his disagreement with theoretical unification with the title of his chapter, "Separate but Unequal is Better." His main concern involved the allocation of resources and wisely reminded counseling psychologists that vocational research has meager financial resources and relatively few participants. Furthermore, the talents of career researchers and counseling psychology's limited resources must be invested prudently. Investing in an "ill-advised" (p. 45) project such as convergence would not only be futile but worse, it could also siphon off resources from projects with better prospects.

In addition to Holland's articulate presentation of the disadvantages of unification efforts, other theorists and researchers have raised concerns:

1. Unification may discourage creativity of counselors in forming their own theories.
2. Unification efforts may be premature because unification requires a larger empirical base than is now available.
3. Convergence and unification should be empirical questions, not literary projects.
4. Quick integration may lead to ambiguous constructs drawn from different theories.

5. Constructive, piecemeal theory building is better.
6. A unification project may force a political agenda on theorists.
7. Committees cannot construct theories.
8. The most that a unification project could achieve would be convergence in terminology, not in philosophy or theory.
9. Postmodern approaches to science are moving toward pluralism, not unity.
10. In emphasizing convergence, researchers may ignore interesting aspects of each theory.

Clearly the advantages and disadvantages of a unification project are now at issue. The status of this contentious issue can be assessed as follows. Rapprochement is evident yet not universal. Some theorists and researchers suspect proponents of a hidden agenda of advancing a particular theory or of trying to subsume most theories under other theories. Nevertheless, the argumentative dialogue has resulted in a clear recognition that all theories have something important to say. The map metaphor proposed by Krumboltz (1994) has replaced the camel joke (an animal or theory created by committee) in discussions about convergence. Moreover, theorists have become more explicit about the purposes for which they constructed their theories. The theorists and many of their adherents, however, are not ready to address convergence in theories of career choice and development.

Rather than convergence, most scholars seem willing to settle for theory *renovation*, to use a word offered by Holland (1994). Savickas (1994a) organized the major ideas for refurbishing career theories into two groups. The first group consisted of *neglected* topics, such as diversity, salience, context, and ability. The second group consisted of ideas that seem to have been *forgotten*, such as the purpose of career theories and praxis as the goal of theory.

Although most scholars seem to see more disadvantages than advantages in a unification project, several theorists have made serious attempts to examine convergence in that they have been willing to relate their own work to that of other theorists. In doing so, they have identified some potential fulcrums for intertheory analysis.

Six Frameworks for Bridging Career Theories

Those scholars who are willing to examine convergence apparently agree that, to advance the project, attention must turn to selecting and developing a conceptual tool for bridging theories, namely an overarching framework. Six existing frameworks have been proposed: living systems, developmental contextualism, systems theory, learning theory, the person–environment transaction model, and the theory of work adjustment. The suggestion by

Krumboltz and Nichols (1990) that the *Living Systems Framework* (Ford, 1987) serve as the framework with which to organize the structures, processes, and functions that combine to generate vocational behavior has already been described.

Developmental Contextualism. In a major theoretical statement, Vondracek et al. (1986) described a developmental contextualism framework for comprehending vocational behavior. Well suited for bridging theories (Vondracek & Fouad, 1994), this framework emerged from the pioneering work of Lerner (1985). He merged the developmental organic perspective with the environmental contextual perspective to produce a point of view called *developmental contextualism*.

Developmental Systems Theory. Interestingly, these two proposed frameworks, living systems and developmental contextualism, have themselves been integrated. Ford and Lerner (1992) synthesized Lerner's (1985) developmental contextualism perspective with Ford's (1987) living systems framework to produce developmental systems theory. In a subsequent chapter of this volume, Vondracek seeks to reinvigorate the study of adult career development by describing how developmental systems theory can be used to comprehend the processes of vocational behavior in adults.

Systems Theory. A third framework for convergence has been suggested by Blustein (1994) and Bordin (1994). They each offered systems theory as a framework with which scholars could contextualize the vocational behavior of individuals within the proximal setting of family and the distal conditions of the opportunity structure and employment barriers caused by the oppressive triad of racism, sexism, and poverty. With regard to social barriers, Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) concluded that career theories already converge in their ignoring of context and, as a result, are of little use to large segments of the population. They suggested that before attending to convergence, scholars enhance current theories by examining each theory from the perspective of social equality and workplace justice and then by renovating and extending the existing theories to comprehend diverse groups of workers. In the end, the renovation of existing theories to fully comprehend diversity and multiculturalism would itself become a bridging framework.

Learning Theory. A fourth suggested convergence framework is learning theory. Most scholars readily agree that learning theory could serve as a bridging framework. Closer examination, however, indicates that learning theory may address convergence from an interlevel analysis rather than from an intertheory analysis. Learning theory offers a fine-grained level of analysis

that complements the coarse-grained concepts in theories such as Holland's and Super's (Dawis, 1994). Thus, in terms of the level of analysis, the use of social learning theory in the examination of theories could prove quite fruitful, although it would not prompt intertheory analysis in the same way that the other proposed frameworks might.

Person–Environment Transaction. A group of distinguished researchers have settled on a fifth potential framework in suggesting that the person–environment (P–E) transaction is a central unifying principle for the converging of theories (Rounds & Hesketh, 1994; Spokane, 1994; Walsh & Chartrand, 1994). They warn, however, that P–E fit means different things in different theories and, therefore, career theorists must sharpen its meaning before attempting to use a P–E model in convergence investigations. Rounds and Hesketh (1994) offered researchers a prospectus for clarifying the latent structure of the variables and moderators in P–E transactions. This prospectus would serve as a precursor to using a P–E model to bridge different concepts of vocational behavior. They suggested five levels of analysis: unit of analysis (i.e., person, environment, or interaction of the two), types of matching variables (e.g., interests, abilities, types), types of criterion variables (e.g., satisfaction, stress, productivity), types of process variables (e.g., activeness, flexibility), and time framework (i.e., repeated measures or longitudinal data).

Theory of Work Adjustment. A sixth framework proposed for convergence is the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Rounds and Hesketh (1994) pointed out, as did Dawis (1994), that TWA has many elements that lend themselves to unified theory because it was constructed as a convergent theory. Dawis (1994) stated that TWA began as an attempt to integrate several concepts: ability from the individual differences tradition, reinforcement from the learning theory tradition, satisfaction from the human relations tradition, and person–environment correspondence from the vocational psychology tradition. Through this integration, TWA bridges the two orientations toward vocational behavior espoused by counseling psychology and industrial–organizational psychology. Dawis showed that TWA converges well with Holland's theory (1985) and concluded that there is not an instance in which these two theories contradict each other. The major distinction between the two theories lies in purpose. Holland (1985) prepared his theory of career choice for counselors to help clients make matching decisions, whereas Dawis and Lofquist (1984) constructed TWA as a means of understanding work adjustment, not career choice. TWA also shares much in common with social learning theories such as Krumboltz's (1994) theory because both rest on learning theory. TWA shares some things in common with Super's (1980) theory, the major differences being that Super's theory is more comprehensive and concentrates on develop-

ment, whereas TWA concentrates on the work environment and describes development at a coarse-grained level, not a fine-grained level. Dawis believed that TWA can incorporate Bordin's (1994) views about the psychodynamics of motivation, work compulsion, and intrinsic values rather easily because Bordin deals with the source traits that support many TWA constructs. Fitzgerald and Rounds (1994) also viewed TWA as having the potential to deal with context and the vocational behavior of diverse groups.

Summary

Vocational psychologists now face the challenge of formally addressing the artificial diversity and untreated redundancy so obvious in the contemporary theories about and research concerning career choice and development. Their views on the issue of convergence and pursuit of the "holy grail" of science, unified theory, will shape responses to this challenge as well as attempts to reduce the schisms that continue to separate theory from practice, vocational psychology from basic psychology, career counseling from psychotherapy, and research programs from social problems.

Convergence can be separated into two root words. The first is *verge*, meaning to bend or incline toward. The second, *con*, is not defined so simply. *Con* may mean either *with* or *against*. Interestingly, for our purposes this dichotomy makes *con-verge* the perfect word. *Con-verge* can mean coming together or against coming together. *Diverge* has a simpler meaning, mainly to deviate or move away from a direction commonly taken. For our purposes, *divergence* denotes a turning away from, and perhaps even ignoring, the common path taken by vocational psychology, not arguments among or between theorists who still share the common path charted by twentieth century logical positivism. In the following discussion, I examine the issue of turning aside from the common path charted by logical positivism, that is, of divergence in vocational psychology.

DIVERGENCE IN VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Debate about the issue of convergence has produced many specific suggestions for making important renovations to existing career theories. These suggestions indicate new directions that would continue to advance the twentieth century project of studying careers. However, some vocational psychologists raise concerns about the future viability of this project. They argue that rather than refurbish career theories, vocational psychologists need to substantially revise or even to replace the construct of career itself. This theoretical issue is most frequently asserted by advocates for a new philosophy of science that is evolving in tandem with the emergence of postindustrial

societies. Accordingly, the contemporary scene in vocational psychology, as well as in counseling psychology, fosters an increasing awareness of and discussion about philosophy of science. The resulting greater self-consciousness about philosophy of science prompts escalating debate about the assumptions that structure career theory and research. The central issue under debate can be succinctly formed as a question: Which philosophy of science should structure vocational psychology in the twenty-first century? The issue begs for clarification before the field can progress beyond its current achievements.

Historically, American vocational psychologists have concerned themselves only incidentally with philosophy of science (Morf, 1992). With the early tradition of empiricism vocational psychologists eschewed theory construction and concentrated on measurement and prediction as the premiere methods for establishing the matching model in both career choice and adjustment. Vocational psychologists, with the notable exception of Tiedeman, who did address philosophy of science issues (e.g., Peatling & Tiedeman, 1977; Tiedeman & Miller-Tiedeman, 1984), generally adopted the positivist position that pervaded the first half of the twentieth century psychology. Ultrapositivists of the 1940s and 1950s, exemplified by Skinner (1950), whose now-classic paper "Are Theories of Learning Necessary?" reflected their disposition, found philosophy of science unnecessary for a psychology grounded in operationalism and empiricism. In cumulated contributions spanning the period from 1951 to 1976, however, Marx's (1951, 1963) compendia on theories in contemporary psychology described a swing of the intellectual pendulum toward an increasing emphasis on philosophy of science issues. This zeitgeist was in no little degree created by Kuhn's (1970) landmark treatise, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Although its evolutionary and paradigmatic interpretations of the history of science have been questioned and criticized (e.g., Marx & Goodson, 1976), a philosophical mood still prevails in psychology. More recently, and closer to home, the special section in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, entitled "Philosophy of Science and Counseling Research" (Gelso, 1984), and the issue of *The Counseling Psychologist* entitled "Alternate Research Paradigms" (Fretz, 1989) attest to the currency of philosophical issues.

Now, prompted by the postmodern turn in our culture, vocational psychologists fervently debate issues arising from philosophy of science, that is, "the study of how science works, or should work" (Runes, 1983, p. 191), to arrive at systematic knowledge (Cohen & Nagel, 1934). Today, vocational psychologists realize that they need a philosophy of science to provide a formal schema for constructing theories and conducting research as well as for maintaining a disciplined and public self-consciousness in communicating concepts and conclusions resulting from these efforts.

Growing recognition of the import that philosophy of science holds for theory and research in vocational psychology has highlighted the central

issue—Which philosophy of science shall we have? Responses to this question often assume the proportions of irreconcilable ideologies, particularly between those who argue from standpoints in positivist and constructivist grounds. The magnitude of the debate is illustrated by the previously mentioned articles about philosophy of science (Gelso, 1984), in which the received view of science, inherited largely from the positivist tradition, was juxtaposed to revisionist alternatives based on what appear to be qualitatively different cosmic assumptions (Polkinghorne, 1984). Sense too the almost doctrinaire tone of Manicas and Secord's (1983) paper entitled "Implications for Psychology of the New Philosophy of Science," and it becomes increasingly clear that sharp lines have been drawn on which philosophy of science to choose. Lest polarization of viewpoints obscure a simple truth implicit in these articles, it should be noted that they not only express a need for alternatives to established philosophy of science but also signify a far greater freedom of scientists to choose a philosophy. Maslow's (1966) *Psychology of Science*, Bannister's (1970) "Psychology As an Exercise in Paradox," Mahoney's (1976) *Scientist as Subject*, and Grover's (1981) *Toward a Psychology of the Scientist* all conclude, either implicitly or explicitly, that it is the individual who finally chooses which philosophy of science to use. Let us begin to examine the issue of which philosophy of science suits vocational psychology and the construct of career for the twenty-first century by placing the issue in historical context.

Historical Perspectives on Work Ethics and Occupational Choice

The view of career posited in contemporary career theories reflects the spirit of the times in twentieth-century science. During the nineteenth century, feelings dominated the process of knowledge production, so Western society inculcated its members with a vocational ethic that coincided with romanticism. Bruner (1986) noted that romantic conceptualism asserted that meaning resides within the person. According to this view, concepts spring from private encounters with examples of natural states. Because motivation and meaning reside in the person, the path to success and personal fulfillment followed a course shaped by both self-expression and individual effort. On the one hand, the vocational ethic encouraged passion, genius, and creativity in all work. On the other hand, the vocational ethic emphasized independent effort, self-sufficiency, frugality, self-discipline, and humility. This vocational ethic was embraced by the farmers, artisans, and independent business owners who constituted the majority of workers in nineteenth century America. The choice of a particular occupation typically followed family traditions such as staying on the farm or joining the family business.

At the end of the nineteenth century, entrepreneurs organized artisans into companies of workers and built large cities around the resulting inclus-

tries. These companies and cities changed America from a rural patchwork of farms and small towns to an interconnected network of major cities. With the advent of large organizations that employed modern technology, careers emerged. People who had worked for themselves on farms and in towns then moved to cities to climb the ladder of an organization. To this day, a ladder remains the dominant metaphor for career because it connotes the essential element of a hierarchical view of life in which the adaptive person advances, climbs, and develops.

This concept of career reflects the hallmark characteristics of discourse about modernity: rationality, efficiency, prediction, and control. Borgmann (1992) traced the origins of the modern project of controlling nature and society through rational decision making to three intellectual architects: Bacon, Descartes, and Locke. Bacon provided the idea of domination of nature. Descartes offered methodological universalism in asserting reason as the sole basis of and the scientific method as the sole means of deducing scientific truth. Locke offered the sovereign individual as the fundamental authority, replacing the external authority imposed by kings and the clergy. Comte bound together Bacon's aggressive realism, Descartes' scientific method, and Locke's rugged individualism to create positivism, that is, the empirical philosophy that proposed sensory experience as the path to truth (Champagne, 1992). Comte legitimized truth, not through church or monarchy, but through sensory experience mediated by the value-free application of the objective, scientific method. Positivism shaped the Enlightenment's metanarrative of the gradual yet steady increase of control through reason over nature and ourselves. Positivist scientists emphasized rational action based on knowledge. Thus, in the modern era, reason replaced intuition, religion, and the state as the ultimate authority (Crook, 1992). Culture moved from romantic notions of fate and destiny to modern notions of personal agency empowered by technology.

As twentieth century logical positivism replaced nineteenth century conceptualism, the career ethic replaced the vocational ethic. Unlike conceptualism, which locates meaning in the person, positivism locates meaning in the world. Accordingly, positivism values facts over feelings. Twentieth-century science replaced romantic passion, creativity, and self-expression and emphasized modern reason, observation, and accuracy. American society eventually learned to demand a singular truth and to rely on the objectivity of the scientific method to extract truth from rigorously controlled confrontations with reality.

Modernity organized work and production around mechanical technology in industrial parks located in large cities. Social status was assigned to individuals according to their place in the production system. The processes of urbanization, individualization, secularization, differentiation, commodification, and rationalization, which shaped modernity, also transformed the

vocational work ethic (a calling) into a career ethic (what one's neighbors call one). Work as a vocation was comprehensive, self-expressive, and intrinsically meaningful. Work as a career in an organization became restricted and specialized, with a consequent increase in the division of labor.

Career as a Modern Project

Vocational psychology is a product of modernity. It was designed and still functions to help people choose and adjust to the specialized work that dominates their identity, defines their social status, and determines their wages. Placed in this context, career is a viewpoint that emerged in tandem with the bureaucratic form of large twentieth-century organizations. Bureaucratic form provided the structure for organizations, and career provided a core value. At the end of the twentieth century, Western society is again in the process of transforming itself as it moves from the twentieth century industrial age to the twenty-first century information age. As industries downsize, the cities that they supported struggle to survive. Now, the large bureaucratic organizations that supported careers are disappearing. People can no longer expect to spend 40 years at IBM or General Motors, establishing and maintaining their careers through the predictable sequence of stages articulated by Super (1980). As large organizations that support careers disappear, the concept of an occupational career path within a single organization pertains to fewer people.

Therefore, the question arises of whether or not the concept of career has a future. Its critics assert that the concept of career does not further the move from industry to information, from hierarchies to teams, from electromechanical to electronic, and from competition to cooperation. As the millennium turns, the career ethic will seem less and less useful.

Given these circumstances, some scholars proclaim the death of career. At a symposium entitled "The Future of Career: Death or Transfiguration," Collin (1994) noted that current economic, social, and political influences are reshaping organizations. She identified three lines of change as having the potential to fracture the concept of career. According to Collin, organizations are becoming more flexible, adaptive, and elastic. Organizations need flexibility to survive and thrive in fast-changing environments. They need flat structures to adapt quickly to changing environments. And, they need elastic employment contracts that accommodate the use of core and peripheral workers to respond to changing demands with a "reserve army of labor" (p. 7).

Collin (1994) forecast that replacing organizational bureaucracy with flexibility will cause vocational psychologists to revise the metaphor of career as a ladder. She speculated that the new metaphor will be career as a portfolio of skills and accomplishments, with the connecting glue or coherence lying in the story that the individual chooses to tell rather than in the

objectively observable organizational pathway of steps up a ladder. Career moves are likely to be lateral rather than vertical. Career planning may be reduced to small, reactive steps, and individual career planning itself may take place within the context of a work team.

Richardson (1993) also speculated about the future of career. She suggested that vocational psychologists demote the concept of career to a peripheral position when theorizing about work in people's lives. A focus on work activities rather than on occupational roles would emphasize "the multiple contexts" of any one individual's life (Richardson, 1993, p. 428). Richardson urged that vocational psychologists take this new direction because simply expanding the "conceptual umbrella of career" (p. 427) (e.g., Super's [1980] life-career rainbow) still equates work with an occupational role. She warned that ignoring work performed outside of the occupational structure perpetuates a bias that validates work accomplished within the occupational structure and devalues work performed in the home and community. Richardson explained that the view of work as individual achievement disconnects work from its fundamental meaning, namely, social contribution. Regardless of the responses to the issues raised by Collin and Richardson (e.g., Savickas, 1994b; Tinsley, 1994), vocational psychologists must recognize that the concept of career has been problematized by their insights and the surrounding dialogue. The concept of career has been besmirched by a postmodern discourse that has demythologized, delegitimated, and deconstructed it.

Postmodern Turn

As the modern career ethic fractures, it may be replaced by a postmodern work ethic rooted in a new perspective on the occupational role, one that emphasizes connectedness and social contribution. Correspondingly, vocational psychologists are being challenged to revise their core philosophy of science and to reform their field into an interpretive discipline. Examples of vocational psychology as an interpretive discipline can be found in the works of Carlson (1988) on career development as meaning making, Cochran (1990, 1991, 1992) on the career project, Collin and Young (1986, 1988) on hermeneutical perspectives in career theory, Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) on life themes in career development, Neimeyer (1988) on constructivism and career choice, Peavy (1992, 1993) on constructivist career counseling, Ochberg (1988) on narrative construction of career, Osherson (1980) on the private meaning of career choices, Savickas (1989, 1993, 1994c) on career counseling in the postmodern era, Young (1988) on meaning making in career development, and Young and Borgen (1990) on the study of subjective careers.

This postmodern turn from a career ethic to a work ethic springs from a new philosophical stance that is articulated in architecture, physics, literary

criticism, gender studies, and critical pedagogy. The posture is generally called *perspectivism*, *interpretivism*, or *constructivism*. Although there are differences in these terms, I use *perspectivism* as the general term. Six issues seem to frame the debate between positivists and perspectivists over which philosophy of science vocational psychology should use: epistemic individualism versus collectivism, objectivity versus perspectivity, universality versus particularity, validation versus legitimation, essence versus context, and concepts versus constructs. Each of these issues clearly implicates the postmodern decentering from "them" to "us" and from abstract principles to contextualized practices.

Epistemic Individualism Versus Collectivism. Modern science proposes that individuals use the scientific method to discover knowledge in the world. Subscribing to a Lockean epistemic individualism, adherents of modern science view the individual as the principal agent of knowledge production. In contrast, postmodern thinkers locate knowledge in relationships between people, not in the world. "Emphasis on truth as a relationship suggests seeking meaning contextually in social processes rather than externally in objects" (Jacques, 1992, p. 595). Because knowledge is mediated through discourse and socially constructed subjectivity, communities, not individuals, are the primary agents of knowledge production (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 83).

This shift from epistemic individualism to epistemic collectivism implies that communities in dialogue provide the basis of truth. Because truth is a matter for decision, not demonstration, communities judge what is knowledge. Although thoughts and personal beliefs must be first expressed by individuals, these thoughts become situated knowledge when communities socially legitimate the thoughts (Harding, 1993). In addition to reason advancing by increasing domination of the object by the subject, reason also increases by search for consensus (Taylor, 1989, p. 509).

Objectivity Versus Perspectivity. Modern positivists seek to discover "the truth" by formulating rational theories and then by using the scientific method to test the theories against reality. According to positivists, the scientific method is the universal method because it controls biases and leads to knowledge as well as to prediction and control. Postmodern scholars assert that positivistic science produces knowledge from one standpoint, not from "the" standpoint. Behind modernity's facade of value-free objectivity stands a commitment to technical rationality. Thus, positivism is one empirical method for knowledge production, not the only method. Postmodern constructivists seek multiperspectival views in the conviction that multiple perspectives on a phenomenon produce richer, deeper, and more complex knowledge.

Perspectivists assault the pretense of value-free science, claiming that objects of knowledge are never separable from the knower. This view argues

that meaning and truth depend on one's standpoint, that is, one's assumptions and theoretical groundings. Facts are never independent of the observer who reports them nor of the definitions and categories provided by the observer's culture. "Truth belongs categorically to the world of thought and not to that of perception" (Habermas, 1973, p. 232). This means that vocational psychologists participate in the knowledge that they produce because they frame assumptions, select topics, and conceptualize the data.

Perspectivists argue that, rather than continue to act as if they produce disinterested (value-free) and dislocated (objective) truth, psychologists must now announce their presence in their own research. 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. 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? How is it meaningful for that group? The answers to these questions should include the implications of the knowledge for race, class, and gender.

Universality Versus Particularity. 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 seem useful in specific circumstances. Postmodern theorists embrace difference and heterogeneity; they reject global and totalizing concepts as well as abstractions that obscure more than they reveal. The move from universality to particularity involves a transition from the search for solutions to the exploration of strategies. Instead of designing experiments, postmodern researchers seek reports of an individual's actual experiences and problem descriptions as well as how she or he eventually responded to and learned from crises, unexpected events, and transitions (Pcavy, 1993). The researcher then attempts to extract from groups of these instructive accounts the effective practices that lead to success in daily living.

One flashpoint in the debate about universal versus particular knowledge centers on the issue of generalizability. Positivist vocational psychologists argue that because locally situated knowledge about particulars is not generalizable, it is not scientific knowledge. They dismiss the singular and particular as transitory and insignificant. Perspectivist vocational psychologists counter with the assertion that universal application is not the same as generalizability. They realize that generality is a goal of systematic inquiry. Furthermore, they embrace the goal of generating knowledge that is "lifted up from but not stripped of its particulars" (Doyle, 1990, p. 14) and seek to construct carefully stated generalizations in terms of patterns and themes. These patterns and themes are not scientific laws; they are explanatory propositions that can be applied to the construction of meaning within the

domain of vocational behavior. In reference to this issue, Polkinghorne (1992) stated that "a neopragmatic body of knowledge consists of summary generalizations of which type of action has been successful in prior like situations. . . . Neopragmatism does not suppose these generalizations to be predictive of what actions will work in new situations; rather, the generalizations have only heuristic value as indicators of what might be tried in similar situations" (p. 152).

Validation Versus Legitimation. To avoid solipsism, postmodern research requires a new criterion by which knowledge generated from instructive accounts is legitimated. Positivistic science validates knowledge in reference to theory. In effect, postmodern researchers have given up the modern project of seeking universal properties that govern human conduct. Because knowledge is produced in diverse interpretive communities that share a local perspective, there are multiple realities, not singular truths. Thus, with perspectivistic science, knowledge is legitimated by its usefulness when implemented in action rather than validated by its relation to theory. The modern question asks, Is it true? Postmodern questions inquire, Why did she say that? How is it true? For whom is it useful? Could it be otherwise? Thus, the postmodern project reemphasizes the goal of science as a guide to praxis. It engenders a new type of pragmatism (Gavin, 1992) based not on efficiency but rather on developing one's values in the real world.

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. They attack the illusion that research participants reflect some universal human nature. Unlike positivists, who view context or culture as a variable, perspectivists view culture as the context of meaning. Perspectivists assert that the complex, contextual nature of vocational behavior limits how far positivism can take career psychology. Vocational behavior is not a pure category; it is always intertwined with race, gender, class, and ethnicity. Vocational psychologists cannot continue the tradition of ignoring social status and context in attempting to homogenize these differences. Simply stated, vocational behavior cannot be understood outside the complex of coherent interrelationships within which it is embedded. Accordingly, vocational psychologists like Vondracek and Fouad (1994) and Spokane (1994) are adopting constructs such as embeddedness and affordances to contextualize vocational behavior instead of continuing to abstract vocational behavior from its context.

This reframing from essence to context enables vocational psychologists to follow anthropology and sociology in concentrating on the ordinary ac-

tivities of everyday life and, thus, in making the research up close rather than out there. Featherstone (1992) described everyday life as "repetitive, taken-for-granted experiences, beliefs, and practices" (pp. 160–161). The common-sense world of everyday life consists of social action. This perspective raises the question, What social action in the ordinary activities of everyday life falls within the realm of vocational psychology? Richardson (1993) 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 argued that vocational psychology, if it is 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" (p. 427). The contentious issue revolves around the preference for abstract principles or for contextualized particulars.

Concepts Versus Constructs. Postmodern thought emphasizes the power of language to shape reality and to guide action. For example, Gavin (1992) 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" (p. 72). We now realize that linguistic concepts and their definitions do not mirror reality; they inscribe meaning.

The word *concept* denotes that something in nature was discovered and named. Postmodern vocational psychologists, however, believe that concepts do not reflect reality directly; concepts re-present reality through the filters of 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 individuals use sensitize them to notice certain things and not to notice other things. Individuals see what they know and do not see what they have not defined. Ideas and feelings not subsumed by constructs remain inexpressible. For example, language limits us in construing the complexities of causation and provokes debates over oppositional dichotomies such as free will and determinism (Mahoney, 1993). Thus, language encapsulates us, words insulate us from experience, and concepts constrain us within a culture.

Adherents of postmodern thought have problemized concepts and definitions that have formed the assumptive structure of vocational psychology by revealing them to be constructs, not concepts. Postmodern thinkers seek to recover the original, and sometimes hidden, meaning of these dichotomous concepts and hierarchical definitions, meaning which is concealed by figurative meanings built on the original, lived experience. This process of hermeneutical recovery of deeper meaning is termed *deconstruction*. De-

construction subverts the binary oppositions and hierarchies that modernity uses to conceptualize individuality, such as male–female, White–Black, employer–employee, or heterosexual–homosexual. Deconstruction accentuates difference and emphasizes plurality, multiplicity, and decentration. Accordingly, postmodern scholars in different fields deconstruct key concepts that dominate typical discourse within that field.

In vocational psychology words like *career* and definitions of work have mastered us for too long. In her recent social analysis of the definition of work, Richardson (1993) 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 analogy, Richardson uncovered something that had been obscured by male biases toward work and its meaning. Work is more than achievement gained through an individual's efforts or a sublimation of aggression in pursuit of future outcomes; it is a relational construct. Richardson has marshaled thinkers who view work as community contribution and social activity that creates interpersonal relationships between people. She defined "caring work," analogous in some ways to relational morality, which does not achieve goals for individuals but maintains the very fabric of society.

Constructs that elaborate the meaning of career, by extension of this logic, are necessarily at issue. For example, the concept of career maturity has come to denote a complex of variables anchored by a future orientation, independence, willingness to compromise, and decisiveness. Vocational psychologists who are sensitive to multicultural diversity have argued that these dimensions of career maturity are not scientific concepts. Instead, they are constructs that reflect the androcentric perspective and individualistic culture of the scholars who have defined career maturity with these dimensions.

Criticisms

Epistemic collectivism, perspectivity, particularity, legitimation, contextualization, and deconstruction of concepts each individually challenge modern theory and research in vocational psychology. Collectively, they assault the fundamental assumptions and methodological imperative that structure the discipline. This invasion of ideas has not gone unnoticed nor uncontested. (e.g., Tinsley, 1994). In fact, career theory and research are now at a crossroads. Those who argue about the direction that vocational psychologists should take are engaging in a lively debate about the issue of which philosophy of science to follow: positivism or perspectivism. Those who advocate the benefits of continued adherence to a positivist agenda mourn

the loss of science as they know it when contemplating the direction perspectivists seek to pursue. The criticism often raised by positivists against perspectivists centers on complaints that approaches such as constructivism, hermeneutics, and the narrative paradigm are self-centered attempts at meaning making that ignore the iron-clad constraints of reality and that denigrate the accomplishments of modern science and technology. Expressing their anger, they complain that perspectivism is not science. Three major issues of contention deal with perspectivity as an integration of objectivity and subjectivity, as a replacement for objectivity, and as moral relativism.

Integration of Objectivity and Subjectivity

First, perspectivity is not an integration of objectivity and subjectivity. Perspectivists counter the myths of objectivity and value-free science by explaining that the social construction of knowledge affects what counts as science. They also counter the myth of subjectivity (i.e., meaning is personal) by inscribing meaning as relational. However, perspectivists do not seek a solution in combining objectivity and subjectivity, as some would have it. The postmodern turn is "not both but neither." Postmodern scholars use doubt and uncertainty to challenge abstract principles and to make common sense problematic. Instead of pursuing facts, they concentrate on ambiguities and uncertainties.

Replacement for Objectivity

Second, perspectivity is not a replacement for objectivity. Rather, perspectivists seek to reveal the pretense of value-free objectivity. Harding (1991) referred to this stance as *weak objectivity*. Research, recognized as socially situated, can be made more objective although it cannot be made value free. We need this *strong objectivity* to rationally distinguish more partial and less distorted truth. The rigors of empirical knowledge seeking lead to maximal objectivity. Perspectivity does not counter objectivity with "just say no." Rather, perspectivists seek to describe objectivity's limitations.

Relativism

Third, perspectivity is not radical relativism. Positivist scientists 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: Anything goes, or moral relativism.

A response to charges of radical relativism comes from perspectivists who 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. Vocational psychologists can have epistemological relativity (i.e., all views are socially produced) without degenerating to moral relativity if they 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. In other words, for situations that require action, not all views are equal (Kvale, 1992). For vocational psychologists, this means the rejection of ultrapositivism and of radical relativism in the quest to take the study of context and circumstances as seriously as we have taken the study of vocational behavior itself. The goal is a contextual empiricism that gives rise to situated knowledge.

Proposed Compromises

Koch (1985) accused many contemporary psychologists of substituting program for excellence and inventing a "sacred, inviolable, 'self-corrective' epistemology that renders all inquiry in the field a matter of application of rule which preguarantees success" (p. 77). Rychlak's (1993) stance is relevant to this criticism. He argued to promote tolerance concerning what counts as science. He further reminded us that the subject matter of psychology, human beings, is complex and thus requires diverse approaches to understanding. Unlike the physical sciences, the human sciences focus on purpose and meaning. Rychlak contended that psychologists have relied too long on a singular explanation and have tried to ignore assumptive differences on which knowledge production can be based.

Rychlak (1993) analyzed four theoretical groundings, which he described as predicating paradigms that serve as assumptive influences in framing what psychologists choose to investigate and how they interpret the results. In conducting a study, the psychologist's first choice or action is the selecting of a grounding that will be used to conceptualize the findings. Rychlak contrasted this acknowledgment of assumptive influences that frame topic selection, operational definitions, and conceptual interpretations with "strict positivism, which held that meanings issue exclusively from below, from the preformed substrate of reality" (p. 935).

Rychlak (1993) identified the four major assumptive influences or theoretical grounds as the "Physikos, Bios, Socius, and Logos" (p. 936). These grounds roughly correspond to the grounds of physical science, which explains inanimate events such as gravity; the biological sciences, which base explanation on the physical substance of animate organisms; the social sciences, which explain in terms of group relations and culture; and cognitive sciences, which explain conceptual processes of intelligence and meaning making. Physikos and bios seem to constitute the grounding for the modern science of psychology, and socius and logos are apparently the groundings for a postmodern science of psychology.

Rychlak (1993) asserted that what underlies the current epistemic war between positivists and perspectivists is the propensity on the part of traditional scientists for ranking these theoretical grounds in a knowledge hierarchy from physical to biological to social to cognitive. Or, even more simply put, the tradition ranks "knowing that" above "knowing how." Rychlak wisely urged that the grounds not be ranked; instead, they are to be appreciated as complementary explanations.

Walsh, Craik, and Price (1992) along with Walsh and Chartrand (1994) have taken vocational psychology a step in the direction proposed by Rychlak in explicating the groundings typically used in career theory and research. They used the framework provided by theories of action, which are defined according to the prime mover or locus of action in that theory. The first grounding addresses the individual, such as in trait approaches to conceptualizing career choice. The second general theory of action deals with the external environment, such as in social learning and social cognitive models of vocational behavior. The third general theory of action concentrates on the fit between the individual and the environment, such as in person-environment transaction theories. The final theory of action emphasizes the person and context as coexisting and jointly defining one another, such as in constructivist interpretations of vocational behavior. Therefore, the four grounds of vocational psychology are standpoints in the person, the environment, the person-environment transaction, and developmental contextualism.

The focus of criticism concerning a theory or research study should not be its standpoint in a particular grounding but instead how rigorously the product is given its particular grounding. The validity of a grounding stems from its usefulness to psychologists in solving problems. Researchers must state their ground, and then critics can "examine the internal structure and clarity of this account, its instructiveness and relevance for wider issues, and its consistency with empirical evidence" (Rychlak, 1993, p. 936). A particular grounding does not have to be accepted as useful just because a theorist or researcher selects it as a standpoint. Critics may fairly inquire about how "instructive the ground initially selected proves to be in the theory, collection of data, and analysis that follows from it" (Rychlak, 1993, p. 938). Following Rychlak's advice and the lead of Walsh and Chartrand (1994) would foster a systematic pluralism (Shotter, 1992) and an epistemological eclecticism (Borgen, 1984) that appreciates and incorporates a number of interpretive standpoints for vocational psychology theory and research.

Summary

Postmodern philosophy of science may lead to the "development of theories that are relational, interdependent, and multicausal rather than hierarchical, reductionistic, and dualistic" (Rosser, 1990, p. 50). In vocational psychology,

perspectivism already seems to be changing the scientific methodology of researchers and the definition of what counts as knowledge. The newly constructed theories of work life will likely concentrate on context, be elaborated by interdisciplinary research teams, and attract diverse participants. Perspectivism may provide vocational psychology and its consumers major intellectual advances with its focus on relationships, community, social contribution, gender, race, ownership, voice, and power. It may also provide insights into the schisms that separate theory from practice, vocational psychology from basic psychology, career counseling from psychotherapy, and research programs from social problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical views that psychologists hold about convergence and divergence issues relate to and probably condition their responses to the four central schisms in vocational psychology. First, let us consider the schism between theory and practice. From the convergence perspective, Forsyth and Strong (1986) stated the unificationist view in concluding that practice will be best informed by the "energetic application of the scientific model to generate a theory of biological, social, interpersonal, and psychological relationships that specifies how the dynamics of therapeutic and nontherapeutic settings differ" (p. 118). From the divergence perspective, postmodern psychologists have noted a growing disuse of theory and claim that practice has advanced further than theory. They prefer perspectivist epistemology because it is compatible with practice. They propose that a narrative paradigm, or career as story, offers a metaphor by which a theory of career development can be built, one that is intimately braided with a theory of career counseling. Despite the differences between the convergence and divergence orientations, advocates of both strategies agree that researchers must concentrate on producing knowledge that is useful to practitioners, that realistically addresses the complexities presented by diverse clients in various clinical situations.

With regard to the schism between vocational psychology and the other psychological sciences, convergence adherents argue for more integration with the basic science specialties within psychology. The enormous potential of this integration is starting to be realized in research that merges vocational psychology with personality psychology (e.g., Blustein, 1994; Rounds & Tracey, 1993; Trapnell, 1992), developmental psychology (e.g., Vondracek et al., 1986), and social learning theory (e.g., Betz & Hackett, 1981). Divergence adherents also want an integration with other disciplines, but not with the psychological sciences. Instead, they argue for merger with disciplines such as literary criticism, gender studies, phenomenology, hermeneu-

tics, interpretive sociology, and cultural anthropology. Both advocates for convergence and those for divergence agree that vocational psychology should recognize valuable linkages with other disciplines.

With regard to the schism between career counseling and psychotherapy, convergence advocates emphasize the importance of work as a central life role and strive to convince psychotherapists to include career interventions in their clinical armamentarium. In promoting the integration of career counseling with psychotherapy, convergence adherents suggest that every client receive brief psychotherapy, including relevant career interventions, that increases their sense of agency. Divergence advocates deemphasize work as a central life role and emphasize life design through the use of a panoply of roles. They argue that career counseling should focus on self-definition and self-determination, not on adjustment to the occupational structure. Both sides agree that vocational psychology should emphasize agency and enablement. Moreover, although they start from different positions, they both appear to deemphasize career counseling as a distinct specialty within applied psychology.

With regard to the schism that separates vocational research agendas from each other, convergence advocates are apparently ready to invest in projects that identify unification constructs, that design standard measures, that address important social problems (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994), and that inform policy (Harmon, 1994; Osipow, 1993). Divergence advocates argue against a value-free and objective vocational psychology. They prefer a vocational psychology that is politically active and that addresses social problems by its focus on the needs of people in the margins, not on the needs of theory. Advocates of convergence and of divergence agree that vocational researchers should do more to address social problems and to influence public policy.

So, as vocational psychology approaches the new millennium, a group of interrelated theoretical issues are rising in prominence. These theoretical issues demand that theorists and researchers in vocational psychology use all available approaches to produce more scholarship and research that rigorously contextualizes vocational behavior; focuses on meaning and interpersonal relationships; emphasizes relationships between work and race, gender, and class; integrates vocational psychology with other disciplines; concentrates on self-definition and self-determination; informs counseling practice; addresses public policy; and deals with social problems.

To deal with such complex issues successfully, vocational psychologists must move quickly beyond epistemic wars. Borgen (1989) wisely counseled that vocational psychology's "research enterprise will prosper if we don't vitiate our energies by joining the debate, but rather openly and nondefensively seek the values of alternate spectacles in research approaches" (p. 93). Multiperspectival theory can coalesce scholars from different standpoints and encourage them to collaborate on their common interests and to consider their individual differences.

Multiperspectival theories avoid the uniperspectival tunnel vision of radical positivism or of extreme constructivism. As they construct multiperspectival theories, vocational psychologists must avoid the confusion inherent in using too many perspectives on a single problem. They must select in advance the standpoints or groundings (Rychlak, 1993; Walsh & Chartrand, 1994) most pertinent to a single problem, not just add a jumble of perspectives that muddle the view. For some problems, a uniperspectival standpoint in positivism or constructivism is appropriate. The positivist tradition, which has furnished the superordinate philosophy of science for vocational psychology, provides a perspective, concepts, and methods that are extremely useful and should not be spurned by constructivists who indeed do offer "alternate spectacles" (Borgen, 1989, p. 93). For their part, positivists must acknowledge that for some problems an array of outlooks rigorously applied could be more useful than the singular perspective to which they are accustomed.

The construction of a sophisticated framework that can map the full complexity of vocational behavior enacted by diverse groups in manifold settings requires the lenses provided by both positivism and perspectivism. The lens of positivism focuses most clearly on macrotheory, whereas the lens of perspectivism focuses sharply on microtheory. With its concentration on particularity, multiplicity, context, difference, and usefulness, perspectivism has the potential to complement positivism by providing a microtheory approach that fills the lacunas in career macrotheory. A combination of modern macrotheory and postmodern microtheory could enrich and deepen vocational psychologists' understanding of work life. The vocational psychologists' first project would be to refurbish modern theories of career choice and development to be more multidimensional and multiperspectival by infusing postmodern microtheory concerning the role of work in everyday life. In this manner, vocational psychology could benefit simultaneously from refinements forged within the distinct career theories, from advances produced by convergence among career macrotheories, and from breakthroughs induced by divergence in work–role microtheory.

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