CHAPTER 12

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REVITALISING VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ENERGISING THE STUDY OF CAREER: A WAY FORWARD

The book's editors had assigned me the following task: "set out, from a vocational psychological perspective, the key issues, challenges, and opportunities the field of careers is now facing, and suggest ways forward." In addressing that I have found that some of the theories developed by the non-psychological organisational specialities are particularly appropriate to respond to such issues and, moreover, that there is remarkable synergy between them and one of the newer theories from vocational psychology. Together they offer new ways of facing today's issues. Hence, whereas I have previously argued (e.g., Savickas & Baker, 2005) that the re-integration of counselling and industrial/organisational psychology would restore the vigour of vocational psychology, I am now going beyond that to suggest that by including other organisational and management specialties in interdisciplinary collaboration we could both heal vocational psychology and make an impact on the field as a whole.

The chapter begins with the story of the synergy with which vocational psychology originated and progressed for four decades that was the starting-point of my original argument. In the first half of the 20th century, practitioners who applied vocational psychology in guidance, selection, and classification showed a cooperative interaction that enhanced their combined effect. Unfortunately following World War II, the interaction decreased as the science of vocational psychology became distributed between the two professions of counselling psychology and industrial/ organisational psychology. Today, communication between the two professions concerning the study of career is infrequent and sporadic at best, to the detriment of vocational psychology as an applied science and its ability to deal with the new challenges posed by the postmodern career. The chapter continues by examining two of the theories that have been developed to address these new career experiences by other organisational and management specialties, and finds that they offer a new synergy for vocational psychology. The chapter ends with a suggestion for revitalising not only the science of vocational

psychology but also energising the field of career more broadly. This can be attained by re-establishing regular communication between counselling psychologists, industrial/organisational psychologists and those from the broader organisational and management field who share an interest in career studies.

BEGINNING WITH SYNERGY

In forming what would eventually become the two disciplines of counselling psychology and industrial/organisational psychology at the beginning of the 20th century Meyer Bloomfield, the key figure, viewed them as complementary. Both a leading expert in vocational guidance and a highly regarded consultant to business and industry on personnel management and labour relations, he believed that vocational guidance personnel must work closely with personnel managers to benefit the community in the appropriate use of its human resources. The pioneers of applied psychology through the 1920s and the 1930s worked in both vocational guidance and business psychology. These pioneers included Harry Hollingworth, Walter van dyke Bingham, E. K. Strong, Harry Dexter Kitson, Douglas Fryer, Morris Viteles, and Donald Paterson.

It may be fair to conclude that these luminaries and dozens of their colleagues conceptualised themselves as applied psychologists, not as either counselling or industrial psychologists. Looking back, we can see clearly that they applied the person-environment fit model and methods equally well to educational guidance, personnel selection, and military classification. At mid-century, the synergy between selection and guidance may be exemplified by John Holland (1959) who began to formulate his preeminent model of matching people to positions during World War II while working as a personnel clerk doing military classification of recruits.

The founding of the American Association of Applied Psychology in 1937 marks the beginning of the drift apart by applied psychologists interested in individuals from those interested in industries. While applied psychologists interested in vocational psychology had typically served both guidance and selection functions, over time industrial psychologists began to concentrate on selection and work adjustment. Although still interested in the individual worker, they offered their services to industry, persuading employers that well-adjusted workers were more productive. Based on their success in aviation flight training during World War II, some applied psychologists became organisational psychologists as they offered social psychological consultation regarding advertising, public relations, and market research. As they started to concentrate on "organisations," testing remained part of industrial psychology, but organisational psychology became concerned with the problems of hierarchical bureaucracies, including topics such as organisational structure, norms, conflict, management techniques, and communication with employees. They were hired by organisations to help management integrate the needs of healthy individuals with those of effective organisations.

This split was completed in the early 1950s with the reorganisation of the American Psychological Association which institutionalised the application of vocational psychology into two separate professions: counselling psychologists interested in vocational choice and industrial psychologists interested in work adjustment (Crites, 1969). These developments in the discipline and profession of vocational psychology were taking place at the same time as massive changes in the world of work. Today as that world is changing even further, vocational psychology has to respond.

FROM MODERN TO POSTMODERN CAREERS

From job to career

As industrial manufacturing and the factory systems grew in heterogeneity of functions and division of labour, they required a bureaucratic organisation to direct and control the diversity of activities. By 1950 the modern factory system was indeed a large-scale, internally differentiated bureaucratic structure. While in the first half of the century the factory system focused on manufacturing, the mature bureaucracy had a large component of non-manufacturing jobs. As they grew larger, companies organised themselves more and more to put order to complexity and chaos. For example, they formed departments and units, each characterised by a particular function and expertise. They became bureaucracies that exercised management or administration by diffusion of authority among numerous offices and adherence to inflexible rules of operation. This prompted the development of a managerial elite and large proportion of white collar jobs. While the bureaucratic form provided a structure for progressive promotions, career provided the value. It is safe to say that we did not have careers until we had large hierarchical, bureaucratic organisations.

Career, with its predictable path, became the individual value that fit the bureaucratic form of organisations during the second half of the 20th century. A career could be developed within the organisation as one progressed up the ladder of positions. As a consequence, counselling psychologists modernised vocational guidance into career counselling. They added a second paradigm to join that of vocational guidance's model of individual differences. The complementary paradigm became the model of individual career development. It focused not on how individuals differed from other people relative to jobs but instead concentrated on how people differed from themselves over their careers. Super's (1957) formulation of career stages focused attention on how people could expect predictable developmental tasks over the life course as they moved through stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. The metaphors were maturation and unfolding of a worklife within a hierarchical organisation that promised stability and security. Vocational psychologists working in the professions of both counselling psychology and industrial/organisational psychology extensively studied careers, led by scholars such as Donald Super and John Crites in counselling psychology and Walter Storey and Douglas Hall in

organisational psychology. Counselling psychologists concentrated on students and their vocational choices whereas organisational psychologists concentrated on adults and their career enactment. Crites's (1969) influential book on *Vocational Psychology* codified the field's two foci as vocational choice attended to by counselling psychologists and work adjustment attended to by industrial psychologists.

From career development to life design

Today, the bureaucratic structure that organised corporations impedes their ability to change, innovate, and work across boundary lines. The late 20th century has brought a new social organisation of work, one that flattens hierarchical bureaucracies. Organisations have become smaller, smarter, and swifter in response to market conditions. Bureaucratic organisations lack the flexibility to adapt in a rapidly changing, global economy. Jack Welch (1992), when he was president of General Electric, addressed this lack of flexibility when he advised organisations to remove barriers that slowed response to problems and environmental changes, and coined the term "boundaryless organisation." He identified four types of boundaries: *hierarchical layers* of organisation, *horizontal units* within a layer, *geographic distribution* of offices in different states and countries, and *external blocks* that make it difficult for customers to deal with an organisation. At General Electric, Welch made the boundaries more permeable by dissolving partitions. In contrast to a bounded holding environment, he shaped the boundaryless environment of General Electric to respond to change by being open, collaborative, proactive, and creative.

Breaking the bureaucratic chains of an organisation dissipates the modern form of career. The employee in a postmodern organisation becomes unbound and ungrounded. Consequently, entering the work world and moving through occupational positions requires more effort and confidence today than it did during the modern industrial era. Working in the global economy entails more risks because in a substantial way jobs are being replaced by assignments, and organisations are being replaced by networks. The dejobbing of organisations has produced the "insecure worker" as companies now look for work, not workers. Insecure workers include those who are temporary, contingent, casual, contract, free-lance, part-time, external, atypical, and self-employed. Henry Ford would be pleased, as he once complained that he had to hire the whole worker when he only wanted their hands.

Once taken for granted, matters such as job security, healthcare, and pensions have become problematic. Individuals can no longer plan to work 30 years or more developing a career within the boundaries of one organisation. Instead, they can expect during their lifetimes to occupy at least ten jobs, more properly called assignments. Healthcare, which was once the province of the employer, is now the concern of the employee. Pensions that once consisted of defined benefits promised by an employer are now reconstituted as deferred contributions to a

retirement plan managed by the employee. Retirement has become "rehirement" characterised by an "encore career."

Postmodern careers are no longer contained and constrained by bounded organisations. This leads to concepts of a boundaryless and protean career in which occupational paths are not bounded within a single organisation for life. Instead, they are routes ploughed, not by jobs, but by a series of assignments and projects in which one develops competencies to add to their portfolio, thus the emergence of the portfolio career. The routes may be within one occupation yet they may cross occupational lines. In a sense the process of organising has replaced the organisation as a structure.

NEW CONSTRUCTS FOR A NEW WORLD

To conceptualise and respond to those changes in the world of work we need new constructs and theories. Among those that many are now finding effective are the metaphors of a protean career and a boundaryless career. These metaphors originated in the specialties of organisation behaviour and organisation and management studies to assist scholars and employees understand and explain the social phenomena that they experience as well as assist them in constructing their views of reality (Inkson, 2006).

Protean career

Given that the individual rather than the organisation shapes a 21st century career leads to Hall's (1996) concept of a protean career. Proteus was a flexible shape shifter who could adapt to circumstances. Hall describes a protean career as driven by values and directed by self, shaped by the individual not an organisation. The shaping is based on internal values and goals, for the whole life space, in pursuit of psychological success rather than power, prestige, and possessions (Hall, 2002). Hall views a protean career as a calling, whether secular or religious, as enhanced by two meta-competencies that help chart a course through the work terrain (Hall, 2002). The first is self or identity-awareness that enables a person to seek feedback and form realistic self-perceptions that keep revising the self-concept as necessary. The second is adaptability, which he defines as the capacity to change based on competence to change and motivation to change. Together, these metacompetencies empower individuals with a sense of when it is time to change and the capacity to change

Briscoe and Hall (2006) used the dimensions of value-driven and self-directed to chart a 2 by 2 model of career orientations. Individuals who are high on both dimensions endorse a protean orientation. Individuals who are low on both dimensions show a dependent orientation because they are directed by others and do not follow their own calling. Those individuals who are high on self-management yet not inclined to follow their own values show a reactive orientation because they manage their careers using external values. Finally, individuals who are value-driven yet not self-directed show a rigid orientation because they cannot

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shape their own careers. Hall's construction of the protean career, which concentrates on orientations characterised by inner psychological variables, finds a complement in Arthur's construction of the "boundaryless career."

Boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996)

For Arthur, a boundaryless career is the opposite of an organisational career bound or tied to one firm. Rather than organisational stability, a boundaryless career show physical and psychological mobility. Sullivan and Arthur (2006) use the dimensions of physical mobility—actual movement across jobs, firms, occupations, and countries—and psychological mobility—a mindset—to chart a 2 by 2 model of boundaryless careers. Individuals who are high on both physical and psychological mobility exemplify the boundaryless career. In contrast, individuals low on both dimensions may be expected to be enacting a traditional career in a bounded organisation that offers job security and interesting work. Individuals low on physical mobility but high on psychological mobility may be expected to remain stable in an organisation yet open-minded in absorbing ideas and actions from sources across the globe. For example, a tenured professor who remains in one university for life would be characterised as physically immobile. Nevertheless, by attending conventions around the globe and studying the world's literature that same professor could be psychologically open-minded, what we used to call a cosmopolitan professor as opposed to a local professor (Gouldner, 1957). Individuals who are physically mobile but more close-minded may be expected to cross boundaries yet may not particularly enjoy the work itself. Sullivan and Arthur use examples of a bartender who travels the world picking up temporary jobs as she goes and the teacher who changes schools systems frequently as he follows a geographically mobile wife. The bartender and teacher may not see any psychological benefits in these moves, and could eventually become in jeopardy of having dysfunctional careers. A solution for them is to increase their career competencies if we agree with the presupposition by Sullivan and Arthur (2006) that individuals with greater career competencies are likely to have more opportunities for physical and psychological mobility.

Combinations of Protean and boundaryless orientations

The four quadrants for the protean career and for the boundaryless career produce 16 possible career orientations from which Briscoe and Hall (2006) identified eight probable career profiles. In discussing the challenges and interventions for the eight profiles, they explained that individuals low on all four dimensions would be trapped or lost because they lack the inner values to direct themselves and the boundaryless perspectives that could envision new opportunities. Briscoe and Hall (2006) suggested that individuals trapped or lost in their career could benefit from basic career development intervention, in particular values clarification and increased self-efficacy. In contrast to the trapped, at the other extreme, individuals high on all dimensions might be Protean career architects because of their

convictions, self-regulation, open-mindedness, and world travels. The challenge for career architects is to prioritise their goals, manage boundaries, and obtain career resources. Briscoe and Hall end their article by stating that major research energy should be given to helping career actors in each of the eight scripts become aware of their orientation, opportunities, and contexts.

Career as story

Vocational psychology's response to the boundaryless organisation and the postmodern career has focused on using social constructionism as an epistemology and narrative psychology for methods of comprehending careers and structuring life design interventions (Collin & Young, 2000). Being most familiar with one approach called career construction (Savickas, 2002), I will explain how it could be a good complement to boundaryless and protean career theorising and intervention.

Before beginning, I do note that careers bounded by hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations still exist for many people in diverse parts of the world. Nevertheless, we have entered the age of insecure workers who are no longer bounded by and grounded in a single organisation for a large portion of work lives. In an article entitled *Holding Environments at Work*, Kahn (2001) made the case that career theories need to address the emergence of boundaryless organisations. He asserted, rightly so, that the increase in the number of underbounded organisations means that workers need other structures with which to manage anxiety. The theory of career construction conceptualises career stories as a structure for managing work anxieties and negotiating transitions during a boundaryless career.

In the postmodern world, employees can no longer depend on an organisation to provide them with a familiar and predictable environment to hold their lives. Nor can they expect to progress along the linear stages in Super's meta-narrative of career. Instead, individuals must rely on themselves to construct a story— a story about self and about career—to hold themselves and their lives together when they encounter discontinuity. As they move from one assignment to the next assignment, they must let go of what they did but not who they are. If they let go of everything, then the loss might overwhelm them. By holding on to the self in the form of a life story that provides meaning and continuity, they are able to move on in a way that advances life purpose and actualises overarching goals. Stories hold in place the life lessons that have been learned and these lessons can lead the way through ambiguity by creating scenarios that link future initiatives to past achievements.

Organisational career has the modernist meaning of series of positions that an individual occupies from school years through retirement. This meaning follows from the interpretation of the French word *carriere* to mean path. It is one's path through life marked by milestones of positions held. The modern use of the word career is conflated with the hierarchy and bureaucracy of modern, bounded organisations. As already noted, organisations served as holding environments. *Carriere* however, has a more fundamental meaning. Career means carrier or

vehicle. We use a career or vehicle to transverse our life course (curriculum vita). From the perspective of social constructionism, career is the vehicle that holds meaning and carries a life. More specifically, career is one's life story about work and working. Career as story functions, as Tiedeman (1965) once stated, to impose meaning on vocational behaviour. In short, career could be viewed as an interpretive construct built by a person to give meaning and mattering to their worklife.

Career as story provides a holding environment. Story holds feelings, comprehends experience, contains anxiety, and secures space for exploration. Stories make our lives coherent and continuous. They explain values, goals, and motivation. Story serves as a container for meaning and a continuity of being. To the extent that the life story holds us, we can master developmental tasks, vocational transitions, and occupational traumas. During these changes, career as story functions to give stability and to shape emotional experience. The life story allows the individual to meet uncertainties of transition with comforts recalled from the past so as to envision a future and entertain possibilities. It enables one to experience chaos and disorder and appreciate them as necessary precursor to change, the next chapter in life. The story orients an individual to the new events and digests these numerous experiences into a short story that can be understood and manipulated. This allows individuals to express and examine their experiences and then make choices about how to proceed.

Counsellors who apply the career construction model to life design counselling use narrative techniques to help individuals move into their own story and learn to hold it, so that in the end the story can hold them and quell their uncertainty. Their clients' narrative construction of self and career becomes the structure that provides meaning and direction as they encounter transitions that involve a loss of place, position, and project. A clear and coherent story does more than just hold tension. Constructing the story turns tension into attention, and telling that story expresses intention. A good story about the self encourages a client to make career changes while holding onto a self that is even more vital and intentional.

The postmodern career as a story is linked to the individual's life project, not the organisation. What Handy (1998) calls a portfolio life involves more than the work role. It involves what Super (1990) calls a rainbow of roles including, student, worker, community member, friend, family member, leisurite and more. That is why the theory of career construction expands the focus from career counselling or career management to that of life design interventions which assist people select, enter, manage, and exit a changing constellation of roles throughout the life course. It no longer assumes that work is the central life interest, it inquires about the salient life roles from each individual and helps them conceive how they enact their purpose and do things that matter to them, their families, and communities.

A NEW SYNERGY

What struck me the most in writing this chapter is how much I can learn from a closer study of the organisational literature. Of course, I knew about Hall's

psychological conception of the protean career and Arthur's interdisciplinary conception of the boundaryless career. The problem is that I think in silos. I thought about the superb scholarship on these constructs at a different time and for different reasons than when I thought about career construction theory and life design counselling. Writing this chapter opened my eyes to how I have been circumscribing my own thinking. I was more than pleasantly surprised to see the synergy between counselling psychology's conception of career choice and Briscoe and Hall's (2006) eight career profiles. They even use the narrative concept of "scripts" to describe the career orientations. The career construction model and life design counselling methods provide the interventions called for by Briscoe and Hall. At the end of their article, Briscoe and Hall explicitly stated that major attention should concentrate on research that helps career actors become aware of their orientation, their opportunities, and content. Career construction theory does exactly that.

The synergy is more than superficial. Hall explains that the defining characteristics of the protean career are the dimensions of being value-driven and self-directed. Self-chosen, purposeful actions pursue psychological success in the whole life-space. Career construction theory asserts that story is the fundamental means of charting personal experience and of pursuing purpose. It defines psychological success as actions with meaning and mattering. Hall writes that the two main meta-competencies for pursuing Protean careers are identity and adaptability. He also explains that personal attitudes are important. In parallel, career construction theory has three segments: personality, adaptability, and identity. In reading Hall carefully, I find no instance of difference in meaning, even slight nuances of meaning. They essentially are same constructs yet viewed from two different perspectives, that of Hall on career management and of Savickas on career choice. The adaptation mini-cycle of career construction theory maps clearly onto Hall's view of career as a series of learning cycles. Life design counselling fits nicely with Arthur's views on the accumulation of career resources and the integration of personal and work life.

Career construction theory asserts that career is a psychosocial construct, not a psychological one. Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom (2005) highlights the idea that career should be broadly conceptualised to include the interdependent nexus between individual roles and identities aligned with institutional positions and expectations. He emphasised that we should pay particular attention to the social processes that bind individuals to the institutions. Arthur argued that to attend to either one alone misses the fact that individuals do not just respond to the stimuli of occupation with vocational behaviour. The individual interprets these stimuli to make sense and give them meaning. The resulting behaviour enacts some purpose.

Hall and Chandler (2005) address meaning and mattering by developing a postmodern concept of secular calling in contrast to the modern view of calling as a religious experience. The postmodern call comes from within the individual not from an external higher being. The individual discerns the meaning of the call for self and purpose, not through prayer and listening but through introspection and

reflection. This meaning is enacting individual purpose rather than enacting God's plan.

NEW WAYS FORWARD

Of course, more can be said about potential synergies in the study of careers but the question for this book is why did I not see the synergy until now? I have never met Hall and talked with Arthur once. I have never heard either Hall or Arthur make a presentation and have not until now followed their work as closely as I should. Part of this disjunction results from vocational psychologists interpreting 'organisational' as industrial/organisational psychology, and not looking beyond that part of it. Some of this confusion stems from .the conflicting scheduling of the conferences hosted by the American Psychological Association and by the Academy of Management. This scheduling keeps member of the Society of Vocational Psychology in the American Psychological Association from attending meetings of the Careers Division in the Academy of Management. The disjunction is also imposed by viewing only segments of a career, with some counselling psychologists interested in choices made during the exploration years, others interested in new employee socialisation and mentoring during the establishment years, and still others interested in commitment and adjustment during the maintenance years. Some prominent figures have been aware of this problem for years. A few of them, such as John Crites and Audrey Collin, for more than a decade have called for a summit meeting, a call that is unheeded, and may be implicit in this very book.

The lack of communication about career theory and research between the professions of counselling psychology and industrial/organisational psychology hurts the science of vocational psychology. Their indifference to other organisational specialties reduces our capacity to understand and respond to present changes in the world of work. The organisational perspective with its innovative constructs and creative ideas remains vibrant in career matters as it responds to changes in the social arrangement of work and in reshaping of organisations. Unfortunately, from my perspective and I could be wrong, these ideas are not finding their way into counselling psychology and career counselling. From the other side, I do not see innovative ideas from counselling psychology informing the organisational perspective. Counselling psychology and industrial/organisational psychology prosper in two different worlds, schools and organisations while their common tap root of vocational psychology withers. A summit meeting to discuss our common interest in vocational psychology sounds good to me. I do recognise that the term "vocational psychology" may be too old to accommodate such a meeting. Although I still like it, something such as "career studies" may have to replace it. The need for that would be strengthened if the other organisational specialties were to participate in our summit.

If we were to have a career research summit meeting, then what would we discuss? For me the model for starting conversations would be the chapter written 30 years ago by Super and Hall (1978). Their chapter on career exploration and

planning appeared in the *Annual Review of Psychology* with Super writing on exploration during adolescence and Hall doing the same for adulthood. This model could form the framework for a summit meeting. I would team matched pairs of researchers to make coordinated presentations, and then later co-author a chapter in a book designed to present and assess cutting edge topics in the study of careers. Each pair of presenters would be drawn from a pool of representatives from the three fields of counselling psychology, I/O psychology, and organisational studies. Their assignments of paired topics could include the following: (a) emotional intelligence and psychosocial education, (b) emotional labour and microskill training in empathy, self-exploration, and assertiveness, (c) the Big Five Factors of personality and Holland's vocational personality types, (d) work-family balance and Super's life-role rainbow, (e) the school-to-work transition and new employee socialisation, (f) career success, (g) self-efficacy in career choice and work motivation, (h) Handy's portfolio life and Schlossberg's model of transitions, (i) Hall's learning cycles and Savickas' adaptation cycle, (j) person-environment fit in vocational choice and work adjustment, (k) psychological contract and occupational information, (l) emerging adulthood and boomer employees, (m) employability and career adaptability, (n) employee mentoring and youth mentoring, (o) expatriate assignments and cultural competence, and (p) organisational identification/commitment and vocational identity development.

All of these topics directly concern managing one's work life in a lifelong quest to construct one's best possible future and may be foundational elements in a science of career studies. Writing the chapters would open lines of communication between researchers interested in similar topics and the presentation of brief papers at a summit meeting would open communication between counselling and organisational psychologists about vocational psychology and between them and other organisational specialists about the broader field of career studies in which we are all working.

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