4   Renovating the psychology of careers for the twenty-first century

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Scrutinising the psychology of careers during the twentieth century requires a close examination of the cultural context in which organizational careers emerged, then flourished, and now languish. Following this analysis, the present chapter discusses how vocational psychology, a discipline born early in the twentieth century, has responded to cultural transformations that, as they reshape work and its social organization, demand renovations in the psychology of careers.

The context for career

The editors of this volume define career broadly, 'as the engagement of the individual with society through involvement in the organization of work'. They do so to allow chapter authors to specify manifold meanings for career. Yet, in so doing, they highlight the very essence of career, the social context of work. Different social contexts condition different social arrangements of work. The dominant arrangements that have characterised a particular historical era and specific society have been usefully designated by different concepts, including vocation, craft, and career. From this perspective, my understanding of career has a particular meaning, embedded in twentieth-century culture and society in North America. This historical era gave rise to the essential structure that required most workers to construct careers within bureaucratic boundaries, thus defining the concept of career with a very specific meaning. Now, changes in that cultural context may be devitalising the concept and experience of career, or at least redefining its core meaning.

To trace the rise and fall of career in North America, I examine social conventions, shared assumptions, and implicit values surrounding survival and procreation, that is work and family as central concerns of people. By focusing on the evolution of work and family across three cultural eras in American history, we can examine how worklives were shaped by agrarian, urban, and global economies. In so doing, I will propose that urban society provided the medium in which organisations

fashioned the concept of career and substantiated its meaning. Before considering this proposal in more detail, let us review the predecessor of career – that is, vocation.

Agrarian economy and vocations

Throughout most of American history, individuals lived in an agricultural economy. For example, during the 1800s, more than half of the population in the United States lived and worked on farms. The agrarian culture moulded work and family roles to fit its needs. The dominant social institution was the family – a large, multigenerational labour unit and production team who worked together in the fields or cottages. The family healed the sick, educated the young, nursed the elderly, and laboured to support itself. If there was schooling outside the family, that education occurred in a one-room school house operated by the smartest or most sophisticated person in town. Work, school, and family were interwoven, with the family itself being the major social institution.

When the time came to earn a livelihood, young people typically just inherited their parents' occupation. For example, people born on farms became farmers and children of crafts workers joined the guild. Occasionally, a family member heard a *calling* from the church, the court, or the village and left the family to become a minister, lawyer, or merchant. Thus, the work ethic of the time came to be referred to as a calling or vocation. The secular version of vocation was often called a craft, and individuals followed their calling or pursued their craft.

Urban economy and careers

With the advent of American industrial society at the end of the nineteenth century, cultural changes occurred in the institutions of work, school, and family. Jobs were relocated from farms to urban areas. As people moved from farms to the hubs of modern industry they, together with a throng of immigrants, formed large metropolitan cities. Rather than working for themselves or a small business, more and more people moved to cities, many of them securing employment in large, bureaucratic organisations. These organisations gave birth to the concept of career as individual worklives followed a predictable course up an organisation's ladder. Career path replaced vocation as the dominant metaphor. As the fundamental social identity of individuals in urban economies became linked to work performed rather than family of origin, one's occupation changed from a calling to what one was called (e.g., Miller, Smith, Cook, Farmer, etc.).

Because the fundamental form of modern twentieth-century organisations was hierarchical, career connotes a vertical perspective, one that defined career success as individual advancement up the corporate ladder. Entry-level positions in most occupations were linked systematically to a sequence of future positions, each with more responsibility and greater rewards. For example, at mid-century a high-school graduate in Montana could begin employment as a labourer in a copper mine, with good wages and the prospect of a 2 or 3% salary increase each year along with the opportunity to move up the ladder from labourer, to heavy equipment operator, to blaster, and eventually (say at about the age of thirty-five) contract miner. Wages for contract miners matched or exceeded the wages earned by college graduates in white-collar positions. Workers learned the skills necessary to climb the blue-collar career ladder on the job by watching or assisting more senior workers perform the skills. Night school and advanced education were unnecessary.

As working changed at the beginning of the industrial era, so did schooling. Schools became institutions that educated people for the industrial society. School structure imitated the model of the factory, with graded class rooms and specialised teachers replacing one-room schoolhouses and generalist teachers. One system fit all students as a teacher, who was expert in a subject matter or type of student, stood in front of thirty students sitting in rows and quietly working on individual tasks. These schools systematically socialised students for assembly lines and organisational life. Psychologists did not need to research problems in school-to-work transitions, these transitions were small changes for which students were well prepared.

In addition to restructuring schools, the movement to urban jobs also restructured American families – after all, when you went to Detroit to make automobiles you did not take twenty people with you. The industrial economy's need for mobile workers changed multigenerational families on farms into nuclear families in cities. Like assembly line jobs, the functions of the family became specialised. Urban schools educated children, metropolitan hospitals cured the sick, county nursing homes cared for the elderly, and companies provided work. The nuclear family, relieved of its critical work functions, focused almost exclusively on reproduction, now emphasising procreation, sex, romance, and companionship. City people married for romantic love, rather than to merge farms. Furthermore, urban families had fewer children; even today, family size continues to shrink.

Modern society no longer expected people to select a livelihood by following family traditions or praying for spiritual inspiration. Those who continued to make their choice in this traditional manner were labeled as

immature and enmeshed. Instead of following the family tradition, students were encouraged by their teachers to choose an occupation autonomously from the hundreds of specialised and compartmentalised jobs engendered by industrialisation and its assembly lines. A new occupation even emerged to help them choose – vocational guidance counsellor (Bloomfield, 1915). Guidance counsellors applied – and continue to do so – the viewpoint of positivist science and its technical procedures to help individuals choose occupations rationally.

Frank Parsons (1909) devised the paradigm for modern vocational guidance in urging counsellors to objectify a client's abilities and interests and then use 'true reasoning' to match these traits to occupations with corresponding requirements and rewards. Parsons's matching paradigm for guiding occupational choice remains the most widely used approach to career counselling. Today individuals describe themselves in responding to interests inventories and ability tests, and then a computer compares these responses to occupational profiles in its data banks. The computer produces a profile that portrays objectively the degree of fit between an individual and dozens of different occupations. After discussing these empirical findings and objective facts with a counsellor, clients select a few occupations for in-depth exploration, leading to a final choice. Parsons's 'true reasoning' paradigm provides career counsellors with a rational and objective model along with scientifically reliable and valid methods for helping individuals choose occupations in a society where occupations have become overly specialised. This matching person-to-position paradigm has served twentieth-century organisations and individuals well, but it relies on stable occupations and predictable career paths.

Global economy and worklives

The end of the twentieth century finds US industrial society becoming an information society. As part of this change, large industrial organisations such as IBM, US Steel, and General Motors are shrinking and reshaping themselves. Daily newspapers are replete with stories of 're-engineering organizations', 'downsizing', 'learning organizations', 'dejobbing', and 'contingent workers'. Fewer and fewer companies promise life-time employment following a career path. Increasingly, individuals working at overspecialised jobs that involve a single task are being replaced by employees who work in teams with each member performing many tasks. As the information age sweeps away the old hierarchies, its computer technology flattens organisations, breaks middle management rungs off the career ladder, and hires 'contingent workers' for term-specific contracts. Job security is history. Without the hierarchical, bureaucratic

organisations that gave form to careers, career paths themselves seem to be disappearing. In 1996, the incumbent US Labor Secretary, Robert Reich, observed that 'Twenty years ago, you could fairly easily plot a career. It might have had a few twists and turn, but you would progress though a hierarchy of positions that were more or less predetermined. Career paths are now gone. They're not even trails. . . The lack of a career path means that people . . . are more on their own' (Brazaitis, 1996).

In the emerging employment compact, employees are urged to view themselves as 'self-employed', with employers being their customers. Because employees can anticipate losing several jobs (or working for several customers) during their worklives, they must focus on developing and maintaining skills that enhance their current performance and can get the next job. This means that, to maintain their employability, contemporary workers must manage their own careers, with résumés becoming a list of transferable skills and adaptive strengths. For their part, employers should provide constructive feedback about employee performance and offer developmental opportunities. Given this transformation in society and its occupations, life-time employment must become life-time employability.

As the economy changes and careers fracture, so does America's nuclear family. Vice-President Gore at his Family Reunion Conference in Nashville (26 June 1996), stated the obvious when he said, 'We have a workplace crunched by change. It is creating profound anxiety. Work and family are in fierce competition. Lifetime job security is a thing of the past. The family is the shock absorber for this tremendous social change.' For the last twenty years, the fit between work and family has been grinding like gears that do not mesh. The emergence of family-friendly companies, that will give workplace flexibility and leave time to address family responsibilities, is an external band-aid for a nation experiencing internal haemorrhaging. Some families find that the schools are not educating their children, hospitals are not admitting their spouses, and nursing homes will not accept their impoverished parents. With work harder to find and paying less, there are increasing numbers of dual-earner, single-parent, and alternative families. Thus, US society is engaged in a redefinition of the family unit to include a variety of structures.

Most surviving and thriving organisations have realised that the only realistic adaptation is to live with change; they have accepted permanent internal reorganisation as a way of life. They realise that, in a complex and fast changing marketplace, the bureaucratic form is maladaptive because the top of the hierarchy does not know what the bottom is doing. Organisations are breaking the middle management rungs off the career ladder, thereby destroying the ladder itself. Instead of looking up,

employees are being taught to look over to colleagues and to move diagonally across departments. Even academia is starting to downsize and place its professors in transdisciplinary teams rather than specialised departments. Tenure as a form of life-time employment is being replaced with five-year contracts.

Unfortunately for many communities, individual workers do not seem to be adapting as quickly as organisations. Laid-off workers need new skills, the most important being new cultural skills with which to adapt to the information era and the global economy. Because the family form is connected to how people work, families too must adapt. Society must become more open to multiple forms of family with diverse structures. Schools also need to diversify, no longer can they consist of uniform classrooms that produce standardised graduates for a stable labour market. Just as there will be multiple forms of families, there must be multiple forms of schooling. Whatever the outcome may be, cultural transformation is in full progress.

Vocational psychology's response to cultural changes in career

Vocational psychologists have made noteworthy contributions in helping to shape the societal meaning of career and fostering career development among individuals. Now, some of these contributions require renovation or replacement to keep pace with the changing structure of work and new global economy (Savickas, 1993, 1994, 1995). The decline of organisational careers directly affects career counselling as a specialised occupation. As vocational psychologists move into the information age their viewpoint must change. Like that of other occupations, vocational psychology's perspective has been conditioned by tradition and training. These social practices have produced a psychology of careers and counselling methods highly related to the modern industrial era. Vocational psychologists' self-defining commitment has been to objectively measuring individual differences, studying occupations, and scientifically matching people to positions. These commitments have led them to privilege the core values of rational decision making, independence, planning, individual achievement, advancement up the hierarchy, and personal success and satisfaction.

As the culture that embeds vocational psychologists' scientific ideals and objective practices changes, it is hard for them to stand outside their training and traditions. However, psychologists must because modern career education and counselling, based on linear projections of career, no longer seem as useful to post-modern workers who encounter twists and turns, with both good and bad surprises. Accordingly, vocational psychol-

ogists must participate in a re-vision and re-interpretation that responds to these cultural changes and the new difficulties that students and workers encounter. Vocational psychology's self-interpretation is at a turning point as its practitioners re-examine their ideals, reflect on their models, and choose new values to emphasise.

The core constructs that have been the foundation of modern vocational psychology are already being re-examined and, in many instances, transformed. At first blush, the cultural revolution seems to have separated vocational psychologists into two camps – those who defend the numerous accomplishments of objectivism in producing trait-and-factor models and methods for career counselling versus those who devise constructivist methods for career intervention that are more sensitive to the needs of diverse clients and individuals who are at the margins of objectivist career theory and practice. However, this dichotomy is simplistic. I have never heard a vocational psychologist call for constructivist models and methods to replace objectivist theory and techniques. There is no attack on the trait-and-factor camp. On the contrary, leading constructivist career theorists (e.g. Cochran, 1997) continue to applaud and build upon the accomplishments of trait-and-factor models as they produce supplemental models and materials. Hopefully, this means that vocational psychologists can quickly renovate career psychology for a second century of distinguished service to its clients and country. Let us examine, in a little more detail, how constructivist and objectivist vocational psychologists are responding to the changes in the meaning of career.

Constructivist responses to changes in career

The change in the structure of work and its social organisation means that the modern paradigm of matching people to positions needs to be expanded to address individuals as managers of their own worklives, drawing meaning from the role of work in their lives, not from an organisational culture. Career must become more personal and self-directed to flourish in the post-modern information age. We have already begun to use the phrase 'career management' to replace 'career planning'. The emphasis on personal meaning and becoming an agent in one's own life draws inspiration and support from constructivist metatheory. The lens of constructivism allows counsellors to view career, not as a life-time employment on an organisational ladder, but as a carrier of personal meaning that defines and structures significant events in a life (Carlsen, 1988, p. 186). Rather than looking just at how people fit into the occupational structure, constructivists envision how work fits into people's lives (Richardson, 1993).

Constructivism provides a viewpoint from which to conceptualise careers in post-industrial societies. Constructivism represents a meta-theory and epistemologic stance that emphasises self-conceiving, self-organising, and proactive features of human knowing (Neimeyer, 1995). From this perspective, career may become a framework for personal meaning and self-management, rather than a path through an organisation. Constructive methods enable people to fashion careers that carry meaning for their lives and impose personal direction on their vocational behaviour (Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1985). According to Young and Valach (1996, p. 364) career will become a process that 'people intentionally engage in to acquire social meaning within the framework of their lives'. From this perspective, career counselling should aim to increase self-reflection about meaning and prompt exploration of and experimentation with other ways of seeing and doing. In the words of Peavy (1993) constructivist career counselling is a 'process which enables individuals to review, revise, and reorient how they are living their lives'.

Constructivist metatheory has already produced three compelling models for expanding and improving career theory and practice (Savickas, 1997a). The personal construct, biographical-hermeneutic, and narrative models for career counselling comfortably and comprehensively meet the needs of clients who must make career decisions and plan their lives during a time of rapid change in society and its occupations. Constructivism's concentration on self-conceiving, self-organising processes enables counsellors to focus on the subjective meaning with which their clients imbue work and career. For example, Cochran (1997) has published a narrative approach to career counselling that emphasises meaning-making, personal development, and identity by focusing on purpose, passion, and life history. This new concentration on subjective careers is revitalising the interest of counsellors in their clients' work roles by making career counselling more complex, personal, and therapeutic. Just as objectivist theory with its trait-and-factor methods fit the modern industrial society of the twentieth century, so may constructivist theory with its interpretive methods fit the post-modern information society of the twenty-first century.

Objectivist responses to changes in career

While constructivist researchers attend to expanding contemporary career counselling by emphasising the subjective perspective on worklife, traditional objectivist researchers are expanding the meaning and contemporary applicability of core concepts in career psychology. Let us examine a few concepts and how they are being renovated or replaced.

Career salience and work importance

Work as the central life role has long been a pillar of career counselling. Occupational roles tie individuals to reality and confer social identity. The career ethic emphasises individualism and competitive self-advancement. Today, some psychologists call for a new work ethic, one that requires a shift from assuming that occupation is the most salient social role for every individual to recognising how individuals position their occupation in a constellation of important life roles. This transformation moves from assuming that occupation is the central life role to examining the role of work in each individual's life. This examination includes an emphasis on charting a life course, with attention to multiple roles and work–family interactions not just occupational roles. This focus on life rather than work benefits from the insights provided by multicultural specialists who emphasise the diverse ways in which different segments of the population structure the roles and functions involved in love and work. To further this transformation, prominent career theorists have developed new psychometric instruments to measure these variables; including the Salience Inventory (Nevill & Super, 1986a), which measures commitment to and participation in five life roles, and the Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory (Holland & Gottfredson, 1994; Gottfredson, 1996), which measures traditional variables such as job satisfaction and work involvement yet also measures skill development, interpersonal abuse, and family commitment. This new perspective on multiple roles, rather than a concentration on just the work role, has prompted some career theorists to reconsider their fundamental postulates. For example, following such a reconsideration, Super (1990) embedded his psychology of careers into a broader life-space model in which importance of the work role is contextualised relative to other life roles. Other theorists such as Brown (1988) and Hansen (1997) have urged counsellors to transform career counselling into life planning.

Career development theories

Career development theories are also being modified in response to the changing economy. For example, Super's twin constructs of career patterns (1954) and career maturity (1955) seem to be in the process of being renovated into a new construct called career adaptability (Super & Knasel, 1981; Savickas, 1997b). This new construct is informed by contemporary advances in developmental psychology, and serves as an example of vocational psychologists trying to link their theories and research back to mainstream psychology (Savickas, in press). The trend to reconnect with mainstream psychology is manifest in projects such as

linking the structure of vocational interests to the Big Five personality factors (Costa & McCrae, 1992), applying Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory to the career domain, and comparing vocational development tasks to the construct of psychosocial identity (Holland, Gottfredson, & Power, 1980).

Career counselling

A few vocational psychologists have begun to focus attention on career counselling theory, as distinct from career development theory (Swanson, 1995). The major career development theories of the twentieth century comprehend how individuals develop an occupational choice and adjust to work; they do not instruct counsellors in effective techniques for working with clients. Models and methods for counselling with clients about managing their worklives address the relationship and communication dimensions of the process. Three new theories of career counselling have recently emerged. Krumboltz (1996) has constructed a learning theory of career counselling 'to facilitate the learning of skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits, and personal qualities that enable each client to create a satisfying life within a constantly changing work environment' (p. 61). Chartrand (1996) has devised a sociocognitive–interactional theory of career counselling that focuses on counsellors' reactions to a client's career-specific cognitions and interpersonal functioning. Fouad and Bingham (1995) have developed a 'culturally appropriate career counseling model' that incorporates cultural variables into a method for career intervention characterised by seven specific steps. All three of these new theories emphasise counselling process and outcomes rather than decision making and developmental tasks.

Rational and autonomous decision making

Long a cornerstone of career psychology, autonomous and rational decision making is now being challenged as the sole method for choosing. Parsons's method of 'true reasoning' fits a more stable and predictable economy. Careers today do not follow a fixed course. In this new era, flexibility and adaptability may be more important than autonomy and rationality. For example, rather than independence being the goal, maybe the goal should be interdependence or the judicious expression of dependence and independence contingent upon the situation. Regarding rational decision making, Phillips (1997) has recently emphasised the need to investigate the role of intuition and 'other-than-rational' methods

in career decision making as well as the circumstances under which they may be beneficially employed.

Occupational interests

Another cornerstone of modern career counselling has been the administration and interpretation of vocational interest inventories. Since their inception early in the twentieth century, interest inventories and vocational guidance itself have focused on 'constant' rather than 'variable' occupations (Ayres, 1915). Today, as occupations become less stable, it is more difficult to know which occupational titles to include in an interest inventory. Furthermore, occupational titles themselves become problematic as items in interest inventories because the occupations involve a set of activities under continual transformation.

The empirical scales in interest inventories such as the Kuder Occupational Interest Scale (Kuder & Zytowski, 1991) and the Strong Interest Inventory (Harmon, Hansen, Borgen, & Hammer, 1994) directly measure occupational interests. These scales are composed of heterogeneous items and the resulting scale scores indicate similarity or degree of fit between an individual's interest pattern and the interest patterns empirically identified for selected occupational groups such as engineers and psychologists. For example, a score on the Lawyer Scale of the Strong Interest Inventory indicates how well a client's pattern of choices resembles the choice pattern that characterises lawyers. Thus scores from empirical scales do not represent a client's interests, rather they indicate the similarity of that client's interests to those of selected occupational groups. Recognising this distinction, Campbell, Borgen, Eastes, Johansson, and Peterson (1968, p. 1) asked rhetorically, 'What does it mean to have interests similar to lawyers?' They developed basic interest scales for the Strong Interest Inventory to address this question. These basic interest scales consist of clusters of related interests which clearly specify the pattern of work activities that an individual likes. Day and Rounds (1997) argued persuasively that because homogenous basic interest scales actually measure interests as dispositional traits, these scales may be more meaningful to clients and thus should play a central role in career counselling for a global economy. Basic interests group together work activities that can generalize across different occupational situations. For example, *writing* maximises meaningfulness in comparison to the general factor of *artistic* interests and the occupational title *reporter*.

Kuder (1977) recommended an even more fundamental innovation to interest inventory scoring when he suggested matching an individual's interest pattern to the interest patterns collected from a large number of

diverse individuals, rather than to group patterns for several occupations. Interpretation of such scores would indicate to clients which individuals they closely resemble and then inform clients about vocational biographies of their 'person-matches' (Hornaday & Gibson, 1995). This process aims to provide clients with suitable role models and a wide variety of occupational possibilities to consider.

Skills confidence

A few psychologists who have devoted decades of sustained research to studying vocational interests are now re-emphasising the need to assess functional skills, in addition to interests. Currently, vocational psychologists are focusing much attention on self-estimates of abilities and skills confidence. In 1981, Hackett and Betz, applying self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997) to the career domain, proposed that self-efficacy, or skill self-confidence, mediates the processes of career choice and adjustment. Subsequent research has shown that combining interest inventory results with self-estimates of abilities or assessments of skills confidence increases the predictive validity of interest inventory results (Prediger & Brandt, 1991). Accordingly, Betz, Borgen, and Harmon (1996) have constructed the Skills Confidence Inventory, and Osipow, Rooney, and Temple developed the Task-Specific Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale (Osipow & Temple, 1996). Using a similar rationale, Prediger (1989) constructed a method for estimating career-related skills, a method that coordinates with American College Testing's world-of-work map. The revitalised focus on inter-domain assessments that include interests and skills bodes well for the future of career assessment in a global economy.

Work values

In the middle of the twentieth century, Super linguistically explicated the construct of work values (Zytowski, 1994) and later operationally defined the construct with the Work Values Inventory (Super, 1970). Late in his own career, when he noted the changing culture and the importance of life-role salience, Super replaced the Work Values Inventory with the Values Scale (Nevill & Super, 1986b) which does not privilege the occupational role. This innovation recognises that individuals can gratify important values in roles other than work. Accordingly, career counsellors can now assess life values and then discuss with clients which values will be fulfilled in which roles. For example, achievement can be gained at work, altruism satisfied in the community, nurturance fulfilled in the family, and

creativity expressed in hobbies. This increasing attention to values in career assessment and counselling fits well with post-modern concentration on meaning-making and the quest for significance as well as the emphasis on work as a contribution to a social community.

Career education

Career education in the schools, since the 1970s, has focused on preparing individuals for a linear career in stable organisations. Now, necessarily, attention is shifting away from developing autonomy, rational decision making, and linear plans to developing employability skills, life-long learning strategies, and flexibility. Vocational psychologists are just now starting to attend to the very real and complex problems that youths encounter as they try to move from school to work (Blustein, Phillips, Jobin-Davis, Finkelberg, & Roarke, 1997; Worthington & Juntunen, 1997). The school-to-work transition has become particularly problematic because the instructional methods and materials in the schools have become increasingly dissociated from the requirements of post-industrial organisations. Thus, since the late 1980s, more and more students have encountered turmoil as they leave school and try to secure meaningful employment.

Conclusion

Vocational psychologists realise that society is in the middle of a cultural revolution that is radically changing their own worklives as well as those of their clients. Whether they consciously attend to it or not, most vocational psychologists are adapting their thinking and doing to reflect the new realities. It might be beneficial for vocational psychologists to become more explicitly and systematically self-reflective as they renovate career psychology for the twenty-first century.

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