It has long been lamented that, although several disciplines contribute to career scholarship, they work in isolation from one another, thus denying career theory, research, and practice the benefits that multidisciplinary collaboration would bring. This constitutes a lost opportunity at a time when new understandings and approaches are needed in order to respond effectively to global changes in society and work. This book takes a major step towards remedying this situation by bringing together two key perspectives on career, the vocational psychological and the organisational (interpreted broadly to include organisation behaviour and human resource management).

Written by international experts, the book opens by identifying some of the “tributaries” that flow into the “great delta of careers scholarship”, and noting the need to link what are at present separate “islands” of scholarship. It is structured to allow comparison between the ways in which the two perspectives address career development and career management theory, research and interventions. It concludes by pointing to the possibilities for dialogue, and even collaboration, between these perspectives, and suggesting ways in which these could be brought about.

The book will be essential reading for career scholars because, with its potential to stimulate new thinking and developments in theory and research and also, importantly, in practice (with beneficial spin-offs for policy-makers), this dialogue could open a new phase in career scholarship.

With its overviews of the history, theory, research and practice of both perspectives, the book will also be a valuable resource for students of both perspectives.
Scope
Recent developments in the literature on career have begun to reflect a greater global reach and acknowledgement of an international/global understanding of career. These developments have demanded a more inclusive understanding of career as it is experienced by individuals around the world. Related issues within the career literature include the relationships within the career theory literature, or theory integration and convergence, and between theory and practice. The influence of constructivism is another influence which is receiving sustained attention within the field.

The series will be cutting edge in focusing on each of these areas, and will be truly global in its authorship and application. The primary focus of the series is the theory-practice nexus.
Vocational Psychological and Organisational Perspectives on Career
Towards a Multidisciplinary Dialogue

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PREFACE

This is the third book published in Sense Publishers’ Career Development Series which was inaugurated in 2006.

This Series looks afresh at a number of areas which have a sustained focus in the career development literature. Its aim is to be at the cutting edge and to focus on the theory-practice nexus, and in particular address areas for which major attention would now be timely. The current book meets those aims by tackling an issue that has long been recognised as a missed opportunity for the career field, and is also one that has implications for theorists, researchers, and practitioners.

To address this issue we have brought together contributors from around the world, reflecting the way in which the study of career, which began in North America, is now a global field of study.

In the final weeks of the book’s preparation the world has been shocked by global financial collapse, and as we go to press businesses are folding world-wide, unemployment is rising, and worse appears to loom. At this point there is no means of knowing when, or even if, global systems will revive. We cannot even guess what this might mean for careers and even the concept of career, which is the child of economic growth and stability. Even temporary recession damages individuals’ career expectations and opportunities. If previous economic conditions are not recovered, who is to say what threat there will be to what we have always known as career? All we can see at present is that the role of work will continue to be of great – perhaps even greater – significance in individuals’ lives. Scholars will have to forge a new understanding of this changing landscape that will support individuals in their working-lives, and to do so effectively could take them across their own traditional boundaries. This book provides a glimpse of what they might find there.

OUR THANKS

The argument for dialogue in this book is grounded in the detailed knowledge of the two perspectives that our contributors have provided. We thank them for their generous sharing of that knowledge. As editors, we are also indebted to them for their willingness to shape and temper their work within the guidelines we set and the later feedback we gave in order to achieve the goals of the book, and for their patience and forbearance in this.

We should also like to thank Dr Jennifer Kidd, of Birkbeck, University of London, for the part she played in the early planning of the book when for almost three months in the spring of 2007 she was acting as one of the co-editors. When she had
PREFACE

to withdraw, Wendy Patton took her place. However, while she was involved, Jenny contributed greatly to our thinking; in particular, she emphasised the need to recognise that there were already approaches that embraced both individual and organisation, and this led to the inclusion of Chapter Ten.

Our thanks go to Michael Arthur and Ed Herr, key figures in the overall career field, and early champions of multidisciplinarity, for their generosity in consenting to write the Forewords to this book.

Finally we wish to thank Andrea McCrindle for her work in supporting the formatting and editorial roles in manuscript preparation.
Donald Super’s *The Psychology of Careers* was published in 1957, Everett Hughes’ *Men and Their Work* in 1958. Both scholars were in broad agreement that a *career* reflected the sequence of an individual’s work experiences over time. Each stayed at the top of his game, in psychology and sociology respectively, for another twenty years. Yet there is no evidence that Super and Hughes ever collaborated over an interdisciplinary approach. Psychologists and sociologists lived in separate “tribes” occupying separate academic territories (Becher, 1989).

A call for an interdisciplinary approach eventually came from Edgar Schein and his colleagues at the Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts of Technology (MIT). The MIT group argued that it was time to connect between psychological assertions—“People make careers!”—and sociological assertions—“Careers make people!” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977, p. 44). The call spurred the growth of careers research among management school scholars. (However, most of that research reflected different disciplinary platforms, rather than being interdisciplinary in any fuller sense). Meanwhile, the call went largely unheard among Super’s followers in schools of education, even though those professional schools were well positioned to foster an interdisciplinary approach. To this day, management school and education school career scholars largely maintain their separate territories.

Why so? Education scholars’ focus on careers is largely anticipatory. Their interest lies in the choices people make across the job possibilities open to them. In contrast, management scholars’ focus on careers comes largely after a job choice has been made. They seek to understand the processes through which careers unfold. These differences mean that the two sets of scholars tend to see *career development* differently. Management scholars see a lifelong interaction between a person and his or her work environment (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977, p. 36), while education scholars see a sequence of individual job choices (Brown & Brooks, 1984, p. xv).

As this book goes to press, little has changed (Arthur, 2008). The distinction between “vocational psychology” and “organisation” in the title reflects the continued separation of education school and management school approaches. It should be noted, though, that management school scholars are now more focused on *inter-organisational*, rather than *intra-organisational* phenomena. Schein (2007, p. 573) recently re-stated his earlier call, arguing that territorial isolation “hurts the overall understanding of what careers are ultimately all about.” Is this is a better
time for rapprochement between different tribes, and in turn for broader debate to better serve both individuals and society?

It may be a better time, in the sense that it is a more urgent time. Whatever the degree of turbulence in the emergent global economy, it is likely to remain a knowledge-driven economy. In an era when we expect knowledge workers to communicate widely, it seems inappropriate for career scholars—whatever their school or disciplinary affiliations—to exempt themselves from the trend. The editors and contributors to this volume are to be congratulated for their initiative. Let there be rapprochement between the approaches that the contributors represent.

REFERENCES


FOREWORD

EDWIN L. HERR
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Vocational Psychological and Organisational Perspectives on Career: Towards a Multidisciplinary Dialogue is a unique book in both its format and its substance. Specifically, the book includes two forewords, one written from a vocational psychology perspective, the other from an organisational perspective; six pairs of chapters with each pair written from a vocational psychological perspective and an organisational perspective about a major issue of relevance to each (e.g., career planning and management perspectives, divergent views of career, career interventions); and the content of the book divided into three parts, with the first part articulating the main focus of the book—the existence of a gap, indeed, a split, between the two primary disciplinary perspectives that study and intervene in individual career development or careers within organisational contexts.

From the viewpoint of a vocational psychologist, the content of the book is also, in many ways, unique as it analyses in depth the importance of how individual career interests and values, career identity, decision-making and choice are constructed by children, adolescents, or adults with the help of vocational psychologists using career counselling, career guidance, career assessment, among other interventions. In some contrast, organisational perspectives tend not to be focused on children and youth but on adult career behaviour in interaction with the workplace. In these venues, the processes that occur between the organisation and the worker include human resource management, the selection and performance of workers, and their adjustment. From such examples, there would appear to be considerable overlap in the beliefs and processes vocational psychological and organisational perspectives share and why. However, the primary problem with which the book grapples is that these two dominant emphases on careers exist separately, both in their academic and applied activity.

In essence, since professionals within organisational perspectives and vocational psychological perspectives on career are not integrated or, with some exceptions, primary users of the same literature, it is reported that they both view the other as well as many other disciplines as irrelevant to their professional goals. As discussed in the book, they tend not to read the literature of other disciplines, cross reference it in their research, or train students to value and incorporate the insights from other disciplines into their research.

Even so, throughout the book there are suggestions that vocational psychological and organisational perspectives overlap in their interests, particularly with adults, and that they differ in emphases, not in totality. To that end, the book poses the importance of integrating vocational psychology and industrial/organisational perspectives on career behaviour, and the many ways
available to do so: for example, collaboration, interdisciplinary studies, joining together in pursuing related lines of inquiry, and addressing joint issues that are problem-based, rather than discipline or theory-based.

Finally, a major subtext in this book is that both vocational psychological and organisational perspectives are of significant value in a world in which work is rapidly changing in its access, processes, locations, as well as the skill sets required of workers by employers. Therefore, the disciplines that address the choice and implementation of work behaviour and the creation of careers must also change and collaborate more fully. Applied approaches to vocational psychological and organisational perspectives on career are too important to languish in their own silos. Both of these disciplines working together would generate added value for both perspectives and for the recipients of the skills and expertise they represent. The content and recommendations in this outstanding book, if they are systematically heeded, are important steps in creating a multidisciplinary and international dialogue that promises to heal the gap between the perspectives in a widening diversity of career patterns and transitions and a global context of change.
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PART 1

AWARENESS OF LACK OF SYNERGY BETWEEN THE TWO DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES
CHAPTER 1

AUDREY COLLIN

ONE STEP TOWARDS REALISING THE MULTIDISCIPLINARITY OF CAREER STUDIES

As a construct in theory and personal experience, career is multidimensional and multilayered: its richness, complexity and ambiguity cannot be grasped from one perspective alone. To be understood fully, it has to be studied in a similarly multilayered and multiperspectival way, and, indeed, it has been. Severally, scholars have constructed knowledge for their own purposes and from their own disciplinary perspectives, but together their contributions could be expected to form a multiperspectival and multidisciplinary body of knowledge about career. That, however, is not how the field of career studies is typically characterised or treated. The potential for that combined effect, with the benefits it would bring to the field, has scarcely yet been realised; it is largely ignored by most scholars, even by many of those whose work is contributing to it. However, this situation has not gone unnoticed, and increasingly there are references in the career literature to the sad lack of multidisciplinarity (or interdisciplinarity; both terms are used in this literature, but my reasons for using the former will become apparent later). Commentators highlight the need for scholars to draw on these multidisciplinary resources, the separation that exists between scholars of various disciplines, and the closely related issue of the need to achieve linkages between them or, taking that even further, to synthesise their disciplinary perspectives. In the light of the force of such comments, it is remarkable that little has so far been done to redress this situation. It is this continuing sense of missed opportunities for the enrichment of career studies that prompted the notion of this book. Its purpose is to focus upon two key perspectives upon career which, if they were to engage in dialogue, could perhaps achieve some degree of synergy that would make a real difference to our understanding. They are the vocational psychological and organisational perspectives.
MULTIPERSPECTIVAL ISSUES RAISED IN CAREER LITERATURE

It is well recognised that there is a wide range of social science disciplines that have an interest in career. Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989, p. 9) list psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, history and geography as “engag[ing] in the study of careers”, while Herr (1990) indicates that specialists in organisational behaviour, human resource management, industrial psychology, personnel selection and retention, vocational education, psychiatry, and economics, all have an interest in career behaviour. Vocational psychologists also recognise that their sub-discipline attracts the interest of other disciplines. Russell (2001) says that it appeals to researchers from the careers, counselling, and industrial-organisational (I/O) sub-disciplinary areas in psychology, as well as to those from other disciplines such as management, sociology, and organisational behaviour. Hesketh (2001) locates it at the intersection between psychology and the disciplines of sociology, economics, education, industrial relations, and human resource management, and considers that its capacity to draw upon “interdisciplinary approaches” is one of its strengths.

At the same time, the predominance of some disciplines in the field of career is also acknowledged. Peiperl and Arthur (2000, p. 2) regard psychology, sociology, education and management as the “four principal fields contributing to career theory” which converge “around the constructs of personality, structure, vocation, and the organization of work, respectively”. It has also been suggested that psychology and sociology provide the basic groundwork of the field (e.g., Moore, Gunz & Hall, 2007), the latter being more influential in Britain (Watts, 1981) and Europe (e.g., Vilhjálmsdóttir & Arnkelsson, 2003) than in North America. More recently, Schein (2007, p. 573) still discerns a “strong bias” towards analysing career from the perspective of psychology rather than of economics, political science, anthropology, and sociology. Looking specifically at vocational psychology, Hackett, Lent and Greenhaus (1991, p. 4) regard the counselling psychology and organisational behaviour perspectives as “the two dominant traditions in [it]”, while Slaney and Russell (1987, p. 156) consider vocational psychology and I/O psychology as the “two perspectives … most centrally concerned with vocational behaviour”.

Scholars from both the vocational psychological and organisational perspectives, in some instances from the 1970s, recognise the potential benefits to be gained from these many disciplinary resources, but also acknowledge that the present isolation of these disciplines has first to be addressed.

The need to draw on these multidisciplinary resources

Herr (1990, p. 17) reports on the awareness in the literature from the 1980s onwards of the need to increase multidisciplinarity and to expand “interdisciplinary perspectives” in career studies. The same calls for increased multidisciplinarity continue, featuring strongly in assessments of the present state of vocational psychology and its future. For example, Betz (2001, p. 280) points out that “there
are many research questions/areas for which a multidisciplinary focus is needed”, while one of Fouad’s (2001, p. 189) “dreams” for the future of vocational psychology is that

An interdisciplinary team of vocational psychologists, sociologists, economists, and anthropologists will test newly developed theoretical constructs to explain contextual factors in vocational behavior.

Those views come from psychologists, but writers from the organisational perspective upon career also point to the need to take a multidisciplinary approach. Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989, p. 9), for example, consider that this emphasis on psychology and sociology does little justice to the range of social science perspectives that can contribute to our understanding of careers.

Schein (1986, p. 315, in Peiperl & Arthur, 2000, p. 3) warned of the price involved in ‘membership of each subset of (careers) researchers’ not building theory ‘on broad enough bases to be relevant to the academic community at large or to practitioners’.

Van Maanen and Schein (1977) note that “psychologists often have a very unrealistic view of the actual requirements of particular careers” (p. 43), and advocate “constructing a framework on which an interdisciplinary study of careers and career development can rest” (p. 45).

The need to break down the compartmentalisation of the field

Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989, p. 11) ask why “diverse perspectives” have “not been brought together earlier, or more substantially, in studies of careers”. The answer lies in the “compartmentalization” (Schein, 2007, p. 573) of the field, and a lack of interaction between the various disciplines. As the following subsections show, this is observed at both disciplinary and sub-disciplinary levels and in the field of practice by writers from both organisational and psychological perspectives who go on to call for linkages between various perspectives.

Comments from the organisational perspective

According to Moore, Gunz, and Hall (2007, p. 33) there are areas … in the sociological and vocational literatures … which [are] parallel streams … never—or rarely—meeting.

Their scholars work independently and separately. This is evident in the “dearth of cross-referencing” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977, p. 44) in much career literature where the perspectives of disciplines other than the one to which the authors or editors belong have scarcely mattered or even been registered. Van Maanen and Schein (1977, p. 44) also write that: “[T]he two career frames of reference—
psychological and sociological—have remained remarkably independent”. They consider that there is a “curious hiatus” that is “just short of appalling” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1977, p. 44) between scholars who address career from a psychological (differentialist, developmentalist, and organisational) perspective and those from a sociological (defined as the sub-disciplines of industrial, occupational, and organisational theory) perspective. They consider that what is needed is to study “both sides of the coin” and give “a profound respect for the dialectic quality of human experience”.

Whether that “hiatus” would be regarded as being as great now as it was then in 1977, Moore et al. (2007, p. 14) are still referring to the “current siloed nature of the careers field” which has sociological, vocational, and developmental “tributaries”, with “little interdependency” between them (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007, p. 8). Moreover, Schein (2007, p. 573), also writing in Gunz and Peiperl (2007), concludes that the situation has scarcely improved since he noted it in 1978.

The division between sociological and psychological approaches seems as strong as ever. … [Scholars still pursued their own conceptions] without the slightest feeling of responsibility to connect their views to other researchers allegedly in the same field.

Comments from the vocational psychological perspective

Vocational psychologists are also aware of this separation of perspectives, which takes place both between and within disciplines. Gottfredson (2001, p. 195) refers to it as “the Balkanization of fields of applied psychology and kindred disciplines that should be closely connected”. Of vocational psychology in particular, Lent (2001, p. 217) comments that it is becoming “insulated” from other disciplines such as sociology and economics and from other domains of psychology, while Leong (1996, p. 336), citing Osipow, says that it suffers from “disciplinary provincialism”. Moreover, although “the foci of vocational/counseling and I/O psychology” are “differing, yet potentially complementary” (Lent 2001, p. 217 ), there is a “growing cleavage” (Gottfredson, 2001 p. 197) between them. This started in the 1930s with the gradual “disconnect” (Erdheim et al., 2007, p. 205) or “splitting of vocational psychology into two groups” and into two “homes”—counselling psychology and business schools—as Savickas and Baker (2005) have charted in their history of this sub-discipline. Both “share in common a concentration on vocational behavior and its development in careers from the perspective of the individual”, and once could have be seen as “two sides of the same coin” (Savickas & Baker, 2005, p. 43). However, vocational psychology can now be likened to two islands, one off the coast of counselling psychology, the other off the coast of I/O psychology (Savickas, 2001b, p. 284).

The need to bring the various perspectives “under the same roof”, for the home of vocational psychology to be a “house with many rooms” (Esbroeck, 2007, p. 205), is now often cited in the discussions of how to reinvigorate vocational psychology (Blustein, 2001; Lent, 2001), and often, but not always, in terms of
reuniting vocational psychology with I/O psychology (e.g., Lent, 2001). This is what Gottfredson (2001) advocates, recommending that vocational psychologists not only become knowledgeable about developments in I/O psychology, and keep up its practices and techniques, but that they should also make links with economics and sociology. Bartol (1981) and Slaney and Russell (1987) point to the need for collaboration, while Savickas (2001b, p. 287) urges that it “is imperative that vocational psychology become less provincial” and link with other specialties in psychology.

Although it is difficult to judge from what are generally only brief references exactly what commentators were intending, many of them seem to mean more than linkage when they call for integration. Having reviewed the literature of vocational behaviour over twenty years, Hackett et al. (1991, p. 28) conclude that “true integration across the counseling and organizational traditions seems vital.” They continue:

A general realm for integrated inquiry, linking the relative strengths and foci of the two traditions, involves the interaction of individual and organizational/contextual factors in determining career behavior (p. 29).

Other commentators refer to the need to “synthesize research findings” from I/O psychology, organisational sociology, organisational behaviour and theory (Bartol, 1981, p. 151); to “integrate individual and organizational perspectives” (Lent, 2001, p. 217); to integrate (Vondracek, 2001) and to achieve “greater integration” between vocational psychology, organisational psychology, and “related lines of inquiry” in other disciplines such as occupational sociology and labour economics (Blustein, 2001, p. 172); and to “participate in interdisciplinary studies of work and workers” (Savickas, 2001b, p. 286)

Comments on the fields of practice

The field of career studies, of course, includes more than just the pursuit of academic knowledge; it has areas of application and practice. Vocational psychology is applied in career counselling and guidance practice and, importantly, those are in large measure professionalised. The application of theory from the organisational perspective takes place in human resource management and development, organisation and management development, which are responsible for career interventions in organisations. For both perspectives, theory is developed and research undertaken to provide the intellectual framework of practice, its application and evaluation. Additionally, both perspectives have their own practitioner literature. This makes for a sense of fuzziness between the boundaries of the academic disciplines, or sub-disciplines, and the field of practice.

Arthur (2008, p. 165) suggests that although in the professional schools of education and of business and management, where he locates career psychology and the organisational perspective respectively, “disciplinary boundaries are less of a constraint, and scholars can … look across disciplinary divisions to better serve their professional populations”, the separation of the two perspectives is evident,
too. Amundson, Parker and Arthur (2002, p. 27) found that occupational and organisational counselling “have existed as separate worlds”. The schools of education are concerned with occupations, vocational guidance, and the psychology of careers, whereas the schools of management are concerned with the world of organisations. Although they have enjoyed “a relatively comfortable coexistence” (Arthur, 2008, p. 166), “there have been only limited attempts to bring the two traditions into the same conversation”.

Hence the value of closer connections is also recognised in the fields of practice. Guindon and Richmond (2005, p. 128) foresee “more dialogue” between disciplines interested in career counselling and development, while Amundson et al. (2002, p. 34) suggest that occupational and organisational career counselling could be “usefully merged”. In the context of examining the gap between career theory and practice in vocational psychology, Leong (1996, pp. 336-337) sums up the need for integration as follows:

The boundaries that define us as vocational psychologists also serve to limit us from opportunities for synergistic integration with other areas of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. … There is a need to transcend some of our boundaries and begin a systematic program of integration that is problem based rather than discipline or theory based.

THE CHALLENGE OF RESPONDING TO CALLS FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

As this chapter has shown, the multidisciplinary nature of the career field is recognised but not yet widely drawn upon in theory and research despite the number of comments made about it, the degree of concern that they reveal, and how long and frequently they have been expressed. However, any desire to respond to those calls immediately encounters several challenges.

The first is to establish which form of disciplinary collaboration is being recommended: as noted earlier the terms “multidisciplinary” and “interdisciplinary” are both used, perhaps interchangeably. I have argued elsewhere (Collin, 2009) that it would be helpful to have consensus on the terminology, and suggested the adoption of the following distinction distilled from definitions across a number of disciplines (see Klein, 1990). With multidisciplinarity, several disciplinary perspectives come together to work independently on the same problem, and are unchanged in themselves when they disperse. With interdisciplinary, their collaboration may result in the building of bridges between them or, going even further, integration between them and the formation of a new, hybrid, discipline. As I noted, the implications of this are considerable, and include “issues of communication, training, common language and meaning systems, and mutual respect for research tools used” (Herr, 1990, p. 19). Transdisciplinarity, to which few references are made in the career literature, is the use of theories, concepts, and approaches from one or more disciplines as an overarching conceptual framework to address issues in a number of disciplines, and I have suggested that systems theory and chaos theory are examples of this. However, a
different interpretation is made by Arthur et al. (1989, pp. 13-14), who see it in terms of

a single disciplinary viewpoint that acknowledges other viewpoints … [the] reinterpre[ta]tions of the findings of one viewpoint from another perspective … the acknowledge[ment of] different assumptions across viewpoints … [i]n sum … a shared frame of reference.

In the calls for collaboration discussed above, it is not clear what form of it is being sought. Is the desire for “linkage” a call for multidisciplinarity or for the bridge-building form of interdisciplinarity, and that for “integration” a call for the formation of a new, hybrid discipline? The references are too slight to justify such interpretations. What is clear, however, is that if the field is to benefit from any such collaboration, then the terms it uses have to be defined. This is yet another instance of language and meaning being an issue in the career field (see Collin, 2007).

The second challenge is to specify the disciplines to be involved. The demands for collaboration are not unanimous: they vary in their identification of which disciplines and sub-disciplines should be drawn upon and together in career studies. While this may not be surprising because the overall field is very broad, it does not help answer the question about which would be the most effective way forward. The difficulty may lie not in choosing which disciplines could collaborate but in differentiating them clearly in the first place. This may be the case particularly at the level of sub-disciplines and specialties, as demonstrated by the variety of definitions of occupational, organisational, and work psychology that can be found. This can be explained in terms of contextualism (Collin, 1997), according to which the differentiation of the parts of any whole can be only arbitrary, or dictated by the needs of the user rather than by any inherent and objective features of their own, because they are interwoven within the larger, complex whole. Current debates about the construction of knowledge and the socially constructed boundaries within it (Lattuca, 2003) reflect that. That is something that practitioners understand, for they have to address the unitary, rather than discipline-shaped, experiences of their clients: “the real problems of society do not come in discipline-shaped blocks” (Kann, in Klein, 1990, p. 35). The growing complexity of the world is encouraging the specialisation, formalisation, and professionalisation of the various branches of knowledge that form the disciplines. The “paradox” (Klein, 1990, p. 106) that results from the need for, yet inadequacies of, the disciplines thus generated has led to the recognition of the value of collaboration between disciplines, represented in the discourse of interdisciplinarity, over the last thirty or so years.

Vocational psychology presents a further issue. While, like organisational commentators, some vocational psychologists call for it to open up to other disciplines with an interest in career, others look less far afield. Relationships with near neighbours are of particular interest. The 20-year review of the literature on vocational behaviour by Hackett et al. (1991) is divided between counselling psychology and organisational behaviour. Slaney and Russell’s (1987) review of
the 1986 publications on vocational behaviour is written from the differing perspectives of counselling psychology and I/O psychology. Moreover, it is collaboration with I/O psychology that is frequently sought, with the purpose of not just enriching vocational psychology but of healing it. This reflects the commonly rehearsed view of a split in the original discipline and the importance of recovering the lost twin of I/O psychology and bringing it back into the fold. However, unlike other key issues for vocational psychology—the possibility of convergence between its theories (Savickas & Lent, 1994) and of achieving greater linkage between its theories and practice (Savickas & Walsh, 1996)—this rapprochement has not yet been addressed.

Despite the recognition of the significance of multidisciplinarity in career studies, in some form or another, there has not yet been any concerted effort to identify how to achieve it. If ways are to be found to take advantage of the opportunities that it would be expected to give, then it must surely be time to move on from recognising these issues to starting to address them. By bringing together two significant perspectives on career—the vocational psychological and the organisational (as we define it)—this book was planned as a step in that direction. The stimulus for it was the awareness that my fellow editor, Wendy Patton, and I had of the significant work that was being carried out by writers from both those perspectives. However, it has not been systematically brought together and, indeed, much work of one perspective is poorly known by the other. With our long-term interest in developing theory, and enriching research and practice, we wanted to be able to examine the differences and similarities between these perspectives, and identify resonances and overlaps which might present potential starting-points that could be developed to take the field forward. Because these have hitherto lain largely unattended, their potential is at present lost, and opportunities are being missed to achieve a more holistic and integrated understanding of career. That is a particular loss for practitioners, who are being starved of what they need to address their clients’ lived experience, and this is contributing to the uneasy relationship between theory and practice.

Given the broad range of disciplines that have been identified in this chapter, this project is of limited scope. However, we believe that, by concentrating on these two perspectives, the book should have outcomes that those from both perspectives would value and be able to apply, small changes that might set in train larger ones. Moreover, it would demonstrate the kind of benefits that could be gained by investing further in multidisciplinary collaboration, as well as ways of going about that.

THE VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THE ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER

Given the difficulty already noted of distinguishing the disciplines with an interest in the field of career studies, our initial task must be to make clear how we as editors understand what the two perspectives are. As well as in our explanation here, our understanding is reflected in our choice of contributors.
We use the standard definition of vocational psychology as the study of vocational behaviour and development (Crites, 1969). It is particularly concerned with career choice and work adjustment, career decision making, the influence of context upon choice, and effective interventions to facilitate the above (Fouad, 2007). Represented in the APA’s Division of Counseling Psychology, it might also be referred to as career psychology. Its field of practice is career counselling and guidance, career education, and the provision of career information.

For the purposes of this book we use a broader understanding of the “organisational” perspective than that which vocational psychologists generally have, although it includes how they would typically understand it, that is, as I/O psychology. As such it includes personnel selection, job analysis and classification, the measurement of abilities, personality, attitudes and morale, motivation and job satisfaction, performance appraisal, work design and safety, equal opportunities practices (Crites, 1969; Gottfredson, 2001). However, here we also include the organisational specialties that Herr (1990), Hesketh (2001), and Russell (2001) mention as having an interest in the study of career. Hence our definition here of the “organisational” perspective includes organisational behaviour and organisation studies, the academic study of human resource management/development, management development, succession planning, and organisation development. The practitioners of this perspective are not only work and occupational psychologists but also, variously, personnel/human resource managers and developers and management consultants. Using this definition obviates any need to differentiate between these sub-disciplines or specialties.

It is important to note that both perspectives are concerned with individual motivations, interests, actions, needs and experiences. We would qualify Savickas’s (2001a, p. 168) view that “its focus on individuals differentiates vocational psychology from the fields of I/O psychology, organisational behaviour, and occupational sociology” because organisational and management specialties also study individuals closely. The changes wrought by technological revolutions and globalisation have forced employers to recognise the need to understand individuals in order to elicit the potential of their staff and to invest in them, to regard them as assets rather than costs, a shift in view represented by the change from personnel management to human resource management. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the motivation of the organisation is to meet its own needs by meeting those of its employees. There are, however, other theorists, as Chapter Ten sets out, whose work encompasses both individual and organisational issues, and so could offer the potential to bring together both vocational psychological and organisational perspectives under an overarching framework.

**The effect of defining “organisational” in this way**

Many careers still take place in, through, and between organisations or institutions. The effect of defining “organisational” in this way for this book is to hold out the possibility of new ways of thinking about career. First, by regarding the organisation as a context of career, it broadens and deepens the view of the
individual-organisational relationship that is held by I/O psychology. The ecological and systems approaches to the study of career (Patton & McMahon, 2006), which already note the workplace as one of the proximal systems with which the individual interacts, others being family, school, etc. (see Figure 1, Chapter 10), could be used to elaborate the details of that relationship. In this way we could examine the organisation as a source and stimulus of individual learning and development, motivation, challenge, fulfilment, direction, and stress, see how it thereby contributes to the shaping of both individual and career through socialisation, training, reward, and control, and how the individual’s responses play a part in shaping the organisation. Attention to such effects of this interrelationship and to the processes of co-construction and structuration (Giddens, 1984) would illuminate and augment the understanding given by I/O psychology.

This broader definition of “organisational” also admits a greater sociological approach to career. Moreover, it contextualises the individual’s career in not just the procedures of the organisation, such as selection or appraisal but also, using a processual or social constructionist interpretation, in the flux and transformations of its processes and dynamics. The recognition of the constructed nature of organisations shifts the interpretation of career from being an individually designed or managed experience to being negotiated and contingent, interconnected with wider organisational concerns and needs. This, too, throws up possibilities for new ways of understanding career.

Our definition, further, allows the recognition of the influence upon career of the pragmatism and instrumentalism of management which I have previously argued influence the career (Collin, 1996, 1998). It brings into play the critical management discourse (e.g., Grey, 1994), and the political discourse, with its notions of power and stakeholding (Collin & Young, 2000). Van Maanen and Schein (1977, p. 42) consider that people constitute the raw materials of the organization and are its customers, workers, clients, inmates, managers, beneficiaries, and sometimes victims. They also note (p. 35) that career is used as an unobtrusive and indirect form of control [which] has the advantage of seeming more legitimate than a system based on order or fiat. This again offers a very different understanding of career from that generally held in the field.

By defining “organisational” in this way we are also opening the door to the recognition of wider contextual issues and new career forms, such as the protean and the boundaryless, or boundary-crossing, career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Inkson, 2006).

Finally, our definition of “organisational” has implications for this book. It gives it a broader aim than that of attempting to integrate vocational and organisational psychologies or to restore I/O psychology to its home discipline. Second, it means that we are bringing together two different orders of perspective upon career. The vocational psychological is that of an identifiable sub-discipline, whereas the
organisational is what we are attributing to a number of associated sub-disciplines and specialties. The book can therefore have no intention to aim at their integration. It can, however, prepare the ground and sow the seed for a thoughtful and creative dialogue between them. This may appear somewhat loose and fuzzy, but we believe that, with the potentially productive open-endedness introduced by this definition, such a dialogue will introduce new ideas that can ripple through the career field and generate new starting-points for career studies. We hope that it will contribute to the “cross-fertilization” and “debate” in the field that Peiperl and Arthur (2000, p. 3) advocate:

What is most important now is to keep the academic community and practitioners in touch with one another, to keep the conversation alive.

INTRODUCING THIS BOOK

An edited book has an inherent strength and weakness. It can draw upon the knowledge of a range of experts but without a strong editorial line it runs the risk of being disjointed. Underlying this book is an argument which gives the book its purpose: to examine these two perspectives upon career and identify whether there are differences and similarities between them, and unexplored issues arising from them; and to do so in a way that allows each perspective a better understanding of the other with a view to developing a dialogue between them. The book therefore had to be constructed in a way that facilitated that and so the chapters are presented in pairs, each written from one perspective. In the event, our invitations to contribute the five organisational chapters that we made to those who affiliate themselves with the broader organisational and management specialities included in our definition were accepted in three instances; the remaining two chapters are written by organisational psychologists.

As editors, we had to ensure that each chapter would meet the needs of the book, and also that readers would be able to make meaningful comparisons between the two perspectives. Hence we briefly outlined for the authors the topic of the chapter, but left them to decide what material they would include that would represent what they considered to be significant to and characteristic of their particular perspective. As the draft chapters came in, and what was needed to sustain the overall argument of the book became apparent, our role was then to give feedback on their scope, emphases and structure. For example, not all our contributors would define “organisational” in the way in which we have chosen to do, and so in some instances, we asked for some re-phrasing to ensure that, while respecting theirs, our definition was not obscured. Thus there was a process of iteration in the writing and editing process.

In addition, we asked the writers of chapters four and five to address the same questions to allow easier comparison between them, though again in a way that reflected their own views and priorities. These questions were:

– How is career development understood from the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
How is career planning understood from the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
How is career management understood from the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
What do you see as the main strands that, historically have contributed to the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
What are the key constructs from the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
What are the major theories/theorists from the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
What are the predominant epistemological assumptions underpinning the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
What are the competing viewpoints within the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?
What audience does the vocational psychological/organisational perspective primarily address?
Who are the stakeholders in the vocational psychological/organisational perspective?

THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three parts. The first part sets out awareness of the existence of a gap between the two disciplinary perspectives. The two chapters that follow this introductory chapter look at the issues from each perspective. Both start with the history of their perspective. Hugh Gunz, from the organisational perspective in Chapter 2, takes a broad view with his image of the “great delta of careers scholarship” which is fed by sociological, developmental, and vocational tributaries whereas, from the psychological perspective, Fred Vondracek and Erik Porfeli in Chapter 3 note the “common ancestry” and subsequent “split” between vocational and I/O psychology. Both chapters examine the differences between the two perspectives, which to some extent they both explain in terms of the academic and professional organisation of their respective fields, though with different emphases, and both advocate greater communication and collaboration.

Part II examines the two perspectives in detail. It comprises six paired chapters. The first pair examines career development and career planning and management, Chapter 4 setting out the organisational and Chapter 5 the vocational psychological perspective. Both have responded to the same set of questions listed earlier, though in their own chosen way. In Chapter 4, organisational psychologists Peter Creed and Michelle Hood emphasise that the organisational perspective is concerned with individuals but for organisational purposes. They examine major theories of organisational career development (the psychological contract, person-organisational fit, the stages of organisational career development, and career success), and then look at responses to today’s organisations (new career models and career self-management). They conclude by emphasising the need to recognise the significance for career of the context beyond that of the organisation. Peter
McIlveen opens Chapter 5 by outlining the discipline of vocational psychology and how it is changing. He sets out its established constructs and theories (development, interests, values, self-efficacy, choice and decision making), and its new constructs and theories (change, complexity and uncertainty, agentic action, story, relationships). He then examines the discipline’s paradigms: positivism/postpositivism, constructivism/social constructionism, and the critical-ideological. He concludes with a plea for the pragmatic recognition of the value of all these approaches within their own time and context.

The second pair of chapters in this Part concerns research into career. From the organisational perspective, organisational psychologist Kate Mackenzie Davey, in Chapter 6, outlines changing concepts of organisation as the context of research, from positivism through to postmodernism. She identifies the need for pragmatism as the researcher faces the challenges of ethical issues, involvement in ongoing organisational processes, the interests of the organisation itself, and the criteria for credibility. She then sets out various methodologies, such as questionnaire surveys, life history, document-based studies, and case studies, which are available according to the philosophical assumptions being made, and emphasises the rich diversity in organisational research. In Chapter 7 Vladimir Skorikov gives an overview of the history of vocational psychological research into career development, and identifies some of the factors that have influenced it, including epistemology. Research has to address career development in terms of content, process, context, person, and the interaction between them, and make choices about quantitative and qualitative studies, sampling, research design, and methods of data collection. The chapter ends by noting aspects of career development that have not yet been adequately researched, and suggesting some issues for the future.

The third pair of chapters in this Part looks at the career interventions of practitioners from each perspective. Yehuda Baruch starts Chapter 8 on the organisational perspective by asserting that the management of career is shared between organisation and individual. He uses a model to depict the nature of career management interventions and the need for fit between individual and organisation, and presents a portfolio of practices concerning planning, organising, investment in human capital, and human resource management responsibilities. He advocates a contingency approach to the selection of which practice to be adopted, emphasising that they must be capable of being integrated and of supporting the organisation’s overall strategy. He concludes by noting the role of the human resource management department in this. In Chapter 9 on the vocational psychological perspective, Wendy Patton notes how career counselling has had to change with the changing nature of work, from a once-in-a-lifetime point at the transition from school to work to a lifelong process of learning. She argues that constructivism is more effective for today’s needs than the traditional trait-and-factor approaches, and outlines a number of approaches. She goes on to explain that similar changes have taken place in career education, where constructivism’s emphasis on lifelong learning is peculiarly appropriate, and in the provision of information and resources, to which access must now be widened, and in which professionals need to move from being experts and gatekeepers to facilitators.
Kerr Inkson’s Chapter 10, which opens Part III, examines some transdisciplinary and other meta-frameworks, such as systems theory, the “grand theories” of sociology, career construction theory, and notions of the psychological contract and of human and career capital. They integrate individual and organisational levels of analysis, and he asks whether they could provide overarching frameworks for the vocational psychological and organisational perspectives. He concludes with a discussion of his own integrative metaphor of the career as “a landscape with travellers”.

Chapters 11 and 12 identify some key contemporary issues in the career field. From the organisational perspective, Tim Hall and Mireia Las Heras use international comparative research into experiences of mobility, flexibility, and security to demonstrate some new features of the present context of career. They then suggest that the protean career, self-efficacy, and learning cycles are effective responses to those features, and discuss how organisations can respond to them. They argue that career development is no longer climbing the organisational ladder but individual learning, and that the pendulum of the psychological contract is now swinging back from a transactional position to a more relational one, in which both organisation and employee share responsibility for career development. Mark Savickas writes from the vocational psychological perspective in Chapter 12. He traces the split between what would become counselling psychology and I/O psychology, and the change from the modern to the postmodern organisation, from job to career, and now to life design. He recognises the relevance of the metaphors of the protean and boundaryless career from the organisational perspective, and suggests that they complement vocational psychology’s career construction theory and concern with career as story. In a spirit of openness, he makes a plea for synergy between the perspectives which would not only revitalise vocational psychology but would also energise the study of career, and closes on a practical note on how that could come about.

The editors’ final chapter pulls these threads together to set out the basis for dialogue between these two perspectives, and discusses ways forward.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 2

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THE TWO SOLITUDES: THE VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL/ORGANISATIONAL GAP, AS SEEN FROM THE ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The present volume addresses a topic that has been a nagging toothache of career scholarship for many decades (Arthur, 2008; Collin, 1998, 2001; Schein, 2007). Writers have complained—despaired, even—about a gulf that separates two solitudes (to use MacLennan’s (1945) telling label for the gulf separating the two isolated worlds that he argued were inhabited by French and English Quebecers), the one interested in the phenomenon of career and how it affects, and is affected by, organisational life, and the other in helping people find their way through their careers.

In this chapter I shall argue that the differences between these two solitudes are not as straightforward as they sometimes seem; specifically, that the organisational solitude comprises a multitude of solitudes and that the two solitudes actually have much in common. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there are real differences between the vocational psychological and organisational literatures, and I shall explore the historical and organisational reasons which I think explain them.

THE “FIELD” OF CAREER SCHOLARSHIP

Careers pervade much, if not all, organisational scholarship, and indeed can be identified in a wide spectrum of the social sciences. Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence (1989a) list psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, history and geography as disciplinary areas in which career writing can be found. Even within the organisational literature the number of domains in which careers are studied is legion (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007a).

So while it is common to refer to career studies as being a “field” (e.g., Arthur et al., 1989b, p. xv), there are many who have raised a note of scepticism (e.g., Collin & Young, 1986). Indeed Gunz and Peiperl (2007a) suggest that career studies is not so much a field as a perspective on social enquiry, the central concept being the effect on people of the passage of time. It is a perspective that can be focussed
on all levels of analysis in social research, from the individual to national economies, and all perspectives on time: retrospective, cross-sectional or prospective. So it should come as little surprise to learn that there are myriad career scholars, each working in their corner of the “field”, largely unaware of other career research going on in other corners. Career scholarship, in other words, consists of not just two solitudes, but a great many.

Nor is there much agreement about the organisation of this “field”. There are many taxonomies in the literature, but they are all different (Peiperl & Gunz, 2007). So we have a “field” with little, if any coherence, in which many very different disciplines have an interest. It is one, in other words, in which a multitude of scholars are working in their various isolated corners, each talking to a small group of others. That is a description of a field that is riven by boundaries. So what, if anything, is distinctive about that separating what I have called the “two solitudes”?

THE VOCATIONAL–ORGANISATIONAL DISTINCTION

At first sight the differences between the two literatures are not overly striking: it is certainly evident that there is quite a lot of common ground between them. A recent review of the career counselling and career development literature published in 2005 (Harrington & Harrigan, 2006), while certainly covering issues that are pretty specialised to counselling and development, includes others that any organisational researcher would recognise immediately. In the former category are topics such as standards and ethics of practitioners and educators, and global perspectives on vocational guidance. In the second, overlap, category, are issues such as life-span development, gender issues, work-family issues, workplace entry, and mentoring.

Clearly, then, it is not simply the case that the vocational and organisational literatures are separated by a great unbridgeable gulf. Each has its unique elements (for example, vocational scholars seem to have little interest in the structure of internal labour markets, while organisational scholars have equally little interest in the dynamics of the counselling relationship); yet they share common elements. However, the premise of this book is that the organisational—vocational boundary is distinctive. And indeed when one moves beyond simply listing topics of interest to examining how the topics are addressed, the differences become more apparent.

The organisational literature is, in a curious way, somewhat inward-turning: its audience is largely its own writers. Its readership is much more diffuse than that of the vocational literature, being drawn from a variety of scholarly disciplines (but with an emphasis on business schools) and interested in the question: How can we use the phenomenon of career to advance our understanding of how organisations and societies work, and how people find their place in them? So, for example, when scholars from this side of the divide study the relationship between personality and career success, their main interest is in the nature of the relationships between personality factors and career success, and not in developing
instruments that are linked to comprehensive occupational classifications (see, for example, Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007). The instruments that are used by these scholars are typically developed on relatively small samples of subjects, drawn from populations that are most accessible to the researchers, more often than not their students or recent graduates. The instruments are usually freely available, either published in the paper in which they are first reported or available from their authors, and are used “as is”, without any required training or authorisation. It is not that organisational writers are disinterested in being helpful: many papers end with a section called something like “Implications for Practice”. However, these are rarely the focus of the paper; they are, typically, a minor part of its closing discussion. These writers, too, will from time to time produce books and articles directed at practitioners, with advice intended to help them manage their careers or those for whom they are responsible. Indeed some writers, for example Edgar H. Schein, Douglas T. “Tim” Hall, and Michael Arthur, have contributed classics to the literature which are read by both academics and practitioners. That said, reputations in the organisational field are built, largely, on the basis of scholarly output which is primarily interested in how understanding careers helps us understand people, institutions, and societies.

The vocational literature, by contrast, serves, much more explicitly, practitioners who serve people trying to make their way through their careers. It is, most importantly, a literature directed at professional practitioners, and addresses the question: How can we help practitioners help their clients make their way through their careers? As Savickas (2007) argues, the person-environment fit paradigm is central to much of vocational research, most particularly following in the tradition of Holland’s work (e.g., Holland, 1959). The field is extraordinarily rich, with research ranging from careful analysis of the psychometric properties and theoretical bases of the instruments used in vocational choice (Bretz Jr & Judge, 1994; Tinsley, 2000) to psychodynamic and postmodern, narrative approaches to facilitating the counselling relationship (Kidd, 2007). It would certainly be unfair to characterise this literature as solely directed at practitioners, of course: It comprises a great deal of theoretical and empirical work on a broad range of vocational topics, and as noted above its interests overlap in many places with the organisational literature. But—to a reader seeing it from the organisational side, at least—it appears to have a much clearer focus than the organisational literature, which is on the need to help people make their way through their careers.

The vocational literature also appears to have about it a sense of greater consciousness of itself as a field than does the organisational. Whereas organisational career researchers have very few of their own journals, publishing in mainstream organisational journals and to a lesser extent “crossover” publications such as the Journal of Vocational Behavior, vocational scholars have a great many specialised journals to choose from. Comprehensive reviews of the organisational career literature are rare, perhaps precisely because it is as diffuse as I have described it above, and limited to a very few book-length projects such as Arthur et al. (1989b) and Gunz and Peiperl (2007b). The vocational literature, by contrast, is
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surveyed regularly, often annually, usually (but not exclusively) in vocational journals.

What are the roots of this difference between the two literatures? I shall suggest that (a) it springs from the different traditions of scholarship that have led to the present-day field of career studies, and that (b) it reflects distinctive differences in the intellectual organisation of the two fields.

The historical roots of career scholarship: Three tributaries

Moore et al. (2007) argue that there are three tributaries that have fed the current streams of career scholarship: sociological, developmental and vocational. The sociological tributary emerges from attempts to understand how societies “work”, for example Durkheim’s writing on the division of labour (Durkheim, 1964), Weber’s on the nature of bureaucracy (Weber, 1958), and Everett Hughes’s on the sociology of occupation (Hughes, 1958). The effect of this tributary can be seen in the industrial sociology of Blau and Duncan (1967), in studies of patterns of intergenerational and occupational mobility (e.g., Erikson, Goldthorpe, & Portocarero, 1983; Sobel, 1983; Yamaguchi, 1983), and in the literature on careers in and between organisations (e.g., Clark, 1966; Gunz, 1989; Mills, 1951; Schein, 1978).

The developmental tributary traces its origins to Freudian and Jungian thought on the development of the individual. Among the best known writers in this school are Erikson (1963), Vaillant (1977), Levinson and his co-workers (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978), and Super (e.g., Super, 1990).

Finally, the vocational tributary emerged from the rise of industrialisation in the 19th century, as psychologists such as Galton, Cattell and Spearman sought ways of measuring individuals’ abilities and potential in order to find means of fitting the vast workforce, displaced from its origins on the land and in artisanship, into the growing factory system, and social reformers such as Parsons (1909) became active in helping people with their vocational choices. The US Armed Forces tested 1.7 million men to find out how best to place them in the WWI war effort (Bingham, 1919; Psychologists, 1961), and the work has continued ever since, associated with names such as Thorndike, Terman, Super, Dawis, Bray, Holland and many others.

These tributaries have spread tremendously in recent years to create the great delta of careers scholarship, so that it is doubtful whether many working in the field know of the intellectual roots of what they do. And, of course, there are those working on what we might identify as career scholarship who owe little intellectual debt to any of these tributaries. But, very broadly, and with many exceptions, we can trace what I am loosely calling here “organisational” career scholarship to the sociological and developmental tributaries, and “vocational” scholarship to the vocational tributary. It is, I think, the different intellectual origins of these two forms of scholarship, and the differing purposes of the researchers, that have a lot to do with the two solitudes of this chapter being as they are. In addition, there are noticeable differences in the way the two subfields are organised.
The organisation of vocational and organisational career studies

In their review of the structure of the careers literature, Peiperl and Gunz (2007) suggest that the fragmentation that characterises it reflects the organisation of the "field" as a whole. They argue that it is an example of what Whitley (1984) calls a "fragmented adhocracy". This is characterised by a low degree of interdependency between researchers ... a relatively fragmented knowledge structure and the existence of much disagreement about the relative importance of different problems to be solved by the field. As a result, the problem-solving activity within the field takes place in a rather arbitrary and ad hoc manner, with limited attempts to integrate new solutions with the existing structure of knowledge. (Knudsen, 2003, p. 278)

This label seems to work well for the field as a whole and for the organisational side of career scholarship, but less so when we come to consider vocational career studies. This is, I suggest, much less of a fragmented adhocracy than is the organisational subfield, and this affects the way it develops and uses career research.

Whitley uses two dimensions (each divided into two) to differentiate between the organisation of different scientific fields, mutual dependence and task uncertainty. In brief, there is arguably greater mutual dependence between vocational scholars and less task uncertainty associated with vocational career research than there is for organisational career scholars.

Vocational scholars typically address practitioners who are members of professional bodies and need licences to practice, and other scholars who aim to serve the needs of those practitioners, so much of what they do is concerned with developing, critiquing and refining the instruments and methodologies that practitioners need for their work. At least as it appears to someone coming from the organisational end, it seems to me as a result that vocational scholars seem to need to use the specific results, ideas and procedures of fellow specialists in order to construct knowledge claims which are regarded as competent and useful contributions (Whitley, 1984, p. 779)

to a much greater extent than do organisational researchers. A prime example is the vast literature depending on the Holland inventory. Organisational scholars are much less organised around a set of instruments that are widely recognised as central to what they do. It could be argued, too, that in vocational research, perhaps because of its intellectual origins (Moore, Gunz, & Hall, 2007) and its association with schools of education (Arthur, 2008), there is less uncertainty about the nature of the techniques that are used in research, and less
uncertainty and conflicts over intellectual priorities, the significance of research topics and ways of tackling them and the likely reputational pay-off of different research strategies (Whitley, 1984, p. 781)

than is the case in the extraordinarily polyglot world of organisational career research.

To the extent that these propositions are reasonable, the vocational subfield is less of a fragmented adhocracy and more like what Whitley (1984) terms a “professional adhocracy”, or possibly a “polycentric profession”. In the former the standard skills and technical procedures enable a more typical ‘profession’ to develop in which reputational organisations control the production and certification of research competences. (Whitley, 1984, p. 789)

The polycentric profession is one in which knowledge is more coordinated and there is less fragmentation of approaches. Either way, my point is simply that—to someone looking at it from the organisational side, at least—by comparison with the fragmented adhocracy that characterises organisational career scholarship, vocational scholarship seems more organised, more coherent, with a greater sense of agreement about the theoretical frameworks to use and what scholars are trying to achieve, as witness its specialised journals, and its regular reviews of its output, neither of which exist for organisational career research to anything like the same extent.

So organisational researchers come from most, if not all, branches of the organisational and behavioural sciences, drawing on different intellectual traditions (the sociological and developmental “tributaries” discussed above). They can be found in many different kinds of institution, but particularly in schools of business and management and publish in journals that are often read only by colleagues in their own particular discipline. That is what a fragmented adhocracy is like.

Vocational researchers, to a much greater degree, draw on the vocational tributary, are focused in schools of education and, although they may take different approaches to studying their problem and disagree vigorously about whose epistemological and methodological—even, undoubtedly, ontological—position is the more sound, they seem to be much more aware of each others’ work, which is what is implied by the professional adhocracy or polycentric profession. And that is reflected in their writing.

In sum, the two subfields appear to have emerged from two distinct traditions—tributaries—in the literature, and there are significant differences in the way in which they are organised. This, I think, accounts for much of why they seem to operate as two solitudes. Does it matter?

DOES ANY OF THIS MATTER?

How much does this matter to scholars on either side of the vocational—organisational gulf? Is there any reason not to continue in our separate, or semi-
separate ways, getting together every so often to peer in mild surprise at all the wonderful work going on, on the other side of the wall? Who or what is suffering?

Presumably, if we accept Michael Arthur’s (2008) eloquent call for interdisciplinarity in careers research, we all are, as is our scholarship. On the face of it, it would be astonishing if we did not have much to learn from each other. But it is hard to guess how much there is to learn unless we make a determined effort to bring the two solitudes together. The risk, of course, is that, were we to do so, we might just find that the problems each solitude studies are so different that it is hard to find common ground.

I would be surprised if this were the case, if only because of the overlap in the literatures to which I pointed above. In other words, I think that it would be worth the effort. Yet interdisciplinarity, as we all know, is a very difficult thing to make work. Specifically, here, we must recognise the very different reasons that organisational and vocational researchers have for doing the work they do. For example, you and I may share an interest in career choice, but if in your case this means developing or refining an instrument that can be used by career guidance counsellors to help school-leavers move into the labour market, and in my case it means understanding the way people find their way through and between organisational hierarchies in order to be able to predict the kind of strategic behaviour that these organisations display, then clearly we are using the same words for very different things.

So the challenge, it seems to me, is to be able to find commonalities in the problems in which we are all interested, and work from those commonalities rather than from the simple labels that so bedevil any attempt at defining the structure of the field. To continue with the example above, perhaps I have much to learn from the way you frame the problem of career choice when you design your instruments, and you can learn from the questions I deal with when I am trying to understand how people find their way through and between organisations. In each case that means going back to basics: what cognitive and affective processes are involved in making choices about one’s future, and how does social context affect them? But each of us must pull back from the way we define our problems, so that we can hear each other speak.

A good first step is knowing about each others’ work. If we each publish in journals the other does not read, then there is little chance that either of us will discover what the other is up to, and little chance that either of us can learn from the other. Collaborations cannot be built on ignorance: if you don’t know that your potential collaborators exist, you are unlikely to end up working with them. That, it seems to me, is what is so valuable about the present volume.

REFERENCES


THE TWO SOLITUDES


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