

# Vocational Psychology: Expanding the Vision and Enhancing the Impact

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## Abstract

In this contribution, we provide a critical analysis of the current status of vocational psychology and present an expansive vision for the future. We begin with an overview of the importance of vocational psychology in the history of *The Counseling Psychologist*, followed by a critical review of contemporary theory, research, practice, and training. We aim to expand the traditional purview of career choice and development and broaden the impact of the field to meet the needs of all who work and who want to work. We propose a new mission for vocational psychology characterized by innovative theoretical advancements, renewed interdisciplinary and international collaborations, and the inclusion of macrolevel factors in research, practice, and policy. Lastly, we conclude with a vision of vocational psychology in 20 years, which optimally will be reflected in a broadened scope of mission, integrative theoretical frameworks, and an expanded training and policy agenda.

## Keywords

vocational psychology, future of work, career development, psychology of working, counseling psychology

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The invitation to contribute an article for such an important occasion as the 50th anniversary of *The Counseling Psychologist* (*TCP*) is an honor that, in this case, also engenders both an obligation and commitment. We write this article at a turning point in the landscape of work across the globe, with growing precariousness and instability across most sectors of the global labor market (International Labor Organization, 2018; National Academy of Sciences, 2017). In short, the challenges to achieving the social justice vision that is so integral to counseling psychology's mission is in serious jeopardy due to growing inequality, an erosion of social and legal protections at work, and countless other threats to human rights, many of which are centered in the work space (Blustein, 2019; Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). At the same time, the role and visibility of vocational psychology within counseling psychology is arguably not as strong as many had hoped it would be at this time (cf. Savickas & Baker, 2005), especially with such complex crises characterizing the work lives of so many people. Thus, although we are deeply grateful for this invitation to share our impressions with the counseling psychology community, we also are very much aware of the obligation that we have to create a launching point for a reinvigoration of the vocational realm of counseling psychology (a call that the senior author of this article initially advanced, under different circumstances, nearly three decades ago in this journal; Blustein, 1992). In this article, we manifest our commitment to vocational psychology by providing a roadmap for counseling psychology to fully engage the potential of our field to contribute significantly to the pervasive problems that confront so many people in their work lives.

Preparing an article on the current status and future directions of vocational psychology for *TCP* has a great deal of resonance given the central role that the Journal has played in the development and enhancement of vocational psychology. Even in the earliest years of *TCP*'s history, seminal theoretical papers were published, often as Major Contributions, which provided a powerful platform for significant advances in vocational psychology, dating back to Astin's (1984) contribution on women and work, and Schlossberg's (1981) theory on transitions. During the 1990s, Major Contributions on attachment theory and career development (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995) and the school-to-work transition (Worthington & Juntunen, 1997) appeared in *TCP*, each of which set the stage for important theoretical innovations in the coming decades. In the past two decades, *TCP* has continued to publish innovative articles that have had a broad reach and impact, encompassing such issues as criminal justice and vocational psychology (Varghese, 2013), counseling for work and relationships (Richardson, 2012), emancipatory communitarian approaches to career development (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005), and career development training in counseling psychology

(Robitshek & DeBell, 2002). Moreover, as *TCP* has moved toward a more traditional journal outlet with free-standing research articles, scholars in vocational psychology have submitted groundbreaking contributions, including developments in work volition (Duffy, Diemer, & Jadidian, 2012), critical consciousness (Diemer, 2009), and diversity and work (Fitzgerald, Chronister, Forrest, & Brown, 2013; Thompson & Subich, 2011). In this article, we build on the range and depth of contributions on vocational psychology theory, research, and practice within the pages of *TCP* by advancing several clear directions for vocational psychology scholars, practitioners, and educators to enhance its impact in the coming decades.

In this contribution, we review some major themes in the existing literature on vocational psychology with the goal of articulating a path forward toward a more inclusive and impactful knowledge base. We do not intend for this article to serve as a literature review per se, but rather for it to provide a clarion call for a more expansive and transformative vision of vocational psychology. We begin with a brief overview of the many changes that are radically reshaping the world of work. We then present a selected review of the core pillars of vocational psychology—theory, research, practice, and training—highlighting areas of strength as well as growth edges. We follow with a framework for expanding the vision of vocational psychology, with which we seek to encompass the full scope of issues and challenges that people face as they navigate an increasingly complex landscape of education, work, and career. We conclude with recommendations for enhancing the impact of our specialty by identifying important areas that merit our individual and collective attention as we move forward into an age of growing uncertainty in the workplace. Throughout this article, we argue that vocational psychology remains at the core of counseling psychology's identity and future. Indeed, we believe that the reinvigorated mission we present in this contribution will serve to create a framework for a rejuvenated vocational psychology that can meet the demands of this challenging era.

## **The Shifting Sands of Work and Career**

Across the labor market (and indeed across society at large), people are raising substantive concerns about the stability of work in light of very rapid changes in the nature of automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and globalization. At the same time, growing inequality is changing the nature of many societies, fueled by the expansion of precarious or short-term work (Hyman, 2018; Stiglitz, 2015). In short, fears are being raised about the capacity of our economies to support the full range of people who want to work and who need to work to support their livelihoods (see National Academy of Sciences

[2017] and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD, 2015] for comprehensive reviews of the issues). New technologies and AI are clearly replacing some jobs, particularly those that require primarily rote tasks (Lent, 2018; OECD, 2015). Although technology and globalization are changing the workplace, considerable debate exists about the impact of these changes, with some scholars arguing that we may suffer up to 45% job losses due to AI and automation (Frey & Osborne, 2013). In contrast, others are more sanguine, arguing that the losses in the workplace will be mitigated by the creation of new, and as of yet, unknown jobs (Hirschi, 2018; OECD, 2015). A thorough and balanced appraisal was presented in a National Academy of Sciences (2017) report that included a panel of economists, policy analysts, and organizational psychologists. They concluded that although many job losses are expected, it is not possible to make precise predictions about how the labor market will absorb these losses and adapt. The authors of the report proposed that we have the capacity to shape this process, particularly if the prevailing assumption that the free market will take care of the labor market is clearly and effectively countered.

A number of vocational and counseling psychologists (i.e., Blustein, Kenny, Di Fabio, & Guichard, 2019; Hirschi, 2018; Lent, 2018) recently reported the results of broad-based analyses and made recommendations about how our field can contribute to debates about the future of work. When considering these three articles collectively, some common themes emerge, which provide a useful synthesis of the changing nature of work in relation to counseling psychology's unique intellectual contributions. The authors found one essential theme related to the radical changes in the nature of work. These changes are creating increasing levels of inequality as the jobs lost tend to occur among those without highly marketable skills. As innovations such as AI-infused manufacturing become commonplace in society, people who have been working steadily, often with decent incomes, will find themselves out of work and without the skills and training to engage in new occupations that may emerge. Another theme expressed to varying degrees in these three articles is the need for counseling and vocational psychologists to expand their impact by engaging in systemic research and intervention, a view we unequivocally affirm in this article. A third issue presented in these contributions is that the future of work will be increasingly characterized by growth in precarious work—work that is short-term, contract-based, and without the security and stability that has often provided an important psychological and economic foundation for so many people (Hyman, 2018; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017).

Consistent with Lent (2018), Hirschi (2018), Blustein, Kenny, et al. (2019), and the National Academy of Sciences (2017) report, we endorse the view that the current and anticipated shifts in the workplace, especially those related to the distribution of resources and opportunities, are mutable to a

significant extent and therefore amenable to interventions. We view this article as one of many calls for action among our peers to address the very troubling problem of a divided society in which some individuals work in the marketplace, others work intermittently, and others do not work.

## **Current Status of Vocational Psychology: The Four Pillars of Engagement**

In this section, we identify the foundational elements of four core pillars of counseling psychology's engagement with work-related issues and challenges, which we believe serve to cohere and propel forward motion for our field. We highlight the status of theory, research, practice, and training in career development and vocational psychology, and use this information to identify areas of need and potential in the field. We also map viable advances that address the realities and challenges that people are facing in the world of work today. We recognize that, although we cover these four pillars separately, they are closely intertwined, and that there is a need to be more thoughtful and intentional in integrating vocational theory, research, practice, and training in the field (Sampson, Bullock-Yowell, Dozier, Osborn, & Lenz, 2017).

Throughout this article, we use the terms *career development and counseling* and *vocational psychology* interchangeably to refer to the broad contours of our field; at the same time, we acknowledge that these terms have different origins (in counseling psychology and applied psychology, respectively). Career counseling represents the applied and practice arm of vocational psychology, as well as the body of work that has emerged from career guidance and career development education; in contrast, vocational psychology refers to the scholarly study of work or career-based behavior and development across the life span (Savickas, 2019). In recent years, however, counseling psychologists who specialize in work and/or career issues have expanded the scope of these terms beyond traditional career guidance and development (Blustein, 2006; Richardson, 1993). Rather than maintaining the emphasis on populations that have access to the resources needed to develop and implement their career plans, the emerging mission of the field is shifting to encompass the work lives of all, including those who do not have easy access to self-determined careers (Blustein, Duffy, Kenny, Gutowski, & Diamonti, 2019; Fouad, 2007). These terms also reflect the fluidity in our field's identity (i.e., as reflected in the naming of the Society for Vocational Psychology, one of the oldest and most active sections of the Society of Counseling Psychology of the American Psychological Association [APA]), and are consistent with the terms used historically among counseling psychologists who specialize in work and career issues.

## Theory

*Traditional vocational theories.* Vocational theories serve as a valuable tool for practitioners and researchers alike to understand and assess the concerns related to work that individuals are experiencing, and to identify ways to help individuals resolve these work-related concerns. Tracing the field's theoretical origins, vocational psychology has a rich tradition in career choice and development theory. Indeed, trait-and-factor theories, developmental theories, social cognitive career theories, and constructivist approaches have largely dominated vocational psychology. These theories are covered in many of the textbooks used to train future professionals and have received ample attention in research studies (Chaichanasakul, He, Chen, Allen, Khairallah, & Ramos, 2011; Sampson et al., 2014; Whiston, Rose, Peterson, & Nguyen, 2013). Notable examples of these theoretical approaches include Holland's (1997) typology theory, Super's (1980) life-span, life-space approach, and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994, 2000) early iteration of social cognitive career theory, each of which is reviewed next.

Over the years, these theories as well as research studies informed by these theories, have provided a strong knowledge base for understanding key factors related to decisions that people make about the career they choose to pursue. For example, Holland's theory focuses on developing the knowledge and tools needed to facilitate a good match between individuals and work environments. Holland's contributions have led to extensive research and practice implications, with highly sophisticated psychometric tools to assess an individual's interests, values, and other attributes that inform the decision-making process (Holland, 1997). Super's theory advanced the perspective that the resolution of developmental tasks and life roles are key determinants of an individual's career success and satisfaction. Finally, an important premise of Lent et al.'s (1994, 2000) theory is that individual and environmental factors interact to shape a person's social cognitions such as self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which are important determinants of interests and career choices.

These theories have provided a strong foundation for research and practice in explaining how individuals make decisions related to their careers; however, there are limitations to these approaches, which have been focused on career choice, decision-making, and adjustment issues. One limitation is that a common assumption—and a common critique—across these theories is the role of human agency (i.e., the belief that many individuals have a relative degree of volition in shaping their career paths; Blustein, 2001, 2006; Hooley et al., 2018; Richardson, 1993; Roberts, 1995, 2012; Sultana, 2014). The assumption that people are able to exert their own will when making career

choices reflects a middle-class bias that is pervasive within the field and in our traditional theories (Liu & Ali, 2005; Richardson, 1993). Another limitation is that although each theory represents an important advancement for vocational psychology, most are extensions of Parsons's (1909) original trait-and-factor theory (Sharf, 2013), largely focusing on career choice and viewing careers as an extension of one's identity. Finally, many of these traditional theories were developed by a single individual, and when that theorist retired or died, theoretical developments often stalled (Sharf, 2013).

To address these issues, vocational psychology needs scholars who are willing to keep these theories "alive" by making refinements and advancements to the theories based on new research findings, novel conceptual ideas, as well as societal changes that affect work experiences. We also need theories that expand discussions of career to include the full range of occupational activities available to all segments of society (Arulmani, 2014; Blustein, 2006; Richardson, 1993, 2009; Sultana, 2014). Moreover, theorists need to acknowledge that people may hold varying conceptualizations of the terms *work* and *career* (Blustein, 2019; Chaves et al., 2004). In addition, our field needs more theoretical frameworks applicable to the work experiences of populations other than middle-class professionals. Importantly, we need to expand our theoretical contributions to cover domains of human behavior and work other than career choices and career development. Theoretical advancements are especially needed in the areas of work and mental health, the experiences of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism) in the workplace, unemployment, and precarious work. In the following sections, we highlight some exemplars of new theoretical perspectives in vocational psychology which expand traditional assumptions, incorporate populations historically marginalized in vocational theory and research, and extend vocational practice and research outside of the realm of career choice and development.

***Emerging vocational theories.*** Several recent developments in vocational theory have expanded the theoretical lens through which vocational behaviors are conceptualized. Those proposing these emerging theories generally seek to move beyond the career choice and development paradigm to embrace a wider array of work-related concerns and challenges; their theories also have a parallel cohering theme in being overtly contextual and theoretically expansive.

Psychology of working framework (PWF; Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2013) and related psychology of working theory (PWT; Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016) reflect a set of initiatives that capture many of the defining elements of the emerging theories. In PWF, Blustein identified the pervasive focus on fostering career success and satisfaction in populations with a relatively high degree of volition and opportunity, and the corresponding

neglect of individuals and communities whose work lives have been characterized by survival needs. Also in PWF, Blustein advanced a conceptual framework for a new perspective and mission in career development focusing on the needs that work optimally fulfills and the connection between work and mental health. In addition, PWF has sought to identify ways in which systems and institutions can be changed to support opportunities for all who work and who want to work. Researchers were inspired to incorporate PWF ideas into new counseling models (Blustein, 2006; Blustein, Duffy, et al., 2019; Blustein, Kozan, Connors-Kellgren, & Rand, 2015), new research agendas (e.g., Chaves et al., 2004; Duffy, Diemer, & Jadidian, 2012), and extensive scholarship on the resources and barriers that shape access to decent work (for a comprehensive review see Blustein, 2013). In an important conceptual contribution, scholars integrated PWF with an intersectional identity theory and a social class identity theory to explain the psychological experiences resulting from unemployment among marginalized groups (Ali, Fall, & Hoffman, 2013). PWF also has provided the inspiration and intellectual tools necessary for the development of two theories—the relational theory of working (Blustein, 2011) and PWT (Duffy et al., 2016). (Because of space limitations, we focus on PWT.)

PWT (Duffy et al., 2016) reflects a contemporary, interdisciplinary theory that builds on Blustein's (2001, 2006, 2008, 2013) PWF. PWT was developed to provide a tool for scholars and practitioners interested in assessing the core assumptions of PWF and related fields (for overviews of the conceptual foundations of PWT, see Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2016). Unique to PWT is the primacy placed on the role of contextual factors in work experiences and decisions, and the centrality of decent work as a construct. The concept of decent work, which was adapted directly from the International Labor Organization (2008) formulation, is defined as (a) working in safe conditions, (b) having time for leisure activities and rest, (c) having consistency in values between the employer, worker, and society, (d) earning fair compensation, and (e) receiving access to health care. Duffy et al. (2016) proposed a theoretically and empirically supported model wherein economic constraints, marginalization experiences, work volition, and career adaptability are key determinants of obtaining decent work. These individual and contextual factors, in turn, predict the fulfillment of three sets of human needs that optimally can be met at work: survival, social connection, and self-determination. These three sets of needs are hypothesized to lead to fulfilling work and overall well-being. Recent empirical tests of PWT have provided support for the theoretical proposition that marginalization experiences are related to decent work among individuals who identify as sexual minorities (Douglass, Velez, Conlin, Duffy, & England, 2017) and racial and/or ethnic minorities (Duffy et al., 2017). Taken together, these recent applications of both PWT and PWF underscore their promise in



expanding knowledge about the work experiences of groups that have traditionally been neglected in vocational psychology theory and to the growing numbers of people who are engaged in precarious work.

An important influence on the development of the PWF and PWT was Richardson's (1993) seminal article on the role of work in people's lives. Within the past few decades, Richardson has expanded on this very thoughtful call for a more inclusive approach to understanding work and career by developing a fully-formed theoretical model to inform practice, research, and public policy. Influenced by both feminist and social justice approaches, the counseling for work and relationships perspective (CWR; Richardson, 2012) represents a social constructionist approach for understanding how individuals construct their lives through two interconnected social contexts: work and relationships. In this approach, Richardson moves away from focusing on work alone to emphasize the interplay between work and self across multiple contexts. CWR distinguishes between market work (paid work in public spaces, or educational preparation for market work), personal care work (work that includes caring for self or others), personal relationships (relationships in the personal context), and market work relationships (relationships in the work context).

Richardson (2012) has articulated the consideration of market work trajectories of individuals as co-constructed meaning that access and success in market work is not purely based on individual efforts but is also a result of political, economic, and social forces (e.g., labor market demand, generational poverty, lack of educational resources). She argued that understanding market work as co-constructed may help to

mitigate some of the damage that is done to those who struggle unsuccessfully to develop satisfying and meaningful market work trajectories. Rather than consider their struggles solely the result of personal failures, a contextualized understanding of how market work trajectories are coconstructed by both personal and social forces will enable the kind of critical consciousness that is an essential ingredient for a social justice approach to vocational psychology (Blustein et al., 2005). These social forces include market work conditions as well as the ways in which these opportunities are inequitably distributed according to social locations such as gender, race, and class. In other words, paying attention to market work as a context can broaden our vision to more easily include these systemic social forces. (p. 207)

In the quote, *critical consciousness* refers to the capacity to read the world and understand the overt and covert ways in which resources and constraints are allocated (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015).

Richardson's model suggests that further inquiry in areas such as individuals' personal care work, sense of agency, capacity to manage transitions, and

the narratives that people construct to make sense of life may serve to broaden the vocational psychology knowledge base. Jung and O'Brien (2019) have thoughtfully advanced Richardson's ideas on the value of nonpaid work, which underscores the importance and relevance of this scholarly area.

When considered collectively, the contributions from the PWF and PWT communities and from Richardson have encouraged a deeper contextualization of work that has served to transform the mission and agenda of career development. These theorists have argued that vocational psychology's contributions to career choice and development to date have been prolific and were consistent with the "pressing social needs of their times, at least for [a] significant portion of the population" (Richardson, 2012, p. 40). However, the nature of work has shifted considerably in the 21st century, and a contemporary focus requires a radical shift toward a more contextualized understanding of how work functions in our lives.

One of the most important cohering themes of the contributions from PWF and PWT initiatives and Richardson's work is an explicit focus on sociological and economic factors as essential considerations in understanding how people negotiate work-related tasks throughout their lives. Sociological theories of career and work have had a long history, particularly in the United Kingdom, as reflected by Roberts (1995, 2012) who countered proponents of the career choice and development models by identifying how the opportunity structure has constrained options for people. Similar contributions emerged in the United States and other nations as the stark reality of work for those with less than optimal choices remained a visible counterpoint to the aspirational assumptions of many existing theories (e.g., Johnson & Mortimer, 2002; Leung & Yuen, 2012). A more explicit integration of psychological and sociological concepts represents a promising direction with intriguing conceptual innovations emerging in different regions of the career development community (e.g., Bimrose, 2019; Duffy et al., 2016; Hooley et al., 2018; Sultana, 2014).

Prominent themes of the emerging theories are an explicit contextualized understanding of work in relation to the broad spectrum of life and a commitment to integrating work and nonwork issues. Building on these themes, Lent and Brown (2006, 2008) developed an integrative social cognitive model of well-being, which extends social cognitive career theory's (SCCT) interlocking model of interest, choice, and performance to explain satisfaction in educational and vocational areas and the effect of work-based fulfillment on life satisfaction. Proponents of this theory posit a reciprocal relationship between work and well-being, where work satisfaction and overall satisfaction are each assumed to have an effect on the other. Researchers have found that satisfaction in a life domain is associated with overall life satisfaction (Lent et al., 2005; Lent, Nota, Soresi, Ginevra, Duffy, & Brown, 2011; Lent, Taveira, &

Lobo, 2012; Ojeda, Flores, & Navarro, 2011); however, longitudinal studies did not support the bidirectional relationship between domain and life satisfaction (Lent, Taveira, Sheu, & Singley, 2009; Singley, Lent, & Sheu, 2010). Additional research is needed to assess the nature of the relationship between domain and life satisfaction, and future researchers in this area may also extend well-being outcomes to include measures of mental health other than life satisfaction.

Another recent extension of SCCT is Lent and Brown's (2013) social cognitive model of career self-management, which expands SCCT's focus outside of the traditional outcome of career choice. The self-management model moves away from the content of vocational choices to capture vocational processes such as managing multiple roles and work transitions, and their relation to work and well-being outcomes. This new theory already has stimulated multiple studies that have provided support for the self-management model in predicting career decidedness (Lent, Ezeofor, Morrison, Penn, & Ireland, 2016; Lent, Ireland, Penn, Morris, & Sappington, 2017; Lent, Morris, Penn, & Ireland, 2018), decisional anxiety (Lent et al., 2016, 2018), exploratory goals (Lent et al., 2016; Lent et al., 2017), job search intentions and job search behaviors (Lim, Lent, & Penn, 2016), multiple role balance intentions (Roche, Daskalova, & Brown, 2017), and sexual identity disclosure in the workplace (Tatum, Formica, & Brown, 2017). Future research using the social cognitive self-management theory can be extended to understand a wide array of work processes with adults in the workforce.

Innovations in developmental and constructionist perspectives to career development have also emerged in recent theories. Within the life-design movement (Savickas et al., 2009), a similar focus has been advanced for the integration of work and nonwork issues in the development of a holistic approach to career development and career counseling. The life design approach uses clients' stories and narratives to understand how they view themselves and events around them to create a career path for the future (Savickas, 2019; Savickas et al., 2009). The life-design paradigm reflects an international synthesis of ideas related to career choice, development, and adjustment, with notable contributions from Savickas (2013) and Guichard (2009). Savickas's compelling career construction theory, which built on new ideas from constructionist narrative psychology, formed a key foundation for life-design theory. Guichard's (2009) contributions are often overshadowed but merit attention in this article. Over the course of decades, Guichard developed an elegant theory that describes how people construct their identities with careful attention to how the context both shapes and constrains the development and expression of identity. The combination of Savickas's career construction theory with Guichard's self-construction theory has culminated in a

rich paradigm that expands the purview of career counseling to include a broader focus on designing one's life across roles and the life span. Life design theory has received widespread international attention and has inspired multiple studies that have validated a key measure, the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), across multiple international contexts. (For a review of the burgeoning literature on career adaptability, we refer readers to an excellent meta-analysis by Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher [2017].) This approach may be particularly useful in developing skills among low-skilled workers to navigate their work experiences (Brown, 2016).

Contextual action theory (Young & Domene, 2019) is also derived from a constructivist perspective. Contextual action theory has emerged from an application of action theory, which includes the proposition that human beings are goal-directed and engage in actions to implement their goals in their lives. The work by Young, Domene, and Valach (2015) has considerable potential to provide ideas that may inform further theory development, practice, and research in a manner that balances individual agency with a clear awareness of cultural factors and social and economic constraints.

Other promising theoretical innovations have been introduced based on a developmental framework. Building on many decades of thoughtful integration of career development and developmental psychology frameworks, Vondracek, Ford, and Porfeli (2014) and Vondracek, Ferreira, and Santos (2010) have developed new and important vistas that have the potential to enrich our understanding of work and career behavior across the life span. A similarly rich synthesis has been advanced by Bakshi (2014), who has applied the compelling theoretical and empirical contributions of Baltes, Lindenberger, and Staudinger (2006) to the challenges inherent in considering work and career behaviors from a life span perspective. Taken together, the developmental tradition remains robust in vocational psychology, with a particularly important potential in further integrations of vocational psychology with emerging theories and research in developmental psychology.

Another promising trend is the emergence of nonlinear theories of vocational behavior. Two compelling contributions have been advanced from Australia—systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 2014) and chaos theory (Pryor & Bright, 2019). The systems theory framework was developed in response to calls for theoretical integration and quickly emerged as a vital and promising contribution that emphasizes the recursive nature of psychosocial causality. Included in the systems theory framework is a broad array of content and process influences, including intrapersonal factors (e.g., psychodemographic factors, psychological attributes, attitudes, beliefs) and environmental societal content influences (e.g., political, economic, and historical factors). This wide range of factors is thoughtfully connected in a systemic

framework that seeks to capture the complex reality of work-based decisions and behaviors. Chaos theory (Pryor & Bright, 2019) is derived from the assumption that career and work-based processes are highly complex and very difficult to predict given the presence of chance factors and other unexpected events that play a role in career development. The use of the term *chaos* may imply a lack of order or coherence in one's career life; however, Pryor and Bright noted that patterns can be discerned if nonlinear perspectives are sought that incorporate chance and broad systemic influences.

The development of work-based well-being models and constructs represents another emerging area in vocational psychology that can advance theory outside of the traditional realms. For example, Allan, Owens, Sterling, England, and Duffy (2019 [this issue]) proposed a model of fulfilling work consisting of job satisfaction, meaningful work, engagement, and positive emotions, which serves as the central outcome of the strengths-based inclusive theory of work (Owens, Allan, & Flores, 2019 [this issue]). The strengths-based inclusive theory of work combines contextual factors with positive psychology concepts into a new vocational theory about the role of work in creating gratifying life experiences—a clear move away from traditional vocational psychology theories' focus on career decisions. Additional novel and promising approaches to the study of work include research on the well-being constructs of career calling (Dik & Duffy, 2015; Duffy & Dik, 2013;), work mattering (Jung, 2015), meaningful work (Steger, 2014; Steger & Dik, 2009; Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012), work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Sonnentag et al. 2010), and capability approach (Robertson, 2015).

When considered collectively, the foundational theories in vocational psychology have provided a firm basis of scientific rigor and an increasingly expansive intellectual agenda for theory development. The new and emerging theories and models extend the traditional discourses to create frameworks with the potential to fully transform and revitalize vocational psychology, especially when integrated with some new ideas discussed later in this article. As reflected in this discussion, promising new theoretical ideas, which we believe are essential for maintaining the relevance of vocational psychology, are evident in analogous fields (e.g., occupational sociology, postmodern thought, narrative psychology) and, increasingly, in non-Western contexts (e.g., Arulmani, 2019; Bakshi, 2014; Mkhize, 2012).

## Research

*Trends in vocational scholarship.* Several content analyses of career journals provide a window from which to assess past and current states of vocational research by assessing frequently researched topics and sample characteristics.

Common topics represented among these studies include career development, career interventions, career assessment, life span perspectives, and special populations (Buboltz, Ebberwein, Watkins, & Savickas, 1995; Buboltz & Savickas, 1994; Chaichanasakul et al., 2011; Garriott, Faris, Frazier, Nisle, & Galluzzo, 2017; Lee et al., 2017; Loveland, Buboltz, Schwartz, & Gibson, 2006; Nilsson, Flores, Berkel, Schale, Linnemeyer, & Summer, 2007; Sampson et al., 2014; Whiston et al., 2013). This research indicates that vocational behaviors (i.e., career choice) and career interventions are well-covered topics in vocational research. Sampson et al. (2014) noted recent research trends in the areas of constructivist theories; SCCT; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics occupations; social justice; career calling; socioeconomic status and/or social class; career life coaching; and public policy. Counseling psychologists have focused less on topics such as the impact of poverty, the complex relationships between care work and market work, or precarious work (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Richardson, 2012).

We have also studied the middle stages of the life span extensively. Prior analyses of publications have indicated that adult employees (19%) more commonly participated in research samples in the *Journal of Career Development* (Chaichanasakul et al., 2011), and college students (44%) were the most common participants in the *Journal of Career Assessment* (Whiston et al., 2013). The aforementioned finding is consistent with other studies covering multiple journals where undergraduate students, high school students, and adult workers were most often represented in multicultural research samples (28–35%, 27–31%, and 14–23%, respectively; Flores et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2017). Moreover, adult workers, high school students, and college students were sampled most often in international research samples (37%, 29%, and 19%, respectively; Nilsson et al., 2007). We know relatively less about children and youth, older adults, and retirees, reflecting the need for more coverage in vocational research on the early and later years of the life span.

Several reviews of vocational psychology research indicate that researchers in this field need to make significant strides to produce scholarship that represents the diverse communities in our society and across the globe. In comprehensive reviews of publications in four vocational journals (i.e., *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Journal of Career Assessment*, *The Career Development Quarterly*, and *Journal of Career Development*) from inception through 2015, a mere 7.4% of all publications within these journals focused on racial and/or ethnic minorities within the United States (Flores et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2017). Together, these two studies indicated that racial and/or ethnic minority career publications represented at least 10% of all publications in only 10 of the 46 years analyzed. The initial rise in career publications focused on racial and/or ethnic minority populations took place starting in

1991 (12.9% of publications) and peaked in 2006 (14.8% of publications). Publication patterns across the decades show an increasing trend from the 1990s to the 2000s (9% to 10.7%), and a decreasing trend from the 2000s to the first half of the 2010s (10.7% to 7.2%) in the proportion of racial and/or ethnic minority publications in the four selected career journals. Thus, as the proportion of people of color within the U.S. population is increasing, the collective share of vocational psychology research that is devoted to their career needs is decreasing in the journals within our field that inform practices and the development of career theories.

Scholars have traced other characteristics of research published in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *The Career Development Quarterly*, *Journal of Career Assessment*, and *Journal of Career Development*. In terms of publication of international career articles, Nilsson et al. (2007) found that 2.4% of all articles published in these journals from 1970 to 2004 were categorized as international articles. These authors also noted an increase in the number of international publications across decades. In the 11-year period following Nilsson et al.'s study, there was a significant increase in the proportion of international articles published across the same journals, representing almost one quarter (22.5%) of all publications (Garriott et al., 2017). By comparison, other multicultural research reflected in the four journals across the same 11-year period was as follows: 8.8% racial and/or ethnic minority (Lee et al., 2017), 11.1% gender, 8.1% age, 5.9% SES and/or social class, 2.1% religion, 1.7% immigration, and less than 1% each for ability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Garriott et al., 2017). Of course, other journals exist in many regions of the world for vocational psychology scholars, including the *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, *L'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle*, and the *International Journal of Educational and Vocational Guidance* (among others), which are vibrant outlets with a long history of seminal publications.

**Future directions for vocational research.** As indicated at the outset of this article, the nature of work has changed and is forecasted to continue to change in unpredictable ways due to globalization, technological advances, and decreasing labor force participation rates (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019). These trends have led to troubling concerns about a postwork society in which marketplace work may not be available to all who want and need to work (Lent, 2018; OECD, 2015). At the same time, U.S. society is becoming increasingly diverse, and we are part of an increasingly global community where countries are interdependent. It is important that vocational psychology scholarship reflects these developments in the nature of work and seeks to meet current and future social, economic, and psychological needs. The topics covered in

our research, the demographic makeup of the participants that comprise our samples, and the varied international contexts where our research is conducted must mirror both the United States and global communities. Psychologists in general, and counseling psychologists specifically, have consistently sought to respond to societal needs (Heppner, Casas, Carter, & Stone, 2000). To remain relevant, it is especially important that the field continue to take shape and be influenced by the society that we serve. The application of our research is further limited in its topical focus, as reflected in an ongoing emphasis on circumscribed life stages and sampling. These restrictions increasingly impact the utility and ability of our efforts to shape both best practices and policies to serve the full scope of the public's interests.

If research is used to develop theory and inform practice, we know relatively little about the work of individuals from marginalized groups in our society. Although there has been a rise in international research in the field, other multicultural aspects have been largely undervalued or underemphasized in vocational psychology scholarship in recent years. Garriott et al. (2017) speculated that these areas may be neglected in vocational journals because of difficulty accessing marginalized populations for research, researchers' biases, underrepresentation of diverse scholars with interests in these lines of work, or authors' tendency to seek other outlets for their research. Certainly, the proliferation of new journals in the field, particularly those in multicultural psychology, or the desire to publish work in open access journals, may steer multicultural career scholarship to outlets outside of the four journals that were examined in these studies. Collectively, these studies on the state of multicultural coverage of vocational psychology research point to the limited external validity of our scholarship and the inadequacy of our research to inform best practices in career counseling for a range of diverse cultural groups (Flores et al., 2006; Garriott et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017).

Expanding our sampling to include the full scope of people who work and want to work is clearly one way to improve our scholarship; however, scholars have highlighted that researchers must also improve how studies are conceptualized, suggesting that the field has relied too heavily on generalizability and group differences research approaches (Hall, Yip, & Zarate, 2016; Leong, Hartung, & Pearce, 2014). These scholars call for more studies that reflect multicultural approaches where human behaviors are understood from the perspective of the participants under investigation, and psychological constructs that are culture-specific are included in the study (Hall et al., 2016). Researchers have provided a tool, the cultural lens approach (Hardin, Robitschek, Flores, Navarro, & Ashton, 2014), to help scholars broaden their focus and enhance the cultural validity and specificity of empirical studies.



The cultural lens approach includes specific steps for the conceptualization of research studies from a cultural perspective, and these authors provide examples of applications of the cultural lens approach to research using common vocational theories (Hardin et al., 2014; Robitschek & Hardin, 2017). For instance, Hardin et al. (2014) challenged scholars to reflect on the definitions and assumptions of basic constructs in theory such as how the “person” is defined in Holland’s (1997) theory, and encourage scholars to expand this definition beyond the assessment of individual interests to generate culturally relevant constructs and research questions for the population of interest.

Work and work-related concerns are crucially connected to psychological health and well-being (Blustein, 2008; Fassinger, 2008; Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Swanson, 2012). However, work and psychosocial issues have historically been compartmentalized in psychology (Betz & Corning, 1993; Krumboltz, 1993), and vocational psychologists and counseling scholars have argued compellingly against the false boundary between career counseling and personal counseling, or career concerns and overall mental health (Blustein, 2006; Fouad, 2001; Lent, 2001). Still, much of vocational psychology research has largely reinforced this dichotomy by failing to focus on the integration of mental health and work to the extent that it could. We believe that more vocational research can assess the relation of environmental factors (workplace policies, organizational climate, experiences with racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, etc., in the workplace) to mental health. Another promising area for research is a focus on individuals who experience serious mental illness and other disabling conditions (Fabian, 2013). Promising new directions include exploratory studies that are identifying the ways in which individuals with disabling experiences understand and relate to their work lives (e.g., Dunn, Wewiorski, & Rogers, 2008; Millner et al., 2015). Researchers can also explore how both voluntary and involuntary work transitions (e.g., a new parent exiting the workforce to care for a baby; being employed in a job that is equivalent to one’s skills and qualifications, subsequently transitioning to unemployment) play a role in mental health (Fouad & Bynner, 2008).

To maintain our relevance as a field, we need to expand the coverage of topics that we investigate as well as diversify the samples that are the focus of our research. As professionals who are trained in assessment, we must continue to develop research tools to assess constructs tied to the new theories described in previous sections. Noteworthy advancements in vocational measurement include scales to assess decent work (Duffy et al., 2017), underemployment (Allan, Duffy, & Blustein, 2016), meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012), and career calling (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012; Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015).

## Practice

*Historical and recent practice trends.* Vocational theory and research are closely aligned with career counseling practice, and so, it should be of no surprise that like the other pillars of the profession, practice implications of vocational psychology tend to emphasize career choice and development interventions and to focus on change at the individual level. Work-based counseling occurs in a wide array of settings, including career counseling centers in educational institutions; nonprofit or government-sponsored employment services for adults in transitions; rehabilitation agencies (for individuals recovering from substance abuse and other disabling conditions); private practice by counselors, career coaches, and psychologists; and more limited services via online systems. Pope (2015) outlined three distinct periods of career interventions, starting with Parsons's (1909) model in the early 1900s where professionals helped youth increase knowledge of the self and occupations, and career decisions were based on a match between the two. Later, vocational practice was influenced by Super's (1957) work to include a developmental focus and to attend to the process of decision-making. More recently, constructivist career counseling practices are reflected in Savickas' (2012, 2019) life design interventions, wherein professionals work with clients to construct, deconstruct, reconstruct, and co-construct narratives to define future life paths in relation to the clients' careers.

Recent meta-analyses conducted on traditional career counseling interventions (i.e., group counseling, workshops, classes, group test interpretations, individual test interpretations, individual counseling, computer, computer plus counselor) indicated that interventions focusing on career choice outcomes such as vocational identity, career decidedness, and career decision self-efficacy, are reasonably effective (e.g., Brown et al., 2003; Whiston, Li, Mitts, & Wright, 2017). The most recent meta-analysis, performed on 57 studies conducted between 1996 and 2015, reported effect sizes ranging from 0.18 to 0.45 across seven career choice outcomes, with a mean effect of 0.35 across all of the outcomes (Whiston et al., 2017). The effect sizes across treatment modalities ranged from 0.77 for individual counseling ( $n = 2$  studies) to 0.07 for computer alone ( $n = 2$  studies). These findings are important to the field of vocational psychology, as research points to the positive impact of our career interventions for individuals; however, the impact that we can have as a field on society is limited by the narrow focus of interventions on career choice outcomes and on the individual. Moreover, most of these career choice intervention studies involved college students (50.0%), followed by high school students (19.6%), adults (16.1%), middle or junior high school students (10.7%), and mixed age

groups (3.6%), indicating that the majority of these interventions occur in postsecondary and secondary school settings.

Other meta-analyses of studies with samples of adult workers and adult job seekers have provided support for the effectiveness of work-based interventions and job search interventions. For instance, a meta-analysis of 38 studies on workplace stress management interventions indicated that these programs had medium-to-large effects on stress, anxiety, and mental health outcomes (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Another meta-analysis of 47 studies on employment interventions found that intervention participants were 2.67 times more likely to obtain a job than control group participants (Liu, Huang, & Wang, 2014). Importantly, employment interventions that included both skill development and motivation enhancement components were most effective. However, of the 85 articles included across both of these meta-analyses (Liu et al., 2014; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008), only seven were published in traditional journal outlets for counseling psychologists who focus on vocational issues: two in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (both published in the 1970s) and five in *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, suggesting that few counseling psychologists are involved in interventions aimed at adult job seekers and employees.

*Advancements and recommendations in practice.* Vocational psychology needs new practice models that reflect contemporary and expected societal changes, and that expand the focus of interventions outside of the career choice domain. Specifically, our field needs models that can inform practice in the areas of unemployment, precarious work, and decent work, and we need to design and evaluate the effectiveness of vocational interventions (both at the individual and systems levels) with unemployed and underemployed populations. One such framework that can guide both individual and system interventions that target unemployment and underemployment combines both emancipatory communitarian (Blustein et al., 2005; Hooley et al., 2018) and psychology of working (Blustein, 2006) perspectives (Blustein, Connors-Kellgren, Olle, & Diamonti, 2017; Blustein, Duffy, et al., 2019). This integrative framework takes a critical approach to analyzing systems that contribute to precarious work in society and theoretical perspectives that fail to adequately address these concerns. Blustein et al. (2017) reviewed unemployment policies at the national level, which encompassed unemployment insurance, one-stop career centers, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, and job creation programs; this review concluded that although these policies have resulted in some success for unemployed workers, they do not attend to the systemic issues that contribute to unemployment.

Another advancement in vocational psychology practice includes the strengths-based inclusive counseling for work (Owens, Flores, Kopperson, & Allan, 2019 [this issue]). What is notable about this contribution is the authors' efforts to link vocational practice to the strengths-based inclusive theory of work, a new vocational theory aimed at addressing a variety of work-oriented, well-being outcomes. In this innovative approach to practice, Owens, Allan, and Flores (2019) present a framework for career counseling practice that incorporates positive psychology interventions to help individuals achieve fulfilling work. The authors outlined interventions to enhance strength-based concepts such as hope, strengths, adaptability, and empowerment, which are hypothesized to be the key mechanisms through which individuals can attain fulfilling work. Research is needed to assess the effectiveness of this new approach to vocational practice.

Promising new directions in practice and advocacy are emerging in vocational psychology and related fields that focus on marginalized communities and facilitate a more expansive understanding of interventions above and beyond career choice and development issues. Research that has documented the academic and work barriers faced by immigrant students (Kantamneni, Dharmalingam, Tate, Perlman, Majmudar, & Shada, 2016; Kantamneni, Shada, Conley, Hellwege, Tate, & Wang, 2016; McWhirter, Ramos, & Medina, 2013) has informed vocational psychology advocacy efforts focused on dismantling structural barriers that prevent immigrant youth from pursuing educational and work opportunities. In addition, Allan, Duffy, and Collisson (2018) made a unique contribution to career counseling practice by focusing on meaningful work as an intervention outcome. These researchers found that a prosocial work intervention aimed at helping others enhanced the experience of meaningful work among college students and working adults. For more details on a broad range of vocational interventions that need to be empirically tested, readers are referred to the *APA Handbook of Career Intervention* (Hartung, Savickas, & Walsh, 2015), which includes chapters devoted to descriptions of interventions designed to enhance employment (Vuori & Price, 2015), work engagement (Bakker, 2015), work–family balance (Cinamon, 2015), calling (Dik & Duffy, 2015), and networking (Shortland, 2015). Other chapters address career interventions with specific groups traditionally excluded from practice discussions, including poor and working-class individuals (Blustein et al., 2015) and immigrant workers (Schultheiss & Davis, 2015). Notable examples of group-level intervention programs for middle and high school students (Ali, Brown, & Loh, 2017; Ali, Yang, Button, & McCoy, 2012; Kenny, Bower, Perry, Blustein, & Amtzis, 2004), survivors of interpersonal violence (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006), inmates reentering the workplace (Fitzgerald et al., 2013), and individuals transitioning from welfare to

work (Juntunen, Cavett, Clow, Rempel, Darrow, & Guilmino, 2006) should be emulated to lessen the burdens that a considerable segment of our population experiences in securing decent work.

Employment counseling and interventions aimed at improving the mental health of workers are crucial areas where vocational psychology practice can have an impact. However, this type of work is largely marginalized in vocational psychology theory, research, and practice or is credited to other professionals, such as industrial/organizational psychologists or vocational rehabilitation counselors. Vocational psychologists can be more involved in research to understand how work-based interventions help to enhance mental health functioning among workers (Kelloway, 2017). To remain relevant to the world of work today and to live up to our profession's origins in social justice advocacy, vocational psychologists must expand their traditional focus of intervention research with college and high school students to include adults. These interventions can incorporate effective practices in securing decent employment, reducing mental health symptoms, helping workers navigate competing demands for their time between work and home, and other positive work outcomes. For instance, Varghese's (2013) integrative model for vocational interventions with prison inmates, which focuses on the link between employment and recidivism, is an exemplar of how vocational psychologists can extend their practice to a marginalized group in our society.

These types of interventions, and others like those highlighted earlier, are not yet mainstream in the vocational psychology practice domain, which still focuses to a great extent on assessment and interventions at the individual level and traditional practices to promote career decision-making. Moving forward, vocational psychology practitioners need to (a) expand their focus from the individual level to group, organizational (Fouad & Bynner, 2008), and policy levels (Blustein, 2008, 2019; Fassinger, 2008; Fouad & Bynner, 2008); (b) incorporate mental health (Blustein, 2013; Richardson, 2019) and social justice (e.g., Ali et al., 2012; Kozan et al., 2017; Sultana, 2014) components; (c) expand the outcomes assessed to include nonwork-related benefits of vocational interventions; (d) broaden the targets of our interventions beyond college and high school students; and (e) collaborate with scholars and practitioners in related fields such as industrial/organizational psychology, social work, human resources, and management, to design comprehensive interventions that cover the broad range of issues that workers experience.

A foundation for a broader and more inclusive approach to practice can be found in the *APA Professional Practice Guidelines for Integrating the Role of Work and Career Into Psychological Practice* (APA, 2016). These guidelines, which were developed by a task force of the Society for Vocational Psychology, provide both the rationale and foundational knowledge that can

inform the work of psychologists whose clients present with work-related issues. The guidelines encompass an insightful perspective on the role of work in people's lives and identities, knowledge about how work influences psychological and physical health, the impact of work-related transitions across the life span, awareness of how social barriers and identities influence work, the intersection of work and other life roles, and an understanding of how economic and social factors influence a person's access to work and career trajectory. These guidelines provide a viable means of considering the knowledge and training that behavioral health service providers need to function effectively in delivering counseling and therapy to clients.

Another approach to career practice described by Hooley et al. (2018) suggests a radical approach to social justice within career guidance, arguing that careers and work are inextricably linked to social, political, and economic systems. As a consequence of these connections, Hooley et al. (2018) argued that it is impossible to develop theories and practices of career development without addressing these systems. In their view, career guidance and counseling developed in Western countries are tied to the neoliberal/free market economic perspectives in which profit is the ultimate goal. They argue that the idea of career currently constructed within career development practice reflects an individualistic process that is focused on helping people compete and gain advantages in their lives (Hooley et al., 2018). In this way, free market/capitalistic economic systems dictate that vocational psychologists' practice encourages people to solely act in their own interests, as this would ensure the effective functioning of a free market economy (Hooley et al., 2018). Thus, it is possible that when vocational psychologists focus solely on individual career development, practitioners and theorists are likely to miss the larger sociopolitical context that influences the work options, motivations, and work choices of groups that are marginalized in society and may risk perpetuating the victim blaming paradigm (Prilleltensky & Stead, 2013). According to Hooley et al. (2018), vocational psychologists too heavily focused on individual career paths miss the opportunity to understand and intervene with employment issues from community, neighborhood, or collectivistic perspectives situated within economic and political systems.

The Hooley et al. (2018) position concerning career guidance for social justice suggests that career practitioners must first understand how our theories and practices are embedded in the neoliberal/free market system in which profit maximization is the goal. In Hooley et al.'s view, it is incumbent upon career practitioners to help individuals understand the political and economic context in which they make work decisions, and to develop new political skills and grow community resources that serve to develop both individual as well as collective actions. This view of practice requires an emancipatory

view of career counseling in which part of the goal is to develop a sense of critical consciousness and collectivism in clients that would help them to feel more agentic in their own lives and optimally challenges unfair political and economic systems. Hooley et al. (2018) offer suggestions on how this radical approach to career guidance practice can challenge existing political and economic structures in a struggle for economic justice.

As counseling psychologists, we are well-trained in both mental health and work and career psychology as well as in multicultural and social justice perspectives, which collectively provide the core knowledge for building a practice model and culture that embraces work issues as legitimate and deeply felt aspects of human experience. The foundational knowledge exists in the practice community of counseling and career development providers. However, we believe that our field must do more to develop practice models that parallel the full scope of challenges that people face in their work lives and in connecting clients' work lives to other life domains.

### *Training Issues*

Despite notable trends in the integration of work and nonwork issues in theory, research, and practice, a stubborn level of bifurcation of vocational psychology and work and career counseling exists in the training of master's and doctoral students in counseling psychology. In the United States, the training of counseling psychology students (and our training of other allied mental health professionals such as mental health counselors and school counselors) to provide career or employment counseling remains marginalized in our programs. Career or employment counseling training is often carved out into one course and not integrated into other aspects of the training models (Fouad & Jackson, 2013; McIlveen, 2007). For over a decade, authors (e.g., Robitschek & DeBell, 2002) have been suggesting that part of the problem is that "career issues" are seen as separate from mental health issues. Career counseling is often taught as a specific type of counseling in which the ultimate goal is to help an individual make a career decision, whereas work-related issues in psychotherapy are often treated as personal stressors that are instigators of mental health issues such as anxiety or depression. As such, mental health symptoms are treated, but the work-related issues remain unresolved or are not given importance as major contributing factors to both a client's struggles and pathway to well-being and health (Juntunen, 2006). *Vocational overshadowing* is a term coined by Spengler, Blustein, and Strohmer (1990) to describe this process.

Tinsley (2001) suggested that the impetus for counseling psychology to marginalize career and vocational concerns, and a contributor to vocational overshadowing, was a shift that occurred in the 1970s toward ensuring

counseling psychologists would be eligible for third party payments from insurance vendors for their practice-based work. He argues that this shift refocused counseling psychology toward billable diagnoses and away from “normal” developmental issues such as career concerns and decisions. Robitschek and DeBell (2002) recommended that counseling psychology training programs incorporate work-related issues and personal counseling in order to recenter vocational psychology as a cornerstone of counseling psychology. Although recentering vocational concerns into personal counseling and psychotherapy is an important issue, Tinsley’s concern is worth noting. It has been over 40 years since counseling psychology’s shift toward billable hours, and current shifts in counseling psychology have increasingly cemented the profession in the health service model of psychology (APA, 2015). Counseling psychologists have expanded from a focus on vocational concerns and “normal” development to serve mental health issues more broadly, but have not effectively found a way to bridge foundational content areas into a health service approach. The aforementioned APA (2016) *Guidelines for Integrating the Role of Work and Career Into Psychological Practice* are an important first step, but more direction is needed in training models and programs to fully integrate work-based issues into the broad fabric of counseling training.

In our view, counseling psychology training in the United States needs to move away from compartmentalizing vocational psychology in a single course with a focus on teaching students about the career decision-making process, career inventories, and theoretical perspectives that describe career choice processes for those with a high degree of volition (Blustein, 2013). This singular focus on career choice and decision-making is problematic when considering the myriad of work-related issues that exist, and is ill-fitted to the needed broader focus that is increasingly required within health service provider psychology. Vocational psychology scholars (e.g., Juntunen, 2006; Peterson & Gonzalez, 2005) have argued that vocational psychology would be better served through an integration of work and vocational concerns imbedded within all aspects of counseling psychology training. Furthermore, it is important that vocational psychologists expand training students to encompass clients experiencing both career-decision making issues and broader work-related issues (e.g., unemployment, work stress, job loss, substance abuse and work, poverty and inequality). Blustein (2008) affirmed this integrative approach when he suggested that “The separation of work from other domains of life is not consistent with the lived experiences of people, whose lives do not conform to neat and tidy boundaries established by scholars to facilitate the study of human behavior” (p. 231).

Thus, a new paradigm for training students to practice career counseling and vocational psychology is needed. Prior calls have advocated for an integration



of work-related issues into psychotherapy (Blustein, 2006; Richardson, 2012, 2019), but an additional focus on incorporating mental health issues into career counseling could push vocational psychology training into mainstream psychological practice and even expand such practice. Within career counseling courses, students are trained to practice career counseling, often in isolation from other aspects of mental health. Students learn theories that explain the career development process but are often devoid of other aspects of individuals' lives and communities. This state of affairs continues despite the fact that considerable research has demonstrated the link between employment and mental as well as physical health, both for individuals and communities (Ali et al., 2013; Paul & Moser, 2009; Swanson, 2012). A paradigm shift could expand training to help students connect employment issues more directly with mental health issues and concerns.

Placing work, employment, and career issues within a mental health framework requires counseling psychologists to train students to think differently about the practice of career counseling, and indeed, about the underlying assumptions and goals of vocational psychology. Work issues touch most adults' lives and, when we broaden the scope of how we address these issues, psychologists can be more effective in helping individuals and communities with these concerns. Training students to integrate career and employment issues with mental health counseling requires viewing work or working as a domain of life that fundamentally affects access to self-determination, survival, and power (Blustein, 2006). The paradox that vocational psychologists face is that to effectively train students to be competent vocational psychologists, there is a need to unpack the artificial distinction between vocational psychology and other applied specialties in psychology. More broadly, there is also a need to focus on how work (or lack thereof) affects individuals and groups being served, whether that be in a career counseling setting or in a psychotherapy session (Juntunen, 2006). New theoretical paradigms such as psychology of working (Blustein, 2006; Duffy et al., 2016) can help reframe perspectives about vocational psychology and, in turn, influence training because it offers a broader framework that goes beyond career decision making to include a discussion of access to decent work as a fundamental human right. Perhaps one way to integrate a broadened focus is to rename career courses as Work Psychology instead of Career Counseling or Career Development. Through renaming the course, we can shift the focus from a specific type of counseling modality to an emphasis on learning about how access to decent work operates to enhance or hinder an individual's life. Topics could expand beyond career development issues and address how work is related to physiological and psychological health and well-being.

Furthermore, vocational psychologists might start to teach about work-related issues from a more systemic framework that educates students to intervene to help people find and maintain access to decent work. Providing opportunities for students to become more involved in multisystemic interventions can aid in their understanding of clients' work lives. In particular, ex-systemic interventions (e.g., public policy efforts) can be most useful for communities and clients (Ali, 2013; Blustein, 2008; Solberg & Ali, 2017a). These interventions include using research to support local and statewide policies that promote opportunities for decent work with sufficient wages and benefits for clients in local communities. Also, there are a multitude of systemic factors or contextual issues that make access to decent work difficult including discrimination, inadequate access to public transportation, geographic challenges, and the shifting economic landscape, that may serve to impede clients' access to work opportunities (Blustein, 2019; Solberg & Ali, 2017a).

### *Synthesis of Strengths and Growing Edges*

On the surface, the field of vocational psychology looks strong. The field has several high quality journals and scholars who are engaging in vibrant research programs. However, as outlined in previous sections, a critical review of the literature revealed significant problems. The field has been mired in a post-World War II timeframe, which has not kept up with radical changes at work, growing diversification of populations, increasing economic and class bifurcation, technological advances that have displaced many workers, and stagnating paradigms that dominate the field (Blustein, 2017; Flores, Navarro, & Ali, 2017). The focus on career choice and development, although offering a relevant agenda in the mid to late 20th century, functions more like an artificial boundary that reduces our impact and inhibits our capacity to grow and reach our potential for the 21st century (Solberg & Ali, 2017b). Additionally, the focus on the individual as the object of our attention may be very limiting (Ali et al., 2017; Arulmani, 2014; Flores et al., 2017; Leong & Pearce, 2014; Mkhize, 2012), given that access to gainful employment is largely a community issue that requires larger systemic solutions. The changing global economic landscape offers an opportunity for the field of vocational psychology to develop a new mission that can create more inclusive and expansive pillars of theory, research, practice, and training.

When considered collectively, the material presented thus far has provided a rationale and a clear foundation for a fundamental transformation of vocational psychology. This transformation would ensure that the talents and skills brought by professionals of the discipline are focused on the most pressing social and psychological work-based challenges currently and in the

future. In the sections that follow, we describe the transformative agenda that we believe is needed to enhance the impact of vocational psychology in the coming decades.

## **A New Mission for Vocational Psychology**

A new mission will require a focus on work and career expanding beyond the grand career narrative discourse that has defined the field since the post-World War II era. Building on the work of Blustein (2006), Richardson (1993), and many other scholars who have argued for a more inclusive path for our field (e.g., Fassinger, 2008; Fouad, 2007; Hooley et al., 2018; Juntunen, 2006; Sultana, 2014), this mission would focus on how work and career interface with other domains of life and human development. We propose expanding the impact of vocational psychology significantly by developing broader conceptual frameworks that link work to other life domains. Super (1980) clearly set the framework for this in his life-span, life-space model, but this broader view did not really shift the parameters of our field, in part due to the prevailing focus on the work lives of people with some degree of volition in their lives (Peterson & Gonzalez, 2005). Vocational psychology's new mission could then focus on individual and contextual factors in a way that simulates life itself. Currently, contextual factors are often viewed as secondary, when in reality they are often primary factors in determining the course of people's lives at work, as reflected in PWT (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2016; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Roberts, 2012). For example, as many developed countries shift away from product-driven economies to service-driven economies, access to work opportunities has shifted, leaving many adults unprepared for new work opportunities (Katz, 2010). In the following sections, we propose that the new mission should start with a focus on expanding theory, research, and community collaboration.

### *New Vistas for a New Mission*

As we reflected previously, the state of theoretical and conceptual advances in our field is in transition, which we believe is a positive development. The career choice and development theories are robust and continue to inform career counseling with an ever-expanding client population and with new advances, such as career self-management theory (Lent & Brown, 2013) and developmental systems theory (Vondracek et al., 2014). At the same time, new advances from PWT, CWR, and other emerging paradigms (Arulmani, 2019; Hooley et al., 2018; Owens, Allan, & Flores, 2019) are providing a

healthy challenge to the status quo of existing and emerging theories. The new mission of vocational psychology, we believe, requires a bold new approach to establishing the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of vocational psychology; next, we review some of the more compelling directions that have a clear potential to inform needed advances in our field.

Incorporating multidisciplinary literature would be useful to a new mission of vocational psychology and can enhance contextualized theories such as CWR and PWT. We realize that calls for multidisciplinary work abound in articles such as this one, and that the success of such calls is modest, at best. However, gains being made in our field, as exemplified by PWT and related movements on decent work and precarious work, do reflect an infusion of ideas from outside the realm of usual influences. Building on these initiatives, we propose that research and conceptual advances from economics (e.g., Katz, 2010) and sociology (e.g., Kallenberg, 2009; Quane, Wilson, & Hwang, 2015) can expand the focus of this new mission and provide a macrolevel understanding of the issues facing today's workers. Katz, an economist from Harvard, testified before the United States Congress in 2011 and described both the economic and psychological consequences of the loss of manufacturing jobs. He suggested that United States workers, in particular working class men, were unprepared for the rapidly changing economic landscape that resulted in a shift from a product-driven economy to a service-driven economy (Katz, 2010). Duffy et al.'s (2016) proposition that economic conditions moderate access to decent work would be especially important to investigate for working class individuals in the United States in light of Katz's arguments. Furthermore, sociologists such as Quane et al. (2015) described the importance of increased efforts for more uniformity in the mission of schools, social service agencies, and workforce development centers to assist those individuals in inner cities, especially Black men, who face multiple social and economic barriers to working. Research from vocational psychologists that investigates access to decent work for Black men in urban communities could add needed evidence to the argument for a more coordinated mission of government institutions. From these examples, we can see that economists and sociologists have been sounding the alarm for some time concerning a crisis of growing inequality and lack of job opportunity, and they provide a larger macrolevel understanding of the concerns and issues of different communities that vocational psychology can incorporate within a new mission.

Another promising theoretical movement that reflects interdisciplinary thinking is scholarship on the impact of poverty, writ large, on work and well-being. One particularly compelling line of work in this area is found in human development economics, and particularly the capabilities approach (e.g.,

Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999), which has been used to explore a full range of macrolevel and psychological factors associated with progress in moving out of poverty as well as finding meaning in life and in work. According to Nussbaum, the capabilities approach is “closely allied with the international human rights movement. . .including political and civil rights. . .and economic and social rights” (pp. 62–63). Recent applications of this work by Poulsen, Skovhus, and Thomsen (2018) and Robertson (2015) offer some guidance on how human development economics theories and ideas can be used to enlighten the conceptual foundations of vocational psychology. In these analyses, a capabilities approach provides a set of conceptual frameworks that is useful in identifying how individual agency can be mobilized to foster a full deployment of an individual’s capabilities. Consistent with many context-based theories in vocational psychology, the capabilities approach also is useful for identifying the role of existing institutions and economic structures in facilitating or constraining the attainment of an individual’s agentic actions (cf. Bimrose, 2019; Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019).

The role of neighborhood and community characteristics has been somewhat neglected within vocational psychology, but studied among geographers and social workers. When these issues are examined in vocational psychology, they are mostly tied to individual identity aspects of community. As noted previously, vocational psychology research studies and literature have focused primarily on factors such as sexism, racism, and classism endorsed by individuals as influencing their career outcomes (e.g., career self-efficacy, career satisfaction), and these are typically measured by self-reporting of experiences with these forms of discrimination. However, job losses and economic downturns are typically experiences that impact neighborhoods and communities, not just individuals (Wilson, 2017). To better understand community issues in career and employment, vocational psychologists could examine outcomes at the community level and utilize scholarly advancements from other disciplines (Ali et al., 2017).

For example, the community loss indicator (Abramovitz & Albrecht, 2013), developed through a collaboration between social work investigators, computational scholars, and theoretical geography researchers, is a social indicator focused on the role of place as a source of stress in a given neighborhood or community. The index was developed to measure collective loss defined as “chronic exposure of neighborhood residents to multiple resource losses at that same time” (p. 667). Through an empirical process, the researchers examined community losses and identified the following components of the community loss indicator: rates of unemployment, untimely death of loved ones, incarceration, foster care placement, long term hospitalization, deportation, deployment, eviction, and foreclosure. Abramovitz and Albrecht

used the community loss indicator to investigate the characteristics of people who lived in high and low loss neighborhoods in New York City. Not surprisingly, they found that poor New York City residents were concentrated in high loss neighborhoods suggesting that a group's vulnerability to the impact of community loss is largely dependent on where they live (Abramovitz & Albrecht, 2013). The authors suggested that the community loss indicator can help researchers and social service agencies better understand the impact of loss on residents in a neighborhood dealing with the collective depletion of resources. Similarly, vocational researchers may use this tool to better understand how community loss operates to affect access to decent work opportunities as well as work and career trajectories. Because the community loss indicator takes into account both social and economic conditions, it can be used in conjunction with indicators of other economic and social stressors to understand work outcomes. This research could also have implications for designing community-based interventions and collaborating with multidisciplinary agencies.

New theories and the incorporation of interdisciplinary research that contextualizes work and work opportunities are crucial for vocational psychologists tasked with helping individuals find and maintain work as well as researching the meaning of work in people's lives. Although reading, digesting, and incorporating information from other disciplines into vocational psychology research and practice can be daunting, doing so can also expand the focus of the field and contribute to a broader understanding of work-related issues.

### ***Driving the New Mission: Developing a Transformative Agenda for Vocational Psychology***

To drive the mission of change for our field, counseling psychology needs to fully understand and internalize the nature of the shifting landscape of work in the lives of people and communities. In the material that follows, we summarize the very dramatic macrolevel shifts in the ways in which work is understood and distributed across the globe, which informs the inclusive agenda we have presented throughout this article. We conclude by setting forth a vision for what our field will look like in 20 years if the recommendations we are advancing in this article (which have been foreshadowed and echoed by others in our field) are adopted. By developing a purposeful vision to enact a socially-just direction for the future of vocational psychology, we hope to be able to keep our eyes on the prize of greater inclusion, impact, and inspiration for our field.

## *Future of Work and Sustainable Livelihoods*

Concerns about the future of work are evoking a major reconsideration of one of the fundamental tenets of work within the past few centuries. Specifically, scholars and policy analysts from all political perspectives are questioning the connection between sustainable livelihoods and work (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; OECD, 2015). Given the potential for technology to replace many aspects of work across the occupational world, serious attention has been devoted to examining alternative methods to support people. As discussed previously, economic systems may need to shift to provide a basic income that guarantees support for people who are no longer able to find employment in the marketplace (OECD, 2015). Blustein, Kenny, et al. (2019) explored this issue in depth and concluded that psychologists and other scholars interested in work and career will be needed to examine how people will manage their lives without work, and how society will change as a result of a major shift in how people construct their lives.

One particularly compelling way in which counseling and vocational psychologists can immediately contribute is by exploring how people will react to receiving basic income guarantees. Counseling psychologists can engage in this debate by conducting research on the psychological implications of separating economic well-being from work. For example, what is the effect of having some people not engaged in marketplace work, even if their sustenance needs are fulfilled, on their well-being and sense of purpose? In addition, what is the impact of growing levels of inequality that exist in many nations across the globe in a society where only some people are working? Moreover, how do culture and social class interface with this unprecedented shift in how people relate to work and sustainability? The research and theory that vocational psychologists have created in the past century is uniquely needed in exploring issues such as how adults will construct their identities without a stable occupational role and manage their time in a less structured life. A foundation for this sort of research may be gleaned from scholarship on how people react to retiring and from some pilot projects on basic income guarantees in various parts of the world.

## *Diversity, Culture, and Globalization*

Vocational psychology (and, indeed, psychology writ large) has been struggling to be truly inclusive with respect to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and other forms of diversity (Flores, 2013). We acknowledge that most career choice and development theorists have identified social barriers such as racism, inadequate resources, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of

marginalization, although there are considerable differences in how these obstacles are understood within each theory. Two notable examples include Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) SCCT and Super's (1957) classic text *The Psychology of Careers*. In both cases, these particular theorists clearly identified the complex ways through which social identities, the opportunity structure, and other barriers play roles in the career choice and development processes. Clearly, many vocational and counseling psychologists have challenged the hegemony of middle-class, European American discourses that have shaped our field (e.g., Helms & Cook, 1999; Leong et al., 2014). Indeed, within the past two decades, serious efforts have been advanced to develop more inclusive theories and models, including the psychology of working initiatives and other social justice-infused perspectives. These points notwithstanding, the focus on diversity and marginalization has often been an afterthought in many of our theories, research, and practices. We strongly advocate that vocational psychology follow the lead of the brave pioneers who have thoughtfully observed that work serves as one of the primary locations for social and economic oppression in adult life. (See Blustein [2017] for a historical review of the ongoing pushback against a middle-class status quo in vocational psychology extending back many decades.)

To develop ideas that will embrace differences and diversity, we propose that vocational psychologists explore how people construct meaning about work, career, and sustainable livelihoods within their particular cultural and historical contexts (Leong & Pearce, 2014). Using qualitative, discovery-oriented research can be powerfully informative to vocational psychologists as they seek to build ideas from the ground up, as opposed to the current practice of adapting Western models to cultural contexts by making modest tweaks around the edges. In addition, an explicit infusion of social constructionist ideas, which underscore the relative nature of knowledge and knowing (Stead, 2013), has considerable potential to provide a conceptual framework for the introduction of more relativistic ideas into our discourse. For example, in one particularly informative line of work, Ribeiro (2015) has mapped the experience of informal work in Brazil, providing a rich account about how people forge a livelihood in various forms of work that have not been adequately considered in our field. As the prevalence of precarious work increases, similar approaches will be needed to explore how work functions for people psychologically and economically as well as how cultural tenets inform and shape these narratives.

Other forms of social marginalization also need to be included in the foreground of vocational psychology discourse. For example, exposure to racism, poverty, oppression, and discrimination are powerful experiences that affect individuals and also constrain opportunities (Blustein, 2019; Flores, 2013; Helms & Cook, 1999). Furthermore, economic systems such as capitalism,



socialism, and communism also shape the work trajectories of communities and nations, and fundamentally define what type of work is both valued and available (Hooley et al., 2018; Sultana, 2014). Connected to these observations about social marginalization are shifting political contexts, which have created considerable stress for immigrants thus need to be considered as major factors in how people manage their work lives (Blustein, 2019; Hooley et al., 2018). Sexism and other forms of gender-based marginalization have been and continue to be profoundly important, affecting such outcomes as wages and salaries, exposure to sexual harassment, and stereotyping in the development and implementation of work-based plans (Fassinger, 2008; Richardson, 2012).

In addition, recent scholarship on intersectionality (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017) has provided clear direction on how to conceptualize diverse and marginalized identities. Specifically, this scholarship articulates the need to examine the unique ways in which social identities intersect, allowing for a deeper and richer analysis of the complex ways that marginalization affects psychological functioning and the welfare of communities. Blustein, Kenny, et al. (2019) have argued that a growth edge in understanding intersectionality lies in exploring the interactions between experiences related to marginalized social identities and work-related tasks and contexts, which reflects an important arena for research and policy advocacy.

We also advocate for the introduction (or in some cases, reintroduction) of more exploratory research methods, including qualitative approaches as well as quantitative approaches such as canonical correlation, exploratory structural equation modeling, and exploratory factor analysis. In addition, vocational psychology needs to have its methodological horizons expanded to include culturally sophisticated perspectives such as discourse analysis (e.g., Gee & Handford, 2013), which can be used productively to unpack the complex ways that culture influences how work is understood and how these understandings shape attitudes, behaviors, and individual and collective agency. Another promising method is community-based participatory action research, which has been used to explore power relationships and poverty within counseling psychology (Collins et al., 2018; Smith, 2010). In short, the epistemology of vocational psychology needs to be expanded radically, in our view, to fully make room for the diversity of people who are engaged in work or seek work across the globe.

## **Vocational Psychology: 20 Years On**

Following a tradition in vocational psychology in which goals serve to motivate and sustain plans and agency, we are adopting a goal-based perspective to help vocational psychologists envision and implement a future that is

inclusive, expansive, and impactful. By articulating a clear sense of how vocational psychology can transform and grow, we hope to inspire readers to develop clear pathways for themselves and their colleagues that will help to make substantial changes in our agenda for the next few decades. In this final part of our contribution, we envision vocational psychology in 20 years, encompassing the contexts, methods, and agendas that we hope will characterize our specialty in the coming decades. The premise that underlies this section is that vocational psychologists are indeed successful in transforming the field to meet the expanding needs of individuals and communities as we enter a period of growing precariousness and inequality.

### *Scope of Mission*

The combination of a workplace that is in a state of flux coupled with vast changes in the demographic and cultural attributes of communities will likely create the synergy for a contemporary and expanded mission for vocational psychology. We anticipate that vocational psychology will continue with its long-standing focus on career choice and development, with a growing emphasis on transitions between work and nonwork roles, and between survival and self-determination jobs. However, vocational psychology optimally will have embraced a broader and more inclusive vision, encompassing the following contexts and concerns:

1. **The impact of precarious work on psychosocial well-being.** Within 20 years, the nature of work in many parts of the globe will be characterized by an overriding sense of precariousness. Vocational psychology is beginning to examine precariousness (Blustein, 2019; Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Lent, 2018), and within the next two decades, we hope that the study of the nature and influence of precarious work will intensify, with sophisticated research identifying its overt and covert impacts on individual and community well-being.
2. **The interface of work and mental and physical health.** As reflected throughout this article, we envision vocational psychology fully connecting with its counseling psychology roots and with the broader mental health and psychotherapy communities in developing research, practice modalities, and training that clearly and thoughtfully integrate work and mental health. This will be manifested in the development of integrative theories, an expanded training portfolio, and research that explicates the link between diverse marketplace working contexts, caregiving work (or personal care work, as discussed by Richardson, 1993, 2012), and mental health.

3. **A fully realized global vocational psychology.** Vocational psychology has long suffered from a rather insular Western focus, which has served to underscore a parallel emphasis on career choice and development issues. As reflected in the literature currently, many new ideas are emerging from outside of the West, with particularly exciting perspectives coming from the Global South and other regions of the world (e.g., Arulmani, 2019; Bakshi, 2014; Mkhize, 2012; Ribeiro, 2015; Sultana, 2014). In 20 years, we anticipate that the nascent collaboration taking place across countries and regions of the world will become the norm, leading to progress in developing ideas and interventions that embrace all who work and who want to work.
4. **Exploring the social location of working in all of its complexity and diversity.** Projections about the marketplace for work in the next two decades are complex; however, a clear concern is that access to work will become even more competitive and that the divide between the “haves” and “have-nots” will expand. Twenty-years on, marginalization may become far more entrenched as people feel less secure at work and struggle to make meaning of their precariousness. Assuming that vocational and counseling psychologists heed the concerns that we (and others) are discussing, we anticipate that serious attempts to identify the sources and consequences of oppressive practices will become an integral part of our mission. In addition, infusing evidence-based practices developed to reduce and eradicate discrimination and harassment in the workplace optimally will become a central agenda for vocational psychology.
5. **The development of forms of agentic action such as critical consciousness as integral parts of career development education and work-based counseling.** Providing work-based counseling services, consultation, and psychoeducational interventions will continue to be a central part of vocational psychology’s mission. We anticipate that research on sources of agentic action including, but not limited to, critical consciousness, will be a central part of vocational psychology’s mission. If the projections about decreasing stability in marketplace work options are accurate, we believe that our emerging skills in promoting critical consciousness will become far more important, yielding a sea change in how we understand and implement career and work-based counseling. In addition, we anticipate that other forms of agentic action (Lent & Brown, 2013; Richardson, 2012) will be identified (e.g., proactive engagement, assertiveness, cooperative planning), which will optimally lead to interventions that will mobilize people to advocate for themselves, their families, and their communities.

## *Theoretical Frameworks*

Currently, the field of vocational psychology is undergoing a transition in its theoretical foci. Specifically, vocational psychologists are expanding the field's focus beyond career choice and development. As reflected in such new innovations as Richardson's (2012) CWR contribution and PWT (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Duffy et al., 2016), vocational psychology theorists are now embracing new ideas and a broadened vision. We anticipate that in 20 years, continued innovations will be evident that build on several important theoretical currents. We envision that our colleagues will continue this trend as the world of work requires far more elaborate thinking about contextual and macrolevel factors. Perhaps the most relevant new theories in 20 years will be developed by multidisciplinary as well as international teams that include relevant ideas from sociology, economics, and psychology in constructing models and paradigms that can explicate a very relativistic set of circumstances about work and human behavior.

A second trend that is already evident is the expansion of how we understand work-related behaviors and experiences, as reflected by an expansion of our focus beyond such outcomes as job satisfaction, choice congruence, and career decidedness. In recent years, well-being and agency have emerged as outcomes of interest (Duffy et al., 2016; Lent & Brown, 2013; Richardson, 2012), which has provided a broader perspective for theory development. Future theorists ideally will examine such outcomes as meaning and purpose within both marketplace and caregiving contexts, as well as the development of critical consciousness and advocacy, which will be critical in fostering individual change and collective action. In addition, researchers will ideally examine how people manage their time without the structure of traditional work, thereby engendering a host of new potential theories about how people navigate work, nonwork, and other activities that we still may not be able to predict at this point.

We also anticipate that new intervention theories will be developed to fully and thoughtfully integrate issues related to both work-based and mental health concerns. We envision that these theories will inform interventions designed to promote adaptive transitions in and out of the marketplace and caregiving contexts. Vocational psychologists have the capacity and the ideas to contribute to major revisions in the major theoretical frameworks in psychotherapy (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, existential/humanistic, and psychodynamic/relational models), which need to explicitly infuse work as a substantive life context that is integral to psychological functioning. Here again, we believe that minor tweaks around the edges of these theories may be insufficient. Optimally, revisions of these theoretical frameworks can be

undertaken, ideally with the input of counseling and vocational psychology scholars and practitioners. Some specific ideas that may be fleshed out in 20 years include a systematic integration of SCCT with cognitive-behavioral theory to develop a focused, goal-oriented integrative theory and practice modality that dignifies work and nonwork roles and responsibilities. Another idea is a synthesis of the relational theories of careers and working (Blustein, 2011; Flum, 2015; Kenny, Blustein, & Meerkins, 2018; Schultheiss, 2003; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015) with relational-cultural theory (Jordan, 2010) and other relational psychodynamic perspectives (e.g., Mitchell, 2003). In addition, inclusive psychotherapy theories that build on a broader appreciation of diverse life roles (as described in Super's [1980] classic work) may help to revitalize mental health practice away from an intrapsychic and intrapersonal focus that, in our view, limits its impact and risks overemphasizing individual dispositions and conflicts (cf. Richardson, 2019). These new theories may be created around a deep appreciation of the role of work, which is likely to evoke far more mental health problems in the coming years as work becomes even less stable and secure.

### *Training*

The ways in which vocational psychologists will contribute to training and graduate education in 20 years will optimally be more inclusive and will hopefully stretch beyond counseling and counseling psychology. As it currently stands, professionals across many regions of the world who are trained to deliver work-based and career services are primarily located in the counseling world (including master's-level counselors and counseling psychologists) as well as career coaches who may or may not have a background in counseling and mental health. If the anxieties about the future of work are indeed accurate, the needs of people in 20 years will likely include work-related issues throughout the life span and across diverse cultures and settings. At that point, the notion of having work-related services delivered by a modest number of specialists will likely not be viable given the needs people will face in navigating a world of precariousness.

From a practice standpoint, mental health providers will need to have skills in work-based interventions that will link seamlessly to mental health concerns. In order for these integrative services to be fully available, vocational psychologists will likely become involved in training mental health providers such as clinical psychologists and social workers in work-related counseling and therapy. As such, training opportunities for the expanding field of vocational psychology in 20 years will exist not just in counseling but in the full range of mental health service fields. In this effort, counseling and

vocational psychologists will need to partner with colleagues in allied specialties in the next decade or so to build bridges, create training models, courses, and continuing education programs. Other collaborative ventures will be needed to reduce the insularity of vocational psychology and to enhance the intellectual influences in the psychological study of working. In our view, this sort of growth can optimally take place when vocational psychologists step outside of their comfort zones, and seek to inform and be informed by others who are also tasked with training the next generation of helping professionals.

### *Public Policy*

Vocational psychology has a history of connecting to various public policy contexts and settings over the past century. For the most part, the policy-based input has been circumscribed to the worlds of education and training, with a particular focus on informing career development education, disability policies, labor policy, and the world of assessment. Assuming that vocational and counseling psychologists heed the call outlined in this article and in similar contributions (e.g., Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019; Hirschi, 2018; Hooley et al., 2018; Lent, 2018), we envision a broader and deeper role for our field in various public policy spaces and contexts.

*Traditional policy contexts.* Traditional policy arenas will continue to need our input; however, in 20 years, policy needs may be different and our contributions will similarly change. Within the world of career development education, one prominent challenge will be in informing the narrative that connects school to work, which drives some of the ways in which students are motivated to perform at their best in school. If student effort is no longer clearly linked to more volition in one's future work life, the entire enterprise of career development education may need to be revisited. In addition, the modal approach of developing curriculum to meet current and anticipated marketplace needs (such as in the current science, technology, engineering, and mathematics career development movement) may need to be revisited if many of these fields are automated or infused with artificial intelligence. Given the changes taking place now and expected to increase in the coming decades, it is hard to imagine that career and school counseling in kindergarten through 12th grade contexts will have similar goals and methods in 20 years. The transforming nature of school counseling will require thoughtful input from vocational psychologists as will the entire enterprise of training and education. The new theories, research trajectories, and expanded visions that we have outlined in this article will help to inform the policy consultation

and advice that we can offer educators and counselors who are exploring ways of developing a sustainable education policy in light of radical changes in the workplace.

In the realm of labor policy, vocational psychologists have had an impact on the design and delivery of career services for adults who are transitioning in and out of the labor market. The career development field, for example, has been actively engaged in providing training for employment counselors and career coaches who work for one-stop career centers in the United States and other agencies that support adults in work-based transitions. Similar efforts have been used in other regions of the globe that have been seeking out best practices for unemployed and precariously employed adults. Optimally, vocational psychologists will develop new counseling models to help people become critically conscious agents in their own lives and in their communities. Ideally, these new models will be disseminated to employment services around the globe. In addition, we envision that vocational psychologists will be able to consult on an issue of fundamental importance currently and in 20 years: What is gained and lost by not providing people with work to fulfill their need for sustainable livelihoods? Even if people are able to support themselves via basic income allocations, the question of how they develop a purposeful life will likely be central in the public discourse. We therefore envision vocational psychologists advising policy makers about the optimal services that ought to be provided for people seeking help in navigating their work lives. At the same time, we believe that our colleagues will be able to advise policy experts, government officials, and other thought leaders on the importance of work (or similar types of tasks and activities) in attaining a life of meaning and overall well-being.

Although working within traditional contexts is critical to advancing a social justice perspective on work, it will also be essential for vocational psychologists to work directly with their local communities in trusted public spaces. For example, as the United States federal and state governments become less reliable and more unpredictable in funding of unemployment resources, communities are turning to their local public libraries as places to find help with finding work (Ali & Brown, 2017; Real, Bertot, & Jaeger, 2014). Vocational psychology partnerships with local community leaders and city councils could help to enhance such services at libraries, especially in rural and more remote areas where access to services is more difficult to obtain. Although libraries are often seen as very traditional spaces, they are on the forefront of social justice movements in many local communities.

*An expanded vision of policy contexts.* A clear objective of this article is to inform and inspire readers to enhance the impact of vocational psychology

outside of the traditional foci and contexts that have defined the field for a century. One important way of expanding our impact is to consider a broader array of public policy spaces in which to contribute in the coming years. Some of these efforts have been manifested over the past few decades with considerable input into policy debates taking place in various regions of the world, with particularly exemplary policy consultation in the United Kingdom over the past few decades (e.g., Hooley & Barham, 2015). We envision vocational psychology continuing to connect to government agencies, which has been our tradition over the years. However, as governments become less stable and predictable, we propose that vocational psychologists reach out to multinational organizations such as the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, and the OECD, which have been very involved in thoughtful considerations about the future of work. A recent report prepared for the International Labour Organization by Blustein, Masdonati, and Rossier (2017) provides an example of how psychologists can engage with public policy bodies that have a broad and expansive agenda with respect to work issues.

We also envision vocational psychologists developing their own public policy initiatives, optimally enhanced by relationships with professional counseling and psychology as well as multinational organizations. The issues that are central to vocational psychology will very likely be key challenges in 20 years, which will dominate the public discourse as individuals and communities seek ways to develop livelihoods that offer both dignity and opportunity. Continuing collaborations with such organizations as the National Career Development Association, the Society for Vocational Psychology, and the International Association of Vocational and Educational Guidance will provide a bit more strength in numbers for policy statements and advice. Thoughtful use of social media will likely enhance the impact of policy positions, as will attempts to inform political, social, and economic debates with a focus on the importance of human rights in the workplace (Blustein, Kenny, et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Our collaboration in this contribution has been a unique opportunity to think deeply and broadly about our field, encompassing its current status and our vision for a more expansive future. As we have argued, vocational psychology is at a particularly challenging choice point: We can maintain the current focus and leave the broader debates about the future of work to other social scientists and practitioners, or we can enhance our vision and expand our scope. We argue that our choice is clear—if we are going to continue to embrace our broad, developmental, and social justice vision, we have to ramp



up our scholarship and broaden our focus to fully join the debates about the role of work in people's lives. We hope that the vision outlined in this article serves as a foundation for a sustained debate and conversation about the future of our field. We welcome the input from the entire community of interested scholars, practitioners, and activists who wish to join with us on a journey of transforming the field of vocational psychology. The stakes are very high, but we believe that our specialty can meet these challenges with creative ideas, compassion for those on the margins, and ongoing contributions to enhancing opportunities for all who wish to have a life of dignity, decency, and meaning at work.

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