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## Doing Human Science Research: A Reply to Van Hesteren

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Van Hesteren (1986) has added his voice to others in questioning the exclusive use of traditional research methods in counselling psychology and in proposing a "human science" perspective as an alternative. Early in his paper, he remarks that it is essential to one's understanding of the method to engage oneself actively in it. Perhaps a useful way to respond to this article is to illustrate how my co-researchers and I have used this perspective in our research and writing in the career development domain. I will address two issues that contrast our work with Van Hesteren's position. The first contrast relates to Van Hesteren's focus on one of three alternative methodologies proposed by Polkinghorne (1984), the phenomenological-hermeneutic. The second contrast addresses the link that is suggested between the phenomenological and the hermeneutical.

### *Three Alternative Methodologies*

Polkinghorne (1984) proposed three methodologies in addition to traditional methodologies for use in counselling psychology research: systemic research, methods for understanding goal-directed human action, and hermeneutic approaches. Van Hesteren (1986) addresses one of these alternative methods which he relabels the phenomenological-hermeneutic. In our work in career development, we (Collin & Young, in press; Young, 1984a, 1984b; Young & Friesen, 1986) have attempted to make the case that all three methodologies contribute significantly to our understanding of this area and, indeed, are inter-related.

Briefly, our research thrust in career development represents an ecological/systems perspective in which a multiplicity of variables can be accounted for. Dimensions such as the reciprocal interaction between persons and systems of which they are a part, the extent to which individual producers of their own development, and the specific cultural and historical environments in which careers develop can be addressed.

The subjective experience of these dimensions is represented by the story one can tell about one's past and the story (plan) one has for the future—career as narrative. Gergen and Gergen (1984) point out that narrative is capable of generating directionality among a series of otherwise isolated events. The narrative actually structures events in a

way that they demonstrate a connectedness and a sense of movement through time. Thus the second alternative research strategy, methods for understanding goal directed human action, is warranted in the career domain.

Finally, hermeneutics allows for the interpretation of texts, actions, or narratives. The reasons for interpretative study are to account for the detail that might have been missed, the context in which the actions took place, or the sequence of events that form patterns. All three reasons can be used to justify the hermeneutical study of career.

The point I want to make is that the three alternative methodologies need to be taken into account when researching complex human phenomena. We have argued that an ecological/systems perspective is capable of incorporating these methodologies.

#### PHENOMENOLOGY AND/OR HERMENEUTICS?

Van Hesteren (1986) has chosen to link two terms, *phenomenology* and *hermeneutics*, in his discussion of this alternative approach. My co-researchers and I (Collin & Young, in press; Young, 1984a, 1984b) have emphasized the term *hermeneutics*.

As Kvale (1983) pointed out, despite their similarities, phenomenology and hermeneutics come from quite different philosophical sources. Originally, Husserl (1931) proposed a presuppositionless approach to phenomenological data. That is to say, the researcher approaches the data without any framework or presuppositions to interpret them. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, suggests presuppositions.

Presuppositions represent the framework that the researcher uses to resymbolize the phenomena. Sullivan (1984) suggests that without resymbolization, "there would be no need for systemic interpretation of the social, scientific kind. Psychologists would simply be like Job's comforters, reiterating the obvious or making things worse" (p. 115).

One may refer to the study by Borgen and Amundson (1984) to illustrate the difference in emphasis. While the authors label this research as phenomenological, it has distinctly hermeneutical characteristics about it. The lived experience of unemployed persons who recount the experience of their unemployment is the subject matter of this study. At the beginning of their report, the authors provide several theoretical frameworks—Maslow, Herzberg, Toffler, and Kubler-Ross—which they subsequently use to interpret their data.

If we want this human science perspective to flourish and actually be used in counselling research, we have to be able to suggest as clearly as possible what it is, what it adds to social and scientific understanding, and have specific means by which we can judge the adequacy of interpretation. In the career field, Sullivan (1984) cites Willis' (1977) English study on how working class boys get working class jobs as a

classic interpretative work because it meets the four criteria Sullivan suggests for adequate interpretation.

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