

**Eclecticism, Counseling and Accommodation Design
for Persons with Cognitive Disabilities**

W. David Hoisington, M.A., M.Ed., ABD
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A person with a cognitive disability is defined as an individual who has difficulty with sensory integration, attention, memory, language processing, problem solving and/or social skills (physical disabilities are not included as part of this population except in how they directly interface with cognitive functioning). The difficulties encountered when trying to establish universal criteria for legally defining “cognitive disability” are not discussed in this article. By law persons with cognitive disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations to assist in their schooling and employment. An example of such an accommodation would be the use of a computerized calendar book for a person with a memory dysfunction. This paper examines the practice of accommodation design, the role of the counselor in such design, and the influence of eclecticism on both.

Effective rehabilitation counseling has been described as being eclectic (Thomas, Thoreson, Butler, & Parker, 1992), using multiple theoretical orientations directed at helping persons with cognitive disabilities understand the nature of their disability, and helping them achieve the highest possible degree of independence. Such an eclectic approach is supposed to allow the counselor greater freedom in finding the best match between treatment technique and individual need. Brabeck and Welfel (1985) reported that in the early 1980s approximately half of the counselors surveyed said they were eclectic. By the early 1990s this percentage had risen further, with most therapists calling themselves eclectic (Hill and Corbett, 1993). This trend in eclecticism may be in part due to the eclectic style of counselor training which presents multiple theoretical positions, both in psychotherapy and in career development (Brabeck & Welfel, 1985). It may also

represent a natural shift in the domain of counseling from one of theoretical divergence to one of theoretical convergence.

Thomas Kuhn (1970), in his frequently cited study of how scientific domains change, described the development of a domain as evolving through a cyclic “revolution” that includes the following sequence: new paradigm -- theory divergence -- theory convergence -- new paradigm. Counselors shifting from theory specialization to eclecticism may be foreshadowing the domain’s movement toward convergence. There may be a common understanding reflected in the desire to be “eclectic” which is in unison with the domain’s shift toward convergence. This common understanding of eclecticism may guide the counselor’s behavior, acting like a theoretical foundation, despite the fact that eclecticism can not be viewed as a theory.

Kazdin (1992) discusses the relation of theory to the construct validity associated with a counselor’s choice of treatment:

“...construct validity threats are not easily enumerated...[because] the threats have to do with interpretation of the reason for the outcome in an experiment [or treatment]. Thus theoretical views and substantive knowledge about how experimental manipulation [our treatment choice] works or the mechanisms responsible for change are also at issue, apart from the experimental confounds.” (p. 47).

Brinberg and McGrath (1982) described theory as an overlap between the conceptual domain of ideas and the substantive domain of real world phenomena.

Kazdin (1992) described theory as “...a conceptualization of the phenomena of interest [which]...may specify the relations of various constructs to each other.” (p.

66). Theory provides the counselor with a detailed conceptual map describing patterns and relationships within a set of real world phenomena. “When we refer to a ‘theoretical orientation’ or ‘theoretical perspective’ we are talking about a way of looking at the world, the assumptions people have about what is important, and what makes the world work. Whether stated or not, all research is guided by some theoretical orientation.” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 33).

“A scientific theory is, in reality, a way of organizing what is known about some phenomena to generate a set of inter-related, plausible, and above all, refutable propositions about what is unknown” (Blocher 1987, p. 66). Theories should (a) be explicit about rules and theorems, (b) be consistent and clear on all terms, and (c) contain a description of the limitations (Sharf, 1992). The problem with the viewpoint of eclecticism is that it has no clearly stated theoretical position. The universally understood meaning of eclecticism may act to guide one’s decision making but it is not a theoretical position. In both counseling “...it is only on the basis of a theory that one can decide on an appropriate hypothesis to be tested [or treatment to be used]...” (Serlin, 1987, p. 365). Eclectic counselors, by definition, are always making choices about treatment. Without a theoretical foundation, hypothesis testing by eclectic counselors may become subject to the bias of selective memory and expectancy (Strohmer, Shivy, & Chido, 1990).

A counselor’s theoretical position has an impact on the hypotheses tested in the field, on the way that counseling is practiced (Pozanski and McLennan, 1995). But when counselors are surveyed on their theoretical stance the majority “...of

practitioners consider ‘something other than the above’ to describe their orientation. The concept of theoretical orientation as the field has known it would seem to be problematic.” (Arnkoff, 1995, p. 423). With eclecticism used as the viewpoint underlying counselors’ decision-making the validity of this eclectic decision-making process needs to be evaluated.

In the theoretical vacuum created by eclecticism Lazarus and Beutler (1993) have stepped in to eloquently state their case for a movement toward technical eclecticism. The authors describe technical eclecticism as combining therapeutic techniques from various psychotherapeutic schools and then systematically matching these techniques to specific client profiles producing a practical approach to counseling. In this age of managed care, within a domain searching for convergence, the idea that we could create a broad list of counseling techniques, a list of client profiles, and then establish matches between the two, is a powerfully appealing approach. It follows the medical model and in doing so it is an approach that is bound to garner support and be applied in the field. It is not dissimilar from Holland’s (1985) trait and factor approach to career counseling and there are serious question as to whether such an approach can be reasonably applied to persons with cognitive disabilities.

Holland’s approach is widely used in the field (Weinrach & Srebalus, 1990) but it may not be commensurate with the universally understood meaning of career development (Salomone, 1997, personal communication). Technical eclecticism may become widely used in the field but it is not commensurate with the

universally-understood meaning of eclecticism. Both the understood meaning of eclecticism and the understood meaning of career development probably reflect the counselor's search for a new bridging paradigm (Barclay, 1983, Newton & Caple, 1985, Osipow, 1990, Staatz, 1991) in a domain hungry for theoretical convergence.

“Most of our so-called counseling theories are not really theories at all in any precise or scientifically relevant sense.”(Blocher, 1987, p. 66). O’Hare (1987) stated that “...career development models have not moved beyond the descriptive and predictive espoused level to operate at the theories-in-use level. The result is that practitioners interpret and improvise...” (p. 303). “Since no theory of career counseling can be judged to be fully adequate at this time, the counselor who is able to conceptualize career problems, from diverse theoretical systems may be better able to develop different treatments.” (Brooks, 1990, p. 456). This eclectic approach to career development theory application is used by the counselor facing the task of providing rehabilitation services to persons with cognitive disabilities.

Career Development for Persons with Cognitive Disabilities

Rubin, Matkin, Ashley, Beardsley, May, Onstott, and Puckett, 1984, listed the cross-site, or universal, functions of a rehabilitation counselor as including case management, vocational counseling activities, and affective counseling.

Hershenson (1990) described the role of the rehabilitation counselor as follows:

“Simply put, the role of the rehabilitation counselor is to...assist the client: (a) to restore, replace or compensate for lost assets and

skills; (b) to reintegrate the self-image; (c) to reformulate goals; and (d) to restructure the environment so that it facilitates, rather than impedes, coping and goal attainment.” (p. 275).

In this description it is implicit that the counselor understands clients’ “lost assets and skills”, “self-image”, “goals” and the clients’ relationship to the environment. The counselor uses paths of inquiry to come to this client-centered understanding (Hoisington, 2002, see www.healingrelationship.com). This client-centered understanding serves as a foundation for the counselor’s decision making processes applied to helping clients with their vocational development. Goldberg (1992) stated that there is “no universally agreed-upon model of vocational development of people with disabilities” (p. 61). In the absence of theoretical convergence, rehabilitation counselors apply their knowledge, within an eclectic framework, to interpret career development for people with cognitive disabilities.

In this eclectic process of career development counseling one of the counselor’s roles is assisting learners in formulating career development goals. Goldberg (1992) stated that persons with disabilities have career development aspirations similar to the general public -- they seek a sense of fulfillment that can be acquired from meaningful work. Hagner & Salomone (1989) describe career development as a series of choices made over time, which are often made for, instead of by, the person with a cognitive disability. The authors stated that rehabilitation counseling for this population should include “choice-facilitating career development strategies” (p. 154) available over a life-span that include ensuring a variety of job opportunities to choose from, job training and support

matched to client need, flexible wage and payment options matched to client need, and helping individuals to improve their career decision-making skills. These are sound program design recommendations but they do not address the issue of program delivery. With eclecticism as the field counselors decision-making foundation, how are these choice-facilitating career development strategies matched to clients with cognitive disabilities over the individual's life span?

Career development viewed over the life span is reflected in Super's (1990) stage development approach. Humes & Hohenshil (1985) stated that "with handicapped students, career education curricula need to be adapted to stage development rather than educational level if success is to be achieved because of the presence of delays, plateaus and discontinuities" (p. 339). But what guidelines do eclectic practitioners use to make these successful adaptations? For example: how can the steps of the exploration stage (crystallization, specification and implementation) be adapted to a person with a cognitive deficit? And can these adaptations also be modified to fit the dynamic interactions between person and environment?

"Super's theory has very different roots, however, from the developmental-contextual approach to career development, which is derived from the contributions of life-span human development and developmental psychology. The most unique feature of developmental contextualism that is derived from these roots is the concept of *dynamic interactions* in development..." (Vondracek & Schulenberg, 1986, p. 249).

Steenbarger, 1991, argues that stage-based theories "...possess many shortcomings when extended to counseling applications. In attempting to reduce

development to linear, hierarchical sequences, these theories fail to account for the interactional nature of change processes, and implicitly pathologize developmental diversity. (p. 288); ...a contextualist understanding of development is fueling important conceptual shifts within the field of counseling.” (p. 293). This shift is represented by recently published contextual, interactional, models of counseling (Dobren, 1994, Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1996, Waehler and Lenox, 1994). The apparent dichotomy between the “stage” view and the “contextual interactional” view of career development can be resolved with the development of a new bridging paradigm based on quantum logic (Bozarth, 1985, Miller-Tiedman & Tiedman, 1990), one that emphasizes the importance of relationships (Hoisington, 2002a,b, see www.healingrelationship.com). The bridging paradigm will need to be merged with models of mind and cognitive processing (see Hoisington, 2002a) if it is to represent a theoretical position of convergence that can be applied to counseling persons with cognitive disabilities.

Martin (1984) introduced the “cognitive mediational paradigm” which simply stated that “...both counselors and clients are cognitively active during counseling, and that this cognitive activity mediates between counseling process...and outcome...” (p. 558). Carraher and Buckley (1996) suggested that an individual’s level of cognitive complexity affected pay satisfaction. Cognitive ability is one of the most valid predictors of job performance (Hunter, 1986). Job performance and job satisfaction are both likely to be influenced by cognitive factors. The Theory of Work Adjustment considers job performance and job satisfaction in career development but the theory is based largely on the concept of reinforcement as the

key factor influencing vocational decision making (Lofquist & Dawis, 1975). Cognitive constructs, such as cognitive dissonance in vocational decision making (Thomas & Bruning, 1984), cognitive schemata (Barak, Librowsky & Shiloh, 1989), vocational schema (Neimeyer & Metzler, 1987), and the role of different types of memory (Cohen & Eichenbaum, 1993) (e.g., implicit versus procedural) are not considered in the Theory of Work Adjustment. Brown & Kayser (1982) modified the Theory of Work adjustment, creating the Theory of Educational Adjustment, in an effort to help participants with special needs. Although conceptually useful, the theory lacks enough cognitive explanatory detail to be applicable to persons with cognitive disabilities. A new foundation that merges the principles guiding eclectic decision making with the application of models of mind that contain explanatory detail is needed (see Hoisington, 2002a).

It seems reasonable that an understanding of cognitive constructs would be useful to the counselor working with people who have cognitive disabilities. Several authors have proposed cognitive approaches to counseling (Dansereau, Dees, & Simpson, 1994, Peterson, Sampson, & Reardon, 1991, Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, & Reardon, 1992). But these approaches lack the psychobiological and cognitive explanatory detail, with case examples, necessary to be of use to the rehabilitation counselor seeking specific information applicable to designing accommodations for persons with cognitive disabilities.

Similar to the cognitive counseling approach, but describing a sequence of decision-making steps instead of a sequence of cognitive processes, are the

approaches which emphasize career decision-making theory (Gati, 1986, Miller and Tiedman, 1990, Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1990, Tiedman and O'Hara, 1963). These models are based on the assumption that the counselor can use common sense teaching strategies, with the level of learner empowerment different for different models (Sharf, 1992), for training participants to understand and use a sequence of career decision making steps. Amundson (1995) stated that "to understand fully the career decision-making process requires not only an awareness of rational decision-making techniques, but also an appreciation of how people come to form perceptions..." (p. 11). Tannenbaum and Yuli (1992) emphasized that in developing training techniques we need to develop an understanding of how, when, and with whom to apply the training. Smith-Jentsch, Jentsch, Payne, and Salas (1996) stated, "...a first and critical step of the training process should be to create a perceived need for the training in the minds of the participants" (p. 115). If career decision-making theory is to be useful to counselors working with persons with cognitive disabilities then the approaches will need to be modified so that they address (a) how learners in this population form perceptions, (b) how the practitioner can decide when to apply which decision making models to the various types of cognitive disabilities, and (c) how can the models help to create a "perceived training need" in the learner's mind. In addition the issue of generalizability needs to be addressed (Martin, 1989). When using eclecticism, it is difficult to adapt decision-making models to the needs of people with cognitive disabilities because of absence of principles and guidelines directing eclectic decision-making.

Holland's (1985) book entitled "Making Vocational Choices" might lead one to conclude that he also discussed career decision-making theory, but his approach is more practical than theoretical. Holland (1985) and Lazarus and Beutler (1993) both offer to the counselor an appealing, practical, easy to use system that matches certain client profiles (or traits) to techniques (or factors). It is a system of matching predetermined categories and not a system describing decision-making theory. This user friendly, trait-factor, approach generates some questions:

- In its ease of use are the foundations of individuality being usurped for functionality? Is such an approach consistent with the hygiene-based foundation (Herr & Cramer, 1992) of counseling psychology?
- Can the categorization used in the matching process be successfully generalized to people with cognitive disabilities?
- Does this approach really match the understood meanings of eclecticism and career development in relation to the domain's shift toward convergence?

Super (1983), in discussing the trait-factor approach, stated "it assumes that the students or adults who are assessed are all sufficiently mature vocationally to have mature and stable traits" (p. 557). "The trait-factor approach, similar to Holland's theory in conception, explains little about vocational behavior and relies more on description than explanation" (Ossipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 313). Dobren, 1994, pointed out that "to describe vocational behavior as derived primarily from individual personality variation (as Roe and Holland do) ignores the influence of external variables." (p. 217); ...the major theories of vocational

behavior designed specifically for people with disabilities are limited by their tendency to focus on vocational adjustment, and by their omission of contextual variables.” (p. 219).

“Most of the theories, thus are clearly constructive, ranging from that of Holland, who identifies constructs that underlie vocational behavior, to that of Super, who postulates hypothetical constructs and processes, such as the self-concept and the interaction with situational events, to account for career behavior. In general, there seems to be little to choose from among the theories as to explanatory adequacy...” (Ossipow and Fitzgerald , 1996, p. 313).

Although the above mentioned career development theories have not been tailored, nor do they contain enough cognitive explanatory information, to suit the needs of people with cognitive disabilities there are some researchers who have built upon these theories and proposed models to address the population of persons with disabilities (Dobren, 1994, Goldberg, 1992, Hershenson, 1990, Hershenson & Szymanski, 1992, Szymanski and Hanley-Maxwell, 1996). These career development theories address some of the needs of people with disabilities using general conceptual approaches, but lack the detail to be both eclectic and specific to the needs of persons with cognitive disabilities.

Perhaps the purpose of career development theory can be viewed as providing a conceptual road map for practitioners to use when meeting the counseling needs of their clients. The changing needs of adults with cognitive disabilities in 1990’s include (a) an increased demand for autonomy, (b) more reliance on natural supports, (c) the improvement in design and delivery of adaptive services, and (d) an understanding of the deficit from a contextual-interactive view (Harper, 1996).

None of the above mentioned career development theories have specifically addressed the relationship between cognitive disability and applied career development in the 1990's -- in particular the design and delivery of accommodations.

There are researchers who have made adaptive changes in career training programs in an effort to meet the needs of persons with cognitive disabilities. Rosenthal (1985) designed a classroom career education program that included modifications for cognitive and attentional deficits, self insight problems, limitations in visual conceptualization, and learned hopelessness. Crunow (1989) and Koller (1994) describe a similar set of modifications to be used when providing vocational counseling to this population and both stated the importance of the counselor as a facilitator who helps individuals develop an understanding of their strengths and their limitations. Researchers (Ehrsten & Izzo, 1988, Kanchier, 1990, Tindall & Gugerty, 1987) have described general program modifications but included no discussion of specific counselor decision-making strategies used in matching counseling or vocational training techniques to client need (as needed when using the eclectic approach). There is no discussion of the principles and guidelines a counselor would use when applying an eclectic approach to helping a person with cognitive disabilities.

Several authors have made recommendations on modifying the information base used by rehabilitation counselors working with persons who have disabilities. Levinson (1994) stated that "A comprehensive vocational assessment incorporates

assessment of psychological, social, educational-academic, physical-medical, and vocational functioning” (p. 95) and he advocates for a transdisciplinary approach to vocational assessment. Such an approach is similar to the case conceptualization approach proposed by Loganbill and Stoltenberg (1983). But this transdisciplinary information, when available, is not easily translated into the field or into practical information usable in the rehabilitation process. Rehabilitation counselors are often provided with information that is of limited use in matching potential employment opportunities to the client’s profile when cognitive disabilities are involved. Counselors are in need of more functional information that is stated using cognitive and behavioral descriptors that can be directly applied to the eclectic vocational selection process (Handler, and Mikrut, 1993, Koller, 1994, McCue, Pramuka, Chase, Fabry, 1994), as well as needing general guidelines on how to use these descriptors (Hoisington, 2002a, see www.healingrelationship.com). Koller, 1994, also advocates for an understanding of the limits of functional assessments and the importance of situational information relevant to potential job performance. Dobren (1994) and Szymanski and Hershenson (1992) echo these concerns, arguing for the incorporation of contextual information into the vocational counseling of persons with disabilities. Acquiring this situational and contextual information will require training in the needed observation skills and a deeper understanding of the relationship in which these observations are made (see Hoisington, 2002 for a description of the founding relationship principles). In addition to the changes in the informational base provided to rehabilitation counselors, practitioners also need a stronger theoretical foundation upon which to base their eclectic translation of

assessment information into both choice-facilitating career development strategies and the design of accommodation.

The Problem of Accommodation Design

This article does not address the legal issues surrounding eligibility and entitlement. It is assumed that the person seeking help, the participant, is entitled to reasonable accommodation and the practitioner is faced with designing a plan to “overcome obstacles” and “level the playing field”.

“In order to assess the impact of cognitive functioning and effectively develop a plan to overcome obstacles to an individual with a cognitive disability, new procedures must be developed and validated...” (McCue, Pramuka, Chase, Fabry, 1994, p. 18).

At almost every juncture in the vocational rehabilitation process the person with a cognitive disability is faced with having to overcome obstacles. The assessment information, using standard approaches, often does not describe the client in a language useful to the counselor, the counselor does not have the training necessary to make an independent assessment, and there is no universally accepted theoretical foundation upon which to create new procedures. Biller (1993) stated that nearly 50% of employers use some form of written test to evaluate the skills of a potential employee. In addition employers also use skills tests, e.g., a typing test, to evaluate a prospective employee. “Persons who have had a long history of learning disabilities due to cognitive processing impairments are likely to be at a disadvantage when taking standardized employment tests.” (p. 21). Counselors

assisting clients with cognitive disabilities are often faced with these issues of mismatch between environment and client ability. These mismatches centered around cognitive disability are no less an impediment than the lack of wheelchair access for the quadriplegic. The client needs practical help from the counselor in the design of reasonable accommodations.

Lazrus and Beutler (1993) argue that the eclectic position must have practical application. This author has, in the past, attempted to use a form of technical eclecticism as an approach to rehabilitation counseling and designing accommodations for persons with cognitive disabilities. With an eclectic counselor tool box in one hand, and the DSM-IV in the other, years were spent seeking symptomology categorization to match with counseling technique in an effort to develop a practical approach to counseling persons with cognitive disabilities.

Persons with cognitive disabilities may represent a very diverse group that is not easily categorized using trait-factor approach. It is a group with a diverse range of causal factors influencing the presenting nature of the cognitive disability: genetic influence, environmental influence, nature of any CNS trauma, age of trauma onset, cognitive ability (and its link to environment), emotional development (and associated social skills) and premorbid status of the individual pre-CNS trauma. In addition all these factors have interacted in a symbiotic manner, through time, in different contexts, for each person. The resulting list of client profiles was staggering making it impossible to justify the use of technical eclecticism or any simple trait-factor approach. A new road map was needed for

practitioners that provided for both an eclectic approach and contained guidelines and principles to design reasonable accommodations within that approach.

A New Set of Guidelines is Needed

When faced with counseling persons with cognitive disabilities, and using an eclectic approach to help with the design of reasonable accommodations, the traditional schools of psychology offer little that is directly applicable, but much that is useful. In seeking an eclectic approach that offers help toward well being practitioners must modify existing theoretical information and choose what is useful in meeting the demands of persons with cognitive disabilities. Picking and choosing from an eclectic handbag is often based more on personal orientation than on a set of guiding principles. Martin (1988) stated that “increased knowledge of relationships between scientific and practical (personal) knowledge and theory in counseling may permit a reconciliation of current tensions between scientific and practitioner perspectives in the counseling profession” (p. 264). The answer to “what is the best approach to use with this client?” was not discovered through expanding trait and factor lists but in developing a stronger theoretical base. Strong (1991) stated “...greater scientific progress will result from moving toward, not away from, theory-driven science.” (p. 204). “Superficial eclectic combinations...yield nothing but ephemeral peace...real bridging theories are needed...” (Staats, 1991, p 906).

Whether providing career counseling, accommodation design, or mental health counseling the success of each approach is linked to a need-fit process. In Hoisington (2002a, see www.healingrelationship.com) this need-fit process is described as fundamental to the helping relationship. When offering quality support for persons seeking help this need-fit process underlies the success of the help provided. The effectiveness of the fit is dependent upon the counselor's ability to know the characteristics of the client, and knowing the client is affected by the relationship established between client and practitioner. The quality of the need-fit process is directly affected by the helping relationship established between client and practitioner.

Hoisington (2002b, see www.healingrelationship.com) describes the helping relationship as having three variations – the healing relationship, the support relationship, and the habitual relationship. Every time practitioners offer help to another person they are also offering the possibility of entering into one of these three relationships. Improving the quality of the need-fit process will involve improving the quality of practitioner skill within each of these three relationships. The guidelines describing these three relationships will cut across disciplines, and will then provide a new definition of eclecticism. In describing the healing relationship Hoisington (2002b, see www.healingrelationship.com) describes a set of characteristics that may be present across a wide range of cultures, and as such may represent a new definition of eclecticism.

In describing the support relationship Hoisington (2002a, see www.healingrelationship.com) proposes an approach that differs from the trait and factor model. Hoisington suggests that providing a helping relationship to another person is a process of promoting well being. This process of promoting well being involves a relationship and it is within that relationship that an “eclectic” approach is applied. Hoisington (2002a, see www.healingrelationship.com) offers the idea that there exists an underlying set of models, or assumptions, that guide the practitioner’s use of the support relationship. These models can be examined, and fundamental guidelines can be developed that cut across both culture and a wide range of human service disciplines. This may represent a new definition of eclecticism and a new way to provide a high quality service to persons with cognitive disabilities.

If we are to provide higher quality human services to persons with cognitive disabilities then we need a new set of guidelines that excels beyond the grab-bag eclecticism of the past.

Summary and Conclusions

Persons with cognitive disabilities exhibit various cognitive disabilities: difficulty with sensory integration, attention, language processing, memory, problem solving and/or social skills (physical disabilities are not included as part this population except in their direct interface with cognitive functioning). By law persons with cognitive disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations to

assist in their education and employment. This paper has examined the influence of eclecticism on the role of the counselor in providing adaptive services to persons with cognitive disabilities.

Eclecticism has become a popular atheoretical descriptor of counseling approach that can be used when it is not obvious how to apply a standard therapeutic regime. Its popularity may represent a shifting in the domain of counseling from theoretical divergence toward theoretical convergence. But the eclectic approach is not a theory and thus provides no theoretical position from which to justify the matching of an approach to client need and the need-fit process. Career development theories were reviewed and found lacking enough explanatory information to be used in the matching of approach to the needs of people with cognitive disabilities. Theoretical models addressing the more global population of persons with disabilities, using general conceptual approaches, have applicability but lack the needed cognitive explanatory detail and the “eclectic” span.

In seeking an approach which counselors can use to modify existing theoretical information to meet the demands of persons with cognitive disabilities, neither the assortment of career development theories nor the position of eclecticism provided the necessary information. The answer to “what is the best approach to use with this client?” was not discovered through expanding trait and factor lists but in developing a stronger theoretical base that cuts across both culture and human service domain.

Developing a new theoretical base can begin with a better understanding of the helping relationship. The helping relationship is fundamental to the need-fit process and is observable across both culture and human service domain. In understanding the basic characteristics of the helping relationship, and the principles guiding its development and application, we may offer a new definition of eclecticism. This new definition would move beyond our current understanding of human service and perhaps bring us closer to theory convergence.

Donald Super is quoted as saying:

“I believe we will soon have one comprehensive theory of career development that will be of much more use than any existing formulation to students and to practicing counselors.” (Freeman, 1993, p. 264).

The ideas presented by Hoisington (2002a,b, see www.healingrelationship.com) may serve as a first step in the paradigm bridge-building process toward a new and broader theoretical foundation more representative of theoretical convergence than represented by past eclecticism. This new theoretical bridge will offer to practitioners a new foundation upon which to build a set of guidelines and principles to use within an eclectic approach when designing accommodations to help others -- across culture, disability, age and gender.

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