

## The Next Decade in Vocational Psychology: Mission and Objectives

Mark L. Savickas

*Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine*

This article discusses the 10 separate analyses of vocational psychology's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that appear in this special issue, entitled "Vocational Psychology in the Next Decade." After identifying points of convergence, attention turns to summarizing, in the form of a mission statement, what vocational psychologists seem intent on doing in the coming years. The mission for vocational psychology in the next decade concentrates on advancing scientific understanding of vocational behavior and providing information to shape career interventions and inform public policy. Eight objectives that aim to execute this mission are proposed and discussed. The article closes with a consideration of how the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* can implement strategies to realize the eight objectives and thus contribute to fulfilling vocational psychology's mission. © 2001 Academic Press

Each author in this special issue, entitled "Vocational Psychology in the Next Decade" has provided an insightful and invigorating analysis of the discipline's current strengths and weaknesses as well as a sagacious appraisal of its future opportunities and threats. Although written from different perspectives, the articles converge in viewing vocational psychology's mission as advancing scientific knowledge about vocational behavior and furnishing information that can be used to shape career interventions and inform public policy about work.

In the diverse analyses of the weaknesses and threats faced by vocational psychology, one common problem stood out. Many of the authors concluded that the science of vocational psychology, lacking a disciplinary home, has become insular. It has become an island because researchers have circumscribed the topics they study and restricted the theoretical models they use. Actually, it might be more precise to liken vocational psychology to two islands. Inhabitants of the two islands share an interest in vocational behavior but at different points in the life cycle. Inhabitants on the island off the coast of counseling psychology investigate educational and vocational choice while inhabitants on the island off the coast of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology investigate work adjustment. Rarely do members of the two cultures visit the other island or even write to each

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Mark L. Savickas, Behavioral Sciences Department, College of Medicine, Northeastern Ohio Universities, 4209 State Route 44, Rootstown, OH 44272-0095. E-mail: [ms@neoucom.edu](mailto:ms@neoucom.edu).

other. In addition to not communicating with each other, island inhabitants do not communicate frequently with their respective mainlands. They seem to be on the periphery of their home specialties. This appears to be particularly frustrating to researchers who study vocational choice because, having once been at the center of counseling psychology, they now find themselves on the margins. As their numbers dwindle, concern grows that the discipline could lose its distinct identity or even disappear.

While there seemed to be some consensus in identifying the problem, the authors differed in suggesting how it could be resolved. Some suggested that vocational psychologists move to a new home. One proposal suggested that vocational choice researchers join with I/O researchers interested in organizational careers and become more active in the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, leaving the Counseling Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association (APA) as the home base for career counselors. Another suggestion would have vocational psychologists join with developmental psychologists, which would better situate them to contribute significantly to life-span psychology. Although not mentioned, another possibility would be to unify all those interested in vocational behavior research into a new APA division or an academic society.

It is doubtful that any of these resolutions will be enacted, so it is critical that vocational psychologists who remain on their islands do a better job of integrating their work with mainstream psychology. The authors identified prevailing topics in motivational, personality, and social psychology that should be incorporated into studies of vocational behavior and fed back to the field at large. While linking to mainstream psychology, it is also important to extend research boundaries beyond their current concentration on college students and individuals who work in management and the professions. It would be useful as well to attend more to vocational behavior at the beginning and end of the life course by studying children and older adults. Incorporating the study of vocational behavior into prevailing currents in developmental, I/O, and mainstream psychology will build bridges that invite collaboration and entice graduate students. It has become increasingly difficult for vocational psychologists to identify and recruit investigative scientists from among the Social and Enterprising practitioners attracted to counseling and I/O psychology. Taking all this into consideration, there seems to be an emerging vision of and commitment to vocational psychology's mission for the next decade.

## MISSION

It is science that attracts researchers to and serves consumers of vocational psychology. In addition to advancing knowledge, vocational psychologists must intensify their efforts to share this knowledge by communicating with psychologists in other specialties, translating theory and research into practice, training new vocational psychologists, updating and learning from experienced career counselors, infusing information and values into policy debates, and contributing to the internationalization of the discipline. Integrating the views of the authors in this

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