

Marginalization of Vocational Psychology

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I identify strengths and weaknesses of vocational psychology and opportunities confronting vocational psychology. Strengths of vocational psychology include its rich diversity of theoretical models and the energetic tradition of empirical investigation. Troublesome weaknesses include the tendency of some to adopt a dabbler, pundit, or booster approach to the issues confronting vocational psychology and the marginalization of vocational psychology in its intellectual home. Technological advances that will occur within the next 3 decades present the field with tremendous opportunities and significant challenges.

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The 30th anniversary of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* is an auspicious time to reflect on the many contributions of vocational psychology to the study of human behavior. Scientific progress often appears to be slow or even nonexistent when viewed from the perspective of the present and near past, but the 20-year retrospectives that appeared in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* in 1991 revealed both impressive advances and important problems requiring further research. Thus, it is helpful to consider what vocational psychology was like in 1971 to provide a context within which to evaluate the advances made in understanding vocational behavior and the challenges confronting our discipline.

Vocational psychology was the core of counseling psychology when the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* was established in 1971. The preeminent graduate training programs were staffed by internationally acclaimed vocational psychologists, many of the most illustrious graduates of those programs routinely established themselves as world renowned vocational psychologists, and students in those programs received a thorough grounding in the science and practice of vocational psychology. The person–environment fit model was dominant but Super's (1953) developmental model was attracting ever larger groups of enthusiastic followers. The classifications systems of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1965) and Anne Roe (1956) provided the organizational structure for much of the conceptual and empirical work. The Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1964) provided the predominant blueprint for vocational rehabilitation counseling

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and Holland's (1966) model was gaining increasingly favorable attention from vocational psychologists working with college students.

In this article I identify what I believe to be the greatest strengths of vocational psychology, the weaknesses that vitiate vocational psychology, and the opportunities confronting vocational psychology.

Strengths

I view the most important strengths of vocational psychology as the rich diversity of theoretical models that depict the career development and vocational adjustment processes from multiple perspectives and the energetic tradition of empirical investigation.

Theoretical diversity. Concern about the employment and efficient use of America's human resources became a national priority as a result of the Great Depression. The Minnesota Employment Stabilization Research Institute undertook a program of research and instrument development that provided intellectual and technical benefits still being enjoyed today. The research demonstrated that the person-environment fit (P-E fit) model provided a practical, effective career counseling strategy for matching individuals to employment opportunities. Many of the vocational assessment instruments developed and validated at that time are still in use today.

The Great Depression was followed by World War II. The need to assign millions of inductees to military occupations in a quick and efficient manner focused attention on the efficient use of human resources and further increased the sensitivity of the nation to the critical importance of vocational psychology.

The P-E fit model worked well when the primary focus was the immediate assignment of workers to occupations. As the twin crises passed, however, leading thinkers of the 1950s saw the need for a broader perspective in thinking about the relation between individuals and occupations. The result was the emergence of developmental models of vocational behavior. Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Alexrad, and Herma's (1951) work still stands as one of the most detailed descriptions of the process through which the vocational self-concept develops. Super (1953, 1957) soon expanded the developmental view to encompass the entire life span. His career life rainbow depicted the overlapping roles that individuals adopt (e.g., leisureite and parent) and the changing importance of these roles across the life span (Super, 1980). This work contributed to the emerging view of vocational behavior as one aspect of the multiple life roles fulfilled by individuals.

At about the same time Roe (1956) suggested that the personality of the individual, which formed as a result of distinctive patterns of parent-child interactions, influenced both career choice and vocational satisfaction. Her thesis subsequently was elaborated by Holland (1966) and Dawis et al. (1964). Roe also developed a system for classifying occupations by type and level that was the forerunner of Holland's occupational classification system.

The 1960s saw the refinement of the P-E fit model (Holland, 1966; Dawis et al., 1964) and an elaboration of the decision-making process. Tiedeman and O'Hara

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