

## Vocational Psychology: An Analysis and Directions for the Future

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In the past decade, research and practice in the field of vocational psychology has substantially enhanced our understanding of individuals' career choices, decisions, adjustment, and work performance. With the changing definitions of careers in the workplace, the field faces some exciting challenges and opportunities. The purpose of the present article is to briefly review some of the key directions that the field of vocational psychology has taken and to articulate a vision for the future. © 2001 Academic Press

These are exciting times for the field of vocational psychology. With the existing new perspectives (e.g., “boundaryless career” and “protean career”), there are numerous challenges confronting career researchers and practitioners (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, Hall, 1996). No longer is career planning and occupational choice a matter of choosing a field of work and one employer. Today's rapid technological changes and evolving organizational structures have changed the nature of job contracts both from the perspective of the employer and the employee (Sullivan, Carden, & Martin, 1998). Employers have streamlined their firms through downsizing and more efficient work methods. Traditional career paths and career management by the firm are less likely to exist. Thus, employees now assume a greater responsibility for career self-management. To be successful, they manage their own careers by developing portable skills and knowledge, engaging in meaningful work and on-the-job learning opportunities, and establishing networks and mentoring relationships (Sullivan, 1999). As London (1998) notes, this requires that adults participate in continuous learning opportunities in order to develop and utilize their own talents to the fullest.

With the new career definitions, the field of vocational psychology has undergone substantial changes, and the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* has been able to illuminate many of these issues to a large and diverse readership. The future awaits and offers new directions for inquiry in the field of vocational psychology as well as the continuation of many current research avenues. The purpose of this article is

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## A BRIEF SWOT ANALYSIS: THE FIELD OF VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR

### *Internal Strengths*

There are many internal strengths in the field of vocational psychology. Some of these include the following.

1. The field appeals to a large, diverse audience of researchers from areas in psychology (careers, counseling, industrial/organizational, etc.) and other disciplines including management, sociology, organizational behavior, and so on. This means that the field is more likely to be interdisciplinary in nature and researchers are more likely to integrate literature from a variety of sources.

2. The strategic mission seems to be clear—that is, to expand knowledge about vocational choice and adjustment across the life span. The focus is clearly on the individual rather than the organization (i.e., organizational behavior).

3. The field can be distinguished from competitors especially those with a greater focus on other topics or on the organization as the unit of analysis.

4. The field seems strong in advancing theories of career choice and adjustment, although more research is still needed to examine these issues with other groups, such as minorities and international samples.

5. The issues studied in vocational psychology cover an individual's entire life span, thus the topics have relevance to adult audiences of all ages (from precareer periods to late career stages).

6. Researchers in the field employ a variety of methodologies for exploring issues, such as qualitative analyses, reviews, empirical studies, and interviews.

The *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, as a premier journal publishing work in the field of vocational behavior, also has a number of internal strengths. These include the following.

1. A high citation impact rating, indicating a broad and large readership using articles published in the journal to advance theory and practice.

2. A strong editorial board including a mix of vocational psychologists, counseling and career psychologists, industrial/organizational psychologists, and individuals specializing in various research techniques and methodologies.

3. A diversity of issues has been addressed which illustrates the breadth of fields of interest in vocational psychology.

4. A relatively quick review process, enabling articles to reach the audience sooner and thus be more timely in the literature.

5. Over time, the journal has been quick to change the nature of special articles from yearly reviews to reviews of special topics and issues. This has been done in order to better reflect the needs of researchers for advanced specialized knowledge on certain topic areas.

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