Psychosocial Aspects of Vocational Maturity: Implications for Counselling

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Résumé

Cet article s'adresse à l'identification et à la pratique des étapes précises de développement et des exercices nécessaires à l'épanouissement des adolescents au niveau de leur maturité professionnelle. Y sont abordés: les rapports entre la maturité professionnelle et tout un jeu de caractéristiques psychologiques et/ou relatives au développement; le développement moral et les intérêts d'ordre social. L'échantillon comprenait 240 adolescents, tous élèves des 9e et 12e années d'un lycée de Winnipeg, Canada. On y lit une revue des ouvrages traitant de la maturité professionelle, ainsi que les définitions des exercices de développement professionnel, social ou moral. A la suite de cela se trouve une description sommaire de l'échantillon, du concept, des instruments, de la méthode statistique et des résultats de l'étude. Les conclusions et questions d'intérêt au counseling indiquent qu'il existe une forte corrélation entre la maturité professionnelle et le développement moral, et les intérêts au niveau social. Ces trois exercices de développement de l'adolescence sont des processus étroitement liés les uns aux autres; on ne saurait les isoler ni les séparer d'autres aspects du développement de l'adolescent.

Abstract

In order to better identify and master specific developmental stages and tasks necessary for the enhancement of vocational maturity of adolescents, this article discusses the relationship between vocational maturity and a set of developmental and/or psychological characteristics —moral development and social interest. The sample of 240 adolescents included all of the students enrolled in the ninth- and twelfth-grade classes of a high school in Winnipeg, Canada. A sketched literature review of vocational maturity as well as the definitions of the vocational, social, and moral developmental tasks are presented. This is followed by a brief description of the sample design, instrumentation, statistical methodology, and results of the study. The conclusions and counselling implications suggest that vocational maturity is significantly correlated with social interest and moral development. These are three developmental tasks of adolescence which are interrelated processes which cannot be isolated from one another or from other aspects of the adolescent's development.

The goal of career development for adolescents which appears most frequently in the literature and which seems to have the most face validity is career maturity (Herr & Cramer, 1984). This term while useful as an ultimate goal of career development is too global to be useful to counsellors unless it can be dissected into specific vocational tasks and behavioural descriptions. Crites (1973) suggests that correlations of vocational maturity with interest and personality traits are needed. Super and Overstreet (1960) note that effects of psychological adjustment upon vocational maturity has been the subject of much speculation and that more work needs to be done in this broad area of investigation (Krebs, 1983).

Psychological adjustment is often viewed in terms of developmental tasks and an individual is thought to be adjusted based on his/her ability to deal with these tasks. Havighurst (1972) in his psychosocial theory of adolescence outlines what he feels are the major developmental tasks of

adolescence. Three of Havighurst's developmental tasts for adolescents are listed as: 1. Preparing for an economic career; 2. Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide; 3. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviours (Havighurst, 1972).

It is hoped that this study which investigates the relationship between vocational maturity and a set of psychosocial characteristics (moral development and social interest) will help to clarify the nature of vocational maturty.

Whereas a moral development literature focus and other aspects of this study were discussed in *Contemporary Education* (Krebs, 1983) this present paper will emphasize the results and specifically relate these results to counselling implications for moral development and social interest in order to enhance the vocational maturity process of adolescents.

THE VOCATIONAL TASK

Havighurst (1972), Super (1957), Erikson (1963), Gribbons and Lohnes (1968), and other career theorists have wedded particular developmental tasks with stages of increasingly mature vocational behaviour. Each of the stages as defined by the various theorists is characterized by certain developmental tasks that individuals must successfully master before moving to the next stage vocationally through the life span. Super (1957) suggests that a person who has already completed the task that still occupies his peers, or who is dealing with it more effectively than they, can be judged to be mature vocationally.

For this study Crites' construct of vocational maturity was used. Crites (1965) analyzes specific vocational tasks or behaviours which mature as age increases into aptitudes and attitudes and he describes the construct of vocational maturity as:

The construct of vocational maturity includes behaviors in both the cognitive and affective domains. Variables such as problem solving, planning occupational information, self knowledge and goal selection cover knowledge and abilities in the cognitive domain. Variables such as involvement, orientation, independence, preference and conception can be classified in the affective domain. (Crites, 1965, p. 7)

Herr and Cramer (1984) stipulate that research of particular relevance to career maturity of adolescents has been accomplished in the Career Pattern Study (CPS) (Super, 1969a, b) in Super, Starishevsy, Matlin, and Jordaan (1963), in Crites (1969); in the Project on Readiness for Vocational Planning (Gribbons & Lohnes, 1968); and in Project Talent (Flanagan & Cooley, 1966; Flanagan & Dailey, 1960).

More recent career maturity research among high school students specifically as related to differences in career aspirations may be explored in Dillard and Campbell (1981); Dunne, Elliott, and Carlson (1981);

Fottler and Bain (1980b); Garrison (1979); Heilman (1979). Research regarding relationships among curricula, work values and career maturity of high school adolescents may be explored in Herr and Enderlein (1976); Herr, Weitz, Good, and McClosky (1981); Jordaan and Heyde (1979); and Pedro (1982).

Studies regarding sex differences in work values in junior high are demonstrated in Neely (1980); Pedro, Walleat, and Fenneman (1980).

THE MORAL AND SOCIAL TASKS

Moral Development.   The moral task of adolescence, the acquiring of a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behaviour, is reflected in part by moral development. For this study moral development was conceptualized largely in terms of Kohlberg's cognitive developmental model which provides numerous experimental and longitudinal studies (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975; Kuhmerker, 1976; Rest, Turiel, & Kohlberg, 1969).

Kohlberg formulated a series of three broad levels of mural development subdivided into six stages (Kohlberg, 1966). The six stages denote a significant expansion of moral conceptualizations from an egocentric through a societal to a universal moral perspective. Kohlberg's theory implies that higher stages of moral development with their restructuring of a person's thinking will develop (1) higher moral reasoning, and (2) affect moral behaviours. Higher moral reasoning includes "decision making skills, problem solving, more critical and independent thinking" (Hersh, Paolitto, & Reimer, 1979) which are also parallel to the cognitive competencies needed for vocational maturity (e.g., Crites, 1965).

In addition to general intellectual ability, the specific ability to take the role of others is emphasized as a key cognitive skill influencing moral responses (Damon, 1977; Moir, 1974; Selman, 1971a). This process of enlarging one's sphere of social identification is again compatible with the vocational maturity process where one explores one's own values and self which bring one closer to the universal nature of man.

Social Interest.   The social task of adolescence, the desiring and achieving of responsible behaviour is reflected in part by social interest. In this research project Adler's (1933, 1953) concept of social interest was focused upon and was defined as that which influences a person's attention, perception, thinking about others, feelings such as empathy, sympathy , and finally motives and overt behaviour relating in co-operation, helping, sharing, and contributing (Crandall, 1980).

Adler (1933, 1953) maintains that all of life's tasks grouped under three major headings of society, work, and love can be successfully fulfilled only by individuals with strong social interest. By way of contrast, the lack of social interest is seen as leading to inevitable problems. In the

occupational task, with low levels of social interest individuals will frequently feel that their personal prestige is threatened or that they are unfitted to do the work (Adler, 1933, 1953).

Research where social interest acts as the criterion for mental health and adjustment as pertaining to all of the life's tasks is found in Crandall (1980), Crandall and Lehman (1977), Crandall and Reimanis (1976), and Parks (1979).

Super (1951, 1953) believes that in entering an occupation one attempts to achieve self-actualization which involves social interest or the awareness of one's interdependency with others existing outside the self. Ansbacher (1964) maintains that Adler's concept of social interest appears to be the forerunner of self-actualization while Crandall (1980) maintains that Maslow's (1955) later descriptions of self-actualized people include several characteristics related to Adler's social interest.

PROCEDURE

The general plan of this study was to investigate the relationship between vocational maturity and a set of psychological/psychosocial characteristics of ninth- and twelfth-grade adolescents.

Sample

All of the students enrolled in the ninth- and twelfth-grade classes of a high school in Winnipeg, Canada were selected as the sample group for the study. Both the ninth- and twelfth-grade sample represented a wide variety of ethnic groups as well as a wide range of socioeconomic levels. The ninth-grade sample consisted of 48 males and 63 females while the twelfth-grade sample consisted of 48 males and 61 females.

Instruments

To assess each adolescent's vocational maturity, Crites' Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) was administered and each student received two individual scores, each assessing different facets of career maturity; the Attitude Scale and the Competence Test (Crites, 1981). The Attitude Scale measures the client's attitudes toward the career choice process, the "dispositional response tendencies" that are intimately involved in making a decision. These include: (1) involvement, (2) independence, (3) orientation, (4) preference, (5) conceptions (Crites, 1973). The Competence Test measures the more cognitive aspects of career choice process. They are (1) self-appraisal, (2) occupational information, (3) goal selection, (4) planning, and (5) problem solving (Crites, 1973).

Rest's Defining Issues Test (DIT) was administered to determine each adolescent's moral development and yielded 9 DIT scores—stage 2, 3, 4, 5A, 5B, 6, A, M, and P (Rest, 1974). Each student received one overall score, the P score (Principal thinking), recommended by Rest (1974) as

the most comprehensive score and eight other subscores. For purposes of testing the null hypotheses relating to moral development the P score was utilized. As a matter of interest and further clarification, the data relating to the subscales was also presented. Stages 2, 3, and 4 correspond to the discussion of the "instrumental-relativist orientation," the "good boy-nice girl orientation," and stage 4 the "law and order orientation." The subdivisions into 5A, 5B, and 6 correspond to the discussions of the morality of social contract, the morality of intuitive humanism and the morality of principles of ideal social co-operation respectively (Rest, 1981, p. 5). The A score, or anti-establishment orientation typifies a point of view which condemns tradition and the existing social order for its arbitrariness while the M score is representative of lofty sounding and meaningless items (Rest, 1981). Crandall's Personal Trait Value Scale was administered to measure social interest. This scale required students to make a number of choices concerning which of two traits they considered to be of more value or importance (Crandall, 1980, p. 483). The Personal Trait Value Scale is a 15-item scale that yields one total score.

Statistical Analysis

In identifying any relationship between vocational maturity and either moral development or social interest, Pearson Product Moment Correlations were used. In defining the relationship among vocational maturity and the combined set of variables, eight stepwise multiple regression analyses were computed using SPSS.

The significance level adopted for this study was at the .05 level of significance ($p < .05$).

Ninth-grade Sample

Only the M score of moral development was correlated significantly with the Competence Test of Crites' Career Maturity for ninth-grade males. Ninth-grade females however were dramatically different in moral development; and stage 3 was significantly correlated with the Attitude Scale while stages 2, 3, and 5A were significantly correlated with the Competence Test of the CMI (see Table 1).

Parallel to moral development, social interest also reached a high level of significance for females with the Attitude Scale while the same variable failed to identify any specific relationship for males (see Table 1).

The combined variables of moral development and social interest produced a significant correlation with the Attitude Test for females while the set of 10 independent variables taken in combination produced a significant relationship for males in the Competence Test of Career Maturity. For females, social interest was the best single predictor of the Attitude Scale while Stage 5A was the best single predictor of the Competence Test. For males, the M score was the best single predictor of the Competence dimension.

Twelfth-grade Sample

For females, the A score of moral development was significantly corre-
lated with the Attitude dimension of Crites' Career Maturity Inventory
CMI while the P score of the DIT correlated significantly with the
Competence dimension in vocational maturity. For twelfth-grade males,
Stage 2 of moral development showed a significant relationship with the
Attitude Test (see Table 1).

Results

TABLE 1

*Results of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation
Coefficients of the CMI with Moral
Development and Social Interest*

Moral Development	9th Grade Females		9th Grade Males		12th Grade Females		12th Grade Males	
	Attitude Scale	Compe-tence Test	Attitude Scale	Compe-tence Test	Attitude Scale	Compe-tence Test	Attitude Scale	Compe-tence Test
Stage 2	.124	.276*	.089	.183	-.009	.193	-.347*	-.103
Stage 3	-.397*	-.288*	-.004	.017	-.102	-.235	-.162	-.261
Stage 4	.170	.020	.012	.100	-.091	-.012	.052	.170
Stage 5A	.207	.334*	-.129	.142	.180	.209	.147	.038
Stage 5B	.020	.067	.033	-.114	.068	.164	.082	.053
Stage 6	-.216	-.215	-.103	-.205	.117	.168	.253	.164
A Score	.049	-.122	.141	-.158	-.248*	-.005	.103	-.016
M Score	.080	-.012	-.090	-.338*	-.207	.017	-.040	.058
P Score	.100	.219	-.115	-.034	.200	.293*	.248	.116
Attitude Scale with Social Interest	.40*		.011		.241		.109	
Competence Test with Social Interest	.136		.235		.031		-.007	

$*p < .05$

Whereas ninth-grade females indicated a significant relationship
between social interest and the Attitude Scale of vocational maturity, no
significant correlations for social interest were found for twelfth grade
females. As with ninth-grade males, twelfth-grade males failed to reach
any significance with the social interest variable in both the cognitive
and attitudinal domains of vocational maturity (see Table 1).

The combined variables of moral development and social interest as
well as the set of 10 independent variables taken in combination

produced a significant correlation with the attitude Scale of Crites' CMI for both males and females. For females, the A score was the best single predictor of the Attitude dimension while the P score acted as the best single predictor of the Competence Test. For males, moral development, Stage 2 was the best single predictor of the Attitude Scale while Stage 3 acted as the best single predictor of the Competence dimension.

COUNSELLING FOR MORAL DEVELOPMENT TO ENHANCE VOCATIONAL MATURITY

1.   *Emphasizing Cognitive Competence*

It is noteworthy that for twelfth-grade females the higher principled P scores were correlated significantly with the Competence Test of vocational maturity while for ninth-grade females the lower stages showed significance. This research has tended to support the general model of moral development as proposed by Kohlberg (1966) where developmental progression is associated with cognitive maturation.

In order to enhance cognitive maturation for moral growth of the developmental task, guidance counsellors and psychologists must help students see moral situations from a variety of points of view. Through hypothetical or real life moral dilemmas as well as role-playing situations, counsellors may create dissatisfaction in adolescents about present knowledge of right and wrong, as well as stimulate them to seek higher stage reasoning. By practicing identification of the levels of response in discussion and by rephrasing and clarifying certain reasons produced by pupils, counsellors can help students cognitively to restructure and begin to hear and understand reasoning one stage higher.

In similar ways, career guidance may utilize these cognitive competencies of the moral developmental process and help students determine what questions to ask as well as help them arrive at a strategy for making career decisions based on information. Discussing moral patterns as well as career decision points of famous individuals in autobiographies, analyzing career roles of famous professionals from a moral perspective, as well as presenting students with a series of hypothetical situations describing moral and career decision-making dilemmas are all appropriate tools of enhancing the cognitive maturation of both the moral and vocational developmental tasks.

2.   *Emphasizing Values Clarification*

Only the M score which scores inconsistencies was correlated significantly with the Competence Test for ninth-grade males. This M score correlation appears to be consistent with the developmental lag and the diffusive stage identity that many ninth-grade males undergo (Thornburg, 1975). This state of moratorium is again to be observed for twelfth-grade males

whose regression or downward shift in moral reasoning to Stage 2 is congruent with findings reported by Turiel (1974) and Kohlberg and Kramer (1969). Turiel (1974) suggested that regressed Stage 2 subjects are experiencing great conflict while Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) found their regressed Stage 2 college sophomores to be in a condition of moratorium with uncertain and vague commitments.

Scepticism is further demonstrated by twelfth-grade females when showing significant results with the Anti-Establishment or A stage of moral development with vocational maturity. Rest (1974) believes that this anti-authoritarian stage reflects a period when youth has greater autonomy and exposure to wider diversity of values which provide cause for the individual to question previous values.

Guidance and counselling programs are suggested which enact value clarification approaches and lifestyle decision-making on both a group and individual basis in order to counteract the moratorium and anti-establishment identities.

Counsellors do not teach their own values but rather encourage adolescents through holistic or "gestalt" counselling techniques, imaginative role playing, and high levels of personal experiencing to deal with their own judgements regarding what is right or wrong. Rather than judging and criticizing students' vocational and moral choices, those in the helping role should help to clarify, ask for elaboration, and gently probe for alternative views.

COUNSELLING FOR SOCIAL INTEREST TO ENHANCE VOCATIONAL MATURITY

1. *Facilitating Awareness for Sex Differences*

Ninth- and twelfth-grade females tended to define themselves more in social terms and they demonstrated significantly higher social interest correlations than did males. Crandall (1980) suggests that females identify more with the feminine characteristics frequently identified with the social interest variable while males on the other hand identify more with the highly masculine traits.

It appears that vocational counsellors and psychologists need to revise some of their personal assumptions concerning male and female differences. Although any counselling model may be as appropriate for young women as for young men it is most important to understand the diverse perspectives with which females will approach their identity concerns. Considering the lives of famous women, looking at social interest in men's and women's roles and doing an analysis of non-traditional jobs are all exercises that counsellors may enact with students in order to facilitate more awareness for male and female differences.

2.   *Blending Social Interest with Self-Oriented Striving*

The correlations for social interest with Crites' CMI decreased with age for both twelfth-grade males and females when compared to ninth-grade social interest correlations. Crandall and Kytonen (1979) suggest that the decrease of social interest may be related to the striving for superiority at this age. This belief tends to be compatible with Erickson's (1963) psychosocial developmental theory where only the later stages involve more concern for things beyond the self while the earlier developmental stages deal with individual growth and competence.

In order that social interest will not be diminished in the later adolescent years, counsellors may help students to blend their self-oriented striving with social interest. In this way the individual's developments and accomplishments with the vocational task as well as other development tasks will involve a concern with others as well as for the self.

CONCLUSION

The individual as well as the combined variables of moral development and social interest demonstrated significant correlations with both the attitude and competence dimensions of vocational maturity. It might be concluded that these developmental tasks or variables are integrated processes which work concurrently. The effects of each one on the development of the adolescent depends to one degree or another on the changes that are occurring simultaneously in other spheres of development. The counselling process therefore should be responsive to all of the developmental tasks which surface at different developmental stages.

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