

A Promise Fulfilled

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Career development theory plays a crucial role in providing a substantive base for the practice of career intervention. This role is vital today as rapidly changing environments require that counselors innovate their practice to better address the cultural context of careers as well as demonstrate the effectiveness of career interventions. The continuing flow of research on vocational behavior and its development helps meet these challenges by expanding the scientific base for the practice of career intervention. However, having expressed this opinion, I recognize that many practitioners neither value research on vocational behavior nor utilize it in their daily work. Killeen and Watts (1983), who have long been concerned about relations between practice and research, concluded that counselors consider research as remote from practice and view it with ambivalence. Margaretha Lucas (1996), then director of training at the University of Maryland Counseling Center, noted that "Research in our journals tends to answer many questions, but few that are asked by practitioners in their offices" (p. 81). Practitioners such as Lucas have good reasons for their ambivalence about career development theory and research. Simply stated, the major career theories and related bodies of research on vocational behavior generally lack utility for large segments of the population, and even the concept of career development itself may not be meaningful in the lives of most people (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994).

Only recently have career practitioners and researchers begun to openly discuss this rift between knowledge production and use. Their conversations suggest that career counselors and career researchers have fundamentally different vocational interests. Career counselors generally resemble the Social-Enterprising-Artistic (SEA) type whereas career researchers generally resemble the Investigative-Artistic-Social (IAS) type. This marked difference in vocational

interests means that counselors and researchers display different personality types, pursue different career goals, and assume different philosophical stances while living in different language communities that infrequently communicate with each other.

Because I enjoy living in the worlds of both practice and research, my own vocational interest was sparked ten years ago by a circular announcing the creation of a new journal that might use a different research dissemination model to bridge the gap between practice and research. In the advertisement, AJCD promised to inform readers about what other career professionals are doing, present the latest research on all aspects of career development, teach about issues in occupational information and labor market trends, and provide training on how to improve the delivery of career services. The overriding goal described in the first issue was to provide a forum for career practitioners, one in which they could share knowledge, disseminate information, and debate issues. Accordingly, the format differs from that of traditional academic journals. In addition to *research articles*, AJCD publishes *case studies*, *reviews* of material relevant to career professionals, a *research digest* to give readable summaries of research related to practice, and a *career forum* to give readers an opportunity to discuss troubling issues and share information from seminars, courses, and conferences. Collectively, these five sections promised to provide concrete assistance to career professionals as well as to raise philosophical questions related to career intervention.

This promise sounded too good to be true. Could we actually have a research journal for career practitioners, one that would not soon die from under-funding? After all, other journals, such as *Careers Today* and *Impact*, have tried and failed. Or, if AJCD succeeded would it be swallowed whole by scientists seeking one more outlet for their research on vocational behavior. Well, the answer is in your hands! After a decade, AJCD has flourished while remaining true to

its unique mission. This noteworthy achievement should be celebrated by all inhabitants of the career domain.

What makes AJCD so special to me is that it serves the reader, not the writer. AJCD concentrates on the reader by emphasizing knowledge dissemination and research utilization. Most other career and counseling journals to which I subscribe seem to serve the writer by providing peer review, constructive criticism, and citation impact ratings. These journals play an critical role in sustaining vocational psychology and advancing career counseling as a profession based on rigorous research. However, these journals do not communicate practice knowledge or help counselors utilize research. Practitioners need, and in AJCD have, a forum in which to communicate practice knowledge and to translate research findings into pragmatic action.

At the end of its first decade, AJCD is not remote from practice; it maintains the feel of the consulting room, not the research laboratory. Now the challenge for AJCD becomes two fold. It must hold itself and its audience together while at the same time advancing the field of career intervention. In its second decade, AJCD can hold us together as a community of practitioner-scholars by continuing to restore communication between practitioners and researchers, emphasizing the incorporation of research findings into clinical practice. As it promotes dialogue between practitioners and researchers, AJCD can advance the career field by championing a clinical science of career intervention to augment the basic sciences of vocational psychology and occupational sociology. This clinical theory and research should concentrate on producing and articulating practice knowledge which improves career intervention.

AJCD is uniquely situated to advance career intervention theory and research because the five sections in AJCD already emphasize practice knowledge and research utilization. In particular, the *case studies* section, my favorite section, already uses the premiere teaching and

learning model for building practice knowledge and prompting practitioner self-evaluation. In the *articles* section, I anticipate reading more reports of clinical qualitative research on the process, content, and outcomes of career intervention, emphasizing clinical significance not statistical significance. In the *research digest* section, I hope to read more accounts that sharpen clinical expertise and discuss best practice guidelines. And finally, in the *career forum* section I would appreciate studies about AJCD itself, ones that investigate how its approach to research dissemination influences the research consumption and utilization of practitioners. This would include, as a legitimate area of research, studies that investigate how the *review* section in AJCD communicates knowledge products. But before dreaming about the future, let us enjoy the present by celebrating the tenth anniversary of AJCD and congratulating its creators and contributors for fulfilling the promise they made a decade ago.

References

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