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Correlates of Vocational Maturity

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Dr. Jordaan has just described the development of the measures which may be considered indices of vocational maturity. It was expected that the boys would exhibit individual differences in coping with the vocational developmental tasks. After all, one of the very basic observations underlying the entire Career Pattern Study is that some individuals are able to function effectively and achieve vocational success and satisfaction, while others flounder aimlessly and frequently remain frustrated throughout their work span. One of the fundamental aims of this venture is to increase our knowledge of what causes the differences. Presumably, one of the basic factors which produce variations in career patterns is the quality of one's vocational maturity.

The behavior which is characteristic of vocational maturity is exceedingly complex, and we had a multitude of hypotheses about which particular variables are relevant or important to the understanding of vocational behavior. Since we were not certain which variables were crucial, we attempted to study the natural unfolding of the developmental process in such a way as to avoid altering the vocational process by the very act of studying it. Therefore, the Career Pattern Study is primarily at the natural history level of investigation rather than at the precisely controlled experimental level. Because

of this we were forced to remain at a level of investigation which would permit conclusions as to which variables tend to go together, or covary, or correlate, but which does not legitimately permit conclusions as to causation. Since it was recognized that we could not draw conclusions about causality it was decided to call the variables which were thought to have some bearing on vocational maturity correlates of vocational maturity. Some of the variables were thought to be determinants, others concomitants, still others were considered outcomes. Probably most of the variables are, in fact, combinations of these in that they are both outcomes of past behavior and determinants of future activity.

The Correlates

What kind of factors would one expect to be related to vocational maturity? Several major areas may logically be considered. Namely, the basic equipment that a boy possesses in terms of age, intelligence, and personal - social adjustment may be thought of as one group of variables. The environmental conditions and figures which serve as models for the boy form another group of forces. Finally, we would expect that the level of the boy's aspirations and the quality of his achievements would emerge from the interaction of the two sets of variables.

The Individual's Equipment

The individual possesses certain basic characteristics which are believed to be related to his vocational maturity. Quite obviously, as one advances from infancy to adulthood he becomes more mature. In fact, one of the fundamental ways in which

maturity measures are validated is to correlate them with age. However, the data being presented at this time were data collected from boys in a single grade. Therefore, the age range is drastically restricted, and even more significant, the older children in a given grade tend to be individuals who could not effectively compete with children of their own age and were left back. Conversely, the brighter individuals tended to be accelerated. Hence, the older boys tend to be the less effective individuals, while the younger boys tend to be more intelligent. In this sample there was a $-.61$ correlation between age and intelligence. In view of these considerations it is not surprising that age is not significantly and positively correlated with any of the vocational maturity indices. In line with the above formulation, the trend is in a negative direction. However, only the correlation with specificity of planning reaches significance in the negative direction.

Intelligence, on the other hand, tends to be positively and in most instances significantly correlated with the indices found in the vocational maturity cluster. It was expected that intelligence, the capacity to manipulate symbols, would be related to vocational maturity because bringing the psychological future symbolically into the present is the process by which one plans ahead. And planfulness appears to be one of the cardinal aspects of vocational maturity.

It seemed reasonable to hypothesize that the better adjusted boys would be more mature than boys ridden with conflicts. Two measures of personality adjustment were used, the total adjustment score of the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Test and

a scoring procedure for TAT stories developed by Miss Overstreet. Surprisingly, the two measures did not correlate with each other in the expected direction, nor did they relate to the indices of vocational maturity. The lack of relationship suggests that amount and variety of conflict within generally normal limits (most of the boys were reasonably normal) is not related to orientation to vocational choice. This conclusion must remain very tentative in view of the difficulty that has been encountered in establishing the statistical validity of most projective instruments.

As in the case of total adjustment, some of the more specific aspects of adjustment were also unrelated to vocational maturity. Social adjustment as measured by peer acceptance related to none of the indices. Identification with father barely reached significance in only the case of specificity of planning. However, adolescent independence, a Biographical Inventory measure of extent of engaging in activities without adult supervision correlated with both acceptance of responsibility for choice and planning, and with specificity of information.

Environment -- The Model

Old proverbs frequently summarize hard-won empirical findings. As suggested above in the father identification measures, the adages, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree", or "Like father like son", are digests of the rationale for the selection of many of the correlates. The effects of environment are so well accepted as determinants of behavior that no further justification is warranted in this presentation. Attempts were made

to measure variables reflecting parental behavior and accomplishments. These variables included the classical indices of socioeconomic status, such as level of parental occupation, size and condition of house, and the educational level of the father and mother. Some of the other environmental variables included parental mobility (in terms of whether the parents ascended or descended the vocational ladder as compared to the grandparents), and cultural stimulation (a Biographical Inventory measure designed to assess the extent of intellectual, artistic, literary and scientific activities engaged in by the family.) The various measures of socioeconomic status tended to correlate among themselves, indicating that they have qualities in common. However, parental occupational level was the only one of the social status variables that correlated positively and significantly with the vocational maturity indices. The other environmental variables generally did not correlate significantly with the maturity indices with the exception of cultural stimulation. The data suggest that sons of parents in the higher vocational ranks and boys from families which provide cultural stimulation tend to be more concerned with choice, tend to accept the responsibility for choice and planning, tend to have more specific information about the occupation they prefer, and tend to have made more specific plans with reference to their preferred occupation.

It is interesting to note some of the environmental variables which were generally found to be unrelated to the indices. Although parental vocational level did relate to maturity, the fathers' educational level had a low but significant correlation with only one of the indices, concern with choice. Mothers' educational level related to none of the indices. Birth order was also found to be an unimportant factor. That is, being the only child or the oldest sibling apparently is unrelated to

vocational maturity indices, again with the exception of concern with choice. It is also interesting that expression of parental vocational aspirations for the boys is not related to the indices. It did not seem to matter whether or not parents verbalized their own vocational aspirations for their sons. However, there was a slight tendency for boys who come from families who engage in many joint activities, cohesive families, to accept responsibility for choice and planning and to be more specific in their planning. Although there was no difference between the urban and rural boys in their concern with choice, the urban boys tended to accept responsibility for choice and planning more than their rural classmates, while the rural boys tended to have more specific information and plans about their preferred occupations than their city cousins.

Level of Aspiration and Achievement

As suggested previously, we would anticipate that a boy's level of aspiration and achievement would emerge out of the interplay of his intelligence, personality, and the environmental forces impinging upon him. The data reveal that the boys' stated vocational aspiration level is related to the vocational maturity indices. It was also found that boys whose aspirations were congruent with their vocational expectations showed more orientation to choice than the boys who also had vocational aspirations, but who did not express vocational expectations. Finally, current

accomplishments were found to be related to orientation to choice and planning. Thus, boys who earned high grades tended to exhibit a higher degree of vocational development. This tendency for achievers to be more mature was also seen in the positive and significant correlations between extent of activity and leadership in extracurricular activities and the orientation to choice indices.

The Vocational Maturity Syndrome

As Dr. Jordaan indicated, the intercorrelations among the various presumed indices of vocational maturity yielded a cluster of variables which characterize vocational maturity at the 9th grade level. The cluster may broadly be conceived as an orientation to vocational choice and planning, an awareness that one has to initiate certain actions in order to enter upon and successfully participate in the adult world of work. One of the major reasons for including the correlates in the study of vocational development is to have a framework in which to place the findings of the analysis of vocational maturity. Although our data do not permit us to say what causes some boys to be more vocationally mature than others, the data do facilitate intelligent speculation as to the determinants of this particular kind of maturity. An examination of the correlates of vocational maturity reveals that orientation to choice is part of a broader constellation of factors which may be regarded as the foundations and outcomes of effective pre-vocational functioning. We found that the groundwork for vocational maturity is laid in an intellectually and culturally stimulating home environment. This means that boys from families at the moderately high socio-

economic levels, the families which provide cultural enrichment are more inclined to be concerned with their vocational futures than boys from less fortunate homes. It is reasonable to assume that this heritage produces what is frequently described as the typical middle-class achievement and future-orientation complex. This complex manifests itself in several ways. It is seen in higher scores on a test of scholastic aptitude, and quite reasonably, in better performance in school as revealed by grades. It is also seen in greater activity and leadership in extracurricular activities. Finally, it is to be found in the boys' vocational aspirations and expectations. Boys from middle-class families who are relatively intelligent, and who do well in school tend to aspire to higher level jobs. These jobs call for lengthier preparation, greater skill, and more responsibility than the more highly structured, more rapidly mastered semi-skilled jobs. The higher level jobs require boys to plan early if they hope to acquire necessary skills and background.

Therefore, in this context of a middle-class future-oriented achievement syndrome it is not surprising that acceptance of responsibility, concern with choice, the acquisition of information, and the specification of plans are the kinds of indices which characterize vocational maturity. The data imply that vocational maturity is the combination of attributes which smooth the way for a successful and gratifying life in our work-oriented culture.

Caution

One of the most striking conclusions that can be drawn from looking at the tables of correlations is the low magnitude of the relationships. This reflects the complexity of the behavior which we are examining as well as the lack of precision of our measuring instruments. The low correlations also require us to view the conclusions that have been drawn as being more in the nature of hypotheses for further scrutiny rather than established facts.