

# Something Old and Something New: Future Directions in Vocational Research With People of Color in the United States

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## Abstract

Vocational psychology scholarship has largely overlooked the work experiences of people of color. In this article, we present evidence that vocational research that addresses the work issues of people of color has been neglected in the key outlets for vocational research among vocational psychologists. We outline seven directions for research inquiry with people of color, namely using culturally sensitive research methods, increasing research on the effectiveness of career interventions, integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, merging psychological and educational science with vocational development, using intersectional approaches, examining collective mobility strategies and structural reforms, and assessing the impact of environmental disasters on long-term educational and work outcomes.

## Keywords

research, racial/ethnic, Latino/a, African American, vocational, Asian, American, Native American

The United States is more racially and ethnically diverse today than it has been at any time in its history. U.S. demographics have been gradually shifting for several decades, and the Pew Research Center (2015) projects that in 25 years, no single group will comprise a majority of the population. Despite these demographic shifts, vocational psychology scholarship, both historically and recently, has largely overlooked the work experiences of people of color. The proportion of multicultural vocational psychology research compared to other vocational psychology research published in four career journals (i.e., *Journal of Career Assessment*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Journal of Career Development*, *Career Development Quarterly*) has ranged from 3.9% in the 1980s to 10.07% in the 2000s, with the first half of 2010s declining to 7.8% (Flores et al., 2006; B. H. Lee et al., 2017). Thus, when the representation of people of

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color is increasing in the United States, the proportion of research in the field on people of color is declining.

Although racial/ethnic issues are a pervasive force in our society, they receive considerably less attention in vocational scholarship in comparison to international and gender issues, which represented 22.5% and 11.1%, respectively, of vocational publications from 2005 to 2015 (Garriott, Faris, Frazier, Nisle, & Galluzzo, 2017; B. H. Lee et al., 2017). Moreover, since 1969, about 4.3% of all vocational research has focused on people of color as a whole, with a very small amount focused on the specific experiences of African Americans, Latinx, Asian Americans, and Native Americans (1.6%, 0.7%, 0.4%, and 0.2%, respectively). We know relatively little about vocational issues pertinent to specific racial/ethnic groups. It is clear that a radical transformation is needed in the field to significantly increase empirical knowledge about these workers that have long been important to our country's labor force and will continue to be in the future.

The state of multicultural research is concerning, given the experiences of oppression and marginalization that people of color encounter in educational systems, labor markets, and the workplace. By many accounts, racial tensions have risen in recent years, evidenced by social movements (i.e., Black Lives Matter and DREAMers) and campus movements (i.e., protests against racism on college/university campuses) that have spotlighted racial inequalities. School and work are key environments in which the insidious effects of discrimination are obvious, as corroborated by racial disparities in access to quality education as well as educational and occupational opportunities and outcomes (Flores, 2013). Vocational psychology research with people of color is essential to addressing the social, institutional, and interpersonal barriers that contribute specifically to racial and ethnic disparities in education and work. In addition to developing multicultural vocational research, the field can benefit from conceptual and theoretical advancements, such as the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) and Framework (Blustein, 2001; Blustein, Kenny, DiFabio, & Guichard, 2019; Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016), that focus on addressing diverse workers on the margins of society.

We are honored to have received this invitation to discuss future directions in vocational research with people of color in the United States. The ideas that we present here are aimed at the next generation of scholars—current students and early career professionals—who will be shaping this field of research in the years to come. In this article, we outline our vision for an expanded research agenda to increase understanding of the vocational development of people of color. We have generated seven directions that we hope will produce future empirical research on work among people of color and that will draw scholars who are interested in conducting social justice-oriented research that can make a difference in the lives of people of color. We have recycled some recommendations that we believe are important to reinforce (something old) and offer new directions for expanding the lines of inquiry on the work lives of people of color (something new).

### **One: Use Culturally Sensitive Methodological Approaches**

Our professional ethics (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017) mandate that our work behaviors reflect the highest ideals of conduct as mental health professionals who are entrusted to care for the welfare of others. The general principles should guide our research activities. *Beneficence and nonmaleficence* speak to conducting research and using the findings of our research in a way to help and not harm others. *Respect for people's rights and dignity* requires us to respect cultural differences in its many forms when engaging in research, and *justice* addresses the profession's ability to produce products that benefit all members of our society. As indicated earlier, our profession must make significant advances in research with people of color to ensure that our

services (which are primarily grounded in research conducted with predominantly White samples) are meaningful to these communities. Readers are encouraged to access the relevant professional guidelines for research with culturally diverse communities to ensure that culturally sensitive conceptual and methodological approaches are utilized when conducting research with people of color (e.g., APA, 2000, 2003; Delgado-Romero, Singh, & De Los Santos, 2018; Hall, Yip, & Zárata, 2016; Hardin, Robitschek, Flores, Navarro, & Ashton, 2014; Leong, Leung, & Cheung, 2010; Ojeda, Flores, Rosales, & Morales, 2011; Okazaki & Sue, 1995; Ponterotto, 2010; Torres, Mata-Greve, Bird, & Hernandez, 2018; Wilkinson-Lee, Armenta, Nuño, Moore-Monroy, & Hopkins, 2018).

In addition to acquiring the requisite cultural competencies for conducting research and adhering to recommended research guidelines, it is critical that the profession reflect on those institutional and professional barriers that limit the production of research with people of color. For example, we need to assess how we are training graduate students in general in vocational issues (is it presented as an attractive area of inquiry with connections to social justice and advocacy?) and we need to expose undergraduate students who are interested in pursuing research careers to scholarship in this area. Further, we must work within our institutions to improve the recruitment and retention of faculty of color and advocate for institutional policies (i.e., annual reviews, merit, tenure, and promotion) that reward scholars for conducting research in community settings. Research with people of color outside of higher education settings is time-consuming because it involves building relationships within the community and gaining the trust of the community members that the research is meant to help. Faculty who are interested in engaging in this research, particularly those who are tenure-track faculty at research institutions, may not pursue research with people of color if the use of culturally appropriate research methodologies are not understood or recognized by those who are evaluating their research outputs against standards that bias faculty with research programs using easy-to-access populations.

## **Two: Design Educational and Work Interventions and Assess Their Effectiveness With People of Color**

A number of conceptual models have been developed to guide career counseling practice with people of color (e.g., Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002; Fouad & Bingham, 1995; Leong & Brown, 1995; Leong, 2010; Leong & Hartung, 1997), and scholars have offered recommendations for best practices in multicultural career counseling (e.g., *Journal of Career Development's* 2010 Special Issue; Walsh and Heppner's [2006] *Handbook for Career Counseling for Women*) that are grounded in the profession's multicultural competencies. However, to date, most of the multicultural career intervention literature has been conceptual, with little empirical research assessing the effectiveness of vocational interventions with people of color (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Brown et al., 2003; Heppner & Heppner, 2003; Whiston, Li, Mitts, & Wright, 2017). In fact, prior meta-analyses of career intervention studies have been unable to explore race/ethnicity as moderators because prior studies did not report this data or did not include sufficient numbers of participants of color.

Vocational psychologists have made valuable contributions in designing educational and vocational interventions that target youth and young adults of color (e.g., Ali, Brown, & Loh, 2017; Fouad, 1995; Kenny, Bower, Perry, Blustein, & Amtzis, 2004; McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 2000; K. M. O'Brien, Dukstein, Jackson, Tomlinson, & Kamatuka, 1999; Turner & Conkel, 2010). Future research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these interventions on the educational and career outcomes of students of color. For instance, research can examine whether various treatment modalities (e.g., individual counseling, group counseling, workshops, classes) are more effective than others or explore the effects of the five critical components of vocational interventions identified by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) on career outcomes with people of color. This research

should follow rigorous research design to establish evidence for empirically supported treatments, such as the use of a control group, multiple treatment groups, and random assignment of participants.

Given the link between work and well-being (Blustein, 2008), future intervention research with people of color should expand the outcomes to include noncareer variables. For example, prior research has found that career interventions produce benefits that extend beyond vocational outcomes such as decreasing depression and anxiety (Davidson, Nitzel, Duke, Baker, & Bovaird, 2012) and enhancing self-determination (Sheftel, Lindstrom, & McWhirter, 2014), meaning in life (Dik, Scholljegerdes, Ahn, & Shim, 2015), and critical consciousness (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006). Given the paucity of people of color in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) fields, we encourage vocational psychologists to assess the effectiveness of educational and vocational interventions with middle school and high school students that aim to increase involvement in STEM fields among students of color. Finally, research can assess the role of counselors' cultural competencies on career counseling processes and outcomes with people of color. Advancing intervention research with people of color as well as translating research findings to practice necessitates that vocational scholars collaborate closely with career practitioners to design, implement, and assess these interventions.

### **Three: Integrate Interdisciplinary Perspectives to Understand the Work Experiences of People of Color**

Scholarship across disciplines provides a rich and nuanced context about race and ethnicity that may facilitate understanding of the vocational development of people of color. Vocational issues among people of color are intertwined with issues that are studied across disciplines, calling for collaborations to tease apart these complex topics and their effects on work. Vocational psychologists are working with scholars in disciplines outside of psychology and integrating other disciplinary perspectives within vocational psychology research. The underrepresentation of people of color in STEM fields is widely recognized (National Science Foundation, 2018) and has received considerable attention in the vocational literature (e.g., Lent et al., 2018). Addressing a social issue as significant as this requires the broad involvement of scholars who can provide differing perspectives to understand the enduring restriction of a large segment of workers from STEM education and employment. Within this area of research, vocational psychologists have established collaborations with STEM and education scholars, elementary and secondary teachers, and workers in these industries, enriching understanding of persistence and satisfaction in STEM fields among students of color (Byars-Winston, 2014; Byars-Winston, Estrada, Howard, Davis, & Zalapa, 2010; Graham, Frederick, Byars-Winston, Hunter, & Handelsman, 2013; Navarro et al., 2014).

While some interdisciplinary collaborations already exist, an area for developing future interdisciplinary collaborations is with economists. These scholars have demonstrated interest in race-related issues evidenced by their examinations of employment and income trends of people of color (Chetty, Hendren, Jones, & Porter, 2018; Darity, 2005). For example, economic analyses of race and ethnicity have demonstrated labor market inequalities for minoritized individuals, including discrimination against job-seekers whose names sound African American compared to those with White-sounding names (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). This area of research allows vocational psychologists to unpack issues related to employer bias, the psychological implications of discrimination for people of color, and to provide insight into interventions for employers.

Interdisciplinary collaboration can also strengthen vocational psychology's approach to research with people of color by broadening the methodologies that we use to understand our research questions. Specifically, collaboration is needed with scholars from disciplines that are at the forefront of culturally competent research methods such as ethnic studies, sociology, and anthropology. Participatory action research (PAR) is one methodology developed by educational scholars and

adopted by vocational psychologists to advance research agendas that include people of color by collaborating with research participants, seeking to understand the historical and experiential perspectives of communities. An example of a qualitative method used in community-based participatory research includes the use of photovoice, where participants are given cameras to take photos that represent the research theme; their descriptions of the photos are used to build narratives *in their words* to reflect their perspective about the issue. This approach was recently applied in a study that examined how first-generation college students make meaning of their educational and vocational experiences and trajectory (Jehangir & Telles, 2019). It was also used to examine the experiences of African American and Latina women community health workers in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina (Scheib & Lykes, 2013). An approach that may extend applications of PAR to vocational psychology research is the emancipatory communitarian perspective. Within this framework, vocational psychologists seek to change systems that maintain oppression for people of color in the world of work, for example, by incorporating interventions into their research (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005). Diemer (2009) integrated these values in a study that examined the influence of sociopolitical development on the vocational development of youth of color. Importantly, he provided attainable, practical suggestions for educators to increase youths' sociopolitical development. These approaches demonstrate some of the many opportunities for interdisciplinary work to advance constructs, theories, and methodologies well suited to address the vocational issues of people of color in the future.

Integrating interdisciplinary perspectives in vocational research provides new lenses to advance our understanding of work among people of color. Although calls for interdisciplinary research are not novel (Arthur, 2008), there continues to be limited vocational research that integrates multiple disciplinary perspectives, despite common goals across disciplines. To develop more interdisciplinary work, we suggest that vocational psychologists (a) seek to publish their work in journals outside of career/vocational psychology to broaden exposure of the work conducted in our field, (b) identify scholars with common research interests on and off campus for collaboration opportunities, (c) identify areas in which consultants from other disciplines may provide insight into projects we are designing, and (d) identify barriers to interdisciplinary scholarship and act to diminish them. Vocational psychologists can offer valuable expertise (e.g., vocational theories, assessment) on interdisciplinary teams addressing work-related issues, such as diversifying both students and faculty in higher education, increasing access to college among DREAMers, integrating refugees and immigrants into the educational and work settings in the communities where they settle, enhancing job quality in working-class occupations, and enhancing the representation of people of color in STEM fields.

#### **Four: Align Psychological and Educational Science With Vocational Theories and Scholarship**

Theories that advance the fields of psychology and education have been essential in developing knowledge of vocational development. For example, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory is central to Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994, 2000) social cognitive career theory, and Super's (1980) life-span, life-space approach utilizes principles of human development to characterize life span roles as they relate to career development. However, as psychology's subdisciplines have become more specialized with time, these disciplines have also become more siloed. Strengthening collaborations and staying abreast of the current psychological literature would benefit vocational research by providing new perspectives from which to understand vocational issues for people of color.

Clinical and health psychology are two areas that may be instrumental in advancing research agendas that serve people of color. Research has established that the long history of racism and

discrimination in the United States has rendered people of color vulnerable to physical and mental health disparities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Several studies have examined the complex ways in which race-related stress, or the experience of acute and chronic exposure to racism and discrimination (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999), has acute and lifelong implications for individuals and even future generations (Harrell et al., 2011). Race-based stress has been found to impact individuals' psychological and physiological states. Exposure to racial microaggressions increases risk of depression and negative affect (Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Hamit, & Rasmus, 2012). Research has demonstrated that psychosocial stress, such as microaggressions, can "get under the skin" and change stress physiology (McEwen, 2012). Experiencing microaggressions is associated with cortisol production, a stress hormone that is implicated in heightening health and disease risks (Korous, Causadias, & Casper, 2017). Another study demonstrated that exposure to microaggressions was positively associated with greater changes in diurnal cortisol patterns in a sample of African American and Latinx young adults (Zeiders, Landor, Flores, & Brown, 2018).

Psychological research has demonstrated the complex and pervasive ways in which race and ethnicity impact individuals' lives, and more scholarship in vocational psychology should focus on how these experiences are related to the work decisions and experiences of people of color. One preliminary study demonstrated that socioeconomic and culture-related stressors serve as barriers to purposeful development for youth of color (Gutowski, White, Liang, Diamonti, & Berado, 2018). Future research can explore exposure to racial microaggressions in school and in the workplace and their relation to outcomes such as academic achievement, job satisfaction, job tenure, and leadership opportunities. Finally, future research can expand prior work on the effects of minority stress exposure on the career trajectories of sexual orientation minorities (Dispenza, Brown, & Chastai, 2016) to encompass people of color. Thus, more research is suggested that focuses on the role of both microaggressions and minority stress more broadly on the work-related decisions and trajectories across the life span of people of color.

Another developing research area that can be broadened is fusing educational concepts with psychological and vocational theories. A particularly promising area of work pursued by vocational psychologists (e.g., Matthew Diemer, Ellen McWhirter) is in critical consciousness (Freire, 2000), an educational and political concept that describes how marginalized and oppressed people gain awareness of the world, especially with regard to social justice issues. Critical consciousness approaches to counseling and career development can assist people of color in leveraging their social awareness to improve their career outcomes (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016). Research suggests that higher levels critical consciousness promote academic persistence (Cadenas, Bernstein, & Tracey, 2018) and occupational attainment (Rapa, Diemer, & Bañales, 2018) among youth of color, including those who are undocumented, working-class, and poor. Little vocational psychology research, however, has examined dual consciousness, the co-occurrence of critical consciousness beliefs with beliefs supporting status quo social relations, such as system justification beliefs (Godfrey & Wolf, 2016). Studies of dual consciousness have examined outcomes such as attributions for inequality and educational planning among low-income and immigrant women of color (e.g., Bullock & Limbert, 2003; Godfrey & Wolf, 2016). They indicate that critical consciousness and system justification commonly co-occur within marginalized groups. This is significant, given that beliefs supporting the status quo may impede the development of robust forms of critical consciousness and related behaviors, such as collective action. It would be fruitful to examine the effects of dual consciousness on the career development of people of color. Intervention research could also explore how critical consciousness beliefs can be promoted among youth of color while attending to system justification beliefs that may also impact their decision-making, self-efficacy, and conceptions of the world of work. The assessment of critical consciousness and system

justification beliefs as distinct constructs, rather than two ends of a continuum, will be essential (Godfrey & Wolf, 2016).

## **Five: Enrich Intersectionality in Vocational Psychology Scholarship**

Members of marginalized groups face systems of power that limit their freedom and impede their lives. Those subordinated within multiple systems experience unique hardships and, frequently, develop creative forms of resistance in response to the oppression they face (Moane, 2010). Activism and intellectual movements have drawn attention to the intertwined effects of racism, colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy in the lives of diverse people, and scholars have urged psychologists to increase understanding of these and other complex forms of oppression and power (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Grzanka, Santos, & Moradi, 2017; Moradi & Granka, 2017; Shin et al., 2017). This work is now referred to as intersectional psychological research and advocacy.

Vocational psychologists have applied intersectional approaches to exploring the work lives of people of color. Notable examples include qualitative inquiries on the career development of prominent women of color (Gomez et al., 2001; Richie et al., 1997) and quantitative applications of vocational theories with women of color (e.g., Flores & O'Brien, 2002; McWhirter, Hackett, & Bandalos, 1998) and men of color (e.g., Arevalo Avalos & Flores, 2016; Ojeda & Pina-Watson, 2013). Still much of the intersectional research on vocational issues seems to be conducted by scholars outside of vocational psychology (e.g., Collins, Dumas, & Moyer, 2017; Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Harris, 2014; L. T. O'Brien, Blodorn, Adams, Garcia, & Hammer, 2015; Tariq & Syed, 2018; Yu, 2014, 2016). Several axes of difference also remain underexplored in the intersectional psychological literature, particularly social class, religion, and transgender issues (Ali, Yamada, & Mahmood, 2015; R. M. Lee & Dean, 2004; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Reimers & Stabb, 2015), raising issues of inequity in research investment.

Epistemological and methodological concerns related to intersectional approaches are similarly important to consider. Moradi and Grzanka (2017) and Shin and colleagues (2017) have argued that intersectionality research in psychology should move away from a focus on static identity categories with little social or historical context and toward approaches that meaningfully represent social structures, power dynamics, and forms of critical praxis intended to address interlocking oppressions. Research using additive models should be reconsidered in favor of research that more accurately examines "the manifestation of experience" for an individual (Warner, 2008). For example, Warner (2008) suggests that authors be explicit in their studies about which identities are accounted for and which are not and include a rationale for conducting research with multiple "master" identity categories (McCall, 2005) such as race, gender, and class. Recommendations have also been made to strengthen the integration of intersectionality theory within quantitative designs (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016) that can be applied to vocational psychology research. Multilevel modeling can be used to examine the influence of contextual factors, such as school- and neighborhood-level socioeconomic status, alongside factors including ethnicity and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) identities as they impact outcomes such as academic achievement among highly heterogeneous groups like Asian American and Latinx youth. Warner (2008) further recommends that researchers consider both the strengths and limitations of statistical analyses in performing intersectional tests and notes that social identities are in an emergent *process* influenced by institutional and societal factors (Bowleg, 2008; Warner, 2008).

Realizing the opportunities and meeting the challenges inherent in intersectional research with people of color require sustained attention in vocational psychology. New tools and theories are needed to support this endeavor, to replace research practices that lend themselves toward representations of social phenomena that are incompatible with intersectionality theory (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). Wong, Wang, and Farmer's (2018) dynamic paradigm of

ethnic culture, for example, examines contextual and temporal influences that impact ethnic culture, emphasizing its “fragmented, subjective, antiessentialist, and performative nature” (p. 1). Measures designed to transcend additive and multiplicative approaches to quantitative intersectional research include the Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Black women (Lewis & Neville, 2015) and Asian American women (Keum et al., 2018), the Black Men’s Experiences Scale (Bowleg et al., 2016), and the Gendered Racism Scales for Asian American Men (Liu, Wong, Maffini, Mitts, & Iwamoto, 2018).

Additional measures are needed to support research with Latinx, Middle Eastern, and American Indian and Alaska Native populations. More specific and contextualized measures of social class and experiences of classism among people of color are also needed (Brannon, Higginbotham, & Henderson, 2017; Brannon & Markus, 2013; Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Reimers, 2013; W. M. Liu, 2013), given the historically racialized and gendered nature of economic oppression in the United States (Acker, 2006; Glenn, 2009) and the overrepresentation of working-class White men in discussions of economic disadvantage (Draut, 2018b; Spanierman, Garriott, & Clark, 2013). The relative invisibility of people of color, particularly women of color and LBGTQI+ people of color, in social class research is especially striking since Whites make up only half of the members of the U.S. working class ages 25–34, down from 60% in 2000 (Draut, 2018b). Further, it is estimated that people of color will constitute a majority of all members of the U.S. working class as soon as 2032 (Wilson, 2016).

With its primary focus on the opportunities and challenges that individuals encounter in educational institutions, labor markets, and workplaces, vocational psychology is an ideal discipline to capitalize on intersectionality research recommendations. Race, immigration status, and religion present avenues for exploring intersectionality in vocational psychology. Muslim women face different forms of discrimination in the workplace that ultimately affect their job satisfaction (Ali et al., 2015). Work earnings may also be affected: In 2000, median earnings for Middle Eastern men were slightly higher than average native U.S. workers (Camarota, 2002), but by 2016, median incomes of households headed by immigrants of Middle Eastern or North African descent were lower than households headed by someone born in the United States (Cumoletti & Batalova, 2018). For individuals emigrating from the Middle East, data suggest an impact on earning patterns in recent years that have not sufficiently been evaluated. With future research, vocational psychologists can look exclusively at the experiences of Muslim women, Muslim men, and individuals who appear racially similar but are of a different religion (such as from the Sikh tradition) and correlate rates of perceived workplace discrimination, comorbid health diagnoses, effects of allyship, and general career satisfaction.

As members of the “baby boom” generation approach retirement (Delgado, 2014), the “graying” of the nation presents another promising line for intersectional research in vocational psychology. By 2030, an estimated 18% of U.S. adults will be 65 years of age or older (Barry, 2010), and older adults of color will make up a greater portion of this population than earlier cohorts (Delgado, 2014). People of color in the United States face cumulative economic disadvantages over their lifetime that results in lower average retirement savings (McKernan, Ratcliffe, Steuerle, & Zhang, 2013) and higher rates of poverty and employment past the federally recognized age of retirement (Cawthorne, 2008). This is especially true for women of color and LBGTQI+ people of color (Delgado, 2014). Research in the coming decade can explore the effects of race/ethnicity in interaction with gender, class, sexual orientation, and health status on the retirement and extended employment experiences of people of color. Vocational psychologists can also study and help raise awareness about the threats that racist beliefs and practices pose to social programs that benefit older adults, following similar work on the impacts of racism on support for U.S. welfare policies (e.g., Limbert & Bullock, 2005).

The retirement and aging of Baby Boomers is occurring at a time when fewer adults are serving as unpaid family caregivers. Professional caregiving and other branches of domestic work are among the fastest-growing occupations in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). This has led to an increase in labor activism of the paid care workforce that supports the nation's elders (Boris & Nadasen, 2008). This line of work is carried out primarily by working-class and poor women of color, many of whom are immigrants (Burnham & Theodore, 2012; PHI, 2018). Rather than being celebrated as a skilled, life-affirming job that is essential for social reproduction (Fisher & Tronto, 1990), paid domestic work continues to be denigrated as “dirty” and shameful (Bosmans et al., 2016; Yu, 2016). Underlying its stigma are powerful structural antecedents, such as labor and immigration policies that perpetuate the insecurity of domestic work (Abrego, 2014; Tronto, 2013). Historically, domestic work has also been shaped by heteropatriarchy (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Richardson & Schaeffer, 2013) and systemic racism and colonialism that have infused labor policy (Ervin, 2017; Glenn, 2009; Nadasen, 2016). We believe that supporting the workplace well-being (Burnham & Theodore, 2012; Espinoza, 2017) and vibrant labor organizing (Boris & Nadasen, 2008; Gupta, Lerner, & McCartin, 2018; Tait, 2016) of this workforce should be a priority of future intersectional research.

## **Six: Examine Collective Mobility Strategies and Structural Reforms Aiding Marginalized Populations**

A central aim of vocational psychology's social justice movement has been to support the upward social mobility of members of marginalized groups (Blustein et al., 2005; Fouad & Fitzpatrick, 2009). The field has traditionally pursued this agenda by promoting the attainment of higher education and professional employment. This approach has been critiqued for class bias (Lee & Dean, 2004; Liu & Ali, 2005)—specifically, “upward mobility bias” that reflects the broader cultural and economic trend of devaluing working-class jobs.

While we find this critique essential, we believe it should be reframed to promote *collective* social mobility and equitable structural reform in today's economic and educational systems, to combat the racial stratification and economic inequality growing in the United States since the 1970s (see Chetty et al., 2018; Darity, 2005). This approach reflects a variety of public and worker-led efforts to ensure democratic access to tools for economic security (Draut, 2018a; Gupta et al., 2018; Milkman, 2017). These tools include living wages and labor rights for all those who work, fairly funded and universally accessible pre-K–16 public education, and job creation and job quality in essential industries like health care, education, domestic work, green energy and infrastructure, and the STEM fields (Burnham & Theodore, 2012; Evans & Tilly, 2016; Kalleberg, 2011; Paul, Darity, Hamilton, & Zaw, 2018; Warhurst, Carré, Findlay, & Tilly, 2012).

Initiatives promoting collective upward mobility and structural reform have played a central role in racial justice movements throughout U.S. history. African American (Ervin, 2017; Kelley, 1996) and Latinx civil rights struggles (Glenn, 2009; Zolniski, 2008), as well as indigenous sovereignty movements (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Glenn, 2009; Temin, 2018), have consistently called for economic dignity and self-determination for people of color while challenging underlying economic and political structures that produce racialized poverty and economic dispossession. Antiracist, immigrant, and indigenous rights organizing today bear clear connections to the economic concerns of earlier movements (Tait, 2016; Taylor, 2016, 2017; Zolniski, 2008). They are also interrelated with modern economic justice movements such as Occupy Wall Street (Milkman, 2017; Moody, 2017) and those addressing the role of the global economic system in climate change (Jacobsen, 2018). Recently, Hargons and colleagues (2017) introduced the policy platform released by Black Lives Matter in 2016 (Movement for Black Lives, 2016). Relevant to vocational psychology, the platform includes subsections on reparations, economic justice programs including federal and state jobs

guarantees and labor rights reforms, and investment–divestment strategies to promote economic development and collective self-determination, such as a constitutional guarantee for fully funded public education.

Immigrant organizing has also advanced influential economic demands over the past decade. Perhaps most notable, the DREAMer movement has campaigned extensively for access to in-state college tuition for students who are undocumented (Milkman, 2017). They have secured victories in eight states including New Jersey, California, Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Minnesota, and Washington, with one victory recently overturned in Arizona (Hing, 2018). Research has begun to document the positive collective effects of DREAMer activism among undocumented youth, such as increased critical consciousness, college persistence (Cadenas et al., 2018), and the development of extensive political and professional networks that support social mobility for undocumented students and their families (Eisema, Fiorito, & Montero-Sieburth, 2014).

Low-wage, politically mobilized immigrant workers and immigrant parents of U.S. public school students have similarly had important effects on educational and labor policy in recent years (Tait, 2016; Yu, 2014; Zlolniski, 2008). Haitian, Central American, and Chinese immigrant organizations were instrumental in overturning (Vaznis, 2017; Yu, 2014) a 2002 Massachusetts law that eliminated bilingual education programs from the state’s public K–12 schools. Organizing by predominantly Latinx immigrant farmworkers through the Coalition of Immokalee Workers has led to significant changes in labor practices within the U.S. fast food industry’s supply chain (Tait, 2016). Somali refugees employed in Amazon distribution centers in Minnesota also recently won the first recorded labor concessions in the company’s 24-year history (Weise, 2018). Another notable example is the leadership of immigrant workers in the Service Employee International Union’s Fight for US\$15 campaign (Tait, 2016). To date, the campaign has succeeded in raising the minimum wage in more than 25 U.S. states, cities, and counties (Blake, 2018). The mental health benefits of minimum wage increases have been noted (Smith, 2015), but their implications for academic and career development have yet to be explored.

As long as the structural foundations of racial stratification and economic inequality remain intact, vocational psychology will be impeded from supporting the economic well-being of most people of color. Racial justice organizations, their coalition partners, and members of the public have been working across the country to undermine these foundations and promote collective social mobility through labor, education, and immigration reforms. These efforts represent a generative area for future research in vocational psychology. To date, the types of campaigns described above have primarily received attention in social psychology and sociology research on collective action (e.g., Fritsche & Jugert, 2017; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Van Zomeren, 2013; Yu, 2014). The conceptual models employed in these studies could be integrated with theory from vocational psychology, such as SCCT models that focus on social justice efficacy and structural reform (e.g., Autin, Duffy, & Allan, 2017; Cadenas et al., 2018). We also see numerous opportunities for propositions from PWT (Duffy et al., 2016) to be tested in the context of racial and economic justice organizing and forms of civic engagement focused on creating an equitable economy and educational system (e.g., protest and voting behavior). For example, we are currently investigating the impact of the 2018 educator strikes and walkouts on critical consciousness and access to decent work among a diverse sample of pre-K–12 teachers. Future studies could examine longitudinally the impact of ballot initiatives to raise local or state minimum wages among low-income workers of color. Studying ballot initiatives may be an especially valuable entry point for vocational psychologists to begin to consider the effects of collective action on work, given their increasing use in the United States to improve wages and working conditions (Kelly, 2018), as well as their extended time frame and breadth of public participation relative to other forms of labor activity. Finally, we believe research on how collective action affects minority stress (e.g., Breslow et al., 2015; Szymanski, 2012; Velez & Moradi, 2016) should be expanded to encompass students,

workers, and parents of color who participate in economic justice activism or advocacy for education equity.

## **Seven: Explore the Impact of Environmental Disasters on Long-Term Education and Work Outcomes in Vulnerable Communities**

Intensifying environmental disasters associated with climate change have devastated a significant number of communities in recent years and disrupted the work and educational lives of individuals in these communities (Handmer et al., 2012). Several of these disasters (i.e., Hurricanes Katrina, Harvey, and Maria) were especially destructive and wreaked havoc in communities with high concentrations of low-income people of color, supporting environmental justice frameworks that link exposure to harmful environmental conditions within these communities to unjust and racist policies that increase their susceptibility to mental and physical health concerns (Santiago-Rivera, Talka, & Tully, 2006). Stressors associated with disasters (e.g., displacement, loss of employment and income, educational systems closing and losing quality teachers/faculty, loss of school records, loss of social supports) are manifested in psychological symptoms and trauma well beyond the actual event (Elliott & Pais, 2006; Mortensen, Wilson, & Ho, 2009; Tuason, Guss, & Carroll, 2012; Weisler, Barbee, & Townsend, 2006). Youth are particularly susceptible to increased mental health symptoms following disasters (Roberts, Mitchell, Witman, & Taffaro, 2010; Ward & Shelley, 2008). Moreover, secondary exposure to these disasters affects people of color with ties to the devastated areas (Capielo Rosario, Abreu, Gonzalez, & Cardenas Bautista, in press).

In spite of the risk of mental health concerns among those who have survived disasters, few survivors meet with a mental health professional after the event (Leon, Hyre, Ompad, DeSalvo, & Munter, 2007), and many experience difficulty in accessing mental health care (Legerski, Vernberg, & Noland, 2012; Mortensen et al., 2009; Tuason et al., 2012; Weisler et al., 2006). This is particularly concerning given that people of color face preexisting barriers to health-care access (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, & Ananeh-Firempong, 2003) and are more likely to report job loss, a decline in income, high levels of current, short-term and long-term perceived stress (Elliott & Pais, 2006), and difficulty finding a job (Zottarelli, 2008) than Whites following disasters. These losses, coupled with the challenges in rebuilding their lives after a disaster, put people of color at high risk of mental health concerns. In the aftermath of a disaster, interventions aimed at facilitating the reemployment of people of color can be critical in restoring their mental health (Zottarelli, 2008).

Professionals have noted the importance of reopening schools to allow youth to return to a regular schedule (Ward & Shelley, 2008). It is also important that college students whose education was disrupted because of the disaster continue their education. A study of low-income women found that high pre- and postdisaster educational optimism, low postdisaster psychological distress, and few postdisaster hours of employment were related to community college reenrollment following Hurricane Katrina (Lowe & Rhodes, 2012). More research is needed to understand the factors that facilitate students' educational reentry following a disaster.

Research indicates that the lack of government response to disasters can affect the mental health and work-related cognitions among people of color, even if they did not experience the devastation firsthand. For instance, Puerto Ricans living on the U.S. mainland reported feelings of pain and sadness as a result of perceiving that Puerto Ricans were neglected by the U.S. government in Hurricane Maria's aftermath (Capielo Rosario et al., in press). Survivors of Hurricane Katrina reported a similar loss of trust and faith in the government following the disaster (Tuason et al., 2012). Research suggests that this lack of trust in the government may impact work cognitions. Researchers found that African Americans reported lower endorsements of Protestant work ethic beliefs, with no change among European Americans, after being primed to think about the federal response to Hurricane Katrina (Levy, Freitas, Mendoza-Denton, Kugelmass, & Rosenthal, 2010).

Vocational psychologists can extend this research to people of color, to understand how vicarious exposure to natural disasters and trust in local, state, and federal agencies to assist communities of color in need impacts personal agency in school and work.

Vocational researchers can also contribute to prevention efforts to minimize the disruption to school and work prior to a disaster as well as recovery efforts postdisaster. Vocational psychologists should coordinate research and prevention efforts with other psychologists (Gheytanchi et al., 2007), such as ecological psychologists, as well as stakeholders in communities of color such as clergy (Aten, Topping, Denney, & Hosey, 2011) to address facilitators and barriers to reemployment experienced by people of color (Lyons, 2011) who remain in communities impacted by disasters and those who are displaced to other locations. Vocational psychologists can work with employers in communities devastated by a disaster to assess their employees' disaster-related stressors and coping strategies and their effects on job and life outcomes (i.e., job and life satisfaction, work hope, mental health). Research can also explore work-related supports that facilitate recovery from the disaster and mitigate the negative mental health effects experienced by school/university closures among youth of color and job loss among adults of color.

In the long term, vocational psychologists should address underlying forms of social, political, and economic marginalization that increase vulnerability to disasters among people of color, particularly those who are low-income, immigrants, and disenfranchised within the U.S. political system, such as Puerto Ricans. Vocational psychologists can assess access to and perceptions of government support among people of color in communities highly vulnerable to disaster, such as low-lying coastal and island communities, as well as the cultural sensitivity (Legerski et al., 2012) and effectiveness of government programs in assisting in the recovery process (Lyons, 2011). Research can also focus on the work experiences of temporary workers, who are often persons of color and immigrants, who move into these devastated communities to help in the rebuilding process (i.e., Latinx in New Orleans). Finally, vocational psychologists can advocate for implementing programs that would create sustainable, high-quality green energy and infrastructure jobs. Such programs would promote access to decent work among people of color while reducing environmental factors that contribute to disasters (Paul et al., 2018).

## Conclusion

Multiple calls over the years (e.g., Byars-Winston, Fouad, & Wen, 2015; Flores & Ali, 2004; Pope, 2012) have done little to increase the generation of multicultural vocational research. The field *must* make strides in developing empirical knowledge that addresses the work and academic needs of people of color in the United States. We need more research with participants from specific cultural groups, that can inform the development of new vocational theories that account for the vocational behaviors of people of color, and that clarifies the most effective strategies in helping people of color in their educational and vocational endeavors. Culturally relevant vocational theory and practice for people of color in the United States will continue to evolve if there is a significant research base to inform these areas and if researchers and practitioners work together to translate research to practice. As a field, we must periodically assess progress to determine whether our research reflects the experiences of our diverse labor force and meets societal needs. We are confident that the next generation of vocational psychology researchers have the talent to take the field where it needs to be.

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