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Cultural Foundations

ASSESSING INTERESTS: HARRY DEXTER KITSON'S INFLUENCE ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND COLLEGE CAREER
ADVISING (151 pp.)

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The purpose of this dissertation was to understand the influence of Dr. Harry Dexter Kitson on the fields of vocational psychology, vocational guidance and subsequently on college career advising. As an early practitioner of vocational guidance, Dr. Kitson held the view that individuals could conduct self analysis of their interests using occupational information and 'trying out' to explore and chose vocations. During the same time, other prominent vocational psychologists were developing vocational tests to assess interests and make vocational choice more scientific. These contrasting views were based on two different understandings of the self. Kitson's interpretation of self was based on the teaching of James Rowland Angell, a student of Dewey, who believed that the self was not static but changed with experience while those who advocated vocational testing held a scientific view of self as an object with traits that could be tested and identified.

Analysis of texts related to these differing paradigms was conducted in order to understand their roots. By reading college career websites in Ohio, it was concluded that college career advisers often confuse the two counseling paradigms.

Although Kitson is not recognized as the source for contemporary career advising strategies, most career advisers in liberal arts colleges embrace the philosophy of self analysis he advocated as they encourage students to learn about themselves, explore career information online and gain experience through internships.