Multicultural Career Counseling: Ten Essentials for Training

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Multicultural Career Counseling: Ten Essentials for Training

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In the past 20 years, several changes have taken place within the field of counseling and psychology with regard to practice and research with individuals from racial/ethnic groups. At the same time, the United States population has experienced a dramatic shift in its composition. Both have contributed to transformations in graduate training. This article will highlight salient aspects from the multicultural literature regarding culturally competent practice and apply it to the training of vocational counselors.

KEY WORDS: multicultural; career counseling; graduate training.

Never before has the United States population consisted of such an abundantly rich multiracial, multiethnic, and multilingual mix. In a short period of time it is projected that people of color will be the majority in the United States. Because of this increased diversity, there is a pressing need for career counselors to have awareness, knowledge and skills to work with an increasingly diverse clientele. Career counselors are in a unique position to serve as social justice advocates in helping racial and ethnic minorities move into the schools and workplaces that have long discriminated against and marginalized them.

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There is evidence however, that racial and ethnic minorities under-utilize both generic mental health services and college/university counseling or career services (Brown, Brooks & Associates, 1990; Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 1998). Research has indicated a greater likelihood for racial and ethnic minorities to terminate after only one session of counseling (Sue & Sue, 1990). Others have conjectured that this premature termination may be due to the lack of culturally similar professionals, poorly trained career counselors, and culturally biased practices and techniques (Atkinson, Jennings, & Liongson, 1990; Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995).

Four decades ago, Gilbert Wrenn warned the profession against practicing in a culturally encapsulated manner, which promotes universal concepts of "healthy" or "normal" ways of being (Wrenn, 1962). Several years following his cautions to helping professionals, we still see examples of a Eurocentric approach to career counseling which disregard cultural variability and the unique strengths various cultural backgrounds contribute to the career planning process. Indeed as Gysbers and his colleagues (1998) emphasized, the field of career counseling has been built largely on a framework of western European tenets that have dramatically influenced career theory, research and practices. These tenets include (a) individualism and autonomy, (b) affluence, (c) the structure of opportunity being open to all, (d) the centrality of work in people's lives, and (e) the linearity, progressiveness, and rationality of the career development process. Research and practice continue to demonstrate that these tenets may no longer be accurate reflections of the present vocational world and its inhabitants. If career counselors are to be truly empowering of all their clients, it is imperative that they receive training in a host of essential issues related to working with diverse clientele.

The purpose of this article is to synthesize the multicultural literature into what we believe to be the most important elements for the multicultural training of vocational counseling professionals. We will highlight ten critical areas that we believe should be integrated into graduate training programs and career center professional development in order to increase the ability of career counselors to effectively serve the needs of culturally different clients. Broadly, these ten areas include: population demographics; the world of work; career and multicultural counseling competencies; career counseling process; multicultural counseling theory; career development models; career assessment; barriers to career development; culturally sensitive career centers; and continued professional development. Next, we will elaborate on how

each of these areas is an important component of multicultural career counseling.

Demographics

According to the most recent census data, there has been a 13.2% increase in the total population since 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). During this time, the rates of White individuals has decreased and is expected to continue to decline, while the number of racial/ethnic minorities have been increasing and are projected to continue to rise. The different growth rates among the racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. is contributing to a more diverse nation in regards to the racial and ethnic composition.

The projected labor force, which includes those individuals in the population who are working or looking for work, reflects similar trends to those we are seeing in the general population. The number of Asian Americans and Latino/a Americans in the labor force is expected to grow at higher rates compared to those of Whites or Blacks. Thus, the constitution of the labor force is expected to change, such that by the year 2008, a third of the individuals working or seeking work are projected to be racial/ethnic minorities.

We are also observing this trend on college and university campuses, as more racial/ethnic minorities are enrolling in post-secondary institutions. Consequently, those individuals seeking assistance with their educational and career planning through the various student services on campuses may be expected to increase as well. As such, career counselors must be prepared to work effectively with diverse clients and be aware of the special issues these individuals may encounter in their educational and occupational development.

It seems that no matter where one lives and works in the U.S., there is a strong likelihood of interacting and working with culturally different people. Culturally competent career counselors must be aware of the people who live in their communities. Some parts of the U.S. have historically had high proportions of racial/ethnic group members living in a region (e.g., Latino/as in the Southwest, Asian Americans on the west coast). Other areas in the country are experiencing more diversity than they have in the past. For example, a rapid increase of Somalian immigrants has occurred in Columbus, Ohio, over the past few years. After word of employment opportunities in the area spread through their extended network, more Somalians have migrated to

the Midwest. Career counselors should know which cultural groups are represented in their local communities and become familiar with these groups' values, practices, and career-related behaviors.

World of Work for Racial/Ethnic Minority Individuals

Career counselors' knowledge of how the world of work operates for individuals from various racial/ethnic groups is a key component of multicultural career counseling. How is career defined by culturally different clients? Which careers are over- or underrepresented by individuals from particular groups and what might a member of a group encounter in each work situation? What are their experiences in interviewing, hiring, or negotiating?

Such knowledge may be helpful for a number of reasons. First, understanding what meaning our clients give to their work/occupation/job/career may provide insight into where it fits into their lives. Second, it is possible that racial/ethnic minority clients may select college majors and/or careers due to their own career stereotypes regarding "appropriate" career options. Helping a client to understand how her/his views about different careers were formed may shed some light as to whether she/he has considered a wide range of possible options. It is possible that a racial/ethnic minority may exclude a number of careers from consideration due to their own lack of exposure to a profession or the lack of role modeling of family or friends from their own community. Moreover, career counselors can assist racial/ethnic minority clients by providing them with the necessary tools to deal with issues that they may encounter in the workplace, such as discriminatory hiring or promotion procedures, racist comments from co-workers, or conflict between personal values and work demands.

To conclude, the career counselor who is knowledgeable about the meaning of work and the various experiences of racial/ethnic minorities in the world of work will be better equipped to provide effective services for the racial/ethnic minority client.

Multicultural and Career Counseling Competencies

Vocational counselors who work with culturally diverse groups must possess skills in both multicultural counseling *and* career counseling. Multicultural competencies were first categorized by Sue and

his colleagues (1982) to include beliefs/attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Later, these categories were expanded to encompass beliefs/attitudes, knowledge, and skills in the following areas: counselor awareness of own cultural values and beliefs, counselor awareness of client's worldview; and culturally appropriate intervention strategies (Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992). Currently, guidelines for culturally competent practice, training and research are being developed jointly by members of Divisions 17 (Counseling Psychology), 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women), and 45 (Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues) of the American Psychological Association (APA) and, once completed, will be proposed for adoption by APA. Nadya Fouad, Patricia Arredondo, Michael D'Andrea, and Allen Ivey have played a key role in creating the latest set of guidelines. See Table 1 for a draft of the guidelines for culturally competent practice (Fouad, Arredondo, D'Andrea, & Ivey, 2001).

Training programs should make attempts to incorporate the multicultural competencies and guidelines into their training of vocational counselors. For example, counselor self-awareness can be increased by having students reflect on their own career process. Moreover, counselor awareness of worldviews can be enhanced by having students interview someone from a marginalized group about her/his career development and presenting data from their interviews to the class. Future career counselors should be encouraged to strive toward multicultural competence in their vocational practice, while realizing that this is an ongoing, lifelong process.

Career counseling skills have been conceptualized to include basic skills in career counseling, information gathering, and vocational assessment. O'Brien, Heppner, Flores, and Bikos (1997) reported on a career counseling self-efficacy scale and identified four latent factors that the scale measured: therapeutic process and alliance skills; vocational assessment and interpretation skills; multicultural competency skills; and current trends in the world of work, ethics, and career research. Thus, building basic counseling skills such as listening, reflecting, and developing the therapeutic alliance are one component of career competencies. Another element of vocational skills includes assessing, interpreting, and communicating assessment results to the career client. This includes knowing which assessment instruments are useful and appropriate for various groups, and will be discussed in more detail later. Multicultural competencies are a part of career counseling competencies because the vocational counselor must be able to work with diverse populations and be aware of any special

Table 1
Guidelines for Culturally Competent Psychological Practice
(and Some Related Behavioral Objectives)

Guideline #1: Awareness—Psychologists recognize that it is necessary to make a lifelong commitment to developing cultural expertise and culture-centered practice.

• Aware of the relationship between mental health and oppression and discrimination.
• Aware of self as a cultural being.
• Understands the client in her/his context.

Guideline #2: Knowledge—Psychologists strive to make a lifelong commitment to increased learning concerning the multicultural bases of psychological practice.

• Learns about racial/cultural identity development theories.
• Learns about non-Western practices.
• Knows about cultural groups' history and how this history may be associated to different worldviews.

Guideline #3: Skills—Psychologists strive to utilize culturally proficient awareness and knowledge in effective multicultural practice.

• Works as agent of social change.
• Receives on-going feedback pertaining to cultural competencies.
• Critiques traditional interventions and theories with regard to cultural applicability.

Note: These guidelines are a work in progress. This draft was developed by a group of psychologists from Divisions 17, 35, and 45 of the American Psychological Association, headed by Nadya Fouad, Ph.D., Patricia Arredondo, Ph.D., Michael D'Andrea, Ph.D., and Allen Ivey, Ph.D.

issues that individuals from that group may experience in their career development process. Finally, keeping abreast of the trends in the work force (e.g., "hot careers", outdated careers, makeup of the labor force) and of the latest research in vocational psychology, particularly those studies that are conducted with culturally diverse populations are another component of career counseling competencies.

The Career Counseling Process

Culture impacts every phase of the career counseling process and thus, career counselors need information about how the salient aspects of culture relate to this process. Although there are a myriad of ways that culture influences the career counseling process, we highlight some of the most significant examples in this section.

Developing a strong working alliance. The development of a strong working alliance is critical to the counseling relationship. Indeed, research indicates that the working alliance accounts for between 30–50% of the variance in outcome variables (Gelso & Carter, 1985; Horvath & Luborsky, 1993; Sexton & Whiston, 1994). Given the significantly higher rates of premature termination of racial and ethnic minority clients, the importance of quickly and effectively forming a working alliance is paramount. Thus, regardless of the racial and ethnic background of the counselor or the client, it is critical that the counselor build rapport with the client by building a bond, understanding the client's expectations about the process, and setting goals and tasks that are congruent with the client's needs in coming for career counseling.

Maintaining a stance of "creative uncertainty." Leong (1993) reminds us to utilize what he termed "creative uncertainty" in our work with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Although having a strong multicultural knowledge base to draw from is an important goal, even if we are uncertain about the elements of a client's cultural background, Leong reminds us to remain creative in our approach to helping the client. Rather than letting our uncertainty cause us to follow a static path, creatively exploring with the client the myriad of ways their cultural background may be influencing their current career path is an important acknowledgement of their unique cultural context. Thus, through exercises like a career genogram that focus on racial and ethnic features of the client's background, the counselor can creatively guide the exploration of the role of culture in the client's current decision making.

Assessing the client's level of "racial saliency." In the career counseling process it is also important for the counselor to assess the client's level of racial saliency. That is, it is important that the counselor determine early on, how much clients perceive race to be a factor in their career planning process in such areas as occupational stereotyping, job discrimination, or decision making (Helms & Piper, 1994).

Determine the locus of the client's worldview, level of acculturation and racial identity status. As part of the process of gathering client information in order to clarify the client's context, the counselor can explore the client's worldview, level of acculturation and racial identity status. Each of these areas may be important to how the client views her or his career planning process within a larger ecological framework. This necessitates a career counselor receiving training in the identification and assessment of these important constructs. For example, career counselors could benefit from knowledge of models of racial identity development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1993; Cross, 1971; Helms 1984, 1990, 1995; Phinney, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1973; Thomas, 1971). In addition, a number of models of acculturation provide a helpful template for understanding the role of cultural heritage in the client's life (Berry, 1980; Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Using each of these models can help the career counselor understand how clients integrate racial information into her or his planning process. Each of these constructs are discussed further in the next section.

Explore how the roles of racism, sexism, and poverty have influenced the client's self-efficacy beliefs. Using a theoretical model which includes sociological variables in understanding career development, such as Cook, Heppner, and O'Brien's (in press) Race/Gender Ecological model of career counseling, the counselor can explore the role of macro system influences such as race, gender, and social class on the client's career planning process. Acknowledging the potential importance of these factors in the lives of clients may be an important first step to building a strong working alliance, and developing goals for the sessions that seek to lessen the impact of these influences on the client's current or future life decisions.

Encourage the use of social networks and role models. The use of social networks and role models may be particularly important in increasing the self-efficacy of racial and ethnic minority clients. The self-efficacy literature clearly demonstrates that observing individuals who one considers similar to oneself is a powerful mode of changing one's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986). Therefore career counseling can be greatly enhanced by helping the client strategize about building and using a social network, and by identifying similar role models who can serve as mentors or guides as the client pursues career fields.

Consider using group work and even including the extended family in the career counseling process. Since many racial and ethnic minority clients may identify with a more collectivist and less individualist worldview, such modalities as career exploration groups may be a pre-

ferred mode of interaction. In some cases, the extended family might also be invited to join in the discourse, since career decisions are often seen as family decisions in collectivist cultures.

Encourage the client to return for additional assistance if they experience obstacles after counseling has terminated. Part of the process of termination involves inviting clients back for additional services should they need them. This may be particularly important for racial and ethnic minority clients who face a greater chance of prejudice and discrimination in the job market. The career counselor should make sure that clients know that the counselor is open and welcoming of their return. This invitation may allow clients to feel more secure as they progress in their career planning.

Multicultural Counseling Theory

Multiculturalism has been referred to as the "fourth force" in psychology (Pedersen, 1991). This movement developed in large part due to a major criticism that existing psychological theories were based on European American culture and values (Katz, 1985), such as individualism and independence in decision making, and, thus failed to adequately address the intricacies of a diverse population. The multicultural counseling movement has had a significant influence on the field of counseling and psychology, and we are seeing these concerns being addressed more and more in the vocational guidance literature.

To address some of the problems identified in the mental health profession regarding treatment with culturally different clients (i.e., premature termination), scholars have began to advocate for the training of culturally competent helping professionals (Sue et al., 1982; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Specific competencies and skills were identified for working with culturally different clients, and career counseling theories have recently been developed which are sensitive to the differences between and within diverse cultural groups. Specifically, Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) social cognitive career theory and Cook et al. (in press) race/gender ecological approach to career development are examples of career theories which have considered the influence of contextual, or environmental, factors on an individual's career decision making process. These career theories take into account the effects of social, economical, and political influences, such as racial and gender discrimination, socioeconomic

status, and role modeling, on the career behaviors of racial/ethnic minorities.

Multicultural counseling and therapy (MCT; Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996) is a meta-theory of counseling and was conceptualized to fill in the gaps of existing counseling theories. The principles of MCT can be applied to career development theories to account for cultural factors which influence the vocational behaviors across diverse cultural groups. MCT's propositions include: (1) theories reflect the worldviews of the culture in which it is developed; (2) the client and counselor must be understood contextually and across multiple levels; (3) the client and counselor's racial identity development explain feelings and behaviors toward own group and other groups and will influence the process and outcome of counseling; (4 and 5) a variety of techniques and multiple helping sources within the community should be utilized in the helping process; and (6) expanding consciousness is a treatment goal.

Much has been written about assessing client's racial/ethnic identity development and acculturation level and their potential influence on the counseling process. These constructs are useful tools to assess differences within cultural groups. In the following, we provide a brief overview of each construct and their applications to career counseling.

Racial Identity Development

One conceptual framework from which to understand clients and their career/educational concerns is through identity development models. Identity development models provide a frame for understanding the process by which a person sheds internalized negative attitudes toward her/his own reference group, accepts a positive reference group identity, and increases awareness of oppressive behaviors in our society. Racial identity models have been proposed for whites (Helms, 1984), blacks (Cross, 1971; Helms, 1984), and persons from diverse cultural groups (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1983).

Understanding our own racial identity development as career counselors, as well as that of our clients is a critical component of multicultural career counseling, as it has been suggested that racial identity may have implications on the counseling process and on our clients' perceptions of the world. For example, suppose that an Asian American client who ascribes to the beliefs of individuals in the conformity stage presents for career counseling due to job related stress. The client's perceptions of the work problems will likely be influenced by her/his attitudes toward her/his own reference group and the dominant

group, such that the client may ignore potential discriminatory acts in the workplace as the cause of the stress.

Acculturation

Acculturation refers to the process by which individuals from racial/ ethnic minority groups adapt to the dominant culture. Generally, studies have noted that individuals from later generations tend to be more acculturated into the U.S. dominant culture than individuals from earlier generations (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). Acculturation issues may be more salient for first and second generation career clients who are adapting to a new culture, a new work environment or educational system, and different patterns of communication and interaction.

Career Development Models

The importance of using theory or models to guide practice in career development is critically important if counselors are to understand the underlying mechanism that promote and impede the career development process. Although foundational theories of career choice and development are very helpful in this process, it may be particularly important when working with racial and ethnic minority clients to use theories and models that are inclusive of the lived experiences of racial and ethnic minorities. That is, models and theories that have as their foundation an understanding of the role of one's cultural context in the individual's subsequent career choice and development. We present two recent models that seek to affirm the prominence of the cultural context: Lent et al.'s (1994) social cognitive career theory and Cook et al.'s (in press) Race/Gender Ecological approach to career development. Readers are encouraged to investigate other theories of career development which have provided a useful framework for understanding the career behaviors of marginalized groups in our society.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) has been noted for its utility in explaining the vocational behaviors of racial and ethnic groups. Indeed, since this theory was proposed, it has spawned

several research studies with racially diverse samples (e.g., Flores & O'Brien, in press; Fouad & Smith, 1996; Gainor & Lent, 1998; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Lent and his colleagues (1994) developed this comprehensive theory to explain the development of interests, the selection of educational and career options, and performance and persistence in educational and vocational realms. Lent et al. (1994) extended Hackett and Betz's (1981) career self-efficacy theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory to develop this theory of career development that hypothesized the influence of individual and contextual factors on the sociocognitive mechanisms of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals, and their influence on interests, actions, and performance.

Before describing the propositions of SCCT, key concepts of the theory will be described. Person inputs refer to variables which assess individual differences, including genetic or inherited characteristics. Contextual variables include determinants in the environment which shape our experiences or opportunities. In their model, Lent and his colleagues differentiate between proximal and distal contextual variables to distinguish their influence (either direct or indirect) on career choice. Proximal variables are believed to directly influence one's career choice at the time of decision-making. For example, the economy or labor market may restrict or enhance choice depending on the timing. Similarly, the people we turn to for advice when contemplating a career may influence our decision based on their feedback. Distal variables, on the other hand, precede the development of interests and help to shape the learning opportunities which contribute to self-efficacy. Our exposure to different careers through family members and other role models is an example of a distal variable. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs concerning his/her ability to successfully perform a given behavior, while interests pertain to one's likes or dislikes.

According to SCCT, individual characteristics, or person inputs, and background contextual variables are hypothesized to relate to self-efficacy, or confidence in performing specific tasks. The personal and background variables are believed to indirectly influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations through the learning experiences that one is exposed to in life. Bandura (1986) hypothesized these learning experiences to include: performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. In turn, both self-efficacy and outcome expectations are hypothesized to directly influence career interests, career choices and actions, and performance in career.

In addition, Lent et al. (1994) posited that career interests directly influence choice goals/actions, and that choice goals/actions have a direct impact on career performance and attainments. Finally, proximal contextual variables are hypothesized to exert direct effects on career choices and career actions and to mediate the relationship between interests and choices.

Race / Gender Ecological Model

Another theory that may be useful to understand the vocational development of racial/ethnic individuals was developed by Cook and her colleagues (in press). They used an ecological model to develop what they title a Race/Gender Ecological approach to career development. The ecological model states that human behavior results from the ongoing, dynamic interaction between the person and the environment. Behavior is the result of a multiplicity of factors at the individual, interpersonal and broader socio-cultural levels. Vocational behavior can then be understood as an "act-in-context" (Ladrine, 1995, p. 5) where the context is essential to the naming and meaningfulness of the individual's behavior.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed the most widely cited ecological model and it is the one Cook and her colleagues use as their guiding theoretical framework. Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified four major subsystems influencing human behavior: (a) the Microsystem which includes the interpersonal interactions within a given environment such as home, school or work setting; (b) the Mesosystem which constitutes interaction between two or more microsystems such as the relation between an individual's school and her work environment; (c) the Exosystem which consists of linkages between subsystems that indirectly influences the individual, such as one's neighborhood or the media; and the (d) Macrosystem which are the ideological components of a given society including norms and values.

The Race/Gender Ecological model of career development recognizes that by their very nature, humans live interactionally in a social environment. The model recognizes that every person has both a gender and a race and that these factors decisively shape the individual's career throughout life, as she or he encounters opportunities or obstacles because of race or gender. It reminds us that career behavior does not occur in a vacuum, but rather emerges from a lifelong dynamic interaction between the person and her or his environment. In addition, career behavior is thought to be determined by the interrelation-

ships between the subsystems in a larger ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Implicit in the model is the knowledge that interrelationships occur simultaneously on multiple levels, so that a focus on any one level of interaction is by definition a limited picture of the dynamics shaping career behavior at any one time. The model also recognizes that although individuals of the same biological sex or race may encounter similar circumstances because of their demographics, each career path is unique because of individual circumstances, and the unique interactions of their subsystems. Clients bring their ecosystems into counseling primarily through conveying how they understand and react to it. For example, perceptions of opportunities or the lack of opportunities, positive or negative comparisons of self to desired models, optimistic or pessimistic conceptions of the future, or internalization of stereotypes as personally salient or irrelevant. Individuals are also thought to shape the environment around them in complex ways as they overtly reward or punish the career behaviors of others.

In applying the Race/Gender Ecological model, an example might be helpful. The larger culture operating as a macrosystem perpetuates career myths and stereotypes related to race and gender and in fact, institutionalize forms of race/gender discrimination. This macrosystem embodies values such as white male privilege, Eurocentric worldviews, race/gender appropriate ideologies or race/gender typing of occupational choices. Macrosystem values may be internalized by the individual (e.g., internalized oppression), and on the microsystem level influence how others treat a woman because of her gender or race.

There are several implications of the Race Gender Ecological model. First, the model reminds the career counselor that we can change the person-environment interaction in numerous ways for any given client. Examples include changing the environment through counselor or client initiatives, helping the client identify and practice skills to cope with the environment more effectively, and addressing the client's cognitive processes which shape their transactions with the environment. In addition to more traditional career counseling interventions that help the individual alter perceptions about desirable and appropriate career alternatives, this model calls on counselors to serve as client advocates working toward environmental and societal changes that may facilitate the development of present and future clients. Careful assessment of the client's ecosystem determines how and where career counseling interventions can be most effectively imple-

mented for an individual. The ecological counselor serves as a liaison, working as a partner with the client to effect more successful and satisfying interactions with the world of work. The ecological counselor uses diverse methodologies and emphasizes that clients are best served when a diverse range of conceptualizations and interventions are considered. And, finally the model requires a range of skills not typically required in intrapsychically oriented interventions, but respects the complexity of influences shaping an individual's life over time.

Career Assessment

Multicultural career assessment is a process of gathering information in which the people (i.e., client and clinician) involved in the process differ from one another along the dimensions of race, culture, or ethnicity. In cases where the client is a member of a racial/ethnic minority group, special consideration is warranted when using standardized career measures because many of the career assessment measures used in career counseling have been developed and normed on White individuals. We will delineate the major concerns in the selection, administration, and interpretation of career instruments with racial and ethnic minority individuals which have been previously highlighted in the literature. Understanding issues related to cross-cultural assessment should aid the career counselor in reducing bias in the assessment process for racial/ethnic minority clients.

Selection and Administration

Evidence suggests that the assessment of culturally diverse individuals can be problematic when the examiner is unfamiliar with the person's cultural background. Ethical multicultural assessment and research is conducted when the researcher or professional understands the intricacies of the culture and can appropriately interpret the responses and behaviors of the individual. Otherwise, the risk of misinterpreting the responses of an individual or groups of people from different cultures exists.

When selecting an instrument, the foremost question that must be answered is whether the construct being measured has the same meaning for culturally diverse individuals. This bias has been referred to previously as conceptual equivalence (Brislin, 1993; Marsella &

Leong, 1995) and addresses whether the construct is defined similarly across cultures (etic) or whether it is culturally specific (emic). Selection of measurements must consider not only the definition of the construct, but also how the construct would be manifested in the culture of the individual being assessed. It is often assumed that the definition of constructs or the manifestation of career related behaviors are universal, when they may actually mean something different across cultural groups. For example, the assessment of inventoried interests has a long history in career counseling. However, some cultural groups may not consider personal interests in the selection of a career or college major, while others may not have the luxury of selecting a career based on their interests. Thus, prior to selecting an assessment inventory, the career counselor must find out enough about the client's cultural context to determine if a particular measure will be useful for the client's decision making process.

A commonly discussed problem in multicultural assessment is the use of measures which are standardized on European Americans or college students. The absence of U.S. racial/ethnic minorities in the normative samples is a serious concern because we can only talk about the test's scores in relation to the sample in which the instrument was normed. Utilization of instruments which do not provide normative data on various racial/ethnic minority groups should be used with extreme caution. Much research is needed to investigate the psychometric properties of career assessment instruments with racial/ethnic minority populations.

The use of assessment instruments with people for whom English is not their first language may pose a problem. Linguistic equivalence (Marsella & Leong, 1995) refers to whether the test is administered in the preferred language of the individual being assessed. When a bilingual individual is being tested, her/his fluency in English and preferred language under test-taking circumstances should be evaluated prior to test administration, as this information may be critical when interpreting the validity of the test results. Although translating the measure in another language may seem like a remedy, it may actually create another potential bias known as translation equivalence (Brislin, 1993). Translation bias occurs when measures are translated to a different language without consideration of whether concepts can be translated accurately in a foreign language. Translation bias can be prevented through the practice of employing a bilingual expert to translate the measure into the foreign language, and then having another person skilled in both languages to translate it back into En-

glish. Comparing the "back-translated" measure with the original measure can then provide support for terms and concepts that are translation equivalent.

Cultural variables, such as acculturation level, racial identity, and worldview, which may influence the assessment process and also serve as moderating variables for the constructs of interest. As mentioned earlier, assessing these variables among racial/ethnic minority clients should be considered in the practice of career counseling. These components are critical in the assessment process because culture affects one's definition, evaluation, and explanation of behaviors.

Interpretation

Information regarding the cultural environment is an essential component of multicultural career assessment. It is imperative that career counselors consider the environmental context in which the individual operates to more accurately interpret the meaning of the test scores. Assessment results should always be interpreted to the racial/ethnic minority client, and feedback solicited regarding their thoughts and reactions to their test results.

In summary, we want to underscore the fact that information can be gathered through informal methods (i.e., talking to the client, talking to family members and friends) as well as formal procedures. Informal assessment may be particularly useful in instances when measures which have not been validated on racial/ethnic minority groups are used. Also, keep in mind that the assessment process begins even before the individual client and career counselor have met. When the career counselor reviews the information provided on the intake forms, the counselor may already begin to formulate hypotheses regarding the clients' career concerns. Remember that assessment is a process, in which information is gathered, hypotheses are formulated, and then reformulated based on incoming information and feedback from the career client and his/her environment.

Barriers to the Career Development of Racial and Ethnic Minorities

It is critical that career counselors are aware of the host of barriers that exist for racial and ethnic minority clients who are seeking to find a place in the world of work. Many of these barriers are external

or environmental and include racial harassment and racial discrimi-
nation. In addition, since a disproportionately high number of racial
and ethnic minorities are also found in lower socioeconomic levels,
poverty is also a profound barrier to career development. Moreover,
the lack of mentor or role models as well as the lack of support within
environments are all examples of barriers that career counselors need
to be aware of and actively work to help their client's overcome.

Other barriers are more individual or socialized such as lower self-
efficacy expectations and lower outcome expectations. Thus racial and
ethnic minorities may internalize the racist beliefs of the dominant
culture which might then lead to a lowered sense of self-efficacy, or
their confidence in their ability to perform the tasks necessary to at-
tain a satisfying career. In addition, their outcome expectancies or the
eventual consequences of a career-related action, may also be a bar-
rier. For example, a racial/ethnic minority worker may have strong
self-efficacy in her or his ability to request a promotion, but have
strong feelings that such a request will go unmet due to a history of
racial discrimination within a given department or company. Thus,
even though the worker's self-efficacy expectations for the task of
seeking a promotion are high, his/her low outcome expectancies may
prevent the client from pursuing the promotion. Thus, it is important
that career counselors are aware of, and able to help a client assess
the types and levels of barriers they perceive to achieving a successful
career path and establish ways to overcome them.

Examining the Environment of Career Centers

In addition to the many skills essential for the career counselor to
possess in working with the needs of racial and ethnic minority cli-
ents, the environment in which the work takes place is also a critical
element in enhancing potential impact. Factors such as the diversity
of the staff and how physically welcoming and affirming the décor is
can be important signs to potential clients. The importance of having
a staff that reflects the diversity of the student body cannot be over-
emphasized. The hiring of diverse staff reflects a tangible commitment
to diversity. Research indicates that racial and ethnic minorities are
more likely to use services when other racial and ethnic minorities
deliver them (Atkinson & Lowe, 1995). In addition, having diverse
staff provides on-going cultural consultation about ways of improving
and enhancing the services of the center to meet diverse needs (Hepp-

ner & Duan, 1995). Other more subtle symbols of awareness and commitment include having art, posters, books or videos that reflect diversity in highly visible ways. Heppner and Duan (1995) suggest examining all parts of the career center through a cultural lens, and asking oneself: "How does the center appear to someone from a different cultural background? How welcoming and affirming is the center perceived to be?"

Continued Professional Development

Training culturally competent professionals is a relatively new approach in counseling programs. Although some structural changes have occurred in graduate training programs, the change has been slow. Various studies have tracked the changes in programs offering and requiring courses in multicultural counseling (Bernal & Castro, 1994; Hills & Stroizer, 1992; Quintana & Bernal, 1995; Ponterotto et al., 1995). In general, more programs offer courses than require them, and there has been an increase over the years in the number of programs requiring students to complete a multicultural counseling class. This suggests that many helping professionals may have graduated from programs without receiving training on working with culturally diverse clients. Indeed, Allison and her colleagues (1994) surveyed graduates of applied psychology training programs to assess competence in working with diverse clients, and found that although a large percentage indicated that they were currently seeing clients from a diverse range of cultural groups, few indicated feeling competent in providing services to these groups.

It is widely acknowledged that multicultural sensitivity and competence is an ongoing, lifelong process (Kiselica, 1999). At minimum, programs that train career counselors must require students to take a course on multicultural counseling. Realistically, however, the learning process will continue beyond ones graduate training. Whether or not you received training during your graduate studies, continued development in the area of multicultural counseling should occur as a professional. There are several ways in which this can happen. You can attend conferences which focus on racial/cultural issues in counseling (e.g., National Multicultural Conference and Summit, Teacher's College Winter Roundtable). Professional conferences are attending more to these issues and including presentations related to multicultural issues in psychology in their program. You can also at-

tend continuing education workshops which focus on some aspect of cross-cultural competencies (e.g., assessment, counseling specific groups), and can keep abreast of the research conducted on the career development of racial and ethnic minorities. Finally, you can read literature by racial/ethnic minority authors to learn more about cultures different from yours. There are multiple activities in which you can engage in to further your personal and professional development. The aforementioned activities are by no means an exhaustive list of continuing professional development options in the area of multicultural career counseling.

To summarize, vast changes are occurring in the racial and ethnic make-up of our society and in the world of work. In order for career counselors to work effectively with the increasingly diverse society, an integrative approach to training which incorporates the various specialties of vocational development, counseling, and multicultural counseling is optimal in producing culturally competent career counselors. We have highlighted ten areas that we believe are most important for career counselors to address in becoming culturally competent professionals. We believe that increasing one's knowledge, awareness and skills in the areas we addressed will help career counselors to meet the needs of racial and ethnic minority individuals in our society.

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