
CAREERS FORUM

CAREERS DIGEST

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE POPULATIONS

SANDRA KERKA

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult,
Career and Vocational Education

Career development theories and approaches have been criticised for lack of applicability to diverse populations. Research on career issues for these groups has been described as limited and sparse (Walsh, Bingham, Brown, & Ward, 2001). However, cultural diversity is a fact of life in the US population and work force, and career development practitioners must be prepared to work with clients in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.

Although individuals and specific groups have different experiences, there are some common career-related issues faced by diverse populations. Their career choices may be constrained by socialisation, access to guidance and assessment, tracking into certain fields, societal and self-stereotypes, isolation from networks, and early schooling experiences (Walsh et al., 2001). Barriers to career development may include lack of developmental feedback or mentors, discrimination in promotion/transfer, tokenism, hostility, plateauing, less access to training, perceived isolation, stress, or self-imposed performance pressure (Walsh et al., 2001). This article examines some of the research and issues involved in multicultural career development. Rather than trying to address all aspects of diversity, the focus is on racial and ethnic minority populations.

What inadequacies have been identified in career development theories and models? Because many of them have been created and tested on limited samples

(usually white, middle class and male), their applicability to a wider spectrum of the population has been questioned. When they are applied to members of diverse groups, different results are sometimes interpreted as deficits—for example, claims that minorities lack career maturity (Flores, Spanierman, & Obasi, 2003). Theories about how and why people choose careers have been based on assumptions such as: everyone has a free choice among careers; career development is a linear, progressive, rational process for all; and individualism, autonomy and centrality of work are universal values (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002; Flores & Heppner, 2002). Research on career development sometimes neglects important determinants such as racism, sexism, family background and opportunity structure (Walsh et al., 2001). In many studies, socioeconomic status and ethnicity/race are confounded, making it difficult to determine the pertinence of findings to specific populations. When culture or ethnicity is considered, most definitions assume that culture is 'static, unitary, essentialist, and all encompassing' and that 'identity is a fixed and stable structure' (Alfred, 2001, p. 111).

INFLUENCES ON THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE GROUPS

Career development processes based on traditional person-environment fit theories involve identifying an individual's skills, abilities and interests; understanding personality, values and beliefs; and matching these variables with appropriate potential careers (Flores et al., 2003). Researchers have investigated other factors that affect the career choices of diverse individuals in order to enhance the relevance of these theories and models. These factors include worldview, identity, values and context.

Worldview

Worldviews, or ways of perceiving and being in the world, are a significant distinguishing characteristic of cultural groups. Walsh et al. (2001) cite the work of Cheatham and Nobles in comparing differences between African (co-operation, communality) and European (competition, individualism) worldviews, noting how the interplay between the two may influence the career behaviour of African Americans. Juntunen et al.'s (2001) interviews with Native Americans identified aspects of their worldview that affect career development, such as sense of place and family/community orientation. Like many Hispanic Americans, the high-achieving Latinas in Gomez et al.'s (2001) study manifested a collectivist/familial worldview.

The individualist–collectivist (I–C) continuum is one of several basic value orientations that make up worldviews. Hartung, Fouad, Leong, and Hardin (2002) studied the relationship between this orientation and the occupational choices, career planning behaviours, work values and family background of 269 college students of African, Asian, Hispanic and European American descent. They found some significant, though moderate, relationships between I–C and the values students sought in work, the career choices they made, and the ways they planned to achieve career goals. Noordin, Williams and Zimmer (2003) compared Malaysian and Australian managers using an I–C scale. Although Malaysian managers were more collectivistic, the two groups were not significantly different in career identity and career planning commitment. The researchers speculate that these results may reflect a shift toward individualism in Malaysian culture or an indication of a collectivist culture adapting to global change. Their findings suggest that, although worldview should be taken into account in career development, it should not lead to an overly deterministic view of its influence on diverse individuals.

Identity

Several facets make up identity, including individual self-definition, gender identity, and group (cultural or ethnic) identification. Alfred (2001) cites three reasons why understanding group identity is important in career development: (1) group identities are important

components of self-concept for most people; (2) recognition and preservation of group identities is of great significance to some individuals; and (3) group identities influence how others interact with us. Individual, gender, and group identities played an important role in the career success of African American tenured female faculty at a predominantly white university. These women created positive images of self-definition as black women and practised bicultural life strategies that enabled them to manage white academic culture (Alfred, 2001).

Racial identity theory depicts a continuum of self-definitions ranging from conformity to dissonance, resistance and awareness. Walsh et al. (2001) reviewed research showing that racial identity significantly predicted foreclosure of career choices, career-related self-efficacy and the ability to use bicultural strategies for managing two cultural contexts. Although biculturalism can be a positive coping mechanism, it may also contribute to stress, for example, when an individual is the only member of his or her cultural group in a non-traditional occupation. When Carter and Constantine (2000) studied racial/ethnic identities of African- and Asian-American students, the students' position on the continuum influenced the types of careers they valued and the extent to which they foreclosed their career options. Individual differences in these findings suggest that 'the career paths of people of colour can be understood by taking into account the psychological variations within racial and ethnic group identifications' (p. 185). One source of these individual differences that must be taken into account is the salience of racial/ethnic identity to the individual, which helps explain the variance and diversity within a cultural group (Walsh et al., 2001).

Another within-group identity variable is acculturation, 'the degree to which individuals participate in and adopt the secondary culture of the dominant society' (Walsh et al., 2001, p. 183). Zuniga, Skaruppa and Powell (2000) depict acculturation as a continuum of responses: cultural resistance, shift, incorporation or transmutation. The five Hispanic corporate managers they studied believed that acculturation and career advancement were related. Cultural resistance impeded advancement, whereas an appreciation of both cultural influences had a positive effect on career goals. The Plains Indians interviewed by Juntunen et al. (2001) expressed

orientations that reflected one of three stages of acculturation: traditional, bicultural or western. These orientations were either facilitators or barriers for their career development.

Values

Individual, cultural and work-related values influence career choices, decisions and development. Brown (2002) proposes an inclusive theory of occupational choice based on values, noting that 'there is considerable diversity within the values systems of people from the same cultural groups and extensive overlap in the cultural values held by people from different cultural groups' (p. 49). He presents research findings supporting several propositions about the role of values in career choice, success, and satisfaction; including differences between people with individualistic and collective social values. The Latina professionals studied by Gomez et al. (2000) shared the strong cultural values of familism and collectivism, although their career aspirations often conflicted with cultural and gender role expectations. Their optimism, persistence and capacity for reframing enabled them to integrate their personal and cultural values with their career choices and achievements. Community college students from four cultural groups (white, black, Hispanic and Asian) displayed significant differences on a number of career values (Teng, Morgan, & Anderson, 2001). For example, having a good starting income was more important to blacks; job security, performance and use of prior experience were more important to blacks and Hispanics. However, the size of these effects was small, again signifying individual differences within as well as between groups.

Context

The notion that 'occupational success can be largely attributable to individual merit has never applied to everyone, because of pervasive and powerful contextual barriers' such as racial and gender discrimination and income disparities (Cook et al., 2002, p. 294). The influence of the external context or opportunity structure may be real or it may be perceived: an individual's experiences and concerns may contribute to overly optimistic or pessimistic perceptions of opportunity (Jackson & Nutini, 2002). Jackson and Nutini's work with multicultural middle

school students identified contextual barriers and resources affecting career-related learning: (1) external barriers (unsafe environment, low income, negative social support, discrimination); (2) internal barriers (negative self-efficacy, negative academic performance, perception of equal opportunity); (3) external resources (role models, social and cultural support); and (4) internal resources (bicultural competence, coping efficacy). Constantine et al. (1998) found that, although youth of colour do not differ from the majority in their career development interests or aspirations, they tend to have lower occupational expectations due to internal challenges: perceptions of lack of opportunity, limited self-knowledge because of fewer opportunities for work experience, and fewer opportunities to develop self-efficacy. External challenges they may face include environmental factors that diminish quality of life, poor quality of available schooling, and bias and stereotyping in the amount and type of counselling they receive.

TOWARDS MORE INCLUSIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT

As more research is done (and remains to be done) in this area, new models incorporating these findings are being developed. A model for culturally appropriate career development that was developed by Fouad and Bingham and extended by others (Flores et al., 2003; Walsh et al., 2001) has the following elements:

1. Establishment of a culturally appropriate relationship;
2. Information gathering that is culturally encompassing;
3. Identification of cognitive, social, emotional, environmental, behavioural, and external influences;
4. Assessment of cultural spheres of influence on career choice;
5. Assessment of cultural, gender and efficacy variables;
6. Traditional career assessments;
7. Selection, administration and interpretation of culturally appropriate instruments; and
8. Career development practitioners' awareness of their own worldviews, identity salience, values and attitudes.

Cook et al. (2002) add an ecological perspective, which recognises that each person operates within a unique ecosystem consisting of multiple factors at the individual, interpersonal and broader socio-cultural levels. Helping individuals develop in their careers may involve identifying coping skills, addressing cognitive processes that shape their transactions within the environment, or working to change the environment and make systems more helpful or affirming. Paying attention to diversity issues in career development does not mean ignoring differences or overemphasising stereotypes. Culturally competent practitioners recognise how and why individuals' career-related experiences might be different and think outside their own cultural frames of reference in assisting people with career development (Flores et al., 2003).

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This project has been funded at least in part with federal funds from the US Department of Education under contract no. ED-99-CO-0013. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the US Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organisations imply endorsement by the US Government.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

AUSTRALIA'S SKILL NEEDS: HOW THEY ARE CHANGING, WHAT IT MEANS FOR TRAINING

This is the first edition of an annual report to be produced as part of the Australian National Training Authority's (ANTA) drive to keep training in touch with the economy's skill needs. ANTA is also changing the way it obtains intelligence from industry about changing skill needs. The new system comprises of a network of ten new national industry skills councils. They will channel information about changing skill needs and future workforce requirements direct from industry to government and the VET sector. The new system also includes a biannual 'think tank' of industry and VET leaders. For more information about these new arrangements visit the ANTA website: <http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=564>

OECD REPORT CITES STUDENT MOTIVATION AS CRITICAL TO LEARNING SUCCESS

Successful learning depends not just on good instruction and the ability to store knowledge, but also on how students approach the process of learning,

according to a new OECD report drawing on a study of 15-year-olds in 26 countries. *Learners for Life—Student Approaches to Learning* provides evidence that students with strong motivation and a belief in their own abilities are able to take better control of their own learning, and that this helps them to perform much better at school. Source: http://www.oecd.org/document/51/0,2340,en_2649_201185_15481523_119690_1_1_1,00.html

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE HAS STRONGEST INFLUENCE ON LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

Experience of working full-time early in the school-to-work transition has the most positive effect on youth labour market outcomes, more so than completion of Year 12 itself or post-secondary qualifications. This is not to understate the significant positive effect of Year 12 completion on entry to employment and to longer-term labour market outcomes. In addition, early experience of unemployment has a 'scarring' effect on subsequent unemployment. Source: http://www.acer.edu.au/publications/newsletters/eNews/November03/LSAY_34.htm

NEWS

ELECTROCOMMS AND ENERGY UTILITIES INDUSTRY SKILLS COUNCIL

The electrical and energy industries have a new voice in the vocational education and training sector—the ElectroComms and Energy Utilities Industry Skills Council. It is intended that the council will cover electro technology, lifts, communications, gas, and the electricity generation and transmission and distribution sectors—which collectively employ more

than half of a million Australians. It will replace the existing ElectroComms and Energy Utilities Qualifications Standards Body of Australia Ltd (EEQSBA), (EE-OZ Training Standards). The councils' role is to support high quality, nationally recognised training products and services—including enhancing innovation and efficiency in their development; and to assist industries, enterprises and their workforce to integrate skill development with business goals. Source: ANTA News Release

GRADUATES' JOB SEARCH: ADOPT AND ADAPT

The Graduate Careers Council of Australia's *Graduate Destination Survey 2002* suggests that new university graduates use a variety of job search techniques, with media advertisements and personal contacts with family, friends and employers being the most likely to yield employment.

The report is based on the survey responses of 95,000 recent university graduates, and discusses their employment prospects and related aspects of the post-university experience. Of that larger group, almost 26,000 graduates who had sought full- or part-time employment in the 12 months prior to the survey were asked to name all the methods they had used: media advertisement 61.0%; an Internet-based job search 52.1%; an approach to employers 40.3%; consulting family or friends 39.0%; university careers service 32.1%; employment agency 29.2%; consulting work contacts or networks 27.3%; attending careers fairs or information sessions 23.9%.

When graduates who had found full-time employment were asked how they first heard about

that position, the pattern changed slightly, with the Internet less helpful: 22.7% first saw their job in a media advertisement; 10.8% through family or friends; 10.4% first heard of their job when their employer approached them; 10.0% by approaching employers; and 8.4% via an Internet-based job search. Source: Graduate Careers Council of Australia.

MORE FULL-TIME JOBS, LESS PART-TIME

Labour force figures show a drop in part-time employment, but a rise in full-time employment. Full-time employment increased by 29,900 to more than 6.95 million. Part-time employment fell by 16,000. In the last six months, 87 per cent of all new jobs have been full-time jobs. Seasonally adjusted employment rose by 13,900 in January to a record high of 9,678,300. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased marginally to 5.7 per cent, while the trend unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5.6 per cent. Australia's unemployment rate has now been below 6 per cent for six consecutive months for the first time since the late 1980s. Source: www.ferret.com.au

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 15–17, 2004, A CORUÑA, SPAIN 'GUIDANCE, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT'

Situated in Galicia in northern Spain, this conference will include presentations, round tables and symposia with a focus on:

- Social inclusion and intercultural guidance;
- Needs analysis of social inclusion;
- Models of guidance in terms of social inclusion;
- Guidance and social inclusion from a global perspective;
- Educational guidance and social inclusion in schools.

Conference languages: Spanish, English and French. Arranged by the Spanish Association on Guidance and Psychopedagogy, Galicia.

Contact: J. Miguel Muñoz Cantero. Email: munoz@udc.es. Website: www.udc.es/occ

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 14–16, 2005, LISBON, PORTUGAL 'CAREERS IN CONTEXT: NEW CHALLENGES AND TASKS FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING'

Arranged by the Portuguese Institute for Career Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Psychology and Education (University of Lisbon); Faculty of Psychology and Education (University of Coimbra); Education and Psychology Institute (University of Minho); University of Évora; Portuguese Career Guidance and Counselling Association; Institute for Employment and Professional Training (Ministry for Social Security and Labour) and Ministry for Education.

Contact: Prof. Helena Rebelo Pinto (Univ. Lisbon) Email: rebelopinto@iop.ul.pt

FROM THE JOURNALS

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE, 3(3), 2003

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Sirpa Moitus & Raimo Vuorinen

Evaluation of a decision training program for vocational guidance
Ursina Teuscher

The influence of career beliefs and socio-economic status on the career decision-making of high school students in India
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Factors influencing job choice
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JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR, 64(2), 2004

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CHANGE IN EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Australian Journal of Career Development* has now adopted editorial policies requiring effect size reporting. Appropriate indices of effect size or strength of relationship should be incorporated in the results section of the manuscript (see pp. 5, 25–6 of the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual*, 5th edition). This information allows the reader to assess not only the statistical significance, but also the magnitude of the observed effects or relationships and clarifies the importance of the reported findings.