

Article 5

The Needed Development of Multicultural Career Counseling Skills: If Not Now When? If Not Us Who?

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It is clear that effective career counseling with people of color [and other historically marginalized groups] does not occur in a cultural or contextual vacuum...The era of monocultural intervention has become history. Multiculturally competent career counselors and vocational psychologists should continuously educate themselves with empirical research and literature regarding career development of racially/ethnically [culturally] diverse clients and apply their knowledge and skills to clinical practice. (Flores, Lin, & Huang, 2005, pp.82-83)

The above observation by Flores et al. (2005) speaks directly to and about the exigent need for career counselors and counseling professionals to develop their multicultural career counseling competencies. Their observation is especially meaningful as the diversity of Americans continues to grow and the career related needs of many of its citizens are yet unmet. The current view of an individuals' career development include the entire life span, incorporating the varying life roles, cultural reference points and contexts, racial/ethnic implications, environmental opportunities and barriers, gender constraints, sexual orientation status, and disability status. Thus, it is the attendance to and awareness of these varying personal constructs by career professionals and counselors, which inform appropriate/successful multicultural career counseling interventions. Pope (2000) reminds us of the development and evolution of career counseling in America that framed the emergence of the multicultural movement which then provided the nexus for multicultural career counseling applications.

Pope (2000) proposed that the history of career counseling and concomitantly concerns about career development occurred over six stages in America.

1. Stage one between 1890-1919, with the development of placement services for the burgeoning industrial / urban societies at the beginning of the twentieth century.

2. Stage two between 1920-1939, and the emergence of guidance programs in elementary and secondary schools.
3. Stage three between 1940-1959, with the training of counselors at the university level.
4. Stage four between 1960-1979, when the profession of counseling blossomed [and career theories were initially proposed], and concurrently the important idea of work having meaning in individuals lives came to the fore.
5. Stage five between 1980-1989, encompassing the movement from the industrial eras to the information age in combination with the emergence of career counseling as a practice.
6. Stage six 1990 through the present day, including technological advances, exploding demographic changes, the growth of the multicultural movement, and the internationalization of career counseling practices. (p. 194)

As referenced by Pope (2000) and further articulated by Herr (2001), the evolution of career development constructs and career interventions emerged within and as a consequence of the social milieu of the times. Thus, career development was originally built upon the work of Frank Parsons in the early 1900. Parsons' model (1909) developed in the "climate of rapid urbanization, child labor issues, the rise of industrialization, the influx of immigrants, and the emergence of the human and behavioral sciences" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey 2009, p. 15). This model or Parsonian approach included three main steps: developing a thorough understanding of yourself; developing a knowledge of what is required for success [in an occupation]; applying true reasoning in terms the previous two steps (Niles et al., 2009). This construct is referred to as Trait and Factor Theory and represented one of the seminal points in what would become career development theory and career intervention processes. According to Gysbers, Heppner, and Johnston (2003) the foundation of career theory and research that was developed in the early and mid 20th Century incorporated a western European worldview including: (a) individualism and autonomy, (b) affluence, (c) structure of opportunity open to all, (d) the centrality of work in people's lives, and (e) the linearity, progressiveness, and rationality of the career development process (p. 53). If indeed career constructs were conceptualized on a western European model and exigency of the times, then their applicability with persons of color, women, and other marginalized groups is at best questionable.

Multiculturalism and Counseling

The theory building vis-à-vis career development that occurred in the decades of the 1960s through the 1990s, provided career counselors and career professionals with models upon which to conceptualize career behaviors, and design and implement career interventions. Corresponding to the growth and professionalization of career counseling and counseling in general, there also emerged social unrest and calls for a more equitable and egalitarian attendance to the needs of an ever increasingly diverse American citizenry. This clarion call for social equity occurred across the breadth of the nation and

had implications for national policy, educational initiatives, institutions and their policies, overt and covert social norms, and all practices seen as inimical to non-majority American constituents. The need for changes in the way we do the business of America equally impacted varying professional organizations across the country. Within this caldron of social flux and agitation, questions arose in terms of the efficacy of counseling paradigms for large groups of the American populace. Specifically questioned were counseling and career counseling theories in terms their application with persons of color, women, gays and lesbians, and the disabled. In responding to these challenges the multicultural counseling movement was born.

The *raison d'état* of human services in general, and counseling and psychology services in particular, are the improvement, adjustment and/or the amelioration of human problems and difficulties over an individual's life span. Thus, beyond historical precursors and theory building, it is the efficacy of interventions that hold the superordinate position. Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) in addressing the need for more culturally appropriate counseling models, proposed that multicultural competencies are framed upon three broad areas: (a) the counselor's awareness of his/her own cultural values and biases, (b) counselor's awareness of the client's culture and values, and (c) the counselor's use of culturally appropriate intervention strategies (p. 481). Each of these broad headings are further explicated in terms of the specific attitudes/beliefs, knowledge and skills required within each category. The importance of multicultural counseling knowledge, awareness (including self-awareness), beliefs, attitudes, and skills are such that the American Counseling Association (ACA) specifically addresses various competencies in its ACA Code of Ethics (2005). For example section A.2.c speaks to the importance of counselors communicating information to clients in a manner that is "developmentally and culturally appropriate" (p. 4). Section E.5.b and section E.5.c address the need to recognize the fact that culture impacts clients' problem definition, that the socio-economic status of the client should be considered in terms of mental diagnosis, and that counselors remain cognizant of the historical implications of social prejudice, and indeed misdiagnosis, on the culturally different client. In terms of the education and training for counselors, Section E.11.c of the ACA Code of Ethics (2005) states:

Counselor educators actively infuse multicultural / diversity competency in their training and supervision practices. They actively train students to gain awareness, knowledge, and skills in the competencies of multicultural practice. Counselor educators include...classroom activities that promote and represent various cultural perspectives. (p.16)

Pedersen (1991) proposed a general theory of multicultural counseling framing a broad view of the construct. This view as articulated by Pedersen includes ethnographics, demographics, status and affiliation, concluding that "the underlying principles of multicultural theory would emphasize both the culture-specific characteristics that differentiate and the culture general characteristics that unite" (p. 7). Helms & Richardson (1997) see multicultural counseling and competency as the "capacity to read the various cultural dynamics of the clients (and therapist) and to react to each of these aspects of cultures in a manner that best suites the client's mental health

needs and the therapist's relevant skills" (p. 70). Pedersen (1991) further explored the possibility that multicultural counseling was moving forward as an emerging generic theory of such significance that it was becoming the *fourth force* in the training of counselors and psychologists, and therefore complementary to psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic counseling theories.

Need for Multicultural Career Counseling Paradigm

In concert with the emergence of multicultural counseling paradigms in counseling and psychology, recognition of the significance of these constructs within the field of career counseling and vocational psychology also became apparent. These musings began to question the efficacy of career theories as historically constructed, on and with clients of color, women, gays and lesbians, and the disabled. June and Pringle (1977) indicated that their review of the theories of Roe, Super, and Holland "ignored race as a crucial factor in developing, researching, and writing about their theories...[further these] theorists took their cultural backgrounds, personal interests, and conceptions of the world as starting points and gave little weight to other backgrounds" (p. 23). Similarly Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) opined that:

Possibly the most profound challenge to the generalizability of career development theories is posed by the assertion that many racial/ethnic minority individuals do not share the value systems on which the traditional theoretical explanations are based...and to the degree that such an assertion is correct, it constitutes a profound limitation on the validity of vocational development theories, suggesting that they may not be applicable to many minority individuals. (p 275)

Leong and Brown (as cited in Hartung 2002), concluded that "the central problem with most, if not all the majority career theories is their lack of cultural validity for racial and ethnic minorities in this country" (p. 13). Given these and other calls to enhance career development from a multicultural career counseling perspective, the question now becomes, "How have we as career professionals and counselor educators responded?" From this writers view, extant research has provided a body of knowledge over time, which if embraced, provides a basis for the development of multicultural career counseling skills, awareness and knowledge.

Selected Resources: Indicative of the Increasing Importance of Multicultural Career Counseling Constructs

1990-1999

1. Africentricity and Career Development of African Americans. H. Cheatham (1990). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 38, 4.
2. Facilitating the Career Development of Minorities: Doing It Differently This Time. B. Hawks, & D. Muha (1991). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 39, 3.

3. Career Assessment of Ethnic Minority Women. C. Ward & R. Bingham (1993). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 1, 3.
4. The Career Counseling Process with Racial-Ethnic Minorities: The Case of Asian Americans. F. Leong (1993). *The Career Development Quarterly* 42, 1.
5. Integrating a Multicultural Perspective into Training for Career Counseling: Programmatic and Individual Interventions. J. Swanson (1993). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 42, 1.
6. Career Assessment with Latinos/Hispanics. N. Fouad (1994). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 2.
7. Racial Identity and Career Assessment. J. Helms (1994). *Journal of Career Assessment* 2, 3.
8. Career Assessment with Asian-Americans. F. Leong & S. Leung (1994). *Journal of Career Assessment* 2, 3.
9. Use of Interest Inventories with Special Populations: Women and Minority Groups. N. Fouad & S. Spreda (1995). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 3, 4.
10. Career Assessment with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals. J. Prince (1997). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 5, 2.
11. Teaching Career Counseling Skills and Cultural Sensitivity. J. Krumboltz, M. Jackson, A. Ranier, & C. Yeh (1999). *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*, 15.

2000- To Present Day

1. *Preparing Counselors for Career Development in the New Millennium ACES/NCDA Position Paper*. (2000). Author
2. The Career-in-Culture Interview: A Semi-Structured Protocol for the Cross-Cultural Intake Interview. J. Ponterotto, L. Rivera, & L. Sueyoshi, (2000). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49.
3. The Cultural Context of Career Assessment. D. Blustein & M. Ellis (2000). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 8, 4.
4. Career Rehabilitation: Integration of Vocational Rehabilitation and Career Development in the Twenty-First Century. M. Shahnasarian (2001). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49
5. Multicultural Career Counseling: Ten Essentials for Training. L. Flores & M. Heppner (2002). *Journal of Career Development*, 28, 3.
6. Career Development of Women of Color and White Women: Assumptions, Conceptualization, and Interventions From an Ecological Perspective. E. Cook, M. Heppner, & K. O'Brien (2002). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 50
7. Teaching the Multicultural Counseling Competencies and Revised Career Counseling Competencies Simultaneously. K. Evans & M. Larrabee (2002). *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 30.
8. Ethical and Professional Issues in Career Assessment with Diverse Racial and Ethnic Groups. L. Flores, L. Spanierman, & E. Obasi (2003). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 11

9. Culturally Appropriate Career Counseling with Gay and Lesbian Clients. M. Pope, B. Barret, D. Szymanski, B. Chung, H. Singaravelu, R. McLean, & S. Sanabria (2004). *The Career Development Quarterly* 53.
10. Multicultural Career Counseling: Theoretical Applications of the Systems Theory Framework. M. Arthur & M. McMahon (2005). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 53.
11. Multicultural and Gender Influences in Women's Career Development: An Ecological Perspective. E. Cook, M. Heppner, & K. O'Brien (2005). *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 33.
12. Racial/Ethnic Minority Vocational Research: A Content and Trend Analysis Across 36 Years. L. Flores, L. Berkel, J. Nilsson, L. Ojeda, S. Jordan, G. Lynn, & V. Leal (2006). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 55
13. Metacognition and Multicultural Competence: Expanding the Culturally Appropriate Career Counseling Model. A. Byars-Winston & N. Fouad (2006). *The Career Development Quarterly*, 54.
14. Racial and Disability Identity: Implications for the Career Counseling of African Americans with Disabilities. E. Mpofu & D. Harley (2006). *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 50.
15. The Effects of Perceived Barriers, Role Models, and Acculturation on the Career Self-Efficacy and Career Consideration of Hispanic Women. L. Rivera, E. Chen, L. Flores, F. Blumberg, & J. Ponterotto. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 56.
16. *Gaining Cultural Competence in Career Counseling*. K. Evans (2008). Boston: Lahaska Press.
17. Career Development Concerns of Recent Immigrants and Refugees. O. Yakushko, A. Backhaus, M. Watson, K. Ngaruiya, & J. Gonzalez (2008). *Journal of Career Development*, 34.
18. The Resume's Secret identity: A Tool for Narrative Exploration in Multicultural Career Counseling. R. Toporek & C. Flamer (2009). *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 46.

Multicultural Career Counseling Efficacy

As is evidenced by the previously outlined bibliographical summary, there has been research and theory building specifically addressing the implementation of multicultural career counseling strategies. Evans (2008), in her book *Gaining Cultural Competence in Career Counseling*, begins the discussion relating that it is the counseling skills and competences, in tandem with multicultural skills, awareness and knowledge, that builds the framework for the development of multicultural career counseling competencies. Of paramount import in gaining these skills, the counselor and /or career professional must begin with the understanding of and appreciation for his/her own cultural heritage. Within the context of this exploration of the self, the professional begins to recognize the racialized society that is America and the Racial Identity Development (RID) status wherein he or she exists. Specifically, RID exploration and introspection is, according to Helms (1984), "based on the premise that all people, regardless of race, go through a stage wise process of developing racial consciousness wherein the final stage is an acceptance of race as a positive aspect of themselves and

others” (p. 154). For a full explanation of Racial Identity Development see Helms (1984). Other areas for examination according to Evans (2008) include examining one’s biases, recognizing unearned privilege, and beginning the process of understanding and informing oneself about the worldview of the client. For the application of multicultural career counseling skills, attitudes, and techniques, Evans proposed the following:

1. Culturally adept career counselors are able to establish trusting relationships to help clients feel at ease during the counseling process.
2. To maintain a culturally sensitive group, culturally competent counselors take care to choose members of the group to maximize the benefits of group counseling and minimize conflicts. This is accomplished by facilitating cultural understanding among group members.
3. Multiculturally competent counselors should be aware that in some collectivist cultures client goals may be communal rather than personal.
4. Multicultural career counselors should choose techniques that best fit their clients’ problems and cultural backgrounds.
5. Career counselors should understand that personality and personal characteristics are influenced by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability status, and that these characteristics must be assessed accurately.
6. Multiculturally competent career counselors should be politically aware and understand that clients are impacted by societal and institutional policies.
7. Multiculturally competent career counselors should understand the expectations that families and cultural structures place on clients in their work environments
8. The multiculturally competent career counselor should be aware that each client is different, and that acculturation will dictate the need for family members and /or other important members of the community to become involved in the process.
9. Identify and understand clients’ attitudes toward work and workers.
10. Identify and understand clients’ biases toward work and workers based on gender, race, and cultural stereotypes.
11. Multiculturally competent career counselors understand how poverty, discrimination, racism, and so forth limit client access to information, inhibit client ability to take action, and limit the scope of possibilities clients may see for themselves.
12. Culturally competent career counselors must be aware of discriminatory practices at social and community agencies that may affect the psychological welfare of the client.
13. Support and challenge clients to examine life-work roles, including the balance of work, leisure, family, and community in their careers. Multiculturally competent career counselors must realize that clients may need to be assisted in finding time for leisure and community to balance their busy lives (pp. 145-146).

Further extending the concept of multicultural career counseling requisites, Flores and Heppner (2002) articulated what they term as *Ten Essentials for Training*. Their discussion includes the changing demographics of America and the need for multiculturally competent career counselors to be aware of the people in their communities and cultural context within which they live. Similar to Evans (2008), these

researchers also propose that the culturally competent career counselor must understand how the concept of career is defined by the culturally different client. In addressing the career counseling process, the development of a working alliance is deemed as the most critical component, and counselors are encouraged to maintain a stance of “creative uncertainty” (p. 187). Other points of emphasis in terms of multiculturally skilled career counseling competencies, include exploring the impact of racism, sexism and poverty on the client’s self-efficacy and belief systems. Of additional note, Flores and Heppner reported that “Evidence suggests that the assessment of culturally diverse individuals can be problematic when the examiner is unfamiliar with the person’s cultural background” (p. 195). Thus it is imperative and ethically required that the “professional understands the intricacies of the culture and can appropriately interpret the responses and behaviors of the individual” (p. 195).

Ward and Bingham (1993) in investigating career assessment with ethnic minority women proposed a *Multicultural Career Counseling Checklist* as an aid/guide for career professional to enhance their culturally appropriate initiatives and services. The checklist is divided into three areas: (a) counselor preparation, (b) exploration and assessment, and (c) negotiation and working consensus. The enumeration of some components of this checklist can be instructive for career counselors and career professionals. This author is of the opinion that while the checklist was based upon the concerns of women of color, it has applicability for culturally sensitive career counseling with other marginalized populations. Selected portions of the checklist include:

1. Counselor preparation
 - a. I am familiar with minimum cross-cultural competencies.
 - b. I am aware of my client’s cultural identification.
 - c. I am aware of my own world view and how it was shaped.
 - d. I am aware of how my SES (socio-economic status) influences my ability to empathize with this client.
 - e. I have information about this client’s ethnic group’s history, local sociopolitical issues, and her/his attitudes towards seeking help.
 - f. I am comfortable confronting ethnic minority clients.

2. Exploration and assessment
 - a. I understand how the client’s career questions may be complicated with issues of finance, family, and academics.
 - b. The client is presenting racial and or cultural information with the career questions.
 - c. I know the client’s perception of her /his family’s ethnocultural identification.
 - d. I am aware of the career limitations or obstacles the client associates with her/his race or culture [gender, sexual orientation, disability status].
 - e. I know the extent of exposure to career information and role models the client had in high school and beyond.
 - f. I am aware of the client’s perception of her /his competence, ability, and self-efficacy.

- g. I know my stage of racial identity development.
 - h. I know my client's stage of racial identity development.
3. Negotiation and working consensus
- a. I understand the type of career counseling help the client is seeking.
 - b. The client and I have agreed on the goals for career counseling.
 - c. I am aware of the extent of exposure to a variety of career role models the client has had.
 - d. I know the client understands the relationship between type of work and educational level.
 - e. I am aware of the negative and/or self-defeating thoughts that are obstacles to the client's aspirations and expectations.
 - f. I am aware of the client's expectations about the career counseling process.
 - g. I am aware of the research support for using the selected instrument with clients of this ethnicity [gender, SES, sexual orientation, disability status]. (pp. 250-251)

Evans (2008), Flores and Heppner (2002), Ward and Bingham (1993) and others, have provided starting points and guide posts from which to move forward in the development of multicultural career counseling efficacy. It is the tasks of all career professionals to fully engage with these and other applications so as to not only enhance our competencies but, more urgently, to fully attend the needs of our clients. In conceptualizing the new perspective in terms of culturally competent career counseling, Parmer and Rush (2003) provided a simple yet comprehensive definition "Career counseling is a discipline of trained professionals dedicated to providing holistic, contextual, life-span counseling to a diverse clientele" (p. 31).

Further Reflections

This discussion has been offered to articulate and identify the need for the incorporation of multicultural competencies within career counseling constructs. In this effort, it appears that career scholars and vocational researchers have begun to outline and propose varying skills, strategies, attitudes, and knowledge bases applicable in career interventions for the diversity that is now America. The exigent need for the inclusion and institutionalization of these competencies is of the moment. According to Winslow (2008), the recent U.S. Census Bureau indicates that the percentage of minorities in America will increase from the current one-third of the nations population to the majority by 2042 . The Asian community is expected to rise from 15.5 million to 40.6 million by 2050 (Winslow, 2008). Hispanics will have the largest growth, followed by Blacks from 41.1 million to 65.7 million. The White population will decrease from the current 66% to 46%. Bingham & Ward (as cited in Gysbers et al., 2003) specifically stated that "If vocational counseling was born from the changing demographics and economic needs of this century, then clearly career counseling will need to change in response to the changing needs of the coming century" (p. 50). Of particular significance at this current juncture, in stressing the utmost importance of multicultural career counseling skills and

competencies, is the recently released *Minimum Competencies for Multicultural Career Counseling and Development* (2009) released by the National Career Development Association. This document is of such precedence its introductory statement must be included in its entirety herein. Thus, stated:

The purpose of the multicultural career counseling and development competencies is to ensure that all individuals practicing in, or training for practice in the career counseling and development field are aware of the expectation that we, as professionals, will practice in ways that promote the career development and functioning of individuals of all backgrounds. Promotion and advocacy of career development for individuals is ensured regardless of age, culture, mental/physical ability, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/partnership status, military or civilian status, language preference, socioeconomic status, any other characteristics not specifically relevant to job performance, in accordance with NCDA and ACA policy. Further, they will provide guidance to those in the career counseling and development field regarding appropriate practice with regard to clients of a different background than their own. Finally, implementation of these competencies for the field should provide the public with the assurance that they can expect career counseling and development professionals to function in a manner that facilitates their career development, regardless of the client's/student's background.

NCDA Board, August 2009, p. 1

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