



Career assessment involves an ongoing process of gathering information to assist clients to make career-related decisions. Useful information to gather in career assessment includes but is not limited to understanding a person's personality, values, skills, interests, life roles, and career history.

Assessment information is typically gathered via intake interviews, standardized tests and inventories, and non-standardized methods such as card sorts, career genograms, and career lifelines. The data that are obtained can be used to inform both the career counselor and the client and to help set appropriate goals and strategies for achieving the goals in career counseling. Multicultural career assessment incorporates information about the client's cultural background such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexual orientation and uses this information to understand how these factors may have shaped one's career development. In essence, in contrast with traditional career assessment, the cornerstone of multicultural career assessment is understanding a person's career issues within a cultural context.

Recent advancements in area of career assessment with culturally diverse groups are apparent in the growth of multicultural career counseling models and multicultural career assessment models that have been formulated. An integral element to effective career counseling with culturally diverse individuals includes accurate and valid career assessment. Several models and frameworks have been developed to guide the career assessment process and to understand the career needs of culturally diverse individuals. Some of these models, which are described below, have focused solely on assessment, while

others have attended to assessment issues within the context of career counseling with culturally diverse clients.

Healy's Career Appraisal Model

Healy's model served as one of the early forerunners of career counseling models that incorporated cultural variables. Healy criticized traditional career models for the hierarchical counselor-client relationship and the lack of emphasis on environmental barriers in the implementation of career goals. As an alternative to the traditional approaches, Healy proposed a reformed career appraisal model that explicitly recognized contextual issues. Furthermore, this model advocated for collaboration with clients, empowerment of clients to take an active role in their career development, and follow-up with clients to help them implement goals.

Career Assessment Models for African American Clients

In this model from Swanson and Bowman, four steps for tasks and decisions for the career assessment of African Americans were outlined. The four steps include establishing rapport, choosing a formal assessment process, determining the type of assessment and assessment instrument, and providing an effective test interpretation by emphasizing the counselor's experience.

Career Assessment Models for Racial/Ethnic Minority Women

Feminist theories highlight the importance of understanding the impact of sexism and the oppression of women's lives. These feminist tenets have served as a foundation for the development of career assessment models for women of color, whereby the influence of gender socialization and social barriers in the career development of women are emphasized and acknowledged. One approach to career assessment by Forrest and Brooks identifies four

important aspects of this process that are grounded in feminist ideology. First, the client and the counselor are considered equal. Second, an awareness of sociocultural conditions that have limited women's experiences and opportunities is critical, and these factors contribute to women's career problems. Third, women must understand how these career problems affect their own social, economic, and political environment. Finally, the goal of feminist therapy is to enable women to be independent, which is essential for their mental health.

Feminist writers have also emphasized the role of client-generated information in counseling. Ward and Bingham offered a framework for the career assessment of ethnic minority women using the clinical interview as the primary assessment tool. They recommended that the career counselor do additional preparation before encountering a diverse client and needs to continuously work on establishing rapport throughout counseling. In addition, counselors should assess the impact of the culture, family influences, racial/ethnic issues, and finances of the client that are presenting concerns. The counselor may prepare for working with culturally diverse clients by using the Multicultural Career Counseling Checklist for Counselors, which was designed to encourage counselors to assess personal multicultural counseling competencies.

Later, Bingham and Ward incorporated the assessment of self-efficacy variables in addition to general cultural variables such as worldviews and structure of opportunity and gender variables as important areas of assessment with women of color. Incorporating this information with data obtained through traditional career assessment variables, such as career interests and work values, comprises the core components of Bingham and Ward's career assessment model.

Culturally Appropriate Career Counseling Model

Fouad and Bingham developed the culturally appropriate career counseling model (CACCM)

because mainstream theories did not mention cultural factors and offered minimal attention to factors related to career assessment with racial/ethnic minorities. The assessment component of the model proposes the appraisal of five spheres that affect career issues, including the individual, gender, family, racial or ethnic group, and dominant group. Relevant constructs within each sphere that are expected to influence career should be evaluated. For example, personality, gender roles, family expectations, cultural values, and structural barriers are variables that may be considered for each of the respective spheres. This model is unique because it incorporates culture into every phase of the career counseling process, including career assessment. Assessing how multiple factors may affect the career self-efficacy, interests, options, and decision making of culturally diverse individuals is important because each of these realms is believed to have unique effects on individual career choices.

Recently, the concept of metacognitive awareness was integrated to the CACCM to explicitly address the counselor's cultural context. Specifically, active engagement in a self-reflective process, or metacognition, is believed to help counselors to maximize their ability to evaluate and address personal cultural backgrounds when working with culturally diverse clients.

Integrative-Sequential Framework

This framework by Leong and Hartung includes five stages for assessing career concerns: (1) the emergence of career and vocational problems, (2) help-seeking and career service utilization behaviors, (3) evaluation of career and vocational problems, (4) career interventions, and (5) outcomes of career interventions. This model is distinct from prior frameworks because it includes defining the client's problem in a cultured context; and by doing so, it highlights the transition from identifying the problem to utilizing career counseling services.

Culturally Appropriate Career Assessment Model

The culturally appropriate career assessment model, developed by Flores, Spanierman, and Obasi, consists of four interrelated steps for evaluating career clients: gathering culturally encompassing information, selecting culturally appropriate career assessment instruments, administering culturally sensitive instruments, and interpreting data in a culturally appropriate manner.

Future Directions

Many of the current career assessment models point to the importance of understanding personal variables that influence career development. Multicultural career assessment models look beyond person variables and take into account the context and environmental variables that affect career decisions and career development. Current multicultural models also suggest that one theory or technique may not be suitable or culturally valid to all clients. In other words, a general approach to assessment with all clients disregards relevant factors affecting the career issues of culturally diverse clients. Important environmental and contextual factors include an individual's family influence, cultural background, racial/ethnic identity, acculturation, socioeconomic status, gender role expectations, worldview, environmental factors including societal barriers, and perceived personal strengths. These factors aid in the career assessment process by helping the client identify factors that may contribute to or influence his or her thoughts, feelings, or actions in the career development process. It is important for career counselors to be aware of their own perceptions and beliefs about environmental factors that influence their own lives to prevent these from biasing their understanding of the concerns experienced by their culturally diverse clients.

Investigating the validity of current measures in use for research and practice has been one of the major thrusts in the recent past. The issue of whether career assessments need to be culturally valid or culturally specific remains a question for future multicultural career assessment research and practice. To continue to advance the area of multicultural career assessment, research is



needed to examine whether these multicultural career assessment models are effective with culturally diverse clients.

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