

Ch. 10: The Role of Race and Ethnicity in Career Choice, Development, and Adjustment

This chapter desires to shed light on the many variations of cultural adherence that influence people's experience in their job/career searches. The many cultural groups have nuances that affect the way persons in those groups think about career opportunities. One clear example of cultural variation is an individual versus a collectivist group. A career counselor should have a basic understanding of the cultural groups they work alongside as a career counselor. However, the authors advise counselors to be aware of acculturation. Acculturation occurs when a person of an ethnic group is exposed to and adopts all or aspects of another cultural group. A person who appears to be of a commonly collectivist culture may come in while being affected by a more individualistic culture, as is frequently found in the United States. We should never assume a person's beliefs solely based on skin color. The writers mention individuals often feel better served by a member of their cultural group, even if varying from their ethnic group. Social Cognitive Career Theory is one modality put forth to help weigh multiple factors surrounding the identifiability of a person's ideal career path. This tool is well equipped to assist a counselor in guiding a person towards their preferred future career. This work also highlighted that role models directly affect career opportunities perceived to be available to individuals. Having a role model who is well-grounded in reality while desiring growth is essential. Many career areas are affected by discrimination, whether real or perceived, regardless of changes made in these industries or career paths. It is vital to see the individual situations for what they are rather than grouping all similar employers or career paths into one group.

Many careers are known to be traditionally dominated by specific cultural groups. It is interesting to see how these areas have changed over time. It would be interesting to consider why these have evolved into what they are today. It seems as though the education aspirations of some ethnic groups have led them to less physically demanding jobs. This education gap has caused an imbalance on one level but has also created career opportunities for ethnic groups without similar educational aspirations. There should always be efforts to help people (not ethnic groups) to be successful to the best of their ability as a human. The historical reality of ethnic discrimination in the United States is indeed disgusting! However, we should be cautious that efforts to balance this great wrong do not turn around and make another group the new low man on the work scale. Future studies should focus on whether measures such as affirmative action have successfully maintained this delicate balance or if it has been instrumental in holding certain groups back simply because of their skin color.

I cannot help but wonder about how to assist individuals in finding the delicate balance between being aligned with and gaining the healthy and valuable attributes of their ethnically aligned cultural group while encouraging limited enculturation to gain the value found in groups around them. It is fascinating to consider areas of ethnic diversity that can be learned when we give others who may not look or sound like us the opportunity to affect and potentially change us for the better. In some small way, we have become a melting pot in The United States. However, we should continue to seek opportunities to gain value from ethnically diverse interactions. This interaction is a path to avoid the mistakes of the past created due to elitism.

The author has a brief conversation regarding "decent work." I wonder if this idea is subjective or a set group of concepts and principles. It may be valuable to consider a situation

such as when an untrained/ uneducated person goes to a more affluent area and does a job much lower on the skills needed level. Are they being discriminated against or given an opportunity for which to be grateful? Throughout history, people have been doing low-level jobs where others find themselves at upper-level jobs. The disparagement has occurred because this balance has been imbalanced, with certain ethnic groups typically being at the bottom while other groups traditionally being at the top. This imbalance needs continued improvement by encouraging humans rather than singling out ethnic groups. Rather than trying to figure out how to make one ethnic group superior to another, what if we researched the cultural strengths of various ethnic groups and put these traits to work at building the human race? This blending of positive attributes does not mean we should all be the same. It says we should learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses. Our differences are what add great flavor and variety to life. Imagine how boring our dinner choices would be without ethnic and cultural variations. Some people enjoy bland food, whereas others enjoy a bit of spiciness in their diet. Who is right? Differences do not always have to equal disparity or injustice.

When teaching masters level students, it needs to be made clear that some client groups will come in who have lived in an ethnic group who have been traditionally held back or found it tough to break through the barriers they have, such as poverty--helping a client find a balance between going in debt to seek an educational pathway (that could lift them into a higher earning path) and being satisfied with a career that may have a lower income level but allows them the ability to not go in debt while also having experiences with their family and cultural group. It will be necessary to help students see the need to support a future client to find a satisfying work/life/income balance for each individual. I am reminded of a group that went to help a homeless

community. Help in their minds meant getting this group off the street. They were shocked that a large portion of those they came in contact with were angered to learn they wanted to take them off the street. The reality is many in this homeless community prefer the life they had developed and did not want to be "saved from the streets." Finding the balance between pushing forward for growth and pushing values is crucial to relationships like that of student/ teacher and counselor/ counselee.