

# The Role of Work and Cultural Values in Occupational Choice, Satisfaction, and Success: A Theoretical Statement

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*Theorists have all but ignored the career development of ethnic and cultural minorities. The purpose of this article is to rectify this oversight by presenting a values-based theory of occupational choice, satisfaction, and success. Values were chosen as the cornerstone of the theory because work values have been identified as critical variables in the career development process (e.g., N. A. Fouad, 1995; D. E. Super & B. Sverko, 1995). Cultural values also play an important role in the occupational choice-making process (e.g., F. A. Ibrahim, H. Ohnishi, & R. P. Wilson, 1994). Although they are the primary factors in choosing and advancing in an occupation, a number of other variables interact with values.*

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Career development theorists have all but ignored the career development of ethnic and cultural minorities (Brooks, 1990; Cheatham, 1990; Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995). One result of this neglect is that current career development theories provide little in the way of theoretical guidelines for practice or research (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1995; Leong, 1995a). Recently, Leong (1995b) assembled a group of scholars who reviewed the empirical literature regarding the career development of ethnic and racial minorities and made suggestions for the revision of some of the major theories of occupational choice and career development (Arbona, 1995; M. T. Brown, 1995; Johnson, Swartz, & Martin, 1995; Leong & Serifica, 1995). Although the suggestions generated by this group may be helpful to career counselors and researchers, the major theories have not been revised and no new theories have been advanced. The primary objective of this article is to partially address the issue of cultural "neglect" by setting forth a theory of occupational choice, success, and satisfaction that will be applicable to cultural and ethnic minorities as well as to White, European Americans. The approach used in the development of the propositions set forth in this article is not unlike the one used by Super (1953), Holland (1959), and others in that the research and theoretical positions of others serve as the primary foundation for the ideas. It is hoped that the proposals presented here are provocative enough to generate empirical tests of their value.

## **BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE THEORY**

Any theorist is faced with the task of identifying and defining the constructs that influence the phenomena addressed by the theory. I have chosen values as the cornerstone of

this theory partially because work values have been identified as critical variables in the career development process (e.g., Fouad, 1995; Super & Sverko, 1995). It has also been suggested that cultural values, particularly social relationships values, play an important role in the career development process (Hartung et al., 1998; Ibrahim et al., 1994). Values are beliefs that are experienced by the individual as standards that guide how he or she should function; they are cognitive structures, but they also have behavioral and affective dimensions. Values develop so that individuals can meet their needs in socially acceptable ways (Rokeach, 1973), and thus they are shaped by the cultural context of the individual. Individuals' values are the basis of their self-evaluation and their evaluation of others, and they play a major role in the establishment of personal goals. They may operate out of awareness or may be brought into awareness through a process of crystallization and prioritization (D. Brown, 1996; Rokeach, 1973). Values are crystallized when individuals can identify them and tell how the values influence their behavior. They are prioritized when individuals can rank order them in terms of their relative importance.

The values system contains all the values held by individuals, including their cultural values and work values. Cultural values have been identified through research as being those typically held by certain cultural groups (Carter, 1991). They include values regarding human nature (human beings are good, bad, or neither), person-nature relationship (nature dominates people, people dominate nature, living in harmony with nature is important), time orientation (past, past-future, present, or circular—oriented to changes that recur in nature as opposed to time as measured by watches and calendars), activity (being—spontaneous self-expression is important; being-in-becoming—controlled self-expression is important; doing—action-oriented self-expression is im-

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portant), self-control (it is either highly or moderately important to control one's thoughts and emotions), social relationships (individualism—the individual is most important social unit; collective—it is important to put the group's concerns ahead of the concerns of the individual) (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Finally, although research has indicated that some cultural values seem to be more prevalent in certain cultural groups than others, Carter (1991) concluded 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*. Counselors should keep Carter's conclusions in mind when considering the points raised in this article.

Work values are the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in the work role. Financial prosperity, altruism, achievement, and responsibility are examples of work values. In addition to work values, individuals develop a number of other values that they expect to satisfy in life roles other than work, such as family (D. Brown, 1996). The major underlying assumption of this theory, which is advanced in this article, is that cultural and work values are the primary variables that influence the occupational choice-making process, the occupation chosen, and the resulting satisfaction with and success in the occupation chosen. However, other life role values also influence many aspects of the career development process.

Although values are primary factors in choosing, deriving satisfaction from, and advancing in a career, a number of other variables interact with values to influence occupational choice and the outcomes of the choice. In some instances, these factors constrain both the occupational choice-making process and the choices made. In other instances, these factors have the opposite effect and make the process easier and expand the number of occupational options available to the decision maker. For example, contextual variables such as socioeconomic status (SES) (e.g., Hotchkiss & Borow, 1996; Sinha, 1990), family or group influence (e.g., Johnson et al., 1995; Leong & Serifica, 1995), and history of discrimination (e.g., Leong & Serifica, 1995; Melamed, 1996; Robinson & Ginter, 1999) influence both the decision-making process and the career chosen. Gender (e.g., M. T. Brown, 1995; Gottfredson, 1996; Melamed, 1995) also plays a major role in the occupations chosen as do aptitudes (e.g., Blau & Duncan, 1967; Jencks, Crouse, & Mueser, 1983; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Other variables that may constrain the occupational choice-making process as well as the choice itself include the mental health of the decision makers (Casserly, 1982; Pietromonaco & Rock, 1987), the information available to them, and their self-efficacy as it relates to occupational options chosen (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996).

### PROPOSITIONS: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CHOICE-MAKING PROCESS

In this section, eight propositions about the role of values and other variables mentioned earlier are advanced. In some instances, subpropositions will be set forth as well. When

empirical support is available to support propositions and subpropositions, it will be presented.

1. *Highly prioritized work values are the most important determinants of career choice for people with an individualism social value (i.e., the individual is the most important unit) if their work values are crystallized and prioritized. Such individuals feel unconstrained to act on their work values, if there is at least one occupational option available that will satisfy the values held, values-based information about occupational options is available, the difficulty level of implementing the options is approximately the same, and the financial resources available are sufficient to support the implementation of the preferred option.*

1. A. *Factors that limit the number of occupational options considered for people with an individualism social value are low SES, minority status, mental health problems, physical disabilities, gender (Gottfredson, 1996), low scholastic aptitude, perception that they will be discriminated against in the occupation, and lack of values-based information. Women, minorities, people from lower SES levels, and people with mental or physical limitations with an individualism social value will choose occupations consistent with their values, but they are likely to choose from a more restricted range of occupations than would White, European American men.*

1. B. *Self-efficacy will become a constraining factor in the career decision-making process of individuals who value individualism when the options being considered require widely divergent skills and abilities.*

*Support.* There is considerable evidence to support the proposition that work values influence the occupational decision-making process (e.g., Ben-Shem & Avi-Itzhak 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Knoop, 1991; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Although these and other researchers did not identify the *social values* (whether the individuals maintained a social value or not) of the people studied, the participants were for the most part European Americans who typically value individualism (Carter, 1991). To this point, no research has been produced that examines the occupational decision-making process in the absence of occupational alternatives that will satisfy the values of the decision maker, and thus this aspect of Proposition 1 is unsupported. Research by Judge and Bretz (1992) has shown that the availability of values-based information is influential in the career choice process. In their research, *values-based* information was defined as information that clearly demonstrated which values would be reinforced in the workplace. In addition, Feather (1988) studied the career choice-making process of college students. He found that self-efficacy became an issue in the process of choosing a career when one of the options being considered required more rigorous (numerous skills and abilities were required) preparation than the others. There is considerable evidence that self-efficacy plays an important role in career decision making (Lent et al., 1996). However, additional research is needed to support Feather's (1988) findings and to sort out the role of self-efficacy under various decision-making conditions.

Several research studies support the idea that expectations regarding occupational attainment are positively correlated with SES (e.g., Gibbs, 1985; Gregory, Wells, & Leake, 1986). The results of these studies have documented the importance of SES as a predictor of occupational attainment (Hotchkiss & Borow, 1996; Ponterotto & Casas, 1991). Impoverished people tend to have "lower aspirations" than individuals who are higher on the economic ladder regardless of their race or ethnicity, perhaps because they believe that their fate is controlled by external factors (Sinha, 1990).

Generally speaking, members of ethnic minority groups and women are overrepresented in lower paying occupations when compared with European American men (e.g., Arbona, 1995; M. T. Brown, 1995; Melamed, 1996; Ong, 1990; Saunders, 1995). There are numerous reasons for this disparity, but discrimination undoubtedly plays a major role in the differential (Arbona, 1995; Arce, Murgia, & Frisbee, 1987; Cox & Harquail, 1991; Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran, 1996; Leong & Serifica, 1995; Montalvo, 1991; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997; Powell & Butterfield, 1997). Melamed (1995) concluded that discrimination accounted for between 55% and 62% of the variance in the differential career success of men and women in a British sample. Because of the widespread prevalence of discrimination in the United States (Robinson & Ginter, 1999), it seems likely that ethnic minorities vicariously or directly have experienced some degree of discrimination, which influences their decision-making processes. It is likely that the same may be true for women. This is an area that warrants considerable investigation.

Gender is a constraining factor in the career decision-making process for a reason other than discrimination. A recent study (Harpaz & Fu, 1997) found that women in Israel, Germany, the United States, and Japan assigned lower importance to the centrality of work in their lives than did men. The researchers suggested that this is the result of women's orientation to other life roles, primarily because of women's concern regarding participation in the family role. Others (e.g., Gati, Osipow, & Givon, 1995; Larson, Butler, Wilson, Medora, & Allgood, 1994; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997) have made similar observations. Although there is evidence that the constraints regarding occupational participation related to family issues are lessening (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997), it seems unlikely that this barrier will be eliminated in the near future.

Feather (1992) suggested that mood is a major determinant of motivation in the career decision-making process, and research (Casserly, 1982; Pietromonaco & Rock, 1987) generally supports the contention that mental health problems do, in fact, influence motivation to make decisions. Therefore, it seems likely that the mental health of the individual will be a major factor in the occupational choice-making process and limits the options considered.

*2. Individuals who hold collective social values and come from families and or groups who hold the same social value will either defer to the wishes of the group or family members or be*

*heavily influenced by them in the career decision-making process. The result will be that the occupations chosen will correlate less with the individual's work values than is the case with individuals who value individualism and make their own career choices.*

*2. A. Gender will be a major factor in the careers entered by individuals who hold a collective social value because of stereotyped perceptions of occupations by decision makers. The result will be that occupational choices are more likely to be stereotypical male and female. Moreover, women with a collective social value will enter a more restricted range of occupations than men with a collective social value.*

*2. B. Perceptions that discrimination may occur if an occupation is chosen will be a deterrent to choosing that occupation by people who hold a collective social value.*

*2. C. Perceptions regarding the resources available to implement an occupational choice will be a major limiting factor in the career decision-making process of individuals who hold a collective social value.*

*2. D. The outcome of the career decision-making process for people who hold a collective social value will be less influenced by the availability of the values-based occupational information than it will be by the work values of their family or group.*

*Support.* After studying the role of parents in the career decision-making process of a primarily European American group, Young (1994), observed, "There seems to be a cultural belief in North America that the choice of one's occupation is an individual right, much like the choice of one's spouse" (p. 197). Unfortunately, the assumption of independence in the career decision-making process may have been misapplied to some minority clients in a culturally oppressive manner by unwitting career counselors. For example, the construct of career indecisiveness (e.g., Goodstein, 1972; Newman, Fuqua, & Seaworth, 1989) is based on the assumption that the decision maker should be able to make an independent decision. Leong (1991) found that Asian American college students were more likely to prefer a dependent decision-making style than their European American counterparts. Although Leong (1991) used cultural group membership instead of internalized culture to identify cultural background, his results support Proposition 2 to some degree. Asian American, Hispanic American, Native American Indian, and other decision makers who hold a collective social value may have a very different view of the decision-making process than European Americans. A collective social value is often manifested in a strong respect for and obedience to one's parents and the traditions of the family or group (Lee, 1991). When a collective social relationship is a highly prioritized value for both the decision maker and the decision-maker's family, the values of family members, depending upon the structure (e.g., patriarchal) of the family, are likely to be the primary determinants of career choices (Sue & Sue, 1990; Yagi & Oh, 1995). The rationale for Proposition 2.D. was drawn from this line of thinking. However, the factors that influence the occupational decision making of people with a collective social value have not been studied directly.

Respect for the traditions of the family or group may also be instrumental in the decision-making process for some Native American Indians (Herring, 1996; Martin, 1995) but in a somewhat different way. In this context, the family refers to biological as well as tribal relations that come to bear on decision makers (Martin, 1995; Thomason, 1995). Some American Indian families practice noninterference in the decision-making process, but their emphasis on cooperation and collateral relationships, as well as respect for the traditions of the tribe, are likely to be powerful influences on the decision-making process (Herring, 1996; Martin, 1995). Therefore, subtle as well as more overt expectations of the family and or tribe may be important forces in the career decision-making process. Unfortunately, at this time there is only observational support for this supposition (e.g., Herring, 1996; Thomason, 1995).

3. *When taken individually, cultural values regarding activity (doing, being, being-in-becoming) will not constrain the occupational decision-making process. People who value individualism and have both a future/past-future time value and a doing activity value are more likely to make decisions at important transition points, such as graduation from high school, and to act on those choices than are people who hold either a collective or individualism social value and a being or being-in-becoming activity value.*

*Support.* Currently there is no empirical support for Proposition 3. It was derived from the descriptions of the values orientations of cultural groups advanced by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). For example, they found that people with a doing value emphasized action-oriented activities that can be measured by an external criteria such as an achievement. People with a future orientation emphasize looking ahead and planning for change to occur. Individuals who value individualism, doing, and a future time orientation should be advantaged in the occupational choice-making process. Clearly, research is needed to support Proposition 3.

4. *Because of differing values systems, men and women and people from differing cultural groups will enter occupations at varying rates.*

*Support.* Earlier in this article, research findings were presented that support the proposition that values vary among and within cultural groups (Carter, 1991). Similarly, differences between the values structures of men and women, generally, and within cultural groups have also been well documented (Bartol, Anderson, & Schneider, 1981; Bassoff & Ortiz, 1984; Beutell & Brenner, 1986; deVaus & McCallister, 1991; Stimpson, Jensen, & Neff, 1992; Vacha-Haasa et al., 1994; Wagoner & Bridwell, 1989). However, the literature regarding occupational values of cultural groups is mixed, probably because level of acculturation is not typically an independent variable in the studies that have been conducted. For example, Lebo, Harrington, and Tillman (1995) studied the work values of high school students from six countries

and concluded that the values of the groups studied were more similar than different. Because all students studied were from countries with Eurocentric cultural orientations, this finding is not surprising. Leong and Tata (1990) examined the occupational values of Chinese American students at various levels of acculturation. They found significant differences in the work values of men and women. However, students at various levels of acculturation varied only on the value of self-realization, which the researchers observed is a value more likely to be a part of European American culture than Chinese American culture. In an investigation that compared Asian American students with European American students, Leong (1991) found that Asian American students placed greater emphasis on extrinsic values (e.g., making money) than did European American students. Vondracek, Shimizu, Schulenburg, Hostetler, and Sakayanagi (1990) investigated samples of students from Japan and the United States and found differences in the work values of the groups studied. Elizur, Borg, Hunt, and Beck (1991) studied samples from eight countries, four from Europe and four from Asia, and found significant differences among their subsamples, which they characterized as "minor variations." The sample (college educated men) and methodology (a gross ranking without consideration of cultural values or acculturation) used by Elizur et al. (1991) may have masked some of the differences that were present.

As noted earlier, empirical data supports the idea that women and most minorities are overrepresented in lower paying occupations (in proportion to their numbers in the population) when compared with White, European American men (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). For example, Swinton (1992) reported that African Americans are overrepresented in social and low-level occupations. Moreover, Aguirre (1990) noted that women are decidedly overrepresented in certain occupations including clerical, social service, and service jobs and underrepresented in the crafts and scientific occupations. However, Hsia (1988) reported that Asian Americans are overrepresented in professional, technical, and service occupations and underrepresented in sales, manufacturing, and laborer job classifications.

Occupational segregation can be accounted for, to some degree, by the twin processes of enculturation (Arbona, 1995; Fouad, 1995; Gottfredson, 1996) and discrimination in the workplace (Hotchkiss & Borow, 1996; Melamed, 1995; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Other factors, such as luck (D. Brown & Minor, 1992) and SES, also play a role in occupational segregation. However, it may well be that the initial occupational choice is the major factor in the occupational success (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Fortunately, this is one factor that counselors, particularly school and college counselors, can affect because facilitating occupational choice is generally considered a major role of both groups.

5. *The process of choosing a career involves a series of "estimates." These include (a) estimates regarding one's ability and values, (b) estimates regarding the skills and abilities that will be required to be successful in an occupation, and (c) estimates*

of the work values that the occupational alternatives being considered will satisfy. For people who value individualism, the ability to accurately make these estimates will be a critical factor in their success in their occupations and their satisfaction with them. For individuals who hold a collateral social value, the estimates made by the decision makers will be the key factors in their success and occupational satisfaction.

5.A. Individuals who come from backgrounds where little emphasis is placed on feedback about individual strengths and weaknesses and personal traits and who make their own occupational decisions will make more errors in the process as defined by mismatches between their values and those values satisfied by the job. The result will be lowered job satisfaction, lower levels of success, and shorter job tenure.

*Support.* There is evidence that African American adolescents may not be as proficient at making estimates of their abilities and other traits as are European American adolescents (D. Brown, Fulkerson, Vedder, & Ware, 1983; Westbrook, Buck, Wynne, & Sanford, 1994), although the reasons for these differences are not clear. It may well be that the results are more attributable to SES than to ethnicity because the researchers did not control for income level. As noted earlier, low SES seems to be related to lowered aspirations. It may also be related to the tendency to underestimate their ability to act on their values and an overall malaise because poor people may have the perception that they have little control over their lives (Graves, 1967; Sinha, 1990). This is an area that deserves additional study.

The importance of having occupational information is attested to in most authoritative texts on career development (e.g., Isaacson & Brown, 2000). People who choose occupations rely on accurate information as the basis of their estimates about both the abilities required to perform the tasks required in an occupation and the extent to which the occupation will satisfy their values. Values-based information, unlike more statistically oriented information, allows decision makers to ascertain not only what workers do, but how they feel about what they do (D. Brown, 1996).

Some minority groups and people living in rural settings may be particularly disadvantaged in the occupational choice-making process because of the dearth of all types of occupational information. Martin (1995) drew upon the research of McDiarmid and Kleinfeld (1986) to support his case that Native American Indians may have less information about jobs. He pointed out that many Native American Indians live in rural areas, have limited contacts with individuals who are knowledgeable about the world of work, and their work values and interests are abridged as a result. D. Brown and Minor (1992) reported that overall a higher proportion of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics believed that they needed assistance in finding information about jobs than did White, European Americans. Newly immigrated Hispanics and Asian Americans may need help finding values-based information more often than their White counterparts due to their English proficiency. It seems likely that any group with limited English proficiency will have

limited amounts of occupational information and that the information they have may not be as accurate as that available to their counterparts who have greater English proficiency.

6. Occupational success will be related to job-related skills acquired in formal and informal educational settings, job-related aptitudes, SES, participation in the work role, and the extent to which discrimination is experienced regardless of the social relationship value held.

6. B. Because success in the career role requires an awareness of future events and the ability to accommodate the dynamic changes that occur in the workplace, success in the career role will be related to time and activity values with individuals with future or past/future paired with a doing activity value being the most successful.

The roles of scholastic aptitude (e.g., Melamed, 1996), family SES (Blau & Duncan, 1967), and discrimination (e.g., Leong & Serifica, 1995; Melamed, 1995, 1996) have been presented elsewhere and will not be discussed at this point. However, research has shown that the extent to which workers, particularly women, participate in the work role was directly related to their success (Tharenou & Conroy, 1994). Research has also shown the positive impact of educational participation on occupational success (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Tharenou & Conroy, 1994). Finally, the role of special aptitudes in occupational success has been well documented (e.g., Ghiselli, 1973).

The importance of time perspective in the career development process seems to have appeared first in 1957 (Super et al., 1957) in a discussion of the determinants of vocational maturity. In 1981, Super set forth an interactive model of career maturity that suggested that time perspective develops as a result of early information about careers, interaction with key figures in the environment, and the interests of the individual. In this 1981 statement, a variety of factors, including time perspective, were merged to form what Super termed *planfulness*, a critical component of career maturity. In 1991, Savickas echoed Super's suggestion that the time perspective held by individuals is an important ingredient in the career-planning process. Savickas, drawing on the earlier work of Hughes (1958), suggested that not everyone has internalized the idea that they will have a career. For this to happen, individuals must be able to draw on the past and project the future. People with a circular-time or present-time orientation may be "lacking" an essential construct: a detailed vision of the future.

Research regarding career maturity has not been highly supportive of the construct, perhaps because of problems with instrumentation (Super, 1990). However, the importance of time orientation in career success has not been tested directly. The groups that research has shown are most likely to have either circular-time or present-time orientations—Native American Indians, Hispanics, and African Americans (Carter, 1991)—are underrepresented in all of the best paying occupations and overrepresented in the lowest paying occupations (Johnson et al., 1995; United States Depart-

ment of Labor [USDOL], 1995). Conversely, Asian Americans, who are more likely to have a past–future orientation (Carter, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990), are overrepresented in these same occupations, as are European Americans (USDOL, 1995). However, it would be impossible to attribute these data solely to the idea that these groups have a particular time orientation, given the historic patterns of discrimination against minorities and other factors that may influence success in a career.

Research on children by Burd, Dodd, and Grassi (1981) and on adolescents by Anderson, Burd, Dodd, and Keller (1980) revealed that Native American Indian students were less able to make accurate estimates of the amount of time it would take to complete a task than were other public school children. Success in the preparation for and performance of the duties involved in most occupations requires individuals to make accurate estimates of the amount of time it will take to complete them. Although there are many factors that influence occupational achievement, the findings in these studies suggest that career development researchers and career counselors may need to concern themselves with this time orientation as Super (1981) and Savickas (1991) suggested.

*7. Job tenure will be partially the result of the match between the cultural and work values of the worker, supervisors, and colleagues.*

*Support.* Sanderson (1993) said, “A major characteristic of a good work environment is one where employees understand each other’s unique cultural characteristics” (p. 5). However, it is likely that few workplaces meet this criterion at this juncture. More research is needed regarding how cultural values and the characteristics of the workplace interact. To this point, no research has surfaced that examines the specific position advanced in Proposition 7.

*8. The primary bases for job satisfaction for people with an individualism social value in order of importance will be (1) the congruence between the values reinforced on the job and individuals’ work values; (2) conflicts that occur between the career role and other life roles; and (3) the approval of the work roles by others such as parents, spouses, and friends. Job satisfaction for people with a collective social value will be, in order of importance, (1) the extent to which the work role is approved by significant others such as parents, spouses, and friends; (2) conflicts between the career role and other life roles; and (3) the congruence between the values reinforced by the job and individuals’ work values.*

*Support.* The support for Proposition 8 is indirect at this time. For example, Nevis (1983) found that workers on the Chinese mainland put group goals ahead of their personal goals, which is consistent with their collective social value (M. K. Ho, 1987). Because of the role that satisfying goals plays in occupational satisfaction (D. Brown, 1996), it seems likely that achieving the goals of the primary group will be a major factor in the occupational satisfaction of individu-

als with a social value. Researchers have not looked at the relationship between individuals’ cultural values and values held by people in their workplaces as a factor in occupational outcomes. Posner (1992) and Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins (1989) did find that job satisfaction was related to congruence between individuals’ work values and those held by people in the workplace. The latter study (Meglino et al., 1989) looked specifically at the relationship between individuals’ work values, the work values held by supervisors, and job satisfaction. Their findings supported the part of Proposition 8 that suggests that congruence between workers’ and supervisors’ values is related to job satisfaction.

In a related study, Yu and Wu (1985) investigated the impact of unemployment and stress among Chinese Americans who were unemployed. The inability of the unemployed workers to provide support for aging relatives was a primary source of dissatisfaction among those studied. This result supports the proposition that individuals with a collective social value are oriented to their families and provides indirect support for the idea that the family may influence job satisfaction to a greater degree for people who hold a collective social value than for people who value individualism. Direct tests of this view are needed before conclusions can be drawn, however.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Several suggestions for needed research have been advanced throughout this article, and they will not be reiterated at this time. However, one general recommendation should be noted. The role of cultural values in occupational choice, occupational satisfaction, and occupational success is essentially unexplored at this juncture. First, future research on the role of values in occupational choice should explore how cultural values interact with work values to influence both occupational choice and outcomes. Second, sociodemographic variables such as race and ethnicity should not be used as proxies for internal culture by either researchers or practitioners (D. Y. F. Ho, 1995). As was noted at the outset, research has clearly demonstrated within-group differences for all cultural groups as well as overlap across groups (Carter, 1991). Therefore, counselors who rely on external variables as indicators of values are likely to err (D. Y. F. Ho, 1995). This of course raises the issue of how best to assess cultural values. Leong and Gim-Chung (1995) identified the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale as one means of measuring acculturation for Asian Americans. Martin (1995) suggested that, for Native American Indians, information such as family structure, clients’ perceptions of their acculturation, involvement in traditional ceremonies, and clients’ work values may provide useful information about acculturation. Results of the Life Values Inventory (D. Brown & Crace, 1996a, 1996b; Crace & Brown, 1996), particularly scores on the Loyalty to Family or Group Versus Independence and Humility scales, may also provide some useful information regarding important cultural values. The language spoken at home by bilingual individuals is also an

indicator of the degree to which members of racial and ethnic minorities adhere to their cultural traditions (LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990). These are but a few of the defensible approaches that can be used to assess cultural values.

It is not my intent to address the nuances of the practice issues with individuals who have varying cultural values. However, issues related to career counseling and assessment of ethnic minorities can be found in a number of sources (Arbona, 1995; Bowman, 1995; Fouad, 1994, 1995; Hartung et al., 1998; Leong & Gim-Chung, 1995; Leong & Leung, 1994; Thomason, 1995). Many aspects of these discussions are related to matching assessments and interventions to the cultural values of clients. Finally, although it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss specific interventions for various groups, the following is offered as a guiding principle when working with clients. Once the cultural values and other information such as language proficiency are determined, assessment strategies and interventions must be designed that are in accord with the values of the individual.

## CONCLUSION

Because the occupational choice-making process of cultural minorities has gone largely unaddressed, it seemed necessary to advance a theory that attempts to explain both the occupational choice-making and adaptation process of all groups. Cultural and work values were advanced as the primary factors in occupational choice and the outcomes of those choices. Gender, SES, history of discrimination, scholastic aptitude, special aptitudes, self-efficacy, and other variables were also included as salient variables in the theory. What is needed at this point is research that focuses on the role of values generally, and cultural values specifically, on the career decision-making processes, the choices made, and the outcome of those choices.

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