

Article 1

Career Assessment With International Students: International Student Card Sort (ISCS)

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Since the 1950s, the number of international students attending U.S. universities has consistently increased (Bhandari & Chow, 2007). During the 2006-2007 academic year, 582,984 international students studied in the United States (Bhandari & Chow, 2007). As globalization increases, the increasing trend of students pursuing cross-national higher education is likely to continue. In recent years, English speaking nations such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom launched vigorous recruitment strategies to attract talented, mobile students from abroad. Although the United States historically has been a leading host country for students seeking international education, recent declines in the enrollment of international students have led governmental and academic institutions to implement proactive recruitment strategies to ensure that the U.S. remains competitive in the global market of higher education (Obst & Forster, 2005).

International students increasingly play an important role in the U.S. higher education and economy. As a group, they comprise more than 16% of all graduate enrollment (Bhandari & Chow, 2007). Many of them are involved in teaching and conducting research as

teaching and research assistants. This trend is particularly evident in science and technological fields (Obst & Forster, 2005). They bring different perspectives and enhance the internationalization and diversification of universities (Obst & Forster, 2005). Those who return to their home country facilitate globalization of their field by serving as a cultural broker between their country and the U.S. International students also make contributions to the U.S. economy, with more than \$13 billion expenditures annually (Bhandari & Chow, 2007). Despite these positive contributions and recent efforts to recruit international students, their contributions and lived experiences are not widely recognized. Research on international students generally focuses on acculturation and adjustment issues, and information on their career development is scant in the counseling literature (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005).

The prospect to expand their career opportunities at home or internationally is one of the major reasons for international students to decide to study abroad (Obst & Forster, 2005). However, although many international students express the need for assistance in their career decision-making, they seldom seek it through their university (Mori, 2000; Singaravelu et al., 2005; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Thus, in order to better serve this population it is critical counselors gain an understanding of factors that influence international student career development. Given that research is limited, we believe it is essential to first grasp common career concerns and factors that may influence the career development of international students. To meet this goal, we used Super's Archway of career determinants (1990) to conceptualize different aspects of career development and present a comprehensive picture of the relevant factors. Next, we developed a list of traits for a card sort that encompasses these factors. The card sort can be used as an assessment tool, with the emphasis on the whole personhood of international students.

Common Factors Associated With International Students' Career Development

Super (1990) developed the Archway of career determinants model to portray the biographical, psychological and socioeconomic factors in career choice and development. The archway consists of two columns, their capitals, and an arch that connects the two columns. The model conceptualizes that each component interacts with each other to influence the person's career decision. The biographical column includes personal needs, values, interests, intelligence, and aptitudes, with achievement and personality serving as the capital. The socioeconomic or geographical pillar represents the economy, society, labor market, community, school, family, and peer group, which influence current employment practices and social policy. The arch of the model symbolizes one's career including developmental stages, role self-concepts, and the self. The two columns and capitals illustrate that career decisions are influenced by both individual and environmental factors. Successful career transition and decision-making are facilitated by helping the person to gain a better understanding of the effects of all the determinants of her or his career (Super, 1990).

In addition to common career transition challenges experienced by domestic students, international students encounter unique challenges such as communication and acculturation issues (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). These issues affect international students making successful career transitions, and thus, it is vital that counselors understand these factors. In the following sections, factors impacting international students' career development are classified into the three domains of Super's (1990) model.

Geographical Factors

The career development of international students is affected by the geographical and socioeconomic factors of their home and

host countries. Economic gaps between the two countries can affect choice of university and career decisions. For example, students from less affluent nations are likely to select universities with more affordable tuition and financial support. Governmental support from home countries may also determine field of study and future career options. Their home society, community, and family may perceive certain occupations as more prestigious. This can have a significant impact on the student especially if he or she comes from a collectivistic culture (Singaravelu et al., 2005; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Further, some cultures value parental or familial involvement in individuals' career choices, and thus, international students may experience family pressure (Singaravelu et al., 2005). Others come from countries where formal career guidance systems do not exist and career exploration opportunities are limited. International students may need to reassess career choices if they experience any career incongruence as a result of cultural adjustment (Singaravelu et al., 2005).

Perceived discrimination at both societal and university levels can negatively impact international students' well-being (Mori, 2000; Yoon & Portman, 2004), educational experience (Wadsworth, Hecht, & Jung, 2008), and career development (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Given that some international students were the majority group in their country, they might lack coping skills to deal with discrimination and stereotypes (Yoon & Portman, 2004), which can adversely affect optimal career development. Further, their immigration may result in a loss of their primary support systems (e.g., family, friends, and community), which can lead to difficulty focusing on career-related planning (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007).

Because immigration law tends to be complex, international students who plan to reside in the U.S. have great needs to learn about current regulations (Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Further, social policy impacts these regulations and may limit career options for those who wish to work in the U.S. Students who plan to stay in the U.S. often desire to learn about the American job market and American-style interviewing techniques, whereas students planning to return to their home country are likely to need information about country-specific

resumes and foreign job markets (Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Unfamiliarity with the employment practices of the country in which students plan to seek employment can also pose challenges.

Biographical Factors

The most salient biographical factors for international students are language skills and intercultural competence, which can be conceptualized as special aptitudes. English proficiency was found to serve as a significant source of distress for many international students (Lin & Yi, 1997) and can be perceived as a potential career barrier for some international students (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Greater concerns about intercultural competence were associated with lower career aspirations and lower career outcome expectations (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Thus, issues related to language and intercultural competence can be significant career determinants.

Two other areas, personality and spirituality, may have indirect effects on international students' career development. For example, personality has been related to intercultural adjustment (Ward, Leong, & Low, 2004), which can impact the person's career-related behavior. Spiritual or religious orientation may also serve as a buffer against negative consequences of acculturation stress or add to it depending on the 'acceptability' of the religion by the mainstream. In addition, assuming that the geographical factors influence students' personal needs, values, and interests, it is possible that the process of adjusting to a new geographical context changes biographical factors such as values.

Psychological Factors

Various developmental aspects in Super's (1990) arch model are relevant for the career development of international students, including the stage of career development, racial/cultural identity development, personal identity development, cognitive development,

and psychosocial development. Cultural adjustment and stress also have significant impact on international students (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Yoon & Portman, 2004). The challenges associated with adapting to a foreign country include culture shock, confusion about new role expectations, homesickness, loss of social support, discrimination, and language barriers leading to acculturative stress (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Acculturative stress has been associated with psychological distress, somatoform complaints, depression, anxiety (Mori, 2000; Wei et al., 2007; Yi, Giseala, & Kishimoto, 2003), poor work-related and socio-cultural adaptation (Shupe, 2007), and lower levels of career outcome expectations (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). In addition, international students often experience the challenges of balancing the need to acculturate to become competitive in the U.S. job market with the need to maintain cultural identity. As they acculturate and modify career interests, they may also have to negotiate the gap between personal interests, family, and cultural values. Thus, acculturation issues have far-reaching impact on the whole personhood. Given that some studies found a positive relationship between cultural identity and vocational identity (Shih & Brown, 2000), connectedness to their cultural identity may serve as a protective factor. Because the process of acculturation can result in considerable changes in the various aspects of the person, it may impact students' racial/cultural identity, personal identity, cognitive, and psychosocial development that influence their career decisions.

International Student Card Sort

Card Sort Approach

Card sorts can be used to clarify students' values, interests, personal traits and perceived abilities. Unlike standardized career instruments or preset survey items, this approach allows students to interpret and give their stories on certain aspects of themselves. Thus, card sorts tend to enhance students' level of engagement and enrich the counseling process. This activity allows counselors to verify

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student-constructed meanings, providing the opportunities to develop a collaborative counseling relationship. It also helps both counselors and students gain a holistic understanding of the students through personal narratives (Brott, 2004).

The International Student Card Sort

Because we attempted to develop a card sort as a comprehensive assessment tool, counselors can use this card sort to assess various aspects of the international student beyond occupational information. The author-developed International Student Card Sort (ISCS) can be used to identify potential career development barriers. It can also be used to identify strengths of the international student. The instructions and 69 terms of the ISCS are described below.

First, students are asked to lay the four category title cards across the table, ranging from very important, reasonably important, not very important, and not important at all. Second, students go through each card while simultaneously thinking about the definition of the term, decide whether the particular concept is something they value, and then places the particular card under the respective category (e.g., very important). The students continue the sorting process until all cards are used. Third, once the students sort the entire deck of cards, the counselor helps them explore their values and traits to determine their strengths and challenges. The counselor helps them become aware of their values, strengths, and challenges, and how these factors may relate to their career development and educational opportunities. Fourth, the counselor develops a list of process questions to help students become clear as to how their values, traits, and challenges influence their decisions and life-as-a-whole (past, present and future-oriented).

The following is the list of terms developed for the ISCS. They represent various values, traits, and challenges salient to the career development of international students.

1. Worldview
2. Collectivist Environment
3. Individualistic Environment
4. Racial/Ethnic Similar Others
5. Racial/Ethnic Differences
6. Peace
7. Assimilation
8. Acculturation
9. Spirituality
10. Religion
11. Folk-Healers
12. Native Language
13. Second Language
14. Ethical Principles
15. Moral Principles
16. Appearance
17. Pigmentation Familiarity
18. Socialization
19. Isolation
20. Political Awareness
21. Social Class
22. Socioeconomic Status
23. Sexual Orientation
24. Personal Identity
25. Group Categorization
26. Conformity
27. Introspection/Autonomy
28. Gender Issues
29. Self-Awareness
30. Openness from Others
31. Healthy Identity
32. Passive Acceptance
33. Environmental Influence
34. Geographical Location
35. Climate
36. Pride in Self
37. Pride in Culture
38. Expressiveness of Culture
39. Personal Identification
40. Kinship Ties
41. Parental Ties
42. Familial Ties
43. Friendships
44. Contact with Religion-
Religious Expression
45. Prefer Native Customs
46. Global Influence
47. Tradition/Heritage Influence
48. Vacation
49. Time-off to Visit Family/Friends
50. Retirement Benefits
51. Medical/Dental Benefits
52. Gender Support
53. Gender Similarity
54. Gender Differences
55. Immigration
56. Naturalization
57. Concerns with Visa
58. Employment Concerns
59. Job Hunting Skills
60. Balancing Competitive
Marketability Skills
61. Returning to Country of
Origin
62. Financial Issues
63. Discrimination
64. Professor Relations
65. Peer Relations
66. Contribute to Cultural
Awareness
67. Contribution to U.S. Economy
68. Contribute to Family of
Origin Economy
69. Enhance Academic Program's
Diversity

Conclusions

International students play an important cultural and economic role in higher education; however, limited attention has been given to their career development. The ISCS assessment, presented in this paper, was developed to facilitate international students' career transitions by integrating Super's career archway with culture-specific variables. Utilizing the ISCS during career counseling can strengthen students' self-concept while assisting them with successful career transitions. Moreover, it provides an impetus for exploration of the many variables impacting career development of international students. As a new assessment instrument, the next research step for the ISCS is to further validate the instrument with a wide range of international students.

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