

CAREER MATURITY OF BLACK, COLOURED AND WHITE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Career maturity attitudes of black, coloured and white first year university students were compared. Black students were found to have lower maturity scores than both their coloured and white counterparts. The result could be attributed to cultural differences, differential exposure to the world of work and differences in educational background. The findings suggest a need for career development interventions to be directed at both the coloured and black population groups.

OPSOMMING

Die mate van volwassenheid van loopbaangesindhede onder swart, blanke en kleurlingstudente is met mekaar vergelyk. Daar is bevind dat swart studente laer volwassenheidpuntetellings as hulle kleurling- en blanke eweknieë behaal. Die resultaat kan toegeskryf word aan kulturele verskille, 'n andersoortige blootstelling aan die arbeidswêreld en verskille in opvoedkundige agtergrond. Die bevindings dui op 'n behoefte aan ingryping in die loopbaanontwikkeling van kleurling- en swart bevolkingsgroepe.

Self-actualization through one's work and complete job-satisfaction are rare, yet these are legitimate ideals for the individual to strive towards. Because of real or potential discrepancies between work expectations and work experiences, there seems to be a need for a greater understanding of career-decision making issues and the related degree of career adjustment experienced.

Insight into these two issues can be gained by measuring the degree of career maturity (cf. Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrad & Herma (1951), Super (1953, 1957) and Crites (1965), as expressed through information obtained on career maturity attitudes. The purpose of the present article is to report on research conducted into the relative degrees of career maturity among the different population groups — black, coloured and white — as obtained through measurement with the Career Maturity Inventory Attitude Scale developed by Crites (1961, 1965).

Super introduced the concept of career maturity, which evolved from his research on life stages and represents "the place on the continuum of vocational development from exploration to decline" (Super, 1955, p.153). Career maturity can be defined as the readiness of an individual to learn certain general and specific developmental capabilities or tasks, so that he may, at certain critical points in his life, be mature enough to arrive at meaningful scholastic and career choices (Super & Jordan, 1973; Super & Bohn, 1973).

Drawing from Super's theory of developmental career choice, Crites (1961) formulated a model of career maturity to operationally define career maturity and assess the rate and level of an individual's development regarding career matters. This model is conceptualized as a general factor which refers to the overall degree of career development, subdivided into two dimensions, viz. career choice content and career choice process. Career choice content includes two group factors, namely realism of vocational choice and consistency of career choice. Career choice process in like manner includes two group factors, namely career choice competencies and career choice attitudes.

The Career Maturity Inventory (CMI), the test which Crites developed to implement his model, concerns itself with the process dimensions of the career maturity model, and consists of an attitude and competence scale. It is to the Attitude Scale that this study is confined as it serves as an index of an individual's level of career development which Super (1983) maintains is important in implementing effective career counselling.

Career development theory and research in the United States has been based mainly on white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males (WASP), with the findings then being generalized to females and other "minority" groups. It has become increasingly important to study career development in groups other than WASP in order to establish baseline data necessary in determining population-specific counselling needs. In conducting such research Watson (1984) suggests that "a first step would be to sort out the significant variables which differentiate such a group from others" (p.80).

Research indicates that there are indeed differences between race groups with regard to career maturity. On comparing "disadvantaged" ethnic groups with the original Iowa WASP sample, Crites (1969) reports that "without exception, the means of these groups have been lower when compared to the norms of the original standardized sample" (p.33). Similarly, Moracco (1976) found that Arabic male adolescents compared unfavourably with American male adolescents in their level of career maturity. Perez (1980) also cites a number of studies which found that "minority" groups do appear less career mature than conventional WASP groups. Disadvantaged young people from the Appalachian area of Tennessee and Kentucky for instance, (Asbury, 1968; Meyers, 1966) scored three to seven raw-score points below the original sample. American-Indian students in North Dakota (Schmieding & Jensen, 1968; McCrystal, 1967) had lower scores than their white counterparts in level of career maturity. Black ninth graders in Pennsylvania (Cooter, 1966) had a mean of 32.13, which was four points lower than the norm groups in Iowa. Mexican-American

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ninth graders (Wilstach, 1967) scored still lower (30,32) with a mean difference of 6,26 as compared to the norm group. Maynard and Hansen (1970), employing the Attitude Scale in a study designed to assess the vocational maturity of eighth-grade black urban young people in New York City, found significantly lower means for this group as compared to an urban white sample, a suburban white sample and the mean established by the Iowa norms. Their conclusion was that inner city eighth-grade students, particularly blacks, are apparently not aware of those factors considered important for vocational planning as measured by the Attitude Scale.

Little research has been done on career maturity amongst South African blacks (Watson, 1984) and lacunae are found in career counselling for this group (Newman, 1982; Van Niekerk, 1985; Watts, 1980). Furthermore, the little research that has been done derives indiscriminately from "white" Western theorizing both in the RSA and elsewhere (Osipow, 1975; June & Pringle, 1977; Van Niekerk & Van Daalen, 1986). Smith (1975, p.54) thus maintains that "as long as theorists continue to generalize vocational theories based upon white people to black people, research on black people will continue to have large loopholes and conflicting results." She suggests the use of an "internal black frame of reference" as a starting point. The need for career development research has been found equally pronounced with regard to the coloured population (Watson, 1984; Watson & Van Aarde, 1986). In order for research to have implications for counselling interventions, Newman (1982, p.76) appropriately recommends that "research into the relative levels of career maturity of various population groups would provide useful data for planning of career counselling and assessing counselling needs in specific groups."

Because of the lack of baseline data on black career behaviour, descriptive research is deemed important for the creation of such an "internal black frame of reference", ultimately to be unified with traditional vocational theories (Smith, 1975; Philips, Strohmer, Berthaume & O'Leary, 1983).

The present study was specifically aimed at addressing the following research questions:

- What are the mean maturity scores for black, coloured and white first year university students as measured by Crites' Career Maturity Attitude Scale?
- Do significant differences on maturity attitude levels exist among the three groups?

METHOD

Subjects

In order to obtain information from different population groups, the screening forms of the CMI Attitude Scale, devised by Crites for research purposes, were administered by lecturers at universities housing black, coloured and white students, thus allowing for the comparison of race. The group of subjects consisted of 39 white, 37 coloured and 60 black first-year psychology students, including both sexes and ranging between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three. The white sample was drawn from students attending Rhodes university while the coloured and black students were drawn from the universities of the Western Cape and Fort Hare respectively. In all instances English was the medium of instruction. As the sample comprised first-year psychology students only, generalizations can be made to a population of first year students at South African universities only. The degree of generalizability is further

limited, due to the fact that sampling selection was mainly done on a convenience basis.

Instrumentation

To measure the level of career maturity the CMI Attitude Scale was selected. The Attitude Scale measures the feelings, subjective reactions and inclinations of the individual toward making a career decision and toward entering the world of work. It consists of 50 true-false questions regarding five attitudinal clusters, viz. decisiveness, involvement, independence, orientation, and compromise in career decision-making (Crites, 1973).

Reliability of the CMI Attitude Scale is based on internal consistency coefficients and test-retest stability estimates. Pendell (1980) reports a Kuder-Richardson formula 20 mean correlation of 0,74 for a sample of 8000 American high school pupils in grades 6 through 12. Pendell (1980) found an $R=0,71$ in a test-retest application on a sample of 1648 American pupils in grades which range from 6 to 12. One year was allowed between the two administrations by Pendell. Van Niekerk (1983) reports a Kuder-Richardson formula 20 of 0,63 on a sample of 40 black third year psychology students at the University of Fort Hare. In another study Van Niekerk (1984) conducted a test-retest of the Attitude Scale on 100 third year psychology students at the same university and obtained an $r=0,59$ between the two administrations. Three weeks elapsed between the two testings.

Construct validity is supported by the CMI's correlation with other intellectual and non-intellectual variables e.g. intelligence, grade point average and personality traits (Perez, 1980). Crites (1973) reports that the Attitude Scale possesses construct and criterion related validities. Van Niekerk (1987) similarly found evidence to support the construct validity of the Attitude Scale on a black university sample. It has been extensively used cross-culturally (Achebe, 1982; Alomari, 1978; Perez, 1980; Rathburn, 1981) and is less culture bound than other measures available such as Super's Career Developmental Inventory (1973) (Laubsher, 1977).

Statistical analysis

A one-way analysis of variance was used to investigate the differences among the sample of 136 white, black and coloured students' responses with regard to career maturity.

RESULTS

It can be seen from Table 1 that differences between the three race groups exist. In analysis of mean scores obtained, white students obtained higher scores (a difference of 5,54) than their coloured counterparts, and the latter, with a mean score of 34,41, scored 6,67 raw points higher than the black students (a mean of 27,73). The difference between white students, who obtained the highest scores, and black students, who obtained the lowest scores, amounts to 12,22 raw score points. Assessment by means of one-way analysis of variance (Table 2) indicates that the means of the subgroups were significantly ($F=80,071$; $p<0,01$) different from one another.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed at determining whether differences in career maturity attitudes existed among black, coloured and white university students. Both black and coloured students were found to have significantly lower career maturity scores (raw scores) than their white counterparts.

TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE CAREER MATURITY SCORES OF COLOURED
WHITE AND BLACK FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Race	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Coloured	34,4054	4,6146	37
White	39,9487	4,5303	39
Black	27,7333	4,9741	60

TABEL 2
ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SUBGROUP SCORES

Source of variance	d.f.	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	2	3620,090	1810,045	80,071	0,0
Within groups	133	3006,550	22,606		

These differences seem to correspond with American studies, where 'disadvantaged' groups scored lower than their white counterparts (Asbury, 1968; Cooter, 1966; Meyers, 1966; Schmieding and Jensen, 1968; Wilstach, 1967 and Perez, 1980).

None of the American studies, however, report differences of the same magnitude as those found between the white and black students in the present study. Cooter (1966) for example, reported a mean of 32,13 for a sample of black ninth-graders, four points below the WASP norms. Wilstach (1967) reported a mean of 30,32 (a mean difference of 6,27 from the norm group) for a sample of Mexican-American ninth-graders. In contrast, the mean score of the black students in this study, at 27,73, is substantially lower. The discrepancy between the scores obtained for the black South African students and those obtained for the two American studies as cited above is aggravated by the age differences between South African first-year university students and the United States ninth-graders. The mean scores of the coloured students, at 34,41, show greater consistency with the cited studies.

The question arises as to possible explanations for the significant differences yielded in this study. One explanation could be that of cultural differences. 'Western' culture, to which both whites and coloureds belong, is characterized by its emphasis on individuality, independence and rationalism. Black culture, on the other hand, still tends to rely on authoritarianism, the extended family and intuition as a means of dealing with life (Bührmann, 1984; Esen, 1972; Holdstock, 1981; Van Niekerk & Van Daalen, 1986). Thus, "if a population characteristic is such that important decisions are made by the family (as in the case of blacks), one would expect that not only would the population score be low on independence in decision-making but that other dimensions dealing with choice would also be affected" (Moracco, 1976, p.371). It thus seems possible that subjects who are more accustomed to independent decision-making in many areas of life, are more likely to obtain higher scores on an instrument such as the CMI than those who are less acquainted with making independent decisions. An item analysis could be of value to show whether subjects from different population or cultural groups indeed differ significantly on the different dimensions of career attitudes, thus displaying cultural predilections. Such information is however not at present available.

Another possible explanation for the large differences in mean scores could be the extent to which the different subgroups

have been exposed to the world of work. It is arguable that the greater a group's exposure to the world of work and to important work role models, the greater the possibility of being career mature — a situation which, perhaps, favours the white population more.

The results obtained could be attributed in the third place, to discrepancies in the subjects' educational background. The coloured, black and white subjects received their schooling in the matrix of three different education departments. It is generally recognized that, in the case of coloureds and blacks, educational facilities and the standard of education are not on par with the situation for whites (Dovey, 1980; Newman, 1982; Watts, 1980). Most black pupils have never received vocational guidance at school, as evidenced by Newman (1982) and Watts (1980). This drawback, in combination with cultural differences and lack of exposure to the world of work, could largely account for the black students scoring lower than their white counterparts. The position of the coloured students could be accounted for as follows: cultural dissimilarity to blacks could account for their scoring substantially higher than blacks, while a combination of a lack of exposure to the world of work and an inadequate education could explain their scoring lower than the whites.

However, possible reasons for differences in scores obtained need to be further investigated.

CONCLUSION

The finding that both coloured and black first-year university students possess significantly lower career maturity attitudes than their white counterparts, points to the need for career development interventions. Such interventions need to be directed at the specific needs of the different population groups. These interventions could be based on Crites' Model of Career Maturity (Crites, 1965; 1974; Van Niekerk, 1985) and include both one-to-one counselling approaches (Crites, 1981) and the implementation of group counselling programmes in black and coloured schools (Laubsher, 1978; Newman, 1982; Rathburn, 1981; Watson, 1984). The present study is limited to the investigation of attitudes to career maturity. An investigation into the subgroup's career maturity competencies, as well as the nature of changes in career maturity occurring amongst black pupils during the high school years would complement the present study. Such studies would help establish baseline data necessary in determining population specific counselling needs.

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