Cultural Factors Contributing to Adolescents’ Career Decision-Making Difficulties:

Individualistic-Collectivistic Perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of vocational psychology and career counseling is to prepare individuals to meet the modern world challenges by helping them to make better career decisions. High school is an appropriate time for adolescents to be incorporate in career exploration and choices. Yet cultural differences create many obstacles in their ways of deciding and choosing careers to pursue. This paper will examine some of career development theories, career decision-making along with some cultural factors that contributing in career decision-making difficulties among adolescents. Suggestions for career counselors and the previous studies weaknesses will be provided. The knowledge from this review will help to stimulate career counselors’ cultural awareness, that they can be able to apply appropriate career assessments and interventions while helping the high school students.
Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Jovit Nyaruhima Mwoleka: My parents who taught me to be patient, hardworking, polite, loving, and prayerful person; my brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces who were always encouraging me to move forward. My late father, Jovit Nyaruhima, and my young sister Mariathereza Kemilembe who were called by God but they kept their prayers and love for me to be where I am today. God may rest their souls in peace.
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Preface

The issue of exploring cultural influences on career decision-making difficulties in adolescents has been a great interest to me for some time. As a member of a religious group and school counselor, I have seen the passion and spirit of high-school students when they are exploring their career interests and skills and at the same time trying to figure out what their future could be. This appears to be a big challenge to them. I could see and feel their frustrations from their statements like the following: “I don’t know what I want do in my future,” “My parent(s) do(es) not want me to follow the career I wish to pursue,” “I do not know anything about career.” My curiosity has been nurtured by taking the Career Development Course at Adler Graduate School. Some factors we discussed in class-included individuals’ career development, historical views of vocational guidance, career counseling, and factors that can inspire or hinder career development in adolescents. The insights I acquired from that course, along with my personal experiences, have inspired me to further explore cultural influences on career decision-making difficulties in adolescents, particularly high school students, for this master’s thesis.
Cultural Factors Contributing to Adolescents’ Career Decision-Making Difficulties:

Individualistic-Collectivistic Perspectives

Cultural differences have been identified to have an impact on individuals’ career selections. Adolescents like adults are not excluded among of many people who are experiencing difficulties in and outside of their cultures. In order to be familiar with cultural differences and their influences on career decision-making difficulties, one should go through previous studies and assessments conducted to assess internal and external cultural factors affecting adolescents’ abilities to choose a career that he or she can follow in their life span. Career decision-making are one of several essential choices adolescents will perform in determining future goals. These decisions will affect them throughout their lives, the essence and who students are will revolve around what they want to do in their lifetime. Yet every adolescent is unique in this process depends on the context in which, an adolescent find he or her identity, and what opportunities they might have influenced their career decisions.

The Purpose of the Literature Review

“One of the central aims of career counseling is to facilitate the career decision-making process of counselees and, in particular, to help them overcome the difficulties they encounter during this process. Therefore, identifying the unique difficulties that prevent individuals from reaching a decision is an essential step in providing them with the help they need” (Gati, Krausz & Osipow, 1996, p. 510).

This review of literature is designed to focus on core cultural factors that contribute to career decision-making difficulties among high school students. The information obtained from this review should not only help to further increase awareness of how cultural factors shape the decisions individuals make but should also clarify how career counselors can develop and apply
appropriate career assessments and interventions that support students in making better career choices with confidence for a better future life. Brown & Trusty claimed that “…we believe that when school counselors carefully design and deliver strategic interventions aimed at increasing academic achievement, the likelihood that they will produce the hoped-for outcomes is substantial” (2005, p.1). Moreover, (Hargrove, Inman & Crane, 2005) suggested that career interventions must support high-school adolescents discuss the “array” of personal and environmental stress students encounter during career decision-making processes.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Acculturation**

Acculturation is a process by which individual recognize and incorporate beliefs, values, and behaviors of the host culture in the context of the values, beliefs and behaviors of the origin culture (Liu, 2009; Zunker, 2008).

**Career**

Career defined as the interaction of work roles and other life over a person’s life span including both paid and unpaid work in a person’s life. People make career arrangements as they make decisions about career, education, work, family and other life plans.

**Career Development**

Career development career development is the total constellation of economic, sociological, psychological, educational, physical and chance factors that bind to choose one’s career (Seddoh, 2002). Development indicates the individual is always in the process of becoming.
Career decision-making

Career decision-making refers to cognitive processes in which an individual organizes information, deliberates among alternatives, and makes a commitment to a course of action (Gat & Tal, 2007).

Counseling

Counseling is described as critical listening to a person’s stories and communicating information, with respect and empathy; clarifying goals and assisting individuals with the decision-making process.

Culture

Culture defined as unstable and magnetic values that seem always acknowledged and adjusted for a better integration and adaption. In the effort of trying to understand the elements within a culture, Parsons categorized them into three parts of culture, which include the relationship with others, the attitudes towards time and setting.

Why Adolescence is an Indispensable Stage

Several career development and career or vocational guidance theorists (Mei & Newmeyer, 2008; Stead, Els & Fouad, 2004; Mau, 2004; Gati & Saka 2001; Kniveton, 2004; Gati, et al., 1996) have noted that during the senior year in high school, students start to explore and become aware of the career interests, values, aptitudes, and decisions they have to make. They struggle to find if the careers they might choose and decisions they might make will be significant in helping them become valuable contributors to society. It is in this stage when adolescents encountered puzzlement about what career(s) to pursue when they graduate—go to college or enter immediately in the world of work. According to Stead, et al., (2004), the transition process from school to work is a challenging task for adolescents because it is usually
accompanied with doubts, worries and imaginations, which considered by adolescent as shapers and constructors of their present and future careers.

Marsh, Bradley, Love, Alexander and Norham, (2007) explained that the knowledge of adolescents’ transition is an ideal situation in the lifespan that requires the process to be flexible to fit in the contemporary world. This means that, instead of thinking in terms of belonging to one group, it is now far more for them to integrate various social identities or sense of belonging to a number of different groups and social settings. The corresponding view affirmed that the modern world requires high school students to become more self-knowledgeable, understand the interdependence between academic achievement and career development; develop strong career planning and decision-making skills (Hargrove, et al., 2005).

In some cultures, students may consider getting married right away after they graduate from high school as a sign of showing obedience and respect to their parents because they are maintaining family and or community values. According to Oliveira (2007) and Gati, et al. (2001), these decisions not only affect adolescent students’ vocational opportunities but may also impose life-long effects such as avoiding other decisions in the future and imposing psychological and physical stress. In addition, those who are trying to go against family or community values may lose family and social approval and, thus, loss of the sense of belonging. According to Alfred Adler, the father of Individual Psychology (IP) believed that the sense of belongingness or social interest is very essential for human mental health (Edwards, Gfroerer, Flowers, & Whitiker, 2004; Ferguson, 1984; Frurtmuller, 1979). Yet lack of a sense of belonging can be a source for an individual of social apprehension, which may lead a person to depression and lack of social support, which might delay personal and social growth as well as a cause of physical pain due to internal and external stresses. Besides that, the feeling of belongingness or
“social interest” is one of Adler’s concepts by which individuals are enabled to maintain and develop positive mental health and behavior for all social beings (Edwards, et al, 2004; Oberst & Stewart, 2002; Furtmüller, 1979; Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). It is through this concept of social interest that our youth are allowed to discover careers that endorse changes, equality, freedom, and peace for everyone within and beyond their communities.

Moreover, the study conducted by Marsh, et al., (2007) and on the social issues under the notion of “belonging” (p. 8) in the twenty-first century reported that all individuals poses positive behaviors, attitudes and benefit from a sense of belonging to their communities, families, and cultures. Equally important, Adlerian and cross-cultural experts declared that a person does not succeed in the “vacuum” or emptiness; the community values and norms of individuals belong assist them to understand the importance of social life and develop and improve their behaviors (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005. As mentioned earlier, the career selected in adolescence not only benefits the adolescents themselves but also community, society and nation at large. Therefore, in order to make better career decisions, thrive to, and persist in their plans they should get career guidance. Watts, (2000) identified career guidance as valuable in helping individuals of different ages and backgrounds to develop sensible career plans throughout their working lives, so they can administer their career plans with confidence.

One cannot help if he or she is not familiar with the past and current career theories and cultural issues that may be involved direct or indirectly in adolescents’ career decision-making process. The career decision-making models by Oliveira (2007) offered a conceptualization statement for professionals who assist students; “It is essential to comprehend the nature and origin of human intuitions to understand the intricacies of decision-making” (p. 12). Also, from an Adlerian point of view, in order to understand an individual’s struggles, a professional should
carefully explore “a person’s environment and social interactions among the many other factors that are assessed during a therapeutic relationship” (Aslinia, Rasheed & Simpson, 2011, p. 2). Hence, a brief summary of vocational guidance, career development, and decision-making is observed as further elaborated.

**Concise Vocational/Career Theoretical Framework**

The role of vocational psychology is to assist individuals to make better career decisions and to connect them with a matching work environment (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). This idea was established as early as in the twentieth century. Frank Parsons (1909), who was also known as the “Father of Vocational Guidance” as noted in (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Stone & Dahir, 2004; Niles, et al., 2002; Repetto, 2001; Kidd, 1981) opened the door to practice career or vocational guidance that would assist youth immigrants to choose an occupation, a process that exists still today. Parsons encouraged people to work hard and love their jobs; he also put emphasis on preparing students for better education and more success.

The most important aspect of Parsons’ contribution in vocational guidance is his principle of career assistance or guidance, which he referred to as “true reasoning” (Niles, et al., 2002, p. 9). This aspect was perceived as youth career interventions in which they would gain a respectable relationship between their unique traits and the demands of the world of work. According to Raaf, Dowie, and Vincent (2009), career interventions were defined as any treatment or procedure intended to enhance an individual’s career development or allow the individual to develop better career. This notion originated from Parsons’ time (1909) when he advocated a three-step strategy for helping individuals improve their career prospects. The steps include using testing to help individuals realize their own traits and characteristics, giving them information about career prospects, and utilizing appropriate arguments to make appropriate
matches between the two (Raaf, et al., 2009; Niles, et al., 2002). The three paths became the foundation of “actuarial” or “trait-and-factor” principle for career guidance interventions. Parsons’ principle signifies that individuals have unique traits that uniqueness can be a benefit to counselees, and counselors once they are well-matched together (Niles, et al., 2002).

Following are some of Parsons’ contributions:

1. He paved the way for vocational guidance in the school and colleges by advocating their role in it and offering methods they could use
2. He began the training of counselors
3. He used all the scientific tools available to him at that time
4. He developed ‘steps’ to be followed in the vocational progress of the individual
5. He organized the work of the Vocation Bureau in a way that laid the groundwork for groups to model in school, colleges, and other agencies
6. He recognized the importance of his work and secured for it the appropriate publicity, financial support, and endorsements from influential educators, employers, and other public figures.
7. He laid the groundwork leading to continuance and expansion of the vocational guidance movement by involving friends and associates in it and preparing the manuscript for choosing for vocation (Niles, et al., (2002, p. 12).

Since Parsons’ epoch, many career guidance theories have been developed. These will be discussed below:

**Holland**

According to Leung (2008) and Niles, et al., (2002), Holland is a father of the *Vocational Personality Theory*. This theory focused on an individual’s psychological features—personalities
and skills. Adler viewed an individual’s personality as a way of describing work motivation (Herr, et al., 1996). Holland, on the other hand, stressed people’s behavior and skills as playing a big part in the process of career selection, in career growth, and in the arena of work.

Holland offered six categories in which every individual’s career interests could be observed (Leung, 2008. P. 118; Figler & Bolles, 2007; Niles, et al., 2002, p. 49-58). The six categories known as RIASEC codes are: R == Reality, I== Investigative, A== Artistic, S== Social, E == Enterprising, and, C== Conventional.

Additionally, Holland used a hexagon pattern to exemplify the relationships within and between these categories (Niles, et al., 2002, p. 53). Holland’s contributions were and still are highly appreciated by many career guidance professionals. Adler perceived persons’ behaviors as a central scheme in which they look for knowledge that helps them to fulfill their unique “lifestyle.” According to Adler, the “lifestyle” is the unified patterns of beliefs, perceptions, actions, attitudes, and relationships that make up the whole person. He uses the term “lifestyle” to refer to the central core individuals’ lives (Aslinia, et al., 2011; Sweeney, 2009; Oberst, et al., 2003).

Super

According to researchers Herr, et al., (1996), Smart & Peterson (1997) and Niles, et al., 2002, Super’s theory is among the core theories of career development that emerged after the Parsons’ theory of vocational guidance. Super professed that career selection is an unending process in which people constantly strive to match their career goals to the realities of the world of work. Moreover, he offered four concepts known as “life stage development framework,” which included “exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement” (Leung, 2008, p. 120). In the stage of exploration, adolescents learn how to cope with the vocational growth tasks
of “crystallization”—cognitive process that involving understanding an individual’s interests, skills, and values. According to Leung (2008), Super was also actively involved in building up the global shared exploration work termed as “Work Importance Study” (WIS). His main purpose of his work was to learn the work values in different cultures around the world.

Moreover, Super introduced the idea of the Life-Career Rainbow (Niles, et al., 2002; Super, 1980) as a visual picture of how individuals play multiple roles throughout their lifespan. Interestingly, Conlon (2004) stated that, “Women and minorities don’t typically follow a life-span career as their career development is disproportionately influenced by their differential experience of home, school, and workforce” (p. 36). While there is a need to do more on Super’s global research, according to Niles, et al., (2002), his theory will continue to play a vital role in career development training internationally.

**Krumboltz (1979)**

According to Niles, et al. (2002), Krumboltz introduced the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making. He believed that a person’s emotions, abilities, environmental and cultural conditions are catalysts in structuring individuals’ orientation to career maturity. He also viewed career training as an important activity in which information is corporate into the right school curriculum and reformation of career growth starts an early age. Jackson and Nutini (2002) reported that Krumboltz (1996) confirmed that that one of the counselors’ roles is to help decision-makers to acquire new skills and increase self-awareness so that they can deal with the stresses of career exploration.

More recently, several other experts (Stead, et al., 2004; Mau, 2004; Hijazi, Tatar & Gati, 2004; Brown, 2002; Gati, et al., 1996) offered a different way of understanding career strategies and cultural factors that might affect individuals’ abilities in making decisions. Career maturity
was explained as a person’s aptitude to make right career choices, including understanding of what is required to make a career decision and the extent to which a person’s choices are both practical and permanent over time (Levinson, Ohler, Caswell & Kiewra, 1998). Generally, maturity theory does not offer much detail on how cultural factors can inhibit or reinforce students’ abilities in career decisions.

**Decision-Making Theoretical Models and Decisions Theories**

Decision-making, decision theories, normative, descriptive and prescriptive models have been playing significant roles in helping understand the process connected to career decision-making, and assisting individuals to know how they should make better decisions and reach their career goals (Zunker, 2008; Oliveira, 2007; Guss, 2004; Germejs & Boeck, 2003). First, the normative models of decision-making were introduced by philosophers and economists, and then adopted by psychologists for the descriptive study of individuals’ decision-making (Beythy-Maron, Fischhoff, & Quadrel, 1991). Specifically, normative and descriptive models encourage decision-makers to find better paths by which they can manage some of internal and external “biases” they may have before and during career decisions processes. Prescriptive models help to clarify the advancement of individuals’ biases on career and other related issues motivating or thwarting a person selecting a career.

Moreover, the normative models focus on the basic “axiom” by which decision-makers consider several possible career alternatives before selecting one that stands to their aspirations. Descriptive models, on the other hand, assist people to attain decisions they have already made or expected to make (Oliveira, 2007). Drawing from the taxonomy theory, Gati, et al., (1996) stated that, “according to the normative theory of decision-making, the best decision is the one...
that best helps to achieve the decision-makers’ goals” (p. 115). Thus, decision-making should be observed in terms of the following:

1. A number of alternatives—a person should be aware of the available alternatives and be fully acquainted with their characteristics,

2. A number of objectives the decision makers want to achieve—a person who is making a decision should have clear goals in mind and link to the alternatives,

3. A set of outcomes that are associated with each choice, and

4. The attributes of the outcomes in cases when an individual is able to determine how many results might meet the goals of the decision makers (Germeijs, et al., 2003, p. 12; Beythy-Maron, et al., 1991, p. 21).

While a normative theory is a theory about how decisions should be completed in order to be coherent, descriptive theory takes care of those normative issues that remain even after the career goals have been fixed. Hansson (2005) explained that the normative theory includes a large number of issues about how to respond when there is uncertainty and insufficient data. It also contains issues about how individuals can meet their decisions over time and synchronize their decisions in social decision procedures.

Above all, how people make decisions differs from culture to culture, family to family, community to community, society to society, country to country, and throughout the world at large. A number of cultural, cross-cultural and decision-making theorists (Gati & Amir, 2010; Oliveira, 2008; Mau, 2000 & 2004; Weber & Hsee, 2000; Yi & Park, 2003) have detailed the impact of cultures on individuals’ decision-making process as will be explained below. Parsons (1909) described the career decision-making process as a system of understanding oneself and the world of work and having the ability to combine these two domains to make a productive
selection of a career. Recently, Mau (2004) and Gati, Krauzs and Osipow (1996) interpreted the career decision-making process as consisting of the preparation phase, during which lack of motivation, indecisiveness, and dysfunctional beliefs were difficult and a decision-making phase, during which it is necessary to achieve adequate and reliable information about the decision-making process, which involves the self and the environment of work.

**Culture and Decision-Making**

A number of cultural theorists have been acknowledged as describing “culture” with interesting definitions. It is important to note that all of them have similar meaning though different phrases or words. For instance, culture has been defined as a silent going communication, ongoing of choices and learning, and non-static knowledge. However, Oliveira (2007) summarized and defined culture as “man-made, confirmed by others, conventionalized, and passed on for younger people or newcomers to learn; it provides people with a meaningful context in which to meet, to think about themselves, and to face the outer world” (p. 14).

According to Gati, et al., (1996), decision-making is defined as a process of problem solving in which people of all ages and cultures repetitively have to make a choice between two or more alternatives. For example, one person may try to minimize food expenses and eat at home instead of going to the restaurant or buy a used car instead a new one or riding public transportation instead of a car to reduce air-pollution. All of these are ways of making a decision. It does not matter how big or small the decision is. The purpose should be the focus. The decisions individuals make create significance in different ways: individually, culturally, familiarly, regionally, and globally. It is not only through these decisions people come to realize that whether they become a successful or a failure is a result of the decisions they made in the past, but also that it is important to make better decisions in life.
Brown (2002) explained that cultural values are those values held within a particular cultural group. Brown described “values” as “beliefs” through which people gain psychological and physical health, set up and achieves career goals. More importantly, cultural values, mainly societal “relationship values,” play a great role in career decisions and development. Constructed within the normative and taxonomy theoretical framework, “the best decision is the one that best helps to achieve the decision-maker’s goal,” (Gati, et al., 1996, p. 511). More interestingly, it is through these cultural values individuals find where they belong. According to Aslinia, et al., (2011) and Sweeney (2009), the “social interest” concept, which Adlerian recognized as a mental “remedy” for all human beings. Moreover, a number of Adlerian and researchers have offered various meanings of social interest. For example, Ansbacher (1968) favored “social interest” as “interest in the interest of mankind” (Crandall, 1991, p.109). While Leon and Golubovich (2010) defined “interest” as a “actions or motivations that engage a person’s awareness and inquisitiveness, which engages long-term attention, positive feeling, and action directed toward the object of interest, as well as preference for that object over another” (p. 1).

Many decisions individuals make are tied to a number of internal and external cultural factors (Gati, et al., 2010; Olivier, 2008; Mau, 2004 & 2000; Strohnschneider, 2002). These include, but are not limited to parents’ mistaken beliefs, educational curriculum, socio-political influences, gender stereotypes, acculturation, economic status, religion, birth order, the period of globalization and economic change. In addition to that, personal value systems, intellectual ability, interests in assorted occupations, self-esteem, attitudes, mental and emotional dispositions. Leon and Golubovich (2010) stated that, “occupational interests in particular may be understood as “patterns of likes, dislikes, and indifferences regarding career-relevant activities and occupations (p.1). Strohnschneider (2002) affirmed that, “in many cultures decisions on how
to view the world, which gods to believe in, which profession to learn, where to live, and whom to marry are, in fact, more influenced by the social and cultural context than by individual decisions” (p. 3). More details on how some of the factors mentioned above influencing adolescents’ career decision-making, are provided below. These cultural concerns can either complicate or lessen career decisions, depending on decision-makers’ cultural backgrounds, individualism or collectivism backgrounds.

**Cultural Factors in Adolescent’s Career Decision-Making Difficulties**

As mentioned before, a number of studies examined cultural factors associated with career decision-making difficulties in both high school and college/university students who are about to graduate (Mau, 2005; Kniventon, 2004; Mugonzibwa, et al., 2000; Kikwilu, Rugarabamu & Ntabaye, 2000; Gati, et al., 2000 & 1996). Following these theoretical views, career decision-making difficulties have been connected to various career behaviors, such as “indecision,” which is viewed as one of the central issues in vocational psychology, “career decision-making self-efficacy,” and maturity (Amir & Gati, 2006; Mau, 2004 & 2000; Levinson, et al., 1998; Gati, et al., 1996).

Career indecision, however, is described as individuals’ difficulties that occurred when individuals are deciding a career to follow. Hijazi, et al., (2004) and Gati, et al., (2001 & 1996) reported that different approaches were employed in order to understand and explore career uncertainty; for example, psychodynamic theory was challenged to arrange difficulties in regard to individuals’ inner “unconscious” causes rather than explicit indicators. The developmental theory by Super (1953) applied the concept of career “self-concept” to explore career choice problems. Gati, et al., (1996) added that usually the problem encountered by individuals associated to the common stages of career development, especially highlighting the concept of
“vocational maturity.” Gati, et al., (1996) confirmed that Holland (1997) suggested that “insufficient crystallization of interests is one of the main factors preventing people from reaching a decision” (p. 511).

Currently, with the concept of decision theory, Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) introduced hypothetical “taxonomy” to explore difficulties in career decision-making. In order to effectively study the suggested taxonomy, an instrument termed Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questioner (CDDQ) was constructed to measure difficulties in career decision-making among high school and college/university students (Amir & Gati, 2006; Mau, 2004; Kleiman, Gati, Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, & Lenz, 2004; Hijazi, et al., 2004; Gati, et al., 1996). From the taxonomy theoretical framework, Hijazi, et al., (2004) defined difficulties as “deviations from ‘ideal career decision-makers’—a person who is aware of the need to make a career decision, and capable of making the decisions ‘correctly’ based on an appropriate process and compatible with the individual’s goals and sources” (p. 64).

Mau (2004) and Gati, et al., (1996 & 2001) observed career difficulties in two areas: 1) Those that occur prior to the start of the decision-making process, which include lack of readiness to make a career decision, lack of motivation, indecisiveness and dysfunctional beliefs about career decision-making and, 2) those which emerge during the actual process. These include lack of knowledge and inconsistent information. Lack of knowledge comprises four sub-categories of difficulties—knowledge about the self, knowledge about different occupations, knowledge of ways of obtaining career information, and knowledge about career decision-making itself. Inconsistent information, on the other hand, occurs because of unreliable sources of internal conflicts (within the individual) and external conflicts (involving the ideas about beliefs of significant others). The other two difficulty categories, 1) lack of knowledge, and 2)
inconsistent information include difficulties that may occur during the right decision-making process. Lack of knowledge comprises four categories of difficulties—knowledge about the self, knowledge about different occupations, knowledge of ways of obtaining career information, and knowledge about career decision-making itself. Inconsistent information, on the other hand, occurs because of unreliable sources of internal conflicts (within the individual) and external conflicts (involving the ideas about beliefs of significant others) (Hijazi, et al., 2004; Mau, 2004; Gati, et al., 2001 & 1996). One of the most recently theorists Mau (2004) emerged to explore how cultural factors may influence high school students in career decision-making processes. The results obtained from these studies were based on students’ originalities particularly, in the individualism and collectivism cultures.

**Cultural Values: Individualistic and Collectivistic Perspectives**

Within the context of the cross-cultural framework, theorists explain the differences between individualism and collectivism cultures by which individuals disclose personal and cultural values, decision-making styles, and manners of interacting with each other in everyday life (Aslinia, et al., 2011; Mau, 2004; Yi, et al., 2003; Brown, 2002). Decision-making style is understood as the standard model in which individuals perceive and respond to decision-making tasks (Mau, 2000). Yet Mau (2004) noted that from the psychological perspectives, “collectivism can be understood in expressions of an individuals’ considerations of the implications of their own decisions and actions for other people, the sharing of resources and outcomes of others behaviors, susceptibility to social influence, and feelings of involvement of others’ lives” (p. 68). Individualism, in contrast, is viewed as representative of cultures that carry on the needs for “autonomy” or independence and high esteem. This means that the individualistic cultures possess an “I” cultural value, whereas collectivism is known as cultures that practice “we”
cultural values, where the effect of “in-group” necessities and mutual respect are highly emphasized (Yi, et al., 2003).

Lowe (2005) explained that in his career theory Super viewed “self-independence” as a key factor in the process of career maturity in which the procedure of career development is essentially that of developing and put for practice work-related self-concepts. From Adlerian views, individualistic cultures are “those that tend to be more concerned with the consequences of one’s behaviors and thoughts as they relate to the person and not the society or group” (Aslinia, et al, 2011, p. 2). Collectivistic cultures, alternatively, were described, as “those tend to be concerned with the consequences of a person’s actions as they relate to the in-group members” (Aslinia, 2011, p. 2). Due to these cultural differences, students also have different opportunities for when they will have to plan and decide on careers. For instance, students whose cultural values are individualistic will demonstrate self-independence, competitive attitudes, and high proportions of high capacity of thinking, planning and deciding on their own careers. Mau (2000) confirmed that strong decision-making abilities are keys for individuals to request more information about their careers positions.

Moreover, like adults, adolescents in the individualistic cultures have a tendency to evaluate and follow those opportunities those would enable them to make good decision on their career and life in general (Oliveira, 2007). Additionally, persons’ interests, freedom, and other personally unique traits are highly cherished by individuals as well as the society. On the other hand, students whose cultural values are based on collectivistic will prefer to utilize regulations that benefit, protect, and honor the entire community with little effort to maintain an individual’s career aspirations. Research confirms that like adults, adolescents in the collectivistic cultures are
most likely to feel uncomfortable and disgraced if their decisions or attitudes do not endorse and or reveal in-group values, needs and expectations (Mau, 2004; Brown, 2002; Gati, et al., 1996).

Cross-cultural career decision and Adlerian theories provide more details on individualistic and collectivism culture. For example, Brow explained that the individualistic cultures consider a person as “a social unity” (2002, p. 49), while Leake and Black identified an individual as “atomism” (2005, p. 17). In addition, Mann, Radford, and Kanagawa identified individualism culture as “person-centered” (1985, p. 159). However, Leake and Black (2005) argued that a person should not understand the meaning of “independent” rather as a locus of shared biographies such as “personal histories of people’s relationships with other people and things” (2005, p. 17).

In contrast, collectivistic cultures were described as “group-centered” (Mann, et. al., 1985, p. 1558). Like Adlerian theorists, Leake, et al., (2005) viewed collectivistic cultures as “holism” in character where individuals are not isolated units but relatively are branches of a whole group—village, extended family, clan and society. Adlerians consider “an individual as a whole person functioning in a current social context and within the context of his or her evolutionary past as well as his or her evolutionary future” (Griffith & Power, 1984, p. 1). Additionally, a collectivistic culture is likely to be a “social hierarchy” that is based on birth order, gender, and or age (Leak, et al., 2005).

Students in collectivistic cultures have to follow in-group decisions when they want to plan and decide on their career. This means that students’ decisions should go along with families, communities and nation’s values, needs, expectations and beliefs. Sometimes, students may have to wait for final suggestion(s) from parents, family members, teachers, or government personnel. To clarify this, Bolles (2008) stated that, “in some countries career choice is certainly
expected, but the whole family chooses what career you will be pointed toward; it is a communal choice(s), not an individual one—based on what will gain the great prestige, or ‘face’ for the family as a whole” (p. 7). Students who try to go against the majority ideas may encounter the plight of family and social approval—loss of the sense of belonging or social interest. The feeling of belongingness or “social interest” is among one of Adler’s many key concepts in which individuals maintain and modify positive mental health and behaviors for all social beings (Herrmann-Keeling, 2004; Oberst, et al., 2002; Fergusson, 1984).

However, in order to thoroughly determine cultural dimensions of career decision-making difficulties, a number of studies have been conducted among high school and college/university students who are about to graduate. In other words, the focus was mainly based on adolescents who are transforming from school to colleges and other related areas or enter directly into the world of work where unstable job satisfaction, business, and economy are particularly challenging. For example, a study was conducted to compare White, Hispanic, African, and Asian-American high school students. The study used the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) of the taxonomy of difficulties (Mau, 2004; Gati, et. al., 1996). The results indicated that students whose cultural values are collectivistic encountered more difficulties in both areas, before and during decision-making than those from individualism cultures. For instance, Mau (2004) reported the study that Asian American students scored higher in lack of readiness ($M = 4.8, SD = 1.2$); Hispanic American ($M = 4.0, SD = 1.2$) scored higher than White American students ($M = 3.9, SD = 1.1$). Also, in the difficulties experienced during the decision-making process, Asian American students scored higher on lack of information ($M = 4.9, SD = 1.6$) than White American students ($M = 3.7, SD = 1.6$) (Mau, 2004, p. 70).
Internal and external cultural factors such as parental influence, government, and education stabilities, socio-gender stereotypes, birth order, and religious beliefs, individual and societal values (as further elaborated) are among cultural influences in adolescents’ career decisions difficulties (Hijazi, et al., 2004; Mau, 2004; Yi, et al., 2003; Brown, 2002; Knivetion, 2004; Gati, et al., 2001& 1996). Knivetion (2004) argued that families and schools are expected to provide information and guidance to influence students’ career choices. It has been reported that individualist cultures are typically found in Northern and Western regions of Europe and North America while collectivistic are typically found in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Middle East, and the Pacific, to name but just a few (Aslinia, 2011; Amir, et al. 2006; Mau, 2004; Brown, 2002). Generally, this information provides significant insights about individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and, how they differ mainly in the system of values and career decisions.

**Parental Mistaken Beliefs**

In both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, parents and other family members would prefer their children to achieve or accomplish what the parents missed to accomplish in their lives such as further education and or selecting a better career for a better life (Mkhize & Nzimande, 2007; Witko, Bernes, Magnusson & Bardick, 2005; Gati, et al., 2001; Knivetion, 2001). However, Witko, et al. also explained that parents’ influences may have both negative and positive impacts on adolescents’ career decision-making. For example, in some cultures parents still strongly hold traditional mistaken beliefs that do not allow their children to plan and decide on their life. They seem to not want to convert from this custom lifestyle to the modern world, which is filled with many life challenges and requires more flexibility than before. In fact, this situation poses many difficulties among adolescents for not knowing which career to follow,
especially those students whose cultural values reflect on the collectivist cultures where “in-group” comes first and the “self” second.

From an Adlerian view, Sweeney (2009) explained that parents and professionals usually do not recognize that “many of their smallest behaviors communicate a lack of faith in the child or adolescents” (p. 234). Bellisari (1991) confirmed that some parents were still unaware of their direct or indirect influences that discourage or exclude adolescents from choosing a career to pursue and other life choices. Again, Sweeney added that normally, young people who are discouraged lack the affirmation, supportive and positive enhancement attributed to others.

Equally important, Dreikurs and Soltz (1992) noted that it is essential to understand that “the lack of encouragement can be considered as the basic cause for misbehavior” (p. 36). He affirmed that a child needs encouragement in order to grow and feel as if he or she belongs. Herrmann-Keeling (2004) identifies those who are discouraged as “being down-hearted” (p. 79) which is accompanied by lack of courage, self-confidence, uncertainty, worriedness, and destructive rational concepts in the forthcoming. Yet Herrmann-Keeling has described encouragement as “having heart within” (p. 79), in which individuals feel encouraged, hope for success, hopefulness, and positive concepts of the future. The internal memo is “I have succeeded here, and so I can expect to continue to succeed even more in the future” (p. 79).

Significantly, the lack of parental motivation and encouragement can become obstacles to adolescents’ freedom and career decisions. For example, in the cultural dimensions in career decision-making theory, Mau (2004) reported that Asian students in a collectivistic culture reported a drastic lack of motivation (Mean = 4.8 and standard deviation 1.2) from significant people beneath their counterparts. For White Americans in an individualistic group, the mean was (3.9), and standard deviation was (1.2). Apart from that, Brown (2002), Keller and Whiston
(2008), and Bellisari (1991) confirmed that some students from collectivist cultures appeared to select a specific career in order to satisfy their parents’ expectations or bring fame and honors to their families. The American students, on the other hand, reportedly were influenced by their American context to emphasize individualistic goals and personal choice first over family concerns and community necessities.

According to Knivetont (2004), Holland believed that every person has the right to choose and decide on his or her life; however, in some cultures students believe they have valid career or alternative choices; while others may demonstrate “learned hopelessness” and not see the selection of career as being under their own power (p. 49). Usually a student who possesses less freedom of choice would be instructed on what to do or there would be a family role model to follow—parent(s), grandfather, grandmother, elder of the clan, to name but just a few. Generally, the values in collectivist cultures encourage submission and traditional meaning to the norms within the family, group, and other significant people. In the individualistic cultures, on the other hand, adolescents, like adults, are expected to make their own career decisions, and stand for the outcomes from the decisions they would make. The benefits from this decision-making style provide more opportunity for adolescents to acquire different strategies of decision-making, problem solving, and risk taking skills.

The following examples illustrate the above ideas. Mkhize, et al., (2007) provided compelling instances from a study conducted with Saudi Arabian and Tanzanian high school students regarding parents’ influences on children’s career aspirations. For instance, one of the students whose mother was a nurse responded that her mother did not encourage her to the career she desired. She stated that, “My mother is a nurse by profession; however, she does not encourage me to do nursing. I think it is because of the stress she is going through in her
profession! She even said that she is not prepared to fund me if I enroll for nursing when furthering my studies in nursing” (Mkhize, et al., 2007, p. 14).

Some parents may prefer a child to pursue the same career as theirs. This is evidence by one of the students whose father and some of other relatives were police officers. The father encouraged his child to enter the same career as his, even to the point that he refused to let the child take anything other than to become a police officer. As a result, the child did not have another choice; he found him/herself forced to major in the career according his father’s will (Mkhize, et al., 2007).

Since both students were from collectivistic culture where arguments with adult are prohibited and obedience and respect to adults are much emphasized, they did not have a chance to express their opinion. Moreover, there was not enough information to choose an alternative career. In the first case the mother did not give details about why she did not want her child to go into nursing; instead the child was just assuming that “work stress” could be the main reason. In the second case, the child was forced to do what the parent wished – presumably for the parent’s benefit and not for the child. Strohnschneider (2002) called this “control span” in decision-making style. Adlerians suggest that, “wise parenting will allow children to develop and believe that they are social equals; that they are similar in families, have equal rights, equal regard and share equal responsibilities. Children need to be treated equally, and their views to be taken into account” (Clifford & Baumer, 2000, p. 19).

Another parental mistaken belief is high expectations from their children. For example, in some cultures children are expected to be caretakers of their parents and relatives when they get older. For this reason, these students are not allowed to continue with more education; they are expected to stay home and take taking care of the elders. Boys and girls are expected to complete
primary education, marry or be married and have a family, which is viewed as the central key to family reputation. A boy is perceived as a supplier and a girl as homemaker. Obeying and respecting parents, following or living parents’ dreams are seen as core values of the family.

Apart from that, students whose parents struggle financially encountered a number of career decisions and career-related difficulties. For example, they will not be able to get better education that can enable them to select a career that fits their primary or high school education. According to the multicultural perspectives, Evans and Rotter (2000) explained that such kind of financial struggle creates negative “feelings about the world of work” (p. 68) among parents particularly within the minority groups. These feelings include but not limited to:

- Lack of hope, belief in the future and self-confidence; consequently, children who are sensitive to their parents’ feelings and beliefs go on to internalize these attitudes as well… poor children believe that they are treated unfairly by society, that opportunities are design for non-poor, that they may not achieve even their scaled-down career choices, and that they will not have the skills and know how that middle-and-supper –class children have (Weinger, 1998) as cited in Evans, et al., 2000, p. 68).

Parents are motivated as well as their children, but they have no more courage to find a way they can overcome the situation, help their children to better education, or achieve what their parents failed to achieve. Instead, their internal conscious holds what Adlerians called: “down-heart” when defined discouragement. Herrmann-Keeling (2004) stated that, “Discouragement is related to lack of courage, fearfulness, self-doubt, disillusionment, and negative mental images of the future. The internal message is ‘I have failed here, and so I can expect to fail in the future, perhaps even more so;’ …the self-doubting child becomes a self-doubting adult…” (p. 79).
Children can only benefit from parents who have positive beliefs about their education and career choice and who are willingly to share that positive career excitement with their children. Parents’ positive beliefs provide children an opportunity to absorb more constructive work value than “non-involvement, indifferences, or negative involvements” (Witko, et al., 2005, p. 36). Research on the adolescents’ career decision-making difficulties and parental influences assumed that overenthusiastic use of their traits and parents’ over-involvement in their adolescents’ decision-making system can challenge parental efforts to be a valuable source of influence (Bregman, et al., 2005). Equally important, extreme parental control concerning adolescents’ individual decision-making results in undesirable outcomes, particularly for establishing relational boundaries and mutual social relationships.

**Cultural Beliefs and Gender Role: A Stereotype Perspectives**

Although progress has been made to balance gender equality, gender stereotyping continues to pose a big challenge in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures for girl adolescent groups compared to boy adolescent groups (Galassi & Gati, 2009; Hakim, 2006; Brown, 2004; Kniveton, 2001; Rojewski & Hill, 1998; Betz, Heesaker & Shuttleworth, 1999). Assuming that cultures differ in their prospects of women and men, girl adolescents in the interdependent cultures will face more career decision-making difficulties than those with more independent cultural values. Brown (2004) stated that,

Gender will be a major factor in the career chosen by individuals who hold collective social values because of stereotyped perception of occupations by decision-makers. The result will be that occupational choices are more likely to be stereotypical male and female; moreover, women with collectivism social values will enter a more restricted range of occupations than men with collectivism social values (p. 50).
In the of historical and cultural context of career choices, the definition of equality in gender roles was written and interpreted in such a way that ignores many contributions of women in the society. From the time of colonization until today, women have been perceived to manage household tasks including cleaning, food preparation, and child rearing while men are perceived to deal with tasks outside the home that required more physical strength and endurance (Walker, 1996). These include, but are not limited to, cultivation of and harvesting crops, hunting wild game or attending cattle, and protecting the family, property and country at large (Kroska, 2003; Hijazi, et al., 2004; Brown, 2002). Moreover, Walker (1996) noted that women tend to choose careers that are not of much interested to them while men tend not to as often.

More importantly, Kroska (2003) confirmed that women often fall victims to stereotypes perceptions of social gender roles, a situation causing a shortage of qualified women in different fields. Due to these cultural stereotypes, some high school adolescents decide to select careers that fit their gender rather than pursuing careers that interested to them (Kroska, 2003). Generally, this situation puts adolescents in dilemmas and, as a result, some may choose to take a job and plan to make a decision on a career later, or to enter college but declare a major afterward. According to Mau (2004), this career-related difficulty affects even more women in the minority groups.

Drawing from cross-cultural theories, career decisions, decision-making theories (Mau, 2004; Hijazi, et al., 2004; and gender role barriers in career decision-making identified above, it is reasonable to assume that women remain the minority in career choices because they lack access to power, freedom and knowledge from family, community and even those at a national level. Thus, studies about racial and gender stereotypes are issues that require more attention.
Career counselors and school personnel have a responsibility to address these challenges that are preventing adolescent women from making their decisions as similar as adolescent boys do.

**Birth Order and Cultural Beliefs**

An adolescent’s ordinal position in the family significantly affects career decision-making. Kniveton (2004) stated that, “the relationship between birth order and occupation has a long history” (p. 48). For example, in some cultures, first-born children pose unique positions in the family—parents tend to expect the eldest son to take over the family assets. Also, there is an issue of the first-born and marriage by which parents as well as family members prefer the first born to get married immediately after graduating from high school. For these reasons, a child grows thinking about inheriting his or her parents’ properties, household caring responsibilities, getting married and having babies. Kniveton (2004) declared that this generally does not affect boys as much as it does girls. Moreover, in some cultures, the first-born rather than the last-born son would be more expected to follow his father’s occupation. More interestingly, parents may expect a first-born children or only child to pursue a career that could lead to outstanding family status such as doctor, lawyer or judge. In short, this child will not only choose a career in order to maintain his family values but also the entire clan where he belongs.

In some cultures, the first-born is perceived to be perfectionist, shy, and warrior at the same time; these personalities can alter his or her academic and career selections in the future (Collins, 2006). Being shy, a child will not be courageous to seek more information about different careers because he or she may feel uncomfortable to interact with peers and career personnel who may know more about careers and life in general.

According to Collins (2006), the only child, on the other hand, is perceived as initiator, academic and career achiever, as well as being over protected and, lacking autonomy or self-
independence. In some cases, the parent may appear to be extremely tender and concerned about security and physical well-being for their child. Consequently, this situation inhibits an individual’s development both socially and intellectually. Parents provide insufficient career information and discourage the child to choose a career from areas, which do not involve physical activities or attend a school that is close to their homes. In contrast, the last born child faces the challenge of being pampered, and, as a result he or she can develop a strange sense of inferiority—later he or she may not be able to make a reasonable decision in life. Most of the time, when asked, the last-born answer will be “I do not know.”

Adler perceived birth order as an essential element that associated with individuals’ “personality development” (Bryant, 1987, p. 36), and distinctive perceptions (Ferguson, 1984). In addition, Brant explained that “ordinal position” correlated to the six Holland’s theory of career selections, which is found in (Niles, et al., 2002). These include “realistic, conventional, enterprising, social, artistic and investigative” (p. 53). Although Adlerian theory is recognized for insisting the importance of psychological birth order, its meaning can be misinterpreted in some areas. To clarify this, Shulman and Mosak (1977) provided a significant clarification that birth order offers only alternatives that a child will have a personality, behavior and life-style, which may cause them to develop a specific career of interests. For example, in the study conducted to find the differences between firstborn child and lastborn child based on the Holland’s six occupational themes, the significant results were as follows: the firstborn were scored significantly greater in the categories of social (p > .025) and conventional categories (p > 0.25). There was no significance in the rest of vocational categories (Brant, 1987, p. 38). This information gave clear insights especially for career counselors when helping students to select their career; they may also consider cross-cultural values that a child’s personality and behavior
will be shaped regard his or her cultural values. How individuals in a particular culture describe the position of children in the family and gender roles.

**Acculturation**

According to acculturation models, career decision-making and cross-cultural theories, acculturation is one of cultural barriers that contribute to adolescents’ career decision-making difficulties (Liu, 2009; Zunker, 2008; Chope & Consoli, 2005; Flores, Ojeda & Huang, 2006; Mau, 2004). Students from minority groups and immigrant international students were reported to be more affected by acculturation issues. These experts also declared that acculturation is perceived to be cultural barrier especially on minority students’ career decision-making abilities and occupational functioning. It is also considered to be one of cultural dimensional elements in which minority students have to submit or adjust their beliefs, identities, values, intelligence, behaviors, attitudes, and other cultural norms to the main culture. According to Liu (2009), students who come to study, in the United States, for example, have to consider the advantages and disadvantages carefully before making final career choices. Career decision-making processes among these groups tends to be complicated because it involves not only the students’ future career plans, but also the definition of personal identity, families and communities where they come from (Liu, 2009; Zunker, 2008; Mau, 2004). Additionally, student minorities who come to study in the United States see almost everything operating in an individualistic model, including career choices and public policies as compared to their country of origin where crucial decisions may be taken based on the endorsement of the family and or community (Zunker, 2008; Mau, 2004). This situation can create a lack of self-competence, low academic achievement and lack of information about career alternatives. To illustrate this, Wittenberg-Lyles, Villagran and Hajek (2008) reported that cross-cultural studies conducted to analyze the
role of acculturation in decision-making showed that there was a significant correlation between levels of acculturation, self-awareness and competence, and education among minority groups who were studying in the United States.

Although some minority groups may have career aspirations similar to the dominant culture, they might be less confident in their abilities to achieve career plans as is observed between White-American high school students and those from an interdependent culture like Latino-Americans (Denise & Newman, 1999). Consequently, students from this group may find themselves in a dilemma for not knowing which career to pursue that fits in their personal identity, family, and community at large. To support this idea, Mau (2004) stated that “…it is also expected that the younger generations of these minority groups may experience more decision-making difficulties as they challenge to incorporate into the majority culture at the same time, sort out their own cultural identity” (p. 68-69).

However, individuals who learn to adjust their behavior to fit into the different cultures experience less acculturative stress compared to those who are not willing to integrate their values into the main culture. Liu (2009) commented that, “those individuals who maintain their culture and are able to combine practical skills from the host culture fit better in the new location” (p.5); their experience of unfavorable consequences to their careers, physical, psychological comfort will be less compare to those who are holding the traditional one.

Furthermore, Chope, et al., (2006) established that, “all acculturation modes include ordinary cultural factors that are either supportive and understanding of other cultures or discriminating and marginalizing” (p. 86). Therefore, it is suggested that career counselors take into consideration the notion of acculturation when seeking to assist and understand clients’ beliefs, values and, attitudes to name but just a few. In the same vein, Denise, et al., (1999)
argued that “counselors should remain sensitive to possible influence of culturally specific beliefs on the career decision-making concerns on minority clients” (p. 75). Adlerian and cross-cultural theoretical frameworks believe that it is through these unique traits a person can be recognized and valued in an outside of his or her society (Zunker, 2008; Herrmann-Keeling, 2004).

**Implication for Counselors**

According to the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) Model, high school counselors possess an exceptional position to encourage and nurture the evolution of students as they transform from high school to an advanced education, selecting a career and other related fields (Constantine, Kindaichi, & Miville, 2007). The ASCA Model is a guiding counseling framework that formulated to develop comprehensive and effective school counseling program that aims to benefit all students. Furthermore, this Model provides opportunities for school counselors, that through collaboration with school personnel, together they can plan, apply, manage and evaluate counseling programs for students’ achievements—academically, socially, personal and career growth (ASCA, 2005). More importantly, Mei and associates state that:

School counselors play a vital role in facilitating students’ career development, particularly at the high school level, because the high school students are more active engaged in planning and implementing their postsecondary career options... To better accomplish the mission of helping students achieve their educational and career choice goals in today’s social, economic, and cultural context, school counselors need to be adequately informed about what factors influencing high school students’ career choices and what approaches would best facilitate career decision-making processes among adolescents (Mei, et al., 2008, p. 285-286).
Therefore, the following are suggestions for career/school counselors that will help them to effectively perform their work among a culturally diverse population.

**Cultural awareness**

High school counselors are encouraged to strengthening their cultural competencies that require better understanding of their own cultural backgrounds first and how these backgrounds have shaped their career paths, values and customs. Afterward, they will be able to understand how individual, family or community values, gender differences, parental beliefs, acculturation and environments cultural factors that contribute to adolescents’ career decision-making difficulties. High school counselors have responsibilities to determine the extent to which the career decision-making difficulties are facing high school adolescents. Becoming familiar with adolescents’ cultural backgrounds, and discover the deeper meanings embedded in it will allow counselors to reinforce positive outcomes sides, a counselor and a student.

**Become familiar with adolescents’ behavior**

Based on the decision-making theories, Byth-Marom, Fichhoff, Quadrel & Furby (2003) assumed that adolescents often act “as if” (p. 28) they have no alternatives to choose. The Adlerian customary acting “as if” techniques (Watts, 2003, p. 73) requires individuals to start thinking or acting as they are already the persons they would like to be. In the other words, this approach is intended to counteract some of the perceived individuals menaces, and encourages individuals establish alternative feelings about the problem, and consider alternative behavior in the direction of improvement. Thus, school counselors are encouraged to develop career assessments and interventions, and make available career information that instructs adolescents to consider various career choices and better understand their unique career interests and other
related skills. Equally important, career counselors are encouraged to assist adolescents establish career goals that nurturing hope and successes throughout lifespan.

**Understand Adolescents’ decision-making difficulties**

Career counselors are encouraged to investigate and fully understand difficulties within the modern working environments, and career decision-making tasks. Counselors must understand the causes of career decision-making difficulties that may vary among cultural groups before attempting to use any interference to this group of people, and therefore, may require applying different career counseling techniques.

**Counselor-parent relationships**

It is clear that, some parents may need to be a part of their children’s career development and decision-making processes. Therefore, counselors are encouraged to work closely with those parents, providing them available career information and the importance of career choices. This especially will help to discredit parents’ mistaken beliefs about their children’s career decisions.

**Become familiar with an adolescent’s birth position**

Career counselors are encouraged to be aware of birth position a teenager holds in the family, and how that position can affect his or her decision-making abilities. Thus, career assessment and interventions must respect individuals’ and family values, expectations and beliefs that placed on a childbirth order.

**Stay away from judgmental attitudes**

Career counselors are encouraged to respect the differences, and avoid labeling or judging others; instead, they must seek clarification when they do not know how to go about with a certain group of adolescents. Career counselors must understand that every person is unique in the way they go about decision-making processes even within the same culture.
Learn to utilize different cultural resources

Counselors are encouraged not only to develop cultural awareness or competency training from school but also they can increase their knowledge by contacting various resources such as books, newsletters/papers, journal and non-journal articles those related to their professional fields. More than that, be willing to learn from the population served is an essential technique in the helping process.

Follow Adlerian concepts as a guide

Counselors’ wish to find joy in their career, as well as assisting and encouraging clients to find their own self-worth in career they desire. Niles, et al., (2002) and Oberst, et al., (2002) noted that it is essential for counseling professionals to assist clients so that they can analyze their lives in holistic terms, and become supporters, and mediators of their own choices and decisions. Consequently, counselors can exploit Adlerian philosophy of encouragement to encourage adolescents to challenge potential obstacles that interfered to their career plans. The encouragement concept will not only become effective while counselors helping adolescents to achieve self-confidence and cope with career decision-making difficulties but also can be applied to convince other school personnel to look more closely at cultural issues for the reason that they can avoid showing the differences among themselves as well as to the population served.

Career Curriculum

Counselors are encouraged to develop career curriculum that reflects on helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses, and cultural influences that can promote or hinder their career plans. Also, the curriculum must focus on helping adolescents understanding the importance of decision-making skills and make them aware that this skill should be developed before leaving high school. Additionally, the curriculum must support adolescents understand the
importance of improving training to their career development plans, and know that decision-making skills are something that are distinctive. According to the normative and descriptive models (Beyth-Morm, et al., 2003), the decision-making curricula also requires further thoughts. Thus, questions like these can be included in the curriculum:

- Ask students if they have made any decision in their life, if yes, why? If not, Why not?
- What obstacles or difficulties they encountered during the process, and why?
- If any, how did they handle the situation?
- Ask them what they think will be useful for them about making better career decisions?
- Why is it important to be able to work on their own decisions and speak out their career concerns, and
- What might they need to succeed in the future career plans?

Weakness of the Previous Studies

Despite the growing career research and diverse group around the world, most of the instruments used to analyze cross-cultural decision-making difficulties, career development, were established in Western cultures mainly in the United States. To illustrate this, Hijazi et. al. (2004) stated that, “comparison of career decision-making among students from different ethnic groups is repeated in the American literature” (p. 66). Even decision-making theories were based on western culture. Cole (1996) criticized the plan and pointed out that this is the failure to respect cultural variability in psychological process, which makes it “difficult to know whether such application (decision-making difficulties) is accepted or specific to particular cultural circumstances” (p. 2). In the same vein, Sedlmeier (2010) confirmed that one cannot believe that the instrument used in one group produces similar effective results; therefore, "one must pay attention to both the construction of the tool and the application of it” (Sedlmeier, 2010, p. 9).
Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Study

Several cultural factors that play a great role in adolescents’ career decision making difficulties are seen as major obstacles. We know that certain cultural aspects can continue to pose barriers in adolescent career decisions if interventions and assessment are not well developed and applied. Also, we see that there is a difference in decision-making difficulties between adolescents in the individualistic cultures and those in the collectivistic cultures. Adolescents in the collectivistic culture were reported to be more affected before and during the time of deciding which career to pursue than their counterpart in the individualistic culture. For adolescents whose values based on collectivistic culture, the threat is that they do not have full freedom to choose what they may want to do in their future time. They have to follow their family’s community’s and nation’s final decisions while those in the individualistic culture have opportunities to choose and decide what career to pursue through lifespan.

Another important aspect to bear in mind is the source from which information is gathered, and where counseling interventions and assessments were developed. In order to be safe in these issues, researchers are recommended to gather information on communities and perhaps in the national levels of adolescents’ nationality or ethnic groups. Although it might be difficult to manage this because of financial involved and other life circumstances, so, possible long-term studies can be considered. Better knowledge about cultural differences in decision-making difficulties cannot be fully understood without a wide range of research in different parts of the world. Instead of focusing in one or two places where immigration populations are concentrated, for example, in the United States of America, researchers could expand their investigations in other angles around the globe. This will help especially helpful in reducing or eliminate generalization habits where career counselors tend to applying same the interventions
and assessments to groups whose cultural backgrounds are different. Applying improper interventions and assessments can ruin an individual’s entire life. Yet proper techniques will help to reduce or eradicate student-counselor-parent/guardian misunderstandings and negative judgments.

Therefore, future studies should consider introducing the knowledge of career decision-making to students as early as the seventh grade. Early career training assumed to have a bright future success in both groups students and counselors. Students will be able to set career goals, identify their strengths and weaknesses in decisions, and be able to determine what personal and cultural obstacles might be in their career paths. More than that, students and counselors will be enabled to find different approaches to go about for what seem to be career barriers. More importantly, counselors will be able to meet the twenty-first century demand (No Child Left Behind Act) that aims at every student’s success regardless of their backgrounds. Also, the future study must work more on understanding better how individualistic and collectivistic values can nurture or break down individuals’ abilities and freedom to decide on their careers and life in general. Finally, cultural differences in career decision-making should work in the similar approach in shaping and prompting both individual and society’s benefits, and that accepting the changes of the modern world of work.
References


