Greetings AACE Members! We continue to have a wonderful year of productivity and growth for AACE. In January 2009 the Standards for Assessment in Mental Health Counseling, a joint project between AACE and AMHCA, was passed by the AMHCA board, implementing the third set of published standards, along with the ASCA-AACE Competencies in Assessment and Evaluation for School Counselors and the AACE-IAAOC Standards for Assessment in Substance Abuse Counseling. Currently, we are developing standards in collaboration with the National Career Development Association (NCDA), the National Employment Counselors Association (NECA), and the International Association of Marriage and Family Counseling (IAMFC). Old, new, and prospective members who have an interest in participating in these collaborative endeavors can contact me at: rick_balkin@tamu-commerce.edu.

2009 National Assessment Conference

AACE is pleased to announce the 2009 National Assessment Conference to be held September 11-12, 2009 at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Proposal forms and conference registration forms are available on our website: http://www.theaaceonline.com/conference.htm.

I realize that I may sound a bit biased when I state that the AACE National Assessment Conference is my favorite counseling conference, but the truth is that this conference has been my favorite long before I ever held office in AACE. I enjoy attending a conference where the research is cutting edge and data-driven. At each conference I experience presentations with fresh, innovative ideas by the experts in the field and emerging scholars. I have especially enjoyed watching students step-up and engage in professional, scholarly presentations. For me, the emphasis on research adds to the quality of the conference. We continue to enjoy large participation from students to seasoned professionals, and I look forward to continuing this tradition this year in Norfolk, VA.

**AACE Setting New Standards!**

**AACE at ACA**

**ACA 2009 Conference and Exposition**

We have a lot going on at ACA, and you are welcome to join us. Our board meetings are open to our members, and we want to see you at our ancillary events. Attending ancillary events is a great way to meet the AACE leadership and get involved! We have several ancillary events throughout the conference and a number of AACE sponsored sessions related to assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and research.

**ACA Update**

In January I attended my last Council of Presidents and Regional Chairs (COPARC) meeting on behalf of AACE. I had the opportunity to meet with leaders of other divisions and regions. ACA continues to increase their benefits and services to members. This past quarter, ACA announced all student members seeking a master’s degree are eligible for free liability insurance. ACA also began their ACA-ACES Syllabus Clearinghouse, where members can contribute or download syllabi for counseling courses. Additionally, we received an update on the ACA initiative 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling. At the time of this writing, ACA has a 90% endorsement from the participating organizations. This initiative is an important part in addressing professional identity across the counseling field.

**And Finally**

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the AACE events in Charlotte, NC at the ACA National Conference. I want to encourage our old and new members to be involved with AACE. We are a vibrant, growing organization. We have an active committee structure to foster leadership and involvement in AACE. The committees include (a) by-laws and ethics, (b) diversity issues in assessment and research, (c) public policy and legislation, and (d) specialty standards and statements. For a description of the committees or a desire to be more involved, please visit our website: http://www.theaaceonline.com/ or feel free to contact me by e-mail.

**2009 National Assessment Conference**

http://www.theaaceonline.com/conference.htm
AACE Ancillary Events

March 20, 2009 AACE Executive Council Meeting 9:00am – 4:30pm
March 21, 2009 AACE Executive Council Meeting (Old & New) 8:00am – 12:00pm
March 21, 2009 Division Reception 5:30pm – 7:30pm (AACE, C-AHEAD, ASER-VIC, IAOC)
March 22, 2009 AACE Executive Council Meeting 9:00am – 4:30pm
March 22, 2009 AACE Breakfast and Business Meeting 7:30am – 9:00am

Keynote Speaker: Craig Cashwell

AACE Sponsored Sessions

Saturday, March 21, 2009
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Program ID # 175, Convention Center, Booth PS3
How to Better Conceptualize Assessment and Treatment of Minority Clients
30-Minute Project/Research Poster Session, Advanced
Savita Abrahams, Argosy University Dallas, Dallas, TX

Saturday, March 21, 2009
3:45 pm – 4:45 pm
Program ID # 260, Convention Center, Room 209 AB
Impact of Deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom on PTSD and Depression in Soldiers by Sex and Parental Status
60-Minute Program, Advanced
Jill M. Bennett, Department of Veterans Affairs, Binghamton, NY, Linda Ball

Saturday, March 21, 2009
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm
Program ID # 273, Convention Center, Booth PS5
Symptomology and Coping Responses of Pregnant Women in High Risk Communities: Preliminary Research Results
30-Minute Project/Research Poster Session, Advanced
Donna Sheperis, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS, Rachael Ammons, Lauren Bussey, Amy Davis

Saturday, March 21, 2009
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm
Program ID # 273, Convention Center, Booth PS5
Symptomology and Coping Responses of Pregnant Women in High Risk Communities: Preliminary Research Results
30-Minute Project/Research Poster Session, Advanced
Donna Sheperis, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS, Rachael Ammons, Lauren Bussey, Amy Davis

Saturday, March 21, 2009
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm
Program ID # 512, Convention Center, Booth PS4
Self-injury: Adolescent Issues, Conceptualization, and Treatment Interventions
30-Minute Project/Research Poster Session, Advanced
Amanda C. Healey, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

Sunday, March 22, 2009
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Counseling Ethics and Legal Issues Academy
Program ID # 559, Convention Center, Room 213 A
The Counselor as Scientist Practitioner: The Ethical Choice
90-Minute Program
Carl J. Sheperis, Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, Donna Sheperis, Laura Simpson, Richard S. Balkin, Joshua C. Watson

Monday, March 23, 2009
7:30 am – 8:30 am
Counselor Education and Supervision Academy
College Counseling Academy
Program ID # 595, Convention Center, Room 219 AB
An Examination of the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory-3’s Correctional Scale in a College Student Population
60-Minute Program, Advanced
Andrew M Burck, Adams State College, Alamosa, CO, John Laux

AACE COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Executive Council:

President: Rick Balkin,
Texas A&M University - Commerce
Rick_Balkin@TAMU-Commerce.edu

President-Elect: Marie Shoffner,
University of Virginia
mfs2f@virginia.edu

Past President: Donna Gibson,
University of South Carolina
gibsond@gwm.sc.edu

Treasurer: Shawn Spurgeon,
University of Tennessee - Knoxville
sspurgeon@utk.edu

Secretary: Amy McLeod,
Argosy University - Atlanta
amymcleod1@gmail.com

Member-at-Large Membership: Danica Hays,
Old Dominion University

Member-at-Large Publications: Carl Sheperis,
Mississippi State University

Member-at-Large Awards: Joshua Watson,
Mississippi State University-Meridian

ACA Governing Council Representative: Brad Erford, Loyola University MD

Graduate Student Representative: Vickie Sutherland, Texas A&M University - Commerce

Committees:

Standards and Statements Chair: Janet Wall
Diversity Issues Chair: Savita Abrahams
Bylaws and Ethics Chair: Donna Gibson
Conference Committee Chair: Danica Hays
Newsletter Committee Chair: Amanda Healey
Review of the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire

By Lindsey Fox, Ohio University

General Information

Title: Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ).

Authors: James B. Rounds, Jr., George A. Henly, Rene V. Dawis, Lloyd H. Lofquist, and David J. Weiss

Publisher: Vocational Psychology Research, Minneapolis, MN


Forms, groups to which applicable: The MIQ has been through three revisions, with the latest revision taking place in 1967. The MIQ user manual, which details the interpretation of the questionnaire, was last revised in 1981. Two forms of the MIQ are available; a paired form and a ranked form. Within the paired form, comparisons are created by pairing a statement once with every other statement. Respondents using this form must decide which statement in each pair is more important in relation to their ideal job. Within the ranked form, various statements are grouped in sets of five. In this case, respondents must rank the five statements according to importance in terms of an ideal job. Both forms ask individuals to respond to statements which relate to their ideal job. In this way, the MIQ can determine individuals' absolute judgments of what is important in job selection (Lachar, 2004).

General Type: The MIQ is meant to indicate one's work needs and values, which can point toward worker satisfaction. In addition, the MIQ assesses preferred methods of reinforcement for clients in their vocational settings (Starkey & Rasmus, 2006).

Practical features: Each statement in both the paired and ranked forms represents one of the 20 needs or scales assessed within the MIQ. A respondent's needs in terms of an ideal work setting are determined based on the number of times a respondent chooses a statement as important in relation to the others. In addition, the MIQ also indicates the values that a respondent finds to be important when considering an ideal work environment. The values assessed in the MIQ are characterized by groupings of related needs (Lachar, 2004).

Cost: A complete MIQ starter kit costs $39.50. The kit includes 50 answer sheets, 10 reusable booklets, the user manual, and 1 Occupational Reinforcer Patterns. The answer sheets are priced at $0.12 or less individually, while reusable booklets cost $0.70 or less individually. User manuals cost $8.50 a piece, while Occupational Reinforcer Patterns cost $20.00 a piece. It should be noted that the MIQ reusable booklets are available in both English and Spanish editions (Vocational Psychology Research). The Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook (2004) also mentions that the MIQ answer sheets have a $6.00 purchasing minimum, while the reusable booklets have a $7.00 purchasing minimum.

Scoring services available and cost: It is almost impossible to score the MIQ by hand. Therefore, Vocational Psychology Research offers scoring services for a fee. A single copy of a standard report costs $3.00 to score, while two copies of the printed report cost $3.15. A single copy of an extended report costs $3.25 to score, while two copies cost $3.45. Additional postage and handling charges apply; with it costing $0.80 for the first two ounces, and $0.40 for each additional ounce (Vocational Psychology Research).

Time required to administer: It takes 30 to 40 minutes for a respondent to complete the ranked form of the MIQ, and approximately 15 to 25 minutes for a respondent to complete the paired form of the MIQ (Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook, 2004).
Purpose and Nature of the Instrument:

**Stated Purpose**: The MIQ is designed to assess one’s vocational needs based on the Theory of Work Adjustment (Layton, 2004). According to the Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook (2004), the MIQ is for use with those ages 16 and older.

**Description of test items and scoring**: The MIQ is offered in two untimed, self-administered forms which both utilize statements to assess one’s needs and values in an ideal vocation (Lachar, 2004). In both the paired and ranked forms the 20 vocational needs assessed by the MIQ include Ability Utilization, Achievement, Activity, Independence, Variety, Compensation, Security, Working Conditions, Advancement, Recognition, Authority, Social Status, Co-workers, Social Service, Moral Values, Company Policies and Practices, Supervision—Human Relations, Supervision—Technical, Creativity, and Responsibility. The ranked form also includes Autonomy as a need. The six values the MIQ assesses are Achievement, Comfort, Status, Altruism, Safety, and Autonomy (Buros Mental Measurements Yearbook, 2004). Within the paired form, respondents complete 210 items. Of these items, 190 of them are in the paired comparison format, while the last 20 questions consist of absolute statements. Respondents must judge whether or not the statements have personal importance in terms of an ideal job. The ranked form contains 21 sets consisting of five items each, and respondents rank the items within each group according to importance relevant to an ideal vocation. The last 21 questions consist of absolute statements, just as in the paired form. An MIQ answer sheet provides a profile of one’s need and value scores, as well as shows a listing of jobs for which satisfaction is predicted or not predicted (Layton, 2004). Both forms of the MIQ are meant for individuals who have at least a fifth grade reading level or higher (Vocational Psychology Research).

Practical Evaluation:

**Adequacy of directions, training required to administer**: The user manual for the MIQ guides helping professionals in their evaluation of clients’ work-related needs (Layton, 2004). As the MIQ is essentially self-administered, counselors must provide adequate testing conditions. The 1981 user manual includes a detailed description of the MIQ, recommendations for the MIQ’s use, instructions for interpreting this assessment tool, and sample reports (Lachar, 2004).

Technical Considerations:

**Norms and Scoring**: Specific statistics are not provided in regards to the norms and scoring of the MIQ, but the manual reports some findings between norm groups. College students produce lower mean scores and more variable scores on all but three scales compared to skilled white collar workers and managers. Men and women report differences on the same jobs, as well as groups that differ in tenure (Lachar, 2004).

**Reliability**: Internal consistency reliability coefficients for all the MIQ scales for nine different groups run from .77 to .81, which indicates strong reliability. The MIQ’s test-retest correlation for the scale items ranges from .89 for immediate retesting to .53 for retesting following 10 months. This also indicates fairly strong reliability (Layton, 2004).

**Validity**: While the technical manual supports some evidence for validity within the MIQ, additional statistics and information ought to be included in the manual in order for readers to better assess the particular studies cited (Lachar, 2004). A need may exist for a MIQ manual that collects published research reports which make reference to the MIQ’s validity (Layton, 2004). However, published research reports that suggest evidence of validity within the MIQ can still be found. In one particular study researchers use a simplified 17-item version of the MIQ, the MIQ Form S, with 45 supported employees who have mental retardation. The researchers conclude that their study has validity and that an adapted MIQ can provide meaningful constructs for use with supported employees with mental retardation (Melichiori & Church, 1997). Another study using the MIQ assesses the level of desire that service-oriented professionals have toward working with underserved populations. The researchers in this study utilize the MIQ to determine the values of 135 college students with majors in helping professions. The MIQ seems to be an asset to the validity of this study, as the researchers have success with identifying the values of future helping professionals (Krous & Nauta, 2005).

**Cross-cultural fairness**: The MIQ can be used fairly and accurately with individuals across cultures. As an example, in the research study by Melichiori and Church (1997) a modified version of the MIQ is used with 45 supported workers with mental retardation as well as with 45 workers without mental retardation. The researchers find that there are more similarities than differences between the two groups in terms of the importance and satisfaction of the needs assessed in the modified MIQ. Thus, the MIQ is adaptable to those from a disability culture.
Evaluation

Practicality: The MIQ seems like a practical assessment tool. The manual is clear and easy to use. The time and money required for administering the test seem minimal. A counselor can administer the MIQ to individuals or groups, which is convenient. Finally, most adolescents and older can easily comprehend the MIQ because this instrument requires only a fifth grade reading level (Vocational Psychology Research).

Aids to user: The MIQ seems to be a reasonably valid and reliable instrument, informative for clients, relatively easy to understand, and practical for counselor use. It is necessary that only trained professionals utilize and interpret this instrument with clients (Lachar, 2004). Both forms of the MIQ are user-friendly. As a whole, the idea of the MIQ and statements that represent vocational needs is easy for clients and counselors to grasp. Clients can understand that comparing and ranking statements is for the purpose of self-assessing the importance of one’s needs and values in the workplace. Through the Theory of Work Adjustment, the MIQ provides an overview of client values and reinforcers in vocational settings (Starkey & Rasmus, 2006).

References


Purchase AACE Breakfast Tickets for ACA

If you would like to participate in the AACE Breakfast scheduled for March 22nd from 7:30—9pm, please call the ACA member services at 800-347-6647 extension 222 or go to their website at http://www.counseling.org/Convention/Registration.aspx and register for the divisional meal. Please register for your meal as soon as possible. The food must be ordered well in advance, so tickets must be purchased in order to properly plan for the event. We look forward to see you all there!
Beginning with this issue I, Amanda Healey, will be serving as the editor of NewsNotes. I would like to thank Dr. Joshua Watson for his assistance in helping me become acquainted with the process and for his service to AACE.

Dr. Watson is an assistant professor of counseling at the Mississippi State Meridian Campus and has served AACE as the NewsNotes editor since 2007 with committee member and NewsNotes student representative Vicki Sutherland.

As the new editor, I hope to continue to represent AACE through this publication as Dr. Watson did so well over the past years. Leigh Falls will serve the committee as the student representative editorial assistant for NewsNotes. She is currently working towards her doctorate at Sam Houston State University.

If you would like information on how to submit interest articles or information you think would be pertinent to the membership, please contact Amanda Healey at ahealey@odu.edu for submission guidelines. Interest articles between 500—800 words will be accepted if the topic area relates to membership activities, accomplishments, testing issues, diagnosis, or other areas related to the mission of the AACE division.
2009 American Counseling Association Conference & Exposition

Schedule of AACE Sponsored Events

March 20, 2009  AACE Executive Council Meeting  9:00am – 4:30pm

March 21, 2009  AACE Executive Council Meeting (Old & New)  8:00am – 12:00pm

March 21, 2009  Division Reception  5:30pm – 7:30pm
(AACE, C-AHEAD, ASERVIC, IAOCC)

March 22, 2009  AACE Breakfast and Business Meeting  7:30am – 9:00am

Please check your conference program for the location of each of these events.
TEST CRITIQUE TEMPLATE

If you would like to submit a test critique to the AACE, please use the following updated template to review the instrument or test of interest.

TEST CRITIQUES

[Insert instrument name here]

[Insert your name here]

[Insert your university name here]

General Information

Title: [Insert title of instrument here]

Author(s): [Insert full names and credentials of instrument author(s) here]

Publisher: [Insert the publisher’s name and address here]

Publication Date: [Insert the publication date of the latest edition here]

General Type: [Insert the general type of the instrument here. Is the instrument a measure of aptitude (vocational, academic), achievement (survey battery, diagnostic test, readiness test), intelligence, personality (identifies normal vs. psychopathology), or vocational interests?] Alternate Test Forms: [Insert any alternative forms of the instrument here and include a brief description of their use.]

Instrument Purpose and Use

Purpose(s) of the Instrument: [Insert a clear and specific description of the instrument’s purpose(s). What are its intended uses? What was the instrument designed for? What specific population(s) is the test designed for?]

Description of Instrument Scales and Items: [Insert a description of all the instrument’s major scales and the construct(s) being measured (e.g., NEO = Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness). Also list and describe any major subscales. Include information regarding the total number of items, number of scale items, and item format(s) (e.g., multiple choice, Likert scale).]

Scoring Method and Score Reporting: [Insert information concerning how the instrument is scored (e.g., self-scored, hand-scored, electronic, publisher-scored). How are the scores interpreted (criterion-referenced, norm-referenced)? How are the test results reported to test-takers? What materials and resources are available to aid in interpreting test results?]

Uses in Counseling: [Insert how this instrument can be implemented in the practice of counseling. What settings can this instrument be used in (e.g., individual counseling, career counseling, couples counseling)? What clinical issues/topics does this instrument address (e.g., learning disabilities, marital distress, career indecision)? What type of clientele can counselors use this instrument with (e.g., adults, those with limited literacy skills,)]

Uses in Research: [Insert how this instrument can be implemented in counseling research. What populations can researchers use this instrument with (e.g., adolescents, minority individuals)? What constructs can be measured using this instrument (e.g., self-esteem, depression)? What type of data does the instrument yield (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, self-report)?]

Administration Information

Administration Time: [Insert the expected administration time.]

Required Training: [Insert the level of training required to administer the assessment. What qualification level does the administrator need to have (e.g., Level 1: no requirements; Level 2: Bachelor’s degree and coursework in psychological testing; Level 3: Advanced degree and certification/licensure in psychological testing)? Include any other trainings/certifications specific to the administration of the instrument.]
**Administration Ease:** [Insert information concerning how the ease of administering the instrument. Is it easy to administer? Are the instructions clear and well detailed? How does the administrator prepare to administer the test? What materials are needed for administration? Are there verbatim guidelines on what to say, or suggestions for responding to examinee questions?]

**Administration Costs:** [Insert information regarding the cost of administering the instrument. Include the costs of test booklets, answer sheets, and scoring services.]

**Instrument Manuals and Other Resources:** [Insert a description of any testing manuals available. Also include any other resources such as books, articles, websites that would assist in the administration process]

**Instrument Properties**

**Normative Sample:** [Insert information concerning the instrument’s normative sample here. Provide a description of the relevant demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, educational status, geographic location) of the sample.]

**Validity:** [Insert information concerning the instrument’s validity. How accurately does the instrument measure the construct(s) it’s intended to measure? What is the extent to which meaningful inferences can be made from the instrument’s results?]

**Reliability:** [Insert information concerning the instrument’s reliability. How consistent is the instrument? Is the test free from errors such as ambiguity of test instructions, misleading samples, etc? Are there any ambiguous items? Are the test scores likely to be consistent across different testing situations?]

**Applicability of Instrument to Broader Contexts and Populations**

[Insert information regarding the broad uses of the instrument as evidenced by past and current research studies. What populations, outside of the norm sample, can the instrument be administered to? What additional contexts (e.g., schools, community service boards) can the instrument be administered in?]

**Overall Strengths and Weaknesses of Instrument**

[Insert information concerning the instrument’s overall strengths and weaknesses.]

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**STUDENT PERSPECTIVES: GET INVOLVED!**

Leigh Falls, Student Perspectives Editor

Student Perspectives is a new column for the AACE Newsletter developed in response to a recommendation from the AACE executive council to increase participation by student members. In the age of managed care and limited fiscal resources, research-based practice is a growing need among counselors. In order to facilitate counselor development, students are encouraged to integrate assessment and research best practices throughout their education and emerging practice as counseling professionals. AACE assists students by providing resources for developing efficacious standards-based counseling practice among students. However, counselor educators and long-time practicing counselors often have a different perspective than those of new professionals and students who are in the process of becoming professional counselors.

Student Perspectives fills an important gap in the organization’s existing services by providing an outlet for students to identify, discuss, and make recommendations regarding research-based practice that may be less evident to experienced professional counselors. In this light, both master’s and doctoral level students are encouraged to submit contributions to the column editor, Leigh Falls, at lfalls@twu.edu. Submissions should highlight issues related to the process of research proposal development; teaching methods they have experienced that have assisted their development as researchers and as users of assessment measures; topics related to research design, dissertation writing, and presentation of research; experiences as students learning research methods; perspectives on assessment use among counselors, particularly related to training and professional development in using assessment measures; experiences with finding funding support and writing small grants; as well as locating and participating in professional development activities related to the AACE mission. Submissions should range between 500-800 words, with a writing style that is consistent with the APA 5th edition Style Manual, and clearly indicate a student-based perspective on the topic featured. Further questions and comments regarding this column may be forwarded to the column editor. If you have thoughts about a particular experience or if you are unsure about a topic, you may email the column editor for assistance with further idea development. The approach taken will be developmental in nature, assisting emerging professionals with their first efforts at writing and publication in a less formal context, although with the opportunity for national exposure.
Two AACE student members were recently honored with the Martha Garrett Research Scholarship awarded through the Mississippi Counseling Association. Lauren Bussey and Rachael Ammons, master’s students in the community counseling program at Delta State University, were invited to join an existing project working with early intervention programs in Head Start services. They are part of a team working to assess the mental health symptomology and coping response patterns of pregnant mothers enrolled in these services. Their aim is to mitigate the effects of pre and post mental health concerns on the developing child through early identification and intervention.

These promising master’s students clearly saw the link between maternal mental health and the developing child and are providing valuable assessment and intervention services for these women. Women enrolling in the early intervention program are assessed using the Brief Symptom Inventory for mental health symptoms that may affect their unborn child. The students also assess the coping response patterns of these women by administering the Coping Response Inventory. The combined information allows them to develop treatment protocols to provide group and individual counseling services, make referrals, and guide other early intervention staff in their work with the pregnant women. Along with other members of the statewide research team, and their faculty advisor Dr. Donna Sheperis, Lauren and Rachael presented the preliminary results of this project at the 2008 AACE National Assessment Conference in Dallas, TX, and will be presenting an AACE sponsored poster session at the 2009 American Counseling Association Annual Conference in Charlotte, NC.

The Implications of Pilot Study Outcomes in the Development of Qualitative Research Design

By Stephanie Crockett, Old Dominion University

For the past three years, I have provided career counseling services to international college students. Through my work with these students, I noticed that this growing population seemed to face unique vocational barriers and increased psychological distress. The literature confirmed my observations, citing that international students may experience vocational difficulty, cultural shock and the related psychological symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and social withdrawal; Leong & Chou, 2002; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994), and have a greater need for career counseling than American students (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989). While it was apparent to me that this population may face vocational challenges, research concerning the vocational situation of international students was minimal and I found it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the career and psychological needs of this population.

Accordingly, I decided to design and implement a qualitative study to explore the career and psychological needs of international students in relation to their student status and country of origin. Before implementing a large-scale research study, my faculty advisor suggested that I conduct a pilot study to evaluate and confirm the proposed methodology as well as assist in the development of future interview and observation protocols. While initially hesitant to invest extra time into conducting a pilot study, I took my advisor’s advice and conducted one focus group interview and two individual interviews. Interview participants included six international students (four focus group participants; two individual interview participants) who were enrolled at an American university and held a nonimmigrant visa.
During semi-structured interviews, participants responded to 10 questions regarding their current vocational situation and future career plans, career needs, use of university services, and the barriers associated with using these services.

To my delight, I found that these initial interviews had several important implications for the design and execution of future research. First, and perhaps most importantly, initial data analysis warranted the need for a large-scale study by confirming that international student participants experienced vocational barriers and desired specialized university services. The pilot study further shaped my research design by illuminating issues in participant selection criteria, interview protocols, trustworthiness, and observation protocols. Originally, the research design was to explore the experiences of full-time international students holding an F-1 nonimmigrant visa. However, during the pilot study, I had an opportunity to speak with part-time students that held NATO visas and, as they shared their rich experiences, I realized that eliminating these participants from the study disregarded the complexity of international student career needs. As a result, I decided to expand the breadth of my study by extending my participant selection criteria to include all international students enrolled in a U.S. university.

As the data collection process progressed, I recognized the interview protocol needed to be amended. The original protocol focused on post graduation career needs and barriers; however, I noticed that for international students, who were not close to graduation, post-graduation career plans were less salient. Instead, they discussed current career issues such as locating on-campus employment or internships. As a result, protocol questions were adjusted to address both current and future career needs and barriers.

In analyzing the data from the pilot interviews, I quickly realized it would be important to triangulate participant interview responses to alternative data sources. Consequently, I decided to conduct two pilot observations at the university's career center. My initial observation protocol for these observations focused on international student utilization rates, presenting problems, and types of services used. During the observation periods very few international students actually visited the career center; so, I began to record the presenting problems, types of services used, and behaviors of the students who were receiving services. In broadening my observation protocol to include all students I had the opportunity to identify differences between American and international student help-seeking behaviors. Discovering differences in help-seeking behavior offered a deeper insight into international students' vocational situation and also taught me the importance of seeking out and triangulating data sources that will yield somewhat differing results.

Despite the time consuming nature of this undertaking, I found all aspects of the pilot study to be highly beneficial to the development of my future research study. Specifically, the pilot study afforded the opportunity to elucidate methodological issues and make key modifications to the design and execution of the original research proposal. As a result, my future research will be able to capture the intricate complexities and real-world nuances of this phenomenon, which will lead to more insightful and credible results.

References


AACE

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The Association for Assessment in Counseling and Education (AACE) is an organization of counselors, educators, and other professionals that advances the counseling profession by providing leadership, training, and research in the creation, development, production, and use of assessment and diagnostic techniques. The mission of AACE is to promote and recognize scholarship, professionalism, leadership, and excellence in the development and use of assessment and diagnostic techniques in counseling.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

If you have any information related to the activities of AACE members that you think should be highlighted, please send pictures and commentary to Amanda Healey at ahealey@odu.edu. Of particular interest are stories related to conference activities, publication, assessment development, and members you have received professional awards. Please submit any information as a Microsoft Word attachment and send photographs as a .jpg file attachment. Do not send more than three photographs related to any individual article. Interest articles from students, practitioners, and counselor educators are equally welcome and encouraged.