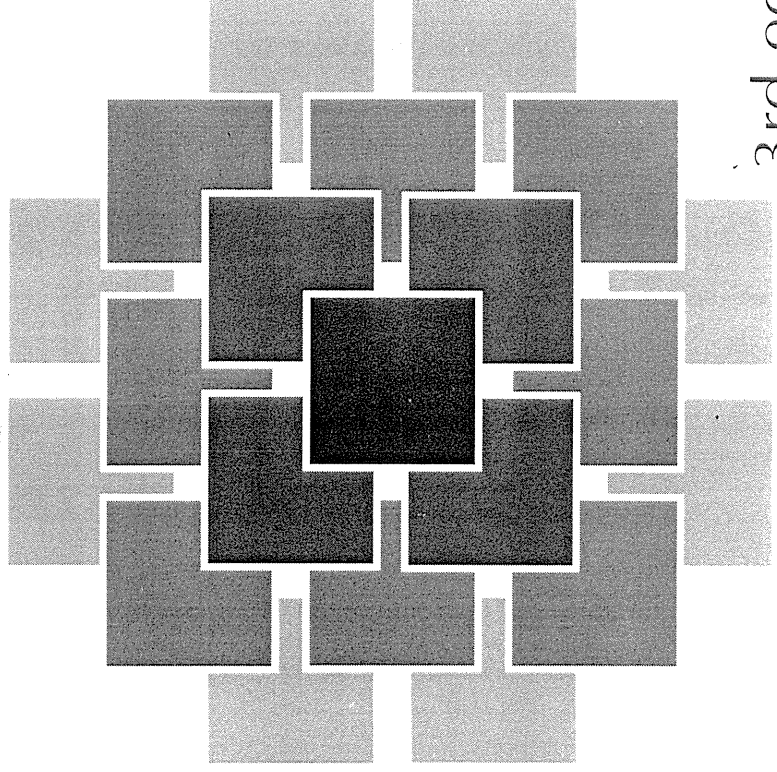

A Counselor's Guide to Career Assessment Instruments

Jerome T. Kapes Marjorie Moran Mastie Edwin A. Whitfield



3rd edition



National Career Development Association

Stephanie L. Brooke
Counselor, Private Practice
Raleigh, North Carolina

Joseph C. Ciechalski
Assistant Professor
Department of Counselor & Adult Education
East Carolina University

DESCRIPTION

The Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ) is designed to assess vocational needs and values of individuals 16 years of age and older. The MIQ measures the importance of 20 psychological needs along with six underlying values associated with work environments.

Needs reflect values in that they are thought to affect choices of environments, and perceptions of and satisfaction with environmental conditions (Rounds, Henly, Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1981). For instance, a work environment that encourages accomplishment is one which is Achievement oriented. A work environment that is comfortable and non-stressful is one which is Comfort oriented. Environments which provide recognition and prestige are Status oriented. Altruistic environments foster harmony with and service to others. Safe environments are ones which are predictable and stable, and environments which stimulate Initiative foster autonomy. The MIQ is designed to indicate satisfaction in each of these work environments.

The MIQ is available in two self-administered forms that use one statement to represent each of the 20 needs. The paired form of the MIQ may be completed in 30-40 minutes while the ranked form only requires 15-20 minutes. The test can be administered individually or in groups. The manual (Rounds et al., 1981) states that the MIQ requires only a minimum of supervision. Respondents must provide an answer for every item, "even if he must guess" (Gay, Weiss, Hendel, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1971, p.3). In the ranked form, statements are grouped in 21 sets of five. Thinking about their "ideal job," respondents rank the five statements in order of importance. In the paired form, a statement is paired once with every other statement, creating 190 paired comparisons. Each respondent decides respondents decides which statement in the pair is more important in an "ideal" job. Needs are then determined by the number of times an individual selects a statement as important in relation to others. Values are defined by a cluster of related needs.

According to the manual (Rounds et al., 1981), the MIQ can be used in vocational counseling, career planning, and job placement. By utilizing the MIQ, counselors can help individuals identify the importance of psychological needs and relate this to expectations of work settings. For career planning, the MIQ profile can be compared with Occupational Reinforcer Patterns (ORPs) to provide a systematic way to identify those occupations that are most satisfying for the person. In order to maximize productivity and reduce turnover, absences, and tardiness, the authors claim that employers can use the MIQ for job placement.

High scale values on the MIQ may be viewed as signifying a specific reinforcer represented by the scale or as indicating a more general reinforcer for which the scale is one of several items (Rounds et al., 1971). By examining the pattern of high scale scores, counselors are able to discern which of the six values is more preferred by the respondent. Authors caution that the scale scores must be interpreted with the same care as the item representing a given scale. The MIQ scores may also be used in terms of the likelihood of satisfaction in a specific occupation. Satisfaction (Satisfied, Likely Satisfied, and Not Satisfied) is linked to specific occupations for which ORPs have been established. By examining the MIQ scores, counselors can determine which occupations are most satisfying. *Occupational Classification System II*, the user is provided with a much larger number of occupations classified according to their patterns.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The MIQ does not use norm groups; rather, each individual's score is determined by his/her responses to the questions. Since the intention is to use the MIQ as the frame of reference, the MIQ employs ipsative scoring. In this approach, two people with identical scores may differ in the strength of their needs.

Scoring of the MIQ results in adjusted scale scores for the 20 vocational needs, and a Total Circular Triad (TCT) score (paired form only). Error bands are calculated around the individual adjusted scale scores. Adjusted scale scores range from -4.0 to +4.0, with a maximum individual being half this total range. Values greater than 0 indicate areas of importance to the person and values below 0 are needs which are not important. All scale values are adjusted for the individual in that they are in such a way that the zero point indicates the same subjective level for all individuals (Gay, et al., 1971).

One internal check built into the instrument (paired form only) is the consistency of responses to the MIQ. Scores of 255 or higher represent scores from zero to 385. Scores of 255 or higher represent scores to the MIQ. Error bands indicate the range of indecision for each adjusted score. MIQ scoring service will also report the degree of correspondence between respondent's profile and the ORPs for a specific occupation. Low correspondence while high scores indicate weak relationships.

USE IN COUNSELING

According to the manual (Rounds et al., 1981), the MIQ can be used in vocational counseling, career planning, and job placement. By utilizing the MIQ, counselors can help individuals identify the importance of psychological needs and relate this to expectations of work settings. For career planning, the MIQ profile can be compared with Occupational Reinforcer Patterns (ORPs) to provide a systematic way to identify those occupations that are most likely to be satisfying for the person. In order to maximize productivity and minimize turnover, absences, and tardiness, the authors claim that employers can use the MIQ for job placement.

High scale values on the MIQ may be viewed as signifying a preference for the specific reinforcer represented by the scale or as indicating a preference for a more general reinforcer for which the scale is one of several indicators (Gay et al., 1971). By examining the pattern of high scale scores, counselors may be able to discern which of the six values is more preferred by the respondent. The authors caution that the scale scores must be interpreted with the specific content of the item representing a given scale. The MIQ scores may also be interpreted in terms of the likelihood of satisfaction in a specific occupation. Predicted satisfaction (Satisfied, Likely Satisfied, and Not Satisfied) is limited to those occupations for which ORPs have been established. By examining the *Minnesota Occupational Classification System II*, the user is provided with information on a much larger number of occupations classified according to their reinforcer patterns.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The MIQ does not use norm groups; rather, each individual's profile is determined by his/her responses to the questions. Since the intention is to use the individual as the frame of reference, the MIQ employs ipsative scoring. Using this approach, two people with identical scores may differ dramatically in the strength of their needs.

Scoring of the MIQ results in adjusted scale scores for the 20 vocational needs scales, and a Total Circular Triad (TCT) score (paired form only). Additionally, error bands are calculated around the individual adjusted scale scores. These adjusted scale scores range from -4.0 to +4.0, with a maximum range for the individual being half this total range. Values greater than 0 indicate needs which are important to the person and values below 0 are needs which are less important. All scale values are adjusted for the individual in that they are computed in such a way that the zero point indicates the same subjective point for all individuals (Gay, et al., 1971).

One internal check built into the instrument (paired form only) is the TCT score which indicates the consistency of responding to the MIQ items. The TCT scores range from zero to 385. Scores of 255 or higher represent invalid responses to the MIQ. Error bands indicate the range of indecision on each vocational need dimension and are computed for each adjusted scale value. The MIQ scoring service will also report the degree of correspondence between a respondent's profile and the ORPs for a specific occupation. Low scores indicate correspondence while high scores indicate weak relationships.

Scale internal consistency was investigated using nine groups of subjects, most of which were college students. Other than indicating that all groups included both males and females, no demographic information is discussed in the manual. Reliability coefficients ranged from .30 to .95, most were between .77 and .81. The internal consistency for each scale is not reported. Studies using nine test-retest intervals, from immediate to 10 months, were conducted. The median range for these intervals was .89 (immediate) to .49 (nine months). Approaching one year, the MIQ scores were relatively stable. Benson (1988) noted that these median reliabilities do not establish the reliability of individual scale scores. The profile reliability coefficients range from .70 to .95 which indicates that the profile of scores may be more reliable than individual scale scores.

Evidence of content validity is not available from the MIQ manual. No information is given concerning the method of selection or the qualifications of the people involved in selecting the initial items. The authors argue that the MIQ results in information about personal values; yet, some would argue that the test actually measures needs and not values (Herr & Cramer, 1988). Although the MIQ may indicate need preferences, counselors should be cautioned about interpreting the results as an indication of personal values.

Construct validity focuses on correlations with other tests. Although the authors attempt to establish discriminative validity by reporting low test intercorrelations with the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) and high correlations with the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB), "the GATB also contains performance tests in addition to paper-and-pencil tests, so variations in method of measure may contribute to the disparity in shared variance" (Lachar, 1992, p. 543). Using information from 5,358 people, intercorrelations were reported from .05 to .77 with a mean of .33. This indicates that the scales are relatively independent. Paired scale intercorrelations were not discussed.

Criterion related validity does not focus on the predictive capability of the MIQ. Instead, the authors provide evidence that the MIQ correlates with other test instruments. Additionally, the authors attempt to use the method of contrasted groups to provide validity evidence; yet, only three occupations were represented (vocational rehabilitation counselors, retail trade work, and school counselors). In addition, a variety of demographic characteristics (e.g., age, sex, education) were related to scores on the MIQ. The authors claim that there are differences where differences were expected; however, this is not supported.

OVERALL CRITIQUE

The MIQ may be a helpful tool in career counseling settings because it provides a profile of the person's needs and work reinforcer patterns. However, there is no evidence to support the author's claim that the MIQ provides a profile of the persons' values. Essentially, the MIQ provides a profile of needs relative to their "ideal job." Because demographic characteristics of the subjects were not discussed, there is no assurance that the instrument is free from bias.

The manual does not present information on the effectiveness of using the MIQ for job placement. Therefore, use of the MIQ for job placement purposes cannot be recommended until additional information relating to placement is pro-

vided. Perhaps the MIQ could be used for within-group scoring. This would allow individuals to be compared to their cultural or ethnic group. Although the MIQ has weaknesses, it can be used in career planning. It is a helpful instrument which provides a person with a list of reinforcers which relate to work satisfaction.

REFERENCES

- Benson, P. G. (1988). Review of the *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire* & M.M. Mastie (Eds.), *A counselor's guide to career assessment instruments* (pp. 144-149). Washington, DC: National Career Development Association.
- Gay, E. G., Weiss, D. J., Hendel, D. D., Dawis, R. V., & Lofquist, L. H. (1988). *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire*. University of Minnesota Assessment Project.
- Herr, E. L., & Cramer, S. H. (1988). *Career guidance and counseling: A systematic approach* (3rd ed.). Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Lachar, B. (1992). Review of the *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire* & J.C. Conoley (Eds.), *Eleventh mental measurements yearbook* (pp. 10-14). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Rounds, J. B., Henly, G. A., Dawis, R. V., Lofquist, L. H., & Weiss, D. J. (1988). *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire: A measure of vocational interests*. University of Minnesota: Vocational Psychology Research.

vided. Perhaps the MIQ could be used for within-group scoring by employers. This would allow individuals to be compared to their cultural or ethnic peers.

Although the MIQ has weaknesses, it can be used in career planning settings. It is a helpful instrument which provides a person with a list of needs and reinforcers which relate to work satisfaction.

REFERENCES

- Benson, P. G. (1988). Review of the *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire*. In J.T. Kapes & M.M. Mastie (Eds.), *A counselor's guide to career assessment instruments* (2nd ed. pp. 144-149). Washington, DC: National Career Development Association.
- Gay, E. G., Weiss, D. J., Hendel, D. D., Dawis, R. V., & Lofquist, L. H. (1971). *Manual for the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire*. University of Minnesota: Work Adjustment Project.
- Herr, E. L., & Cramer, S. H. (1988). *Career guidance and counseling through the life span: Systematic approaches* (3rd ed.). Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.
- Lachar, B. (1992). Review of the *Minnesota Importance Questionnaire*. In J.J. Kramer & J.C. Conoley (Eds.), *Eleventh mental measurements yearbook* (pp. 542-544). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Rounds, J. B., Henly, G. A., Dawis, R. V., Lofquist, L. H., & Weiss, D. J. (1981). *Manual for the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire: A measure of vocational needs and values*. University of Minnesota: Vocational Psychology Research.