

# Career Development Research and Practice With Diverse Cultural and Gender Groups

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A recent trend in vocational psychology is the focus on understanding the career development issues and patterns of culturally diverse groups of individuals (Byars & McCubbin, 2001; Flores et al., 2006) and broadening theory, research, and practice to incorporate the career experiences of all groups represented in our global society. This special issue of the *Journal of Career Development* was formulated in response to the interest of career counseling practitioners and researchers to better understand the career issues of specific cultural groups. The special issue includes five articles that cover career topics related to gender, cultural, and social class groups, and each article in this special issue makes an important and unique contribution to this growing body of literature. It is particularly noteworthy to highlight the specific focus of several of these articles, which allows us to gain additional knowledge of the career development of culturally diverse subgroups that have received little attention in the literature: Vietnamese Americans, Appalachians, and transgender individuals.

In the first article, Patel, Salahuddin and O'Brien (2008) use Bonfenbrenner's ecological model to examine the effects of several individual, familial, peer, and social factors on the career decision-making self-efficacy of a sample of Vietnamese adolescents. Collectively, the measured variables accounted for 36% of the variance of career decision-making self-efficacy. The authors provide suggestions for career counseling practice with Vietnamese youth in light of their findings.

Next, Bennett (2008) presents a framework for applying social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000) to the career development of Appalachians. Specifically, Bennett highlights factors in Appalachian culture that can serve as either proximal or distal contextual factors within the SCCT model, and she provides recommendations for culturally sensitive career counseling practice and future research with Appalachian samples based on her review.

The third article, by Scott and Ciani (2008), reports the effects of a career exploration course on a sample of college men and women's career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational identity. The authors found that students' career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational identity were enhanced after completing the course, and women's self-efficacy for career planning and problem solving was significantly higher than their peers following the course. Scott and Ciani highlight implications for career decision-making self-efficacy interventions.

O'Neil, McWhirter, and Cerezo (2008) provide a much needed and highly practical introduction on transgender career development. These authors review the transgender vocational research and present an overview of the career and workplace issues experienced by transgender individuals in the United States. The authors include case vignettes and provide several suggestions for providing culturally sensitive career counseling with transgender individuals.

Finally, Shapiro, Ingols, and Blake-Beard (2008) offer a contemporary perspective on women's career development for organizations that is person-friendly. These authors challenge the use of outdated paradigms in industries that have compared women to their male counterparts and provide an overview of societal and organizational trends that are impacting this shift from a pejorative to a more positive perspective.

As we continue to strive toward providing culturally competent and effective career counseling services to the diverse students and adults with whom we work, more empirical and conceptual studies that address diversity issues in career development are needed. This special issue provides essential information for career practitioners and highlights the importance of attending to the career issues of specific diverse subgroups in our society to better understand and to appreciate the unique factors that may affect their career decision-making and career goals.

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