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The implications fof cultural diversity constitute one of the most critical issues facing the United States today. Census data show rapid increases in nonwhite populations, a vast reserve of human potential that makes a multicultural focus imperative for career

education and development (Locke and Parker 1991). What is meant by a multicultural perspective? Wurzel (1984) defines it as a critical and reflective understanding of oneself and others in historical and cultural contexts, an awareness of both differences and human similarities. For career educators and counselors, it means infusing practice with an awareness of their own personal and cultural background and experiences as well as those of their students or clients.

Self-concept and identity are crucial to career development. Cultural values and beliefs have great influence on the formation of self-concept; therefore, effective career development must take culture into account (Rifenbary 1991). The purpose of multicultural career education and development is to foster positive self-concepts and career choices regardless of cultural background, encourage understanding of the contributions of all cultural groups, and develop effective intercultural communication skills. This ERIC DIGEST examines how career education and development can respond to the cultural diversity of school and workplace.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

World view--the attitudes, values, opinions, and beliefs with which a person perceives the world--is influenced by cultural heritage and life experiences. Locke and Parker (1991) explain how different combinations of Locus of Control (LC) and Locus of Responsibility (LR) affect the formation of world view. Four combinations are as follows: (1) Internal LC-Internal LR--feelings of high personal control and personal attributions of success or failure; (2) External LC-Internal LR--acceptance of the dominant culture's definition of self-responsibility; (3) External LC-External LR--feelings of a lack of both control and responsibility; and (4) Internal LC-External LR--belief in individual efficacy but perceptions of external barriers to action.

The category that corresponds with an individual's world view derives from his/her cultural background as well as the historical, social, and economic experience of that cultural group. This is the context in which students will attempt to act on their career choices (ibid.). One of the dangers of multiculturalism is thinking that all members of a group share identical characteristics. However, cultural awareness must begin with understanding of such differences as world view, bearing in mind that people are a complex product of gender, ethnicity, and individuality (Gainor and Forrest 1991).

Another dimension of difference is nonverbal communication styles. Interpretations of words, gestures, spatial and temporal relationships, and touch can vary among groups (Herring 1985). Other values and perspectives on which groups may differ are as follows: cause and effect, holistic versus linear thinking, competition versus harmony, long- versus short-term goals, view of the teacher or counselor as authority or facilitator, collectivism versus individualism, degree of tolerance for ambiguity, assertiveness versus restraint, and authoritarian versus democratic family structures (Leong 1991;

Rifenbary 1991; Wurzel 1984). According to Herring (1985), intercultural communication means the ability to approximate another person's meanings, without necessarily agreeing with them. A culturally effective career educator has a wide repertoire of skills to interpret the world views and communication styles of students and to select the best strategies and techniques to help them.

How does culture affect career development? An El Paso, Texas, project provides an example. Hispanic females have high dropout rates and the lowest college attendance rate of any ethnic population (Tinajero, Gonzalez, and Dick 1991). The alienation of many Latinas from school stems from lack of role models and counseling, stereotypes in curriculum, and low teacher expectations. Mothers are a strong influence, but many mothers have low educational levels and lower expectations for their daughters (ibid.). The Mother-Daughter Program jointly operated by the University of Texas, the YWCA, and El Paso School District builds on the strong maternal influence. Sixth-grade girls and their mothers participate in a program designed to acquaint them with careers and college, raise aspirations, introduce them to Hispanic female role models, and help mothers to be role models. The program targets sixth-graders because it is felt that the pre-high school period is a critical time before girls conform to cultural norms and restrict their own options. Program activities include campus tours, career day, community service projects, awards ceremonies, and summer camp, a 2-day immersion in campus life. An important factor in the program's success is respect for the participants' language (using bilingual materials) and cultural traits.

TECHNIQUES FOR MULTICULTURAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A key to effective career education and development for diverse groups is the sensitivity and awareness of educators and counselors. Locke and Parker (1991) describe the cross-cultural awareness continuum, which educators and counselors can use to gauge their growth in intercultural competence, a lifelong, ongoing process. The levels of the continuum are as follows:

--Self-awareness

--Awareness of one's own culture

--Awareness of racism, sexism, and poverty

--Awareness of individual differences

--Awareness of other cultures

--Awareness of diversity

--Career education skills/techniques

Culturally skilled career counselors or educators are aware of their own ethnicity and personal prejudices, have knowledge and understanding of culturally diverse groups, and have knowledge of culturally relevant strategies, skills, materials, and resources (Rifenbary 1991).

Examples of a secondary and a postsecondary program illustrate ways of integrating multicultural techniques. The Iowa Department of Public Instruction's (1986) approach to secondary multicultural career education begins with the premise that students must see themselves reflected in the curriculum and must see the potential for themselves in various careers. The curriculum has five parts: (1) self-concept (including race, sex, national origin, and physical condition); (2) understanding of the world of work; (3) understanding of the contributions of all groups to society; (4) commonalities of the human race, uniqueness of individuals and cultural groups; and (5) interpersonal and intergroup communication. The Iowa curriculum includes a self-evaluation checklist to assess the following aspects of schools and programs:

--Diverse role models on staff

--Diverse student enrollments across courses and curricula

--Multicultural, nonsexist content integrated into curriculum philosophy, goals, objectives, and evaluation

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--Instructional materials representative of cultural diversity and gender

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--Culturally aware teaching strategies, behavior, and attitudes

Case Western Reserve University's Minority Career Awareness Program addresses three factors considered important in minority career development: friendly atmosphere, leadership opportunities, and a sense of success (Barnard, Burney, and Hurley 1990). The program features the student-run Careers Unlimited Corporation (CUC), which sponsors workshops that provide interaction with minority professionals. The CUC simulates workplace situations, enabling students to develop and test leadership abilities in a supportive environment, receive feedback on interpersonal skills, and learn about organizational dynamics.

The following strategies synthesize from a number of sources some approaches to multicultural career education/development:

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--Teachers and counselors should establish a climate of acceptance, have high expectations for student achievement, and foster positive self-concepts and cultural identity. Gainor and Forrest (1991) consider it important to assess the strengths of the multiple parts of self-concept: psychophysiological, ethnic/cultural, and individual.

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--A cultural group should not be thought of as homogeneous. For example, Asians are composed of many different subgroups (Lee and Richardson 1991). Native American differences appear among tribes, in urban and rural environments, and intergenerationally (ibid.). Teachers should strive for a balanced view of students as individuals and group members (Locke and Parker 1991).

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--Curriculum materials should be representative of all groups in a wide range of careers.

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--Bilingualism should be valued and students' language and culture incorporated in instruction. Students should be helped to learn the difference between feelings of superiority and pride in one's heritage (Locke and Parker 1991). Reflective teaching

practices (Wurzel 1984) and sharing of the teacher's own ethnicity and background (Rifenbary 1991) can foster a sense of community.

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--Differences in communication styles, learning styles, and decision-making styles should be assessed and appropriate teaching and counseling methods selected (Herring 1985; Leong 1991; Rifenbary 1991).

ISSUES IN A MULTICULTURAL APPROACH

Although a goal of career development is empowering people to change their lives, a focus solely on individual competence ignores the effects of external forces. Teachers and counselors are encouraged to be advocates for students by recognizing problems that are systemic rather than individual (Rifenbary 1991). Acting as change agents, they can seek commitment from administrators for a multicultural perspective, examine institutional practices and the values they represent, and question the assumed universality of theories, methods, and instruments used in career development.
Lee and Richardson (1991) recognize the potential of counselors as systemic change agents but identify some concerns about an overbroad definition of multiculturalism and the potential for a new kind of racism by overemphasis on differences. They present the following considerations for a multicultural approach:

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--The importance of a group's history, the way its perspective is derived from exclusion from power

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--The level of ethnic identity and acculturation

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--Influence of family, sex role socialization, and religion

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--The way a group has been named or labeled

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--Some groups' traditional mistrust of counseling and education as tools of social control

Locke and Parker (1991) conclude that system commitment to meaningful career education, a belief that students can learn and want to learn, and educators and counselors who value the worth and dignity of all students are the keys to successful multicultural career development.

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