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COUNSELING AND  
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SERVICES

THE EFFECT OF SELF-DIRECTEDNESS ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF  
MEDICAL STUDENTS (143 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to determine if self-directed or other-directed status is related to the success with which individuals enacted career choices and if this status varied by gender, ethnicity, or parental occupation. The literature indicates that the construct of "other-directed versus self-directed career choice" has existed for quite some time. The current focus of developmental and vocational psychologists and counselors has made them question the relevance of this construct for contemporary American society. Some researchers suggest that the construct includes a Western cultural bias, in that it reduces the effectiveness of career counseling for certain people and ethnic groups, especially those that may be characterized as allocentric and collectivistic. This longitudinal study utilized a logistic regression analysis to examine the construct of "self-directed versus other-directed career choice" as measured by the Thematic Apperception Test. The sample consisted of 433 BS/MD medical students of which 53.1% were ethnic minorities and 46.9% were Caucasian. The findings suggest that self-directedness or other-directedness was not predictive of career choice success or failure for these students. Ethnicity, however, accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance in predicting medical school success. Ethnicity increased prediction rates such that if one was Indian-Pakistani the success rate was increased 41.7% over Caucasian and if one was

Asian the success rate compared to Caucasian decreased 14.2%. Individual ethnicity, therefore, was the best predictor of career choice success. These results led to the conclusion that the ethnicity of medical students, specifically those of Indian-Pakistani and Asian students, relates to medical school success and lack of success for this sample.