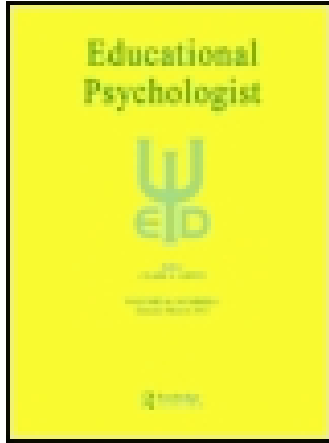


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The Schooling of Ethnic Minority Children: Commentary

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This commentary highlights conceptual and methodological concerns related to the study of the schooling of ethnic minority children as illustrated in this special issue. The first concern is that researchers should recognize cultural biases in the development of research on populations of color. Another suggestion is to examine diversity within an ethnic group and limit ethnic group comparisons, which should be used when there are strong theoretical grounds. Third, processes pertaining to ethnic minority cultures should be integrated with those of normative development. Fourth, ethnic and cultural factors should be examined in multiple settings. A fifth common theme is that there is a need to balance the focus on risks and problems with attention to strengths and protective factors. Finally, outcomes other than school achievement should be examined. This commentary also offers suggestions for future research.

As noted by many scholars (e.g., Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Graham, 1992; McLoyd, 1991; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990), the theoretical and methodological approaches of prior research have provided limited information about the normative development and experiences of individuals of color. Although several conceptual approaches and research designs have been used to understand the schooling of ethnic minority children, the most common approach focused on ethnic group differences in outcomes, such as school achievement, academic motivation, and school misbehaviors (e.g., Davenport, 1998; Hall, Davis, Bolen, & Chia, 1999; Powers & Wagner, 1983; Ramirez, Taylor, & Petersen, 1971; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Numerous other studies examined ethnic group differences in the correlates of various developmental outcomes, such as parenting style and peer support for achievement (e.g., Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990). Finally, some researchers investigated whether a single theoretical model was supported by data from different ethnic populations (e.g., Castro, Maddahian, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1987; Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Flannery, 1995; Wong, 1990).

In these comparative studies, ethnicity was examined only in terms of ethnic group differences in outcomes and correlations. Moreover, many of these comparative studies focused on the comparison between White children and children of color (Graham, 1992; McLoyd, 1991). Not only does a comparative framework between Whites and ethnic minorities increase the possibility of cultural bias, but studying only ethnic group differences also provides limited understanding of the processes underlying achievement-related outcomes for ethnic minority children. Consequently, there is a great need for the development of theories, empirical studies, and research methods that advance our understanding of diverse populations in culturally sensitive ways.

The collection of articles in this special issue provide direction for advancing the state of research on the schooling of populations of color. The articles in this special issue illuminate several conceptual and empirical themes that are important for researchers to consider and adopt to improve theories and research with children of color. The first critical issue is that researchers should recognize their own cultural biases and be sensitive to the cultures of the participants in their studies to develop more sound, comprehensive theories and research. Another idea presented in these four articles is that comparisons between ethnic minority groups and White children should only be used with careful consideration and strong theoretical grounding. The third is that influences and

processes pertaining to ethnic minority cultures should be integrated with normative developmental influences and processes. Another tenet common to the articles presented is that processes and influences associated with ethnic minority cultures should be examined in multiple settings to determine the influences of their interplay on the child. A fifth theme in these articles is that there should be a balance between a focus on risks and problems and attention to strengths and protective factors. Another shared principle is that outcomes other than school achievement should be examined.

Each of these themes are critical conceptual issues and methodological concerns that researchers should examine in developing meaningful theories and culturally sensitive research for studying schooling and ethnic minority children. In addition to discussing how the authors of the articles in this special issue effectively handled these issues, this commentary also offers suggestions for future research, which follow from the ideas and examples given in the four articles.

CULTURAL BIAS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Very often, scholars studying people of color (even those who are “of color”) believe that it is the research participants whose lives are governed by culture, assuming that the scientific perspective is somehow representative of a greater truth (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Indeed, the research questions, methods, and hypotheses that guide research are all products of how the researcher views the world (Banks, 1998). For instance, theories of normative development are often based on White, middle-class, cultural perspectives (Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, & Harpalani, 2001). Moreover, these foundational aspects of research oftentimes are rooted in cultural stereotypes. By mistaking stereotypes and myths for truth, researchers may overlook subtle or counterintuitive explanations for behavior in people of color.

An example of cultural bias in research is the use of a deficit model to guide research questions and methodology and to interpret results. A deficit model is one in which one group (most often the minority group) is implicitly or explicitly compared to White, middle-class participants; in the deficit model, any differences between groups are considered to be a deviation from the “White norm” and are consequently viewed as deficits. Comparative research designs are a common way of explicitly making these negative comparisons. Implicit comparisons between Whites and ethnic minorities can also be made by using tests that were normed on White middle-class samples (McLoyd, 1991) or by interpreting results with European American norms and cultures as a reference point. Consequently, one of the pitfalls of failing to examine the cultural biases of the deficit model, as well as other culturally biased frameworks, is that researchers may accept results that are in line with their stereotypes without exploring alternative interpretations.

Another way that cultural insensitivity and cultural biases are played out in research is when researchers infer that certain behaviors are rooted in negative or maladaptive cultural processes without empirically testing those hypotheses (Phinney & Landin, 1998; Spencer et al., 2001). Classic examples of these inferred ethnic correlates are the doll studies that purported that African American children’s choice of dolls was reflective of their self-hatred and preference for Whites. However, when children’s choices of dolls were linked to empirical measures of self-concept, there was no association (Cross, 1991). Another example is that one study (i.e., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and lots of anecdotal evidence have led many researchers to believe that African American students devalue education and that African American students who do well in school are considered “acting White” by their peers. Moreover, researchers also assume that students underachieve to be socially accepted. This theory has been accepted, despite the absence of strong empirical support (Cook & Ludwig, 1998). Cook and Ludwig, for instance, found that high-achieving African American students feel as popular, and in some cases more popular, than their lower achieving peers. Spencer et al. (2001) also demonstrated that having an Afrocentric identity, rather than a Eurocentric identity as implied by the acting White hypothesis, is related to high achievement in African American students.

The articles presented in this special issue provide several strategies for improving the cultural sensitivity of research on the education of ethnic minority children. One strategy for avoiding such bias is combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. As noted by Okagaki (2001) and Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001), many cultural influences and processes are tacit beliefs, values, and norms. Because these cultural processes are often difficult to capture with one methodology, researchers should use a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Gallimore and Goldenberg, for instance, used quantitative methods to obtain a general overview of 121 Latino girls and boys in two school districts, and they used qualitative approaches to look in greater depth at parents’ cultural beliefs about literacy in about one fourth of the survey sample. The survey methods provided information regarding these Latino families’ beliefs, values, and practices in the home, such as parents’ educational aspirations for the child, parents’ religious beliefs, and literacy activities in the home. The longitudinal case studies illuminated the complexities of the factors that shape parents’ cultural beliefs. For example, in one of the case studies, the mother had a ninth-grade education, but she was very religious. Her religious beliefs led her to create many home activities that integrated religion and literacy. It would have been difficult to use only quantitative methods to adequately capture the complexity of this mother’s cultural beliefs.

Research by Okagaki (2001) and Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin (2001) similarly shows how others can use available methodological tools to explore the complexities in the schooling of ethnic minority children. Many researchers have

assumed that African American and Latino families place little value on school. These conclusions, however, are reached not because of what members of these families are saying, but because their behavior and attitudes differ from those of White middle-class families. Okagaki and Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) noted, for instance, that when ethnic minority parents are actually asked about their aspirations and expectations for their children's educational attainment, they report wanting and expecting their children to go to college. However, parents of certain ethnic minority groups feel less able to help their child with homework because of language barriers (Okagaki, 2001). Other parents struggle with using learning materials that are provided by teachers but that do not coincide with their beliefs about how children learn best (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin also noted that parents are not the sole influences on children. Teachers and their perceptions of children's potential can also influence the learning of children of color. Each of these examples shows how well-executed research can help researchers move beyond stereotypes to create meaningful and valid models of schooling in ethnic minority families.

Another way to maintain cultural sensitivity in research with students of color is to use an emic approach in which processes are examined from an insider's perspective. There are a number of ways of achieving this. One way is by including indigenous informants or consultants (Marin & Marin, 1991), individuals who live in the community of interest who can assist researchers in planning and designing research questions and hypotheses and research protocols that reflect the experiences of the study group. Indigenous informants can also help researchers to frame results in the social and cultural context of the participants. Collaboration with indigenous researchers can also be beneficial in design and interpretation (McLoyd, 1998). Researchers, however, should be cautious of assuming that because an individual grew up in a particular environment that he or she is an indigenous insider. In many ways, education and assimilation can lead to a status as an indigenous outsider (Banks, 1998). Another way to gain an insider's perspective or "voice" is to use qualitative data as Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) do. Use of qualitative data allows the researcher to uncover counterintuitive or subtle aspects of the ethnic minority student's culture (Hines, 1993).

Furthermore, researchers must be sensitive to the ways in which culture influences interpretation and responses to survey and interview protocols. Specifically, investigators must examine whether constructs and measures used in studies with ethnic minority children are valid and have conceptually, linguistically, and psychometrically equivalent meanings for different groups of children and adolescents (Knight & Hill, 1998; Marin & Marin, 1991). To begin, they can do this by conducting pilot studies and talking to knowledgeable informants in the community or school. In addition, when researchers are using scales that have been normed, it is essential to know the characteristics of the referent population. As for determining whether scales and other measures have

equivalent meanings across groups, qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, have proven useful. In addition, a number of statistical tools including item response theory, comparison of correlation patterns, and confirmatory factor analysis can be used to compare the psychometric properties of the measures across groups (Knight & Hill, 1998; Long, 1983).

Culturally sensitive (and therefore more ecologically valid) research begins with an acknowledgment of biases and personal stereotypes. Beyond that, researchers have a number of tools available to help them to create stronger models reflecting the school experiences of ethnic minority children. This section highlights the value of (a) going beyond stereotypes and exploring alternative examples; (b) combining qualitative and quantitative methods to give voice to participants and frame data; (c) explicit testing of theory, not inferring cultural underpinnings of behavior; (d) using an emic approach to studying populations of color; and (e) examining linguistic, conceptual, and psychometric equivalence of measurement tools.

COMPARISONS WITHIN AN ETHNIC GROUP

Another strategy for advancing the research on ethnic minority children's schooling experiences is to examine diversity within an ethnic group. The articles in this special issue illustrate that within-group differences are important to consider in studying the schooling experiences of ethnic minority children. In prior research, ethnic minority children were often compared to White children (McLoyd, 1991). This type of framework encourages the view that Whites are the normative model, which can lead to erroneous conclusions that those who are different from the standard bearers (i.e., Whites) are deficient in some way. Moreover, such comparative research leads to little information regarding the processes associated with certain outcomes (McLoyd, 1998). In addition, Whites and each ethnic minority group have different political, cultural, and economic histories in this country and are viewed and treated differently by the larger society. These macro level differences contribute to the fact that comparisons between ethnic minorities and Whites provide limited information about the schooling experiences of ethnic minorities.

The articles in this special issue provide evidence that comparisons within an ethnic or racial group reveal more about a particular phenomenon than simple majority-minority comparisons. For example, Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin (2001) compared the educational goal setting of children in a Head Start program to those who were not in a Head Start program. This comparative study shows that an 8-week program was not sufficient to counteract the negative effects of poverty and the cultural biases in schools. Because this study used a matched sample of African American children, the fo-

cus of the study is on the difference in the educational experiences of the children. In contrast, if the study compared the effects of Head Start for White and African American children, there would be greater attention to the children's ethnic group. Moreover, looking at within-group differences also decreases the inclination to conclude that African Americans are doing poorly in school because they have deficient pre-school skills.

Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) also illuminated the importance of understanding within-group differences instead of comparing Whites and ethnic minorities. They enumerated several familial factors that contribute to Latino parents' use of literacy in the home, and they found that subgroup differences in parents' religious beliefs, parental education prior to immigration, and parents' exposure to alternative cultural practices shaped parents' use of literacy in the home. In addition, when they compared the literacy skills of Latino children whose parents received conventional worksheets to children whose parents received Spanish language books, they found that use of the Spanish storybooks did not increase the children's literacy scores, but use of the phonics worksheets did. Given such findings, it is unlikely that researchers would conclude that the Latino families cannot effectively teach their children to read. Rather, the study emphasized variability of experience within the sample, decreasing the tendency to view members of ethnic minority groups as monolithic. In contrast, comparison of Latino families and White families would increase the likelihood of researchers interpreting the results in terms of Latino families' deficits.

In addition to these examples, future research should compare children from different school and community contexts. Previous research suggests that racial and socioeconomic compositions of schools and neighborhoods influence the schooling experiences of children and adolescents of color (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993; Lee & Bryk, 1989). Research should also try to include variability in racial composition within communities of different socioeconomic status. For example, in San Francisco there are many schools in which the majority of the students are Chinese American. A few of these schools include mostly Chinese American students who are from financially prosperous Chinese American neighborhoods. In other schools, the majority of Chinese American students are from Chinatown, where families of four live in one small room. In addition, there are those Chinese American students who are attending schools where the majority of Chinese Americans are from affluent White communities. It is plausible that the specific configuration of the schools and neighborhoods, based on racial and socioeconomic composition, influences the relation between cultural processes and ethnic minority students' schooling experiences.

Although ethnic-comparative studies have been assailed by researchers because of the limitations they impose on our understanding of process and culture, they are not without

value (Azibo, 1992; McLoyd, 1998). They must, however, be used only when one's theory and goal deem them valid. One special case is when researchers are examining differences in prevalence of health problems or access to resources (Azibo, 1992). Ethnic comparisons may also serve as a beginning point for studying important phenomena, but researchers should be cautious in viewing such comparisons as an end within themselves (McLoyd, 1991). Comparative models may also be used to refine scholars' understanding of certain issues as in the research cited by Okagaki (2001). In one study, large heterogeneous ethnic groupings were disaggregated by comparing Cambodian, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Mexican immigrants with European Americans and Mexican Americans (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1992, as cited in Okagaki, 2001). This technique avoided the view that European Americans are the standard bearers and instead focused on issues of immigration status, assimilation, and immigrant type (voluntary vs. involuntary).

INTEGRATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY CULTURE AND NORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT

A third way that researchers can cultivate better theories about ethnic minority children is to merge research and theories on cultural-ecological processes and influences with research and theories on processes associated with normative development. In general, prior research on ethnic minority children and adolescents has not been linked to the larger literature on child development and education (Spencer, 1995; Spencer et al., 2001). On the one hand, some studies examine the psychological development of children and adolescents of color without consideration of influences and situations pertaining to the children's ethnic minority culture, such as racial socialization and experiences of discrimination, which may be critical to their development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Phinney & Landin, 1998). Other studies focus only on issues and constructs related to ethnic minority culture and ignore normative developmental processes (e.g., puberty, cognitive development, and identity development), which are important in the development of all children. The most comprehensive strategy would be to jointly examine normative and culture-specific processes in a single study.

The articles in this special issue are based on coherent frameworks in which constructs that examine processes and influences pertaining to ethnic minority culture are linked with normative developmental issues and experiences. For instance, Okagaki (2001) conceptualized school learning as a combination of cultural influences and normative development. She explained that all children are potentially resistant to school because of the compulsory nature of education, the organization of classroom activities, and public demonstration of knowledge. For ethnic minority children, there are additional factors, such as cultural dissonance between school

norms and norms of the child's ethnic culture, that increase the likelihood that they would show resistance to school. Most accounts of resistance to school, however, focus on ethnic minority samples in a way that "racializes" an otherwise normative event. Okagaki's research does, however, point to the fact that understanding the cultural constraints that are specific to certain ethnic groups also adds to our understanding of the issue. To understand ethnic minority children's resistance to school, one must consider cultural factors pertaining to the child's ethnic minority culture and general factors that influence all children's perceptions of school.

Spencer (1999, as cited in Spencer et al., 2001) provided a second example to illuminate the importance of simultaneously examining cultural issues and developmental status. They noted that young children are relatively unaffected by racism because of their young developmental status; they are too egocentric to "really experience racism" (p. 22). This finding highlights that ethnic phenomena and processes have different meanings and influences at different ages.

Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) also showed a relation between children's ethnic minority culture and normative developmental phenomena. Their approach to integration is to use general conceptual constructs, which can be applied to diverse areas of research, to guide their understanding of Latino children's early literacy skills. Gallimore and Goldenberg demonstrated how the conceptual tools of "cultural models" and "cultural settings" can be used to study the influence of Latino children's home culture on their literacy development. They illustrated how Latino parents' cultural models of literacy development constrained the age at which the child first learns to read, the process the child uses to learn to read, and parents' definitions of academic success.

Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) also showed that the same constructs of cultural models and cultural settings can be used to study school reform. The advantage of using the same conceptual tools across studies is that these tools permit researchers to determine if parallel processes are taking place in apparently different arenas of research. Parallel to the fact that research on ethnic minority children has not been integrated with the larger literature on child development, the research on ethnic minority children has not been merged with research on school reform, despite the fact that proposals for school reform often are directed toward schools in which there are large populations of color. Gallimore and Goldenberg's use of the same conceptual tools to study the schooling of ethnic minority children and school reform can bridge the separation of research on ethnic minority students from research on school reform. For instance, interventions designed to improve Latino children's literacy skills are dependent on the congruence between the parents' cultural models of literacy and the teachers' cultural models. Similarly, school improvement efforts are hindered when teachers' cultural models of teaching are different from those of researchers and policymakers; for school reform to work,

reculturing is critical, so that teachers' cultural models of teaching shift to those that are implicit in school reform. We see that parallel processes are taking place in different situations. The use of similar conceptual tools and theories can provide the bridge to disconnected areas of research.

In addition to the concepts of cultural models and cultural settings, there are other general theoretical frameworks available in the larger field of psychology and education that can potentially guide the development of theoretical models that merge cultural-ecological processes with normative developmental phenomena (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Examples from child development include Bronfenbrenner's (1975) ecological model, the framework of developmental risks and protective factors (Jessor, Van Den Bos, Vanderryn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995), Sameroff's (1975) transactional model, and Eccles et al.'s (1993) person-environment-stage fit model. These general theoretical frameworks do not explicitly tell researchers the specific relations between ethnic minority culture and developmental issues. Instead, these general theories are tools that can guide the development of theoretical models, in which processes pertaining to ethnic minority culture can be integrated with processes of normative development.

In integrating cultural processes with processes of normative development, researchers should consider using a longitudinal design. In comparison to studies with a cross-sectional design, longitudinal studies provide multiple data points to make better generalizations about the phenomenon under study. In addition, research with a longitudinal design affords a dynamic view of the relations between cultural processes and influences and children's normative development. Studies with longitudinal designs can also furnish data about how the cultural processes and influences in children's settings shift over time. For example, Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin (2001) noted the changes in the larger community's race relations and attitudes toward Head Start and the potential influences these community changes had on African American children's academic goal setting. Moreover, the same processes may lead to different results at different times across the lifespan for the same individual. Longitudinal designs can assist researchers in developing conceptual frameworks that examine both cultural-ecological and developmental facets of ethnic minority children's schooling experiences.

INTERPLAY AMONG MULTIPLE CONTEXTS

To advance theories about the schooling experiences of ethnic minorities, researchers should also examine the interplay of cultural influences in different contexts. All children are influenced by multiple ecologies including family, peers, school, neighborhood, media, and larger society. Culture and its related processes are also played out in these multiple set-

tings. Unlike prior research that primarily focused on the family, and more recently the peer group, as the main influence on ethnic minority children (Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001), the articles in this special issue focused on more than one sphere of influence. Neither family nor peer group is the sole influence on ethnic minorities' schooling experiences. As noted by Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin, schools, particularly teachers, also influence the long-term academic trajectories of ethnic minority students. They found that both parents and teachers contributed to children's early academic goal setting, which subsequently influenced their later goal setting.

Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin (2001) and Spencer et al. (2001) advocated that greater attention should be paid to the sociohistorical contexts in which students of color are developing. In the framework outlined by Spencer et al. (2001), Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory, the authors linked sociohistorical factors, developmental status, and psychological processes. They noted that the sociohistorical context, particularly the historical context of oppression, indirectly influences children's school experiences because the past racial context shapes the stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination that children experience in and out of school.

In addition to the fact that ethnic minority children's schooling experiences are directly and indirectly affected by families, schools, neighborhood, peers, and sociohistorical context, the synergy among these different subsystems influences the overall developmental trajectory of children of color. Much of the educational and developmental research indicates that similar influences in multiple settings have stronger impact than different influences in multiple settings (e.g., Eccles, Early, & Fraser, 1997; Mounts & Steinberg, 1995). Moreover, lack of synergy among different ecological settings can create conflict or difficulties for the child or adolescent, making it challenging for the child or adolescent to maintain his or her connections to these seemingly different "worlds" (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994).

Okagaki (2001) explained that differences in the norms of the classroom and the norms of the family can make it challenging for the child. If schools, however, address these differences, then children can better adjust to school. For example, when the classrooms of Hawaiian children were changed from whole class instruction and independent seatwork to small group learning based on peer learning, Hawaiian children's achievement increased because the culture of the classroom was now more similar to that of their home (Jordan, 1984, as cited in Okagaki, 2001). Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) showed that children who are taught literacy skills in the same manner at home and at school are more likely to be successful readers than those who experience discordance between home and school. When schools address parents' cultural beliefs about literacy, children benefit from this intervention. Other studies show that when schools attend to wait time, emphasis on cooperation versus competition and other implicit values and norms, the impediments to

children's full participation in the classroom are lifted (Tharp, 1989).

In addition to examining the congruence in norms between families and schools, it is important to look at congruence between families and peers, among different peer groups, and between the family and neighborhood. Some researchers have studied the messages that peers convey in school (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), and others have looked at parental socialization (Bowman & Howard, 1985), but few have explored the congruence between these different worlds. It may be the case that adolescents whose family and peer group consistently communicate that education is important for overcoming racist obstacles are at less academic risk than their counterparts, whose various worlds are communicating different messages. Future research should also explore coherence in achievement-related values and behaviors among students' different peer groups. The developmental literature shows that peer influence is not uniform across different types of peer groups, which include crowds, cliques, closest friends, and best friends (e.g., Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). This issue may be particularly relevant for high-achieving ethnic minority students in integrated schools, where they may have classroom peer groups that differ markedly from neighborhood or school-wide peer groups. Examining the continuities between the culture of the neighborhood and that of the child's family also warrants additional attention. When studying the influence of ethnicity on schooling, researchers should examine the extent to which each of these various settings is conveying dissimilar values, messages, or knowledge to the child.

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) is a multilevel statistical technique that can be used to examine influences among the multiple settings in which children develop. For example, HLM can be used to study the relation between school's and neighborhood's cultural influences and individual academic trajectories (Duncan & Raudenbush, 1999). As mentioned previously, research at the individual level of analysis has examined ethnic influences in terms of ethnic group differences. Parallel to this research, most of the research that used HLM to look at the influences of cultural contexts on academic outcomes has focused on variables, such as percentage of minorities in the school or neighborhood. To our knowledge, there are few studies that have used a multilevel modeling technique to examine the relation between cultural contexts and individual development. For instance, one could use HLM to determine whether the proportion of community members who hold racist beliefs is related to the quality of education for students of color in that community. Alternatively, one could examine the specific ways that different implementations of bilingual education affect literacy skills in two languages. Researchers should use multilevel modeling and mixed methodology to obtain different types of information about the interplay of cultural processes in multiple settings and its influence on ethnic minority children. Regardless of methodologies used, it is critical that researchers

find ways to capture the dynamic interplay among the multiple contexts of development as they are played out for children of color.

BALANCING NEGATIVES AND POSITIVES

It is also recommended that researchers attend to both positive and negative aspects of ethnic minorities' schooling experiences, as the articles in this issue have done. Spencer et al. (2001) lamented that much of the current literature on children of color focuses on negative adaptive processes (such as rejection of ethnic identity and criminal behavior) and "generally ignores the presence of protective factors and consequent resiliency indicative of many youth and their familial socializing contexts" (p. 22). Yet, a substantial number of ethnic minority children experience success in different domains of their lives, even some of those who live in adverse environments. Furthermore, students of color have many strengths, opportunities, and protective factors in their schools, families, peers, and neighborhoods. To paint a balanced and realistic picture of the school experiences of minority children, researchers should include a focus on the problems, risks, and negative outcomes as well as the equally important strengths, protective factors, and positive outcomes.

Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) demonstrated how researchers can present a balanced view of the experiences of students and families of color. Although they showed how certain "cultural models" held by Latino parents may be associated with fewer preliteracy skills at the start of kindergarten, they also noted that "cultural models are not straitjackets;" that "seemingly widely shared and endorsed cultural models ... do not necessarily produce invariant behavior" (p. 49). Few of the Latino homes in their sample had early literacy settings or shared literacy activities because of a belief that children cannot learn much before kindergarten. However, this cultural model did not fit perfectly for the entire sample. They provided the example of a Latino mother who was actively involved in a church. This involvement led to the introduction of numerous literacy activities within the house. Gallimore and Goldenberg also noted that parents with even modest levels of education prior to immigration engaged in more literacy activities at home and at work. These examples show just how important it is for researchers to go beyond simple models that only contain negative or risk factors.

Okagaki (2001) noted that cultural and situational factors may be sources of strength in the lives of children from certain ethnic groups. Although she showed that there is a certain degree of cultural discontinuity between the home lives and school environments of children of color, she also noted that such cultural discontinuity is not necessarily associated with school failure in all minority groups. Asian American families, for instance, tend to see few occupational alternatives to

those requiring a great deal of education. Therefore, many Asian Americans view school success as critical for occupational success and stability. In this way, many children of this ethnic group are protected from home-school cultural discontinuity by their perceptions of the function of education.

Spencer et al. (2001) focused on positive factors found in individuals within a particular ethnic group. In this case, they demonstrated that holding Afrocentric ethnic identities played a protective role against school failure and poor self-concept in a sample of African American children. Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin (2001) also noted that resources internal to the child, such as achievement motivation, were stronger in predicting educational goals than other variables, such as teacher evaluations and expectations. Although the fact remains that children of color are disproportionately exposed to negative influences such as living in poor and dangerous neighborhoods, having teachers with low expectations, and having parents who are poorly educated, research must also explicate the numerous positive factors available to these children, including having parents who strongly value education (as mentioned by Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001; Okagaki, 2001), personal displeasure at failure (as noted by Spencer et al., 2001), and high educational goals (as noted by Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001).

When the positive aspects of cultural influences and normative development are ignored, a biased and stereotypic view of ethnic minorities' lives may be portrayed. Recent research on the influences of peers on adolescent development serves as an example of the importance of integrating both risk and protective factors in a single model. The general literature on adolescent peer influences tells us that youth peer groups can facilitate prosocial values and activities, such as engagement in school, as well as encourage involvement in less socially desirable behaviors, such as truancy (e.g., Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1985). In contrast, research on ethnic minority peer groups has tended to study topics such as the pressures that ethnic minority peers place on individuals to disengage from school (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). There are few studies that have looked at the ways that ethnic minority peer groups mentor and tutor individuals with academic problems, help individuals cope with ethnically devaluating experiences at school, and encourage high academic goals. Perhaps if there was more research on ethnic minority peer groups as prosocial influences, then the stereotypes about ethnic minority peer groups would dissipate.

Highlighting the protective resources of students of color in research programs serves several functions. First, integration of risks, problems, and negative outcomes with strengths, opportunities, protective factors, and positive outcomes in a single coherent framework provides a more accurate and comprehensive view of the development of children of color. Second, knowledge of protective resources can play a critical role in teacher training programs, helping teachers to become a source of positive support (Spencer et al., 2001).

Third, this information can be used to design effective interventions for less successful students.

MOVING BEYOND GRADES AND TEST SCORES

A comprehensive portrayal of ethnic minorities' schooling experience also requires attention to multiple aspects of development. The articles presented in this special issue provide a holistic view of the academic well-being of children of color by incorporating achievement-related outcomes that move beyond traditional indicators, such as grades and standardized test scores. The studies presented include achievement-related outcomes such as academic self-esteem, displeasure at failure and misbehavior in school (Spencer et al., 2001), school engagement, adjustment to school, achievement motivation (Okagaki, 2001), educational goal setting, independence (Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001), and the establishment and maintenance of literacy activities in the home (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Many of these outcomes are indicators of children's motivational orientation, which is a strong predictor of grades and test scores (Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001).

Although grades and test scores are used by teachers and school administrators to make important educational decisions (e.g., tracking, retention), they are narrow "snap shot" views of students' educational experiences. Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin (2001) explained that "educational goal setting would be the single best indicator of the affective quality of prior school experience and a transitional pivot between all schooling ... and social mobility" (p. 32). It is these goals, not simply previous performance, that lead a child to pursue higher education. In fact, Slaughter-Defoe and Rubin's data on sample attrition at the third timepoint suggest that school dropout did not occur most often in students with poor academic records, but in those who were least engaged in school.

Other than the indicators mentioned by the authors in this special issue, researchers should look at variables that have been examined with mainly White middle-class populations of students, such as attributions, goal orientations, motivational strategies, problem-solving strategies, help-seeking behaviors, and beliefs about knowledge (Dweck, 1986; Graham, 1991; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Okagaki, 2001; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). For instance, looking at cultural influences in causal attributions or in the meaning of effort would provide more useful data about the motivation patterns and learning of ethnic minority students than examining only school achievement (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Graham, 1997). Gallimore and Goldenberg's (2001) research illustrated that ethnic minority cultures influence many subtle aspects of individuals' implicit beliefs and values that shape behaviors. They show the importance of understanding these different beliefs, the orga-

nization of these beliefs, and the interrelation of one belief to the others.

In addition to examining a number of achievement-related behaviors and beliefs when studying the schooling of minority children, it is important to include other psychological outcomes. Children's and adolescents' development occurs across many different psychological domains, and these facets of development are interrelated. Research indicates that there is comorbidity among academic and mental health problems, where a child or adolescent is experiencing difficulties in multiple areas of their lives (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998). Other research indicates that children who have difficulty making friends also experience problems in school and feel socioemotional distress (e.g., Asher & Coie, 1990; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). For instance, when adolescents experience ethnic discrimination at school, they are likely to feel depressed, alienated, and angry, and these emotions occur simultaneously with acting out in school and doing poorly in school (Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). By incorporating multiple indicators of psychological well-being in empirical studies, researchers create a holistic perspective of the schooling experiences of ethnic minority children.

SUMMARY

The commentary on this special issue about the schooling of ethnic minority students was aimed at delineating several common conceptual themes and methodological issues addressed in these four articles. The collection of articles presented here provides researchers with examples of how to conduct valid, culturally sensitive, comprehensive, and balanced research on children of color. In addition, we included suggestions for future research that developed out of these examples.

In reading the articles from this special issue, one overarching theme seems to abound. Children of color are complex individuals, living in dynamic environments, with multiple interacting social networks that influence their schooling experiences in a variety of ways. The authors of the articles in this special issue have used a variety of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological tools to capture some of this richness. Specifically, they were sensitive to subtle cultural processes; they used the comparative framework to look at diversity within an ethnic group instead of just comparing ethnic minorities to Whites; they integrated culture-specific processes with more normative developmental information; they studied ethnic minority students in a variety of settings and examined the interplay between settings; they balanced acknowledgment of risks with attention to strengths; and they used a variety of indicators of academic well-being.

The excellent scholarship of these studies naturally leads to several suggestions for future research. One of the suggestions is for researchers to think broadly about what is meant by context as it relates to ethnic minorities. For instance, stud-

ies could vary critical contextual variables such as school and neighborhood ethnic composition and socioeconomic status rather than studying a single subgroup from the same geographical area. A second suggestion for future research is a more complex examination of the interplay among members of different contextual groups (e.g., parents and peers, families and neighborhoods, and different peer groups). Of course to do this means use of certain statistical tools, such as HLM, which allows estimation of several levels of analysis in a single model. It was also suggested that longitudinal studies are needed to incorporate cultural and normative developmental information.

As our nation becomes more diverse, there will be a need for greater attention and sensitivity to the needs and cultures of students of color. To increase the effectiveness of interventions and the validity of research with these populations, we should follow the examples of the articles presented in this special issue. By doing so, we can develop theories and research designs that provide a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of ethnic minorities' schooling experiences.

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