

Triarchic Model of Minority Children's School Achievement

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Schools in the United States have attained greater and lesser degrees of success in providing educational experiences that facilitate the achievement of children of color. Although research from a variety of perspectives has provided a solid foundation for understanding the achievement and underachievement of children of color, much remains unknown in the understanding of the patterns of school achievement among minority children. In the Triarchic Model of School Achievement, the form and perceived function of school, the family's cultural norms and beliefs about education and development, and the characteristics of the child are considered as factors contributing to minority children's school achievement. It is argued that focusing on only one component provides limited understanding of the complex environment that contributes to minority children's school achievement.

Rocio is a bright-eyed, talkative, 5-year-old girl. Rocio's mother and father were born in the United States. Their parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico, and primarily speak Spanish. Her mother graduated from high school; her father completed the 10th grade. Rocio's grandmother looks after Rocio and her younger brother while her parents work. Rocio has learned to speak both English and Spanish at home. Prior to kindergarten, Rocio attended a head start preschool class for 6 months. Before she began kindergarten, Rocio could recognize many letters of the alphabet, count to 20, and reliably recognize basic colors. Her mother reads to her at night, and Rocio loves to look at books and pretend to read. Her father tells her to pay attention in school. He wants his children to do well in school so that they will not have to struggle working two jobs to support their families.

Rocio often sits next to Vannak, a quiet little boy from Cambodia. Vannak did not speak English when he began school. His mother completed 1 year of schooling in Cambodia. Vannak lives with his mother, younger sister, three adult relatives, and four young cousins. His mother wants him to study hard every day, but she knows very little about school. She does not know what is expected of Vannak in school. She believes that the school is responsible for seeing to it that Vannak does well at school.

Vannak and Rocio are just 2 of the nearly 17 million children of color whom we serve in our nation's public schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1997–1998). Their family cultures differ in many ways from the majority culture in the United States. However, by the end of their kindergarten year, both children would speak, with varying levels of expertise, two languages and would experience varying degrees of success in their abilities to negotiate the expectations of the school culture. In this article, I discuss the educational experiences of children of color in our country and introduce a theoretical model for understanding the school achievement of children of color.

Schools in the United States have attained greater and lesser degrees of success in providing educational experiences that facilitate the achievement of children of color (e.g., Humphreys, 1988; Miller, 1995; NCES, 1995a, 1995b; Oliver, Rodriguez, & Mickelson, 1985; Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Although research from a variety of perspectives has provided a solid foundation for understanding the achievement and underachievement of children of color, much remains unknown in our understanding of the patterns of school achievement among minority children (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Goldenberg, 1987; Laosa, 1982; Ogbu, 1992; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990; Tharp, 1989; Trueba, 1988; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993; Weisner, Gallimore, & Jordan, 1988). For example, why is it that some groups of minority children thrive in our schools and other groups of minority children are struggling? Why do seemingly minor changes in the social

construction of the classroom improve the educational outcomes for some underachieving minority children? Why are some immigrant, language-minority children able to thrive in American public schools even though the language and culture of the school differs from their home culture in significant ways? The answer to these questions is complex and has enormous implications for the education of all children in our nation's schools. In this article, I suggest that multiple factors contribute to minority children's school achievement and focus on the roles of the family, school, and student identity.

TRIARCHIC MODEL OF MINORITY CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

In the United States, we have been faced with the phenomenon that our schools have been more successful in facilitating the development of some groups of children than other groups. In the last 50 years of our history, we have witnessed incredible technological, scientific, and medical achievements. We stared at our televisions while a man walked on the moon. Antibiotics have improved the quality and prolonged the lengths of our lives. Radios, televisions, telephones, and now computers have changed the form, the amount, and the immediacy of our communication with one another. Despite these significant accomplishments, we have yet to find ways to create educational environments that support the achievement of all children in our country. Education, and particularly public education, is a complex and continually evolving challenge. Public education is embedded in the constantly changing economic, social, political, and technological zeitgeist, and as such, must constantly reinvent itself. The increasing reliance on technology in school coupled with differential home access to technology by students, changes in immigration trends, and welfare reform are but three examples of complex societal phenomena that challenge the ability of our schools to be responsive to diverse groups of students.

How can we best understand the school achievement of children of color? In this article, I argue that taking a more holistic approach—one that includes multiple factors that contribute to minority children's learning—will provide a more productive way of moving our country forward in educating all children. The Triarchic Model focuses on three of the major factors that contribute to variation in minority children's school achievement. First, we have to understand the ways in which the form and function of schooling support, or undermine, students' motivation for school achievement. Second, we need to identify the ways in which families contribute to children's academic performance. Third, children's social identities—the way they view themselves within our society in general and within the academic setting in particular—shape the way children approach and perform in school. In the model, we consider the importance of each of the factors separately and the ways in which the three factors inter-

twine with each other to facilitate and inhibit minority children's school achievement.

The Role of the School: Its Form and Perceived Function

The first component of the Triarchic Model focuses on the school. The structure of school and the perceived function of education by various groups within our society contribute to students' response to and motivation for schooling. This discussion is limited to the ways in which the nature of public education can foster or impede minority students' performance in school through students' motivation for learning. Other aspects of education (e.g., variation in the quality and type of pedagogical practices, variation in school expenditures) also contribute in significant ways to the underachievement of minority students (Miller, 1995; Moll & Diaz, 1993).

The form of school. Educational anthropologists have argued that the form or structure of education in our country has the potential to elicit resistance to school from all children, not just from minority children (e.g., Bossert, 1979; D'Amato, 1987, 1993; Jackson, 1968). Resistance to school has been observed in students who have traditionally been successful in school (Bossert, 1979; Schoem, 1982) and in students who traditionally have not been as successful in school (Dumont & Wax, 1976; Williams, 1981). Several factors contribute to children's resistance to schooling. For example, the compulsory nature of education, although not bad, does not necessarily evoke feelings of cooperation. Organization of classroom activities (e.g., whole class recitation) constrain teacher-student and student-student relationships in ways that are associated with frequency of reprimands, friendship formation among students, and determination of who receives attention and assistance from the teacher (Bossert, 1979). In addition, children are required to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge in public ways. When children must answer questions during class discussions, when examples of good work are displayed on classroom walls, and when awards are given for the best science projects, the best history reports, or the best essays, most children will find themselves in the undesirable position of not being the best (Bossert, 1979; D'Amato, 1993; Jackson, 1968). Such practices have the potential for evoking resistance to education from all children. But, as researchers have observed, differences between the behavioral norms of the classroom and the norms of the family culture make it especially difficult for children from some nonmajority groups to work within the classroom environment (e.g., D'Amato, 1993; Heath, 1983; Miller, 1995; Tharp, 1989).

There are abundant data showing that modest changes in instructional practices can facilitate the performance of underachieving children of color (e.g., Dumont & Wax, 1976;

Jordan, 1984; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vogt et al., 1993). These studies suggest that cultural differences between home and school interfere with some children's ability to adjust to the classroom and focus on learning. For example, one of the cultural adaptations that has been cited as improving native Hawaiian children's school achievement was changing from whole class instruction and independent seatwork to small group learning centers that facilitated peer assistance. Allowing children to work together created a classroom social organization that was more similar to native Hawaiian youngsters' outside-of-classroom social structure, a social organization that relied heavily on child-organized and child-initiated activities through sibling and friendship groups (Jordan, 1984; Vogt et al., 1993).¹ Researchers believed that greater congruence between school culture and home culture facilitated children's adjustment to school.

Another example of cultural modifications that facilitate children's adjustment to and participation in school has to do with the ways in which teachers and students communicate with each other. To facilitate student participation in classroom discussions, teachers need to attend to the sociolinguistic conventions of the local culture (Tharp, 1989). Increasing the amount of time that teachers wait for students to answer questions before moving on facilitated class participation in classrooms serving Navajo children whose custom was to expect a longer period of silence between speakers. The converse—a negative “wait” time that allows for student speech to overlap with teacher speech—increased class participation among Native Hawaiian children whose normal communication strategies included using overlapping speech as a way of showing interest in what someone was saying (White & Tharp, 1988, as cited by Tharp, 1989).

In a myriad of ways, discontinuity between the norms of the home and of the school can interfere with children's school learning. For example, sharing, cooperation, and primacy of group needs over individual needs are commonly held values among Native American peoples. These values are emphasized in such a way that competitive behavior is inhibited in certain situations (Sanders, 1987; Yates, 1987). Consequently, in mainstream schools, Native American children may be perceived as being unmotivated because of their unwillingness to compete. Differences in rules for speaking, listening, and turn taking in conversations may make it more difficult for Native American children to participate in classroom activities (Greenbaum, 1985; Sanders, 1987). For example, compared to other children, Choctaw children made more unsuccessful attempts to gain the floor, gazed more at peers while the teacher was talking to the class, engaged in more choral responses (where two or more students respond simultaneously or in a quick sequence), spoke individually

less often, and provided shorter utterances when responding individually (Greenbaum, 1985). Greenbaum suggested that the Choctaw children did not want to participate on an individual basis in classroom conversation (shorter and fewer utterances when speaking individually) and were attempting to identify with the group (choral responses and peer-directed gazing). Researchers argued that these types of differences between minority cultures and majority-culture classrooms may inhibit minority children's participation in classroom activities and interfere with their learning.

In sum, the form of education in our country can elicit resistance from all children, but it especially works against children whose cultural norms for behavior do not match the behavioral norms of the classroom. To understand minority children's school achievement, we must understand the ways in which the social organization of the classroom can help and hinder children's learning. We also must recognize that not all minority children have responded in the same way to cultural differences. Lack of congruence between home and school has not kept some minority children (e.g., children of Korean immigrants) from doing well in school. What leads to the dissolution of resistance among some children and, on the other hand, intensifies resistance among other groups of children? The answer lies in the perceived function of education.

The perceived function of education. In his classic book describing the ecological systems theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) wrote the following:

The scientifically relevant features of any environment include not only its objective properties but also the way in which these properties are perceived by the person in that environment. ... Very few of the external influences significantly affecting human behavior and development can be described solely in terms of objective physical conditions and events; the aspects of the environment that are most powerful in shaping the course of psychological growth are overwhelmingly those that have meaning to the person in a given situation. (p. 22)

In short, perception makes a difference. This section is an examination of the relation between motivation for school achievement and students' and parents' perceptions of the function of schooling. There are a plethora of data showing that most parents, regardless of race and ethnicity, believe that education is important (e.g., Okagaki & Frensch, 1998; Stevenson et al., 1990). Mickelson (1990) argued, however, that there is a distinction between the abstract belief that education is important and the concrete, pragmatic belief that education will benefit oneself. The critical belief is how necessary is a good education. What is the perceived function of education? In a survey of White and Black high school seniors, she found that pragmatic beliefs about the direct benefits of education, not the abstract value of education, were related to school achievement.

¹When referring to other research, I have adopted the terms the authors used to identify different ethnic or racial groups.

Steinberg, Dornbusch, et al. (1992) found that most adolescents—African American, Asian American, Latino, and European American—believed that if they received a good education they would be able to get the kind of job that they wanted. The strength of this belief did not differ across ethnic groups. The critical belief in this study had to do with the extent to which students believed they would do well without a good education. African American and Latino adolescents were more likely to believe that they could obtain the job they wanted without getting a good education. Asian American and European American students believed that a good education was, in essence, a prerequisite to obtaining the jobs they wanted. Steinberg, Dornbusch, et al. (1992) posited that if adolescents believe that a good education functions as the necessary preparation for a good job, then adolescents are more likely to work hard to achieve that education.

In an ethnographic study of high and low achieving students of Mexican descent, Matute-Bianchi (1986) observed that successful students of Mexican descent “expressed a strong belief in the linkage between doing well in school and in being a successful adult” (p. 243). The students reported that their parents would remind them to do well in school so that they would not have to take jobs as laborers on farms or as cannery workers. School was viewed as the vehicle leading to better paying jobs. Similarly, studies of other groups of Latino adolescents indicate that those who are doing well in school believe that education serves an important function. For example, education may be viewed as the primary means to improving the family’s economic and social conditions (Suarez-Orozco, 1993). Sue and Okazaki (1990) contended that when other avenues for upward mobility are blocked (e.g., business, politics, sports, entertainment), then education becomes more important as a vehicle for upward mobility. Schneider and Lee (1990) suggested that Asian American parents maintain high expectations for their child’s schooling because they see educational success as the only road past the occupational discrimination they foresee in their child’s future. As a parent in their ethnographic study indicated, “I think there will be discrimination against my children because they are minorities. Therefore I tell my children to study for two hours when white children study for one hour. If they ask me the reason, I tell them I will let them know later” (Schneider & Lee, 1990, p. 370).

When education serves a relevant, pragmatic function in an individual’s life, it appears that the individual is more likely to be motivated to do well in school. The converse is also true. Believing that working hard in school will not bring economic and social benefits is associated with less motivation for schooling. The relation between the perceived relevance of education and students’ motivation for schooling is especially important for minority students for two reasons. First, despite advances made in the last half of the 20th century, the playing field for people from majority and minority groups is still not level. Members of minority groups have been treated at the institutional and policy levels within our

society in ways that limit their opportunities to succeed economically, professionally, politically, and socially. This discrimination may discourage some minority students from working hard in school because they do not perceive the long-term benefits of education.

In a study of fourth- and fifth-grade children of Mexican descent, the relations among perception of racial prejudice, school engagement, acceptance of school, and intrinsic motivation for learning were examined (Okagaki, Frensch, & Dodson, 1996). All of the children’s scales used the same Harter-item format in which children were presented with descriptions of two types of children and decided which description better fit themselves and to what degree (“really true” or “sort of true”). The Perception of Racial Barriers Scale included items pertaining to the classroom (e.g., “Some Latino kids think Latino kids can get good grades as easily as White kids do BUT other Latino kids think it’s harder for Latino kids to get good grades from teachers”) and situations outside of school (e.g., “Some Latino kids think Latino people face barriers to job success because of their race BUT other Latino kids think Latino people don’t face barriers to job success”). The School Engagement Scale consisted of items related to the child’s active participation in class activities (e.g., paying attention to what is going on in class, trying hard in school) and the child’s feelings about being in school (e.g., wanting to go to school, being happy at school). The Acceptance of School Scale related to whether doing well in school was appropriate for Mexican American children (e.g., being smart in school is cool, working hard in school is dumb, answering the teacher’s questions is showing off). Students also completed the Harter intrinsic–extrinsic motivation for learning scale. Among these 9- and 10-year-old Mexican American children, perception of racial barriers was negatively correlated with school engagement, negatively correlated with intrinsic motivation for learning, and negatively correlated with acceptance of school as an arena in which Mexican American children can or should excel. For the fourth and fifth graders in our study, their perceptions of racial barriers were not related to their actual school performance, as assessed by grades and achievement test scores. However, if students are less engaged in school at 10 years old, it seems reasonable that their school performance will ultimately be in jeopardy. In fact, in samples of adolescents, school engagement has been positively correlated with school achievement (e.g., Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). In short, belief in the benefits of schooling—belief that school serves an important pragmatic function—is associated with stronger motivation to achieve in school. On the other hand, students who do not believe that there are relevant, practical rewards to school achievement are less engaged in school and are less likely to do well.

A second reason that perceived relevance of education is a critical factor in the school achievement of minority children is because the cultural values of some minority groups elevate

the relevance of education. Underlying cultural values that promote the relevance of education may attenuate resistance to schooling that has been attributed to discontinuities between home culture and school culture.

In Asian cultures, the importance of education is linked to a strong belief in human malleability and an emphasis on the importance of bringing honor to one's family (Chen & Uttal, 1988). These beliefs provide a context in which motivation for educational achievement is high and a context in which parents and children believe that educational achievement is attainable—it is simply a matter of effort. A number of researchers have suggested that in Asian American families, children are encouraged to do well in school because school achievement brings honor to the family. Schneider and her colleagues (Hieshima & Schneider, 1994; Schneider & Lee, 1990) argued that the economic rewards for obtaining additional education are lower for Asian American students than for European American students. Therefore, they suggest that the motivation for educational attainment must include the hope for noneconomic rewards such as self-improvement and bringing honor to the family.

In some cultures, to be well educated is part of what it means to be a good person. Education functions as a pathway to virtue and honor. In an ethnographic study of Punjabi high school students, Gibson (1993) observed that students were “told that those who do well in school can expect to find better marriage partners, that their accomplishments bring credit to their family, and that they set an example for other younger Punjabis to follow” (p. 121).

In Asian American families, the emphasis on educational success is not only directed to the student, but also to the parent. Chao (1994) reported that one of the primary goals of immigrant Chinese parents is to help their children succeed in school. A good parent is one whose children do well in school. Similarly, Hieshima and Schneider (1994) observed that Japanese American parents take seriously their responsibility for their child's educational attainment. As a third generation Japanese American parent in their study explained, “Asian parents see themselves as primary teachers, all along. The primary role of parent is one of teacher” (p. 324). In these two examples, from the perspective of evaluating the parent, educational achievement did not serve a pragmatic function for the parent, but rather the child's educational achievement served an important function as a vehicle for demonstrating that the parent was a good parent.

The perceived function of education appears to be a key factor in minority children's school achievement. If students and parents perceive relevant benefits to educational attainment, whether the benefits are economic rewards, honor to the family, or a better marriage partner, then it seems that students are more likely to be engaged in school and to do well in school. According to the Triarchic Model, the perception that education serves a useful function in the student's life can attenuate resistance to schooling. The implication of this thesis is straightforward. Convince students and their parents that

obtaining a good education is necessary for their economic survival in a technological society, and then school achievement levels should increase. Unfortunately, it is not that simple. People have different ideas about what it means to do well in school, what it takes to do well in school, what educational goals are appropriate for their children, and what it means to be intelligent. And, these beliefs make a difference in the ways that families approach education.

The Role of the Family: Implicit Theories of Education and Development

The previous section focused on the structure of school and its perceived function. In this section, I consider ways in which parents and families contribute to the context of children's learning apart from the perception of the function of education in children's lives. The second component of the Triarchic Model has to do with the cultural beliefs and practices of minority families. In this section, parents' expectations for their child's school achievement, their beliefs about intelligence, education and what it takes to do well in school, and the strategies they use to support their child's education are discussed.

Some researchers contend that the difficulty that minority children experience negotiating two distinct cultural contexts (i.e., home culture and school culture) contributes to their underachievement (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Tharp, 1989; Trueba, 1988). As previously noted, there are certainly times when cultural discontinuity inhibits children's learning, but the effects of culture on school achievement are more complex than that. In addition to playing a role in the ease with which children traverse boundaries between home and school, culture provides a foundation for parents' understandings of school and contributes to children's overall educational environment.

Expectations for school achievement. Let us consider the basic question of what it means to do well in school. How do parents decide if their children are doing well in school? What do parents mean when they say that they want their children to obtain a good education? In study of fourth- and fifth-grade children, Okagaki and Frensch (1998) asked parents how much education they would ideally like their child to obtain, how much education they expected their child to obtain, and what would be the very least amount of schooling they would allow their child to attain. The sample included Asian American, Latino, and European American parents.

Compared to other parents, Asian American parents had higher educational expectations for their children. Asian American parents ideally wanted their children to obtain a graduate or professional degree. They expected their children to graduate from college, and the minimum educational attainment they set for their children was college graduation. In

contrast, the ideal educational attainment level for European American and Latino parents was for their children to graduate from college. However, European American and Latino parents expected their children to get some college education. Finally, for European American parents, the lower boundary was high school graduation; for Latino parents, the lower boundary was some college education.

Overall, compared to European American and Latino parents, Asian American parents expected their children to stay in school longer than other parents did. They also had higher expectations for their child's school performance. Parents were asked how happy or satisfied they would be if their child received an A, B, C, D, or F for his or her schoolwork. Everyone was happy with As and unhappy with Fs. The difference came with parents' responses to Bs and Cs. Asian American parents were less satisfied with grades of Bs and Cs than the other parents were. Among Asian American and European American families, parents' expectations for their child's educational attainment were related to the child's school achievement. For all three groups of parents, expectations for the child's school performance were related to the child's school achievement.

In this study, the Asian American parents described a different vision than other parents of what constituted doing well in school. They wanted their child to obtain a graduate degree. They expected their child to graduate from college. Perhaps more important, they began to be concerned when Bs started to show up in schoolwork.

Obviously, by the time a child is 10 or 11 years old, the child's previous grades may affect parents' expectations (Seginer, 1983). Parents' expectations for their child's grades may be a function of their perceptions of their child's ability to succeed in school. However, when Okagaki and Frensch (1998) examined parents' ideal, expected, and minimal educational attainment levels for their child, controlling for the child's grades from the previous year and parents' perceptions of their child's ability to do schoolwork, differences across groups on expected school attainment and minimum school attainment remained. In other words, differences in parents' expectations for their child's educational attainment were not solely a function of how well the child actually performed during the previous year or parents' perceptions of their child's abilities.

One implication of this finding is that as educators, we can tell parents that it is important for their children to do well in school because doing well in school will help their children get better jobs as adults or be more successful in life. However, parents have different ideas about what it means to do well in school. If parents' expectations are to be translated into meaningful improvements in children's school achievement, then educators need to be very clear about what constitutes doing well.

Educational goals. Parents not only have different expectations for their children, but they also have different ideas

about what is important for teachers to teach their children. Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) examined parents' ideas about primary-grade teachers' classroom goals among Cambodian, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Mexican immigrant parents and parents who were born in the United States with European American and Mexican American backgrounds. They found that European American and Mexican American parents believed that it was important for teachers to help their students develop knowledge and problem-solving skills. The immigrant parents reported that teaching children how to do their work neatly was just as important as developing children's knowledge and thinking skills. The parents in this study had different expectations for their children's teachers.

In addition to entertaining different expectations for their child's education, parents have different ideas about what it takes for children to do well in school. In the following section, I examine parents' ideas about being intelligent.

Conceptions of intelligence. Both across nations and within our own country, people's notions of intelligence differ (e.g., Dasen, 1984; Fry, 1984; Serpell, 1984; Siegler & Richards, 1982; Wober, 1974). In the previously mentioned study of parents of kindergartners through second graders from several cultural backgrounds, Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) also compared parents' conceptions of intelligence. Parents considered six potential components of intelligence: problem-solving skills, verbal ability, creativity, effort on school tasks, self-management, and social skills. The European American parents' conception of intelligence was very much like traditional Western psychological theories of intelligence. Cognitive skills such as problem solving, verbal ability, and especially creativity, were the most important components of intelligence. In general, the minority parents expressed a broader view of intelligence than the traditional Western psychological view of intelligence. They believed that the noncognitive components were as important or more important to their conceptions of intelligence than the cognitive skills were. For example, both Mexican immigrant and Mexican American parents indicated that having strong interpersonal skills is an important aspect of being an intelligent person.

Of particular interest is that for Filipino and Vietnamese parents, effort was most important to parents' conceptions of intelligence. To be intelligent meant working hard to achieve one's goals. This emphasis on the importance of effort is consistent with data from multinational research indicating that East Asian parents attribute success in school to effort rather than to innate ability (e.g., Holloway, 1988; Holloway, Kashiwagi, Hess, & Azuma, 1986; Kim & Chun, 1994; Stevenson & Lee, 1990). Children who do well in school are children who work hard. This belief makes an important contribution to Asian American parents' expectations for their children's education. Academic performance is not viewed as solely a function of ability, but rather effort is a critical com-

ponent of one's performance. Hence, if a child does not do well initially, it is not necessarily interpreted as the child not having the capability to do well in the future. Parents are able to maintain high expectations for and continue to provide support for their child's achievement. Educational achievement is attainable as long as the child works hard. This view accords with Dweck's (e.g., Dweck, Hong, & Chiu, 1994) notion of incremental intelligence—that is, one becomes more intelligent as one solves problems that one previously could not solve. According to this conception of intelligence, children become smarter as they master more problems.

In addition to finding that parents have different views of intelligence, different expectations for their children's education, and different ideas about what teachers should be teaching, researchers have also observed variation in parental support for children's academic achievement and parental perceptions of what parents can do to help their children.

Self-reported behaviors and feelings of efficacy. In a study of Asian American, Latino, and European American parents, Okagaki and Frensch (1998) asked parents how frequently they engaged in activities to help their 10- and 11-year-old children with schoolwork (e.g., help study for a test, check homework) and how frequently they engaged in intellectually stimulating activities that were nonschool related (e.g., reading at home themselves, reading a nonschool book with their child). There were no differences across groups in the reported frequency of these behaviors. However, data from ethnographic studies by researchers suggest that although Latino parents actively help their elementary school children with their schoolwork, their instrumental help is not always effective (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Parents who were not educated in U.S. schools do not always understand the assignments, especially when the directions for an assignment are often given verbally to the child and are not written on an assignment sheet. Moreover, unless a teacher communicates otherwise, the parents may assume that everything is going well and they may not recognize when their child needs more assistance than he or she is receiving in class (Goldenberg, 1987).

Not surprisingly then, Okagaki and Frensch (1998) found that where the parents did differ is in their feelings of efficacy—in their beliefs about their ability to help their child do homework problems and in their perceptions of their ability to understand homework assignments. European American parents were more confident of their ability to help their child do well in school than either the Asian American or the Latino parents.

If parents are unable to provide effective instrumental assistance, does that mean that they are unable to facilitate their child's school achievement? Not necessarily. Parental encouragement and indirect help, coupled with high expectations for their adolescent's school performance, is associated with Latino high school students' success. In an ethnographic

study of Central American immigrant adolescents, Suarez-Orozco (1993) noted that indirect help was associated with school success among the older Central American immigrant adolescents in the study. For example, instead of allowing the adolescent to work after school to contribute to the family finances, the parents would work two or three jobs. The parent's role in the adolescent's schooling was not to help the adolescent with the schoolwork. Rather, the parent's role was to insure that the adolescent had sufficient time to study and to create a climate in which the adolescent's job was to study and do well in school.

Indirect help and encouragement also seems to work in Asian American families. Several researchers observed that Asian American parents structure the home environment to facilitate the child's learning rather than directly helping the child with schoolwork (e.g., Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1992; Schneider & Lee, 1990). For example, parents set aside a specific time for the child to do homework and limit the amount of time the child spends watching television or playing with friends. The indirect nature of parents' encouragement is highlighted in this example from an ethnographic study of Japanese American families. Hieshima and Schneider (1994) observed that Japanese American parents do not directly tell their children what to do; instead parents make indirect comments such as, "You sure finished with your homework fast" or "Not much homework tonight?" (p. 322). Along the same dimension, Schneider and Lee found that Asian American parents were more likely than European American parents to encourage their child to take private classes in music, language, and computer science, and that their children spent more time practicing for their lessons than did European American children. In essence, the parents created an overall environment in which discipline, studying, and practice were integral elements of the child's role in multiple contexts.

In the first two sections, I suggested that the learning environment of the school and the educational environment in the home contribute to minority children's school achievement. What is important to note is that for some minority groups, difficulties that may be attributed to lack of congruence between home and school cultures appear to be attenuated by broader cultural values that support educational achievement. Believing that bringing honor to one's family is a primary duty of a child, that educational achievement brings honor to one's family, and that educational achievement is primarily a function of effort and therefore is attainable if one works hard enough, may produce the motivation that enables children to overcome obstacles resulting from the cultural discontinuity between home and classroom. Alternatively, it may simply be that these children do not have opportunities to excel in other domains (e.g., sports) and have more time to concentrate on schoolwork.

Thus far in this discussion, attention has not been directly focused on the child. However, characteristics of the child obviously play an important role in school achievement. In the

Triarchic Model, the emphasis is not on the child's innate abilities, but rather the child's social identities vis-à-vis the society's perceptions of the groups to which the child belongs.

The Role of the Child: A Resilient Academic Identity

According to social identity theorists (e.g., Bernal, Saenz, & Knight, 1991; Garza & Herringer, 1987; Tajfel, 1981), human beings define themselves in multiple ways according to the groups to which they belong by birth (e.g., gender, ethnic), choice (e.g., political, religious), or achievement (e.g., Olympic athlete, world-class musician). The salience and meaning of these social identities depend on the individual's social environment. To understand minority children's school achievement, theorists have contended that one must consider the development of children's ethnic identity as well as the development of their academic identity (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Ogbu, 1992).

Ethnic identity has been operationalized in multiple ways in the empirical literature. Broadly defined, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors contributing to one's ethnic identity include knowledge about and attitudes toward one's ethnic culture, feelings of commitment and belongingness to one's ethnic group, participation in traditional cultural activities, and attitudes toward the majority culture (Phinney, 1990). Based on observations of the relation between academic identity and ethnic identity, some theorists proposed that minority children's academic performance must be understood in the context of their ethnic identity. LaFromboise et al. (1993) posited that healthy bicultural development includes (a) knowledge of both cultures, (b) positive attitudes toward both cultures, (c) significant social relationships in both cultural groups, and (d) what they termed *bicultural efficacy*, or the belief that one can be true to one's ethnic identity and still function effectively in the majority culture. Ogbu (1992) argued that minority children must learn "that they can participate in two cultural or language frames of reference for different purposes without losing their own cultural and language identity or undermining their loyalty to the minority community" (p. 12). For school achievement, this means that children need to develop a positive academic identity while holding onto a positive ethnic identity. They need to see school as a realm in which they can succeed and are motivated to succeed. In a study of Native American college students, a measure of academic identity (e.g., "Doing well in school and graduating from college are important to my view of myself") was positively correlated with a measure of bicultural efficacy (e.g., "I believe I can maintain my tribal identity and still participate in activities that are traditionally part of the White culture"; Okagaki, Helling, & Bingham, 2000).

Recent data suggest, however, that the notion that academic achievement is not appropriate for membership in one's social group may not necessarily be a function of ethnicity. In a study of 243 African American and 130 European

American adolescents, Arroyo and Zigler (1995) compared high- and low-achieving students' scores on a construct that they termed *racelessness*. The racelessness score was comprised of four subscale scores: attitude toward school achievement (e.g., "Doing well in school helps you do better later in life"), alienation from peers (e.g., "I don't seem to act or think about things in the same way as most people my age"), managing peers' impression of self (e.g., "I never let my friends know when I get good grades in school"), and stereotypic beliefs about African Americans (e.g., "In general, Blacks are to blame for their negative image among Whites"). Arroyo and Zigler obtained a main effect for achievement on racelessness scores but no main effect or interactions with race. This result suggests that adolescents' discomfort with their academic achievement vis-à-vis their peers may be an adolescent peer group phenomenon rather than an ethnic phenomenon. In three diverse samples of adolescents, Arroyo and Zigler found that academic orientation was positively correlated with feelings of alienation from peers and reported efforts to inhibit peers' knowledge of their academic success.

Other research has also documented the influence of peers on adolescents' development. For example, in a diverse sample of 4,431 adolescents, including non-Hispanic White, Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, Native American, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander students, Fletcher, Darling, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1995) observed that the adolescent's social network significantly contributed to the adolescent's intellectual performance over and above what was explained by the influence of the adolescent's parents. Steinberg, Dornbusch, et al. (1992) noted that all adolescents do better in school when both parents and peers support academic achievement, and that White and Asian American adolescents were more likely than Hispanic or African American adolescents to have support for academic achievement from both groups. For the Triarchic Model, the contention is simply that the beliefs and behaviors of members of one's social network may influence not only the individual's academic orientation and behaviors but the way the individual integrates an academic identity with other social identities.

Thus, conflict that appears to arise between identity with one's group and one's academic identity may, in fact, be a function of what is deemed appropriate by adolescent culture or alternatively, may be part of students' general resistance to schooling. Recent work by Steele (e.g., Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995), however, suggests that there may be a particular way in which social identities, such as ethnic or gender identity, interact with and bring about a conflict that inhibits student achievement. Steele (1997) argued that students who strongly identify with academic achievement and are members of groups that have not traditionally done well in school face an additional barrier when they try to achieve in school—that of *stereotype threat*. Stereotype threat is defined as "the event of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs becoming self-relevant, usually as a plausible interpretation of something one is doing,

for an experience one is having, or for a situation one is in, that has relevance to one's self-definition" (Steele, 1997, p. 616). Evoking negative stereotypes in experimental settings has been shown to lower math performances of women (Spencer et al., 1999), to lower verbal scores of Black college students (Steele & Aronson, 1995), and to lower math scores of White male college students (where the negative stereotype was a comparison to Asian students; Aronson et al., 1999). Stereotypes can also facilitate performance. In a study of Asian American female undergraduates, priming participants on gender identity resulted in lower math scores than the scores of the no-priming control group, whereas priming participants on ethnic identity produced higher math scores than the scores of the control group (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999).

Work on stereotype threat is new. The research needs to be replicated with younger students and in other settings. Steele (1997) hypothesized that stereotype threat may affect minority student achievement in two ways: (a) For those who have excelled in school, it may reduce performance in situations in which the threat of the negative stereotype is evoked, and (b) it may inhibit students over time from identifying with school and subsequently decrease motivation for learning in school.

DISCUSSION

Developing successful strategies for the education of minority children in the United States is a complex problem. In this article, I have discussed three major factors that contribute to minority children's school achievement: characteristics of the school, the home, and the child. In addition, there are other important variables to consider, such as parental education and occupation, economic resources of the family, and generation status (see Gordon, 1988; Miller, 1995; Slaughter-De-foe et al., 1990). I have focused on characteristics of the school, parental beliefs and practices, and social identities of the child, because these are factors that we, as educators, can potentially influence. This section describes why a multipronged approach is more powerful than frameworks that address a single factor and provides implications for educational practice.

According to the Triarchic Model, the school, the home, and personal characteristics of the student must be considered in explanations of minority children's school achievement. Models that focus on only one or two factors fall short in their explanations of the issues. For example, Ogbu (1986, 1992) argued that members of minority groups (e.g., African Americans, Mexican Americans, members of Native American tribes) have developed standards of success that are in opposition to those of the majority culture. For children and adolescents, this opposition has taken the form of resistance to schooling. Ogbu (1986) focused on macrosystem processes, such as societal discrimination, which may affect minority children's achievement. His theory does not explain (a) why resistance to schooling has also been observed in children

from majority and voluntary minority groups; (b) why majority students, as well as involuntary minority students, see school achievement and positive attitudes toward school as something that they need to hide from their peers; (c) why modest adaptations to the classroom can improve the performance of minority children; and (d) why students and parents from involuntary minority groups report believing that education is important, and yet many students continue not to do well in school.

In contrast to Ogbu's (1986) model, some researchers have focused on the lack of congruence between the home culture and the school culture (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Laosa, 1982; Stevenson et al., 1990; Tharp, 1989; Weisner et al., 1988). According to these researchers, the lower school achievement of minority children results from a mismatch between the values and norms of the home culture and those of the school culture. As in the Triarchic Model, differences in the cultural norms between the minority family and the school are purported to inhibit children's learning and adjustment to school. Solely focusing on cultural differences, however, does not explain (a) why resistance to schooling has been observed in children whose family cultures are similar to the school culture, (b) why majority and minority students see school achievement as something to hide from peers, or (c) why children from some immigrant groups have done well in school despite language and cultural discontinuities with the classroom environment.

According to the Triarchic Model of Minority Children's School Achievement, the very nature of schooling (e.g., compulsory, requiring public displays of knowledge, fostering competition among students for few rewards) elicits resistance to schooling from all children. In addition to contributing to some children's distancing from or disidentification with school, this natural resistance to schooling may help explain why adolescents do not want to advertise their own academic achievements or positive attitudes toward school. If schools emphasize an "us versus them" (students vs. teachers) structure and only a few students (i.e., "nerds") reap the top honors, then students who do like school may be reluctant to display positive attitudes toward school. Modifications to classroom practices that facilitate teacher-student and children's peer relationships and that increase school engagement may reduce resistance to schooling for all children. Adaptations to the classroom culture that reduce the discontinuity between the classroom environment and the child's family culture may facilitate school achievement for children from minority cultural groups. In addition, reducing cultural discontinuity between home and classroom may make school more "understandable" for the child. The child may be able to interpret classroom norms more easily and be able to focus more attention on learning school content. Second, reducing the discontinuity between the classroom culture and the family culture may reduce minority children's resistance to schooling. It may help the child identify with school and be more inclined to participate in classroom activities.

From the Triarchic perspective, the cultural beliefs and norms of the family play a critical role in children's school achievement—not only because of issues functionally related to cultural discontinuity (i.e., knowing the behavioral and social norms of the classroom), but also because cultural beliefs are related to children's motivation for school achievement and their approach to school achievement. Minority children from some cultural backgrounds appear to benefit from cultural beliefs about education and development that seem to act as a buffer to problems attributed to cultural discontinuity between school and home. For example, some minority students may underachieve in school even though they and their parents believe that education is important on a general or abstract level, because they do not believe that education is relevant in some personal, pragmatic way. In contrast, other minority children appear to benefit from cultural beliefs that being highly educated is a virtue in and of itself, that school achievement is primarily a function of effort rather than ability, and that education is the main way to achieve success in life. These types of beliefs provide a context in which educational achievement is supported even if parents are not able to provide instrumental support for their child's education.

Parents' ideas about and understanding of school may help children's academic performance to greater or lesser degrees. Some parents have less understanding of how school "works" and may not accurately interpret teachers' feedback on the children's performance or be able to instrumentally support children's efforts in an effective way. This may be particularly detrimental to school performance when children are younger and require more assistance from their parents.

But, even a consideration of home and school characteristics and their interaction is not enough to explain minority children's achievement. The larger societal context and historical backgrounds of ethnic groups in the United States play a role in the development of minority children's social identities. For those minority students who are doing well in school but belong to groups that have traditionally not been as successful in school, stereotype threat may inhibit performance in situations that evoke the negative stereotype. In addition, as Steele (1997) suggested, stereotype threat may inhibit younger students' desire to develop an initial identification with school.

Implications for Educational Practice

How can we better educate all children in our country? First, we need to recognize that the structure of education in our country naturally elicits resistance from children. This resistance is intensified for some children because of the mismatch between the behavioral norms of the classroom and the norms of the family culture. Making the culture of the classroom more visible or understandable to children from different cultural backgrounds and, when possible, adapting classroom practices to facilitate the transition to school for children from minority cultures should help reduce children's resistance to schooling.

Second, we need to consider the depth and clarity of our communication with parents. Parents need clear feedback from teachers as to what is expected of the child in school, how the child is doing, and what each grade means. For example, in a study conducted in California, a district administrator told me about his son's math grades. In fifth grade his son began to receive Bs in math. Now and then an occasional C appeared on homework assignments and on math tests. He and his wife, a well-educated, Latino couple, were not overly concerned at first. Their son received As in his other subjects and an occasional C on a math test did not seem worrisome. Their interpretation of a C was that it meant that their son was doing average work for his grade. Then they went to their parent-teacher conference and found out that their son was testing below grade level in math. Apparently, a C did not mean average work; it meant falling behind the rest of the class. In this particular case, the administrator and his wife redefined what constituted an acceptable grade for their son; what was the lower boundary for their child's performance on schoolwork.

Third, we need to help students and parents see the practical relevance of obtaining a good education. When students perceive education as serving a relevant function in their lives, it appears that they are better motivated to achieve, and resistance to education diminishes. Conversely, when the student does not perceive education as helping the student gain an important goal, then the student's resistance to education may be intensified. However, as previously noted, we need to be clear in how we define what it means to obtain a good education and what it means to do well in school. If parents want their child to graduate from college one day, they need to know how that goal translates into expectations for student achievement in elementary school, junior high, and high school.

Fourth, we need to think through what we do in schools that might evoke the effects of stereotype threat for our students—whether it is related to gender differences in math or Scholastic Assessment Test scores for minority students. How can we help students identify with school and develop academic identities that become resilient to threat of negative stereotypes? Steele (1997) provided excellent suggestions, such as developing optimistic teacher-pupil relationships, espousing an incremental view of intelligence, and providing role models who have achieved within the targeted domain (e.g., successful female mathematicians, prominent African American scientists), and thereby legitimizing students' identification with achievement in that domain.

Finally, we need to recognize that families have different folk theories about education, intelligence, parenting, and child development. Parents will interpret information from schools through the filter constructed by these folk theories. Part of understanding the relation between ethnicity and schooling is to understand the folk theories that underlie people's behaviors. We need to go beyond demonstrating differences in achievement across ethnic and racial groups, across levels of family income, or even parent education. Yes, differences exist across these groups. Important differences also

exist within each of these groups. But, for the most part, there is little we can do to change these types of variables.

Identifying, articulating, and understanding the beliefs that underlie the support that Vannak's and Rocio's parents give to their children can help us design more effective educational experiences for the children and help their parents facilitate their children's school achievement. Rocio's parents have given her a good start to schooling. But, what about Vannak, whose mother has very little education? What can she do? According to the research previously discussed, parents can provide valuable indirect help and encouragement to facilitate their children's schooling. Even if the parents cannot read, they help their children develop a love for books and stories and, ultimately, reading by telling them stories, "reading" picture books together, listening to audiotapes of children's books (e.g., the read-along story books), making books available to them, and having other people read to their children. They can create a climate in which children are expected to study every day and where children are expected to work hard to master a problem even if they do not succeed the first time. They can set limits on their children's extracurricular activities, including whether their children will work after school when the children are in high school. They can help their children see the benefits of obtaining a good education.

Culture has to do with people's beliefs and practices, with the way people understand the world. Some understandings of the world put people in a better position to achieve their desired goals in this society. Some understandings do not. One of the roles we have as educational psychologists is to help people understand their own beliefs and practices and the interface between their beliefs and practices and those of the school, so that they will be able to choose among opportunities rather than being left with few options for life in our society.

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