An Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children

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This article proposes a conceptual model for the study of child development in minority populations in the United States. This work is the product of a multidisciplinary collaboration among the authors who share a strong collective concern with the absence of appropriate conceptual models or frameworks for conducting research that addresses the diversity and strengths of minority populations. A conceptual framework that incorporates and emphasizes essential factors for understanding the growth and development of minority children and their families is critical to address omissions in existing theoretical formulations and research. The proposed integrative model differs from previous sociodevelopmental frameworks and models in that it introduces...
considerations of both social position and social stratification constructs at the core rather than at the periphery of a theoretical formulation of children's development.

A new model is needed because, traditionally, the interaction of social class, culture, ethnicity, and race has not been included at the core of mainstream theoretical formulations in the discipline of child development. For example, most of the prevalent conceptual frameworks do not emphasize the social stratification system, or the social positions that comprise the scaffolding or structure of the system (i.e., social class, ethnicity, and race) and the processes and consequences that these relative positions engender for a child's development. This shortcoming is found even in most of the contextually based theoretical frameworks identified in the developmental literature as organizational, transactional, and ecological.

Accordingly, reviews of published research suggest a pattern of omission and neglect (Garcia Coll, 1990; McLoyd, 1990a; McLoyd & Randolph, 1984, 1985). They indicate (1) the conspicuous absence of longitudinal investigations on the normative development of minority children; (2) an emphasis on outcomes rather than on process in what little research is being done on children of color; (3) a lack of attention to intragroup variability and an emphasis on between-group comparisons; (4) a disregard for the diversity inherent in some of the minority group categories in use; and (5) a minimization of the effects of such social stratification derivatives as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and segregation on the development of minority children. These exclusions and lack of attention to crucial aspects of the context in which children's development takes place undermine a more comprehensive scientific understanding of the minority child and raise questions about the validity of empirical knowledge about children in general (McKinney, Abrams, Terry, & Lerner, 1994). Moreover, they hamper our ability to intervene efficaciously and to lessen the deleterious effects of the less-than-optimal conditions experienced by most minority and other low-income children.

This article includes (a) a critical analysis of mainstream theoretical frameworks in relation to the understanding of developmental processes in children of color and of issues at the intersection of social class, culture, ethnicity, and race, and (b) a description and evaluation of the dominant conceptual frameworks that have guided the extant literature on minority children and families and that exemplify the need for mainstream models to incorporate and delineate other important sources of influence. Based on the above considerations, an integrative conceptual model of child development is presented. The model is anchored within social stratification theory (Attewell & Fitzgerald, 1980; Barber, 1957; Bendix & Lipset, 1966; Laumann, 1970; Tumin, 1967) and emphasizes the importance of racism, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and segregation to the development of minority children and families.

African-Americans and mainland Puerto Ricans will be used as examples throughout this article, although most of the issues raised are generalizable to other ethnic and minority groups (Ogbu, 1981, 1987). Aside from space considerations that preclude the inclusion of all minority groups, there are two main reasons for using these two groups as examples. First, for most indicators of development and social well-being (e.g., infant mortality, low birthweight, teenage pregnancy, and school drop-out), these two groups occupy the most unfavorable positions in comparison to other minority groups (Arcia, Keyes, & Gallagher, 1994; Becerra, Hogue, Atrash, & Perez, 1991; Collins & Shay, 1994; Mendoza, Glenn, Takata, & Martorell, 1994; Rodriguez, 1994; Ventura, 1994; Wise, Kotelchuck, Wilson, & Mills, 1985). Second, these two groups are examples of involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1987) who were originally brought into the United States through slavery, conquest, or colonisation. Although both groups have often been relegated to menial positions and denied integration into the mainstream, their contrasting social histories, languages, and cultures provide two distinct reference groups.

This article has several recurrent themes. One is that neither early theorists nor researchers have proposed a realistic understanding of racial and ethnic groups in the United States and their experiences within a white, mainstream society. Certain beliefs and practices such as ignoring minorities, maintaining false stereotypes, and/or distorting their life styles have hindered the understanding of different groups (Sue & Sue, 1990). Second, the expanded role that family and kin networks play in developmental processes for minority children may serve to protect them from economic hard-
ships and social and psychological sources of oppression derived from their relative position in society (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; McAdoo, 1982). Third, there is the need to more fully include contexts other than the family because of their particular saliency in the development of minority children. Consequently, health and education should be viewed not only as important contributors to children’s development, but also as outcomes in themselves that share with other more traditionally considered developmental outcomes many of the same determinants and causal sequencing.

Mainstream Theoretical Models: Considerations of Race, Culture, and Ethnicity in Child Development

Throughout Western history, developmental theories have evolved toward a greater understanding of the child, progressing from a lack of acknowledgment of developmental differences between children and adults (see Locke, 1690/1913; Rousseau, 1762/1938) toward recognition of the unique characteristics of childhood and also of its complexity and diversity (see Darwin, 1859; Erickson, 1950; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957; Vygotsky, 1978). These theories have not only influenced social values, but have also been shaped by society’s views. These bidirectional influences are discernible in the treatment of race, ethnic status, and gender, as well as other issues in child development (Young, 1974).

There is no theoretical or empirical reason to assume that individual primary developmental processes operate differently for children of color than for Caucasian children in Western society. Developmental processes (e.g., cognitive, affective, and social) probably emerge in similar fashion across racially and ethnically diverse populations. However, developmental differentiation, beyond that related to constitutionally based individual differences, is largely a function of the dynamic interaction between the child and both proximal and distal ecologies. As such, understanding the normal developmental process of children of color requires more explicit attention to the unique ecological circumstances (e.g., the pervasive influence of racism) these children face. Defining and integrating these unique ecological circumstances that are not shared by Caucasian children becomes the basis for the formulation of theories of normal development in children of color because their influences often inhibit rather than facilitate development. Indeed, as Spencer (1990) suggests, developmental adaptations of children of color require insights not readily available from traditional paradigms.

Early theoretical foundations of child development generally failed to address issues related to life-course processes for children of color within a larger sociocultural context (Sue & Sue, 1990). Though differences in gender were frequently recognized as important by early researchers, race was rarely considered (e.g., Goodenough & Anderson, 1931; Parten, 1932; Thomas, 1929). When ethnic and racial factors were taken into account, they were typically incorporated within an evolutionary framework that described differences between racial/ethnic groups rather than within groups and conceptualized these differences as evidence for either the genetic or the cultural inferiority of ethnic/racial groups relative to the white mainstream standard (see Darwin, 1859; de Gobineau, 1915; Galton, 1869; Jensen, 1969; Reissman, 1962; Terman, 1916). Moreover, the focus on environmental influences on human learning and development was limited primarily to immediate situational events, and therefore sociocultural factors were largely excluded from research efforts (e.g., Sears et al., 1957).

Mainstream developmental theories may nevertheless have an heuristic value in guiding the study of the normative developmental process in children of color. Global developmental theories can provide a general framework for the development of more specific predictive models. In particular, the interplay of organizational (Cicchetti & Schneider-Rosen, 1986; Sroufe, 1979; Werner, 1948), transactional (Sameroff & Chandler, 1975; Sameroff & Fiese, 1990), life span (Lerner, 1989), and ecological theories (inclusive of person-process-context concepts) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983) has the capability of addressing particular issues critical to developmental process in diverse populations of color, although both expansion and greater specification are needed to realize this potential.

Although mainstream developmental models could contribute to the conceptualization of developmental processes in children of color (Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990), they have not met this promise. To date, these models have been too narrowly defined and applied,
without elaborating those considerations unique to populations of children of color (e.g., the culturally diverse physical and psychological attributes of individual children of color, the contexts specific to their daily experience, the racial and ethnic values that influence their competencies, and the societal structures that limit them). Further, the literature has proven to be more exclusive than inclusive. However, a call to become more inclusive does not represent a call to approach all populations from a similar view, nor does it imply that all populations can be understood from a single explanatory model. Indeed, a “one model fits all” approach exposes the well-documented dangers of race-comparative research (McLoyd & Randolph, 1985). Further, it detracts from efforts to describe models that account for intragroup variability in diverse populations of color (McLoyd, 1990a). Given the variability within populations of children of color (e.g., differing ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, or skin colors), these populations provide ideal samples with which to test our theories and the specific models to be developed.

Developing more inclusive models requires the rigorous specification and integration of contextual influences far beyond what has been done to date in either ecological theory or transactional theory. For example, although cultural influence may well be subsumed under the broad notion of macrosystem influence, specific notions of culture have been only marginally integrated into ecological theory. Sameroff and Fiese (1990) have incorporated culture more specifically within transactional theory by discussing the importance of the cultural code as the primary regulator of family processes that directly influence children’s development; however, these authors failed to specify the mechanisms by which these distal considerations shape development.

In addition, social mechanisms such as racism, discrimination, and prejudice have not been routinely specified in analyses of macrosystem influences, even though these may well be the critical factors that underlie the more commonly studied sociopsychological aspects of developmental processes in children of color. McAdoo (1992) has suggested that ecological models may be appropriate in describing environments of diverse families and children, but only when they are extended to include societal racism, classism, and sexism. These mainstream theories have not yet provided a specific framework with which development of children of color can be best studied and understood.

**Development in Children of Color: Dominant Conceptual Frameworks**

The lack of attention to issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in developmental science has resulted in a literature on minority children and their families that concentrates on explaining developmental deviations in comparison to white middle class populations rather than examining normative developmental processes and outcomes. This comparative paradigm has been exacerbated by a heavy reliance on two theoretical models that have been used over the past 150 years to explain or describe differences among ethnic/racial groups. The genetically deficient model (see Dunn, 1987; Herrnstein, 1971; Jensen, 1969; Shuey, 1966) posits that differences in physical, intellectual, and psychological capacities between races are innate. The culturally deficient model (see Sears, 1975; Senn, 1975) conceives of the “culturally deprived” as those who lack the benefits and advantages of white middle-class America and thus end up with developmental deficiencies and deviances.

The conceptual and empirical literatures on Puerto Rican and African-American children and their families have been guided primarily by these deficiency models (Anastasi & Cordova, 1953; Anastasi & de Jesús, 1953; Armstrong, Achilles, & Sacks, 1935; Dunn, 1987; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Herrnstein, 1971; Jensen, 1969; Lewis, 1965; Miller, 1952; the Puerto Rican Forum, 1964; the Puerto Rican Study, 1953–1957, 1958; Sears, 1975; Senn, 1975). Genetic and environmental deficiencies are still considered to be the primary explanations for the poor school performance of African-American and Puerto Rican children (Dunn, 1987; Ogbu, 1985). In addition, African-American and Puerto Rican parents are blamed for not transmitting the right educational values (i.e., white, middle-class competencies) to their children (see Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965; Dunn, 1987; Passow, 1963).

Moreover, current research on African-American and Puerto Rican children and their families continues to concentrate on standard definitions of high risk and competency. Although studies are addressing the contributions of stress, poverty, and lack of social support (rather than assuming genetic
or cultural deficits), the emphasis still remains on negative developmental outcomes. McLoyd (1990b) argues that the race-comparative research model encourages researchers to document how minority children compare unfavorably with white children, and therefore concentrate on how they are abnormal or incompetent. Similarly, Barbarin (1993) notes that most research on African-American and Latino school-age children has focused on aggression, delinquency, attention deficits, and hyperactivity, but it has not informed areas such as emotional development or resiliency.

In contrast to these deficiency models, there is a growing theoretical and empirical literature using culturally diverse/difference models to guide the conceptualization and investigation of minority children. The culturally different model (see Boykin, 1978; Gibson, 1976; Ogbu, 1981; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974) proposes that cultures and lifestyles different from the white middle-class mainstream are not pathological, deviant, or deficient relative to the mainstream but rather legitimate and valuable in their own right. This literature adapts existing concepts, measures, and diagnostic instruments to the specific sociocultural contexts and creates new measures of competencies for these populations. This body of work argues, for example, that by assuming that African-Americans and Puerto Ricans should have the same cultural imperatives (Cohen, 1971) as middle-class whites, research is decontextualizing these competencies from their cultural, economic, and social realities (Ogbu, 1985). In other words, the establishment and maintenance of white middle-class child-rearing patterns as the standard for normal development of intellectual, cognitive, and social competencies not only obscures cultural differences in child rearing, but assumes that anything other than mainstream competencies are inferior.

Although culturally diverse/different models can capture the strengths within these populations, they have not yet addressed in depth some of the critical factors in the analyses of developmental competencies in children of color. These models include contextual variables but have yet to fully articulate how variables such as racism, prejudice, discrimination, and other sources of oppression operate and influence developmental outcomes. In addition, studies of children of color need to move from conceptualizing developmental outcome as either negative or positive to a more balanced conceptualization that reflects both the strengths and weaknesses in developmental processes and competencies of these children.

An Integrative Model

We propose an integrative theoretical model that both incorporates and expands current formulations of mainstream developmental theoretical frameworks as well as culturally different/diverse models. This model addresses two major considerations: (1) constructs salient only to populations of color that contribute unique variance to their developmental processes, and (2) constructs that are also relevant to the developmental processes in other populations, but are differentiated on the basis of individual factors that affect developmental processes. Figure 1 presents the model in schematic form, showing eight major constructs hypothesized to influence developmental processes for children of color.

We first provide a brief overview of the model as a framework for understanding the relations among the eight constituent constructs. Of primary concern in this framework is the preeminence of social position factors. These are attributes of individuals that societies use to stratify or place individuals in the social hierarchy and that pertain to children of color. These factors include (but are not limited to) race, social class, ethnicity, and gender. For example, included within considerations of race are factors such as skin color and racial features. These position factors represent social addresses that influence or create alternative developmental pathways to competence in these children. Further, these social position factors are not simply additive in their contributions; rather, they have the potential to interact in ways that magnify or diminish the importance of the factors that follow (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983).

Although considered a primary construct, social position does not directly affect developmental outcomes and the immediate environments in which children of color grow. Rather, the effect of social position is mediated through the pervasive social mechanisms of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. These factors, in turn, create the segregated environments to which children of color and their families are subjected. We hypothesize that the effects of racism on children of color operate through the creation of segregated contexts,
as opposed to a simple direct pathway of influence. Segregation must be considered as multifaceted, combining residential, economic, and social and psychological dimensions. These elements create unique conditions that more directly influence individual developmental processes of children of color. The interplay of these three major derivatives of social stratification (social position, racism, and segregation) creates the unique conditions faced by children of color and affects the nature of the developmental processes that operate and the eventual competencies that result. These are "nonshared" experiences with mainstream populations and define the unique pathways of development for children of color.

Moreover, we propose that segregation (residential, economic, and social and psychological) directly influences the various inhibiting and promoting environments that children of color experience. Within these multiple environments (e.g., the school, the neighborhood, and other institutions such as health care) children are directly affected by the macrosystem factors. Although previously we have posited that racism and its concomitant processes provide a macrosystem context that indirectly influences the nature of the opportunities available to children of color, processes such as racism, discrimination, and prejudice directly affect children's experience through social interactions in specific inhibiting and promoting environments. Through these social interactions the influence of the macrosystem factors (derived from the social stratification system in place) directly affects developmental processes in children of color.

Inhibiting and promoting environments in turn directly influence the adaptive cultures that are created in response to children's and families' experience within these environments. An adaptive culture involves a social system defined by sets of goals, values, and attitudes that differs from the dominant culture. The adaptive culture evolves from a combination of both historical forces and current demands. As Boykin and Toms explain, "though a Black cultural orientation might be present, Blacks must still possess distinctly pragmatic and expedient ways of responding to racially and economically problematic life circumstances" (Boykin & Toms, 1985, p. 44).

Both inhibiting/promoting environments and the adaptive culture directly influence the nature of specific individual family processes (the day-to-day interactions and experiences) and interact with the children's biological, constitutional, and psychological characteristics. Children are not simply passive recipients of their experience;
rather, they influence their family processes and contribute to their own socialization. Finally, children’s developmental competencies emerge as a direct function of individual contributions of adaptive culture, family processes, and the child’s own characteristics operating through the interactions among these systems of influence. Each of the models’ constructs are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Social Position Variables**

A fundamental assumption of this model is that developmental outcome is profoundly affected by the individual’s social position derived from the social stratification system of any given society. Although no standard definition of social stratification exists, most definitions denote a process that sorts individuals into a hierarchy of groups based on their imputed relative worth, utility, or importance to the society in which they live (Tumin, 1967).

Three assumptions are embedded in the concept of social stratification: (a) a social position such as social class, ethnicity, or race carries with it varying degrees of segregation in the spatial, physical, social, and psychological environments; (b) the degree of social mobility is a consequence of one’s relative social position; and (c) individuals develop a hierarchical attribution system that consists of attitudes and beliefs about the self, as well as the persons both above and below on the social ladder.

Theoretically, the bases for imputing relative worth, utility, or importance can be any personal or group attribute. The critical prerequisite is that the characteristic or attribute is defined by the society as desirable/undesirable and consequently merits differential rewards, such as access to scarce resources (Tumin, 1967). In the United States, race, social class, and ethnicity are the most important attributes on which our society is stratified. These categories are overlapping, with resultant additive and multiplicative effects, depending on the degree to which an individual child occupies specific combinations of these social positions (e.g., a child who is poor, dark skinned, and Puerto Rican). Gender further compounds the adversities faced (Krieger, Rowley, Herman, Avery, & Phillips, 1993).

A recent article by Entwisle and Astone (1994) emphasizes the difficulty that researchers have had incorporating these social constructs in developmental research. Although the need to include and appropriately measure these demographic characteristics in studies is being addressed, their article highlights the difficulties that researchers have had defining and measuring these constructs.

**Race.**—There are two definitions of the concept of race: the biological and the social. UNESCO’s Statement on Race summarizes the biological definition as “...a group or population characterized by some concentration, relative to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles (genes) or physical characteristics, which appear, fluctuate, and often disappear in the course of time by reason of geographic and/or cultural isolation” (Montague, 1972). Even at the biological level, there is great controversy about the validity and origin of the concept of race (Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993).

As socially defined, the construct of race constitutes a way of classifying individuals and groups in the context of daily living, usually on the basis of externally visible physical characteristics (Simpson & Yinger, 1953). The classification that ensues implicitly or explicitly attributes an inferior/superior social position to the group or individual in question. This attribution of social position is often institutionalized, either formally or informally, and guides to varying degrees public as well as private behavior. The social valuation of race and ethnicity evolves in response to changes in historical and economic circumstances.

Skin color, hair texture, and facial characteristics are often used as indicators of race. This has been true especially when considering the racial identity and social position of individuals with multiracial or biracial backgrounds. Historically in U.S. culture, there has been a conceptual racial dichotomy. Children of mixed ancestry are categorized as either white or black, depending on their features, and those who are considered black are relegated to an inferior social status (Hirschfeld, 1995; Massey, 1993). Hirschfeld (1995) has demonstrated that by the end of their grade school years children expect that a child with one black parent will have a black external anatomy. Moreover, these children’s thinking was specific to racial categorization and asymmetrical, in that they did not believe a child would have brown hair if they had one parent with brown hair and one with blond hair, nor did they predict that dark hair or skin dominated in animals. Therefore, racial categorization is a cultural construct sustained...
by beliefs about the inheritability of identity which are passed on from generation to generation.

Moreover, the darker the skin color the more social penalties accrue (West, 1993). This situation exists across all race and ethnic groupings within the United States, and derives from "... the salience of race in the United States ... and ... the unique status of African ancestry" (Massey & Denton, 1988). Differences in innate abilities, poverty, and culture are frequently imputed to be the causes of racial and ethnic differentials in health and development to avoid acknowledging that racism may be the culprit (Ogbu, 1991a).

Social class.—As used most often today, the term social class refers to a unit of social stratification in which individuals are classified on the basis of economic considerations (Gordon, 1963). Such classification implicitly or explicitly posits commonalities in psychosocial and cultural characteristics among the classified individuals arising from their unit’s economic rank in the overall social structure (Tumin, 1967).

More recent conceptualizations of social class include multiple levels, which are individual, household, and neighborhood, both independently and in their interactions (Krieger et al., 1993). Research also suggests that age plays a significant role in how social class affects the self-esteem of individuals. For example, Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) suggest that social class is achieved by adults and assigned to children. Consequently, they argue that the principles of self-esteem formation in children, adolescents, and adults are affected by social class differently as each age group organizes their “social class” experiences differently. Similarly, Wiltfang and Scarbecz (1990) found that adolescents’ self-esteem was significantly related to their own achievement rather than their parents’ social class. Yet, they also found that some dimensions of parental social class, such as measures of neighborhood unemployment, had a negative effect on adolescents’ self-esteem.

Social class has also been examined as it relates to values and orientation. For example, Kohn (1977) suggests that social class variables influence parental values and child-rearing practices, thereby influencing how children develop and acquire the knowledge and skills to cope with change and the conditions of life. Furthermore, Kohn posits that systematic differences in conditions of life (e.g., occupation, education) have an important influence on people’s behavior, social class position, and value orientation and therefore in the transmission of these values to their children.

Ethnicity.—The term ethnicity is used principally to convey cultural distinctness deriving mostly from national origin, language, religion, or a combination thereof (Broom & Selznick, 1970; Harrison, Serafica, & McAdoo, 1984; Morris, 1968). Because it is socially acquired, this cultural distinctness is subject to change over time through the process of acculturation and assimilation, unless other social barriers such as race prevent full participation in the society.

As in the concepts of social class and race, ethnic identification for the most part includes valuation and attribution of inferior/superior social status, and it changes as a function of historical processes. For example, Masson and Verkuyten (1993) found that ethnic identity was highly correlated with in-group formation and preference. In addition, they found that more frequent cross-ethnic contact was associated with a decrease in in-group preference and formation, suggesting that in-group preferences and orientations may shift as a function of exposure and contact with out-groups. However, while it has been widely noted that intergroup contact lessens discrimination and hostility, negative intergroup contact can also reinforce hostility and prejudice (Masson & Verkuyten, 1993).

Gender.—As with race, there are both biological and social aspects of the definition of gender. One refers to the biological primary and secondary characteristics pertaining to the ability to reproduce. Socially defined gender involves the culture-bound conventions about the appropriate roles and behaviors for, as well as relations between, women and men (Krieger et al., 1993). Gender relations, as part of society’s social stratification system, are supported by assumptions of the innate superiority of men over women and the subsequent subordination of women by men. For minority children, their expected role in society as a function of their gender also influences access to resources, social interactions, and expectations, and will consequently influence their developmental outcomes. For example, Stevenson, Chen, and Uttal (1990) found that African-American girls received significantly higher scores for comprehension at first grade and
computation at third grade when compared to boys. In addition, Spencer, Dobbs, and Swanson (1988) reported that poverty has more detrimental effects for black boys that it does for black girls. These findings may help explain why black boys and girls differ academically. The social valuation of gender, therefore, also evolves with changes in economic and historical circumstances and can lead to differential developmental outcomes within particular groups.

**Social Stratification Mechanisms**

Classification in terms of social position does not itself explain how these variables eventually influence developmental outcome. Four macrosystem-level mechanisms mediate between an individual’s social position and various other contexts that may more directly affect developmental outcome: (a) racism, (b) prejudice, (c) discrimination, and (d) oppression.

**Racism.**—Racism refers to the pervasive and systematic assumptions of the inherent superiority of certain races, and consequent discrimination against other races. Racism occurs when the ideology and concepts of social stratification are actualized and persons are deemed to be more or less inferior solely on the basis of their membership in a racial group (Essed, 1991; Montague, 1942). In Western societies, the preferred group is Caucasoid. Persons who are descendants of all other racial groups are placed into an inferior class status. Whereas an individual’s position can be modified or buffered through the acquisition of wealth or higher social status, it can never be completely changed. Racism is considered to be the primary mechanism of influence within this categorization system, as it refers to different social attitudes and treatment based solely on race. In contrast, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression may be experienced not only as a function of race, but also on the basis of social class, ethnicity, and gender.

Racism also can vary in its expression from institutionalized racism to symbolic racism (McConahay & Hough, 1976). Research on symbolic racism demonstrates that racism in the United States has not actually declined but is now expressed in a more subtle and complex manner (Duckitt, 1992; Frey & Gaertner, 1986). While majority individuals may increasingly support the principle of racial or ethnic equality, they still maintain a set of moral abstractions and attitudinal predispositions concerning how minorities ought to act, whether or not they are treated equitably, and what they deserve. Behaviorally this is manifested in a set of acts (such as voting against minority candidates or opposing affirmative action) that are rationalized on a nonracial basis but that operate to maintain the racial status quo. Thus, while in the past racism was rooted in legal barriers that prevented minority children from having access to the same educational institutions as white children, today minority children are faced with more subtle forms of educational racism such as “low teacher expectations and attitudes, clinical definitions of black academic problems, testing and tracking, biased curriculum and textbooks, and socializing into lower expectations and inferior jobs” (Ogbu, 1991a, p. 269).

**Prejudice.**—Prejudice refers to the preconceived judgment or opinion made about a person or a group based on social position variables, and it is usually accompanied by an unreasonable predilection or objection. Prejudice is operationalized by the automatic attribution of certain (often pejorative) characteristics to a person regardless of whether that person indeed has these particular characteristics (Feagin, 1992). Even when evidence is presented that a specific attribute may not be applicable, a prejudiced person does not incorporate this new information into the perception of the other individual or into their conceptual framework (Duckitt, 1992). Under such informational conditions, the person is seen as an exception to the ongoing prejudicial rule of status. Prejudice is likely based on a complex interaction of the attributes of race, social class, ethnicity, and gender.

Children, even at the preschool level, make judgments about people based on ethnic, racial, and social categories and also identify themselves as members of particular groups, compete for resources, and segregate themselves based on social and physical characteristics (see García Coll & Vázquez García, 1995a). While these are normative processes, it is not necessary that they result in prejudicial attitudes against children of color. García Coll and Vázquez García (1985a) argue that certain environmental conditions and socialization patterns, such as de-emphasizing in-group/out-group distinctions, providing positive models, and reducing social distance, can contribute to reducing the development of prejudicial attitudes in children.

**Discrimination.**—Discrimination has been defined as “any behavior which denies
individuals or groups of people equality of treatment which they may wish” (Stroebe & Insko, 1989, elaborated from Allport, 1954, p. 50). As a manifestation of prejudice, individuals are discriminated against on the basis of preconceived notions or stereotypes. The systematic inclusion or exclusion of members of a specific group can also stem from social distance or social desirability. Discrimination may be subtle as well as overt. Discrimination not only limits the quantity of resources available to a particular group but also places limits on their access to those resources.

One of the most detrimental forms of discrimination today is employment discrimination. Although this form of discrimination was made unlawful by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there are still occupational fields in which women and minorities are paid less than their white male counterparts (Haberfeld & Shenav, 1990). In addition, several studies have shown that discrimination persists in hiring practices, and therefore minorities have a harder time than whites securing employment (Coontz, 1992; Shulman, 1990; Turner, Fix, & Struyk, 1991). Bowman’s (1990) national survey of young black adults portrays a group of individuals whose hope and expectations have been eroded by their own experiences in and observations of the job market. As Bowman explained, “chronic job search strain and related psychosocial problems among black youth do not occur at one point in time; they evolve from past student-role expectations and adaptations to pressing labor market barriers” (Bowman, 1990, p. 99).

Oppression.—Oppression is the systematic use of power or authority to treat others unjustly. Oppression is an omnipresent atmosphere that exists when a group of persons find that they are in a devalued position, a position from which they cannot escape (Turner & Singleton, 1978). There is a pervasive element of oppression that comes from the acting out of a racial or ethnic classification. Research has shown that the psychological internalization of the devalued status and feelings of oppression can tend to limit the mobility of families and individuals and lead to the adoption of denigrating views and judgments both about themselves and others in their racial and ethnic group (Essed, 1991; Feagin, 1989).

Segregation
Aside from the ideological social stratification mechanisms described above, another salient mediator between social position variables and developmental outcome is segregation. Segregation refers to the systematic separation of groups and individuals based on attributions made in regard to their social position (Taeuber & Taeuber, 1965). Separation and segregation are ongoing facts of life in the United States. No longer by law or de jure, but de facto, segregation continues to be pervasive in today’s society (Feagin, 1992). The proposed model denotes three types of segregation that can affect the family’s and the child’s ongoing transactions with the environment: (a) residential, (b) economic, (c) social and psychological.

Residential.—The most pervasive form of segregation in the United States is residential. Where a family lives determines many of the elements of the environment that will either promote or inhibit the child’s development (Blau, 1981). Barriers in the housing market, which create residential segregation, have been perceived to have a direct and constraining effect on the resources available to a population within a segregated area (Massey & Bitterman, 1985; Santiago, 1992). Despite the mitigation of legal barriers, members of the same ethnic and racial groups still tend to cluster in specific residential areas because of social position variables and stratification mechanisms (e.g., ethnic and racial discrimination that does not allow families to freely live in any area that they can afford) (Massey & Bitterman, 1985). The higher concentration of poor blacks than poor whites in impoverished neighborhoods suggests that black children are more likely to live in dangerous neighborhoods and thus more likely to be exposed to violence, inadequate housing, and other environmental health risks (Krieger et al., 1993).

Economic.—Socioeconomic status of the family is another major determinant of segregation. The persistence of employment discrimination in both salary levels and hiring practices has contributed to economic segregation of minority populations. Economic segregation is critical to children’s development because families with higher economic status have greater access to the resources that enhance the development of their children’s competencies than families of lower economic status. However, even an upwardly mobile minority family with an increased income will not have accumulated available resources from previous generations that often are necessary for a family to meet emergency needs (Landry, 1980). In
addition, families are also forced into forming protective groups because of differential education and occupational opportunities that are available under segregation (McAdoo, 1995; McAdoo & Villarruel, in preparation).

Employment discrimination and subsequent economic segregation are particularly troublesome given the detrimental effects of poverty on children's development (see Huston, McLoyd, & García Coll, 1994b). For example, Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov (1994) found that children who lived in poverty, even only occasionally, demonstrated lower IQ scores and more internalizing behavior than children who had never experienced poverty. Furthermore, economic hardship heightens a parent's psychological strain, which in turn creates a tendency for parents to be erratic, punitive, and nonsupportive of their children (McLoyd, 1990a). This type of parenting has been found to be a critical contributor to the socioemotional problems of children.

Social and psychological.—Residential and economic segregation provides the background for social and psychological segregation. Social and psychological segregation occurs when families and children of color are not permitted access to important social and emotional resources as a result of social stratification mechanisms. Social and emotional isolation among groups only serves to widen the gap between them. As the emotional intensity of discord between these groups escalates, their separation increases, fostering feelings of fear and distrust (Harry, 1992). Social and psychological disconnection is compounded by the cultural, racial, and ethnic characteristics of the groups that initially separated them from one another (Harry, 1992). For the most part, minority families of diverse heritages find themselves living in different worlds from each other, as well as from mainstream society. By remaining separate, groups are unable to find commonalities between their cultures and their experiences. This situation enhances the power positions of those who control environmental resources (Harry, 1992). "Mainstream" environments to the realities, experiences, and necessities of these particular populations. In the case of minority families and children, there is the need to evaluate how the environments of these children can either promote, inhibit, or simultaneously inhibit and promote their developmental competencies.

Promoting/Inhibiting Environments

Children are exposed to similar settings across cultures, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, and health care settings). Yet the structure, function, and relative importance of these systems for the development of competence vary according to cultural influences, values, and goals (Sameroff & Fiese, 1990). Within these settings, macrosystem variables such as poverty and segregation become operationalized in these children’s lives (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983). It is necessary both to specify how these environmental factors affect children of color and to consider the relevance of these "mainstream" environments to the realities, experiences, and necessities of these particular populations. In the case of minority families and children, there is the need to evaluate how the environments of these children can either promote, inhibit, or simultaneously inhibit and promote their developmental competencies.

Inhibiting environments can result from a limitation in resources (e.g., inadequate health care). These resource deficits create conditions that do not facilitate and might actually undermine the development of competencies in children. In addition, inhibiting environments can result from an incongruence between the expectations, goals, and values of the child and the family and those held in a particular environment. For example, familial and cultural values can conflict with school ideologies, thereby influencing the child’s school performance (Harry, 1992).

Promoting environments, on the other hand, can result not only from an appropriate
number and quality of resources (e.g., neighborhoods that can adequately respond to social, emotional, and economic needs) but also from the compatibility between the two sets of systemic variables. In other words, an environment that would be considered inhibiting (e.g., such as school segregation) can become a promoting environment for a child when that setting is supportive of the developmental outcome of children and prepares them to deal with the societal demands imposed by prejudice or discrimination. Rosenberg (1979) asserts that a child’s self-esteem is affected by whether he or she operates in a dissonant or consonant environment. In a consonant environment, which can be segregated but supportive, not only is a minority child protected from the prejudice of the majority world, but the environment and norms are more comprehensible and congenial and the social reference group is appropriate. In a dissonant context, the minority child faces greater discrimination, an unfamiliar environment and norms, and a less appropriate reference group, and consequently is more apt to suffer from a lower sense of self-esteem.

Among the multiple environments that can be both promoting and inhibiting to children of color, we will highlight three: the school, the neighborhood, and the health care system.

**Schools.**—Children enter school with a rich background that includes the child’s unique characteristics, family characteristics, and community characteristics. This background influences the child’s ability to learn and develop within the context of the school setting. School variables that can influence child behavior can be viewed as a set of nested environments: (a) the school district or system (including organizational and instructional philosophies, policies, and procedures); (b) the individual schools (which includes school personnel and resources); (c) and the individual classrooms (which includes child, teacher, and peer characteristics and classroom structure, curriculum, and instructional strategies) (Wasik, 1989). Each of these nested environments can be inhibiting, promoting, or both. Very little systematic research has been done to address how these different school variables influence the social and academic competence of children of color. Most literature discussing issues of multicultural education focuses on the individual classroom teachers (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). However, an analysis of multicultural education should include other important variables such as the role of administrators and school boards, the school’s policies on staffing and tracking, and the extent to which the school promotes parental involvement (Harry, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

There is some evidence that compatibilities between school and culture have fortuitous effects on student achievement and school satisfaction (Tharp, 1989). Tharp’s (1989) review of studies revealed that the sociocultural compatibility of classroom instruction and children’s nativity patterns could lead to an improvement in learning. The studies surveyed included factors such as social organization, participation structures, speech patterns, and the contextualization of instruction. For example, a study by Mohatt and Erickson (cited in Tharp, 1989) found that when Anglo teachers did not employ a Native American’s rhythm and patterns of speech during their instruction with Native American children, “a more disorganized and less efficient pattern of interaction as well as a lower level or rapport between teacher and students resulted” (Tharp, 1989, p. 352).

Delgado-Gaitán’s work (1994) also illustrates how the cultural gap between schools and homes can be bridged for more effective schooling experiences. She examined how Mexican-American immigrant parents in Carpinteria, California, changed their child-rearing practices after participating in a Latino parent/community program to help families address school-related issues. She found that the parent support group was effective in two ways. First, the group enabled Mexican-American parents to learn how to convey to the schools their interest in bilingual programs and other curriculums. Second, it helped them socialize their children to meet the expectations of the school. Although both first-generation and immigrant families verbally communicated to their children, parents who participated in the program spoke to their children with the intent of encouraging specific verbal skills, expressive language, and critical thinking, which would help them academically.

**Neighborhoods.**—Neighborhoods also are a crucial component of children’s development. Barbarin and Soler (1993) suggest that the persistent prevalence of anxiety-based behaviors (problems with concentration, restlessness, and noncompliance) in African-American adolescents is based in an anxiety response to environmental stresses, particularly the concern for personal safety.
However, while the tendency for many is to label poor and ghetto neighborhoods as inhibiting environments and categorize middle-class communities as promoting environments for the development of children of color, these environments can be both inhibiting and promoting. Children develop subsistence tasks and acquire instrumental competencies according to their surroundings (Ogbu, 1981). Although a child who grows up in a poor, all Puerto Rican neighborhood might not have the availability or access to adequate resources (i.e., health care or good schools), the community can still encourage and provide the child with the instrumental competencies needed to be successful outside of that community. Conversely, while a middle-class environment can provide a minority child with some sort of economic stability, better schools, and access to adequate health services, it might not buffer the effects of prejudice, racism, and discrimination to which the child might be exposed within as well as outside of the community (Rodriguez, 1975; Tatum, 1987). Barnes (1991) argues that a sense of belonging in an ethnic or racial community can filter out the harmful effects of mainstream society, either by rejecting harmful messages or transforming them so they are harmless. Initial data analysis of a study conducted by Barnes in four schools in Dayton, Ohio, showed that parental involvement in the black community and black consciousness were associated positively with a more positive self-concept in their children. Neighborhoods need to be examined not only on the basis of the external resources available (i.e., better housing, better schools, good health care), but also on the internal resources of the community that may support or interfere with a child's social, academic, and psychological competencies.

The ability of predominantly African-American neighborhoods to provide economic and social support for residents is a strong theme in Tatum's (1987) qualitative study of African-American families living in a predominantly white community. Eight of the 10 sets of parents interviewed lamented that their children were not a part of a black peer group, and four of the families actively sought to create a black peer group for their children. Tatum's work suggests that black families see a link between having black friends and the establishment of a positive racial identity, an important source of protection from white racism.

Health care environments.—The development of competencies also is affected by the individual's health status, which is partly a reflection of adequate health care resources. By this we mean a system with reasonable accessibility that can screen for diseases or conditions that would impede normal development and that can respond appropriately to injury, infection, or health problems to avoid further complication or disability.

Research has shown that underutilization of health services among minority families, especially preventive care, is due to socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural barriers (Anderson, Giachello, & Aday, 1986; Boyce et al., 1986; Chavez, Cornelius, & Jones, 1986). Guendelman & Schwalbe (1986) compared rates of Hispanic, black, and non-Hispanic whites' contact with physicians during a 1 year period and found that the rates of health care utilization were significantly different. They found that Hispanic children were least likely to have had contact with a doctor, followed by black children and then non-Hispanic white children (68.3%, 72.2%, and 78.5%, respectively). This occurred despite the fact that Hispanic families were more likely to report that their children had only fair or poor health.

In addition, the presence or absence of family stressors and social networks operates to enhance or diminish the likelihood that a child can take advantage of available health resources. Traditional sociocultural practices can operate as buffering mechanisms against negative health conditions (Dowling & Fisher, 1987; Swenson, Erickson, Ehlinger, Swaney, & Carlson, 1986). A child's environment can also operate to inhibit or promote better health status. Health risk conditions (i.e., an area of high crime or violence, unsafe playgrounds, older housing with lead-based paints or hazardous waste) can expose children of color to environmental influences that can have negative consequences for developmental outcomes (Krieger et al., 1993).

The most frequently noted health risk for children is lead poisoning. Between 1988 and 1991, one in four black children younger than age 6 were affected by elevated levels of lead in their bloodstream, which can result from inhaling lead dust or from paint chips (Sherman, 1994). Children in poverty are at particular risk for lead exposure. High levels of lead in childhood have caused hearing loss, stunted growth, damage to blood production and kidney development, and poor vitamin D metabolism (Sherman, 1994). Health care environments can be im-
Adaptive Culture

Social stratification deriving from prejudice, discrimination, racism, or segregation and the differential access to critical resources such as good schools, employment, and health care influence families and children of color to develop goals, values, attitudes, and behaviors that set them apart from the dominant culture. This adaptive culture is the product of the group's collective history (cultural, political, and economic) and current contextual demands posed by the promoting and inhibiting environments.

Work by Ogbu (1981, 1985) and Boykin (Boykin, 1983; Boykin & Toms, 1985), among others, contributes to the conceptualization of adaptive culture. Ogbu (1981) describes a series of subsistence tasks and survival strategies that are developed in response to the environmental demands of the inner city, such as scarcity of jobs, dead-end peripheral and unstable jobs, and low wages and little social credit as measured by the values of the larger society. Boykin and Toms (1985) postulate that African-American families must negotiate three different realms of experience: the mainstream, the minority, and the black cultural experience. These different survival strategies and realms of experience are integrated into the development of an adaptive African-American culture.

These responses largely reflect culturally defined coping mechanisms to the demands placed by the promoting and inhibiting environments. A good example is the development of kinships or extended social networks to cope with the demands of child care and employment. At the collective level, three sources of historical processes are operating to influence the development of these responses: traditions and other cultural legacies, economic and political events, and migration and acculturation patterns.

Traditions and cultural legacies.—This first source of adaptation refers to traditions and other cultural legacies that have been part of the group's collective history for generations (i.e., for Puerto Ricans, internalized and externalized expressions of a mixed cultural heritage that incorporates Taino, colonial Spanish, and African influences, as well as influences from the United States). Boykin (1983) has specified nine interrelated but distinct dimensions of black culture that are incorporated into the socialization processes of African-American families, including an emphasis toward the affective-feeling domain and an enhanced responsiveness to variability. These dimensions, according to Boykin, are an integral part of black culture and permeate the child-rearing processes of African-American families.

Economic and political history.—Adaptation is also rooted in the economic and political events that have shaped the group's collective history. For African-Americans, the system of enslavement and its subsequent economic and political ramifications have had tremendous consequences for adaptation (Herskovits, 1930; McAdoo, 1993). For Puerto Ricans, the history of colonization from Spain and the United States has been postulated as a major contributor to psychosocial development (e.g., García Coll & Vázquez García, 1995b).

Migration and acculturation patterns.—A third influence is the migration and acculturation patterns of a group. These patterns include the initial reasons for migration (i.e., slavery and seasonal employment), length of the settlement of the particular community, and the ease of back and forth, or circular, migration. Patterns of acculturation are also important, including the ease of acculturation and the community's ideal of biculturalism versus assimilation to the mainstream culture. Minority parents residing in the United States must decide what aspects of ethnic parenting they wish to retain and those they wish to relinquish in favor of the dominant culture's parental values, attitudes, and practices. Subsequently, parental acculturation levels might have an impact on parenting styles by influencing developmental expectations, mother-infant interactions, feeding and caregiving practices, and the role of the extended family (García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995). For example, Gutierrez and Sameroff (1990) found that bicultural Mexican-American mothers' levels of acculturation were associated with their perceptions of child development. Mothers who were more acculturated had more complex conceptualizations of their child's development and therefore could better understand their children's behavior than mothers who were less acculturated or monocultural. They suggest that a bicultural living circumstance may enable a
mother to more easily understand and differentiate multiple influences on a child’s development and thus enhance her parenting skills. Similarly, Rueschenberg and Buriel (1989) found that Mexican-American families became more acculturated they became increasingly involved with formal social support services outside the family.

These collective forces of migration and acculturation provide the background from which adaptive responses are generated at both the family and the community level. Cohort effects need to be considered when assessing the impact of migration and acculturation, as each are ongoing processes and can be experienced as much by recent immigrants as by those living in the United States who move from an ethnic neighborhood to one that is predominantly white (García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995). In addition, the distinction made by Ogbu (1991b) between voluntary and involuntary minorities might be important in that involuntary minorities might be less likely to embrace the dominant culture than voluntary minorities. Finally, the consequences of these historical processes should be recognized as relevant for both dominant and minority groups.

Current contextual demands.—More contemporary and immediate sources of influence also contribute to the development of an adaptive culture. Rates of unemployment, neighborhood safety, and other aspects of the promoting/inhibiting environments are current influences on children and families (Krieger et al., 1993). Also operating at this level are racism, prejudice, and other ideological stratification mechanisms that are transmitted through systems of formal education, the media, and interpersonal interactions.

Thus, the adaptive culture is the product of the group’s prior collective history (cultural, political, and economic) and the contextual demands placed by the promoting and inhibiting environments.

Child Characteristics

The developmental principle that children are not passive recipients of environmental influences is no less the case for children of color, such as African-Americans and Puerto Ricans, than for any other groups. In the proposed model, child characteristics play a key role, both in how they are influenced by promoting and inhibiting environments and adaptive cultures and in how they influence family functioning and the emergence of developmental competencies. While the range of potential characteristics to consider is wide and shares some similarities with those of majority culture children, a number of others might be considered particularly relevant for children of color.

Age and temperamental characteristics are obvious considerations. Few studies explicitly assess temperamental characteristics of children of color; however, previous findings suggest that African-American and Puerto Rican children differ from Caucasian infants on Brazelton indices assessed neonatally (García Coll, Sepkoski, & Lester, 1981). Temperament also has been incorporated into previous models of the connections between poverty and African-American children’s socioemotional functioning (McLoyd, 1990a). Although important, such considerations are less unique to children of color than other potential factors such as health, maturational timing, and racial features.

There are clear indications that the health status of children of color is less satisfactory than is the health status of majority culture children (see García Coll, 1990). Rates of prematurity in both African-American and Puerto Rican populations are higher than in Caucasian populations, thereby creating greater developmental risk (see Vohr & García Coll, 1988). Further, African-American infants have been found to have a greater incidence of iron deficiency, which has been associated with decreased attention, greater fatigue, and impaired performance on measures of cognitive ability (Carter, 1983; Webb & Osiki, 1974).

Biological factors may have specific significance for children of color. García Coll (1990) reviewed a number of studies that demonstrate differences in neonatal behavior in various populations of infants of color. Lester and Brazelton (1982) suggested that neonatal behavior may be a phenotype that expresses the complex relations among genetic endowment, intrauterine environment, and mothers’ obstetrical history, and these characteristics can elicit specific adaptive behaviors from the caregiving environment and contribute to the practices and expectations of the culture. In a different developmental period, biology, as manifested in maturational timing during adolescence, may be important. Spencer, Dobbs, and Swanson (1988) note that African-American adolescent boys tend to be taller and heavier that their Caucasian counterparts and may mature earlier as well. These authors suggest that early maturation and increased size
are risk factors for social and academic competence. They posit that larger, early maturing African-American boys may be perceived as a threat in their environment and therefore receive less positive support from the contexts in which they interact, which in turn affects the development of competencies.

Physical characteristics, such as racial features and skin color, also may affect minority children's development, although the impact of such characteristics has not been fully studied. Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) have suggested that skin color may affect development of identity and social relationships in African-American children, although they note that this possibility is seldom addressed either empirically or conceptually. Lightness of skin color is perceived as more desirable, even within groups of African-American and Puerto Rican children, and is associated with greater opportunity (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992).

Gender has been discussed in previous sections of this model, but also has relevance as an individual characteristic. Spencer, Dobbs, and Swanson (1988) showed that poverty appears to have more detrimental effects on black boys than black girls, although the extent to which this finding is culturally unique is unclear. Nevertheless, documented gender differences in various competencies (Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Vaden, 1990) suggest that the impact of gender must be taken into account in multivariate models of developmental competence.

Family

Minority families tend to have certain characteristics that differentiate them from mainstream families and that affect family processes in very profound ways. Among these characteristics we will highlight the following: the structure and roles of the family; family beliefs, values, and goals; racial socialization; and socioeconomic status and resources.

Structure and roles of the family.—The presence in the family of at least one or more persons who unconditionally love a child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is considered a minimum requirement for the development of competencies in children. In families of color, there is a tendency for a more integral use of persons other than the birth parents to perform some of the tasks of parenting, through the support of extended family members, familism, and fictive kin (friends who become as close as kin) (Garcia Coll, 1990; Harrison et al., 1990; McAdoo, 1982).

African-American, Puerto Rican, and other minority populations have a high percentage of single heads of households (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1986; Vázquez Nuttall, 1979), but the reliance on extended kin by some of these family systems might provide enough resources to meet the child's needs.

Reliance on the social support of extended kin is maintained as part of the adaptive culture because of cultural patterns that have been brought from other lands (Harrison et al., 1990). These patterns have been maintained because of the economic and discriminatory environments of the societies in which these groups live (McAdoo, 1982). These families are not able to rely on mainstream institutions to provide assistance and help to meet the differential developmental needs of family members.

The roles that individuals play in the family are based on culturally defined gender, parental, and age-appropriate expectations as well as the family structure (i.e., the persons living in the home). In families of color, there can be flexibility of roles as an adaptive response to cultural and societal pressures, as well as adherence to traditional culturally defined roles (McAdoo, 1993). Interactions between family members, therefore, will be reflective of the adaptive culture and the stresses and pressures that the family must cope with.

Family values, beliefs, and goals.—Family values, beliefs, and goals embody the elements that are held dear and important to family members. A growing literature documents the differences between ethnic and minority groups in child-rearing values, beliefs, and goals (McAdoo, 1993). These beliefs are rooted in cultural and religious traditions that can be traced to the countries of origin (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Fitzpatrick, 1988; García Coll, 1990; García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995; Harrison et al., 1990; Ogbu, 1981) and the adaptive culture, as well as the unique experiences of parents. These factors will not only determine the basis of the behavior displayed during family interactions, but will also influence family structure and roles and therefore interactions with other members of the extended family.

Racial socialization.—Positioning families and children of color within their environment requires incorporating the ways in which minority families cope with racism and discrimination in the confines of family life (Cross, 1992; McAdoo, 1993). Families
of color face chronic stressors when they attempt to socialize their children and simultaneously protect them from the negative effects of racism, segregation, and the resulting inhibiting environments (Peters, 1985).

Racial socialization has been postulated as an important aspect of family processes within minority populations from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Branch & Newcombe, 1986; García Coll, Meyer, & Brillon, 1995; Hale-Benson, 1982; Renne, 1970; Tatum, 1987; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Children of color must learn to function in both white and black realms (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Cross, 1991; Thornton et al., 1990). Parents teach their children how to cope with the demands of a society that devalues their heritage, race, and culture (McAdoo, 1992). While children of color may demonstrate preferences for being members of the dominant culture, parents have the task of ensuring that their children maintain a positive view of their ethnic and racial group. In fact, Brigham (1974) found that African-American children were more likely than white children to attribute positive traits to their own group. The importance of racial socialization is emphasized by findings that relate these practices to the child's motivation, achievement, prospects for upward mobility, and racial attitudes (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Branch & Newcombe, 1980, 1986).

Socioeconomic status/resources.—The socioeconomic resources available to families of color and how they are used also are important influences on the developmental competencies of minority children (see Huston, McLoyd, & García Coll, 1994b). While measures of socioeconomic status can be good indicators of social class variables, they fail to pick up within-group nuances. For example, a first-generation middle-class family of color may react differently to a financial crisis than a fourth-generation middle-class family, with greater uncertainty about socioeconomic status. Given the fact that most minority families experience higher, more extreme, and more long-lasting poverty (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991), the consequences of differences in socioeconomic status on the development of competencies in children of color need further attention (Huston, McLoyd, & García Coll, 1994a).

Developmental Competencies

Developmental competencies represent the “outcome” portion of the model and reflect both the functional competencies of a child at any one point in time and the developing/emerging skills that children bring to the multiple ecologies in which they exist. Nevertheless, it is critical to determine and appropriately measure the emergence and salience of specific skills that define the functional or adaptive competence of children of color in specific developmental periods. According to organizational models, development in children of color cannot be judged solely in relation to a specific “standard norm” applied to all children, but must be considered within the context of specific ecological circumstances. Further, within-group variability in ecological niches and developmental outcome in children of color is as great as is the between-group variability that necessitates the development of this model.

The evaluation of meaningful developmental competencies will continue to involve important traditional skill areas such as cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic skills. However, functional outcome measures must also recognize manifestations of these skills that reflect competent adaptation to circumstances created by social stratification, the effects of racism and its concomitant processes, and the influence of segregation on the nature of the environments faced by children of color. For example, assertive behavior with members of the peer group may be more appropriate in some contexts for African-American children (Heath, 1989; Rotheram-Borus & Phinney, 1990), and the lack of eye contact with authority figures is an appropriate social response by Puerto Rican children (Fitzpatrick & Travieso, 1980).

Notions of competence also must be expanded to include a broader range of adaptive responses beyond the traditional areas of concern and to incorporate additional and alternative abilities, such as the child’s ability to function in two or more different cultures, to cope with racism, subtle and overt discrimination, and social and psychological segregation. Both culture-specific and bicultural competencies are needed to promote these children’s development. Children must learn the codes that are appropriate to both cultures if they are to master the activities that are called upon in each (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Szapocznik and colleagues (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980; Szapocznik, Santisteban, Kurtines, Perez-Vidal, & Hervis, 1984) found that Hispanic children with bicultural skills were less likely to experience school and family conflicts or to become involved in illegal drug use. Children of color also
must effectively cope with racism and its derivatives and maintain a strong sense of self despite multiple threats. Parents who are successful in preparing their children for these tasks thus can be considered to be effective teachers of a culture who foster the adaptive racial socialization of their children (see García Coll, Meyer, Brillon, 1995).

Competency for children of color involves a wide range and multiple levels of abilities that are intertwined and cannot be defined by any one single index, indicator, or measure. The adaptive competency of children of color at any one point in time is, in turn, an important influence on the subsequent ecological processes that will continue to affect the developmental course of these children. The process is recursive and operates at multiple levels, but is most represented in reciprocal influences on the child's psychological and social segregation, promoting/inhibiting environments, and family processes.

Conclusions

Both historically and in the present, mainstream developmental sciences have not emphasized the unique normative processes among minority children and their families or the development of competencies within these populations. This omission reflects, in part, the inability of existing theoretical models to address critical aspects of the environment that have profound influences in the developmental processes in these populations. By placing these influences (social position, racism and its derivatives, and segregation) at the core rather than at the periphery of a causal framework and by specifying how they influence more immediate settings, the proposed model is a heuristic guide to research in the development of competencies in children of color. Patterns of family interaction can then be conceptualized as a reflection of an adaptive culture—a mix of history, traditions, and adaptive responses to present contextual demands—and not solely as individual patterns of interactions.

Several challenges are posed by this model. The first is to identify the alternative competencies in children of color that are not measured by traditional assessment tools, not only in the realms of established developmental competencies but in areas of bicultural adaptation and coping with racism. The second is to analyze the implications for social policy and interventions. For example, the present analysis implies that bilingual education should foster the development of balanced bilingualism so that the children develop mastery in two languages and the family is not negatively affected by the creation of a linguistic gap between family members. Alternatively, bilingual education for children can be paired with English as a Second Language instruction for family members so that, as the child's communicative skills evolve toward greater mastery in a second language, so do other family members.

The third challenge is to recognize that we cannot continue to waste human talent because of outdated racial/ethnic conceptualizations. The competence and productivity of minority populations are crucial to our collective well-being (McLoyd, 1990a). Indeed, people of color from various national origins will be close to a majority in the United States (Exter, 1992) early in the next century. The proposed model and the consequent research and social policies can contribute to a necessary change in societal views of children’s development and the characteristics of racial and ethnic groups.

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1910 Child Development

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