

The Ethnic Minority Context of Child and Adolescent Problem Behavior:
Implications for Theory, Assessment and Intervention.

Miwa Yasui

&

Thomas J. Dishion

Child and Family Center

University of Oregon

Paper submitted to *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*

Introduction

Overview. The increasing proportion of minority groups has marked the United States as one of the most culturally diverse countries in the modern world. Immigration trends, technological advances, and increasing global economic and social interdependence have enhanced this diversity, which is clearly reflected in the changing demographics of the American population. The nation's census poll (Census of Population and Housing, 1990), reports that one in four Americans were members of minority groups (i.e. non-White or Hispanic). It has been estimated that approximately 31% of U.S. adolescents belong to an ethnic minority group, and 40% of public school children are minorities (Hill, 1993), indicating that minority youth constitute the largest proportion of adolescents, and also the largest proportions of public school enrollees. This growth of the minority population is expected to continue, indicating a major shift towards a population that is increasing in its diversity in racial composition. Thus the experience of American children in the coming decades will increasingly be the experience of culturally diverse minority children, highlighting the growing need for recognition of the important role culture plays in developmental transitions for minority youth.

This paper addresses this growing need by proposing a conceptual framework for understanding the developmental pathways unique to ethnic minority youth and their families. This conceptual framework will describe how culture is endogenous to the socialization of all youth, and central to the development of specific self-regulatory strategies and problem behavior. The centrality of culture is addressed through reviewing cultural influences on the following three ecological levels: 1) internal developmental processes (e.g. ethnic identity development, development of coping and self-regulatory mechanisms), 2) familial socializing contexts (e.g. racial and ethnic socialization), and 3) interaction with the larger societal contexts (e.g.

maintenance of bicultural competence in adapting to mainstream and ethnic cultures). Specifically, we will focus on ethnic minority groups' experiences of discrimination and oppression, ethnic minority status and the resulting effects, and the development and maintenance of adaptive strategies (e.g. cultural values, bicultural competence) that serve to promote resiliency in ethnic minority children and families. We will focus the discussion of these influences during adolescence because this transitional period is especially unique for ethnic minority adolescents where socio-cultural influences play significant roles in shaping one's coping, psychological adjustment and identity development.

Secondly, in proposing this conceptual framework, the paper addresses current conceptual and methodological challenges within the field of developmental and clinical psychology that are faced in conducting ethnic minority research. The limitations of current theoretical models of child development for ethnic minority youth has spurred the conceptualization of a more adaptive model of understanding how culturally specific influences within the familial context serve to promote resiliency and self-regulation among all youth in general and ethnic minority youth in particular. The paper further addresses the limitations of current methodologies within assessment and intervention research; highlighting the critical need in incorporating culturally anchored methods in assessments and interventions involving ethnic minority youth. Thus we draw on a theoretical model to identify the key elements critical to conducting culturally sensitive interventions with children and families.

Conceptualizing Culture. Within developmental research, several models of child development have served as an anchor for understanding adaptive development in ethnic minority children. Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1985; 1989) ecological systems theory describes the child as developing within a multilevel system of relationships, behavior settings and more

general community contexts. The model describes the child as embedded within “layers” of environment, which include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem which resembles the closest environmental context to the child represents the relationships and interactions a child has with his or her immediate surroundings. Examples of microsystem structures include family, peers, and school environments. The relationship is bidirectional where the structure influences the child and the child influences the structure.

The mesosystem is the second layer that includes the relationship between the structures of the child’s microsystem, such as the relationships between parents and his peers, or his parents and the school context. The mesosystem can be a powerful organizing influence in child and adolescent problem behavior, for example. For example, the parents early withdrawal from parenting at the same time as the child becomes involved with deviant peers defines a ‘premature autonomy’ mesosystem, found to be prognostic of dramatic increases in problem behavior (Dishion, Nelson & Bullock, 2004).

The exosystem defines the larger social system which impacts child development through interacting with some structure in his or her microsystem (Berk, 2000). Lastly, the macrosystem, which is the outermost layer in the child’s environment, consists of cultural values, customs, traditions and laws of that culture or community. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979;1985; 1989) framework suggests that each environmental level impacts the child through the interactions between the systems, especially with the microsystem. For example, pathogenic environments relevant to understanding problem behavior include coercive family dynamics (Patterson, 1982), and deviancy training among peers (Dishion, Nelson et al, 2004). Thus the microsystem influences on child and adolescent problem behavior mediate the influence of context and cultural factors.

Cultural influences on child development are also described by the “developmental niche” (Super and Harkness, 1985). According to Super and Harkness (1985) the developmental niche is a ‘theoretical framework for studying cultural regulation of the micro-environment of the child’ and explains cultural acquisition through three subsystems 1) physical and social settings of the child, 2) culturally regulated customs of parenting, and 3) the psychology of the caretakers (Super & Harkness, 1985). The three subsystems work within the framework of the larger environment, where external influences such as political or societal level changes impact each subsystem, and in turn these influences are experienced by the child as changes in their immediate micro-systems. In the developmental niche model, culture is therefore seen as a central aspect of child development, within each of the three microsystems that directly influence the child.

Similar to the developmental niche model, Garcia Coll and colleagues (1995) have proposed an alternate model of child development that includes culture as a central to socialization process; that is, endogenous within the relationships that influence child and adolescent development. In contrast to the Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model where culture is understood as one of the macrolevel influences on the child, the integrative model by Garcia Coll et al (1995) places culture as a central aspect of all environmental contexts of the child. Thus, cultural influences are experienced by the child at each ecological level, from the immediate microsystem level influences such as family context, to the larger macrosystem level influences such as social, economic or psychological segregation, racism, discrimination, and oppression. In this model, culture is an integral part of all subsystems of the child, existing on multiple levels of analysis-within individuals, within groups and across groups. Such reflects the fluid and dynamic process that occurs between the individual and his or her culture, indicating the centrality of

culture in child development.

Much of the empirical and theoretical work on culture and ethnic minority status presumes the Bronfenbrenner framework. In this paper, we offer a conceptualization that is most consistent with that articulated by Garcia-Coll et al (1995). Understanding the cultural and ethnic factors as endogenous to key developmental processes has implications for the development of assessment and intervention practices that are sensitive and effective for ethnically diverse children and families. We first offer an empirically-derived model for conceptualizing factors that influence the development of child and adolescent problem behavior that integrates the development and psychopathology data with that of resilience, self-regulation and prosocial coping. Then we discuss specific examples of how this model can be applied to understanding protective factors among major ethnic minority children and families within the United States. Finally, we discuss the implications of this perspective to redefining future research leading to effective and efficient child and family assessment and interventions.

An Empirical Model

Overview. Figure 1 below provides a revision of a model recently offered by Dishion & Patterson (2006) in a literature review on the development of problem behavior in children and adolescence. In the literature review, causal status of constructs was established by two criteria: 1) The constructs were found to covary with problem behavior longitudinally; 2) Randomized interventions that target the these constructs result in reductions in child and adolescent problem behavior. The use of interventions as a litmus test for establishing causality certainly simplifies the summary of a model, as few variables survive such the more rigorous test (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Dishion & Patterson, 1999).

Insert Figure 1 about here

There are two major sets of findings that require explanation relevant to the issue of ethnicity and culture understanding and intervening in child and adolescent problem behavior. First, the rates of problem behaviors vary for specific ethnic groups across various contexts. For example, in some samples, African American children are found to be more aggressive than European American children (ref?), however, European American children have higher rates of substance use and abuse (Catalano, Morrison et al, 1992). Second, although the literature is limited as of this writing, most studies that include a substantial number of ethnic minority families reveal that all groups are responsive to family-centered interventions (Connell, Dishion & Yasui, under review).

We propose that ethnic differences in the prevalence of problem behaviors is primarily a function of resilience among children to pathogenic environment influences. We conceptualize self-regulation as a construct relevant to understanding resilience in children and adolescents. Dishion & Connell (in press) propose self-regulation as a major resiliency factor for adolescents, showing that youth high in self-regulation were virtually impervious to deviant peer influences at age 16 to 17. Thus, youth growing up in the same neighborhood, or interaction with the same peers will be differentially affected by these interactions, conditional on their levels of self-regulation.

Self-regulation is likely to include a large set of abilities that almost certainly vary as a function of culture, ethnicity and minority status. In fact, cultural values, ethnic identity, gender identity, and daily routines are thought to provide the infrastructure for the successful learning and practice of self-regulatory strategies (Dishion & Patterson, 2006). Growing up African-American in the context of racism and oppression is requires a unique set of prosocial coping

skills than does growing up European-American, primarily in a high achieving and competitive family context. Growing up female has a unique set of demands compared to male development with respect to the kinds of environmental experiences as well as effective strategies for coping. We hypothesize that children's development of culturally specific self-regulation strategies is largely a function of parent and family mentoring, modeling and socialization. As we discuss below, dealing with just the racial dimensions of ethnic minority status is positively affected by parent's skill in racial socialization.

Self-regulation in children and adolescents is also quite relevant to intervention science. The vast majority of clinical interventions delivered directly to child and adolescents focus on enhancing self regulation and prosocial coping. These interventions are found to successfully reduce child and adolescent problem behavior (e.g., Kazdin, 1994; Prinz, Blechman et al, 1994). With an ecological approach to interventions with children and families, self-regulation serves as a focus for direct interventions for children and adolescents (Dishion & Stormshak, 2006).

We will first review the general model as presented in Figure 1, and then link to the model the literature on ethnic identity and coping as diverse aspects of self-regulation among ethnic minority youth. In particular, it is important to consider the evidence for family and peer socialization process that predict child and adolescent problem behavior.

Family and Peer Socialization. As can be seen from Figure 1, child and adolescent self-regulation and problem behavior are mutual outcomes of family and peer socialization processes. The parenting practices associated with child behavior problems vary with development. For example, in general, parent monitoring is a construct that is equally valid in early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence, but its form varies dramatically across those three developmental time periods (Dishion & McMahon, 1998). For early childhood, both affective

(i.e., attachment) and behavior management practices appear critical to the young child's social emotional development. Shaw and Bell (1993, 2000) propose an integrated model for family socialization for early childhood, which emphasizes: (a) reciprocal parent-child influence; and (b) transactions between the family and the larger social context and previous developmental experiences. That is, proximal involvement with the young child may serve as a precursor to later parent monitoring practices, as well as serve as the core of parent-child attachment relationships. Consistent with this premise, we found that parent involvement was observable on home visits to the family, and that random assignment to the family centered intervention condition was associated with increased levels of involvement (Shaw, Dishion et al, 2006).

Central to the emergence of early childhood behavior problems are weak or disorganized family management practices, which can result in coercive parent-child interactions. As the child's aversive behaviors increase in intensity and frequency, the parent acquiesces, unwittingly reinforcing problem behaviors (Gardner, 1989). As the child becomes increasingly irritating, the parent may further escalate power assertion techniques, or alternately, begin avoiding conflict with an increasingly coercive young child. Coercive cycles eventually lead to the child's open defiance or behavior problems that, in later development, include being away from home excessively, lying, stealing, and engaging in more serious behaviors such as fire-setting. Patterson, Capaldi, and Bank (1991) formalized the "early starter model," one of two pathways by which children may emerge as chronically offending delinquent adolescents and antisocial adults. According to this model, families provide direct training in antisocial behavior for young boys through their family management practices. From Shaw's recent follow-ups of high-risk children, it is clear that coercive and rejecting parent-child relationships measured at age 2 are associated with child conflicts with peers and teachers at age 6 (Ingoldsby et al., 2001),

trajectories of persistent conduct problems from ages 2 to 10 (Shaw et al., 2003, 2005) and serious antisocial activity (i.e., arrest), substance use, and sexual activity between the ages of 11 and 15 (Shaw, 2006).

While the study of coercive interactions has yielded significant data about the onset of early conduct problems (Campbell, Pierce, Moore, Marakovitz, & Newby, 1996; Shaw et al., 1998, 2003, 2005), there is a growing body of research showing the importance of early positive interactions between caregiver and child. For example, among 3- to 4-year-olds with conduct problems, Gardner (1987) showed that only 20% of the child's time was spent in conflict with parents. We would expect that the quality of positive interactions during quiet time (80%) would have a preventive effect on early conduct problems. Consistent with this notion, Pettit and Bates (1989) found the amount of play and social contact in the first and second years to be associated with fewer conduct problems at age 4. One might expect, therefore, intervention outcomes on seemingly mundane parent-child interactions such as talking or joint play.

Whereas a predominately positive and responsive caregiver would be expected to influence the course of conduct problems during the first year, retaining a positive stance becomes a greater challenge in the second year. At this stage, parents need to minimize the toddler's exposure to unhealthy behavior and dangerous situations, which in turn prevents oppositional behavior and conflict. In the first year, contingent responsivity to the infant's bids for attention may suffice; however, greater anticipatory awareness is needed to minimize conflict with the mobile and emotionally labile toddler. Although normative increases in parent-child conflict would be expected during the "terrible twos," evidence suggests that proactive strategies to prevent aversive exchanges in the short-term (Holden, 1983) would improve child outcome in the long-term (Gardner, Sonuga-Barke, & Sayal, 1999). In particular, a mother's skills in scaffolding the

child's activities predict improvements in conduct problems over time (Gardner et al., 1999; Gardner, Burton, & Wilson, 2003).

Literature on child development suggests that inconsistent, erratic and harsh parenting practices, excessive levels of parental control, parent-child conflict, are parental factors that lead to the development of problem behavior and depressive symptoms (Patterson, 1995; Sanders, Dadds, Johnston, & Cash, 1992). For example, family conflict has been related with adolescent externalizing problems including aggression, antisocial behavior and conduct problems, and further, internalizing problems such as depression, anxiety and low self esteem (Barrera, Li, & Chassin, 1995; Jenkins & Smith, 1990). Adolescents who engage in delinquent behaviors are reported as more likely to live with families identified as having lower levels of parental monitoring and parental warmth, and higher levels of parent-child conflict, inconsistent discipline, and higher parental psychological control (Lahey, Gordon, Loeber, Stouthammer-Loeber, & Farrington, 1999; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999, Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). Similarly, Mason and colleagues (1994) reported that even after controlling for the neighborhood context, family conflict was predictive of child externalizing behavior. Negative parenting practices such as these are reported to be highly associated with high levels of stress; for example, Webster Stratton & Hammond (1988) found that mothers with high levels of stress were more controlling and more punitive with their children than mothers who reported less stress. Similarly, Weinraub & Wolf (1983) found that mothers who experienced more stressful life events were less responsive to their children.

Thus absence of coercion in the family does not necessarily translate into growth in positive child behavior and abilities. There is a growing literature suggesting that the child's development of self regulation is a critical step towards prosocial behavior, psychosocial adjustment in home

and school through childhood and adolescence (Barkley, 2001; Eisenberg & Fabes, 2000; Rothbart & Ellis, 2004; Wills & Dishion, 2003). Less is known about the parenting factors associated with the emergence of children's self regulation, although it is likely linked with the development of prosocial behavior, including behaviors such as induction of empathy, proactive structuring, scaffolding and other positive parenting practices (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Rothbart & Bates, 1998). We hypothesize that a major advantage of improving family management in early childhood is that it frees the caregiver to focus on the development of positive, self-regulatory abilities in the child. Within this developmental framework, there are two correlated and developmentally significant outcomes to family socialization in early childhood: antisocial behavior and self-regulation.

The presence of problem behavior and deficits in self regulation do not bode well for the school age child. There is a cascade of developmental experiences that potentially contribute to the early drug use risk within the school context. For example, poor self regulation in school and problem behavior undermine progress towards learning academic skills. In addition such behaviors are associated with early peer rejection (Dodge, 1983; Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983). In our early work we assumed peers do not become important socialization agents until early adolescence (Dishion, Patterson et al, 1991). However, children's time with peers exceeds time with parents as early as 4 years of age (Ellis et al, 1981). Peer rejection dynamics are certainly prevalent at age 5 and 6 (Ladd et al, 1990, 1993). We found evidence for deviant peer involvement in first grade (Dishion, Duncan et al, 1994). Important, recent observation research by Snyder et al, 2005) indicates that deviancy training among first grade youth can be readily observed in the school context, and that such interactions uniquely predict growth in covert forms of antisocial behavior as well as increasing negative interactions in the home. Finally, it is

becoming increasingly clear that a child's placement in classrooms is not a benign event, in that placement in a classroom with other highly aggressive children amplifies behavior problems for those children most at risk (Kellam et al, 1998; Warren et al, 2005). It is relevant that focusing on classroom management with techniques such as "the good behavior game" (Dishion & Patterson, 1996; 2005) can have a long term impact on reducing risk for more serious forms of problem behavior and early onset substance use (Ialongo et al, 2001). Thus, early management of the peer environment has critical implications for children's social and emotional development, and for prevention programming (Dishion & Dodge, 2006).

There are many aspects of self-regulation that are likely to be universally beneficial to children and adolescence, such as the ability to inhibit prepotent responses in the classroom or in social interaction. Regardless of the child's ethnic status, these skills are likely to be critical social survival skills. However, there are a range of unique skills and competencies for children and families that are of minority ethnic status. Some of these skills are particularly appropriate for coping the daily 'microaggressions' (Walters, Simoni et al, 2002) that may occur as well as negotiating multiple cultural worlds (Scapocznik, Kurtines et al, 1997). We see ethnic identity as fundamental to the self-regulatory coping of minority youth.

Ethnic Identity. The ecological context of the ethnic minority child includes many challenges associated with ethnic minority status and being part of a culture that differs from the mainstream. Societal stressors such as restricted opportunities in employment, housing, services, discrimination, and difficulties with language barriers or cultural misunderstandings place ethnic minority adolescents and families at a greater risk compared to mainstream families.

These challenges around ethnicity make it particularly important for ethnic minority adolescents to have a strong identification and sense of belonging with one's ethnic group.

Attitudes about one's ethnicity are central to the psychological functioning of individuals who live in societies where their culture and group are poorly represented politically, economically, and socially, and, in worse cases, discriminated against (Phinney, & Chavira, 1982). For these individuals, the concept of ethnic identity provides the basis for understanding resilience in minority children faced with mixed acceptance by the majority culture.

Ethnic identity is more than just membership in a particular ethnic group; it is an aspect of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her knowledge of membership of a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981). Self-identification with one's own ethnic group is a salient issue that influences the psychological well-being of the individual. The importance of ethnic identity in developing a self-concept has been well documented for members of diverse ethnic groups (Cross, 1978).

Research suggests that individuals need a firm sense of group identification in order to maintain a sense of well-being (Lewin, 1948). However, for ethnic minority groups, holding a group identity poses certain difficulties individuals have to face. If mainstream culture views traits or characteristics of an ethnic group as disadvantaged or lower in status, ethnic group members may potentially be faced with a negative social identity. Members of lower-status groups may seek to improve their status by identifying themselves as members of the dominant society, thus rejecting their own; which may have negative psychological consequences. For ethnic minorities, ethnic identity formation involves developing an understanding and acceptance of one's own group in the face of societal stigmatization (Phinney, 1991).

Models of ethnic identity have emphasized the importance for minority group members to examine and question preexisting attitudes and assumptions about ethnicity as a necessary step toward identity achievement (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1993; Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1989).

Adolescents and young adults are assumed to progress over three developmental stages of ethnic identity: 1) an unexamined or received ethnic identity which is framed by the attitudes of family, communities, or society, 2) a crisis or exploration phase which involves thorough reevaluation of the history and culture of their group, 3) and finally an achieved ethnic identity defined as a secure commitment to one's group based on understanding obtained through an active exploration of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1996).

In the first stage of unexamined ethnic identity, individuals take on without question the values and attitudes to which they have been exposed. Attitudes towards other and one's own group depends largely on socialization in the family and the social context (Phinney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1996). The exploratory or immersion stage is the period during which minority individuals become deeply interested in knowing about their group. Exploration and reexamination of the history, culture and social positioning of their group within mainstream society promotes the awareness of ethnicity and group membership. The final stage of ethnic identity achievement involves the acceptance and internalization of one's ethnicity. Minority individuals who have achieved this stage develop a secure, confident sense of themselves as members of their group. They hold positive, yet realistic views of their own group, abandoning the anger towards the majority group and are generally open to other groups (Cross, 1991).

This developmental process of achieving ethnic identity is important due to its implication in the overall adjustment of minority group adolescents. Empirical evidence has shown a consistent positive, although modest, correlation between ethnic identity and self-esteem (Belgrave, et al., 1994; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Wright, 1985). Phinney and Kohatsu (1997) describe the initial stage of unexamined or diffuse ethnic identity is accompanied by low self-regard and feelings of inadequacy, whereas the final stage of ethnic identity

achievement typically is associated with a positive self-concept and absence of psychological distress. In the study by Phinney (1989) on 10th grade African American, Asian-American, and Mexican-American adolescents, subjects at higher stages of ethnic identity were found to have significantly higher scores on all four subscales of a measure of psychological adjustment (self-evaluation, sense of mastery, family relations and social relations). A similar relationship between ethnic identity search and commitment and self-esteem was found among college students from four ethnic groups (Asian-American, African American, Mexican American, and European American); and the relationship was found to be stronger among minority group students than among the European American students (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Phinney and Chavira (1982) found that adolescents with high ethnic identity had higher self-esteem and used more active strategies in dealing with threats such as discrimination and stereotypes than did those with low ethnic identity.

Protective Parenting Practices

Overview. In addition to the basic parenting processes that involve balancing and regulating the demands that come from within and outside the family, ethnic minority families encounter multiple sociocultural influences that shape their experiences into those that differ from mainstream families. Factors such as discrimination, prejudice, poverty, acculturation, lack of accessible resources, and language barriers are some examples of external influences that affect ethnic minority families. Not only that, ethnic minority parents bring to their family context internal cultural elements such as cultural beliefs, attitudes, values, family roles, and cultural expectations about child rearing that are central to the development of ethnic minority children. Both external and internal cultural influences affect parenting processes and family functioning of ethnic minority families in ways that deviate from mainstream European American families.

Because of the “deviation” from normative European American familial processes, ethnic minority families are often perceived as having deficits that are due to ethnicity, culture or race (Thomas, 1992). This “cultural deviant” perspective in which ethnic minority families are evaluated as maladaptive or as falling short of the mainstream standards of healthy child adjustment, has been the dominant view in current literature on child development. Bronfenbrenner (1985) reported that because minority groups are evaluated using the majority group values, behaviors, and attitudes, the deviation from the “norm” is interpreted as due to cultural, racial and socioeconomic status influences. This “cultural deviant” view of ethnic minorities is reflection of the “melting pot” ideal of society that promotes minorities to embrace and assimilate into mainstream American culture and discard their ethnic differences.

Recent findings on ethnic minority parenting has identified that ethnic minority families may have a set of adaptive parenting styles that somewhat differ from those practiced by mainstream culture families. Ogbu (1981) suggests that childrearing attitudes and practices can be heavily influenced by the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of parents, their extended family and neighborhood. Cultural variability in parenting practices, family values and childrearing attitudes are often the product of the methods developed by culture which promotes and fosters a child’s competence and adaptability in that particular culture (Garcia Coll, 1990).

The literature on the socialization practices of ethnic minority families suggests that there is cultural variation in what is considered “optimal” parenting practices when comparing the developmental trajectories of ethnic minority and mainstream European American children. Little research has examined normative developmental processes within ethnic minority families let alone specific ethnic minority groups. This paper reviews current literature on specific groups including Asian Americans, Latino, African Americans, and Native

Americans with a focus on identifying culturally specific adaptive strategies of family extendedness, role flexibility, biculturalism and ancestral worldviews critical for these ethnic groups (Harrison et al, 1990).

Asian American families. The literature on Asian American child development suggests that standard mainstream parenting practices may not adequately capture elements of child socialization within Asian American families. Baumrind (1971) reports that parenting styles capture two important elements of parenting: 1) parental responsiveness, which is the degree to which parents are warm, nurturing and sensitive to their children's needs, and 2) parental demandingness, which indicates the degree to which parents establish high expectations for their children's behaviors and monitor their children's behaviors (Macoby & Martin, 1983). Baumrind (1971) suggests that categorizing parenting according to these two dimensions yields four types of parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and indifferent. In our analysis of Asian American parenting practices we will focus on authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles which are the two main parenting practices associated with Asian Americans.

According to Baumrind's (1971) parenting style model, authoritarian parenting includes valuing obedience to and respect for authority, having high expectations for child behaviors, expectations that children do not question or challenge parental decisions or judgments, and limited exhibition of parental warmth. On the other hand, authoritative parenting is characterized by encouragement of child autonomy, exhibition of parental warmth, and responsiveness to the child's perspectives while setting clear limits and expectations. Authoritative parenting has been documented as the optimal parenting style for promoting positive child development, whereas authoritarian parenting is associated with negative child adjustment particularly in European American samples (Baumrind, 1971).

Despite mainstream emphasis on the positive influence of authoritative parenting, studies have reported a consistent finding suggesting authoritarian parenting as the dominant parenting style among Asian Americans. Associations between authoritarian parenting and child adjustment indicate differential effects whereby Asian American children with authoritarian parents were found to perform better academically than those who reported that their parents engaged in authoritative parenting (Chao, 1994). Not only that, some studies have indicated mixed findings in that Asian American parents appeared to fall into both authoritarian and authoritative parenting categories exhibiting that both parenting styles were associated with academic achievement, lower depressive symptoms and lower externalizing behavior problems (Xu, Farver, Zhang, Zeng, Yu & Cai, 2005, Chao, 2001).

These findings suggest that for Asian American families, parenting characteristics identified as central to the psychological adjustment of children differs from what is reported in standard mainstream parenting practices. A way to understand the varying effects among Asian American families is to examine the cultural values and belief systems that underlie these ethnic groups. Among East Asian cultures such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures, Confucian ethics are embedded into the basic foundations of relationships and family structure (Ho, 1982). According to Bond and Hwang (1986) Confucian ethics place special emphasis on particular relationships including sovereign and subject, father and son, older brother and younger brother, husband and wife. All of these relationships are hierarchically structured in which the subordinate member is expected to display loyalty and respect to the senior member, who holds the responsibility to teach, discipline and govern the subordinate. Within parent-child relationships filial piety is a central quality, which includes obedience and honoring of one's parents, ensuring the continuity of the family line, behaving in ways to bring honor and not

disgrace to the family name, and fulfilling family obligations.

Chao (1994) describes that for Chinese families, the influence of Confucian thought can be found in the parenting concepts of “*guan*” and “*chiao shun*”. *Guan* which means “to “govern”, “to care for” and “to love” is a word that is most often used to describe a teacher’s control and regimentation in the classroom. Tobin, Wu and Davidson (1989) described *guan* as the continuous monitoring and correcting of the child’s behavior by providing appraisal when the child obeys clearly defined parental or teacher expectations or standards for children’s behaviors. The term *guan* represents the responsibility of parents and teacher’s role in which they exhibit governance of the child. *Chiao shun*, a term that involves the idea of “training” children in the appropriate or expected behaviors, has been particularly emphasized in the area of parental support and children’s academic achievement. Chao (1994) describes that training children to adhere to socially desirable and culturally approved behaviors require parent’s immense devotion, sacrifice and commitment to the child, whereby the mother creates an environment in which she is constantly available to the child’s physical and psychological needs. Through training, parents foster motivation in their children to achieve in school so that they can ultimately fulfill the societal and familial expectations for success.

The centrality of “training” among Chinese families has been replicated in several studies and which show that this construct includes some aspects of authoritarian parenting, yet is qualitatively different. Chao and Kim (2000) found that Chinese parents showed exceptionally high endorsement on training style compared to other parenting styles including the authoritarian style. Xu, Farver, Zhang, Zeng, Yu & Cai (2005) reported that both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles correlated with the following Chinese values - family recognition, emotional self control, collectivism, humility, and filial piety. Parents high on authoritarian and

high on authoritative parenting dimensions scored the highest on the Chinese values. The authors found that both authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles included aspects of *chiao shun* and *guan* which are more culturally relevant parenting constructs for Chinese families.

Some studies have examined subcomponents of Baumrind's parenting style, finding that the results do not replicate with Asian American families. Rohner and Pettengill (1985) found that as Korean adolescents' perceptions of parental control increased, so did their perceptions of parental warmth for both mothers and fathers. Salazar, Schludermann, Schludermann, and Huynh (2000) found that among Filipino adolescents, authoritative parenting style did not directly influence adolescent academic achievement, but its effect was mediated through culturally relevant concepts such as family reputation and internal attribution of academic success or failure. The authors also found that for Filipino parents the expression of one's opinions, the offering of rewards for academic success, and providing the adolescent his or her freedom were not important parenting dimensions, suggesting that authoritative parenting aspects such as adolescent autonomy are not as relevant. Segal (1991) reported that Asian Indian American immigrant parents perceived adolescence as an extension of childhood rather than a period in which the adolescent gained more autonomy. Instead, parents expected adolescents to listen and obey their decisions rather than develop their own opinions.

Family obligations and the importance of interdependence is another quality that characterizes Asian American families. Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999) examined adolescent attitudes toward family obligations and found that Asian American and Latino adolescents held stronger values and had greater expectations regarding their duty to assist, respect, and support their families compared to European American adolescents. The authors noted that families with a collectivistic background tend to emphasize interdependence and retain values such as family

obligation, family responsibility, respecting elders, and making sacrifices for the family. Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore (1991) observed that Asian immigrant students are often reminded of the sacrifices their immigrant parents have made because they see their parents work long hours in low menial jobs that are well below their level of training. Especially for immigrant families, the youth's focus on succeeding academically is perceived as a way for the youth to fulfill family obligations. As described in a quote by a Vietnamese student "To be American you maybe able to do whatever you want. But to be a Vietnamese you must think of your family first" (Zhou & Bankston, 1998, p166).

The theme of interdependence and family obligation is largely observed in the emphasis on academic achievement by Asian American families. Asian American youth have generally exhibited high academic performance- according to the 1990 Census, 37% of Asian Americans completed at least a bachelor's degree compared to only 20% of the total population. Chao (1994) reports that children's success in school is a primary parenting goal for Asian Americans. As described in the concept of *chiao shun*, parents are expected to train their children to succeed especially in academics; and a good parent was one whose child was successful in school.

Chao (1994) has examined parental role in children's academic success through two main parenting practices - structural and managerial involvement. Managerial involvement consists of parents tutoring children with their homework, checking homework, monitoring the child's progress in school, and advising children in the selection of courses. In contrast, structural involvement comprises of the parents setting up the child's environment in ways that is intellectually and academically stimulating, such as structuring children's schedules after school, providing educationally enriching experiences (e.g. music lessons, individual tutors, additional textbooks or workbooks), and assigning a study area in the home. Kim (2002) reported that

among Korean immigrant families, children who had higher academic achievement had parents who supervised the child at home such as homework checking and setting rules about TV watching. Sy & Schlenberg (2005) reported that Asian American parents set more rules for watching TV at home, and were more involved in non-home and non school-based educational activities than European American parents.

The positive influence of parental involvement is reflected in the Asian American child's behavior and attitudes towards academics. Fuligni (1997) reported that immigrant family youth received significantly higher grades, exhibit a strong emphasis on achievement, and spent substantially more time and effort on academics endeavors. Peng & Wright (1994) reported that Asian American students spent more time working on their homework, participated in more extracurricular activities, and engaged in more educational activities outside of school than other students. Asian American students were more likely to take college preparatory courses, spent 5 or more hours on homework each week, and to be less absent from school (Wong, 1990). These studies indicate that the use managerial and structural parental involvement are indeed aspects of parenting that enhance the intellectual development of Asian American youth.

Despite the stereotype of Asian Americans as the "minority model", not all Asian American youth show successful growth in their academics. In her study on South Asian immigrants, Bhattacharya (2000) reported several barriers to school success including limited English skills, the pressure of upholding family reputation, fear of "losing face" and guilt over the failure to meet family expectations, which were associated with low self-esteem, poor academic achievement and deviant peer association.

Overall, the research on Asian American parent socialization suggests that traditional parenting constructs studied in developmental research have not adequately captured culturally

relevant domains of parenting that foster healthy child development. Examination of indigenous concepts such as *guan*, *chiao shun*, and filial piety has highlighted the central role these constructs play in the lives of Asian American children and families. Understanding these culturally specific constructs sheds light on why Asian American parents tend to exhibit authoritarian parenting practices and why these practices have not hindered psychological adjustment of Asian American youth. Interdependence and emphasis on family has shaped adaptive developmental trajectories for Asian American youth such as pursuing academic success as a way to fulfill family expectations and obligations. The examination of culturally specific constructs is a substantial step towards conceptualizing and developing theories on normative child development among and within Asian American groups. Future research should identify, measure, and examine how these culturally relevant constructs influence the different developmental pathways of Asian American youth.

Latino American families. In contrast to the literature on European American parenting practices and child adjustment, findings for Latino families have been mixed. Consistent findings among European American families indicate that high parental control, harsh parenting, family conflict, and lack of parental warmth are related to the development of problem behavior and depression (Patterson, 1995, Reid & Patterson, 1989). However, studies among Latinos that examine the relationship between parenting practices and child outcome often report mixed effects. For example, Hill, Bush, & Roosa (2003) found that maternal acceptance and maternal hostile control were positively associated for Spanish speaking Mexican Americans, unrelated for English speaking Mexican Americans and negatively related for European Americans. The authors conclude that particularly for Spanish speaking Mexican American families who are lower on acculturation, a combination of harsh control with high levels of parental warmth may

actually buffer adolescents from acculturative stress and living in neighborhoods that maybe dangerous or atypical. Gonzales, Pitts, Hill & Roosa (2000) reported that in their multiethnic sample, high levels of hostile control was associated with lower levels of conduct problems for Spanish-speaking children. In a study on Mexican immigrant families, Izzo and colleagues (2000) reported strong positive correlations between parental warmth and control, with higher parental control predicting positive child adjustment.

Mixed findings have also been reported for Latino families in their use of authoritarian versus authoritative parenting styles. Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, (1996) found that Hispanic parents were more controlling and autonomy granting than African American parents and Hispanic boys were more submissive and deferential compared to African American boys. The authors reported negative associations between parental nurturing and adolescent assertiveness, indicating that autonomous behavior is discouraged among Hispanic families. Varela and colleagues (2004) compared the parenting styles of Mexican, Mexican American and Caucasian families and found that parents of Mexican descent reported more use of authoritarian parenting style than Caucasian parents, with Mexican parents reporting the highest levels of use.

These findings suggest that adaptive parenting styles and practices for Latinos do not completely “map” onto what is commonly defined as adaptive parenting among European American families. Cultural influences such as ethnic minority status and cultural values specific to the Latino culture such as *familism*, *machismo*, *respeto* are core aspects of Latino parenting which mediate the relationships of parenting and child adjustment.

Among Latino culture, *familism* is a cultural value of importance that plays a role in the family structure and relationships. According to Unger and colleagues (2002), the definition of *familism* is “a sense of obligation to, and connectedness with one’s immediate and extended

family” (pp.259). Zayas (1992) describes *familism* for Latinos as “family unity, with a sense of obligation among family members, reverence for the elderly, and responsibility to care for all members, especially children.” (as cited in Ferrari, 2002, pp.794). Thus, *familism* emphasizes the importance of maintaining family cohesiveness, through family support, and sacrificing family over individual needs.

The centrality of *familism* to Latinos is often depicted in their representation of family and family relationships. Latinos place priority on the family over the individual, and it is expected that family members support or help other family members who are less successful, such as looking after other family members’ children during times of crisis (Arcaya, 1999, Zea, Mason, & Murguia, 2000, Garcia-Preto, 1996a). The value of *familism* is reflected in the presence of strong family support not only from nuclear family members but also from extended family network such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and godparents (Unger et al, 2002). Findings report that support in child rearing by nuclear and extended family members buffer Latino children from engaging in risk (Martinez, 1999; Garcia Coll et al, 1996). Contreras and colleagues (1999) reported that among less acculturated Puerto Rican American adolescent mothers, grandmother involvement was associated with decreased stress and fewer psychological symptoms. Roosa and colleagues (2005), Gil-Rivas, Greenberger, Chen and Lopez-Lena (2003) and Eamon and Muler (2005) explained that the sense of family cohesion and the presence of a family network may protect against the impact of parent-child conflict on adolescent problem behavior or adolescent depression.

Current research on Latino cultural values has reported the importance of *familism* on child socioemotional adjustment. Ramirez and colleagues (2004) conducted a study examining the relationships between *familism*, acculturation, parental monitoring and adolescent substance

use among Hispanic and European Americans. They found that only for the Hispanic adolescents, high *familism* predicted low marijuana and low inhalant use. In addition, the authors reported that high parental monitoring and high *familism* uniquely played a role in the prevention of substance use. Gil, Wagner, & Vega (2000) compared U.S. born and immigrant Latino adolescent males and found that for adolescents who reported higher levels of acculturative stress, decreases in *familism* was associated with greater disposition to deviance, which lead to more alcohol use.

Respeto is another cultural value that is characteristic of Latino families. According to Marin & Vanoss-Marin (1991), *respeto* is a cultural value that emphasizes obedience and respect towards parents and elders. Latino children are taught to respect and not question, but comply with authority figures. Unfortunately within the American school context these behaviors are met with some concern, for example, Rotheram-Borus & Phinney (1990) found that compared to African American children, Mexican American children were reported to rely more on authority figures in decision making. Marin & Vanoss-Marin (1991) reported that because many Latino children are taught that it is disrespectful to question authority or make eye contact when spoken to, teachers interpret this behavior as lack of interest. The emphasis on deferring to authority may also prevent Latino parents from questioning or directly intervening with teachers and school staff; which may be seen from teachers as lack of parent involvement (Sue & Sue, 1999).

Parenting for Latino families involves distinct gender differences in the socialization of children. *Machismo* is considered important in the socialization of boys and includes qualities such as masculinity, male dominance, responsibility as the protector of the family, sexual prowess, and physical strength (Sorenson & Siegel, 1992; Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzales, 1995). In contrast, *marianismo* requires that women model or emulate the Virgin Mary through sacrificing their own needs for their husbands and children's needs, valuing sexual purity,

caregiving to family members by providing emotional and instrumental support, and maintaining traditional gender roles (Gil & Vasquez, 1996; Ginorio, Gutierrez, Cauce, & Acosta, 1995). In addition, *marianismo* involves the ability to maintain strong family traditions of *familism*, *respeto*, and *personalismo* (attending to other's needs and wishes).

The differential roles of *machismo* and *marianismo* influences parental involvement in childrearing - mothers are assigned the primary responsibility of disciplining and taking care of the children, whereas fathers are more distant and less involved in the parenting (Garcia-Preto, 1996b). This gender difference in parental involvement has been identified in several studies in which Latino fathers are high on authoritarian in parenting compared to mothers, who are less authoritarian and show higher levels of authoritative parenting (Bird & Canino, 1982; Figueroa-Torres & Pearson, 1979). Ferrari (2002) reported that in her multiethnic sample, Hispanic fathers were the least nurturing among Hispanic, European American and African American fathers. Deyoung and Zigler (1994) found among their sample of Guyanese fathers and mothers, parents who were high on *machismo* exhibited higher levels of controlling and punitive disciplinary strategies. These studies did not address the impact of these controlling and punitive strategies on child behavior; however from the current literature, the influence of cultural values such as *familism*, *respeto*, *machismo* and *marianismo* may provide a foundation for Latino children in which harsh parenting or authoritarian parenting adheres with cultural norms and expectations and therefore is not associated with negative child adjustment as found in European American children and families (Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003; Gonzales, Pitts, Hill & Roosa, 2000).

This overview on research examining parenting among Latinos highlights the integral nature of Latino cultural values in the socialization of children. Research utilizing mainstream theories and methodologies of child development has reported differential outcomes between

European American and Latino American children and families in which the positive association between harsh and controlling parenting practices and externalizing or internalizing problems has not been replicated among Latino youth. Research indicates that the differential outcomes reflect the important roles cultural values such as *familism* and *respeto* play in the lives of Latino children and families. This centrality of culture in the socialization processes of children therefore emphasizes the importance of conducting culturally anchored research that is based on culturally specific theories and assessments that identify risk and resilience factors among Latino American youth.

African American families. Literature on African American socialization practices have shown a trend similar to Latino and Asian American families where a large portion of African American parents are authoritarian or restrictive in their parenting, compared to European American families (Dornbusch, et al, 1987; Furstenberg et al, 1999). Some researchers argue that the parenting styles model is inadequate for African Americans because the constructs are not culturally relevant (Bradley, 1998; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1996; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000).

Several studies suggest the protective effects of restrictive parental control among African American families. Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Steinberg (1996) reported that unilateral parent decision making which is conceptualized as a form of authoritarian parenting, predicted decreased involvement in deviant activity among African American youth. In contrast, among European American youth, higher levels of unilateral parent decision making was associated with lower self esteem, self reliance and lower work orientation. Baldwin, Baldwin & Cole (1990) found that for European American families, restrictive parenting was negatively associated with academic outcomes, whereas for African Americans, the pattern was inversed in

which higher levels of parental restriction predicted higher academic achievement. Clark, Novak, and Dupree (2002) found among African American youth, adolescent perceptions of high parental strictness was associated with lower anger temperament, lower outward expressions of anger, and lower use of avoidant coping strategies.

Deater-Deckard et al (1996) concluded that physical discipline was associated with child externalizing problems in European American families but not among African American families. Whaley (2000) reported that the use of physical discipline is associated with lower levels of disruptive disorders for African American youth, while for European Americans, higher levels of physical discipline was related to higher problem behaviors. The African American family context is one in which there is a higher endorsement and reliance on the use of physical punishment (Giles-Sims, Straus & Sugarman, 1995). Thus, in comparison to European Americans, African American parents are more likely to report that physical discipline is an appropriate discipline strategy (Flynn, 1998).

Strict parenting style is perceived by African Americans across various socioeconomic levels as necessary to aid the development of effective coping abilities in the face of harsh realities of racism and discrimination (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey 1994). Contextual factors influence the decisions of what is the optimal level of parental control for each child. For adolescents who reside in dangerous neighborhoods where there is gang activity and high rates of delinquency, parents may modify their parenting to be more controlling than they would in safer neighborhoods (Furstenberg et al, 1999). Nobles (1975) argued that parenting practices among African American families are directed by parents' perceptions of the realistic dangers and risks such as discrimination and prejudice that African American children may encounter.

African American families are characterized by exhibiting high levels of parental warmth; often co-occurring with restrictive or high control parenting practices. Young (1974) describes this type of parenting as “no nonsense parenting”, defined as high levels of parental control, including use of physical control and punishment that occur together with high positive affect among mother-child relationships. Several studies have indicated that high parental control with high parental warmth fosters healthy adjustment among African American youth. Brody & Flor (1998) found that “no nonsense” parenting of African Americans predicted higher levels of self-regulation, which in turn predicted higher cognitive competence, social competence and lower levels of internalizing problems. In their sample of low income African Americans, Steele, Nesbitt-Daly, Daniel, & Forehand (2005) reported positive correlations between harsh discipline practices and parental warmth, a reflection of “no nonsense parenting” in which parents exhibit higher reactivity because of their high investment in their children.

The importance of both restrictive and positive parent-child relationships for African American child development is reflected in the study by Dearing (2004) where high levels of restrictive parenting and supportive parenting were found to promote academic success and decrease depression among African American children. Dearing (2004) describes these outcomes as representing the cultural meanings of family connectedness, parent involvement and emphasis on child obedience and respect for elders. Ispa and colleagues (2004) found that maternal warmth moderated the relationship between maternal intrusiveness and mother-child relationships among African American parent-child dyads, but not for European American dyads. For the African Americans, parental intrusiveness did not affect the positive aspects of mother-child relationship measured by child engagement with mother and dyadic mutuality. These

results suggest that for African Americans, exhibiting high levels of parental control is normative and beneficial especially when it co-occurs with parental warmth.

The salience of parental control and parental warmth for African American families are reflective of the cultural values and norms embraced by African American families. Cultural values and beliefs such as communalism, spirituality, importance of kinship relations, collectivism, unity, cooperation, and the awareness of racial disparities in mainstream culture are central themes in the socialization of African American children (Constantine, Gainor, Ahlwalia & Berkel, 2003; Utsey, Adams & Bolden, 2000). Communalism, defined as a belief in the importance of group over the individual and cooperation rather than competition (Belgrave, Townsend, Cherry, & Cunningham, 1997) indicates that the self is seen as a part of the collective whole. The emphasis on collectiveness and group harmony is reflected in the African philosophy “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am “ (Mbiti, 1963, p.106).

This cultural emphasis of communalism in valuing interconnectedness of family members, friends, and community members, and the interrelatedness of people, is apparent in the strong family orientation of African Americans. African Americans value their relationships and tend to have strong and close relationships with a large network of relatives and fictive kin. Family for African Americans may include multiple generations and non-blood related members. For African Americans who have faced separation from family historically due to slavery, and currently due to economic hardship or other challenges, fictive kin has served a central role in preserving the concept of family and the rearing of children (McAdoo, 1981). African American families often feel a sense of obligation to kin and provide mutual social and instrumental aid to one another such as caretaking others’ children or taking in elders, essentially “doubling up” (McAdoo, 1981, Hill, 1972). This social capital provided by extended kin provides positive

support and influence on the developmental pathway of the African American child – kinship support is associated with academic achievement, fewer problem behaviors and self reliance among African American youth (Taylor, 1996). Lamborn & Nguyen (2004) found that kinship support was related to a stronger ethnic identity, higher self-reliance, a stronger work orientation, a stronger orientation to school and higher educational expectations for African American youth. Taylor (1996) found that kinship support was related with positive family climate and higher levels of parental involvement and organization, all of which were associated with higher grades, less problem behavior and lower psychological distress.

Another African American value that serves a central role in the life of the African American family is spirituality. Utsey, Adams & Bolden (2000) report that both spirituality and the emphasis on interconnectedness with the larger environment are traces of the African worldview that perceives everything in the universe as functionally connected. The emphasis on interconnectedness with the environment- nature and human – is evident in the cultural value of communalism, which values cooperation, close connections with family, and harmony. Thus within the African worldview, spirituality and communalism go hand in hand where spirituality represents the individual's sense of connection and oneness with the Higher Power, people and nature; and communalism reflects the connection through group harmony and collectivism.

The important role of spirituality in the lives of African American children and families has been reported in a few studies. Woods & Jagers (2003) found that African American values of communalism and spirituality were positively related to sociomoral reasoning of African American youth. Similarly, Belgrave, Townsend, Cherry and Cunningham (1997) found that spirituality predicted perceived drug harmfulness and lower drug use among African American 4th and 5th graders. Brody, Stoneman & Flor (1996) reported that spirituality was associated with

higher levels of family cohesiveness and decrease in problem behavior among African American adolescents. Spirituality, along with communalism serves as the foundation for the African American family context, promoting healthy development of youth through family cohesiveness, harmony, intergenerational interdependence, and collectivistic worldviews.

As an ethnic group that has faced a long history of discrimination and prejudice, African American families have developed specific socialization practices that are geared toward the promotion of resilience in African American children. The combination of strict parenting with high parental warmth represents the ways in which African Americans have developed parenting practices that caution and protect the African American child from external dangers, while simultaneously providing a sense of security through expressions of parental warmth. Moreover, African American families have successfully integrated African values and traditions into the family context through the social support of extended family and kin and their emphasis on spirituality as a buffer against hardships such as racism and discrimination. Through the integration of culture, African American families have developed adaptive parenting strategies that foster resiliency in children who are challenged by multiple sociocultural influences such as poverty, discrimination, and racism. Future research needs to identify and assess cultural domains that are central in developing resilience in the face of these sociocultural challenges.

American Indian families. The long history of oppression has continuously challenged the familial experience of American Indian families (Duran & Duran, 1995). Literature on American Indian youth has largely focused on their struggles with substance use, depression and low academic achievement, suggesting deficits associated with ethnicity, culture or race. Studies have indicated that American Indian youth start engaging in substance use in early childhood, continue use after experimentation (Beauvais, 1992c, Beauvais, 1996), and frequently engage in

binge drinking which consists of consuming large amounts of alcohol in short period of time (May, 1996). Adolescent substance use is associated with other high risk behaviors such as adolescent delinquency (Beauvais, 1992b) and unprotected sexual activity (Rolfe, Nansel, Baldwin, Johnson, & Benally, 2002). Research on American Indian youth reports higher than average levels of depressive symptoms and suicide; both that are linked to early onset of substance use (Beauvais, 1996, Rieckmann, Wadsworth & Deyhle, 2004).

Several studies have suggested specific cultural influences associated with at risk behavior among American Indian youth. Kawamoto (2001) reports that the underlying cause for at risk behavior stems from the historical and generational trauma experienced by American Indians due to the boarding schools system sponsored by the U.S. government. Kawamoto (2001) reports that the boarding school system aimed at “civilizing” American Indians through changing their young, which involved mandatory separation of American Indian children from their families of origin. This resulted in the disruption of cultural transmission, leading to the loss of spiritual traditions, communication practices, parenting standards and Indian heritage (Kawamoto, 2001). Moreover, ethnic dislocation and alienation from tribal communities as a result of historical oppression continues to increase the vulnerability of American Indian youth for developing psychological problems (Oetting, Beauvais, & Velarde, 1982).

Despite the challenges American Indian families have faced over multiple generations, some research sheds light on culturally specific protective factors foster healthy adjustment among American Indian youth. Thurman and Green (1997) reported that youth who exhibited a stronger cultural orientation to American Indian culture engaged in lower rates of substance use. The authors also found that American Indian youth who participated in traditional tribal activities and ceremonies reported lower inhalant use. Cultural values are reported to be a central aspect of

American Indian families - Stubben (1998) reported that 95.4% of American Indian parents and children reported the centrality of cultural values. Stubben (1996a) also found that 96% of American Indian youth indicated that cultural respect was critical to their success at school and home. Although the literature is sparse, these findings suggest that culturally specific familial processes and values play a critical role in promoting resilience among American Indian youth.

In comparison to other ethnic groups, the American Indian family is perhaps the most diverse in family structure and roles of family members, because of variation across tribes and among family within tribes. However there are several unifying concepts that describe the American Indian family life, including interdependence, harmony, extended family, respect of elders, spirituality, cooperation, and sharing (Wise & Miller, 1983). The American Indian household is the context in which interdependence, harmony, sharing and cooperation is highly valued and expressed. American Indian families generally include a large extended family that may consist of as many as 200 members (Wise & Miller, 1983). Family members may include those who are distant relatives or members who are not blood related but close to the family (Manson, Beals, O'Neill, Piasecki, Cechtold, Keane & Jones, 1996). Family members are not only responsible for their family but also bear responsibility to the clan or tribe to which they belong to. Any problem of youth is understood as the problem of the family, kin, and community; to which all respond collectively to the needs of the youth. In American Indian communities, family and friends are important aspects of the child's healing process, which is based on the understanding that problems arise from the disruption of harmony between the child, family and community; and that all of these areas of the child's life processes need to participate in the healing process to regain harmony and balance (Duran & Duran, 1995).

The interdependence of the family, kin and community is reflected in the involvement of other family members in child rearing. Grandparents, uncles, aunts and other kin share the role of disciplining and teaching American Indian children (MacPhee, Fritz, Miller-Heyl, 1996). In certain tribes, American Indian children are named after family or kin with the cultural expectation that the child will grow to resemble that person, and also that the person will be closely involved in the child's life (LaFromboise, Berman, & Sohi, 1994). Across tribes American Indian children are raised with the cultural expectation that they will be involved and committed to their family, tribe and culture, rather than competing for individual achievement. The emphasis on interdependence, cooperation and harmony is reflected in lack of importance American Indian parents place on children's individual achievement; instead one earns respect among family and community by prioritizing others' needs above the individual's (Nofz, 1998).

An aspect of parenting that may be viewed as permissive or lax, is the Native tradition of teaching that family members should not interfere with decisions or choices that are made by individuals. American Indian children are expected to make their own choices and have semi-independence from a young age (LaFromboise & Low, 1988). This perspective on child rearing stems from the belief that individuals should be allowed to "work things out in their own manner" (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1991). Thus, family members allow children to pursue their choices and experience the natural consequences of their choices. Children are expected to learn from their mistakes and change their behavior from that experience. Rather than directly pointing out the negative consequences of poor choices, American Indian families would emphasize the impact of the child's behavior on others, such as the family and the community, and in turn the family would collectively meet the needs of the child (LaFromboise & Low, 1988). For the American Indian child, this understanding of one's responsibility within

the network of kin and community relationships is central to one's ties and sense of belonging to the tribe. According to More (1987), American Indian methods of teaching children diverge from mainstream methods which often involve the use of direct verbal instruction; in fact, American Indian children are primarily taught cultural values or attitudes through story-telling. Moreover children acquire skills through "watch-then-do or listen-then-do or think-then-do" which is a method in which the child acquires skills by being present and participating with family in behaviors (More, 1987). This tendency to silently observe, in contrast to reacting to a child's behavior may be interpreted as passivity and laxness (Wise & Miller, 1983).

Spirituality coins the American Indian worldview of harmony, interdependence, collectivism and balance. Although American Indian tribes may vary in terms of dominant religion, the belief that all of nature – plants, animals, minerals, land, sun, wind, moon, sky are all interconnected with personhood is a central component of American Indian spirituality (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). The interconnectedness of life is represented in a circular worldview where the East represents the spirit, South represents nature, West represents the body and North represents the mind (Garrett & Garrett, 1994). This spiritual perspective on the intimate connection between the American Indian individual and nature serves as the framework from which children relate to family and their community – living as independent yet serving in maintaining the harmony and balance of the kinship network and community.

Research on American Indians has mainly examined the elevated levels of psychopathology found among American Indian youth. Little is known about the normative familial processes that occur within the family context and how these processes serve as buffers for disadvantaged American Indian children who face the challenges of poverty, discrimination, alienation and intergenerational psychological trauma. The near destruction of American Indian

families by the boarding school system has left a large gap in the culturally specific notion of what is an American Indian family. However, the few findings that we have examined suggest that culturally relevant variables such as interdependence, harmony, and spirituality play critical roles in family relationships and functioning; indicating the importance of the transmission of culture in the developmental pathways of American Indian youth. Future research on American Indian youth should examine culturally specific domains of family processes and child development that would shed light on the importance of developing culturally anchored theories and research methodologies for American Indian children and families.

Racial socialization. Among the people of color, there lies a common historical experience of racism, oppression, and exclusion. Each ethnic group has experienced acts of racism and discrimination ranging from subtle to violent, sometimes individually or as minority groups. These experiences have solidified the “minority status” of people of color, which often involve the stress of encountering hostility, prejudice, lack of access to resources, lack of social support, alienation, and social isolation. These experiences are often associated with increased psychological dysfunction especially among ethnic minority youth.

Ethnic minority youth and families encounter racial or ethnic discrimination as part of their daily lives, in various contexts such as among their peers, school, neighborhood and community. Rosenbloom, and Way (2004) found in a multiethnic high school, African American and Latino adolescents reported experiencing racial discrimination by teachers, police, and shopkeepers; whereas Asian American students reported physical and verbal harassment by peers. Broman, Mavaddat, & Hsu (2000) reported that 77% of African American youth experienced racial discrimination, with African American males experiencing the most discrimination by police and in finding jobs.

Several studies have documented the negative mental health and physical health outcomes associated with experiencing acts of discrimination. Among ethnic minority youth, a positive association between perceived discrimination and an adolescent's probability of engaging in problem behavior has been reported. Wong and colleagues (2003) found for African American adolescents, perceived discrimination by peers and teachers increased problem behaviors such as shoplifting, skipping class, lying to parents, cheating, stealing cars and bringing drugs or alcohol to school. Nyborg & Curry (2003) found that adolescent report of their experiences of racism were related to both adolescent and parent report externalizing symptoms. Prelow, Danoff-Burg, Swenson, & Pulgiano (2004) reported that perceived discrimination exacerbated ecological risk for African American youth, resulting in higher engagement in delinquent behaviors, whereas no association was found for European American youth.

The psychological toll of racial discrimination has also been reported to be associated with internalizing problems such as depression, somatic symptoms and anxiety. Simons and colleagues (2002) found that individual experiences of racial discrimination among African American children predicted child depressive symptoms. Noh and Kaspar (2003) found in their sample of Korean immigrants that as perceived discrimination events increased so did the levels of depression. Schmader, Major and Gramzow (2001) found that beliefs about ethnic injustice were associated with greater devaluing of one's academic success and distrust in academic feedback among African American students. In a study on Puerto Rican youth, perceived discrimination and worrying about discrimination was associated with depression and lower self esteem (Szalacha, Erkut, Garcia Coll, Alarcon, Fields, and Ceder, 2003). Among American Indians, perceived discrimination was strongly associated with higher depressive symptoms (Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFromboise, 2002). These results reflect the common

theme of the negative impact of discrimination across many ethnic minority groups.

Recent evidence indicates that the experience of racial discrimination not only affects the psychological well being, but also the physical health of ethnic minorities. Krieger and colleagues (1993) found that Black adults who reported that they passively responded to racism by accepting unfair treatment had higher systolic blood pressure than Black adults who challenged the unfair treatment. Bowen-Reid and Harrell (2002) found that African Americans who reported higher levels of perceived racial stress exhibited more negative health symptoms. Guyll, Matthews, Bromberger (2001) reported that African American women who identified racial discrimination in interpersonal mistreatment showed greater diastolic blood pressure reactivity suggesting that racial discrimination can adversely affects cardiovascular health.

The stressors related with racial discrimination also have system level influences, in particular, the family context. The Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress model (MEES; Peters & Massey, 1983) describes the living conditions of ethnic minority families as an environment where there is “constant threat and actual periodic occurrences of intimidation, discrimination, or denial because of race. The stresses which families face-sometimes subtle, sometimes overt-are pervasive, continuous and debilitating.” (p.196). Daily encounters with overt and covert racial discrimination can exacerbate the effects of contextual stressors on family functioning and relationships. Gibbons, Gerrard, Cleveland, Wills and Brody (2004) found that parental experiences of racial discrimination were directly associated with parental distress and substance use. Moreover, parental racial discrimination experiences were directly related with child psychological distress and indirectly related to child substance use. Murry, Brown, Brody, Cutrona, and Simons (2001) found that maternal report of perceived discrimination was directly associated with lower mother-child relationship quality, lower mother nurturing, and lower

mother-child relationship satisfaction. As such, for ethnic minority families, encounters with chronic, unpredictable acts of racial discrimination impact the individual as well as the family system and relationships within that system (Peters and Massey, 1983).

Despite dire conditions, ethnic minority youth and families exhibit resilience in the ways they cope with daily encounters of racial discrimination. According to Peters and Massey (1983), ethnic minority families develop culturally based practices, behaviors and attitudes that are embedded in the culture's value and belief system that serve as psychological and social support required by the youth and families. These culturally specific coping mechanisms serve to buffer ethnic minority families from the multiple stressors associated with racism, poverty, minority status, and acculturation. Several researchers have examined coping strategies of ethnic minority youth and families, suggesting the importance of ethnic and racial socialization in promoting bicultural competence and the development of a secure ethnic identity. In particular, racial socialization has been highlighted as a protective factor for minority children who grow up in a context of racial discrimination and oppression. Racial socialization is defined as "the task Black parents share with all parents- providing for and raising children...but they include the responsibility of raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society in which Black has negative connotations" (Peters,1985). According to Stevenson, Cameron, Taylor and Davis (2002), racial and cultural socialization processes are essential aspects of family functioning because they provide explanation and support for: 1) "appreciating the spiritual and metaphysical buffers to being an ethnic minority in a racist world, 2) appreciating the cultural uniqueness of being and behaving ethnic in a racist world, 3) appreciating and internalizing the meaning-making experiences of being ethnic in this world" (p.85-6).

Several theories on racial socialization have reported an association with positive identity

development, equity, racial barriers, and egalitarian perspectives (Thorton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). The African –centered model by Nobles (1973) and Semaj (1985) explains that racial or ethnic identity is shaped first by the messages and interactions that the African American child experiences in their immediate social context, the family, and then later is either reinforced or disconfirmed when interacting with external agents such as peers, teacher, schools, and the general society (Burke, 1980).

Recent empirical studies suggest racial socialization as a salient aspect of parenting that promotes identity development and positive adjustment. Sanders-Thompson (1994) found that 79% of their African American participants recalled race-related discussions with a parent. Murray and Mandara (2001) reported that among African American youth, ethnic pride and strategies to deal with the broader society’s messages were necessary elements in racial identity development. Among Mexican American adolescents, higher levels of parental ethnic socialization were associated with ethnic identity achievement (Quintana, Castaneda-English, and Ybarra, 1999). Immigrant Latino and Asian American families are reported to emphasize the socialization of traditions and values of the culture of origin (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Buriel & DeMent, 1997). Studies on African American, Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese samples have indicated that most parents attempt to foster the transmission of cultural values, history, and practices, and to foster the cultural pride of their children (Ou & McAdoo, 1983; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota, & Ocampo, 1993).

Evidence supports the centrality of ethnic and racial socialization for ethnic minority families. However, the content of cultural messages and ways in which these messages are transmitted appears to vary across and within ethnic groups. Current literature suggests that various cultural messages are included in racial socialization, ranging from transmission of

cultural practices and values to discussions concerning racial discrimination. Boykin and Toms (1985) indicate that racial socialization consists of: 1) cultural experience (i.e. tradition, values), 2) minority experience (i.e. social, economic, and political influences on minorities), and 3) mainstream experience (i.e. influences of white middle-class culture). Thornton, Chatters and Taylor (1990) suggest that racial socialization encompasses areas of racial pride, racial history, achievement, racism, equality, religion, self-image, moral values, and peaceful coexistence. According to Peters (1985), parents believed that compared to instilling a strong racial identity, it is more important to learn how to cope and survive prejudice and discrimination and understand that equality is not always present in white-black relationships.

Studies have indicated that youth who are socialized to be aware of racial barriers and cautioned about interracial challenges (Thornton et al, 1990) show more positive behavioral and psychological outcomes than youth who are taught nothing about race or who receive negative in-group messages (Bowman & Howard, 1985). Fischer and Shaw (1999) found that receiving higher levels of racial socialization messages attenuated the relationship between racism experiences and poor mental health. However, other studies report that an overemphasis on racial barriers by parents may undermine the efficacy of ethnic minority children and lead them to withdraw from opportunities and experiences that may enhance their competence (Biafora, et al, 1993; Marshall, 1995). Interestingly, some studies show that despite the importance ethnic parents place on discussing issues with racial discrimination, few actually engage in the transmission of these messages. In fact, parents are more likely to report messages about ethnic pride than discussions about discrimination (Hughes and Chen, 1997, Phinney & Chavira, 1995). The minimal amount of discussion on this topic may be because parents find it inherently difficult to introduce children to issues of discrimination than cultural traditions. Ethnic minority

parents maybe particularly vigilant in introducing children to negative ethnic stereotypes because of the negative consequences related to the internalization of these stereotypes, and that these stereotypes may influence their understanding of race. Although evidence suggests that parents see the goal of racial socialization as discussing minority experience by which they would prepare their children for an oppressive environment, it is not known whether the transmission of such messages actually influence the use of coping strategies by minority children when faced with discriminatory experiences (Tatum, 1987).

Current literature on adolescent coping and stress indicate that the type of coping strategies used in response to life stressors among youth is generally associated with particular psychological outcomes (Moos, 2002). Coping strategies fall into two general domains: approach or problem focused coping and avoidance coping strategies. Approach coping strategies include seeking social support or problem solving the situation and are generally associated with positive psychological adjustment in adolescents (Halstead, Johnson, & Cunningham, 1993). In contrast, avoidance coping strategies involve suppression, denial, using diversions and externalizing that is associated with greater distress and poorer psychological adjustment (Causey & Dubow, 1992). Parents who have mainly experienced negative racial interchanges may engage in avoidant approaches when dealing with racial discrimination and be mistrustful of other groups. They may completely avoid discussing discrimination or they may openly express denial of discrimination, thereby modeling and teaching avoidant coping strategies to their children. Parents who are less mistrustful may model and teach problem focused or secondary coping strategies such as acceptance or distraction as a method for dealing with racial discrimination. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), purports that influence of behavior occur through imitation and modeling, thus in families where hostility or negativity towards other ethnic groups is openly

expressed, children may learn that these messages are valid and imitate similar negative attitudes.

Despite the relevance of coping strategies for ethnic minority youth, coping strategies used in response to racial discrimination and prejudice have not been empirically tested. a common theme experienced by many ethnic minority groups. Because of the ambiguity, unpredictability, and uncontrollability of discriminatory events, approach coping responses that aim to target and problem solve may run into difficulties because there is little the victim can actually do to change the perpetrators' behaviors. According to Compas (1995) problem-focused coping is positively associated with perceived control or control beliefs. Thus, for adolescents who generally may use problem focused coping, confronting situations that are "objectively" viewed as uncontrollable may lead to greater frustration, feelings of helplessness, and distress.

Current empirical work on coping with discrimination has indicated some variability in coping mechanisms utilized by ethnic minorities. Scott (2003) found that among African American youth, the more control the youth felt that he or she had over perceived discrimination, the more likely it was that he or she used approach coping strategies. African American youth who received more race-related socialization reported engaging in problem solving coping and seeking social support. In contrast, adolescents who reported higher levels of discrimination distress and received minimal racial socialization messages tended to use avoidance coping strategies in response to discrimination. Phinney and Chavira (1995) found that African American youth who received racial socialization messages concerning personal achievement and coping with racial discrimination were more likely to engage in proactive coping strategies (discussion, disapproving or self-affirmation) compared to passive or aggressive coping strategies in the face of discrimination. Scott (2003) also reported that African American youth with a high orientation in spirituality and strong belief in the value of effort tended to use more

problem solving coping strategies. In addition, youth who rated the African value of communalism as high in importance, reported lower engagement in avoidance coping strategies.

Few studies have examined coping against discrimination among other ethnic groups, indicating strong cultural influences in the type of coping strategies individuals use. For example, Noh and Kaspar (2003) examined Korean immigrants and found that problem solving coping which included personal confrontation, taking formal action, and social support seeking was more effective for more acculturated Koreans. In another study on Southeast Asian refugees, Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou and Rummens (1999) found that use of emotion focused coping or forbearance which includes passive acceptance and emotional distraction, diminished the strength of the link between perceived discrimination and depression. Forbearance coping appeared to be most effective with Asian refugees who reported a strong ethnic identity, whereas for individuals who did not identify with traditional ethnic values, neither forbearance nor problem solving coping were effective buffers against poor mental health outcomes. These results support previous findings in which Asians reported that the best way to respond to racial discrimination is to “do nothing” and simply ignore or chose to regard it as part of life (Buchignani, 1982; Kuo, 1995; Noh, 1998). Coping strategies used among Latinos also suggest that culture influences the individual’s choices in coping behaviors. Gabrielidis and colleagues (1997) found that Latinos preferred to use conflict resolution styles that emphasized concern for the outcomes of others such as accommodation and collaboration, than did European Americans. Thus, for Latinos who are collectivistic in nature, avoidance may be the coping strategy of choice when dealing with interpersonal conflicts because it indicates a concern for others, whereas in individualistic culture, avoidance may indicate a lack of concern for others.

These findings suggest that the transmission of coping strategies use against challenges

such as racial discrimination occurs in a culturally meaningful context. Research is still limited in addressing how discriminatory experiences influence the transmission of cross-generational negativity of racial discrimination and, in turn, how these experiences affect growth in adolescent problem behavior. It is yet unclear to what extent the transmission of minority experience serves as a protective factor for ethnic minority youth. Future research should identify racial and ethnic socialization messages that promote resilience against the negative impact of discrimination.

Bi-cultural Competence. The concept of acculturation has become increasingly important as economic globalization, international migration and modernization has integrated the experiences of ethnic minorities and immigrants into the mainstream culture. Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936), coined the concept of acculturation as “a phenomena which results where groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p.149). The authors describe in this definition that it is through continuous interactions between original culture and mainstream culture that ethnic minority individuals experience both cultural conflict and cultural fusion, which often lead to internal and sociocultural changes in the lives of ethnic minorities.

Berry (1980) describes the change process of acculturation at the psychological level using four dimensions of adaptation: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. Assimilation occurs when an individual seeks integration and absorption into the mainstream society, rather than maintaining a cultural identity that differentiates them from the dominant culture. As opposed to assimilation, separation occurs when individuals choose to maintain their cultural identity through minimizing contact and interaction with mainstream society. Separated individuals tend focus their lives within the spheres of their culture of origin and have low involvement with members of other groups. Integration occurs when individuals are involved in

both culture of origin and mainstream culture. Integrated individuals are able to maintain their cultural identity while interacting and integrating themselves as members of mainstream society. Integrated individuals have bicultural identities in that they maintain a sense of belonging and membership in the culture of origin and mainstream society. Lastly, marginalized individuals are those who show little interest in the maintenance of their cultural identity or the integration into mainstream culture. Marginalization often occurs as a result of enforced cultural loss and discrimination or exclusion from mainstream culture or even culture of origin.

LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993) describe another framework of acculturation using five separate models: assimilation, acculturation, fusion, alternation and multicultural. According to LaFromboise et al (1993) the assimilation model involves an ongoing process of absorption into the dominant or mainstream culture. The goal of assimilation is to adapt one's attitudes and behaviors in order to become socially accepted by mainstream society. Assimilated individuals lose elements or attachment to the culture of origin as they embrace and internalize mainstream culture, eventually acquiring a new mainstream identity. The psychological and societal costs associated with the process of assimilation include possible rejection from mainstream and culture of origin, loss of one's cultural identity and the experience of stress and anxiety surrounding the incorporation of new sets of cultural beliefs and behaviors while discarding those of the culture of origin (LaFromboise et al, 1993).

The acculturation model by LaFromboise et al (1993) describes individuals who are competent in the dominant culture, however will always be identified as a member of the culture of origin. In contrast to assimilating individuals who gain full membership in mainstream culture but lose their cultural identity, individuals who acculturate often come to the United States involuntarily and choose to learn and integrate oneself with the mainstream culture in order to

survive. Models of acculturation describe that the process of acculturation involves the stressful experience of never acquiring first-class citizenship in mainstream culture and experiencing alienation that from both the culture of origin and dominant cultures (Kim, 1979; Szpocznik & Kurtines, 1980; Padilla, 1980). In contrast to assimilation, acculturating individuals are reminded of their culture of origin regardless of their efforts to integrate into mainstream culture.

The fusion model (LaFromboise et al, 1993) is based on the ideology behind the melting pot theory. The model indicates that cultures that share economic, geographic or political resources will “fuse” together to create a new culture. The difference of the fusion model from assimilation or acculturation models is that in this model, various aspects of each culture are taken and integrated into the new culture. This model assumes that there is no hierarchy between mainstream and other minority cultures, whereas the power difference is clearly represented in the assimilation and acculturation models (LaFromboise et al, 1993).

The alternation model (LaFromboise et al, 1993) represents an individual’s competence in both mainstream and minority cultures. In contrast to the linear acculturative process represented in the assimilation and acculturation models where individuals shifts their identity and membership from culture of origin to mainstream culture; the alternation model suggests that the individual has a bidirectional and orthogonal relationship with each culture. An example of this bidirectional relationship is described in the use of code-switching by bilinguals (Saville-Troike as cited in LaFromboise et al, 1993), whereby individuals can alternate their behavior and attitudes depending on the culture context they are in. This model suggests the coexistence of both cultures within the individual, and that the individual is able to choose and alter his behavior or attitude based on the sociocultural context. LaFromboise et al, (1993) report that the alternation model is the optimal model for psychological and sociocultural functioning.

Lastly, the multicultural model (LaFromboise et al, 1993) implies the maintenance of distinct cultural identities while individuals of different cultural backgrounds work together in a single multicultural social structure. According to Berry (1986), a multicultural society is one that promotes the differing social groups to maintain and develop their identities, have acceptance and tolerance of other groups, engage in intergroup communication and learn languages of the other groups. It is argued however, that it is questionable as to whether a multicultural society can be maintained, because separation of cultural groups from each other often comes hand in hand with the need for institutional protection.

For the majority of ethnic minorities who undergo processes described in the models by LaFromboise et al (1993), acculturative stress is often experienced as part of the adaptation process of living in two or more cultures. Acculturative stress is the stress that directly results and arises from the experience of acculturation and includes numerous stressors including perceived discrimination, language barriers, perceived cultural conflicts, lack of maintenance of cultural values, differences in acculturation levels among family members, and lack of cultural knowledge of culture of origin or mainstream culture (Vega, Zimmerman, Gil, Warheit, & Apospori, 1991; Szapocznik et al, 1989; Williams and Berry, 1991).

The psychological impact of acculturation on individuals has been documented (Hovey & King, 1997). Acculturative stress is associated with higher levels of depression (Salgado de Snyder, 1997; Vega, Kolody, Valle, and Hough, 1986), anxiety (Hovey & Magna, 2002), suicidal ideation (Hovey & King, 1997) and increased drug use (Gil, Wagner, and Vega, 2000). Assimilation of immigrant youth into mainstream culture is associated with higher rates of substance use, (Vega & Gil, 1998), delinquency (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980). Buriel, Calzada, & Vazquez, 1982), and depression (Kaplan & Marks, 1990).

The impact of the process of acculturation is also mediated through family systems such as marital and parent-child subsystems and individual family members. One area in which acculturative influences are most prominent among youth is the changes that occur in family socialization practices. Adaptations in child-rearing practices, parental disciplining methods and parental expectations for their child occur when families live in more than one culture. Gil, Wagner, and Vega (2000) found that acculturative stress was associated with lower levels of *familism* and parental respect among immigrant and U.S. born Latino adolescent males. The authors found that the impact of acculturation on alcohol involvement was mediated by decreases in *familism*, and increased adolescent disposition to deviance. Among Mexican American adolescents, increased levels of acculturation was associated with decreases in parental monitoring, increases in family conflict and higher levels of adolescent delinquency (Samaniego & Gonzales, 1999). Both family conflict and parental monitoring mediated the effect of acculturation on delinquency, indicating the significance of the primary socialization context for these youth. Dinh, Roosa, Tein, & Lopez (2002) reported that acculturation had an indirect effect on problem behavior through parental involvement and adolescent self-esteem. Parental involvement was a significant mediator of acculturation on behavior proneness of Hispanic youth.

Intergenerational conflict reported by ethnic minority adolescents and their parents highlights the impact of acculturation on the family system (Gil, Vegas, & Dimas, 1984; Vega, Khoury, Zimmerman, Gil & Warheit, 1995). The shift to a new culture often impacts the parent-child relationship through conflict that stems from differences among family members in their cultural values and familial roles or responsibilities. Ethnic minority parents report challenges associated with rearing a child in “two cultures”, especially in regards to balancing the integration of mainstream lifestyle and perspectives that families perceive as necessary for

succeeding in school and society, while preserving their cultural identity (Nah, 1993). Intergenerational conflict in ethnic minority families arise due to the clear contrast between mainstream and ethnic minority parents in their expectations about adolescent autonomy and freedom, familial roles and obligations (Arnett, 1999). For example, Rohner and Pettengill (1985) found that for Korean immigrant adolescents, strong parental control was perceived to increase conflict between parents and their adolescents. In contrast, adolescents in Korea perceived high parental control to be associated with more parental warmth and low neglect. Min (1995) found that Korean immigrant parents suffered problems of parental authority because of the shift in family roles and power between parents and children caused by language barriers, long hours of employment for parents and inadequate parental knowledge of mainstream culture. Chan and Leong (1994) found that more acculturated Chinese children who were fluent in English acted as translators, cultural experts and representatives of the family. Matusoka (1990) found that prior to immigrating to the United States Vietnamese youth reported having a sense of self that adhered with family values and relationships, whereas after a few years of residing in the United States, the same youth reported that their sense of identity was secured in their peers.

Several studies have examined how differences in acculturation levels between parents and adolescents impact the family system. Farver, Narang, & Bhada (2002) found that American born Asian Indian adolescents whose parents exhibited either a separated or marginalized acculturation style reported more family conflict. Families in which acculturation levels were similar between the parent and the child reported lower levels of family conflict, lower adolescent anxiety and higher adolescent self esteem; indicating the impact of the acculturation gap on family conflict. Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin & Szapocznik (2005) found that assimilated Hispanic youth reported significantly higher levels of adolescent problem behavior

and lower levels of parental monitoring compared to youth who reported a separated or bicultural acculturation style. Of all acculturation groups, youth who reported bicultural adaptation had the highest academic competence, peer competence and parental monitoring. These findings suggest that for ethnic minority parents and youth, bicultural acculturation style is optimal considering the association with positive youth adjustment and use of effective family management strategies.

The majority of the literature on acculturation suggests that biculturalism is the most adaptive form of acculturation. Berry's (1980) model of integration (1980) and LaFromboise's (1993) model of alternation propose that acculturation to a new culture and identification to one's culture can be independent, where individuals hold a bidirectional and orthogonal relationship with each culture. Bicultural individuals maintain relationships with both host and own cultures, rather than choosing membership in one culture over another.

The model of biculturalism proposed by Birman (1994) suggests that among bicultural individuals there are varying patterns of behavior and identification with the culture of origin and host culture. Birman (1994) proposes a typology of biculturalism which includes blended and integrated biculturalism. According to this model, blended biculturals highly identify with, and behaviorally engage in both ethnic and mainstream cultures. They develop a new "fused" identity that is a combination of both cultures. Blended biculturals do not perceive their ethnic culture to be distinct from the mainstream culture, and do not see conflict between the cultures. An example of the experience of a blended individual is described in the study by Phinney & Devich-Navarro (1997): "It really doesn't seem like two cultures to me" "I see them as one".

In contrast, integrated biculturals are those who are highly behaviorally involved in both ethnic and mainstream cultures, yet they hold a firm sense of identity as a member of their ethnic group. Integrated biculturals (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997) do not experience the overlap in

their identity between ethnic and mainstream culture as their blended counterparts, however they feel comfortable functioning in both circles. Quotes from alternating biculturals include: “I put myself as a mixture. It works as me accepting some of *their* culture and I keep *my* culture too” “you are not as American as another White person” (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Integrated biculturals identify with both cultures, yet keep the two cultural identities separate and report that it is easier to be either ethnic or mainstream but hard to be both at the same time (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Integrated biculturals are very aware of the variability of their two cultural identities and exhibit competence in switching their behaviors between cultures.

Empirical evidence highlights the importance of biculturalism for the positive adjustment of ethnic minority youth (Szapocznik, Kurtines & Fernandez, 1980). Bicultural competence involves the ability to function competently in various domains - identity development, cultural awareness and knowledge, intergroup attitudes, bicultural efficacy, bicultural communication, role repertoire and groundedness. Individuals who have a secure, integrated bicultural identity are more likely to exhibit adaptive coping in both culture of origin and mainstream culture (La Fromboise et al, 1993). Studies have reported the psychological advantage of maintaining a bicultural identity, for example, Lang, Munoz, Bernal & Sorenson (1982) found that Hispanics with a bicultural identity indicated better psychological well-being, less depression, and better education. The achievement of a bicultural identity provides a foundation for individuals to develop an awareness of their attitudes about both mainstream and ethnic groups. The ability to perceive both mainstream and ethnic cultures as positive, yet distinct entities is central in the act of identifying and maintaining membership in two or more cultures (Palleja, 1987).

Bicultural efficacy, which is “the belief, or confidence, that one can live effectively and in a satisfying manner, within two groups without compromising one’s sense of cultural identity”

(LaFromboise et al, 1993); is an integral aspect of effective functioning in mainstream and culture of origin. Szapocznik and Kurtines (1980) indicated that biculturalism is the most advantageous style for acculturating persons as it allows the flexibility for individuals to use skills that apply to specific cultural demands of varying situations. Achievement of bicultural efficacy provides the basis for ethnic minority individuals to develop bicultural communication and flexibility in the roles and behaviors that they engage in, which vary according to the culture of contact (McFee, 1968; Szapocznik, Kurtines & Fernandez, 1980).

La Fromboise and colleagues (1993) indicate that achieving bicultural competence is most successful when one has a sense of being grounded in an extensive social network in both mainstream and ethnic cultures. The ability to integrate into a social network that serves as a support system and enhances one's sense of connectedness and belongingness to the culture is crucial in maintaining a healthy bicultural lifestyle (La Fromboise et al, 1993). Several studies suggest the importance of communal support, for example, Palinkas (1982) reported the presence of a solid social network that 1) grounds individuals in their original culture and 2) supports their adjustment to mainstream culture, significantly dampens the negative impact of acculturation.

The literature on biculturalism highlights its importance as a protective factor for ethnic minority youth who may face multiple challenges in social, political and economic domains. The development of a bicultural competence through exploration and contact with both culture of origin and mainstream culture appears to be an aspect of resilience that is necessary for ethnic minority youth. This development of bicultural competence which involves exploration, integration, learning of behavioral expectations and attitudes of both ethnic and mainstream culture begins from the very immediate context of the family home, where parents, extended family and kin transmit their cultural worldview through knowledge, behavior and role modeling.

Summary. Current theoretical models of child development have failed to integrate into their core formulations the unique experiences of ethnic minority children and families. Mainstream developmental models do not incorporate multilevel cultural influences experienced by the ethnic minority child, such as the intergenerational transmission of culturally specific values and traditions, challenges of the acculturative process, and the negative impact of discrimination.

The overview of ethnic minority familial socialization in this paper highlights the centrality of culture in the ecology of ethnic minority youth. Culture touches every contextual level of the ecology of ethnic minority youth, from parental socialization practices to facing larger social, political and economic challenges including poverty, discrimination, and acculturation. Across Asian American, Latino, African American and American Indian families, we have witnessed great variability in parenting practices, cultural values, familial expectations and societal influences, highlighting the differences in socialization goals that are determined by each culture's conceptualization of adaptive or functional behaviors associated with psychosocial competence in children. This diversity among ethnic minority families in their conceptualization of "appropriate child development" thus underlines the necessity for developmental research that places cultural variability at the core of the research framework. It is imperative that future developmental research examine central cultural variables in order to develop culturally relevant theories and research methodologies that examine both risk and resiliency in the developmental trajectory of children of color.

Child and Family Interventions

Overview. The vast majority of research on intervention and prevention programs for children and adolescents has stemmed from European American theories of normative child

development and utilized predominantly European American middle-class samples (Hammond & Yung, 1993). Despite the inclusion of ethnic minorities in study samples, little is known whether these interventions are effective with specific ethnic minority groups, and to what extent the constructs assessed hold the same meaning across different cultural contexts. Moreover, because many interventions are developed using current theories of child development, the targeted behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in the interventions often represent what constitutes “normative child behavior” in mainstream culture, which may not necessarily match the cultural views and expectations of ethnic minority youth and families.

Within the prevention and intervention literature, the majority of interventions have utilized a framework in which interventions are “fixed” or have “a single composition and dosage that is offered to all program participants” (Collins, Murphy & Bierman, 2004, p.185). Fixed interventions tend to provide all components of the intervention menu to each individual in the intervention condition. According to Collins et al (2004), fixed interventions are based on the expectation that regardless of individual differences in intervention needs, exposure to a single, uniform intervention will produce effective outcomes even if some components of the intervention are irrelevant or promote minimal changes in clients. Fixed interventions reflect an etic approach of research, in that an apriori intervention curriculum is applied to a sample with the postulation that differences among individuals minimally influence intervention effects. An etic approach to intervention research operates on the assumption that the intervention or prevention program is applicable and appropriate for all individuals regardless of differences within individuals, family contexts, cultural origin or contextual background. To date, the majority of interventions - including those conducted by ethnic minority researchers - have implemented etic- based fixed intervention paradigms that have little evidence whether these

interventions are valid for the youth and families of diverse backgrounds.

In response to the call for understanding how individual intervention needs influence intervention effectiveness, researchers have developed a new approach of research based intervention/preventions referred to as adaptive interventions (Collins et al, 2004). Adaptive interventions entails adapting or shaping the intervention to the specific intervention needs of the individuals, whether it be assigning different dosages or varying intervention components according to the presenting problems of each particular individual. In these interventions, the assignment of treatment components is determined by examining the effect of tailoring variables (variables of the individual that are expected to moderate intervention effects) on the client. Collins et al (2004) indicate that tailoring variables generally include characteristics specific to the individual, family, or context that “represent risk or protective factors that influence responsivity to various types or intensity of preventive interventions” (p.186).

The approach of adaptive intervention models reflect several key elements underlined in emic approaches to research. The inclusion of tailoring variables as part of the intervention process highlights how this approach identifies individual, familial, cultural and contextual characteristics as central in understanding the research outcome. Within adaptive interventions, what is identified as the “problem” and also the “appropriate intervention” is dependent on individual, familial, cultural and contextual factors that are *specific* to each individual in the intervention - a view which coincides with the emic perspective that conceptualizes truths or principles as specific to the culture or the context of the individual.

Intervention/prevention programs targeting ethnic minority populations have increasingly begun to integrate etic and emic perspectives as a way to address the specific needs of ethnic minority populations. Several interventions for ethnic minority youth have combined etic and

emic approaches through targeting etic or universal issues (e.g. adolescent drug use, problem behavior); while simultaneously integrating emic considerations such as specific cultural values, behaviors, and expectations that may directly or indirectly contribute to the presenting problems.

The way in which the identification and inclusion of tailoring variables are integrated as part of the intervention suggest that adaptive interventions may be one of the most optimal research designs for developing culturally sensitive or culturally adaptive intervention programs. The framework of adaptive interventions allows for an integration of both etic and emic approaches in that specific risk and protective factors are measured and utilized to determine the appropriate intervention for the overarching etic issue (e.g. adolescent problem behavior). Such provides a basic foundation for developing culturally adaptive intervention models for ethnic minority youth and families. The processes of choosing and measuring tailoring variables, and further, using the data from tailoring variables as a tool for making decisions about appropriate interventions are all critical research stages relevant to developing culturally sensitive treatments.

Second, the flexible structure of adaptive interventions is advantageous for intervention research with ethnic minority children and families because the decisions for intervention targets are driven by participant data. In contrast to fixed interventions, in which the decisions regarding appropriate treatment considerations are previously determined (e.g. prior research findings), adaptive interventions use the information from tailoring variables as a guide to determine the more appropriate treatment choices for a specific individual. This approach of adaptive interventions thus allows researchers the flexibility to test whether particular cultural constructs/variables will moderate or mediate intervention effects. Such flexibility is critical in research on ethnic minority children and families because it allows researchers to empirically test the effects of specific variables that may lead to the development of new ideas, theories and

research methodologies for interventions with ethnic minority populations.

The use of a data driven approach in understanding how variables within the ecological context of the individual impact intervention effectiveness has been examined among several intervention models. One model found to be particularly effective with interventions targeting problem behavior among early adolescents is the ecological model (Dishion et al). Work by Dishion et al (200-) has proven that the use of information gathered through initial assessments is instrumental in determining what intervention options are the most optimal for each family. In contrast to the deficit-based approach in which use of particular assessments is determined by the presenting problems, or the goal to confirm or disconfirm a clinical diagnosis (Stormshak & Dishion, 2005); the ecological approach uses a strength-based approach of assessment in which assessments are used to identify risk and protective factors within various ecological levels that impact child and family functioning. The goal of this approach is to utilize the information gathered in the ecological assessment of strengths and risks as a tool in building the motivation to change among children and their families.

The focus of the ecological model in which family members are active agents in the decision making and choices of intervention options, may be a particularly effective research model for understanding ethnic minority youth and families. The appropriateness of the ecological model is because this approach provides flexibility for both intervention researchers to: 1) explore, 2) identify and 3) implement culturally specific or culturally relevant variables into the intervention options. Moreover, this model utilizes a qualitative approach in understanding the key risk and protective variables of the family - a method which allows for important information gathering which can be applied to the development of culturally sensitive assessments and intervention models for ethnic minority families.

Within the field of developmental research, the literature examining basic processes that are specific to ethnic minority children and families has been sparse. Intervention science can address this concern by using the adaptive intervention model as their framework, in which “adaptations” are made to enhance cultural adaptability or sensitivity of the intervention. In the following section we will identify key considerations that are integral in assessment and intervention dimensions of intervention research for ethnic minority youth and families.

Culturally anchored assessment and research methodology in intervention research

Culture influences every level of the research process - from the formulation of research questions, development of research design and procedures, selection of assessments, identification and recruitment of sample, delivery of the research, to data analysis and interpretation - highlighting the importance of examining cultural validity and at each level of the analysis. In developing culturally sensitive adaptive interventions the inclusion of culturally important perspectives and variables is critical in every dimension of the research.

Ethnic minority researchers have argued for cultural competence in intervention research, suggesting the need to incorporate cultural factors in several domains identified as critical to the development of culturally sensitive methodology for intervention research. We will discuss the importance of utilizing an “adaptive” design in not only the intervention component but also the following dimensions of ethnic minority research: 1) formulation of research questions, 2) sample characteristics, 3) assessment reliability and validity, 4) research design, and 5) interpretation of findings.

Cultural competence in the formulation of research questions. The formulation of the research

question is the primary dimension in which cultural competence is critical for ethnic minority research and assessment. This stage of research begins with the awareness of the researcher's cultural context. According to Seidman (1978), the researcher himself is a cultural being whose experiences, perspectives, attitudes, beliefs and values are influenced by the culture he is in. These influences shape the cultural lenses of the researcher, through which he formulates the research questions. As a result, his research questions are derived from the cultural perspective of a particular cultural framework-namely the researcher's own culture.

The salience of the researcher's "cultural lenses" becomes apparent when the perspective of the researcher differs from those of the ethnic or cultural group of interest. More so than often, researchers tend to base their research questions on literature, theories and research methods that reflect their own perspectives, rather than those of the cultural group of interest. Matsumoto (2000) describes this as ethnocentrism, which is "the tendency to view the world through one's own cultural filters". Matsumoto (2000) indicates that because each individual has his or her own cultural lenses, every one is ethnocentric. However ethnocentrism can lead to systematic biases in cultural research when one is unaware of, or inflexible about his or her ethnocentric views. Research developed within an ethnocentric framework is therefore more likely to interpret behaviors and attitudes that deviate from the norms of the dominant culture as "problematic" or maladaptive; resulting in the formulation of erroneous research questions (Seidman, 1978).

Researchers have highlighted the importance of developing the flexibility of one's ethnocentrism (Bochner, 1982; Brislin, 1993). Researchers can attain ethnocentric flexibility by developing an awareness of one's ethnocentrism, recognizing other cultural perspectives, and perceiving and learning about other cultural perspectives. To increase the awareness of one's ethnocentrism while recognizing other cultural perspectives, researchers should keep themselves

informed of salient cultural processes and sociopolitical issues of the groups that they will be studying. Exposing oneself to the available literature, participating in educational opportunities that are informative of the culture, having regular contacts with members of the community, and having personal contact with members of the group who are willing to share their stories and experiences, can lead to cultural sensitivity and flexibility (Dumas et al, 1999). Involvement with the culture of interest enables the researcher to form research questions that adequately address the concerns of the cultural group.

Recruitment and sample characteristics. Exhibiting cultural competence in the selection and definition of the research sample is highly important in conducting effective research studies. One overarching issue with ethnic minority research is that ethnic groups are often regarded by researchers as internally homogenous and externally distinctive (Gjerde & Onishi, 2000). Within developmental research, ethnicity has been used as a marker of culture; conceptualized as static, bounded phenomena that are not affected by sociopolitical or historical changes. Despite the functional value of using ethnic or racial categories to represent culture, this current method of classifying participants has some potential problems for the reliability and validity of the research. First, current classification of ethnic groups in research consists of broad ethnic or racial categories that include multiple nationalities and cultural groups with varying historical, socio-political and economic backgrounds. For example, categorizing Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Asian Indian, etc into the one ethnic category of “Asian Americans” assumes that there are more similarities than differences across these diverse national groups. The use of ethnicity as a marker of culture in research is often based on the assumption that historical roots are the primary determinant of an individual’s cultural framework. As a result, it ignores the variability that occurs within ethnic categories due to multiple influences such as

differences in nationality, language, religious beliefs, history, immigration experiences, socioeconomic status, acculturation levels, geographic location, cultural beliefs, traditions and values. This heterogeneity within ethnic minority groups therefore questions the units of analysis researchers are actually measuring when reporting group comparisons.

Current cross-cultural research operates on the assumption that ethnic groups are equivalent on non-ethnic variables. A major confound with ethnic minority research is the high correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic minority status (McLoyd, 1990). However, a large proportion of cross-ethnic studies continue to fail to control for the effects due to SES. Similarly, several studies have documented differential mental health outcomes among individuals with differing levels of acculturation or generation status (Buriel, Calzada, & Vazquez, 1982; Hill et al, 2003). These findings suggest that experiences of the ethnic minority individuals may greatly differ along various dimensions including culture, and social, political, or economic status; reinstating the inadequacy of current ethnic categories as a representation of the cultures of ethnic groups. Consumers of ethnic minority research must be aware of the heterogeneity within groups and account for these multiple influences before assuming that ethnic differences are an indication of cultural differences.

Whether or not a sample is representative of the population of interest is also affected by the recruitment process. Recruitment of ethnic minorities, especially children and families, is a challenging task. In contrast to mainstream parents, ethnic minority parents may be more cautious in providing permission for their child to participate in an intervention due to the: 1) fear that the research may adversely affect the child (e.g. labeling of the child with psychopathology), 2) fear of blame if the child is identified as “at risk”, or 3) prior negative interactions with mainstream organizations such as schools, mental health agencies, and social

services (Dumas et al, 1999). Ethnic minority youth are more likely to drop out or be absent from school (Pantin et al, 2003, Phinney & Tarver, 1988), which impacts the recruitment process, especially in school based intervention studies. Ethnic minority groups are reported to underuse mental health services compared to European American (Sue et al, 1991).

These challenges within the recruitment process indicate the need for the implementation of procedures tailored to address the needs of the ethnic minority population of interest. Fisher and Ball (2002) employed several community members as their intervention staff thereby creating a venue for the research staff to reach out to the families in the communities. Creating personal contacts in the community and interacting in person can lead to higher recruitment (Cauce, Ryan, & Grove, 1998). Adaptation of the recruitment procedure in a culturally sensitive way that caters to ethnic minority families is critical in recruitment and retention in research.

Cultural validity of assessment measures. The cultural sensitivity of assessment measures is a growing area of concern within the domain of developmental psychology. Particularly in the area of standardized testing, the consistently poor performance and disproportionate displacement of ethnic minority children has resulted in the enactment of federal mandates such as Public Law 94-142 that requires school districts to ensure nondiscriminatory assessments (Guerra, & Jagers, 1998). Cultural bias in assessments results in problems resulting from lack of construct equivalence, linguistic equivalence, and measurement equivalence (Okazaki & Sue, 1995).

Construct or conceptual equivalence, refers to the similarity in conceptual meaning in two or more cultural groups (Okazaki & Sue, 1995). In examining a construct across ethnic groups, a key concern is whether a construct has the same meaning across both comparison groups. The equivalence of a construct may be highly dependent on the cultural context in which the construct and assessment is developed. When comparing constructs across cultural groups

that differ in cultural worldviews, values, beliefs, tradition, history, sociopolitical backgrounds and economic status, it is critical that researchers consider how these sociocultural influences affect the meaning and functionality of the construct for group of interest.

In developmental psychology, the majority of child development constructs examined are those founded on principles of normative child development in mainstream society. As a result, developmental studies with ethnic minorities have largely focused on the comparison of ethnic minority children with European American, middle-class standards or samples because of an underlying assumption that these represent universal standards (McLoyd & Randolph, 1984). For example, the common use of authoritarian parenting styles among Asian, Latino and African American families may be interpreted as maladaptive, because European American samples have shown a positive association between authoritarian parenting and externalizing problems (Chao and Kim, 2000; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1996; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000). This indicates the need to use culturally anchored research methods to operationalize constructs so that they are meaningful to ethnic minority children and families.

Several researchers have implemented culturally sensitive ways to achieve the construct equivalence across groups. Hughes and DuMont (1993) have used focus group interviews to tap into cultural constructs and further define their meanings. Fisher and Ball (2002) integrated community members as research staff who examined whether assessments and intervention components addressed the concerns of the community. The inclusion of community members is beneficial because they can assist in determining the cultural validity of the assessments.

Linguistic equivalence is another area of importance when administering assessments across ethnic minority groups, particularly those whom English is not their native language. Administration of assessments in English may result in poorer performance or outcomes for

ethnic minority youth because they misinterpret information or do not understand the assessment. To ensure linguistic equivalence, assessments should undergo the process of translation (e.g. English version translated to Spanish), then back translation (Spanish version translated back to English), followed by a comparison of the two English versions (Brislin, 1993). However, researchers should not assume that because a measure has been translated and back translated that it is equivalent across cultures. Diaz-Guerrero & Diaz-Loving (1990) found that three personality constructs derived in European American samples were not replicated in Mexican samples even after the measure was translated and back- translated. The factor analysis with the Mexican sample failed to confirm the original factor structure and resulted in an uninterpretable factor structure. The authors concluded that the translations were not sensitive to the differences in construct meanings across cultures. Additionally, even among cultural groups that speak English as their native language (e.g. African Americans) certain linguistic components that are culturally specific should be accounted for in assessments (Okazaki & Sue, 1995).

Measurement equivalence refers to the extent to which a particular measure elicits the same responses across groups. Findings have reported the danger of assuming that a particular assessment or assessment administration procedure will elicit the same type of information from respondents of varying backgrounds. For example, in behavioral observation measures, Gonzales and colleagues (1996) found that African American coders rated African American parents as more effective in parenting, whereas non African American coders rated African American families as significantly higher in family conflict and parental control. Terrell, Terrell, & Taylor (1980) found that the ethnicity and the interactional style of the examiner significantly influenced the intellectual performance of African American but not European American children.

Other areas of assessment equivalence include scalar equivalence, item equivalence and

task equivalence. Scalar equivalence as described by Knight and Hill (1998) is when a “given score on a measure refers to the same degree, intensity, or magnitude of the construct across ethnic or racial groups.” (p.184). Several studies have documented the lack of scalar equivalence, for example, Bachman & O’Malley (1984) found evidence of extreme response styles among African Americans compared to European American respondents. Chen, Lee, and Stevenson (1995) found that compared to North American students, Chinese and Japanese students responded using the midpoint scores on the scales. The authors suggest that ethnic and cultural differences in response sets may reflect differences in cultural norms in responding to stimuli, for example, the modest approaches in responding of Chinese and Japanese students aligns with their cultural expectations and behaviors. Ethnic differences in response sets may also reflect differences in how respondents interpret subjective experiences into numerical, categorical responses which for some; may be a very foreign concept.

Item equivalence refers to the extent to which items on the measure have the same meaning across ethnic groups (Knight & Hill, 1998). Expressions common in mainstream culture may not be interpreted in the same way by an ethnic minority respondent who has never heard or used that particular expression. It is critical that researchers scrutinize items using a cultural perspective, and modify expressions to match the understanding of the cultural group.

Lastly, task equivalence is described as the respondent’s familiarity with the assessment procedure (Knight & Hill, 1998). For many ethnic minority participants, the notion of rating one’s thoughts or feelings, or interacting with family members while being videotaped, are experiences that are outside their cultural context. As a result, some respondents may behave in ways that they believe is desirable by the experimenter. The observational study by Gonzales and colleagues (1996) reported that for Asian American families, obtaining reliable ratings of the

family interactions was difficult because of the inhibited responses of the families. The authors reported that for the Asian American sample the observational paradigm may have been inappropriate “because it asks families to do something that is not just potentially ‘artificial’ but perhaps culturally prohibited” (p.280). These findings indicate the need to carefully examine the cultural context of the participants and design or modify assessments so that they are relevant to the particular population. Ball & Fisher (2002) have incorporated the use of storytelling of American Indian legends into their behavior observation task because it serves as a vessel for American Indian youth and families to connect with the task, and also provides a culturally sanctioned method to discuss problematic topics with youth.

The evaluation of these domains of assessment equivalence highlights its critical role in obtaining culturally reliable and valid data. As a result, researchers have increasingly focused on implementing several methodological procedures in developing culturally sensitive assessments and assessment procedures that align with the cultural framework of ethnic minority populations. First, researchers should conduct extensive testing of both assessments and assessment procedures in the culture of interest. Piloting of assessments will provide researchers with information that can help identify areas that require the implementation of culturally appropriate methods. Examples of culturally sensitive methods include the integration of cultural traditions, history, and practices into the assessment, use of ethnographic assessment procedures such as participant observation or interviewing local informants, or use of focus groups recruited from the community of interest. Second, the inclusion of members from the culture or community as research staff can increase the cultural sensitivity of the assessments because they provide insight to participants’ experiences of engaging in research. Last, researchers should obtain information from a variety of sources in order to create an accurate picture of the child’s adjustment. Use of a

multi-agent, multi method approach enables the collection of information on a variety of levels: from the individual (child), family members (parent, siblings), school informants (teachers, peers) and observers (coders in research), thus allowing the researcher to effectively obtain an accurate picture of the child's development.

Research Designs. The majority of intervention research using multiethnic samples have used between group research designs that generally involve the comparison of an ethnic minority group with a mainstream European American group. Several researchers have criticized the use of mainstream culture as the “standard” because ethnic difference are regarded as a “deviation from the norm” (McLoyd & Randolph, 1986).

Phinney and Landin (1998) have described two research models for studies that integrate the influences of culture and ethnicity: 1) the inferred ethnic correlates model which draws on existing literature or common knowledge to identify ethnic or cultural differences, and 2) the measured ethnic correlates model which assesses relevant ethnic variables that are associated to the outcomes of interest. We describe the differences between these two models using the framework of fixed and adaptive interventions discussed by Collins and colleagues (2001).

Between group studies of the inferred ethnic correlates model generally examine differences between ethnic or cultural groups, but the interpretation of these differences is inferred from existing literature on race or ethnicity and not directly measured (Phinney & Landin, 1998). Explanations for ethnic differences in intervention outcomes are not based on participant data but are drawn from current theories or past empirical work that may not always reflect culturally normative developmental processes of specific ethnic groups. Moreover, within group differences are not evaluated because of the assumption that individual variables such as acculturation, SES, family structure or discriminatory experiences do not significantly impact

outcomes (i.e. intervention effectiveness) – a perspective similar to that of fixed interventions.

In contrast to the inferred ethnic correlates model, between group studies of the measured ethnic correlates model (Phinney & Landin, 1998) directly assesses culturally relevant and sociocultural variables (e.g. discrimination, acculturative stress, cultural beliefs and traditions) that are central to the ethnic minority youth and family functioning. The inclusion of critical cultural and sociocultural variables in the measured ethnic correlates model stem from the need to better understand ethnic or cultural differences in study outcomes. Such approach is similar to the inclusion of tailoring variables in adaptive interventions – in that specific ecological variables are incorporated as part of the study as indicators of research outcomes. In developing culturally adaptive intervention programs, integration of the measured ethnic correlates model and the adaptive intervention model may provide a solid basis for understanding the implications of cultural processes in the positive adjustment of ethnic minority youth and families.

Between group studies of the measured ethnic correlates model are the most advantageous in that they examine both 1) culturally relevant factors associated with outcome variables, and 2) provide explicit information on the how these variables differ among groups and further, relate to differences in study outcomes (Phinney & Landin, 1998). The study by Phinney, Romero, Nava and Huang (2001) on ethnic identity and language proficiency among Armenian, Vietnamese and Mexican immigrant families is an example of such research. Measures of cultural maintenance, ethnic identity and ethnic language proficiency were included and the associations between these variables were examined. Because of the differences among these groups, the authors ran separate models for each ethnic group in order to understand the culturally specific relationships among these variables within the three ethnic groups. According to Phinney and Landin (1998), the measured correlates model is the best approach to ethnic

minority research because it includes assessments of cultural variables and further, examines the influences of these variables on study outcomes - information critical in understanding similarities and differences in the developmental trajectories of ethnic minority youth.

Another research design that serves as an excellent model in developing culturally adaptive interventions is the parallel research design proposed by Sue and Sue (1987). This model is a culturally appropriate research design because it combines etic and emic approaches of research. The combined etic and emic approach in parallel research designs involve the: 1) identification of etic concepts and processes that are universally applicable, 2) development and validation of assessments that accurately measure constructs or processes that are meaningful for each culture, and 3) comparing of the cultural groups on the emically defined etic constructs (Sue & Sue, 1987). Parallel to the conceptual framework of adaptive interventions in which tailoring variables are included and used as indicators of intervention implementation, this design serves well for culturally adaptive research because the researcher aims to discover, rather than impose the framework or perspective from one cultural group onto another. As a result, researchers can determine similarities and differences of the cultural constructs or processes of interest.

Dumka, Gonzales, Wood and Formoso (1998) provide an example of using a parallel research design in which the authors describe the use of qualitative methods to develop culturally appropriate quantitative assessments of parenting stress among English speaking U.S. born Mexican Americans, Spanish speaking Mexican born Mexican immigrants, African American, and European American families. The qualitative methods used to collect information regarding parenting stress included individual in depth one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The individual interviews were semi structured which allowed for detailed descriptions of parent-child interactions and also provided opportunities for parents to freely share their perspectives.

The focus group method was beneficial in collecting culturally relevant information because the parents tended to share and confirm beliefs, attitudes and practices surrounding parenting in an ethnically homogeneous group setting (Dumka, Gonzales, Wood and Formoso, 1998). The authors reported that the use of qualitative assessments informed the researchers of the lived experience of the families and guided them to develop a contextually relevant measure of parenting stress and also informed them of appropriate research designs for future interventions.

Overall, concluding from the work of Phinney and Landin (1998) and Sue and Sue (1987), culturally sensitive research designs (i.e. measure ethnic correlates research studies, parallel research designs) serve to provide the framework in developing culturally sensitive adaptive interventions. Integration of culturally and ecologically specific information thus is central in identifying appropriate interventions for ethnic minority youth and families.

Interpretation of Findings. Culturally sensitive methods in the interpretation of data on diverse samples are critical in developing a culturally grounded knowledge base for research on ethnic minority youth and families. Data analysis and interpretation of the results in studies with ethnically diverse samples requires the use of data analytic methods that can identify rich and meaningful descriptions that encompass important cultural phenomena (Rapkin & Luke, 1993). Dumas and colleagues (1999) identify three areas of data analysis that require attention to culture: 1) identification of group and individual variability, 2) indication of statistical reliability and validity of measures and ethnic specific norms, and the 3) analysis of residual variance.

The majority of research conducted with ethnic minority youth and families have focused on reporting general group differences between ethnic groups or have utilized statistical methods to “control” for differences between groups (Dumas et al, 1999). According to Betancourt and Lopez (1993), the use of ethnicity as a proxy for culture results in the tend to assume that ethnic

differences are due to cultural differences, despite the fact that the cultural processes or influences thought to underlie these differences are not directly assessed. Instead, the inclusion of culturally relevant variables that potentially influence group differences in outcome (e.g. acculturation, experience of discrimination) provides a more accurate and detailed description of cultural phenomena associated with the differences across ethnic or cultural groups. Betancourt and Lopez (1993) argue that without the direct assessment of culturally relevant variables, it is difficult to determine if and how cultural processes impact psychological outcomes.

Dumas and colleagues (1999) also suggest that researchers conduct two analytical procedures to maintain the reliability and validity of their data. The first involves conducting preliminary analyses to determine the reliability and validity of assessments separately for each cultural group examined. The majority of assessments for youth and families are developed on European American theories and samples and standardized on mainstream populations. An example is the cross-cultural study on personality traits by Diaz-Guerrero & Diaz-Loving (1990) in which the original three personality factor structure was not replicated in their Mexican sample. The authors developed a new instrument using culturally meaningful descriptions which was a factor analyzed, revealing three comparable personality constructs. Second, preliminary analyses need to examine factors of measurement error that vary across the groups, such as group differences in reading ability or language fluency.

Dumas and colleagues (1999) also caution for cultural sensitivity in the examination of residual variance in analyses of different groups. Scrutiny of whether there are other variables that account for residual variance other than random measurement error is highly important. Dumas et al (1999) explain that subtle influences such as the influence of the experimenters on the participants, the study setting or location, or interactions between research staff and

participants can contribute to the unaccounted variance, thus violating the assumptions of nonsystematic residuals. For example, Gonzales, Hiraga and Cauce (1998) examined whether ethnocentric biases of the coders influenced coder ratings of parent-child relationships. The authors found that non-African American coders tended to rate the African American families as more conflictual and exhibiting more parental control, whereas African American coders' ratings were consistent with self-report data. These findings are alarming when one considers the lack of report on coder ethnicity or coder characteristics in many of the behavioral observations studies in developmental research; suggesting that group differences in outcome may be influenced by extraneous factors such as coder biases. In general, research with ethnic minority groups has failed to account for external influences such as how experimenter race and experimenter-participant interactions sway research findings.

Lastly, researchers must exhibit cultural competence in the interpretation of data. According to Dumas et al (1999), the interpretation of results requires the researcher to be capable of drawing conclusions based on his knowledge of the literature, experience, and the awareness of similarities and differences among cultural contexts and processes. Because of the various cultural influences that affect the developmental trajectory of ethnic minority youth, research findings may not align with current developmental theories or perspectives. Thus, researchers should actively seek culturally meaningful interpretations from various cultural informants (e.g. ethnic minority researchers, focus groups, members of the community). Dumas et al (1999) describe that the inclusion of cultural informants in the interpretation of results can help: 1) identify cultural variables that influence outcome in both data analyses and assessment, 2) provide culturally appropriate explanations for unexpected results, and 3) propose other culturally important processes or constructs that can be targeted for future research. As scientists

in pursuit of understanding fundamental principles of human behavior, researchers who study ethnic minority populations have the responsibility of applying every resource –whether it be empirical knowledge, research experience, cultural informants or other ethnic minority researchers – to draw culturally meaningful conclusions from their research.

Conclusion. In conclusion, developmental research needs to address the various influences of ethnicity and culture on assessment and research with ethnic minority youth and families. As discussed, developing culturally sensitive assessments and research paradigms involves addressing issues of systematic cultural biases at each level of the research process. First, research should address the questions of concern that are identified by the people of the population examined. Second, the generalizability of current measures on children and families should be examined across various ethnic groups. Modifying current measures in obtaining equivalence can be conducted by the assistance of ethnic minority individuals who can provide cultural viewpoints on whether certain constructs are culturally specific or universal. Third, in order to develop research that identifies the “real” problems that ethnic minority individuals face, it is important that representatives of ethnic groups are involved in implementing culturally appropriate research. Inclusion of multiethnic research staff will help familiarize research to the cultures of concern, creating an environment that bridges the realm of research and practice. Movement towards research strategies that address culturally relevant dimensions of ethnic minority youth development will result in the future development of culturally anchored research methodology that will address the needs of ethnic minority youth and families.

Intervention

The work by Collins et al (2001) suggests the promising framework of adaptive

intervention designs for interventions targeting ethnic minority youth and families. In the following section we will discuss ways in which “cultural” adaptations can be incorporated into adaptive intervention research to develop culturally sensitive treatments for ethnic minority populations. Bernal and colleagues (1995) identify eight core dimensions that are necessary for the cultural adaptive treatments: 1) language of intervention, 2) persons of intervention, 3) metaphors used in intervention, 4) content or cultural knowledge, 5) concepts, 6) goals of treatment, 7) methods for treatment, and 8) context. We will discuss implementing cultural adaptations in the following areas to develop culturally sensitive adaptive interventions.

Language. Language is central for interventions with immigrant populations whom English is not the primary language. Language encompasses more than just the method of communication; the presence of culture is found in language through its symbols, words, and euphemisms that reflect the culture (Bernal et al, 1995). The knowledge of language is related to an increased awareness and knowledge of the culture, which can increase the effectiveness of culturally sensitive interventions (Sue & Zane, 1987; Dolgin, Salazar, & Cruz, 1987). For example, matching the language of the therapist and client was associated with decreases in client treatment drop out, increase in treatment outcomes for Asian American and Mexican American individuals whose primary language was not English (Sue, Fujino, Hu, Takeuchi, & Zane, 1991). Integration of language through the use of cultural terms is also a vehicle to increase treatment involvement, for example, Spoth, Gyll, Chao and Molgaard (2003) coined their prevention program for African American youth as “Harambee”, a Swahili word that means “pulling together”. Language in intervention transcends the mechanical practicality in communicating the intervention, and includes the “use of cultural syntonic languages, particularly within inner-city, regional, or subcultural groups” (Bernal et al, 1995, p.74).

Person. The person dimension of intervention refers to the client and therapist variables and the therapeutic relationship (Bernal et al, 1995). Literature in this area has mainly focused on the effects of ethnic match between therapist and client, indicating that in general, ethnic matching is beneficial. Gamst & Kramer (2000) found that for Asian American, African American and Latino clients, ethnic match between therapist and clients predicted higher psychological functioning at termination for clients with schizophrenia and mood disorders, whereas no association was found for Caucasian clients. Gamst and colleagues (2004) also found that for adolescent Latino and African American clients, having a therapist of similar ethnic or racial background predicted significant increases in psychological functioning at termination. McCabe (2002) studied factors that predicted premature termination among Mexican American children and found that ethnic matching of therapist and client was associated with lower drop out rates.

Some studies have investigated other culturally relevant variables within the person domain that contribute to treatment outcome with ethnic minorities. Recently, Constantine (2001) examined whether therapist ethnicity, ethnic match, previous academic multicultural training, and self reported multicultural competence predicted observer ratings of therapists' multicultural competence. Interestingly, after accounting for the ethnicity of client or therapist, the number of formal multicultural counseling courses predicted the ratings of therapists' cultural competence above and beyond the effect of therapist or client ethnicity. Atkinson, Casas & Abreu, (1992) found in their sample of Latinos that perceptions of cultural sensitivity in the therapist was the single most important variable, independent of ethnicity or client's level of acculturation.

Several studies have examined the influences of client cultural variables on treatment preference. Johnson & Lashley (1989) and Bennet and BigFoot-Sipes (1991) found that higher commitment to American Indian culture increased preference for ethnic matching. Atkinson and

Lowe (1995) found that African Americans immersed in pro-Black racial identity preferred an ethnically similar therapist, whereas those at the internalization level of racial identity development base their preference on other factors than ethnicity. Lopez and colleagues (1991) found that middle-acculturated Hispanic male college students had the strongest preference for a therapist from the same background and that Hispanic students with the lowest acculturation indicated a preference for a European American therapist.

Metaphors. Metaphors include the use of symbols and concepts that are central to the ethnic minorities. In the Families Unidas intervention, (Pantin et al, 2003) facilitators adapted the delivery of the parent group session by including social engagement time for parents prior to sessions – a common custom among Latinos. The intervention staff also addressed the mothers and fathers in the parent group formally as “Mr.” and “Mrs.” as a way to respect the families (Tapia, Schwartz, Prado, Lopez, & Pantin, 2006). These subtle adaptations are ways to maintain and respect Latino cultural values of deferring to authority (*respeto*) and promote the cohesive social networks of Latino families (*familism*). Incorporation of artwork or pictures of the ethnic group are also symbols that reflect cultural sensitivity, for example, Spoth and colleagues (2003) used African artwork and pictures of African American staff and participants in the intervention materials that presented to the intervening adolescents and families.

Several interventions have utilized the culture’s emphasis on cohesive familial or kinship and social networks of ethnic minority families. In Familias Unidas (Pantin et al, 2003), “joining” the Hispanic families is described as an important social-cultural process. The therapist enters the family’s world through recognizing the acculturative stress that faces the parents and adolescents. Through this process the therapist gradually blends into the social support network of the family, and becomes “part of the family”. The integration of the therapist into the family’s

social network is an act of acknowledgment of “*familism*”, which is integral in working with family members. In Belgrave and colleagues’ (2004) cultural intervention for African American girls, the intervention staff or “mzees” which refers to respected elders in Kiswahili, served as role models for the girls in the sessions. The role of the mzees was to function as a “sister mentor” to the girls. The mzees facilitated engagement in the group sessions while modeling behavior that would promote the maintenance of healthy relationships.

Content. Cultural knowledge in intervention is key to the conceptualization of interventions for ethnic minority youth and families. Awareness and understanding of cultural values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and norms is central in the deliverance of a culturally sensitive intervention. This dimension is particularly important in the development of adaptive interventions because cultural content serves to provide the basis for identifying important tailoring variables necessary for the intervention. For example, Stevenson (2002) developed a multisystemic intervention, Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth (PLAAY) that targets anger and aggression among African American adolescent boys. PLAAY incorporates cultural elements through several components: a martial arts aggression reduction curriculum, basketball play that involves face-to-face in-vivo anger management coaching, community-based parent empowerment education, and a rites of passage program. According to Stevenson (2002), PLAAY was developed through integrating cultural dimensions central to the African American experience such as empowerment, diunity, cultural history and traditions, racial identity development, psycho-historical racism and within-race differences. Racial socialization was also included as one of four key parenting processes targeted in the Strong African American Families (SAAF) program by Brody and colleagues (2005). Parents in SAAF were taught consistent, nurturing parenting practices, adaptive racial socialization strategies and strategies for clear

communication and limit setting. Racial socialization strategies involved parents teaching their children the realities of racial oppression, while promoting success in the face of these social barriers (Brody et al, 2005). In the Indian Family Wellness project (Fisher and Ball, 2002), the intervention aimed to recreate traditions of tribes such as storytelling, inclusion of extended family, and the incorporation of indigenous beliefs and values.

Concept. This dimension describes the fundamental theories or models of the intervention (Bernal, Bonilla, & Bellido, 1995). Within cross-cultural psychology, the dimensions of etic versus emic and individualism-collectivism are examples of overarching concepts that can largely influence how mental health is conceptualized and treated. The importance of integrating etic and emic approaches to ethnic minority intervention has already been discussed. Similarly, conceptualizing the treatment research from an individualistic or collectivistic perspective will impact every level of the intervention, from conceptualization of the core issues, choice of assessment materials, intervention delivery, and lastly to the interpretation of the findings. For example, Sue and Zane (1987) argue that the compatibility between therapist's conceptualization of the presenting issues and the client's belief systems is essential for increasing therapist credibility and treatment efficacy. Thus evaluating the overarching concepts of the intervention, whether it be etic versus emic, or a combination of etic and emic, is critical in developing culturally appropriate interventions.

Goals. In determining the goals of the intervention, consensus between the therapist and client in the identification of the problem and the areas for intervention is critical; and needs to be determined prior to intervention development (Bernal et al, 1995). Culturally sensitive treatments are those that are successful in setting compatible therapist and client goals through the use of cultural informants and the integration of cultural research personnel. Cultural informants can

range from members of the community or neighborhood, focus group members, to ethnic minority researchers. The primary role of utilizing cultural informants is to gather culturally relevant information that is necessary in the development of the intervention (Dumas et al, 1999). Focus groups are particularly important in providing researchers the perceptions and expectations of the population of interest (Hughes & DuMont, 1993). Incorporation of research personnel from the culture of interest can also help establish valid intervention goals because they provide bridges between the science in research and the application of the intervention research to the cultural group's needs. Fisher and Ball (2002) indicate that having research staff from the culture or community is advantageous because they "already have an established acceptance in the community, understand the community, and are committed to the intervention projects that can promote positive changes to their community" (p.236). In developing interventions, it is critical that the goals of treatment are formed within the cultural framework of the cultures; and furthermore, that they reflect cultural beliefs, values, practices and traditions.

Method. This dimension includes the procedures taken for achieving the goals established in the intervention (Bernal et al, 1995). Implementation of various culturally appropriate methods in the delivery of the intervention has been documented. For example, in Familias Unidas, a participatory format was used for the parent groups because Hispanic immigrants tend to be submissive to authorities or experts and respond passively, which would work against group cohesion and engagement (Pantin et al, 2003). The Indian Family Wellness Project included an intervention curriculum based on six tribal legends (Fisher & Ball, 2002). The authors reported that story telling of these legends was used as the primary parenting tool to share cultural knowledge and values, to indirectly address child problem behaviors and to encourage positive behavior. Stevenson's (2002) PLAAY intervention utilizes athletics to reduce anger and

aggression by targeting the “cool pose” coping strategy that is common among African American boys. Cool pose coping involves the use of behaviors such as pretending to be apathetic to social convention, showing resistance to authorities, and use of physical expressions of male strength and power as a means to protect oneself from internalizing negative images (Langley, 1994; Majors & Billson, 1992). Using athletics as a medium for intervention is extremely effective because cool pose behaviors are actually used in sports - in PLAAAY, martial arts or basketball teaches boys ways to regulate their emotions through exercises or physical contacts (Stevenson, 2002). In examining Black low income families, Slaughter (1983) showed recognition for the Black family structure by delivering the intervention through a mentorship program in which older or more experienced Black mothers provided support in implementing new skills. In Families Unidas (Pantin et al, 2003), communicating to parents about their parenting skills was carefully considered, so that the presentation of information adhered to family hierarchy and structure; for example, for authoritarian Latino families, intervention staff was careful to protect the status quo of the family system by not challenging a father’s authority (Pantin et al, 2003).

Context. This involves the social, political and economic contexts of the ethnic minority group targeted for the intervention. Many ethnic minority families face the challenges of low socioeconomic status and minority status that include unemployment, immigration policies, changes in policies governing welfare, poverty, social disorganization in neighborhoods, acculturative stress, and availability of social support systems (Myers, 1989; Bursik and Grasmick, 1996; Sampson and Groves, 1989). These macrosystem level factors impact the developmental trajectory of the ethnic minority youth through the influences through the interactions of all other layers. Awareness of the affects of such contextual influences is critical in the conceptualization of the presenting issues and further the development of the intervention.

The issues regarding the validity and effectiveness of culturally sensitive intervention programs highlight the importance of integrating culture into all levels of the intervention. Display of cultural sensitivity to family structure, culturally specific values and beliefs, acculturation level and experiences of discrimination are all elements that impact the ecology of the ethnic minority child and thus, need to be addressed in intervention. Without implementing culturally adaptive strategies, researchers can easily provide ineffective or even harmful interventions. Especially in intervention, ignorance for cultural sensitivity can result in the dangers of producing highly unethical or even harmful outcomes. In this era where ethnic minority issues touch virtually every area of psychological research, training, and practice, it is essential that researchers incorporate cultural diversity and its implications into their research to develop programs that truly benefit the future multiethnic U.S. population.