Myriad 2004

FEATURING:

IMR Scholars’ research in the communities...
CONTENTS

1 Publisher’s Corner

2 Models of Family Socialization: African-American teens’ perceptions of parents

6 Hmong Americans: A growing presence at UW-Milwaukee and in Wisconsin

10 Sabbatical 2002-2003: Stories of cultural change and aging on the Pueblo of Laguna

14 To Assess or Not: Is that the question? Who benefits from the No Child Left Behind Act?

16 The Five Success Factors of High Achieving Puerto Rican High School Students

24 Creating Effective Schools in Failed Urban Districts

30 Milwaukee’s Black Professional Class

32 Institute on Multicultural Relations

33 UWM Students Won Top Awards at the AMSLC Conference
Dear Myriad Readers,

Responding to the Community continues in this issue of the Myriad, an issue devoted to engagement. The Institute on Multicultural Relations (IMR), established in 2002, expands UWM’s commitment by addressing community identified issues and providing a public forum for sharing our response.

I hope you find the articles by our Institute Scholars of interest. Looking at African American parenting styles, closing the academic achievement gap of Puerto Rican students, examining Milwaukee’s black professionals, improving failing urban schools, assessing students to “leave no child behind,” understanding Hmong cultural competence, and experiencing cultural changes of Pueblo Indians are issues that impact all of us. I commend the members of our diverse community for voicing priority issues and allowing the Myriad to provide a platform to explore our inner connectedness and common ground.

We will continue to listen.

Gary L. Williams
Publisher
www.imr.uwm.edu
Models of family socialization: African-American teens’ perceptions of parents
Susie D. Lamborn and Amanda J. Felbab

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated both the parenting styles and family ecologies models with interview responses from 93 14- and 15-year-old African-American adolescents. The parenting styles model was more strongly represented in both open-ended and structured interview responses. Using variables from the structured interview as independent variables, regression analyses contrasted each model with a joint model for predicting self-esteem, self-reliance, work orientation, and ethnic identity. Overall, the findings suggest that a joint model that combines elements from both models provides a richer understanding of African-American families.

A growing body of research on ethnic families aids in understanding socialization influences on the development of ethnic minority youth. At least two models for understanding the role that ethnicity plays in associations between parenting behaviors and youth adjustment have been advanced by the current literature: ethnic equivalence models and cultural values models.

Ethnic equivalence models, represented in this paper by the parenting styles model (Baumrind, 1982; 1991a; 1991b; 1996), emphasize similarities across ethnic groups to suggest that family influences largely transcend ethnicity (Lamborn, et al., 1991; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, et al., 1991). The parenting styles model suggests that extensive work previously undertaken to conceptualize parental socialization is applicable in multiple ethnic settings, even though the model was originally based on European-American families. Current measures are accepted for assessing diverse families, with continued work to substantiate ethnic equivalence for specific populations. According to this model, parental warmth, behavioral control, and psychological autonomy positively influence adolescent adjustment, regardless of ethnicity. As in most ethnic equivalence models, the parenting styles model acknowledges cultural influences but presents common patterns of socialization as more central.

According to cultural values models, parenting behaviors often have different effects in ethnic families because they are embedded in alternative value structures. The cultural values framework is represented by the family ecologies model (Harrison, et al., 1990), which explains how ethnic minority parents develop adaptive strategies to accomplish positive socialization goals with their children. Ethnic variations in associations between parenting and adolescent adjustment may occur because behaviors are interpreted differently in varying cultural contexts. Further, ethnically derived models and measures are needed to capture essential features of ethnic families. For example, characteristics such as interdependence, family obligations, and ethnic socialization define adaptive family functioning in some cultural contexts.

Few studies of African-American adolescents have fully embraced both models in the same study. The family ecologies model is frequently presented as a competing position to the parenting styles model. The usefulness of the parenting styles model for understanding African-American families has been disputed when this model is viewed as ethnocentric. One strategy for addressing this problem is to use methods that rely on ethnic family members to define meaningful aspects of family functioning. In the parenting styles literature, little attention has been paid to how children’s reports of parents may be influenced by open or guided questioning. Further attention to influences of questioning style is warranted as one method of evaluating the cultural appropriateness of the parenting styles model for African-American families. Therefore, this study investigated teen responses regarding family socialization practices using both open and structured questioning.

The current study investigated African-American families using both Baumrind’s (1991a) parenting styles and Harrison, et al.’s (1990) family ecologies frameworks. This study provides three opportunities for evaluating whether a joint model might be effective for understanding African-American families. First, we considered whether open-ended descriptions of parents would reveal responses associated with both models. Second, we evaluated whether structured descriptions of parents would favor one model over the other. Third, we contrasted each individual model with a joint model for predicting youth adjustment in terms of work-orientation, self-reliance, ethnic identity, and self-esteem. These qualities contribute to self-regulation and positive self-concepts, and may mediate between parenting and other forms of youth adjustment.


**METHODS**

**Sample**
The sample consisted of 93 14- and 15-year-old African-American students who were enrolled in a college preparatory program at an urban, predominantly African-American high school. Three family structures were represented: 44% two-parent families, 51% one-parent families, and 5% other types. Thirty-three percent had parents who completed a high school education or less, and 64% had parents who completed at least some college. Forty-six percent of the students were 9th graders and 54% were 10th graders. Finally, 67% of the students were female and 33% were male.

**Procedures**
Students completed surveys in small groups during class. The survey included measures of Ethnic Identity, Self-Reliance, Work Orientation, and Self-Esteem. Interviews were conducted privately in the school library by a multi-ethnic team of interviewers. In the open-ended interview, students identified six qualities that described each parent. Students elaborated until six qualities and concrete examples were presented. A content analysis included three variables that were defined a priori: Model, Broad Category, and Specific Dimension (Lamborn & Velasco, 2001) (see Table 1).

In the structured interview, students rated each parent on 36 items that were developed for this study after reviewing the literature. Exploratory factor analyses revealed five factors for the parenting styles model: accepting, involved, monitors, verbal give and take, and independence. Five factors also emerged for the family ecologies model: dependence on the family, kinship networks, respect elders, ethnic pride, and bicultural attitude. These scales were created for use in further analyses.

**FINDINGS**

This study evaluated the parenting styles and family ecologies models of family functioning based on African-American teens’ responses about parenting behaviors. After examining whether African-American teens’ open-ended and structured descriptions of their parents reflected a joint model, we also evaluated whether a joint model was more effective than either one of the models in predicting youth outcomes.

Teen descriptions of parents reflected both models. With open-ended queries, the parenting style model clearly dominated (see Table 2). General adolescent concerns about parental warmth and behavioral control emerged as central motifs. Family obligations also emerged as a central theme for the family ecologies model. With structured questions, students continued to favor the parenting style model; however, students also rated parents highly on dimensions from the family ecologies model. As expected, parental warmth and interdependence were prevalent themes in teen perceptions of parents (see Table 3).

The final set of analyses used the structured interview variables as predictors of four aspects of youth adjustment: self-esteem, work orientation, self-reliance, and ethnic identity. The findings provided modest support for the usefulness of a joint model for predicting youth adjustment. However, the manner in which the joint model was effective was domain specific. For example, the joint model was more effective in predicting only one of the outcomes: work orientation. In this case, a mediated relationship emerged in which the mother’s emphasis on ethnic pride served as a link between maternal involvement and adolescent work orientation. In contrast, although each model contributed to the prediction of self-reliance, the two models did not improve the prediction of self-reliance when considered jointly. More specifically, mother emphasis on respect related to lower self-reliance, whereas mother involvement related to higher self-reliance. Finally, the family ecologies model was a better predictor for ethnic identity, whereas the parent styles model was a better predictor of self-esteem. These domain specific findings revealed different ways that including constructs from both models provided a richer understanding of family socialization and youth adjustment in African-American families.

**DISCUSSION**

Many of the relations that emerged between the parenting practices and the outcomes were consistent with earlier research. Mother involvement emerged as the key predictor of self-esteem and self-reliance. Parental involvement has been linked to an enhanced sense of self in numerous parenting studies and is a key parenting practice related to positive self-development (e.g., Lamborn, et al., 1991). Parental involvement may contribute to the development of a global, positive sense of self that helps teens to perform positively in various domains of adjustment.

Similarly, ethnic identity has been most consistently linked to parental emphasis on ethnic pride and other forms of racial socialization. For example, Stevenson (1995) found that cultural pride reinforcement related to higher stages of racial identity development. In another study,
parents who prepared their children for living in a diverse world were more likely to have teens with higher levels of ethnic identity. African-American parents reported frequent use of ethnic socialization and emphasized attaining positive socialization goals, pursuing educational success, and fitting into society.

Interestingly, mothers’ emphasis on respect related to lower self-reliance. Respectful relationships may include unquestioning deference to parental opinions and decisions, which can minimize experiences that enhance self-reliance. This type of socialization sometimes coincides with authoritarian parenting. The effects of authoritarian parenting on adolescent development vary within and across ethnic groups. For European-American youth, authoritarian parenting has been linked with relatively strong school performance and low problem behaviors, but also with problematic self-development. However, for African-American youth, authoritarian parenting sometimes has been associated with less negative outcomes. Further research is needed to better understand how traditional values, such as respect for family, relate to the adjustment of ethnic teens in America’s individualistic and autonomy oriented culture.

Concepts identified in mainstream models of family functioning, such as the parenting styles model, have been criticized as being less meaningful for ethnic families. The preference for the parenting styles model in both open-ended and structured responses suggests that this framework is appropriate for African-American teens, at least for the teens in this sample. Open-ended questions are especially useful in revealing the individual’s organization and focus, according to the social-cognitive literature on person perception. Consequently, these findings provide another instance of support for the cross-contextual validity of the parenting styles model.

In conclusion, these findings contribute to understanding how general and cultural forms of family socialization are perceived by African-American teens in normative contexts. The parenting styles and family ecologies frameworks both appear to be appropriate models for understanding African-American families. As others have suggested, a joint model reflecting both general and cultural aspects of socialization may provide a richer understanding of African-American families. Further work is warranted on the development of conceptual frameworks and measures for examining African-American family socialization in normative contexts. This work can help to illuminate culturally specific findings as well as identify areas of cross-contextual validity in family socialization processes.

---

**Table 1 – Coding Categories for Content Analysis of Open-Ended Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Styles</th>
<th>Family Ecologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONNECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved</td>
<td>Depends on Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. We do things together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can talk to her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Kinship Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. She’s affectionate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Says she loves me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRUCTURE</strong></td>
<td>Family Obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Control</td>
<td>Family Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>1. Example for younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Knows who I’m with, where I’m at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Strict, lots of rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>2. Expects me to take care of siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Values education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Says I should try harder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUTONOMY</strong></td>
<td>Respects Elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Autonomy</td>
<td>1. She’s a good role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages Independence</td>
<td>2. Wants me to be respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Thinks I’m responsible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Feels I can make decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Give and Take</td>
<td>Ethnic Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Listens to both sides before decision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Debates with me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. We talk a lot about culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tells about life as a child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Pride</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Go to church together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Talks about her religious beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Column headings are Models; main heading are Broad Categories; indented headings are Specific Dimensions; numbered listings are examples.
Table 2 – Summary of Percentage Scores for Open-Ended Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MOTHERS (N=93)</th>
<th>FATHERS (N=77)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pos.</td>
<td>Neg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Control</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Autonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Ecologies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Obligations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Socialization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Positive indicates that the variable characterized the parent (e.g., warm mother). Negative indicates that the parent was described as the opposite of the variable (e.g., a behaviorally lax mother). Data is presented for Broad Categories.

Table 3 – Means and Standard Deviations (SD) for Scales from the Structured Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MOTHER</th>
<th>FATHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Give and Take</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Ecologies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on Family</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship Networks</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Obligations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect Elders</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Socialization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Pride</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicultural Attitude</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The range for all variables is 1-4, with the following exceptions: Mother and Father Involved (1.3-4); Father Accepting (2-4).
HMONG AMERICANS: A growing presence at UW–Milwaukee and in Wisconsin

Mary Louise Buley-Meissner and Vincent K. Her
Coordinators, Hmong American Studies Initiative

Our essay reviews developments in the Hmong American community as these were revealed to us through our efforts to create a Hmong American Studies Program on the UW–Milwaukee campus. The views and ideas presented here emerged out of many hours of discussions, over the past two years, with community leaders and Hmong American students, as well as individuals, both Hmong and non-Hmong, who had worked on issues of importance to this community. The comments and opinions expressed herein are entirely ours, and we take responsibility for any inaccuracies. We will begin with a brief, but essential recap of Hmong history, highlighting the circumstances that gave rise to the Hmong diaspora.

HMONG AND U.S. HISTORY

According to many scholars, Hmong history and civilization can be traced back at least four thousand years to China, where Hmong people originally settled in the Yellow and Yangtze river valleys (2000-5000 BCE, as noted by Quincy, 1995). For many generations, the Hmong were persecuted because they refused to follow the customs, wear the clothes and speak the language of the Chinese. To escape this oppression, they eventually migrated to mountainous regions of the country, where they established a kingdom of their own, called the Chu Kingdom, which lasted approximately 700 years (1000-223 BCE). Despite that success, the Hmong were forced to wage nearly constant warfare with the Chinese in their efforts to remain free and independent. Consequently, by the start of the 19th century, at least half a million Hmong migrated into Southeast Asia, searching for new land and opportunities. During the 1870s, the Hmong began to settle in Laos, where they lived as self-sufficient farmers, hunters and traders in family-centered, patrilineal, clan-based village societies. That life was harsh, but vibrant.

Hmong and U.S. history intersected in the 1960s when Presidents Kennedy and Nixon made calculated decisions to do anything necessary to stop the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia. (For more details on the underlying politics of the war and related developments, see Quincy, 2000: 106-134.) Guided by that political vision and assisted by General Vang Pao of the Royal Lao Army, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruited forty thousand Hmong to fight in their own country (which was officially neutral) as U.S. allies in the Vietnam War. This army became known to the Hmong as the Secret Guerrilla Unit or SGU.

The Hmong supported the United States because they wanted to be free of oppression from outsiders, but more importantly, they believed in fundamental American ideals: democratic rule, equality and justice. These were more appealing, both in principle and practice, than what the Communists could offer.

The Hmong made many sacrifices and contributions to the Vietnam War. However, because they were fighting in a “secret” guerrilla war, their participation was deliberately kept off the record. In fact, it was not publicly acknowledged by the United States government until recently. Mainly, the Hmong provided the front line defense against the invasion of Laos by the North Vietnamese Communist army, and thwarted its advancement through that country into South Vietnam; rescued American pilots whose planes had gone down in northern Laos; protected radar systems essential to fighter plane navigation; gathered counterintelligence; and served as “trail watchers,” reporting enemy movements and location. Many Americans may be surprised to learn that the Hmong also piloted T-28 bombers. Lee Lue, the most exceptional in his bravery and skill, completed over 5,000 missions, a record for the Vietnam War. The motto for the Hmong pilots — “Fly until we die” — predicted the fate of Lee Lue himself and many of his comrades.
HMONG AMERICANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since 1976, when the Hmong first arrived in the U.S. as refugee immigrants of the Vietnam War, the Hmong population in this country has grown to over 200,000. Initially, the majority settled on the West Coast. However, the past decade has seen a major shift to the Midwestern states, specifically Minnesota and Wisconsin — the two states where nearly 50% of all Hmong in the U.S. reside. Many factors have been cited for this, including economic and educational opportunities that encourage Hmong American families to work hard toward fulfilling their dreams and visions of a better life.

Wisconsin’s Hmong population stands at 33,000-40,000. Of these, 8,000-12,000 live in Milwaukee County. The Hmong American community in Milwaukee is thriving with many small businesses (restaurants, grocery stores, video rental, laundromat and dry cleaning services, travel and translation/interpretation agencies, and more), Hmong language radio programs, a community newspaper printed in both Hmong and English, Hmong-owned and operated health clinics — dental, medical and chiropractic — and many social service organizations. As people in the community have emphasized in conversations with us, Hmong Americans are shifting their focus in an economically and socially significant way: they are making the transition from meeting basic survival needs — which necessarily preoccupied the first generation during the 1970s and 1980s — to pursuing and achieving an American dream of their own imagining. Now the majority of Hmong American families in Wisconsin own a home, a clear indication that they are carving a meaningful niche for themselves, creating a sense of place, belonging and permanence in American society.

HMONG IN WISCONSIN

To comprehend how much ground that Hmong Americans have covered in their educational pursuits over the last three decades, it is important to keep in mind two events pivotal to this story. First, as people familiar with Hmong history already know, the Hmong did not possess a written language until 1954. That manual script, based on the Roman alphabet, resulted from the collaborative efforts of a linguistic anthropologist from the United States and a French missionary. This system remains in popular use by Hmong all over the world today. Second, the first doctoral degree ever awarded to a Hmong was granted by the Sorbonne in 1972. The historical significance of both events deserves to be underscored. For the establishment of the written language not only helped to fuel a great desire for learning; it also marked the beginning of a slow transition from an oral culture to a written one. Moreover, in the eyes of many people, the Sorbonne doctorate defined the pinnacle of educational success. Even so, formal public education for Hmong Americans did not become widespread until the mid 1980s, when teenagers from the refugee camps entered the U. S. and enrolled in middle and high schools, often at grade levels where they were older than their classmates. (An 18 year old, for example, could be placed in a freshman high school class because of his limited language proficiency.)

A small number of this cohort, despite struggling with the English language, completed their undergraduate education in the late 1980s and early 1990s. (One co-author of this essay was among that group.) Against this background, Hmong Americans have made substantial educational gains during the 1990s. For example, more than 3500 individuals have earned B.A./B.S. degrees; 350 have received M.A./M.S. degrees; and more than 125 have completed Ph.D./professional degrees. Currently, an estimated 6,000-6,500 Hmong Americans are enrolled in undergraduate programs across the U.S.

UW–Milwaukee granted its first doctoral degree to a Hmong American in 2000. Twenty-six Hmong Americans are now enrolled here in graduate programs. Since 1991, UW–Milwaukee has awarded 272 Bachelor’s, 49 Master’s and 3 Ph.D. degrees to Southeast Asian Americans. (Hmong Americans constitute an overwhelming majority of this group.)

To us, these numbers clearly demonstrate a fundamental fact of modern life for Hmong Americans: given the opportunity, people will find ways to overcome their obstacles and achieve progress that is motivated by their own values and measured at their own pace. In our view, these local and national statistics reveal extraordinary growth, considering the fact that ninety-five percent of the Hmong parents who came to this country had never held a pencil in their entire life.
HMONG AMERICAN STUDENTS AT UWM

HMong American students are enrolled in all of the major campuses in the UW System, but by far, the largest population is to be found at UW–Milwaukee. In the mid 1980s, Vincent Her, co-author of this essay, was among the first wave of HMong Americans to enter this university. As a freshman, he was one of only a dozen students from his ethnic group on campus. Over the years, the HMong American undergraduate population has steadily increased here, reaching over 500 in 2003. According to recent statistics, enrollment figures have been rising for this group at a higher rate than for any other ethnic group on campus. The HMong American Studies Initiative (HASI) recognizes and respects this growth, which reflects the presence of a large, vibrant HMong American community in Milwaukee and southeastern Wisconsin. Furthermore, HASI intends to make HMong American voices part of the UW–Milwaukee dialogue on diversity and multiculturalism — concepts that must be made more inclusive, not only in classroom discussions, but also in campus policies.

HMONG AMERICAN STUDIES INITIATIVE: A VITAL CAMPUS-COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The HMong American Studies Initiative (HASI) is a new set of ideas that will serve as the groundwork and framework for developing a permanent HMong American Studies Program on the UW–Milwaukee campus. It will play a central role in the implementation of the Milwaukee Idea by strengthening and expanding the educational partnerships between UW–Milwaukee and the HMong American community. Within that context, its main goals are:

1. Community Engagement:
   Establish long-term, collaborative relationships with organizations serving the HMong American community, including sponsorship of presentations and public forums, on and off campus, that address both contemporary and traditional issues influencing the lives of HMong Americans.

2. Curriculum Development:
   Cooperate with community organizations, campus departments and programs in the development of undergraduate courses that can contribute to the formation of a HMong American Studies certificate program at UWM. For the benefit of the wider Milwaukee community, expand opportunities for teacher-education and professional development focused on HMong American history, culture and contemporary issues.

3. Interdisciplinary Scholarship:
   Promote community-based, interdisciplinary scholarly research on issues of social, religious and cultural change and adaptation that define the HMong American diaspora experience in urban America. Aid in the recruitment of community experts, faculty, visiting scholars and research associates who can contribute to such scholarship at the undergraduate and graduate level.

4. Student Recruitment and Retention:
   Work with campus offices, community organizations, two-year colleges and local schools to enhance the recruitment, retention and graduation rate of HMong American students at UWM, including co-planning of activities to be held on and off campus. In partnership with the Institute of Service Learning, expand opportunities for UWM students to participate in community-based volunteer work and research projects.

Guided by these aims, HASI will make HMong American faces more visible on campus, enhancing the diversity of the UW–Milwaukee student body. Most importantly, our efforts, combined with those of the Cultures and Communities Program, will broaden the educational experiences of all UW–Milwaukee students, helping them to acquire the knowledge and skills — specifically, the cross-cultural competencies — essential to becoming responsible citizens.

UW–Milwaukee is in a unique position: it can be the first university in the nation to build a comprehensive program that weaves together HMong American history, language, culture and contemporary life. This is significant in two ways. First, HASI will draw many prospective students, both HMong and non-HMong, from across the United States to participate in its certificate program and other activities. At the same time, UW–Milwaukee can become a research center, a magnet for HMong American scholars in diverse fields. Second, HMong American students have for too long felt that they are invisible, unrecognized and unacknowledged on this campus. Many students have expressed to us that their educational experiences involve much more than learning about biology, chemistry, calculus or philosophy. Their journey is one of self-discovery, personal growth and transformation. Consequently, many young HMong American students end up asking questions about their own identity. To know what it means to be HMong American, they find it necessary to broaden and deepen their understanding of their own history and culture; otherwise, they do not feel fully prepared to face the constant challenges of modern, multicultural life. Thus, UW–Milwaukee, through the goals we have envisioned, can contribute substantially to the progress of the HMong American community through the advancement of knowledge about its unique heritage and the social changes that are influencing its growth in urban America. This emergent program, built on solid ideas with so many exciting possibilities, will put UW–Milwaukee on the map as a “destination campus.”
Our efforts over the past two years have also revealed to us the tenuous, fraught history between UW–Milwaukee and the Hmong American community. Many leaders are concerned that their interests are disconnected from the University’s. As one executive director of a Hmong American social service organization put it: “In the past, a researcher would come in, gather what she needed from the people, and then leave, and we would never hear from her again. What we, as a community, would like to see happen is that she offers us something in return.” From this perspective, the researcher and her sponsoring institution have benefited at the expense of the people who provided the information to make her publications possible. People have repeatedly asserted to us that the knowledge gained should be shared with the community and used to bring about positive social change. Research should be integral to positive transformation in the community, which should be able to trust not only the abilities, but also the guiding intentions of anyone who enters the community as a university representative.

These observations are consistent with a recent trend among indigenous scholars and scholars of native or immigrant communities (Battiste, 2000), who face an ongoing struggle to balance the competing demands of community activism and academic expectations. How to determine what constitutes productive work remains highly contested. Our work with the Hmong American Studies Initiative must be viewed in a similar context. On the one hand, we remain accountable to the institution which employs us as we carry out course work, research and other departmental duties. On the other, we are seen as individuals who can make a difference in the community, and so we are expected to contribute in any way possible to advance its causes. For any mutually beneficial partnership to succeed, meeting this double demand is necessary, and may even be obligatory, as confirmed by our personal experiences.

Finally, we believe students will gain the most from their academic experiences if the campus and community can overcome institutional barriers and work together more productively. Consequently, our responsibility to the community includes making the University more open and inclusive in its policies and procedures. Likewise, through HASI, the Hmong American community can constructively voice its concerns to the University, especially in collaborative efforts to educate Hmong American youth as well as the general student body. For example, many Hmong American social service organizations have already agreed to be service learning sites for UW–Milwaukee students. Clearly, the first and perhaps the hardest step — to acknowledge the strong need to work together — has been completed. The next phase is to bring together students, faculty, administrators and people from the community to determine how to move forward on mutually beneficial projects of various kinds. Indeed, community leaders welcome this opportunity. As one remarked, “We need the University to look into our problems and concerns. We need help.” Now is the time to put the HASI motto into action: “Nyob ib puab. Koom ib suab.” (“Live together. Share a voice.”)

REFERENCES


END NOTES

1 The Hmong American Studies Initiative is a seed project of the Cultures and Communities Program. We thank Gregory Jay, its Director, and Sandra Jones, its Assistant Director, for supporting our work for the past two years.

2 The Sacramento Bee has devoted a special issue, “Orphans of History,” to the Hmong American experience; a succinct timeline of Hmong history is included. This article is available at http://www.sacbee.com/static/archive/news/projects/hmong/

3 These figures are our own estimates based on the 2000 census. Community leaders believe the Hmong population is actually higher than the census indicated. Many families did not return their census forms.

4 Starting in the 1960s, Hmong children were granted minimal access to schooling in Laos; however, girls were rarely afforded this chance. It was not until the Hmong arrived in the U.S. that both boys and girls had equal opportunities to attend school. Now, more Hmong American women than men are pursuing a college education.
The Laguna Construction Company (LCC) sits about two miles up the old road to Paguate, the second largest village on the Laguna Pueblo. Driving west this morning past LCC, there are no less than 19 contrails overhead, crossing blue skies east to west. Some spread wide and others more narrowly mark the skyroads to Albuquerque, New Mexico’s largest city. One plane, traveling north, cuts a new linear path.

Today will be hot. Albuquerque will be hotter, no doubt. By this afternoon, many people in the village of Paguate will not be home. Today is the tribal payday for some and to escape the heat, they will probably head to the malls and movie theaters in Albuquerque, 50 miles west.

By March, six months from now, a new government facility, built to test communication technology, will sit on hill above the Laguna Construction Company. New lines carrying optic fibers will surround the small village of Paguate. In some places, the lines will run parallel to the old lines. New lines will hang across the old road into Paguate. And on the old Questa road from Laguna, the mother village for this pueblo, telephone poles — like marching sentinels — will claim spaces that have never seen electric lines.

To the west of the Paguate village, the sentinels will march toward abandoned open-pit mines. The Anaconda Company tore open the land to extract uranium in the late 1950s through the mid-1980s and the land still struggles to restore itself. The mining boom called Laguna people back to the pueblo for jobs. At the same time, the planting fields of Paguate were left fallow for the new cash economy. The dynamite blasting shook the old stone houses of the village and created odd-looking cracks, splitting some homes at the corners, and weakening walls. The need for
constant repairs made experts of the Riley boys from Laguna, who became skilled at home repair and stucco finishes. The dust from blasting around Paguate became thick enough to stop the women from drying apples and apricots outdoors, and the oldest orchards died.

This summer there are about six men in the fields. Despite the heat, Merle Scott (66) and his older brother Arthur (76) will irrigate two fields today. Merle’s daughter Jackie and her partner will help and the crew will quit work about 4 p.m.

Merle is a former environmental health technician for the Indian Health Service and has a degree in environmental management from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.

The men comment on their disabilities, when their cousin Simon is mentioned. Despite his ailing feet and unreliable help, Simon (76) managed to plant a decent-sized field with a growing crop of corn, squash, chili, and melons.

“It’s a good thing,” Merle says. “It keeps him active, it keeps him out, and involved.” Today, Simon is not able to use the water still running through the ditch to irrigate his field. He’s 25 minutes away at ACL, the Indian health hospital, having his head examined — literally.

Merle recognizes the symptoms: “It’s like acne on your face, except it’s on your head,” he summarizes.

Simon described the pimples earlier. “They burst and smell like piss on your pillow.” He’s worried about what these pimples are doing to his brain. The next day, Simon will report that he confronted the doctor with this concern. The doctor didn’t know what is wrong. Simon decides he needs a specialist, a skin doctor. The next day, Simon will report that he confronted the doctor with this concern. The doctor didn’t know what is wrong. Simon decides he needs a specialist, a skin doctor.

“A dermatologist?” I question.

“Yeah, somebody who knows what he’s doing!” he answers forcefully. Simon asserts that if the symptoms return — and this is a reoccurrence — then, the doctor does not know what is wrong.

Merle reports that his own maladies stem from a condition he has had since birth. He’s had surgery “from his neck to his tail bone.” And his knees are steel-plate-plated.

“One time when I was a councilman, we had dinner at the White House with our tribal attorney. I set the security alarms off. ‘I’ve got steel-plates in my knees,’ I told the guard. The guard wanted me to raise my pant legs. ‘You can’t see the plates, I told him. ‘There’s skin over them and it’s not going to do any good to raise my pant legs!’ ”

“This was in the 70s and the governor then, what was his name?”

“Roland Johnson,” inserts Art, the quiet one.

“Yeah, Roland Johnson, the governor then, was just laughing!”

Roland Johnson will be elected again in fall 2002, and start serving another term, after a 20-year hiatus. Roland is now in his 60s. As head of the Laguna Development Corporation, he was largely responsible for ushering in the casino-era for the Pueblo of Laguna. The first casino at Laguna was opened in early 2000. The second casino, 15 minutes from Albuquerque, opened over Labor Day weekend in 2003. Some of the casino profits are directed to services for the people, now 7,000 strong. The tribe has distributed funds since the Anaconda mining days. At Christmas time, tribal members usually receive between $80 to $125.

Art, the quiet one, has physical problems too. He got as far as “stomach problems” when Merle breaks in with “and mental health problems, too,” he teases.

Merle stands and stretches. His eyes scan the small field.

“We have all this water and yet, it’s all us guys with disabilities who have fields. All the able-bodied guys don’t even work the fields anymore.”

The men gather their tools and get ready to leave the field. There is the anticipation of a good meal and plans made for tomorrow. Someone’s outdoor oven (horno) has to be plastered and the brothers decide to roast corn to donate for the ceremonial dance at Seama village about 20 minutes from Paguate. The dance will be held this weekend (August 3-4).

Ceremonial life is alive on this pueblo. Basic practices are being resurrected at Paraje village. The head men and clan leaders have joined together to re-learn the songs for the social and ceremonial doings. Now they do their own singing and ceremonies.

While the Laguna language is taught in the Head Start, the elementary school, and the middle school, there is no consistent curriculum. In 2002, a position for a director of culture and language in the Laguna Department of Education was created, although it remains unfilled in fall, 2003.

Since March 2003, Laguna language classes have taken place in Mesita, Paraje, Laguna, and Casa Blanca. In September 2003, a group of women and children — members of the Paraje language class — gathered to take turns on seven corn grinding stones and learn two songs recorded by a woman from the Bear Clan in Paguate. The women and children filled several large pottery bowls for ceremonies. They distributed the rest among themselves. The sacred meal they ground together will “feed” the katsinas, spiritually.
The sky is New Mexico blue and the sun to the south is warm. Frank Aragon, who turned 80 in April, sits on his porch in a faded metal lawn chair. His walker and his white dog Blanca sit nearby. In his heart, he is still a Marine, a former councilman, and a rancher. He wears a Marine cap and shades. He is brown, strong, and good-looking.

Frank talks about the “old men sitting on the south side of the houses at Laguna taking in the sun” on a day, just like this. They had their bangs cut straight across their foreheads and long hair bundled in a traditional way, he remembers. Long turquoise earrings hung from their ears. They talked about the time when you would see people going by like ants, Frank says. People on the road and things overhead, he looks up and the contrails to the south support his words.

“The old man used to tell me a lot of stories,” he says referring to my grandfather Paul, “but I can’t remember them. He was always talking about how things were and how things are now. I remember in the village meetings the old men used to stand and talk about the way it was. They brought history into the meetings. One after another, they would stand and talk. I wish I had listened,” he laments. “I wish I could remember.”

A Paguate Elder

This woman is modest or maybe she is just private. But she doesn’t want her name used, so I’ll call her Paguate Matriarch. She is more than a mother and grandmother and great-grandmother to her family. This family now includes people of Laguna and Mexican descent, including grandsons who teach at a high school and at a university, and one who is an engineer. Her Laguna/Catawba adult grandchildren include a veterinarian and an environmental health specialist. Her school-aged, great-grandchildren are mixed Laguna, Mexican, and Anglo blood. And her extended family includes people from the Hopi and Navajo and other Indian nations. She would never own the term “Matriarch” right away. But before you leave her...
kitchen, warm from dry wood burning in the stove, she would lean across the large kitchen table covered with a plastic table cloth. She would flick a glance upward and say something like, “Matriarch? Well, if you say so, granddaughter, I guess it’s ok. You’re the professor! I guess it’s ok.”

The Paguate Matriarch’s (85) eyes fill with tears. She misses the warmth of her own large family — her parents, her brothers and sisters — coming together for supper in the evening. “Paguate was so beautiful,” she emphasizes. “There were fields everywhere and the orchards were still here. And Paguate was clean.”

At the village meeting on August 1, it was announced that the ceremonial *katsina* dances will be coming up on August 17-18 and a call for a community clean up was made. Fifty-three people walked the quarter mile to the graveyard, which has been in use since the 1930s. Paguate Matriarch’s parents are buried here and she notes that Placita and John Menaul Chavez, my great-grandparents, and my grandparents, Paul and Martha Lowery, are also buried here.

“Of course, we didn’t have that many people then and only one or two people passed away each year. Now we have so many people,” she observes. There were two deaths in July, and several since the first of the year. The graveyard has grown by three rows since 1999.

“Back then, we didn’t buy all these things,” she says referring to the discarded candle holders. Faded synthetic and plastic flowers, aluminum cans, dishes, and small, discarded American flags are stacked in ugly piles near the entrance. There is disagreement about this trash. The men say that these things are associated with the dead and should be left alone. Women, like Paguate Matriarch, say that to allow this trash to pile up for years is disrespectful and violates our obligation to care for our relatives.

We work for an hour and fill 25 bags of garbage from the piles. Cleaning the entrance means clearing away weeds clinging to the fence, as well. By agreement, a female cousin will haul the bags to the tribal garbage facility in a few days.

We are not yet finished and plan to return another day. Paguate Matriarch is 85, but works like she is 50. I have trouble straightening my back; she scampers about without an ache, it seems. When we are done, she comments under her breath, “Well, we behaved; at least, we behaved. We did a good job.”

On the way back, we pick up trash. “Look, how far this is down,” she remarks when she gets to the small gate to her backyard. She points to the lopsided, stone steps. She doesn’t approve of the way the tribal “cutter” has gradually caused the erosion of the embankment of the gravel road to the south of her house. The gravel embankment she talks about is no longer visible.

“Anaconda made this road because the school bus came by here, and they really packed the gravel along the sides,” she explains. After Anaconda left years ago, the Laguna tribe continues to cut the growth along the sides of the roads. Sometimes, the “cutter” distorts the angle of the road signs, grates the curbs along the paved roads, and hacks the large salt bushes.

With her rake, Paguate Matriarch reaches for a plastic, turquoise tumbler on the other side of the barbed wire fence. The fence contains a small cornfield across the road from her home. Her foot dislodges a piece of buried wood and she falls forward, but catches herself nimbly. I remind myself that she is 85.

“This is going to come into the road,” she says snagging the tumbler. The plastic still looks good, but sun-exposed over time, cracks under pressure. “It’s condemned,” she says. This is the second time she uses this phrase to refer to something that is no longer useable. The first time, she referred to a pot that was “condemned by the school.” She uses the pot to hold water for the cats.

Her husband has burned weeds near the main gate. She rakes these together with weeds that have been hoed, collects them with her gloved hands, and stuffs them into the empty spaces in the trash bag she is carrying. The bag is tied and she is satisfied. “Hina, now we’re finished.”

October: Graveyard Trash

This morning is overcast from a night of intermittent rain. Paguate Matriarch calls me to help activate her plan to clean the growing mound of accumulated trash at the graveyard. She worries that we don’t take care of relatives who have passed away in the way we should.

Water is running from her outside faucet through a hose to a small patch of grass in the yard. She is trying to clear the water of dirt and stones from a recent plumbing intervention. “I clean my vegetables out here in the summer,” she explains.

In preparation to leave, she gets out her brown working gloves and stretches her 4’ 11” frame to reach for the rake hanging in the apple tree. She looks fresh in a pastel t-shirt and matching cotton pants. Her short, white hair is curled in a gentle perm under a straw cap trimmed in yellow gingham. She moves with amazing energy.

“I only have an hour-and-a-half,” she declares. “We are going to Grants sometime this morning.” Her husband will determine the time they leave. Right now, he has claimed his spot in the sun outside his garage. Grants is about 40 minutes away and has a Wal-Mart and competing grocery stores. Her husband, now 87, continues to drive this route twice a week. The couple does laundry early on Sunday mornings.

She has used behavioral management strategies for years: “I’ll work on this for two hours or that for an hour. And I get things done,” she chuckles. “Now, I have to realize that I just can’t do as much, but I still work for an hour or two.” She practices saying “behavioral management strategies” three times.

We walk the quarter mile to the cemetery, which has been in use since the 1930s. Paguate Matriarch’s parents are buried here and she notes that Placita and John Menaul Chavez, my great-grandparents, and my grandparents, Paul and Martha Lowery, are also buried here.

Her husband has burned weeds near the main gate. She rakes these together with weeds that have been hoed, collects them with her gloved hands, and stuffs them into the empty spaces in the trash bag she is carrying. The bag is tied and she is satisfied. “Hina, now we’re finished.”
TO ASSESS OR NOT: IS THAT THE QUESTION?

Who benefits from the No Child Left Behind Act?

Personal perspectives

Festus E. Obiakor


This law is supposed to:
1. Reduce and eliminate the existing achievement gaps between “disadvantaged” students (e.g., culturally and linguistically diverse students and poor children) and their more advantaged peers.
2. Improve the academic performance of American children through the retention of highly qualified teachers and through a unified system of education that creates high academic and behavioral standards.
3. Increase institutional accountability for adequate yearly student progress.
4. Improve reading literacy, mathematics, and science education, as well as teacher quality, by instituting collaborative partnerships between universities and local school divisions in an effort to promote evidence-based practices in education.
5. Increase block grants to States in order to enhance quality education, promote flexibility in the use of funds, and reduce bureaucracy by consolidating grant programs.
6. Reward with bonuses and incentive programs to school districts that meet the clarion call for accountability.
7. Subject to corrective action for school districts that have failed to make progress in three years. For example, students will have the choice of transferring to other achieving public schools.

The Rationale for Accountability and Testing Under the No Child Left Behind Act (Obiakor, 2001, 2003; Obiakor & Ford, 2002; Obiakor, Grant & Dooley, 2002; Obiakor, Mehring & Schwenn, 1997).

Rather than focus on accountability that excludes students who learn differently, the focus should be on innovative futuristic questions such as the following:
1. Does a school have a neighborhood feeling?
2. Do teachers and students of a school reflect each other’s diversity?
3. Does a school climate demonstrate excellence and equity?
4. Does a school foster a sense of “goodness” or belonging?
5. Does a school welcome all students despite their racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and learning differences or does it expose feelings of discrimination and exclusion?
6. Does a school have enough funds to enhance its operational mission?
7. Does a school environment create opportunities and choices for all students to grow?
8. Does a school have well-organized programs to deal with students’ stressors and crises?
9. Does a school have well-prepared culturally sensitive teachers and administrators who are visionary about their understanding of the world we live in?
10. Does a school foster the Comprehensive Support Model (CSM) that encourages the collaborative and consultative energies of
students, families, schools, communities, and
governments?

Beyond the No Child Left Behind Act: Making Assessment Functional and Authentic for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners (Smith, 2004).

A. To make assessment authentic and functional and move beyond the narrow focus of the No Child Left Behind Act, educators and service providers must:

1. Have text passages in both English and native language.
2. Provide [test] questions in both languages.
3. Accept [test] answers in either language.
4. Allow English dictionary use.
5. Permit bilingual dictionary use.
6. Translate unfamiliar words.
7. Give extra time for test directions.
8. Allow extra time to take tests.
9. Simplify test language.
10. Deliver the test to the student orally.
11. Measure growth in language proficiency.
12. Use portfolio assessment documentation. (p. 96)

B. To truly “leave no child behind,” educators and service providers must do the following (Day-Vines & Patton, 2003):

1. Consider their personal attitudes, biases, and assumptions.
2. Value children and their languages.
3. Recognize that the culture of the school and the culture of the child’s family may not be well synchronized.

Conclusion

The No Child Left Behind Act will leave many children behind. Its embodiments are complex and its wisdom is weak. To leave no child behind, there must be a Comprehensive Support Model that taps on the energies of students, families, schools, communities, and governments in the educational process. Clearly, many children will not benefit from the No Child Left Behind Act. The beneficiaries will be (a) educational bureaucrats, (b) test manufacturers and producers, (c) testing professionals and bureaucrats, (d) politicians, and (e) those who want to perpetuate phony meritocracy and fraudulent multiculturalism.

RECOMMENDED READINGS


The Five Success Factors of High Achieving Puerto Rican High School Students
William Vélez, René Antrop-González, and Tomás Garrett

BACKGROUND

High achieving Puerto Rican high school students are largely missing not only from urban high schools but also from the educational research. The purpose of this article, then, is to describe the five success factors that ten low-income urban high school students from this ethnic group attributed to their high academic achievement. These success factors are 1) the acquisition of social capital and academic motivation through religiosity and participation in school and community-based extracurricular activities; 2) student affirmation of Puerto Rican identity; 3) the influence of mothers; 4) the potential for caring teachers to influence high academic achievement; and 5) membership in multicultural/multilingual peer networks. Additionally, these success factors and their implications for Latina/o education are discussed in this paper.

Over the last three decades, numerous scholars have written about the connection between the academic underachievement of Puerto Rican students and the socioeconomic/academic struggles that they frequently confront. These struggles include such things as internal and direct colonialism, households headed by teenage mothers, poverty, culturally irrelevant curricula, and non-academic tracking (Nieto, 1998; Pérez, 1973; Spring, 1994). Although this scholarship is theoretically rich, it places undue emphasis on the deficit/dropout model in explaining the schooling experiences of these students.

In response to this overemphasis on low achieving Puerto Rican students within traditional urban public high school settings, several scholars have recently produced research that serves to deconstruct, reconstruct, and transcend this scholarship by looking at several conditions that work to foster the high academic achievement of these students. These conditions are 1) the importance of these students’ families, especially the role of the mother and/or grandmother, as support systems (Hidalgo, 2000; Hine, 1992; Rolón, 2000); 2) the connection between curriculum and Latina/o students’ funds of knowledge [e.g., the application of Latino home/community-based cultural knowledge in schools] (Moll et al., 1992); 3) these students’ acquisition of social capital through their participation in social institutions and their networks of institutional agents [e.g., knowledge, life experiences, and mentorship/information garnered through connections with community members/leaders and/or school staff] (Flores-González, 1999, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 2001) and; 4) the importance of caring teachers and culturally relevant curricula within schools (Antrop-González, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Muller, 2001; Nieto, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999).

Finally, recent research has discussed religiosity/religion-based identity as a source of social capital and how it is linked to the high academic achievement and resiliency of Latina/o urban high school students and other youth of color (Cook, 2000; Flores-González, 1999, 2002; Muller & Ellison, 2001; Sikkink & Hernández, 2003). Religiosity, through active participation in church-related activities, can be an important source of social capital for two reasons. First, church membership instills positive attitudes, values, and behaviors that promote school success and serve as protective measures against oppositional youth behaviors like gang membership, drug use, and truancy. Second, participation in church activities like retreats and conventions encourages intergenerational closure, which has also been found to facilitate the high academic achievement of high school students (Coleman, 1987; Carbonaro, 1998; Muller & Ellison, 2001). Intergenerational closure describes the relationships and social networks held between students, their friends, and their friends’ parents. These relationships are valuable because it is within these networks that mentorship, counseling, and access to other school and community resources are shared and provided.
METHODS

This study was driven by the following primary research question: According to the experiences of Puerto Rican 11th and 12th grade students who are enrolled in a Midwestern United States urban high school, what factors are linked to their high academic achievement?

To address this question, three sets of data were collected for this mixed methods study. The bulk of the data was qualitative and consisted of tape-recorded one-on-one interviews using a semi-structured interview protocol. A majority of the interview questions focused on the students’ familial educational backgrounds and experiences as well as their own. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) in order to identify themes. Each student was interviewed once and each interview lasted between one to one-and-a-half hours. The second set of data that we collected and analyzed was an acculturation/linguistic scale (Marín, 1987) that was used to determine which language (English vs. Spanish) and types of social networks (Anglo, African-American, and/or Latina/o) each student preferred within and outside school. Each student filled out this scale and the individual items from the ten completed scales were summed to develop the scale values. Finally, our participant observations with the students helped us learn more about their everyday schooling experiences. We were able to spend time with them in the hallways, lunchroom, and some classes.

We conducted this study during the fall and spring semesters of the 2001-2002 academic year at Brew City High School (a pseudonym), which is a large comprehensive high school located in the Midwestern United States. This high school has a student population of 1,500 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Of these students, 55% fall below the federal poverty line and qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program. Moreover, approximately 70% of the high school’s students are of color with 15% of these being Latina/o. Brew City High School is regarded as one of two of the city’s best high schools because its curriculum offers many advanced placement and honors level courses and because 70% of its graduates go on to pursue some sort of postsecondary education.

The students who were recruited for this study had to meet the following four criteria. First, they had to be enrolled in grades 11 or 12 because the majority of Puerto Rican students drop out of school by the tenth grade (Nieto, 1998). Second, the students must have had a cumulative G.P.A. of a 3.0 or higher because we determined this G.P.A. to be indicative of a high achieving student. Third, the students must never have dropped out of school because we wanted this study to focus on non-dropouts. Finally, participants had to identify themselves as Puerto Rican (students who were self identified as half Puerto Rican were also included in the participant recruitment and selection process).

A Puerto Rican guidance counselor at the school volunteered to facilitate the recruitment and selection process of the participants because she knew a majority of the school’s Latina/o students. As a result, ten students met the four criteria and agreed to participate in the study. Each student selected her/his own pseudonym and their interviews and acculturation/linguistic surveys were conducted and completed individually in an empty classroom during school hours.

FINDINGS

The Acquisition of Social Capital and Academic Motivation through Religiosity and School and Community-Based Extracurricular Activities

Many of the students we spoke with credited their high academic achievement to their involvement with a Catholic or Pentecostal-based religious institution and/or other kinds of extracurricular activities. The main benefit of participating in these activities consisted of targeted recreational activities for youth. These activities also contributed to the further establishment of community/social networks that facilitated their access to resources like homework help and mentorship. Daniel, a junior (3.8 G.P.A.), said:

Growing up my mom always took me and my sister to church and she always had us involved in youth groups as far as you know, Sunday school and we went on trips with our church groups and that always helped me keep on a straight path.

In addition to his church involvement, Daniel’s participation on athletic teams also played a major role in his high school career and helped him gain much access to positive help-seeking, middle class resources like information regarding college, mentorship from his teammates’ parents, and his access to computers at his friends’ houses. This intergenerational closure (Carbonaro, 1998; Muller & Ellison,
marked by social and informational networks comprised of Daniel’s friends and their parents, was valuable for Daniel because he felt this information was necessary to be successful in college, get a job after graduation, and obtain a middle class lifestyle. He remarked:

A lot of my friends who I play with on the teams are a lot better off than me. Like, David’s parents live out in the suburbs and both his parents are college psychology professors and make a lot of money. They both have been a great influence on me because they’ve talked to me about what I need to get into college and be successful in college. They helped me make the decision on which university to apply to. I like their advice because I see that they have become successful. I want to follow their examples and also have a big house and nice cars like them one day.

Cecilia, a junior (3.2 G.P.A.), also commented on her church involvement, her church-based multicultural social networks, and the impact these had on her academic achievement:

Ever since I was in the ninth grade, I have been going to church regularly. I also sing in the church choir. The people at church have always been friendly and supportive of me. I feel like I really belong. I have also met a lot of people at church. I have a lot of friends from different backgrounds. I have Hispanic, White, Asian, and Black friends. We all treat each other as friends and we keep each other in line. I think all of these things help me do well in school.

Limari, also a senior (3.6 G.P.A.), felt that God impacted her school achievement: God had helped me become a good student because He has been with me through all my struggles.

Estrella, a senior (3.4 G.P.A.), also echoed her peers’ feelings regarding her involvement in church and credited this involvement as being a factor in her high academic achievement:

I’m involved in church very much. I have lots of friends in church. We do lots of things together. We do retreats and we invite other youths to come. We also evangelize together. We want other youths to know God and Jesus. There are also lots of camps in the summer and conventions in the Midwest. There are lots of Latinos that get together for these conventions and we have lots of fun.

Participation in school and community-based extracurricular activities also had a role to play in our participants’ academic success. Erica, a junior (3.1 G.P.A.), remarked:

I participate in a lot of sports activities and they help me become a good student. I was always getting asked by my teachers to do favors for them and I took part in lots of competitions around the state.

Likewise, Alexia, also a junior (3.4 G.P.A.), talked about her involvement with community-based agencies and how it greatly influenced her academic performance.

I do all kinds of work with people in the community. I work with the Private Industry Council and help people get jobs. I also work with the Historical Society. These jobs keep me busy and help me meet lots of interesting people.

Our participants’ experiences were similar to those of other high achieving Latina/o urban high schoolers and other youth of color (Cook, 2000; Flores-González, 1999, 2002; Muller & Ellison, 2001; Sikkink & Hernández, 2003) because their involvement in religious organizations and/or community-based extracurricular activities had a positive impact on their academic achievement. Hence, their experiences suggested that this kind of involvement served a dual function.

First, these activities served as protective measures for our participants because they encouraged them to develop their positive self-concept and discourage participation in oppositional youth cultures like gang life because they have the potential to greatly impinge on scholastic endeavors (Flores-González, 2002). Second, their involvement in these types of activities contributed to the high degrees of intergenerational closure (Carbonaro, 1998) was valuable because it facilitated these students’ access to important resources like adult and peer mentorship and other positive help-seeking behaviors (Stanton-Salazar, 2001) and encouraged them to pursue a school kid identity (Flores-González, 2002) that valued high academic achievement.

Student Affirmation of Puerto Rican Identity

All the high achieving students we spoke with strongly affirmed their Puerto Rican identity by expressing they were proud to be “Boricua” or
“puertorriqueña/o” and that their peers also viewed them as being Puerto Rican. This ethnic affirmation challenges the belief held by some researchers who contend that being a good student from an involuntary migrant group is ultimately perceived by other students of color as “acting White” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Like the participants in our study, Flores-González (1999) also documented that the high achieving students she interacted with did not hide their Puerto Rican ethnicity regardless of race. Héctor, a senior (3.8 G.P.A.), reinforced this ethnic affirmation when he remarked:

*I’m proud to be Puerto Rican and bilingual. But, you know, White people stereotype Puerto Ricans and think that we’re not serious about our education. I want to prove them wrong.*

Héctor also went on to describe that he felt Puerto Ricans were often negatively represented in the city. In turn, several students we interviewed felt their high academic achievement could have the potential of dispelling the negative stereotypical images that others held towards them. Jasmine also commented on the negative stereotypes that White students in her advanced placement held towards her. She said that he didn’t think that people like us could be in these kinds of classes. I told him that he shouldn’t be so stereotypical and that we can be smart, too.

These students used their ethnicity as a tool to prove to their teachers and peers that they had the potential to be good students. This finding compels us to believe that these students’ sense of school-based marginalization, rather than cause them to resist the idea of schooling, actually worked to motivate them to academically perform well. If this “marginalization as motivation” concept were to appear in future studies, it would certainly continue to challenge the belief that involuntary migrant group status is a strong and reliable indicator of low academic achievement (Ogbu, 1978). Moreover, our participants’ affirmation of their Puerto Rican identity and its impact on their academic achievement also reinforces the concept of “accommodation and acculturation without assimilation” (Conchas, 2001; Gibson, 1988; Lee, 2001). This concept is reflected in that although they were willing to accommodate themselves in mainstream curricular classes at the expense of facing ethnically and culturally hostile conditions, in order to challenge the stereotypes that some of their peers and teachers held towards them by doing well in school, they did so without feeling compelled to reject their ethnic identity.

**The Influence of Mothers**

Although the majority (9 of 10) of the students we interacted with came from traditional two-parent households, they indicated that their mothers played strong roles in their school and home lives. These mothers often took it upon themselves to help their child with schoolwork. When some of the mothers felt they could not directly help with schoolwork, they actively sought out the necessary resources that would facilitate their child’s learning process. Moreover, several students indicated that they felt strongly obligated to make their mothers proud of them by getting good grades.

Several references were also made by students regarding how mothers were also friends and mentors in times of need or personal crisis. When asked to elaborate on her mother’s role in her education, Lisa stated:

*Ever since I was in middle school, my mom has been sending me to pre-college programs and doing things like getting me stuff on the ACT and the kinds of questions they ask on that test. I also go to my mom for personal problems that come up. My mom is always coming down hard on me to do well in school. So if she can’t help me with my school stuff she finds somebody who can.*

Lisa’s mother went the extra mile to counsel her children and seek informational resources that would aid them in the college application process and in their general learning process. Again, these kinds of profound statements support the work of several scholars and their discussions concerning the influence of Puerto Rican mothers in the academic lives of their children (Hidalgo, 2000; Hine, 1992; Reis & Díaz, 1999; Rolón, 2000). Also important was the fact that our participants’ mothers also held their children to high academic
expectations and actively sought additional human resources to help their children with things like homework.

Other students also spoke about the power of their mother’s influence and expressed the desire to do well in school to make their mothers proud of them. Daniel commented:

*My mom has been my inspiration to do well in school. I remember that I used to make bad grades in school and my mother would become sad. When I started to bring report cards home with As in them for the first time, I remember the happy look in my mother’s eyes. When I saw that look in her eyes, I just felt that it was much more rewarding to get good grades. I also remember going to family picnics and my mother would talk about my grades. The rest of the family would then start talking about me. They were all proud of me.*

Daniel was driven to do well in school in order to make his mother happy. It was also important for him to be the pride of his family. He also mentioned that his school did not do much in the way of helping him select a college or fill out financial aid or admissions forms. Ironically, although his mother was not a high school graduate and had never been to college, she took up the role of helping him acquire and fill out the necessary forms he needed to go to college.

Erica also contrasted the roles that her parents played in her school success. While she felt her father played the role of authority figure who demanded that she follow the “rules of the house,” she commented on the words of encouragement and friendship that were characteristic of her mother’s role as a nurturing supporter.

*My mother is the best. She supports me in everything I do. She is always willing to support me at whatever I do at school. She is always very excited about helping me with my work and she always talks to me more like a friend than a mom. My father is very different. He always comes across as the authority figure.*

Cecilia also relied on her mother for trust and support in times of personal need. It was evident that a high degree of *confianza* (trust) existed between them.

*When I have a personal problem, I don’t really trust my teachers or friends. I usually go to my mother who is always willing to be there for me because I know she won’t go around spilling my personal life to everyone.*

Rachel also spoke about her mother encouraging her to do her best in school so she would not be a high school dropout like her. Although Rachel’s mother did not have the experience of going to college, she knew the importance of after school programs for tutoring services and access to college information and made social connections to facilitate her daughter’s entry into these special programs.

*My mom dropped out of high school in the 10th grade. So she doesn’t want me to have the hard life that she has had. For her, it’s a top priority that I stay in school and go to college. She has gotten me in after school programs and found me jobs. She makes a lot of phone calls to people and asks about the kinds of programs that exist to get me help with school work and information I need to get into college.*

Also worth noting is that the majority of our participants’ parents had a high school education or less and were employed in factories or low-level white collar jobs. In addition, many of the students had experienced relatively stable family situations, in many cases living in the same household/neighborhood for extended periods of time. This finding reinforces the importance of reduced school mobility and is frequently associated in the literature with the process of dropping out of high school (Vélez, 1989).

### The Potential for Caring Teachers to Influence High Academic Achievement

Finally, several of the students in our study described the potential that caring teachers could have on their academic success. The recurring theme of caring was prevalent in their descriptions of good teachers. Similar to recent studies (Antrop-González, 2003; De Jesús, 2003; Müller, 2001; Nieto, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999), the students we interviewed defined a caring teacher as one who truly knew them as a person and to whom they could talk about their personal problems. Like the previously mentioned “mother role” (Rolón, 2000), some students in this study also mentioned that caring teachers should be relied upon for obtaining information or assistance for things like applying for college, tutoring, or successfully securing part-time employment. Erica, a high achieving junior, defined a caring teacher in the following way:

*A good teacher is one who knows you, cares about what you do, pushes students, and cares about the stuff going on in your life. A good teacher also wants you to absorb information and understand it.*
Cecilia also defined a caring teacher as one who held their students to high academic expectations. A good teacher is someone who cares enough not to accept low quality work. I like being pushed and told that I can do better. Some of my better teachers are like this.

These descriptions strongly resemble Valenzuela’s (1999) notion of authentic caring because they described the high quality interpersonal student-teacher relationships that are crucial for the education of Latina/o youth. On the other hand, aesthetic caring describes the emphasis that a teacher may place on things or ideas like academics. This type of caring is often reflected through technical discursive practices that tend to be impersonal, objective, and standardized. Teachers who consistently engage in aesthetic caring define their roles around a preoccupation with imparting their expert knowledge and not getting to know their students holistically (Valenzuela, 1999).

Like the students that Valenzuela (1999) interviewed in her study at Seguin High School, our participants expected their teachers to engage in authentic caring relationships where a high degree of confianza between them and their teachers was present. These caring relationships also involve teachers’ respect for the students’ cultural and linguistic practices that are embedded in their homes and communities. According to Valenzuela (1999), Mexican students are socialized to show and receive respeto (respect) in their interactions with adults. Therefore, when teachers fail to reciprocate this same respect, they resist and refuse to cooperate in their teachers’ efforts to school them. This rift is deepened when school officials engage in what she calls “subtractive schooling” where students are either explicitly or implicitly encouraged to abandon their native cultural practices to acquire the cultural and linguistic practices of the “worthier” dominant culture.

Many of the students Valenzuela interacted with also felt that the goal of acquiring an education was compatible with love of family and community. This acquiring of an education with a love for family and community is referred to as educación and is defined as a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility that should be well mannered and respectful. This concept is grounded in both the Mexican and Puerto Rican cultures (Valenzuela, 1999). Hence, although our student participants articulated very similar definitions of caring teachers, their accounts of their teachers’ behaviors did not reflect authentic caring.

On the contrary, our participants’ teachers manifested aesthetic caring because they only cared enough to challenge them to study hard and master content subject matter. Moreover, while many of the students at Seguin High School responded to their teachers’ lack of authentic caring by resisting the idea of schooling altogether (Valenzuela, 1999), our participants instead chose to mitigate their teachers’ emphasis on the less desirable aesthetic caring by relying on their home and community-based authentic caring to carry them through their schooling at Brew City High School.

Our survey findings suggested that our participants valued membership in multilingual/multicultural peer networks. Only two students had “only Latina/o” friends while the rest of the sample had made non-Latina/o friends. The analysis of these surveys also indicated that, when it came to language use, there was an even balance of English dominant bilinguals and “balanced bilinguals” because when asked, “What languages do you read and speak?” half of the students responded English and Spanish equally while half replied English better than Spanish.

Their multicultural approach to peer networks was also confirmed by the results on the question asking them what kinds of friends they would prefer for their own children. Eight of the ten students chose equal numbers of Latina/o and non-Latina/o friends for their hypothetical children. These results suggest that our participants’ academic success was in part due to their multicultural, rather than exclusively bicultural and/or bilingual (Darder, 1991; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), approach to building peer social networks. They had learned to be educational and social “border crossers” (Giroux, 1991) and felt comfortable with members of other racial/ethnic groups.

Membership in Multilingual/Multicultural Peer Networks

Our survey findings suggested that our participants valued membership in multilingual/multicultural peer networks. Only two students had “only Latina/o” friends while the rest of the sample had made non-Latina/o friends. The analysis of these surveys also indicated that, when it came to language use, there was an even balance of English dominant bilinguals and “balanced bilinguals” because when asked, “What languages do you read and speak?” half of the students responded English and Spanish equally while half replied English better than Spanish.

Their multicultural approach to peer networks was also confirmed by the results on the question asking them what kinds of friends they would prefer for their own children. Eight of the ten students chose equal numbers of Latina/o and non-Latina/o friends for their hypothetical children. These results suggest that our participants’ academic success was in part due to their multicultural, rather than exclusively bicultural and/or bilingual (Darder, 1991; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), approach to building peer social networks. They had learned to be educational and social “border crossers” (Giroux, 1991) and felt comfortable with members of other racial/ethnic groups.
The high achieving Puerto Rican high school students in this study suggested there are five success factors attributed to their high academic achievement. Therefore, we offer several recommendations for teachers, school policy makers, and scholars. First, it is imperative that large comprehensive high schools encourage more Puerto Rican students to participate in school-sponsored and community-based extracurricular activities. Participation in these activities helps students acquire pro-school behaviors, social capital, and intergenerational closure. These things are important because they facilitate the sharing of important college related information and mentorship between students, their friends and their friends’ parents, and community members.

Second, it is crucial that students’ racial/ethnic identity be nurtured, respected, and viewed as an asset and not a problem. This kind of respect and solidarity can be fostered by designing courses that address the experiences of Latina/o students. The students in our study, in spite of Brew City High School’s subtractive, Eurocentric curricular practices (Valenzuela, 1999), strongly suggested that it is not necessary to “act White” or be perceived as such in order to academically succeed. Additionally, they manifested a concept we call “marginalization as motivation” because they affirmed and used their Puerto Rican ethnicity to disarm some of their peers’ and teachers’ negative stereotypes and low academic expectations. Ironically, then, instead of allowing their experiences around school-based marginalization to propel them to resist school, this marginalization motivated them to excel academically and withstand the insidious nature of subtractive schooling. We argue that Latina/o students should not have to make the choice between either having to resist school or accept the idea of schooling under such negative conditions. Schools need to seriously examine and move to implement additive curricula that weave all students’ sociopolitical/historical/economic realities into the fabric of traditional high schools and, hence, add to the knowledge bases that students already bring to school thanks to their families and communities.

Third, it is evident that parents, especially mothers, play a central role in the lives of their children. Our students’ mothers spent time with their children, helped them with homework or found them help when they could not provide it, and offered encouragement in times of need. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that teachers understand the important role mothers play in the lives of their children. Schools need to rely more on the wisdom of these mothers and understand that parents are indeed involved in their children’s lives. Fourth, these students defined caring teachers and their potential to impact their academic achievement. Caring teachers are individuals who hold their students to high academic expectations, know who they are as individual human beings, and make classes interesting and engaging. Finally, it is important to encourage students of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds to interact with each other so that they can learn to appreciate multiple worldviews.

What we found most compelling about the experiences of our participants was that while they were all academically successful, they did not credit most of their success to school-based factors. On the contrary, they attributed a large part of this success to the home and community-based factors that we described in this paper. We are led to believe, then, that large comprehensive urban high schools are still inequitably structuring opportunities for Latina/o students by not working to find ways to use the community-based resources, wisdom, and knowledge that students and their families already bring to school.

We must continue to encourage schools to allow for broader partnerships with the very communities that our students come from. These school-community partnerships can provide students with the information and human resources they need to graduate from high school, enter college, and eventually obtain a career that will increase their life chances and structures of positive opportunities. Only when these positive conditions are placed within the context of school cultures will Puerto Rican high achievers no longer be scarce in our urban high schools.
REFERENCES


Cook, K.V. (2000). “You have to have somebody watching your back, and if that’s God, then that’s mighty big:” The church’s role in the resilience of inner-city youth. Adolescence, 35 (140), 717-730.


Creating Effective Schools in Failed Urban Districts

Martin Haberman

In my city, 36% of African American students and 42% of Hispanic students graduate from high school. These graduation rates are not the lowest for students in these ethnic groups in the 120 major urban districts. Compare this with the graduation rates of students having handicapping conditions in the United States as a whole: learning disabilities 62%, language impaired 66%, mentally retarded 40%, emotionally disturbed 40%, multiple disabilities 48%, hearing impairments 68%, orthopedic impairments 68%, visual impairments 73%, autism 47%, blindness 48%, traumatic brain injury 65%. Stated simply, an American student who has been officially labeled handicapped in some way which prevents him/her from learning has a better chance of graduating from high school than a student of color in one of America’s major urban school systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

In Who Benefits From Failed Urban Districts, I explained why the 120 major urban school districts cannot be changed let alone transformed and listed 22 constituent groups who derive great benefits and unearned privileges from miseducating seven million diverse children in urban poverty who attend school in these districts (Haberman, 2003). At the same time, there are successful schools within each of these failing districts and it is possible to create more of them even though they must function as part of dysfunctional bureaucracies. The creation of such schools is of the highest priority since the children who attend them can be saved from becoming dropouts, push outs, or worst of all, “successful” graduates who lack the skills to enter the work force or to pursue higher education.

The attributes of effective urban schools have been well researched, clearly documented and frequently published in professional journals and even in the mass media. The reason they are not implemented immediately throughout the failing districts of the nation is that to do so would threaten the constituent groups who currently benefit from the present failed systems. In effect, the process of trying to scale up these successful school models, triggers blocking strategies used by functionaries in these dysfunctional bureaucracies to control those who seek to circumvent or mitigate their failed policies and procedures.

An educational leader as principal

An effective urban school is not lead by a principal functioning as a building manager but by an individual functioning as the leader of a non-profit community organization. The effective leader of an urban poverty school accomplishes three basic goals: s/he creates a common vision; builds effective teams to implement that vision; and engenders commitment to task, i.e., the persistent hard work needed to engender learning. This means that the effective principal does not conceive of him/herself as the representative of the central office down to those in the school but as the advocate for all the constituent groups in the school community upward. The threat to the system of such leadership is that the effective...
principal’s highest priority is helping the teachers, staff, parents and community demand what is in the best interests of stimulating, enhancing and protecting the learning of children. A leader who advocates upward will inevitably question central office’s budget and policy decisions and this is the exact opposite of what the failed system wants. In order to maintain itself, the system needs a top-down messenger who will simply inform the school community of the budget that has been allocated, the decisions that have already been made and then deliver the compliance of all the constituencies in the school community back up to his/her superiors in central office. The dysfunctional bureaucracy recruits and rewards principals who will keep a lid on failing schools, not individuals who would seek to transform them. Transformation would change the way power, benefits and unearned privileges are now distributed and the dysfunctional system reacts to such serious threat with strong blocking strategies.

The effective educational leader of a successful urban school, in effect, becomes a strong, persistent advocate of his constituents against the system. Because there are never enough resources for the school and always too many policies and regulations that interfere with learning, the school leader inevitably leads in the creation of ways to circumvent district policies. Even more disturbing to the system, the effective principal does not take “no” for an answer. If there are no resources within the system, s/he seeks ways of reworking the budget to generate the needed funds, or s/he generates resources from outside the system and becomes even less dependent on the central office. The effective leader figures out ways to circumvent or mitigate the debilitating impact of the system’s policies. Effective principals never ask for permission before implementing policies and practices, which support children’s learning. They are experts at knowing how their system operates, who are the particular people in the central or district offices who can help them, and the specific ways in which they can make things that are not typically done become acceptable or go unnoticed. Such principals are not aspiring to move into the central office someday and therefore are not toadies to their superiors; neither do they seek to cultivate a reputation as one of those who can be trusted to maintain the bureaucracy. Principals of effective schools are only put up with and tolerated by the system because they become too visible to be easily reassigned. They are treated with suspicion and not regarded as loyal soldiers. The threat to the failed urban school system of having even a few effective school principals is enormous. They network with other principals who might catch their affliction for putting children first.

The failing urban districts have developed various blocking strategies for coping with effective principals. First, they seek to never appoint such a principal in the first place. Future principals are carefully vetted by superintendents and school boards to make certain they are like those currently appointed. Commitment to children’s learning, creativity and courage are selection criteria those who appoint urban principals would not dare use. Second, by using state certification laws the school boards can be certain that the pool of new principals will be limited to former teachers and assistant principals who have come up through the ranks and have been thoroughly socialized by the system. These will be individuals who are safe to the system because they will apply and extend their own experiences gained in failed schools to their new duties. Third, the school boards require master’s degree training for administrators offered by the local universities, which have traditionally trained their administrators. This preparation cannot in any way be adversarial or critical of the dysfunctional bureaucracies or the local university would put itself out of business as a “cooperating” partner. Fourth, many of those who seek to become principals in this limited and limiting pool are people whose motivation is to escape the classroom, gain more status and higher salary. They are neither star teachers nor individuals with the goal, the drive or the ability to transform failing schools. Fifth, urban school boards claim to use race and ethnicity as an important criterion for selecting new principals. This would be an excellent criterion if it went beyond the rhetoric. By limiting the pool of future principals to former teachers and assistant principals from their own systems they, in effect, narrow the pool to even fewer minorities. Several states, e.g., Michigan and Texas, have alternative certification laws for hiring principals from outside the traditional pool but do not use them. The political power of the failed urban
districts within their states prevents the states from implementing their own laws. The only way to get more diversity into the principals’ ranks is to appoint proven leaders from community agencies, government and the private sector. The failed urban bureaucracies fight to the death to block such an expansion of the pool. Sixth, the dysfunctional bureaucrats (school boards members, superintendents, central office functionaries) try to enhance their own individual power by being instrumental in making principal appointments. They desire loyalty to themselves above any attributes or training. Those who appoint principals seek control over particular schools in future and nothing is as effective as having the new principal be beholden to them for his/her appointment. Finally, if all the preceding blocking strategies fail and the system is stuck with an effective principal whose achievements are becoming well known, they simply transfer the effective principal out of the school/s/he may have spent a decade transforming. They disguise this blocking strategy with the claim, “This principal is so effective we want him/her to now do the same thing for another school,” when the real goal is to separate the effective principal from his/her power base of constituents.

**Star teachers**

No school or innovation can succeed without effective teachers. In Spring Branch, Texas and in Buffalo, New York where I was able to help failing schools hire a whole new faculty, schools that were among the lowest in achievement became some of the highest achieving schools in their district in one year. The bureaucratic functionaries are well aware of this road to success and use various blocking strategies to prevent creating the critical mass of star teachers who are needed to turn a failing school around. First, they assign teachers to schools singly and never in groups or teams. Second, if they allow individual schools to select their teachers, they limit their choices to only teachers who have first been screened by the central office. Third, they support transfer policies, which limit the ways in which the school can advertise for and select teachers outside of the seniority system and claim this is the fault of the teacher’s union. My experience has been that the teacher unions are quite open to how failing schools are restaffed. Teachers with seniority do not rush to transfer to failing schools and the unions are not the blockers; it is the dysfunctional bureaucracy seeking to protect itself from success models, which limits how failing schools are reconstituted. Fourth, more and more major urban districts are screening and hiring teachers without ever speaking to them in person. Under the guise of becoming more efficient they rely on only the examination of paper credentials and telephone interviews to hire teachers. Except for urban teachers, no one in America can get a job without ever speaking to another human being. Even part time employees in a car wash are hired only after they speak with someone in person. Such “efficient” hiring is guaranteed to produce teachers who are quitter/failures. Fifth, urban school districts block the hiring of more mature adults who can become star teachers in their districts by pretending that a license predicts a “highly qualified” teacher. Urban districts find it more convenient to continue the churn of unqualified youngsters with licenses who simply pass through their schools for short periods than to do the hard work of recruiting a diverse teaching staff who will be effective and stay. Even when the federal government defines mature, college graduates who have passed state exams and are being mentored on-the-job as “fully qualified,” many districts continue to hire traditional graduates who they know very well will be unable to relate to diverse students in poverty and who will soon be leaving. Once it is understood that the system’s goal is to control teacher behavior and not to hire a lot of troublemakers who will put the needs of the children over the self-serving maintenance of the bureaucracy, does it become clear why districts prefer 22-year-olds with no work experience who won’t be around long enough to figure out how the system is organized against teaching and learning. Sixth, the system’s stated goal of hiring more minority teachers is disingenuous piffle. By blocking the hiring of mature adults who use alternative routes, the system has in effect protected itself against creating a culturally representative teaching force.

**A system of accountability**

There is no urban district in America which makes those who hire the teachers accountable for the performance of those they hire. With no accountability in place, those who hire the teachers are only responsible for having a certified teacher in every classroom on the first day of school. How well the teacher does after that is something for which no one in the failing school districts is held accountable.

Currently, urban districts do hold principals accountable for student achievement in their school, but only as one part of their annual evaluations. It is typical in these failed urban districts for principals whose schools seldom, if ever, show increased achievement to be retained and even rated as “satisfactory” year after year.
The way these failed systems ensure retaining a cadre of ineffective but loyal principals is by using evaluation schemes in which the failure principal can do well enough in other areas of "leadership" to compensate for low or no student achievement gains.

The mass of functionaries in the central offices and their superiors are not held accountable in any way or to any degree for anything that even relates to student learning. The directors of reading, science, math or social studies in the central offices are never dismissed because the district’s achievement scores continue to drop in those areas. The directors of staff development are not held accountable because the teaching staff is not “developing.” Aside from the test scores which they eschew, none of the 120 districts provide data that can tell how well the teachers are doing, let alone whether or not they are improving. No one in the central office is held directly responsible for the districts’ dismal rates of graduation, attendance, suspension or expulsion. If a new reading or math program is adopted, those who recommended it are not held accountable for its failure. If a program is started to cut down on violence, tobacco use, or teenage pregnancy, no one is held accountable for negative results, or for even assessing results. If a federal, state or private grant is secured, no one is held accountable because the district’s achievement scores should not be used because there is too much student mobility, too many special education students, too many homeless children; and that four years is not enough time to demonstrate improvement.

There is no successful business in America in which individuals in leadership and budget management positions are not held accountable. There is an encyclopedic amount of evidence that no organization, private or public, can function effectively by putting into place a system of automatic, continuous rewards with no accountability… and this is precisely the system that is in place in the dysfunctional bureaucracies of the 120 largest failing districts. The hope that bureaucratic functionaries would embrace rather than do whatever they can to block a results-oriented management system is a victory of naïve expectation over a century of experience.

Any effort to hold any functionaries in the system accountable for anything will be forcefully and effectively resisted by all levels of the bureaucracy. The blocking strategies currently being used in the 120 largest districts with the greatest percentage of failing schools to resist and undermine Leave No Child Behind is the ultimate example of how failed systems resist accountability. The extremely powerful and passionate resistance of failed bureaucracies to do something about their failed schools is compelling evidence of their motivation to block rather than comply — as if more evidence is needed. The district’s reasons for why they cannot be held accountable for their failing schools includes, but is not limited to, the “facts” that the tests aren’t good enough measures of important learning; that the schools are underfunded; that achievement scores should not be used because there is too much student mobility, too many special education students, too many homeless children; and that four years is not enough time to demonstrate improvement.

In effective urban schools the building culture delivers a constant message: “Children’s learning is the ultimate value to be preserved. Whatever supports learning is something we need to do. Whatever interferes with learning is something we must stop.” Once learning rather than custodial care becomes the mission of the school, all of the priorities are reordered and the school culture is under threat of change. In effective schools this message is actualized. In failing schools it is merely verbalized. The conditions under which teachers work and children learn reflects whether the culture of the school makes learning the highest priority. In urban schools, a typical class has 125 interruptions a week because anyone in the school can walk into any classroom at any time with a message or to pull out a student. If learning were the highest priority, this would not be typical behavior in schools. The squawk box or the class telephone can break in on the teacher and the class at the will of office staff. If learning rather than administrative convenience were the highest priority, this would not be typical behavior in schools.

The principal has the greatest input into reshaping the school culture. The task the effective principal faces in battling a school culture that makes adult convenience a higher school priority than learning is enormous. The demands of the system for paper work, reports and compliance to ritualistic procedures are the bureaucratic strategies the principal...
Parents as partners and resources

In effective schools, the parents are genuine partners in every phase of the life of the school. In failing schools, the parents are viewed as uncooperative “no shows” and homework helpers. In an effective school, the principal and teachers create adult, respectful relationships which put parents in the role of genuine partners. Parents in these schools are treated as if they were wealthy, highly educated parents of advantaged students in a private academy. The primary purpose of interactions between the school staff and the parents in an effective school is to learn more about the students so that this information can be used in turning them on to learning and making the curriculum relevant. In failing schools, the primary purpose for dealing with parents is twofold: a) to report negative behavior and request that the parents make their children more compliant, and b) that parents oversee homework and actually teach their children the specific skills and content the school is failing to teach.

The policies and procedures of the system punish schools that treat parents as equal, cooperating partners and reward schools that treat them as part of the problem. Just one example, by federal law parents must be informed when their children attend failing schools and that they have the right of transfer. In the urban districts, there may be 50% or more of the children whose parents have been so informed. The problem is that there are insufficient openings in schools that are not deemed to be failing and no transportation to get to them. The system creates elaborate, lengthy written procedures for making these transfer requests. Schools that have openings are likely to be other failing schools. In my city last year, 45,000 parents were notified that they had the right to transfer, but only 500 actually were able to work through the cumbersome regulations to transfer their children. And even then, parents had no way of knowing the quality of the new schools they had chosen. Principals and teachers in effective schools do not support policies that obfuscate and mislead parents and are therefore regarded as dangerous and not “team players” by the functionaries who benefit from maintaining the dysfunctional systems.

A network of human service providers

Effective schools function within a network of health and social service providers. They regard their clients as the children and their families. They seek to connect their clients with all the available medical, dental, mental health, job training, religious, nutritional, recreational, housing, and other services. In effective schools, it is understood that the child is not only a “learner,” but a member of a family and community. To improve the conditions of life of the children is to improve their potential for learning. Acting on this philosophy is not only annoying, but dangerous to the system. The schools cannot control all these other entities and must make adjustments in time, scheduling and organization in order to cooperate with them. Worst of all, as other parents learn of the services available to children, parents and families in effective schools, they immediately want to know, “Why don’t we have these resources and services available in our school community?” Another telling example of how urban systems try to block making the full range of services available to their students is how they respond to after
school programs such as the reading tutoring offered in YMCA’s and other community agencies. These programs frequently do a better job at teaching reading than the failing urban school district. Yet, the district either ignores these programs or starts competing ones, which cost five times as much and are significantly less effective. If the failing districts are not able to establish links with after school tutoring programs which compensate for their lack of instructional effectiveness, what is the likelihood they will develop the mechanisms to cooperate with health and human service agencies? The effective school functions as a health and human services referral agency.

For the last half century, urban school districts have demonstrated consistent growth in their central offices and total budgets, and decreases in their achievement levels and graduation rates. My city has become the national center of the voucher and charter school movement. Enrollment in the public schools is down to 91,000 with over 29,000 now in 106 private, charter, suburban and open enrollment schools. Yet, as enrollment declines, the total annual budget of the system increases each year and the ratio of total employees to classroom teachers continues to increase. When Albert Shanker first warned against the burgeoning central offices in the 1970s, he predicted that more and more urban districts would have a ratio of 1:1; that is, one employee for every teacher working directly with children. We now have urban districts where the ratio is more than 2:1. The culture of the 120 failing districts remains constant and clear. The further away an individual works from children the higher the status and financial rewards. In such a culture, the system and its bureaucratic functionaries will inevitably expand at the expense of teachers and children.

Private sources as well as federal and state governments have spent billions for the ostensible purpose of equalizing educational opportunity, yet the achievement gap between rich and poor and between the races continues to widen. Meaningful change is effectively blocked because those with the power to transform these self-serving bureaucracies are those who benefit most from their survival and expansion. If stopping the miseducation of seven million diverse children and youth in urban poverty is the goal, the focus of change efforts must shift from the system to the school level. Knowing the system’s blocking strategies when they find that one of their schools has become effective enables us to push ahead with making other individual schools successful. For those committed to saving the educational lives of seven million diverse children in urban poverty, the school, not the district, is the unit of analysis and effort.

REFERENCES


METHODS

The purpose of this study was to collect information which allowed for the description and explanation of the behaviors and attitudes of a group of black professionals in Milwaukee who, occupationally, are commonly referred to in the literature as members of the middle or upper class (Frazier, 1957; Landry, 1987). The design of this descriptive study was defined as a cross-sectional survey design, as the data for this study were collected at one point in time. This survey employed a non-probability purposive sampling plan — a technique which allows for the selection of certain categories of blacks for their theoretical relevance to the study (Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 1977).

Specific individuals chosen for participation in the survey were randomly selected from membership lists provided by various black professional and social organizations in the city of Milwaukee, i.e., black teacher’s, physician’s and lawyer’s associations; and various fraternal organizations.

The specific data gathering instrument used was the self-administered mail questionnaire. The survey questions can be roughly grouped under four headings: 1) socio-economic characteristics; 2) life-style characteristics; 3) attitudes and opinions concerning others; and 4) attitudes and opinions on issues, problems, and concerns facing the community.

BACKGROUND

One hundred years ago, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) stated that, “[the] Negro race like all races is going to be saved by its exceptional men — the best of this race that they may guide the mass away from the contamination and death of the worst, in their own and other races.” DuBois goes on to describe these exceptional individuals as “worthy of leadership.”

Fifty years later, E. Franklin Frazier (1957) and others conveyed an unflattering image of the black professional class and portrayed them as failing in their responsibility to the black community. “By innuendo, they charge them with proving faltering to a trust reposed in them by handicapped people who look to them for assistance and advice as to the way out of their difficulties” (Woodson, 1934). Contemporary writers have concluded that the black elite are responsible, have a strong commitment to the black community, appear organized, and provide much of the leadership in civil rights and other social movements.

As members of an elite within an oppressed group, black professionals occupy a unique place in the social history of America. They are denied power, privilege and prestige while occupying upper ranks in our society in terms of their access to material goods and prestige among blacks.

Historically, the black elite in America had their roots in slavery. The economic and social structure of slavery and the plantation involved a complex division of labor among blacks that has profound implications for both the social structure and interpersonal relationships among blacks even today. Artisans, craftsmen and house slaves formed a privileged class in the slave community, which set them apart from field slaves and at times caused suspicion, distrust and friction between these groups.

The first black settlers arrived in Milwaukee around 1835. In 1860, there were only between 106 and 122 blacks in Milwaukee out of a total population of 45,140. Milwaukee’s black elite date back to the 1860 census which listed a black dentist named Nelson Badger. Seventy years later, by 1930, blacks numbered about 7,500 out of a total population of 578,249 Milwaukee residents and the numbers continued to grow.

The black professional class also grew and became a small class which had to cater almost exclusively to whites. The perception of this class was that a social gap or schism existed between themselves and black laborers.

This is an excerpt from a forthcoming publication
CONCLUSION

One hundred years after DuBois referred to the black elite as a “talented tenth” who suffered from “double consciousness,” i.e., living in two worlds, and fifty years after Frazier stated that the black elite escape into a “world of make believe,” Milwaukee’s black professionals show no signs which would indicate a significant inconsistency between what these authors said then and what Milwaukee’s black elite are doing or saying today. This suggests that the black elite have not progressed beyond what some authors concluded as exhibiting behaviors or attitudes unbecoming of an elite upper class. Rather, the black elite in Milwaukee have done something even more significant and complex. As a class, they have made adjustments to adapt to changes not unlike species that survive in the face of adversity and change. They have adapted in order to survive.

Milwaukee’s black professionals constitute a responsible elite who are aware of the plight of less fortunate blacks and have been responsive to the needs of the black community. Could members of Milwaukee’s black professional class do more to address these needs? Will they do more? Based on their past history in Milwaukee, we can hope for the future.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study of black professionals was based on 363 completed questionnaires returned and analyzed. Sixty percent of the respondents were female. Occupationality, the sample was very diverse, including educational fields, medical-related fields, attorneys, and various executives, accountants, and other occupations categorized as professionals. Over 95 percent of the respondents minimally possessed a baccalaureate degree. Also, they were primarily Protestant and Democrat as were their parents. Most were first-generation college educated and attended predominantly white postsecondary institutions.

Overall, Milwaukee’s black professionals were satisfied with their quality of life. A great majority of them were in good to excellent health, contented with the type of work they performed and their current jobs. While they were generally happy with their family life and friendships, they were less satisfied with the community in which most of them reside.

The findings also indicated that the black professionals viewed themselves as middle to upper class in status which based on the income, education, and occupation of a majority of this group is consistent with other writings about black professionals. They clearly acknowledged a gap or schism between themselves and poor or less fortunate blacks. While it appeared that the schism was one of social distance, i.e., white collar workers were perceived much more favorably than blue collar workers, or unskilled service or domestic workers; what is less clear is how pervasive this perception is and how it might manifest itself in terms of the behavior of black professionals toward these other groups. What we do know, in addition to the above, is that 90 percent of black professionals stated they felt an obligation to help less fortunate blacks. And that they, black professionals, were in sync with other blacks in terms of issues and concerns which represented challenges to the black community, i.e., education and crime.

KEY REFERENCES


The mission of the Institute on Multicultural Relations (IMR) is to create, organize, and disseminate scholarly knowledge designed to impact policy and quality of life issues in the greater Milwaukee area.

The IMR at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee was created as a new and innovative program designed to address the needs and concerns of communities of color through research, public service, and information resource sharing. This holistic approach to addressing issues is accomplished through multi-ethnic and multi-disciplinary scholarly research, public forums, think tank, and educational/training services. All IMR activities and programs originate from the communities of color and will result in civic engagement and outcomes with policy implications, which positively impact children and adults living in these communities.

The IMR is organized around 35 UWM senior faculty scholars representing diverse racial/ethnic groups and a wide range of academic disciplines. These Institute Scholars provide guidance and expertise toward the implementation of the mission of the IMR.

Institute Scholars
Cheryl Ajilotutu, associate professor, Anthropology
Swaranjit Arora, director/associate professor, Institute for Survey and Policy Research/Economics
David Beaulieu, professor, Education Administration
Mary Louise Buley-Meissner, co-coordinator/associate professor, Hmong American Studies Initiative/English
Adrian Chan, professor emeritus, Educational Psychology
Portia Cobb, associate professor, Film
Beverly Cross, associate professor, Curriculum & Instruction
Edgar Epps, professor, Educational Policy & Community Studies
Bertram Ezenwa, associate professor, Occupational Therapy
Bruce Fetter, professor, History
Enrique Figueroa, director/assistant to the provost for Latino Affairs, Roberto Hernandez Center/Academic Affairs
Sandra Grayson, associate professor, English
Donald Green, associate professor, Sociology
Martin Haberman, distinguished professor, Curriculum & Instruction
Gregory Jay, director/professor, Cultures & Communities Program/English
Joyce Kirk, executive director/associate professor, Institute on Race and Ethnicity/Africology
Susie Lamborn, associate professor, Educational Psychology
Gwat-Yong Lie, associate professor, Social Work
Christine Lowery, associate professor, Social Work
Min Z. Lu, professor, English
Joan Moore, professor emerita, Sociology
John Ndou, associate professor, Clinical Laboratory Sciences
Donald Noel, professor emeritus, Sociology
Festus Obiakor, professor, Exceptional Education
James Peoples, Jr., professor, Economics
Diane Pollard, professor, Educational Psychology
Kalyani Rai, associate professor, Center for Urban Community Development
Joseph Rodriguez, associate professor, History
Harold Rose, professor emeritus, Geography
Marty Sapp, professor, Educational Psychology
Josef Stagg, associate professor, Architecture
Jose Torres, associate professor, Social Welfare
Hanh Quang Trinh, associate professor, Health Care Administration
William Velez, professor, Sociology
Walter Weare, associate professor emeritus, History

Institute Librarians
Steve Atkinson, senior special librarian, Graduate School
Michelle Harrell Washington, multicultural studies librarian, UWM Libraries

Institute Staff (Department of Multicultural Affairs)
Gary Williams, director
Linda Huang, program manager
Victoria Pryor, senior specialist
Umeeka Harris, office manager
UWM students won top awards at the AMSLC conference

Linda Huang

UWM students won eight of the 16 awards presented at the American Multicultural Student Leadership Conference (AMSLC), which was held at UW-La Crosse on October 24-26, 2003. As part of the UW System-wide award competition, students submitted papers and artworks to a panel of judges from UW-Madison. Through this judging process, they were selected to present at the conference and won awards based on the superior quality of their submissions. The award categories and winners were:

Research – Race/Ethnic Focus
Second Place — Tomás Garrett
(Senior, College of Letters and Science)
Third Place — Toni Tavita Robinson
(Senior, College of Health Sciences)

Research – Open Topic
First Place — Deb Becker
(B.S., School of Education)
Third Place — Leah Adeniji
(Graduate, School of Business Administration)
Honorable Mention — Lisa Bemus
(Senior, College of Letters and Science)

Visual Arts
First Place — Damani Sekou Hill
(Senior, Peck School of the Arts)
Second Place — Adebisi Agoro
(Sophomore, College of Letters and Science)

Creative Writing
Honorable Mention — Ewurama Hayford
(B.S., College of Nursing)


Following are selected comments from the award recipients regarding the AMSLC conference, its paper competition process, and/or winning the award:

Damani Sekou Hill (graphic design and journalism/mass communications majors):
“…[the scholarship money] has allowed me to pay my entire portion of tuition and housing for Spring 2004 and a sum of Fall 2004 tuition…I was astonished and still am to this very day about how somebody…could visually and psychologically recognize the value of my artwork’s strong content, abstract form, and quality among other great artist…”

Deb Becker (early childhood education major):
“…My experience at the conference this year was even better than last!…Ultimately, the experience of preparing my paper for competition, and then the eventual winning instilled much pride in me…”

Leah Adeniji (MBA major):
“…As an attendant of AMSLC for more than one year, I can honestly say that the conference is exceptional! I always leave the conference feeling enlightened on a new level…[this conference] allows people to become more diverse individuals, and contributors to the health of our society in regards to race relations and understanding…”

Tomás Garrett (sociology major):
“…This conference has provided many students, especially students of color with the opportunity to present and showcase their hard work and efforts…”

Lisa Bemus (psychology major):
“…The scholarship I won has aided in defraying my costs associated with applying to doctorate clinical psychology programs. I would like to use this degree to help others…”
After 50 years of Brown v. Board of Education: Are we better off?

One of the most important decisions of the Civil Rights Movement

May 17, 1954

“In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.”


Was segregation in public schools the issue?

Has desegregation and integration in public schools made a difference?