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Introduction and Overview

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We must teach our children to prepare for the future – how to set goals for their lives and for their careers. We must do more to inspire, train, and motivate them. (p. 82)
Every home and neighborhood [school and community] in this country needs to be a safe, warm, healthy place – a place fit for human beings as citizens of the United States. It is a big job, but there is no one better to do it than those who live here. (p. 44)

– Rosa Parks (1994)

The chapters of this book originated from a national invitational conference in Washington D.C. sponsored by the Laboratory for Student Success in November of 2005. The conference took place just blocks away from the Capitol Rotunda where, days before, Rosa Parks' body laid in state as the nation mourned her passing. The conference began with the quotes above that reflected her views. The quotes, though simple, were profound as was the life of Rosa Parks. Her life and efforts were significant not only because of her leadership in the civil rights movement but also because of her other passion, “young people and education.”

The purpose of the book and conference was founded on the importance of education for minority children and a belief that research should be useful in practice and policy. The conference participants included researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who shared the same passions and were eager to develop recommendations for improving minority education. The book is a means to that end since it discusses both the strengths and challenges of minority children and provides recommendations in each chapter. Based on work group sessions at the conference, the last chapter summarizes consensual recommendations for research, policy, and practice.

In developing this conference and subsequent book, several important questions were asked, such as:

- Who are these minority students?
- How can we best understand them?
- What are their challenges and strengths?
- What are the similarities and not just the differences among the groups?

How can we collaborate and develop a collective voice in discussing the three groups?

How can we best serve them?

What recommendations can we provide?

We wanted to understand these questions by developing a systematic design focused on three minority groups: Latino, Black, and Asian students in each of the three sections in the book.

Why were these groups chosen? Latino, Black, and Asian ethnic minority groups are the most visible, and are rapidly growing as shown by U.S. Census data. As suggested by the book title, the groups are listed in terms of their population size. Latinos, for example, are now the largest minority group in the U.S. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has also emphasized these groups as a concern, especially in economically disadvantaged areas. A growing number of minority and immigrant families now reside in urban areas (Fix & Passel, 2003); and these families tend to be poorer, less educated, and have lower proficiency levels in English (Rong & Preissle, 1998). For purposes of accountability, the NCLB Act also mandates that educators report separate achievement scores for each of these minority groups as well as English language learners.

The achievement gap continues to persist between minority and non-minority groups in the U.S., as well as growing gaps even within minority groups. How can we diminish the achievement gaps especially with the growing number of minority students? Educators and allied professionals are interested in improving the efforts of these growing minority populations.

In trying to understand these groups, we found that there were few books that offered an array of research expertise on Latino, Black, and Asian children in a single collective volume. This motivated us to bring together the research represented in this book. In addition, a better understanding of socio-cultural issues and experiences regarding the home, school, and community provide insight into the three groups. Consequently, the following three themes emerged:

Part 1: Culturally Diverse Families and Schooling

Part 2: Histories, Issues of Immigration, and Schooling Experiences

Part 3: Socio-cultural Issues on Teaching, Learning, and Development

Within each section is a chapter on each of the three minority groups. Rather than sorting themes by three distinctive groups, this organization allows comparisons and contrasts of the cultural groups within each section. Learning about similarities and differences among the groups provides greater insight into the myriad of problems and contexts that affect minority and immigrant children.

The invited authors are top scholars and leaders in the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology, education, and ethnic studies. The interdisciplinary selection of scholars was a challenging task, but the editors went to great lengths to identify the most qualified contributors. Without question, the authors complemented each other in terms of the purpose and scope of this book.

We are aware of the complexities in cultures, subcultures, and topics in this area of research. In inviting the chapter authors, we acknowledged the cultural differences within each minority group. Although there are differences among and within the groups, there are also some similarities in history, culture, language, customs, and traditions both in the originating countries and their experiences in the U.S. Since it was impossible to represent all the groups, we sought to represent not only the largest minority groups, but those subgroups addressed in the NCLB Act.

The chapters in the book are represented by a variety of perspectives, and we acknowledge they are a starting point in understanding the complexities involved in minority groups and subgroups. Each of the authors brought their own expertise and perspectives to address these points and was asked to provide clear recommendations based on their research. The authors also defined and used various terms as appropriate in their respective chapters (e.g., Latino, Hispanic, Black, African American, Asian Pacific American, or Asian American usage, etc.). They also employed language and distinctions in their field of expertise that would make most sense particularly with respect to how minority children can best be served.

While it was impossible to cover everything, this book provides the breadth and organization of synthesized research on the three groups. The chapters synthesize research-based findings on the practices in homes, schools, and communities to help increase our understanding of psychological resilience, academic performance, and pro-social behavior. Classrooms have now changed and it is imperative to understand the background of culturally diverse families and students in order to shape effective schooling experiences. Each author offers recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to improve their success in school and life.

The following sections in this chapter provide descriptive statistics about the school and life experiences of the three minority groups in general. This information is presented to the reader to provide a demographic overview in the context of minority education. Followed by summaries of each chapter, the chapter ends with concluding remarks regarding the conference and book.

1.1. Background on Minority Learning

On January 8, 2002, Congress enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which has strongly affected education for all students and minority students in particular. The NCLB Act requires new state academic standards for stronger accountability, better teacher training, and research-based educational practices. Allocating an additional \$26.5 billion for the support of public K-12 schools, Republicans and Democrats joined to support this legislation to help all children learn as implied by the Act's title (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The Act mandates that academic achievement progress be reported separately for students by race, ethnicity, SES, English proficiency, and disability. The information

on test performance must be publicly available, and policy makers, educators, parents, and others will be able to see results for each of these student groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Though bold and providing large increases in federal funding for the education of disadvantaged students, NCLB continues national efforts to increase achievement. Since 1965, more than \$242 billion was spent to educate economically disadvantaged students, and indeed, spending has more than doubled since 1996. Achievement gaps, however, persist among low-income, minority, and English language learners. Despite increased spending, performance in reading has not improved in the last 15 years. Currently, less than one-third of the nation's fourth graders read proficiently. Less than 20% of 12th grade students score proficiently in mathematics, and they continue to rank near the bottom on international surveys (U. S. Department of Education, 2003).

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was amended in the new NCLB Act (Sec. 1001) "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This purpose is to be accomplished by:

(1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement;

(2) meeting the educational needs of low achieving children in our nation's highest poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, neglected or delinquent children, and young children in need of reading assistance; and

(3) closing the achievement gap between high and low performing children, especially minority and non-minority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Students and families from disadvantaged homes, especially those ethnic minority populations who are rapidly growing in the United States are of particular concern.

1.2. Minority Students: A Growing Population

Minority children and youth, particularly immigrant children, are the fastest growing population in U.S. schools. It is estimated that the ratio of immigrant children in grades K-12 is one in five, representing 19% of schoolchildren (Fix & Passel, 2003). Furthermore, an estimated 1,000 immigrant children enter U.S. schools each day (Rong & Brown, 2002, p. 125). The foreign-born population is currently over 31.1 million, which is at an all-time high (Fix & Passel, 2003). Currently, 10.5 million students are children of immigrants; roughly one-fourth are foreign-born and three-fourths are U.S. born (Fix & Passel, 2003).

The largest immigrant groups seeking education in the U.S. are Latinos, Asians, and Caribbean and African Blacks (Rong & Preissle, 1998). Latinos are currently the largest minority population representing over 13% of the population in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2004). Latinos include Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominican Republicans, and other Central and South Americans. The U.S. Census reports foreign-born and U.S. born Mexicans constitute roughly 38% of all immigrant children (Fix & Passel, 2003). Educational researchers have long been concerned with achievement, enrollment, and high school dropout rates for Latino students (Tutwiler, 1998; Rong & Preissle, 1998).

Asian Americans are also one of the fastest growing minority populations comprised of both high and low achieving groups as illustrated in the chapters. Census data show that Asian and Pacific Islander Americans total nearly 12 million, which is about 4% of the entire U.S. population. Since 1965, 90% of Asian Americans are recent immigrants (Rong & Preissle, 1998). A particularly diverse group, Asian Americans represent all the countries of East, South, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Among the most common are Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indians who are typically high-achievers in school, whereas Cambodians, Hmong, and Vietnamese have traditionally achieved less well.

Of post-1900 immigrants, Blacks are the smallest group; they accounted for less than 5% of immigrants in 1994. Census projections, however, suggest that the foreign-born Black population will grow from 1.6 million to roughly 2.7 million in 2010 (Rong & Preissle, 1998). Foreign-born African groups are largely comprised of Non-Hispanics from the Caribbean (mostly Grenadine, Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian, and Tobagian) and Africans (mostly Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Nigerian, and South African).

Though the Black immigrant population is smaller than Asians and Latinos, the U.S. born Black population is the second largest minority group and constitutes over 12% of the population based on Census data. Researchers have long been concerned with the educational achievement of African Americans. The U.S. Census reports that substantial numbers of minorities, particularly African Americans, live in urban areas, where inequities continue to persist in achievement, employment, and quality of life.

Scholars have long noted the relationship between educational success and family income. In the United States, many ethnic minority groups, particularly immigrant families, tend to be among the poorer income groups. By 1991, one-third of immigrant children (foreign-born and U.S. born) lived in families with incomes below the poverty line (Fix & Passel, 2003). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (2006), growing trends show that 63% of Latino children (8.9 million), 61% of Black children (6.6 million), 30% of Asian children (0.9 million), and 27% of White children (11.7 million) lived in low-income families in the U.S. in 2002. Although the largest group is White, minority populations, particularly Latino and African American populations are more likely to live in low-income families.

In general, low-income, minority children face additional challenges to succeeding in school, which widen the achievement gap throughout the school

years. Some studies have shown as the number of family risk factors for a child increase (e.g., living in a single-parent household, living below the federal poverty level), that child performs less well in both reading and mathematics (Rathbun & West, 2004, p. v).

In a nation of more than 3 million kindergarteners, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of the Kindergarten class of 1998–1999 (ECLS-K) follows a nationally representative sample of 22,782 kindergarteners through fifth grade, revealing important challenges facing minority children. Among the sample, it was found that 45% live in low-income families accounting for all groups (e.g., White, Latino, Black, Asian and other) involved the study. Concerns for disadvantaged minority students continue to grow given the dismal predictions. The study found on average that Black and Latino third-graders had lower proficiency in advanced reading skills and mathematics (Rathbun & West, 2004, pp. vii–viii). Ongoing research from the ECLS-K demonstrates that achievement gaps between disadvantaged and more advantaged children identified at the beginning of school grew wider over the first 4 years of school attendance (West, Denton, Germino Hausken, 2000 as cited in Rathbun & West, p. x).

While the research on Latino and Black populations is well cited regarding the achievement gap, there is also a growing concern over Asian populations, who don't achieve as well. Typically, East Asians have done considerably well, but recent research shows that some students from South or Southeast Asian groups do not perform as highly. Recent research has also cited that some East Asian groups are also struggling academically (Lew, 2006). Given the reputation of the model minority stereotype, research and services for Asian families and students have been generally lacking in the schools. As the diverse Asian communities are growing, there is concern to disaggregate the data and understand the needs given the little existing research on Asian American students (see Lee, Pang, Zhou, chapter publications in this text).

In addition to the complexities, many students also come from non-English speaking countries (e.g., Asia, Africa, and Latin America). There are over 2.6 million limited English proficient students in grades K-12 (Fix & Passel, 2003). Limited English mastery, economic hardships, and cultural barriers are often obstacles to success in school and life. Many believe that without better opportunities, large numbers of foreign-born and U.S. born Latino, Black, and Asian students will continue to be marginalized in the United States. As a result of these trends, school psychologists, educators from various disciplines, and other allied professionals must work hard to improve the academic and life prospects of minority children and youth.

1.3. Chapter Overviews

The chapter summaries are provided on each of the three themes on culturally diverse families and schooling; brief histories, issues of immigration and schooling experiences; and socio-cultural issues on teaching, learning, and development.

1.3.1. *Part One: Culturally Diverse Families and Schooling*

Chapter 2. *Fostering Latino Parent Involvement in the Schools: Practices and Partnerships*. (Concha Delgado-Gaitan). Employment statistics reveal a strong correlation between college attainment and well-paying employment opportunities. For Latino students, however, college entrance is often unattainable. The underrepresentation of Latinos prompted Delgado-Gaitan's questions of what needs to be done, beginning at the elementary school level, to increase Latino student college admission. A 4-year ethnographic study involving 20 Latino families from Central America and Mexico, in a Northern California community, traced the socialization of young Latino students and their families preparing for college admission. Delgado-Gaitan discusses the importance of Latino parent involvement, practices in the home and school, and effective partnerships as exemplified in a Mother-Daughter county schools project. Through interviews, observations, and participation in their off-campus and after-school activities, she was able to construct a multi-faceted picture of the cultural knowledge in families and community educational agencies that is necessary in the long journey of changing the dismal statistics of Latinos in higher education. In summary, Delgado-Gaitan discusses issues regarding Latino families and communities in understanding early academic experiences of students. While there is a need to address the schooling process for Latinas, the implications of this study are applicable for both male and female Latino students as educators consider reforms for preparing students in the early grades.

Chapter 3. *Parenting, Social-Emotional Development, and School Achievement of African American Youngsters* (Ronald D. Taylor). Renewed attention has been devoted to the gap in the achievement between African American and European American students. On a variety of indicators (e.g., grades, SAT scores, college attendance and completion), African American youngsters fare poorly compared to European American adolescents. The gap in the achievement appears before kindergarten and continues into adulthood. Among the factors linked to differences in achievement have been social class, teacher expectations and perceptions, parental expectations and practices. Ron Taylor discusses family relations, parenting practices and their association with adolescents' school achievement and social and emotional adjustment. Taylor also discusses factors that impact the functioning of African American families and their capacity to rear their youngsters. Taylor's chapter discusses how African American families experience high rates of poverty and stressful living conditions. Thus, the influence of families' economic resources, neighborhood conditions and social networks on family functioning are also discussed. Taylor provides recommendations for policy and practice, aimed at improving youngsters' achievement and the social and psychological well-being of students and their families.

Chapter 4. *Asian Pacific American Cultural Capital: Understanding Diverse Parents and Students* (Valerie Ooka Pang). Pang's chapter provides an informed discussion regarding the cultural values that shape the behaviors and achievement of Asian Pacific American (APA) students. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of

human development is used to explain how families, particularly APA families encourage and reinforce educational achievement. A central idea in this chapter is “cultural capital,” which Pang refers to as the attitudes, expectations, knowledge, and behaviors parents pass on to their children that assist them in succeeding in school and society. To illustrate this central idea, she also employs several of Sue and Okazaki’s ideas about Asian cultural capital in the educational achievement process. Pang also discusses the experiences, backgrounds, and educational needs of diverse APA groups by providing examples of the various groups (e.g., Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Lao, and Vietnamese, etc.). She explains that their educational needs may be similar, but their social and academic experiences may differ due to various elements such as history and generational levels in the U.S. The chapter concludes with recommendations for educators to encourage and collaborate with Asian Pacific American students and their families.

1.3.2. Part Two: Histories, Issues of Immigration, and Schooling Experiences

Chapter 5. *The Mobility/Social Capital Dynamic: Understanding Mexican American Families and Students* (Robert K. Ream and Ricardo D. Stanton-Salazar). Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States, increasing eight times more rapidly than the population as a whole. Their rising numbers come with concern about the status of Latino students in schools. The two-thirds of all U.S. Latinos who are of Mexican descent are challenged with disproportionately high dropout rates and low test scores. In this chapter, Ream and Stanton-Salazar argue that Mexican American underachievement is partly due to the instability in social relationships that accompanies particularly high rates of transience among them. “Like the frequent re-potting of plants” in their analogy, residential and student mobility disrupts social root systems and the context for interaction. It follows that the *mobility/social capital dynamic*, whereby mobility impacts the resources inherent in social networks, merits attention on the basis of its sway over relationship stability and academic achievement. After reviewing the incidence, consequences, and causes of mobility, Ream and Stanton-Salazar address how school systems can reduce unnecessary student mobility and develop strategies for strengthening the social support networks of Mexican American students and their families.

Chapter 6. *Educational Attainment of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Young Blacks* (Xue Lan Rong and Frank Brown). As African American experiences move into the 21st century, diverse educational attainment patterns and schooling behaviors have emerged among Black students. Recent immigrant Blacks from the Caribbean and Africa with growing numbers differ from Blacks who have lived in the United States for many generations. To compare and contrast the groups, Rong and Brown first discuss the similarities and differences with respect to immigration experiences and history, family and community environments, and schooling experiences. Rong and Brown then focus the discussion on the variations in

educational attainment in African and Caribbean immigrants and non-immigrants affected by region or country of origin, generation in the United States, gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Their chapter draws on insights from direct observations and demographic data from the 2000 census. Their chapter also identifies and differentiates causes for variable patterns in educational attainment (e.g., schooling behaviors and self-defined identities). To improve the educational opportunities of Black students, Rong and Brown state that educators and policy makers must recognize the differences in Black communities and among generations. With increased understanding of the distinctive strengths of these communities, educational opportunities may increase for children and youth in several specific ways suggested in this chapter.

Chapter 7. *Divergent Origins and Destinies: Children of Asian Immigrants* (Min Zhou). There has been relatively little concern with whether or not children of Asian immigrants can make it into the American mainstream, partly because of their comparatively high socioeconomic status upon arrival and partly because of their extraordinary educational achievement. The general perception is that a great majority of them, even those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, will succeed in school and life, and that the “model minority” image represents a reality rather than a myth. Zhou examines the problems and limitations of the homogenized image of Asian Americans based on the analysis of the U.S. Census data and her own ethnographic case studies in Asian immigrant communities. Zhou argues that Asian immigrants and their US-born or raised children are living in a society that is highly stratified not only by class but also by race. This reality, combined with unique cultures, immigration histories, family and community resources, has shaped and, to an important extent, determined the educational outcomes of the children of Asian immigrants. Her chapter starts with a demographic overview of the diverse Asian American population as impacted by immigration. Zhou then examines how diversity creates opportunities and constraints to affect the trajectories of second-generation mobility. Finally, Zhou draws lessons from two case studies, Chinese and Vietnamese, to illustrate how culture interacts with structure to affect unique social environments conducive to education. The chapter ends with a discussion of the lessons and implications for immigrant education, particularly for Asian American communities.

1.3.3. Part Three: Socio-cultural Issues on Teaching, Learning, and Development

Chapter 8. *Educational Issues and Effective Practices for Hispanic Students* (Hersh C. Waxman, Yolanda N. Padrón, and Andres García). The educational status of Hispanic students in the United States is one of the most challenging educational issues. Although the number of Hispanic students in public schools has increased dramatically in recent decades, Hispanic students as a group have the lowest levels of education and the highest dropout rates. Furthermore, conditions of poverty, health, and other social problems have made it difficult for Hispanics to improve their

educational status. Waxman, Padron, and Garcia summarize some of the critical educational problems facing Hispanic students and provide some recommendations to alleviate the problems. Their chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section focuses on the educational status of Hispanic students in the United States. The second section discusses factors associated with the underachievement of Hispanic students. This section includes problems associated with the need for qualified teachers, inappropriate teaching practices, and at-risk school environments. The third section examines factors associated with the success of Hispanic students. Waxman, Padron, and Garcia provide a brief summary of programs, schools, and instructional strategies that have been found to significantly improve the academic achievement of Hispanic students. Finally, their chapter provides recommendations and conclusions on effective practices and programs for Hispanic students.

Chapter 9. *Improving the Schooling Experiences of African American Students: What School Leaders and Teachers Can Do* (Gail L. Thompson). For more than half a century, the greatest failure of the U.S. public school system has been that despite numerous education reforms, the achievement gap persists. Although there now exist numerous achievement gaps—including the gap between economically disadvantaged students and their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, the Latino-White gap, the Latino-Asian gap, the Latino-Black gap, the Latino-Latino gap, and the Asian-Asian gap (gaps among various Latino groups, and among various Asians groups),—Thompson informs us that the Black-White achievement gap has historically received more attention than the other gaps, primarily because of the attention given to it via the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown versus Board of Education*. In spite of this attention, educators have failed to close the gap, and today, as a result of the current unprecedented pressure to improve students' standardized test scores as a result of NCLB, narrowing the Black-White gap has become a top priority at school districts nationwide. Because educators and researchers continue to seek solutions, Thompson's chapter presents pertinent research from researchers, and African American parents and students regarding how educators can increase their efficacy with African American students. Thompson begins with a brief summary of research on the role of school leaders and then presents "Seven things that African American students need from their teachers". She emphasizes the importance of professional development and concludes with specific recommendations.

Chapter 10. *The Truth and Myth of the Model Minority: The Case of Hmong Americans* (Stacey J. Lee). Asian Americans are generally depicted as model minorities who have achieved academic, social and economic success through hard work and adherence to Asian cultural values. Asian American students are stereotyped as valedictorians, violin prodigies and computer geniuses. While there are Asian American students who are highly successful, the model minority stereotype hides variation in academic achievement across ethnic groups and among individuals. Lee discusses how disaggregated data on Asian Americans reveals significant differences between East Asian and South Asian groups that have high levels of educational attainment, and Southeast Asians who have relatively low

levels of educational attainment. Lee's chapter analyzes the similarities and differences in educational achievement and attainment across various Asian American ethnic groups, but focuses on traditionally lower achieving groups. As a primary example, the chapter examines the case of Hmong Americans, a group that has experienced significant barriers to education. Based on data from Lee's ethnographic study of Hmong American high school students in the Midwest, her chapter discusses economic, racial and cultural barriers that Asian students, Hmong students in particular, face in schools. Her study examines the impact of the model minority stereotype on lower achieving Asian American students. Lee concludes with recommendations for educational policy and practice for educators and policy-makers.

1.4. Concluding Remarks and Acknowledgements

The conference participants included the authors, other scholars, and representatives of Washington education groups such as the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Educational Leaders Council, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and national parent organizations. Board members and officials from state departments of education and local school districts, superintendents, principals, and teachers also participated.

The main work of the conference took place in small groups. With a chair and recorder for each group, their task, based on the conference papers, discussion, and their own experience, was to develop consensus around "next steps" to improve policy and practice. The synthesized recommendations constitute the last chapter (Ch. 11) of this book, which consists of general recommendations for the three groups. Specific recommendations for Latino, Black, or Asian students can also be found in each of the chapters.

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Richard P. Duran from the University of California – Santa Barbara, Margaret Gibson from the University of California-Santa Cruz, Grace Kao from the University of Pennsylvania, A. Lin Goodwin from Teachers College Columbia University, and Marc Hill from Temple University provided insightful perspectives to the papers.

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