CHAPTER 16
Understanding Vulnerability and Resilience from a
Normative Developmental Perspective: Implications
for Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth

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A multicaated, context-linked, and systems-oriented human development perspective is essential for a maxi-
mized understanding of resilience and vulnerability; in fact, a carefully nuanced approach is particularly needed when considering broad ethnic enclaves and, more gener-
ally, all humans' normative pursuit of stage-specific life course competencies. The perils that youth face, along with the successful and unsuccessful strategies they em-
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developmental psychopathology and applied human development have increasingly focused on risk and resilience. Scholars have begun exploring important conceptual issues that require greater clarity, such as the various definitions of resilience as a construct, and the utility of these in various contexts (e.g., see Luthar, 2003; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Spencer, 2001). A key point to add to this discussion is that risk and resilience cannot be separated from normative developmental processes that occur in multiple contexts. Healthy and normal human development involves negotiating some level of stage-specific threat (i.e., given available and honed competencies of salience to the risks confronted) and demonstrating a degree of resilience (i.e., successful outcomes) in the face of challenge.

From our perspective, risk is properly conceptualized as the exacerbation of normative challenges encountered in the pursuit of myriad stage-specific competencies and is linked to broad sociopsychological processes (i.e., racism, sexism) and/or lack of resources (e.g., see Galay & Flanagan, 2000). Protective factors such as social (e.g., cultural capital) and material (e.g., the intergenerational transmission of wealth) resources help individuals to cope with exacerbated normative challenges and, thus, maximize available supports. We define vulnerability as the net experience of risk and protective factors that an individual encounters (see Anthany, 1974). Productive as well as unproductive coping outcomes are possible. Accordingly, as an outcome, resilience involves successful negotiation of exacerbated challenges; however, resilience is not possible without significant challenge being encountered and is associated with heightened risk conditions.

RESILIENT OUTCOMES: LINKAGES WITH CONTEXT, CHARACTER, AND COPING NEEDS

From a service provider perspective, Looe Chestang (1972b) suggests that American culture and social policies are infested with misconceptions concerning what is wanted and expected from citizens of color. He postulates that, on the one hand, competence, social responsibility, and independence are desired as life course outcomes. However, independent of the developmental period of concern and efforts made, there remain significant and built-in obstacles to the achievement of these outcomes.

Spencer (2001) describes the consequences of structural racism for minority youth as, at minimum, a wound blow. First, youth of color frequently live and mature in high-risk contexts characterized by systemic, structural barriers to individual success. More specifically, these obstacles include conditions in the neighborhood, family, and school context, and interactions among these different contexts; additionally, challenges emanate from relationships between these settings and the larger social, economic, and political forces in U.S. society more generally. In fact, Kochman (1992) suggests that there are particular individual-context conditions. In a thorough and broad review, he describes communities where children grow and adults attempt to meet their needs although they are confronted by consistent patterns in the social structural conditions that make goals for competence and productive citizenship virtually impossible. More to the point, Kochman suggests that specifically African American communities are frequently distinguished by crowded conditions, hazardous waste facilities, and other high-risk environmental elements that seldom appear in affluent and suburban communities. Of salience is that these conditions collectively increase stress, decrease one’s ability to cope, diminish the sense of community and psychological mutuality, and result in increases in behavior problems that compromise competence. As illustrated by Emmy Werner’s (1989), Werner & Smith, 2001) classic studies, many youth manage good outcomes and demonstrate resilience; however, generally speaking and as suggested by standard journal publications and textbooks, when considering mainstream youth of color, the mediating processes between risk factors and resilience outcomes are infrequently unpacked when considering ethnic minorities.

From our perspective, a significant contributor to the unpacking of mediating processes evident between the risks and resilient outcomes has been Brewster Smith’s (1968) classic theorizing about competence formation. DeCharme’s (1968) ideas aid and complement Smith’s, which together enhance our understanding of resilience. Specifically, DeCharmes suggests that an individual’s primary motivational propensity is to be effective in producing changes in his or her environment to make a (positive) impact by making a difference. Although conceptually similar to Smith’s and to Robert White’s (1959) views concerning competence formation and effectiveness motivation, DeCharmes theorizing goes a step further. DeCharmes describes his construct as one of personal causation, which implicitly reinforces the salience of human agency. His perspective suggests that psychosocial processes (i.e., demonstrating personal agency) are fundamental for productive outcomes and stage-specific competencies. The classic ideas put forth by White, DeCharmes, and Smith complement each other. Considered together, the conceptual formulations (1) provide accompaniment to James Anthony’s
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(1974) insightful notions concerning resiliency, (2) afford additional essentials to the race-specific and culturally sensitive contextual perspective of Leon Chestang (1972b), and (3) highlight the person-process context insights made available by Bronfenbrenner (1989). Collectively synthesized, these theorists provide a dynamic and synergistic conceptual formulation that is foundational for Spencer’s (2001) suggested second component or outcome that the hypothesis examines from structural racism. Specifically, she suggests that the many instances of resilience—success and competence displayed by vulnerable youth in spite of adverse living conditions—often go unrecognized, thus denying individuals a sense of agency, success, and inferred accomplishment. Importantly, the oversight forgets the potential and positive protective factor function of acknowledged resiliency. Instead, by ignoring the fact of race and ethnicity linked negative social structural conditions and associations with resiliency, the omission further compromises individual coping and allows the continued interpretational liberties about youth of color that frequently and narrowly label their lives and efforts as suggesting solely deviancy, pathology, deficits, and problems.

Spencer’s (2001) synthesis suggests that youths’ manifested resiliency should still be associated with future psychological fragility that requires sustained support during subsequent developmental periods and for the critical transitions in between (see Spencer, 2001). To illustrate, a single dose of early intervention against iniquitous life course conditions administered during the preschool years alone—perhaps as Head Start programming—is inadequate. “The inoculating impact is ineffective given the chronic and multidimensional expressions of structural racism as one moves forward across the life course” (p. 35). As suggested by Anthony (1974), all youth are psychologically vulnerable. However, low-risk environments may offset the manifestation of high vulnerability, whereas chronic high-risk environments may virtually guarantee it. In other words, even in the face of high-risk, protective factors may promote generally positive outcomes, stage-specific competencies, and resiliency. The work by Werner and colleagues (Werner, 1989, 2000; Werner & Smith, 2001) with indigenous Hawaiian children quite clearly demonstrates the point.

As described by Cook and Cook (2005), it is heartening to observe children doing well when everything is working for them; however, it is more imperative to see youth doing well when the odds appear insurmountable. Programs of research on resilient children—children who succeed, achieve, or otherwise have positive development outcomes despite growing up under negative conditions—have been addressed for youth generally by researchers such as Garmezy (1985), Luthar et al. (2000), and Rutter (1987). However, an identity-focused and context-linked scholarly emphasis on resiliency, particularly when considering diverse youth of color, has been a long-term focus of Spencer and colleagues (e.g., see Spencer, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987).

Our approach to human development, and thus to vulnerability, risk, and resiliency, represents an identity-focused, cultural-ecological perspective. We focus on identity structures that confer either privilege or marginality and consider factors including race and gender. We examine and infer how these factors affect several dimensions of human coping: individuals’ perceptions of self and future opportunities, imposed expectations, such as stereotypes that result from inferences about race and gender, and the interaction between these various influences and normative development processes such as physical maturation and identity formation. Furthermore, we emphasize the need to understand these issues as they are impacted by multiple levels of context. This includes both proximal contexts—immediate situational settings such as school, family, and neighborhood—and distal contexts, such as, broad societal influences including political decisions and media messages that are filtered through the more proximal venues. The interactions among these different settings and hierarchically levels of context should also be recognized as they impact human development processes, risk, and resiliency.

In this chapter, as an organizational strategy for understanding development in context, we present Spencer’s (1995, in press) phenomenological variational ecological systems theory (PVVEST). The Identity-focused, cultural-ecological framework of normative human development significantly enhances the examination of resiliency and vulnerability among youth. Accordingly, first, we consider major conceptual flaws that have marred research on racially and ethnically diverse youth. We highlight how these conceptual flaws have led to misunderstandings about resiliency and vulnerability. Next, we present several theoretical corrections to these flaws in an effort to build toward our comprehensive, racially and culturally sensitive model of human development. We discuss the major theoretical traditions that PVVEST builds on, including Erikson’s and Marcia’s theorizing on identity, racial identity theories, symbolic interactionism, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. Subsequently, we lay out the PVVEST model and apply it to understand both the unique and patterned challenges—or the absence of major difficulties—faced differentially by racially and ethnically diverse youth. Broader societal factors and histori-
conclusions. This sentiment is shared by many researchers who emphasize the importance of understanding the development of racial and ethnic identity and the challenges faced by minority youth. Understanding the experiences of youth is essential to addressing the issues faced by minority youth.

CONCEPTUAL FLAWS IN RESEARCH ON RACIALLY AND ETNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH

Historically, several recurring conceptual flaws have characterized research on racially and ethnically diverse youth (Spencer & Harpalani, 2001; Spencer, Noll, Stolz, & Harpalani, 2000; Swanson, Spencer, & Peterson, 2006). First and foremost, in general, discussions about youth of color have often lacked a developmental perspective. African American youth are often studied as a monolithic group, and the experiences of black youth have been compared to those of non-black youth. The frequent lack of consideration of the unique experiences of black youth has led to an overemphasis on the similarities between all youth.

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In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of understanding the experiences of minority youth. This has led to a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of minority youth, and a greater appreciation of the unique experiences of minority youth.

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In conclusion, understanding the experiences of minority youth is essential to addressing the issues faced by minority youth. It is important to recognize the unique experiences of minority youth, and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of minority youth.
not only resilience and vulnerability, but the entire realm of experiences and psychosocial attitudes and behaviors of racially and ethnically diverse youth. Such an analysis buttresses the use of resilience as the classification for productive outcomes for some (i.e., those experiencing persistent and significant challenges) versus those whose productive outcomes are due to the confluence (i.e., consistency of experiences) between contextual character (i.e., communicated positive expectations and patterned support) and the sets of stage-specific normative challenges associated with particular developmental periods. That is, we possess the conceptual position that the latter situation and noted stage-specific productive coping outcomes do not necessarily suggest resilience but, instead, indicate productive coping efforts and outcomes that are the result of significant supports provided in response to normative developmental challenge.

Finally, a lack of cultural competence is another related flaw in scholarship on youth of color. In a paradoxical way, this is particularly relevant to research on racially and ethnically diverse youth. Ethnic minority status may, on the surface, prompt the researcher to consider issues of culture and context; however, scholarship lacking a comprehensive theoretical framework of normative human development often obscures the most salient issues for particular groups rather than illuminating them (see discussion by Lee, Spencer, & Hylaplan, 2003). The behavioral outcomes of youth of color are often analyzed simplistically using culturally determinant formulations that ignore within-group variation. Conversely, researchers often assume that cultural factors are unnecessary to consider; thus, they are conveniently overlooked in the experiences of White youth. This penchant undermines the field's embrace of culturally competent analyses and encourages a perspective that suggests that culture applies only to youth of color and is associated narrowly with deficit points of view. As suggested, this approach not only neglects salient issues, but also implicitly pathologizes the experiences of youth of color by normalizing White youth's developmental experiences (see Spencer, in press). Of particular importance, cultural competence is not merely of clinical and therapeutic relevance; it is a critical factor in the design and interpretation of research. In sum, cultural competence promotes scientific research that is proficient in its incorporation and consideration of culture. As described by Lee et al., adolescents from diverse backgrounds have a variety of understandings of family, school, and neighborhood experiences that cannot be understood with traditionally simplistic, gender-stereotyped, and normative cultural formulations (e.g., Fordham & Ogbo, 1986); such short-sightedness under-

mines the design, production, and application of good science. Although culturally nuanced perspectives are necessary to understand social and psychological experiences of diverse populations, such an understanding of necessity must also include careful attention to assumptions about normative developmental experiences (Swanson, Spencer, et al., 2003).

MITIGATING CONCEPTUAL SHORTCOMINGS IN RESEARCH: CORRECTIVE STEPS

To address traditional shortcomings in research on racially and ethnically diverse youth, we propose several key steps. All are related and employed to assist in building toward the PVeST.

Normative Human Development Perspective

First, a normative human development perspective should be employed when examining resilience and vulnerability among all youth. As noted earlier, we view risk and resilience as integrally tied to normative developmental processes. The experiences of youth should be viewed in terms of such processes and challenges, including those associated with physical maturation, identity formation, negotiation of relationships with peers and elders, and other situations that require youth to employ problem-solving strategies in response to normative and nonnormative stage-linked challenges. For youth of color, these challenges are often exacerbated; for example, for second-generation Asian American youth, navigating peer and family relationships may be compounded by extensive cultural dissonance across family and school settings; for African American youth (males in particular), physical maturation must be negotiated in conjunction with media-propagated negative stereotypes of black male criminality. The important point is that all of these challenges should be understood as part of normative development in adolescence; although issues such as stereotyping and cultural dissonance may contribute to and exacerbate normative challenges, the experiences of youth of color should not be viewed separately from normative developmental issues. Moreover, we should keep this issue in mind whether we are considering adaptive or maladaptive behaviors by these youth because the behaviors as reactive coping strategies are associated with contextual experiences linked with broad and frequently exacerbating experiences (i.e., for
some) as described. Without that admonishment, differences in outcomes accrued both within and between groups are naïvely characterized.

Thorough and Nuanced Integration of Context
Context considerations require careful integration when analyzing the experiences of racially and ethnically diverse youth. Moreover, this should occur not in superficial ways, but in a manner that incorporates all levels of contextual influence. For example, Van Oers (1998) notes that context is often defined improperly in empirical literatures. Often, context is used to refer merely to situational influence, ignoring information processing and meaning making, which translate situational influence into perception-linked interpretation and action. Van Oers argues for a more dynamic approach to the defining of context, one that takes into account these processes and is more accurately described in terms of action (i.e., "contextualizing") rather than static influence. Additionally, Dannefer (1992) describes four components of context: physical setting, social interactions, developing person, and time. Beyond these considerations, it is important to recognize how larger societal biases and historical influences filter through into everyday life and potentially permeate youths' daily experiences. Accordingly, beyond merely placing the experiences of young people in their immediate, situational contexts, there are conceptual benefits to placing these immediate situational settings in their larger social context and, thus, for considering the implications for youth.}

Focus on Resilience in Conjunction with Normative Human Development
There should be a focus not only on problem behavior, but also on resilience, the attainment of positive outcomes among high-risk youth who are confronted with significant, persistent, and frequently normative challenges. The notion of resilience, along with the challenges in studying it as a phenomenon, enjoys broad interest. It has been addressed in detail by Sueyi Luthar and Dante Cicchetti (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Luthar et al., 2000) and Margaret Beale Spencer (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Spencer, 2001; Spencer, Cole, Dupree, Glyph, & Pierce, 1993; Swanson & Spencer, 1991) and their colleagues. Spencer's early work frequently and specifically highlighted African American youth, although more recent research and application include ethnically diverse samples. We build on all of this work to raise several points.

In conjunction with a normative developmental perspective and an emphasis on multiple levels of context, researchers would benefit from analyzing risk and resilience in terms of process, rather than traits. This allows social scientists to consider and integrate perceptual processes that can be employed to help children overcome barriers and access available supports (Spencer, 2001). As youth develop and interact with siblings and peers, their perceptions and behaviors change with social and cognitive development. They move from having an egocentric to a more sociocentric view of their world as they develop into more social beings. This conceptually multifaceted approach that simultaneously considers and integrates multiple domains of human development in fact improves our understanding of the manner in which social, cognitive, and motivational development can affect children's perceptions of their immediate and larger worlds. Insights accrued also explain how these developments interact with significant others in different settings that vary as to levels of context and, consequently, their implications for risk, resilience, and vulnerability. Researchers should recognize the developmental plasticity inherent in these phenomena, so as not to assume that particular risks will lead to negative outcomes and that youth cannot employ active strategies to avoid or minimize their exposure to risk. We hope that such thinking is inherently narrow and deterministic and implies that environmental factors are intrinsically, unable to be altered by human effort.

The use of certain terminology further suggests a focus on macrosystem influence over individual-level agencies. In fact, there have been recommendations for researchers to revise their use of terminology, using the term resilience rather than resiliency to refer to positive adjustment within challenging contexts, rather than a personal attribute (Masten, 1994). Such a change reflects a move to embrace the transactional nature of resilience. A criticism of using the term resiliency is that it can be associated with a personality trait, and therefore suggests that children are born with (or without) the skills necessary to overcome challenges (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). It therefore implies that children do not engage in transactions with different elements of their environments and have no independent ability to influence their contextual surroundings to decrease or increase the amount of risk and protection around them. With this in mind, risk and resilience involve dynamic processes, not predetermined traits, and they emerge as a result of constant interactions between children and factors in their environments (Luthar et al., in press; Masten, 1994).
The same argument can be applied to the use of "at risk"; the term has historically been applied to youth who are disproportionately exposed to risk factors at various levels of proximity. Even though children living amidst numerous challenges may coexist with high amounts of environmental stress, they may simultaneously benefit from having availability and access to numerous supports in their immediate contexts; their availability and accessibility may offset the negative effects of risk and increase children’s abilities to exhibit resilience. When the words "at risk" are used to describe youth themselves rather than the high-risk environments in which they live, this suggests, at best, that these children have little autonomy in overcoming challenges and avoiding negative outcomes. Even worse, the association of "at risk" with youth of color has contributed to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes assigned to them, which in turn has led to negative assumptions about their abilities to exhibit success under adverse conditions.

**Authentic and Dynamic Consideration of Cultural Influences**

Our view is that culture should be understood as a dynamic system and way of living, not as a static entity. Traditionally, culture has been defined as a "complex whole" (e.g., Tylor, 1871/1958, p. 1) or a set of routine practices within a particular socially and historically located group (Cole, 1996). Classical ideas of culture have also been critiqued and expanded on. In analyzing the notion of culture, Gilbert (1989) notes that psychological constructs are often unequipped for describing dynamic processes. In the modern world, rapid social change has become characteristic of all domains in society; thus, the construct of culture is difficult to define. Gilbert proposes a definition as a set of control mechanisms, with individuals acting as self-referent agents responding to cultural forces and social change. Segall (1984) has criticized efforts to create a universal definition of culture. He contends that the focus should be on identification of salient ecological, sociological, and cultural variables that influence human behavior. According to Segall, the identification of these variables, rather than a strict, universally applicable definition of culture, is central to theoretical advances in cross-cultural psychology.

Building on these ideas, we propose the analysis of cultural influences in a process-oriented manner—to focus on cultural socialization and the learning of these practices, along with their meaning to the individual (Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003). As noted by Ingold (1994, p. 330), “People live culturally rather than . . . live in cultures.” Conceptualizing and understanding cultural influences in this way can help mitigate the pitfalls of cultural determinism and inherently emphasizes the changing nature of cultural practices, at both individual and group levels.

Related to these issues, both etic (general to all cultural groups) and emic (specific to a particular cultural group) perspectives on socialization and human development are important (Garcia Coll, Akerman, & Cicchetti, 2000). One of our major points has been the importance of normative developmental processes and experiences (as understood by the outside observer) as common to all youth. Additionally, we recognize that the meaning attributed to these experiences (and thus the subjective developmental phenomena from the individual’s perspective) may vary according to social, historical, and cultural context and be influenced by more proximal factors.

**Nuanced Consideration of Race and Ethnicity**

Researchers and practitioners should acknowledge the complexity of race and ethnicity and view these phenomena from multiple perspectives: in terms of cultural differences, structural racism, and normative developmental processes such as racial identity formation. Each of these areas is derived from a different disciplinary source—cultural differences from anthropology, structural racism from sociology, and racial identity formation from psychology—and they are seldom integrated into a single body of scholarship. Nevertheless, to properly understand the normative development of racially and ethnically diverse youth, an integrative approach indicative of a multidisciplinary human development perspective combining these areas is essential.

With regard to race, our perspective emphasizes the individual’s everyday experiences and perceptions; thus, we focus on how (the salience of) race is lived on a daily basis and how individuals, including developing youth, make meaning of these experiences. Experiences of race are filtered through larger societal influences, such as manifest trends of structural racism (the Bonilla-Silva, 1997), as illustrated by residential and economic segregation, and by encounters of negative stereotypes in the media and in everyday life. It is also necessary to clarify the application of items such as "race" and "ethnicity," which are often used interchangeably. Generally, the former refers to perceptions of observable phenotype, and the latter refers to cultural background. At times, it is useful for researchers to
focus on ethnicity; for example, the culturally specific family experiences of African Americans and African immigrants may differ. However, of salience is that given the more difficult task of discerning facts of culture, youth from both groups may experience similar racial stereotyping and treatment based on the common denominator of color and identifiability (see Spencer, in press). Depending on the particular circumstances, it may be more useful to focus on one or the other. It is also important to note that many youth and adults perceive their racial and ethnic backgrounds as interchangeable, if not identical, and these are often intrinsically linked in identity formation. Thus, at times, it may be useful to consider race and ethnicity together, and it is always important to understand how the two interact in shaping the everyday experiences of racially and ethnically diverse youth (for an overview, see Fisher, Jackson, & Villarruel, 1998, pp. 1157–1166; Spencer, in press). Additionally, it is worth explicitly stating that "racially and ethnically diverse" includes White; if it did not, this would only contribute to the normalization of Whiteness. White youth, like all others, must be studied as one of many diverse groups. Although youth of color are disproportionately represented among the low-economic-resource populations, many White youth are also in this group. The socioeconomic stresses faced by all of these youth may be similar, although low-income Whites typically are not residentially segregated and have greater access to financial resources (through family connections, etc.) than people of color (Conley, 1999; M.L. Sullivan, 1989). Additionally, White youth and youth of color face the same basic developmental challenges; the primary difference between the two is that White youth are considered to be the norm and reap all of the privileges of this status, ranging from greater cultural consciousness experienced across school, family, and neighborhood settings to "racial invisibility" (i.e., minimal race-based stereotyping) in everyday encounters. Nonetheless, because the challenges faced by all racially and ethnically diverse youth, generally, and youth of color, more specifically, overlap to an extent, we are nuanced in our use of terminology. We refer differentially to youth of color (designating all non-White youth), low-economic-resource youth (designating those of all racial/ethnic backgrounds whose families meet particular socioeconomic criteria such as federal poverty guidelines), marginalized youth (youth from both of the aforementioned categories and others, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, who are accorded lower status on the basis of identity), and all racially and ethnically diverse youth, depending on the specific developmental issues and challenges being discussed. At times, we also refer to specific racial/ethnic groups, particularly African Americans, to illustrate challenges.

As a function of their net vulnerability and stress levels experienced, the specific and patterned strategies that youth of color employ to cope with life experiences afford the basis for the formation of identity, including racial/ethnic identity. As noted, this process occurs both in the larger social context of American society and in the more local contexts of family, school, and neighborhood that youth encounter. Our major point here is that the processes of coping and identity formation are developmentally contingent; they depend on youths' prior experiences and previous coping responses and identities. There is also a need to examine gender identity in intersection with race. Studies of gender identity often yield significant racial and ethnic differences; for example, Parker et al. (1995) note that Black and White adolescent girls think about body image ideals in very different ways. Confounding factors create complex interactions between race/ethnicity and gender.

Phenomenological Perspective on Identity and Self

It is also critical to employ a process-oriented phenomenological perspective in research on youth—to understand how youth understand their own worlds. Studies that have overlooked the importance of youth phenomenology have resulted in misinterpretation, as perceptual processes are essential to a full understanding of behavioral outcomes. For example, the interpreters of the program of research by Clark and Clark (1939, 1940) erroneously assumed that children of color needed to respond as Caucasian children did in order to be considered "healthy" and "normal"; thus, scholars and policymakers misinterpreted the self-esteem of African American youth (see Spencer, 1982b, 1984). Such misinterpretation results largely from comparing outcomes among youth of color to Eurocentric expectations. It is important not only to appreciate how youth of color contend with unique risk factors, but also to acknowledge normative developmental responses to these conditions. This can be accomplished only through a phenomenological viewpoint.

As suggested by Bandura's (1978) theorizing, self-system development is reciprocally determined from self-foster appraisal processes (Spencer & Dupree, 1998). Self-appraisal processes integrate various aspects of one's life that promote identity formation; these represent social, cognitive, and affective dimensions. As perceptions
of the self are gained through interaction with the environment, ethnic and racial identity constitutes integral aspects of youth development. Cultural values afford the information necessary to interpret and proactively respond to environmental experiences and stereotypic messages concerning minority status. Developing a sense of efficacy is crucial during adolescence due to youths' heightened self-consciousness and greater cognitive awareness; however, this self-efficacy is partially determined by the opportunities, limitations, and expectations that society imposes on youth. Successful performance on a particular task increases a sense of personal empowerment (i.e., competence) and the likelihood of future successes in subsequent tasks.

**Comprehensive, Developmentally and Contextually Sensitive Theory**

The final corrective we propose is a contextually and developmentally sensitive theory that integrates all of these issues. We employ Spencer’s (1995) FVEST as an overarching framework to accomplish this end. FVEST builds on multiple theoretical traditions in developmental psychology (e.g., Bowlby, 1980; Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and other disciplines (e.g., Chess, 1972), including subfields of psychology (e.g., Steele, 1997); all address one or more of the issues noted earlier. As a dynamic and systemic framework, FVEST serves as a tool for examining resilience and vulnerability in conjunction with normative human development, focusing on identity formation while taking into account structural factors, cultural influences, and individual phenomenological experiences and perceptions of these contextualized features. In the next section, we present FVEST as the integration of several developmental traditions, including Erikson's and Marcia's theories of identity formation and symbolic interactionism and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

**BUILDING TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGICAL VARIANT OF ECOSYSTEMS THEORY**

Spencer’s (1995) FVEST builds on a long tradition of theory in the realm of normative human development. The broad scope of this work spans several disciplines, covering ideas about individual developmental processes such as identity formation theories and racial identity theories, traditions such as symbolic interactionism that emphasize the self in relation to society, particular concerns of applied youth development such as resilience theorizing, and developmentally sensitive schools of thought such as the ecological psychology school. Each of these traditions highlights particular salient issues in normative human development. We review the major trends that influenced the model (Spencer, Harpalani, Poggey, Dell‘Angelo, & Seaton, 2003) as a strategy to better understand these issues and to gain a more sensitive grasp on FVEST.

**Theoretical Underpinnings of Identity Formation Processes**

In considering resilience and vulnerability, it is critical to understand the developmental underpinnings of identity and self. In fact, we conceptualize resilience essentially as an identity achievement-oriented sense of self attained by the individual to overcome obstacles (risks) by drawing on available resources (protective factors). This process can be best understood within a theoretical framework that seeks to explain how youth effectively meet the demands of developmental tasks in infancy, childhood, and adolescence. Moreover, a child's ability to successfully navigate various life stages emerges in the context of social relationships embedded within the child's unique societal and cultural environment. Knowledge of self, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of how to regulate self in relation to other develop in these contexts. Once we build an understanding of identity and self processes from a normative human development perspective, we can apply this understanding to various contexts of differing levels of vulnerability, thus building toward a normative developmental view of resilience.

Identity in psychological theorizing is viewed as the core character of an individual that provides psychological stability across time and space. More recently, the concept of identity has been expanded to include a wide variety of domains of self, for example, there are growing literatures on racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and national identity. We cover some of these later in conjunction with our discussion of race and ethnicity. Here, we draw on the classical theoretical frameworks of Erikson and Marcia and limit our discussion to what is commonly referred to as "ego identity."

One of Erikson's (1968) primary contributions was to define stage-specific concepts of development more explicitly. Prior to Erikson, stages of human development between life and death were not clearly formulated or articulated; the individual merely progressed from "baby to..."
adult. Of course, there were limited exceptions, for example, Piaget's (1952, 1970) work on cognitive development, but often these involved a limited domain (e.g., cognitive reasoning) or limited stages (e.g., childhood). Stages of life course human development, along with the transitions between them, had not been discussed widely (Zellner, 1994). In his epigenetic model, Erikson (1968) proposed that development occurred in stages across the life course in a fixed order: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. He identified eight stage-specific developmental tasks across the life course: trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame, industry versus inferiority, identity versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair, and initiative versus guilt. The eight stages represent developmental challenges that must be negotiated and renegotiated throughout the life course.

Erikson's (1959, 1968) model highlights the centrality of identity in human development. In his theorizing, a large component of identity formation occurs during youth and particularly during the period of adolescence—the time marked by the active search for identity. Here, youth must grapple with the challenge, or "crisis," of increased independence, sexual maturation, greater cognitive ability, pleasure to conform to social norms, and heightened awareness of others' perceptions of them. Youth rely less on parents for guidance about self and peer groups begin to play an increasingly important role in this regard. The search for identity is further complicated by the onset of secondary sex characteristics and desires for intimate relationships, all of which play a role in self-definition, particularly with regard to gender identity. In technological, industrialized societies, there are numerous options for managing these newfound capacities and resultant traits of self. The manner in which youth tend to adapt to these circumstances across time and space defines their identity.

Erikson (1968) is also well-known for his concept of identity crisis. Crisis refers to a period of emotional and mental stress that can lead to significant alterations in worldview in a limited time. For example, a crisis may lead to changes in group or peer associations, political beliefs, or engagement in risk-taking behaviors. On the surface, crisis may appear to have a negative connotation, but this is not necessarily the case. Erikson's notion of crisis as a state of internalized tension is also an opportunity to cope and grow. When youth are presented with challenges, they have an opportunity to respond to these challenges and to learn from the process—essentially, to display resilience. This is a part of normative human development.

Marcia builds on Erikson's work by elaborating on identity formation and creating a typology for identity development. Like Erikson, Marcia describes adolescence as the time for active engagement in the search for identity, and building on Erikson's notion of crisis, Marcia (1966, 1980) delineates the process of identity development in terms of four different identity statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. During the first stage, diffusion, youth have not encountered significant crisis. The individual is not committed strongly to any particular way of being or perspective on life. Foreclosure assumes an early commitment to a conventional standard of behavior. Foreclosed youth do not actively explore different possibilities for identity formation; they tend to follow the traditionally socialized standards of behavior and resultant trajectories. Contrary, moratorium, if it occurs, can be a time of exploration, when alternative possibilities are explored. Subsequent to moratorium is identity achievement. When the individual has encountered crises and emerged from them with a stronger sense of self or, in Marcia's terminology, "high identity commitment." This is also tantamount to demonstrated resilience. Of course, identity achievement is not universal or final; individuals continue to encounter new crises and move through the life course—particularly in domains that are not foreclosed or achieved—and thus, given domain-specific challenges encountered, must demonstrate continued resilience in this regard.

Both Erikson's work and Marcia's expansion contribute to and lay the foundation for our general conceptualization of identity development. To examine issues of vulnerability for racially and ethnically diverse youth, it is useful to apply these concepts more specifically in the domains of race and ethnicity and consider racial and ethnic identity theories.

Theories of Racial and Ethnic Identity

Theories of racial and ethnic identity draw on Eriksonian and Marcian theorizing and apply their concepts of identity formation to racial and ethnic awareness. Racial identity development refers to the "process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning of belonging to a particular racial group" (Tatum, 1997, p. 16). William E. Cross is one of the pioneers in the study of racial identity. Cross's original framework model (Cross, 1971; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991) delineates four stages of racial identity formation for African Americans. During the preencounter status, Black individuals view the world from a White, eurocentric frame of reference, consciously or unconsciously holding pro-White and anti-
Black attitudes. The second status, the encounter phase, involves an event or series of events that cause individuals to recognize that they cannot fully assimilate into White society. These may be tangible experiences of racism, crises in an Eriksonian sense, which facilitate exploration of racial identity. The third phase, immersion-emersion, is a consequent reaction to the encounter phase. Here, individuals become more interested in their Black identity and show increased awareness of racism and sensitivity to it. This phase may be characterized by anti-White attitudes. Individuals will also show a superficial immersion in realms associated with Black cultural attributes (e.g., music, speech, styles). Internalization occurs as individuals become secure with their Black racial identities and move toward a more pluralistic perspective. African Americans then represent the primary reference group, but individuals' attitudes are not anti-White. In contrast to the superficial displays of the immersion-emersion stage, individuals in the internalization stage have more stable, deeply rooted conceptions of attributes of their Black heritage, and they may also have the ability to connect comfortably with aspects of White society; for example, they may have diverse groups of close friends. Consistent with this train of thought, Edgar Epps's (1985) analysis would suggest youth's adoption of a cultural pluralistic perspective: the recognition and valuing of one's own group membership and cultural traditions along with an appreciation of ways of life associated with other groups.

Cross (1991) has modified the acculturation framework as a more dynamic and flexible model of racial identity development. Individuals may recycle through the different stages at various developmental periods, and depending on parental racial socialization, they may not start in the preencounter stage. Thus, the stages should not always be viewed as a literal progression. Cross also added a fifth stage to the original four; this stage, known as internalization-commitment, represents a more consistent internalization phase. He has also described different types of internalization, some of which include bicultural identities (W. E. Cross, personal communication, November 20, 2000).

We would add that the preencounter stage should be further qualified when considered for young children. That is, given cognitive egocentrism manifest in the first 6 or 7 years of life, children's reported outgroup identifications represent a statement of their cultural early exposure and experience with particular cultural stereotypes rather than a conscious identification with or preference for Whiteness (Spencer, 1982a, 1983; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). In other words, when considered from a developmentally sensitive perspective, young children's stated and early identifications have more to do with what they are exposed to (e.g., unchallenged portrayals of racial stereotypes) that an internalized identification or an identity construing a valuing of Whites and devaluing of Blacks. Unfortunately, for the most part, the absence of development-sensitive analyses continues to plague much of the racial identity literature.

Of course, White racial identity must also be studied to understand how race and ethnicity operate in development. Whiteness is usually not articulated, serving as the implicit norm, but scholars have begun to explore White racial identity. Most notable in this area is the work of Janet Helms (1990). Helms's model of White racial identity development consists of six stages, organized in two developmental phases. The first phase, abandonment of racism, consists of three stages. The second phase, involves acceptance of the dominant status of White people, although not explicit awareness of this dominance or the subordinate status of people of color. Disintegration occurs as White individuals become aware of their dominant status in society and go through a period of dissonance. Reintegration, the person acknowledges his or her Whiteness and holds the view that he or she deserves the privileges accorded by this status. The second phase of Helms's model is called defining a nonracist White identity. This initiates with the pseudo-independent stage, individuals begin to question the dominant status of White Americans and may become overly involved with trying to help or change people of color. In the immersion-emersion stage, individuals begin to focus on changing White people rather than African Americans. With the final stage, autonomy, individuals achieve a positive racial identity and also appreciate and seek opportunities to learn from other groups. Other theorists have built on this work and also examined ethnic identity. For example, Jean Phinney (1992) drew on Cross's (1971, 1991) racial identity theory and Marcia's (1966) work on identity statuses to devise the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, a psychological assessment instrument that can be used across diverse groups. However, even if researchers acknowledge the significance of racial and ethnic identity, conceptual challenges remain. As noted earlier, academics may define race and ethnicity differently and precisely, but these constructs are inextricably linked in people's own meaning-making systems. It is important to be clear about the particular definition of race/ethnicity (or combination of the two) in use, and, of course, this depends on the context and issues that are being examined. For example, Chinese
Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and South Asian Americans may all be classified as Asian American even though there is significant within- and between-group variation in these categories. Their different histories and locations in American society are important to consider in the realm of ethnic identity development. However, at the same time, it is important to note that different groups such as Chinese, Vietnamese, and South Asian Americans may have similar socialized experiences; they may be identified by others as one racial group and thus stereotyped and stigmatized in a similar manner (i.e., the "model minority" myth; see Takaki, 1998). Thus, there may also be a dimension of similarity in their experiences, and depending on the issue and context of investigation, it may be more useful to emphasize the similarity of the difference of various experiences.

In that vein, identity and self should be placed in context to help distinguish salient developmental issues in particular situations. To build toward a PCVST, we must also consider the notion of self in relation to society, as the understanding of self processes is central to our developmental framework.

Self in Society

Identity and self not only develop within larger social contexts; they are also impacted by these contexts. William James (1892/1963) was a pioneer in describing the relational nature of the self. According to James, the self comprises two components: the "I" and the "Me." The "I" includes the self-as-knew, the active observer, the subjective self, the observing ego, and the private self. "I" organizes and interprets the self's experiences and reflects on the "Me." Additionally, "I" is commonly alluded to as the self-conscious, self-reflective element of self.

In contrast, the "Me" is described as the self-as-known, the observed self, the objective self, the empirical self, or the public self. "Me" is the collection of perceptions regarding the self; these include tangible, material aspects of self (body, possessions, family), the social self (others' views of the self, relations, roles, personality), and the spiritual self (inert psychological workings, including thoughts, wishes, desires). "Me" is commonly referred to as the self-concept component of self.

James's (1892/1963) theory has significant implications for identity development. His work emphasized the reciprocal quality of the self, and with the advent of cognitive maturation, adolescents become increasingly aware of the duality of self (Browne, 1981; Rosenberg, 1979). At this developmental period, youth begin to distinguish between their own public and private selves, a phenomenon that is central to the identity crisis and exploration associated with adolescence (Erikson, 1956; Marcia, 1966, 1980). As children's social networks also expand at this age, they begin to see themselves in multiple roles, some of which demand very different ways of presenting oneself. Thus, cognitive dissonance is compounded. The central task of adolescence is the quest to integrate the various selves and achieve equilibrium with a stable sense of self (Hart, 1988). Failure to accomplish this can lead to fragmentation and to the impression that one's self is merely an empty shell or façade, malleable to suit every person and situation. This can be problematic in various domains, as future developmental tasks ranging from goal-setting and accomplishment to the development of healthy, stable social relationships all require youth to have a strong sense of who they are.

All of these are normative developmental tasks that all youth must negotiate. But it is important to consider how these issues are compounded for youth of color. Cultural dissonance across school, family, and peer contexts can make the integration of self more difficult. Moreover, racial stereotypes also impact self-concept and may create dissonance about goals and provide opportunities for exploration. These issues will be explored in greater detail in later sections of the chapter.

The symbolic interactionists, including Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, made significant contributions to understanding the social nature of the self. Cooley (1902; Scheibe, 1985) is best known for his metaphor of the "looking-glass self." According to Cooley, children participate in interpersonal networks, which yield perceptions of reflected appraisals from others. Through this participation and self-appraisal, they develop their own sense of self. It is not others' attitudes that are critical in the formation of self, but rather the individual's perception of others' attitudes (i.e., an individual's personal phenomenology; Rosenberg, 1979). Mead (1934; Scheibe, 1985; Taylor, 1997) elaborated on Cooley's notion of the looking-glass self. According to Mead, self-aware people see themselves through the eyes of others; consequently, they may act in ways to gain others' approval. Contingent on the situation at hand, individuals may respond to others with varying presentations of self (Goffman, 1959). These presentations of self can elicit varying reactions, all of which have an impact on self-concept and identity formation. For youth of color, these issues are manifested in various ways, from the phenomenon of code switching and "double consciousness" (Du Bois, 1903) to the misinterpretations of Fordham and
Ecological System Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) ecological systems theory provides an ideal framework to characterize levels of environmental influence that impact human development. These levels of influence are cast in terms of dynamic, interactive systems of person-environment relationships. Ecological systems theory is organized hierarchically, as interactive systems of increasing complexity are nested within the framework of human development. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1993) starts by transforming Lewin's (1935) formulation that behavior is a function of person and environment, he substitutes development for behavior, stating that development is also a function of person and environment over time. The developmental function is temporally contingent, as each successive developmental period is dependent on all previous stages of development.

Several types of theoretical models characterize research in developmental psychology. According to Bronfenbrenner (1993), theoretical constructs in developmental psychology have usually focused only on characteristics of the individual, ignoring context. Developmental characteristics of individuals make an reference to the environments where they occur; examples of such constructs include standardized psychological measures such as personality and IQ tests. Bronfenbrenner (1989) refers to this type of analysis as the personal attributes model; it focuses narrowly on the individual, with the assumption that researchers can generalize conclusions derived from standardized measures, regardless of context. Bronfenbrenner (1993) questions these assumptions of environmental generalizability; he does note the utility of standardized tests but argues that research must simultaneously incorporate context-oriented measures.

The most common approach in developmental psycholology, according to Bronfenbrenner (1989), is the social address model. In contrast to the personal attributes model, the social address model examines only general environmental factors, such as social class, family size, and other demographic variables. It tends to neglect specific environmental characteristics, along with activities that occur in particular environments, and the impact of these activities on individuals. (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1983). Essentially, the social address model employs the simplistic view of context critiqued by Vau Oens (1998), which we noted earlier.

The person-context model examines both the individual and the context but neglects the processes involved in development. For example, this might include studies of personality or attitudes that control for specific environmental characteristics, such as parent-child interactions, without specifying how those characteristics are related to the outcomes at hand. This person-context model is able to specify ecological niches (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), but it does not delineate the processes by which developmental outcomes are attained. A process-oriented approach is necessary for understanding resilience and vulnerability, which, as noted earlier, should be conceptualized in terms of priorities rather than traits.

Conversely, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989, 1993) ecological systems theory is a process-person-context model; it underscores the variability within developmental processes as a function of person and environment. Ecological systems theory (Figure 16.1) is organized with four hierarchically nested levels of environmental influence that mediate person-environment interactions: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The first level of Bronfenbrenner's model, the microsystem, involves the interaction of the person with the immediate social and physical environment; examples include home, family, and school settings. All higher levels of environmental influence are filtered through one or more microsystems, the exchange of which is controlled by the individual's actual experiences occur. Proximal processes are the patterns of person-environment interactions that occur within microsystems, and these change through the development of the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1993). Elsewhere, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) discuss how proximal processes mediate the inheritability of traits by allowing individuals to actualize their potentials.
The mesosystem is the second level in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1989, 1993) ecological systems theory; it describes interactions between the various microsystems in the individual’s life. Mesosystems essentially constitute networks of interpersonal relationships that span the various settings. The third level, the exosystem, entails more distal influences, such as the structure of the community where the individual resides and settings where the individual is not directly present. For example, interactions at a parent’s work setting would constitute exosystemic influences; these do not directly involve the child but may impact his or her development.

The final level, the macrosystem, consists of larger societal institutions, such as government, economy, and the media. Not the broad social and historical context for development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989, 1993). The impact of macrosystem-level influences may or may not be readily apparent in the lives of individuals, but it is always present in salient ways. The overarching patterns of social practices and relationships found through micro-, meso-, and exosystems often result from macrosystemic factors. Typically, sociologists, political scientists, and economists, rather than developmental psychologists, have studied macrosystems. Nevertheless, developmentalists must also be attuned to the

![Diagram of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory](image)

**Figure 16.1** Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. Sources: From The Ecology of Human Development: Experi-
ments by Nature and Design, by U. Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Cam-
volution in Context: Acting and Thinking in Specific Environ-

The PVEST serves as a model to examine normative human development framed through the interaction of identity, culture, and experience as linked with progressively difer-
tegated developmental processes. PVEST utilizes an identity-focused cultural-ecological perspective, integrating issues of social, historical, and cultural context with norma-
tive developmental processes. The model aims to capture

**PHENOMENOLOGICAL VARIANT OF ECOCLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY: AN IDENTITY-FOCUSED, CULTURAL-ECOCLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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the individual's intersubjectivity and meaning-making processes in light of tangible experiences, which are determined by the proximal and distal contexts of development. PVEST centers on describing individual identity formation unfolding over time. Although both ecological systems theory and PVEST, its phenomenological variant, account for identity formation and context, we believe our focus on direct experience, not information, contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of human development. As noted by Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), and Sullivan (1953), the self is mediated by interpersonal relationships, influenced by the phenomenological experience of multilayered, contextual influences and relationships (Spencer et al., 1997). It is the combination of experiencing micro- and macrocontextual influences, normative development, personal processes, salient interpersonal relationships, and the cognition-based perceptions and phenomenological experiences that delineate identity forming and eventually yield resilient or adverse outcomes. Determining how we view and comprehend family, peer, and societal expectations, as well as their prospects for competence and success, is central to understanding resilience and devising interventions that promote it (Spencer, Harpalani, Fegeley, Dell'Angelo, & Seaton, 2003). Moreover, for youth of color, it is important to understand how broader societal inequities and biases influence these processes.

Considered from this nonstatistic perspective, PVEST is a systems theory consisting of five basic components linked with bidirectional processes that form a dynamic developmental framework (see Figure 16.2); it is a cyclic, recursive

![Diagram](image.png)

model that describes identity development throughout the life course. Our approach affords a better understanding concerning not just the "what" but, more important, the "how" of development (see Spence & Harpalani, 2004).

The first component of PVEST, net vulnerability, level 1, consists of the contextual and personal characteristics that may potentially pose challenges during an individual's development. Risk contributors are factors that may predispose individuals for adverse outcomes. These may be offset by protective factors, thus defining net vulnerability for a given individual. For marginalized youth, such as youth of color and young people from low-resource families, these include socioeconomic conditions such as living in poverty, imposed expectations such as race and gender stereotypes, and the influences of larger historical processes such as racial subordination and discrimination. Perceptions of the risks one faces and the protective resources available are central to the process of identity formation. Self-appraisal involves constant close scrutiny and evaluation of these risks and resources; the process is particularly salient for identity formation during adolescence, when cognitive and emotional maturation lead to heightened awareness of self and context.

Net stress engagement (2), the second component of PVEST, refers to the actual experience of situations that challenge an individual's well-being. Available social supports can help youth negotiate experiences of stress; thus, supports are actualized protective factors. Whereas risks and protective factors denote potential entities in the environment, stress and support refer to actual manifestations of these entities—experiences in context, as it were. In this way, PVEST forge a link between context and experience. For youth of color, experiences of racism, both subtle and overt, and related dissonance are salient and often chronic stresses; these compound the normative developmental issues encountered by all youth (e.g., puberty, identity exploration, peer relationships). As noted, cognitive maturation results in unavoidable awareness of dissonance, and in adolescence, acute reactions to these experiences are coped with normative rebellious behavior; thus, this is a period when stress is escalating. Adult role models and other resources in school, family, and community settings can serve as social supports and help youth cope with these experiences.

It is important to note that although stress engagement poses challenges, the construct of stress in PVEST is not entirely negative. It is derived from, and in many ways similar to, Erikson's view of crisis. As we discuss later, stress not only poses challenges but also provides opportunities to develop and hone coping skills.

In response to stressors and in conjunction with supports, reactive coping methods (3) are employed to resolve dissonance-producing situations. Reactive coping responses include problem-solving strategies that can lead to either adaptive or maladaptive solutions. Interpreting experiences and determining how to respond to them involves the development of patterns of coping, which are both immediate and long term. All youth must learn to cope with different sources of stress as part of normative human development; but noted, these issues are compounded for marginalized groups. Additionally, it is important to recognize that a given coping strategy may be adaptive in one context (such as school) and maladaptive in another (e.g., neighborhood; H. C. Stevenson, 1997). Moreover, such dissonance accrued and linked to the deployment of coping strategies is more likely to occur for youth of color (Phe lan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991).

Over time, coping processes shape an individual's sense of identity. As youth employ various coping strategies, self-appraisal continues, and individuals replicate those strategies that produce desirable results for the ego. These become stable coping responses that, coupled together, yield emergent identities (4). Emergent identities define how individuals view themselves within and between various contexts of development (e.g., family, school, and neighborhood). The combination of cultural/ethnic identity, sex role understanding, and self- and peer appraisal all produce one's identity at any given time; these domains and the interactions between them are constantly changing, evolving, and thus defining the process of identity formation.

Identity processes afford behavioral stability over time and space; as such, they provide the foundation for future perception, self-appraisal, and behavior. This leads to either adverse or productive life-stage-speciﬁc coping outcomes (5), the final component of PVEST. Productive outcomes include good health, educational attainment, positive relationships with others, and high self-esteem; on the other hand, adverse outcomes include poor health, incarceration, and self-destructive behavior. Resilience is the attainment of productive outcomes in spite of adverse conditions (i.e., disproportionate to expectations risk level experienced as significant challenge).

PVEST is a cyclic framework that represents dynamic developmental processes that continue throughout the life span and aids in explaining the "how" of developmental processes. It aids in explaining the frequent diversity obtained for specific life-stage coping outcomes by demonstrating the underlying mechanisms by which individuals (1) balance new risks against protective factors;
Vulnerability among Racially and Ethnically Diverse Youth: A General Overview

(2) encounter new stressors (i.e., changes potentially offset by supports); (3) establish new coping strategies (i.e., manifested reactively "in the moment" as either adaptive or maladaptive response efforts); and (4) redefine how they view themselves, which also impacts how others view them. PVEST provides a normative human development framework to examine the range of outcomes, including resilience, for all youth. It highlights the importance of development in context, with identity formation at the core. Moreover, it is important to recognize that the five components of PVEST are merely stepping points for analysis; it is the processes that link these components that actually constitute normative human development. PVEST allows us to conceptualize how the normative processes of development are exacerbated for marginalized youth, and how resilience and vulnerability are manifested as part of the context-linked processes of normal human development. Although recent scholarship has thoroughly reviewed literature on youth of color (e.g., Fisher et al., 1998) and provided contextually sensitive models to examine developmental competencies among these youth (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996), it is the direct, process-oriented delineation of developmental trajectories throughout the life span that makes PVEST unique.

VULNERABILITY AMONG RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY INVERSE YOUTH: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Having presented PVEST as a comprehensive, dynamic, normative developmental framework, we now apply this framework to examine vulnerability and resilience among racially and ethnically diverse youth. Although much of our focus here is on the first components of PVEST, net vulnerability level, we consider all five components, along with the developmental processes that link them.

The broad, contextual factors that exacerbate normative developmental challenges for youth of color are vast and numerous; many books have been writing about each of these issues. We focus on some illustrative examples highlighting various groups. First, we briefly cover structural and ideological manifestations of racism and then explore one of these, skin color bias and attitudes, in more detail. We then turn our attention to the context of immigration in the United States and explore issues such as cultural dissonance and dual identification that render the task of identity formation more difficult for immigrant youth. These topics are covered as representative of normative understandings confronted by youth of color, but they are by no means a complete account of these challenges.

Structural and Ideological Legacies of American Racism

Race and racism have been perhaps the most charged political issues in U.S. history. Various historical and political forces brought about the current racial/ethnic composition and demographic trajectory of the United States, and these forces serve as the broader social and historical context for the everyday experiences of all Americans. Traditional definitions of racism view it simply as discrimination based on race; these neglect the innumerable ways the phenomenon of racism affects lives. Racism is omnipresent, though often subtle; it is channeled through multiple levels of context, as described by Bronfenbrenner (1979). It is inclusive not only of discriminatory behavior, but also of structural power relationships, political ideologies, and institutionalized practices, all of which can be normative, albeit unacknowledged, components of society. There are various and subtle ways racism impacts lives, not only by disadvantaging people of color but also by privileging white people.

Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation perspective is among the most widely cited sociological theories of racism, and it presents an ideal framework to describe the formation of racial ideologies, which are also expressed in everyday life through stereotypes, assumptions, and other forms of tangible bias. Omi and Winant define racial formation, as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55). Racial formation focuses on the process of racialization and recognizes the multiple levels at which racism occurs, with microlevel structural manifestations transcending into individual everyday experiences at the microlevel. "Racial projects," according to Omi and Winant, are historically situated interpretations and explanations of the racial relationships in a society; these serve to reallocate resources across racial groups and can serve as explanations/justifications for inequities. Other perspectives, such as that of Bonilla-Silva (2001), have built on Omi and Winant's work and emphasized structural and ideological dimensions of racism.

Structural Racism and Economic Inequities

Structural factors center on the social relationships inherent in racial inequality. For example, poverty is a major structural barrier to success for African American youth. Moreover,
the materialized secure of poverty goes beyond monetary in-
come; community resources and accumulated wealth also play a critical role. For example, Sapiro and Moresoff (1997) reported that in 1989, 85% of poor Black Americans lived in impoverished areas lacking in community resources; only about 30% of poor White Americans lived in such areas. More than 33% of poor African Americans resided in extremely impoverished neighborhoods, as compared to only 7% of poor White Americans. The impoverished com-
unities where poor African Americans often reside are characterized by different family structures, few economic opportunities, few recreational facilities, poor quality of
schooling, and lack of available role models.

Similarly, Cosley (1999) notes the critical distinction between income and wealth. Even when controlling for in-
come, White Americans tend to have much greater net
worth than Black Americans when measuring total assets. This disparity is due partly to differences in home owner-
ship, which have a historical basis in redlining and restric-
tive covenants, issues that are all the more salient because housing discrimination laws are so weakly enforced. In-
come has a large impact on many areas, including the abil-
ity of Black families to afford higher education. Thus, the history and ecology of poverty and wealth distribution re-
fect the legacy of structural racism inherent in American
society. In the context of these continuing structural barri-
ers, Black youth have limited access to resources and lim-
ited opportunities to visualize and comprehend success and
attainment. In the absence of resources, successful role
models, and social supports, experiences of dissonance and
normative developmental challenges can yield negative out-
comes such as academic underachievement.

Other sources of vulnerability and potential stress, re-
sulting from poverty and related ecological risks, exacerbate
normative developmental challenges when experienced by
many African American youth. Growing up in poverty has been related to higher teen pregnancy rates among Black youth (Mayer & Stacks, 1999). More than 50% of African
American children are born to unwed mothers, with poor
nutrition and medical care often characterizing the prenatal
period (Starlack & Norris, 1991). The noted eco-
nomic conditions are not independent of associated chal-
lenge that leave Black men unemployed or underemployed
(see M. J. Sullivan, 1989); accordingly, these men may be
viewed as less than optimal options for stable marital rela-
tionships. The consequences have implications for the char-
acter of the surroundings in which children's growth and
development take place. Adverse neighborhood conditions,
which are not independent of the economic circumstances
described, can lead to developmental deficiencies early in
life; for example, anemia, lead poisoning, and ear infections
often afflict urban African American and Latino preschool
children and, considered long term, have implications for
learning and mental health. Of particular importance, they
influence the possibility of either high vulnerability or res-
iliency. Although family and home characteristics vary substantially at all income levels, children growing up in
low-economic-resource families and highly impoverished
areas are more likely to experience stressors such as an un-
stable home life, parental neglect, and violence (Tivkli-
Williams & Carillo, 1995). Without proper supports, these
can lead to impaired cognitive and social development, with
consequences such as deficient language acquisition, social
withdrawal, and depression. It is the pattern of psychosocial
and health-related stressors coupled with low societal ex-
pectations that can lead to poor academic achievement and
high-risk behavior if proper supports are not provided. For
example, appropriately designed and supported interven-
tions can create more stable family structures, effective par-
taking skills, and conflict-resolution supports.

As indicated, it is also important to note that even in the
most adverse circumstances, many families already draw
on such resources, and consequently, children are able to
attain resilient outcomes in spite of the exacerbated chal-
lenge they confront (see Swanson, Spencer, DelliAngelo,
Harpalani, & Spencer, 2002). Vulnerability means that
risks are present, but actual experiences of stress can be
avoided if adequate protective factors are present or youth
can draw on resources to negotiate this stress effectively.

Vulnerability Related to Violence.

Violence is another source of vulnerability for urban youth, particularly in terms of victimization. Shkook and
Chalmers (1991) found that approximately 75% of African
American youth surveyed in Chicago schools had been "vic timitized," witnessing directly the perpetration of se-
tious violence (e.g., shooting, stabbing) against another per-
son. Victimization may lead to Posttraumatic Stress
Disorder, and such exposure to violence has also been
linked to the perpetration of violence (DuPaul, Cadman-
bold, & Pendergrass, 1994). Adolescent and young adult
Black males have disproportionately high rates of victim-
ization (Doniger, 1995). Moreover, Cunningham (1999)
found that Black males are keenly aware of danger, and that
cognitive appraisals of risk were significantly strong pre-
dicators of hyperarousal coping (i.e., beliefs that violence is
manly). May (2001) also found that Black males were sig-
nificantly more fearful of victimization than their White
counterparts and reported to carrying more lethal defensive

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weapon. H. C. Stevenson (1997) reports that many Black youth reside in high-risk neighborhoods where displays of anger may be necessary and represent adaptive coping mechanisms to avoid victimization; indeed, display of anger may be a form of competence for social and emotional viability in these contexts. Also, hypermasculine posturing necessary to avoid victimization may also mitigate school adjustment (Spencer, 1999) by means such as reinforcing negative teacher perceptions. Moreover, these kinds of phenomena must be understood in light of the salient, existing, negative stereotypes of Black males, which are already rooted in hypermasculine imagery (Ferguson, 2001).

In sum, violence poses a complex web of threats to resilience for Black males. First, violence and victimization are maladaptive, leading to obvious adverse outcomes. Second, African American males are often perceived by society to be especially hostile, and as a consequence, they are treated unjustly by law enforcement and social agencies. Whereas White youth with psychological adjustment problems are often referred to mental health (and often private) services, African Americans are usually placed in the criminal justice system for the same offenses (Spurlock & Norris, 1991). The differences in treatment options available or system type used (i.e., private vs. public), although generally not acknowledged, have implications for the accumulation of statistics in the public domain and their contributions to and reinforcement of negative imagery and stigma. Third, as H. C. Stevenson (1997) describes it, displays of aggression by some Black youth may be adaptive responses in high-risk neighborhoods, where anger displays may be necessary to mitigate victimization. The conundrum, of course, is that such displays, in conjunction with negative stereotypes of African American males, may be misunderstood in school settings, where they constitute maladaptive coping responses. Thus, distance across the various settings of development may compounding the issue, because violence functions as a complex, multifaceted source of vulnerability for African American youth (Spencer, Dupree, Cunningham, Harpalani, & Muncy-Miller, 2003; Spencer, Flagley, Sorensen, & Harpalani, in press).

Racial Stereotyping

A related and significant source of vulnerability for youth of color is racial stereotyping, in all of its manifestations. Awareness of racial stereotypes and group membership status plays a key role in identity formation, particularly in adolescence, as identity and appraisal by self and others become prominent developmental issues. In addition to the negative stereotyping noted earlier with regard to aggression and violence, racial stereotypes present a barrier to academic achievement and resilience for African American youth. Claude Steele's (1997, 2004; Steele & Aronion, 1995) work on stereotype threat highlights these issues. Stereotype threat is essentially the fear of confirming a negative stereotype in circumstances where that stereotype is prized and salient; Steele and colleagues have experimentally demonstrated how stereotypes can negatively impact the academic performance of Black college students. Although their work has emphasized the experiences of college students, we infer that the mechanisms are also relevant for adolescence. Moreover, the phenomenon of stereotype threat is most salient for high-achieving Black youth (i.e., those demonstrating resilience "to date"), who have a great desire and expectation to succeed.

Academic stereotypes can also be a source of vulnerability for Asian American youth, who are often monolithically viewed as high-achieving "model minority." This can create tremendous pressure to succeed and meet expectations. Even seemingly positive racial stereotypes can have a negative side; Asian American youth are often taint as "geeks" and "nerds," and they are viewed as passive and racially "nice." Asian American males are stereotyped as weak and unmasculine, and females are portrayed as submissive. These stereotypes, in conjunction with other factors, can render these youth particularly vulnerable to mental health and social adjustment problems.

Stereotypes can be coupled in ways that complicate their impact and thus require more measured and thoughtful attention. To illustrate, positive and negative stereotypes can be coupled together, as is the case with African American athletes (Harpalani, 2001; Stone, Petry, & Darby, 1997). Here, the idea of African Americans as outstanding athletes, a seemingly positive attribute, is linked to the notion that African Americans are less intelligent and inherently lower achievers, due to genetic (Rushton, 1995) or cultural (Robertsan, 1997) factors. With regard to academic racial stereotyping, another subtle facet of vulnerability is lenient feedback and generally low expectations communicated from teachers; again, this becomes a risk factor as normative human development progresses. Cognitive integration renders adolescents more sensitive and aware of implicitly communicated attitudes, beliefs, and explicitly conveyed feedback from elders and peers; additionally, they are more perceptive of false or deceptive success than younger children, who represent a less sophisticated level of social cognition. Hartrey (1998) illustrates this Black American college students in late adolescence and young adulthood may be so wary of praise from White Americans that receiving it may, in reality, depress their self-esteem. This is
another example of how a seemingly positive action can have negative consequences; intended support, in fact, may not be perceived in ways that are indeed supportive.

Given all of these factors, it is apparent that racial stereotyping is often more complex than stigmatization of mental illness and other deviant statuses. Corrigan and Fenz’s (1999) distinction between stereotyping (value-neutral cognitive categorization) and stigma (“negative” forms of stereotyping) may obscure salient issues in racial stereotyping. As illustrated, racial stereotypes that appear neutral or positive on the surface can reinforce other, negative stereotypes about respective groups. We’ve focused on minority youth; however, White adolescents have challenges that emanate from other issues and status concerns.

White Privilege

White privilege is a critical, although often ignored, element of any discussion of race and racism. Whiteness should not be normalized, and the history of White Americans as a racial group in the United States must be understood to explain the current privileges and challenges of White youth. The new field of Whiteness studies is particularly illuminating (e.g., Lipsitz, 1998), although the connections to normative human development have yet to be made in substantive ways. Nevertheless, Hasty-Lopez (1996) and Harris (1993) provide compelling legal and historical discussions regarding the centrality of White as a legal category to the very definition of U.S. citizenship. Although formally legalized racial barriers to citizenship have been eliminated, the legacy of White supremacy continues in many ways and filters through multiple levels of context to impact everyday life.

For example, in her widely cited article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh (1989, p. 10) defines White privilege as a “package of unearned assets which (Whites) can count on cashing in every day...an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions.” In this vein, White privilege basically encompasses the advantages that White people secure on the basis of skin color. In many instances, White Americans themselves are not generally aware of these advantages; the lack of consciousness itself may be due to the fact that advantages accrued represent incidents that do not take place, such as not being stopped unjustly by the police, not being followed in a store or suspected as a thief, not being represented in the news media primarily in negative ways (or ignored totally), and not being questioned about one’s national loyalty, an even more salient issue in the post-September 11, 2001, era. Because these are incidents that Caucasians do not generally experience, many fail to acknowledge or do not understand the everyday burdens that people of color encounter, or they tend to minimize the salience of these burdens. White Americans often take their own advantages for granted and attribute them solely to hard work and merit. Through the mechanism of intergenerational transmitted wealth (see Darity & Myers, 1998) and contemporary privileges (see M. L. Stittivan, 1989), White Americans have always had access to money, property, social and employment networks, and education than people of color. Moreover, the social and cultural practices of schools and workplaces are defined by White American norms, and cultural expressions by people of color, ranging from hair and clothing styles to language, are either discouraged in these settings, or they are embraced superficially under the rubric of “diversity,” without a deep exploration of their meaning and significance. All of these factors contribute to the continuation of White privilege as a salient issue.

Another concept of importance needs to be introduced here: the downside of privilege. In the context of Whiteness, privilege is typically viewed as a racially dependent advantage, usually unfair in some broad sense. On the surface, privilege appears to serve as a protective factor, offsetting potential risks that more marginalized individuals may face. However, we can also view a privileged person as one who is not subject to particular experiences of stress engagement, for example, negotiating cultural dissonance or racial stereotyping. Youth of color who must negotiate these challenges have the opportunity to demonstrate resilience: successful coping with the given challenges. In the process, these resilient youth acquire and hone valuable coping skills, whereas privileged youth do not acquire these skills. Employing a PVES: cyclic perspective, youth who do not need to acquire these skills during one developmental cycle may need them at a subsequent time. The lack of requisite coping skills, due to minimal or nonengagement with stress, thus negates or undermines the possibility of resilience. This may lead to adverse outcomes in the future.

As indicated, privilege, in fact, precludes the opportunity to hone coping repertoire, which may be necessary for later life challenges. In short, successful resolution of challenges makes youth more resilient, and those who do not encounter those challenges cannot be characterized as resilient because they remain untested outside of the normative encumbrances generally associated with a particular stage of development. Accordingly, being untested and having underdeveloped reactive coping skills enhances
their vulnerability. As a consequence, given the function of coping processes both for adequate responses in the moment (i.e., reactive coping strategies) and their patterned character as multiple emergent identities, one should consider the lack of coping skill actualization as the downside of privilege.

Although infrequently described as such, the 1990s student massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and related incidents, along with the recent White identity theorizing (e.g., Helms, 1998) and general White-woman discourse, suggest that there is a downside of privilege. As suggested, due to a lack of coping skill honing and actualization, privileged individuals become more dependent on the built-in and unacknowledged advantages enjoyed rather than developing their own abilities and authentic emergent identities. Much more research is necessary to determine the precise effects of privileges in different contexts. Recent research by Lusher (Lusher & Becker, 2002) and her colleagues provides credibility to this analysis. Of course, privilege is not just limited to race; other statuses such as gender, social class, ethnic/cultural background, skin tone, physical attractiveness, and sexual orientation can also confer privilege. Nonetheless, Kenneth B. Clark (1939, 1940) postulated the downside of racial privilege 50 years ago with his expert testimony in Brown v. Board of Education. His report included evidence of "racial para autonomy" and "unrealistic view of self" that segregation created among White Americans (see Harrell, 2004).

Conscientious with the pathologological ethos regarding African Americans, the U.S. Supreme Court ignored this evidence in favor of the Clarks' doll studies, which have since been reinterpreted (Spencer, 1982a, 1983, 1984), as will be discussed later.

Multiracial/Biracial Identification

Individuals from bisacial and multiracial backgrounds face challenges not only of marginalization as individuals, but also of dissonance of group identification. Historically, terms typically used to classify multiracial persons, such as "mongrel," "half-caste," "half breed," "mulatto" and "hybrid," denote this lack of fit with the dominant realm of American racial categorization. Despite these distinct labels, societal attitudes have also typically asserted that a person with "one drop of non-White blood" is by definition a member of the non-White group—a reenactment of what we euphemistically call "race." Theorizing on bisacial and multiracial identity development paralleled the deficit-oriented perspectives that characterized previous scholarship on all youth of color. In this case, the dominant view was that biracial individuals face developmental problems because they are caught between two irreconcilable cultural contexts (H. W. Stevenson & Stewart, 1958). Stonecipher's (1957) "The Marginal Man" was one of the first proponents of this theory, stating that the biracial individual experiences personally the racial tensions of the society and is therefore alienated from both subcultures. In contrast, Kerwin, Piotterotto, Jackson, and Harris (1993) found that in their study, biracial adolescents did not perceive themselves to be marginalized as such. Much of the current debate still relies heavily on a marginal view of the multiracial individual's development. An important future scholarly endeavor is to determine how the normative challenges of identity formation are exacerbated for biracial and multiracial youth without assuming pathology in the youth themselves. The question of multiracial identification is also highly politicized, with direct implications for U.S. Census categorization and resource allocation (Hernandez, 1994).
does not identify a single healthy outcome. Rather, the
maintains that there are four distinct possible healthy out-
comes for the birth (individual); acceptance of the iden-
tity society assigns (similar to Mayr’s foreclose stage),
identification with a single racial group (typically the
minority group), identification with both racial groups
(similar to Putnam’s integration stage), and, finally, identifi-
cation as a new racial group. Of course, it is important to
understand all of these possibilities in the larger context of
racialization, with ever-changing racial categories and ide-
ocles (Omi & Winant, 1984). Additionally, although
Clandinin generally not emphasized, parents’ very early cultural so-
icialization efforts (or lack thereof) matter and have impor-
tant implications for youths’ healthy identity resolution and
reference group orientation (see Spencer, 1990).

Additional Sources of Vulnerability Due to Racial and
Ethnic Marginalization
Numerous other sources of vulnerability are related to
racial and ethnic marginalization in the United States.
For example, the history of Native Americans in the United
States, consisting largely of cultural and physical genocide
(Chehalish, 1996), has immense consequences for the devel-
oment of indigenous youth. One of the monumental chal-
enges to resilience of this youth is the need for more
culturally sensitive basic research efforts.
Scores of other issues abound; however, owing to limited
space and constraints due to expertise, we cannot cover
them all. Instead, we supplement our general look at vul-
erability among racially and ethnically diverse youth with
an in-depth consideration of two issues of particular promi-
nence across racial and ethnic groups: skin color bias and
cultural dissonance. Although both of these issues affect
the entire spectrum of people of color, we focus largely on
African American youth for the former issue and immi-
grant and second-generation youth for the latter. In the pro-
cess, we also illustrate by more detail the components of
PVVEST at unique analytic tools for examining vulnerabili-
ity within normative human development.

VULNERABILITY AMONG RACIALLY AND
ETHNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH:
COLORISM/SKIN COLOR BIAS
To understand how skin color bias can be a risk factor for
youth of color (most significantly, Black youth), it is help-
ful to consider the historical context of race and color
stratification. Skin color is probably the most visible and
salient phenotypic feature associated with racial catego-
rization and related biases. Colorism, systemic bias, and
inequality on the basis of skin color (usually privileging
lighter skin tones over darker ones), even predates the no-
tice of race in many societies. John Hope Franklin’s
(1968) volume Color and Race illustrated that colorism has
existed in a number of areas around the world, including
Japan (Wagatsuma, 1968), Northern Africa (J. S. Brown &
Porter, 1968), South Africa (Legum, 1968), and India
(Bettelhle, 1969). In parts of South and Central America,
there is a correlation between darker skin tones and so-
cioeconomic and political disadvantages. Issues of color hi-
erarchy are prevalent in countries such as Brazil, where
Portuguese invaders established a social system in which
lighter-skinned Portuguese were on top, indigenous peo-
ple were in the middle, and Africanos were at the bottom
(Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). Even as many current
Brazilians can claim mixed heritage, skin color still serves
as a marker of social status. Other countries, such as Mex-
ico, show similar color hierarchies.

In all of these societies, lighter skin tones are valued
over darker skin tones, and color has broad implications for
social status. Nevertheless, it is important to note that skin
tone has taken on a particular structural significance in the
United States. For example, on the surface, the social strat-
ification and organization of the Indian subcontinent, based
largely on the caste system, seems similar to the racial sub-
ordination inherent in the United States, with the two ap-
pearing as parallel hierarchies based on skin tone. However,
the caste system of South Asia and the racial stratification
of the United States differ in both origin and structure. Al-
though skin color bias is apparent on the Indian subconti-
inent and perhaps even related to caste, skin color was not a
key component in the formation of the caste system. Origin-
ally, European translators mistakenly assumed that skin
color was the basis for caste divisions; this occurred be-
cause the Sanskrit term for caste, varna, translates as
"color" (Koshy, 1996; Prashad, 2000). As noted by Koshy,
there are classical Vedic references to upper-caste individu-
als with dark skin. Occupational delineation, rather than
skin color, was the key component in the formation of the
caste system.
In contrast, as Franklin and Moss (1994) note, the iden-
tifiable of Africans based on skin color was a key feature
in the institution of slavery. Slavery in the Western Hem-
sphere became a massive economic enterprise. Slaves were
systematically captured and bred for profit, creating a system
of racial exploitation and segregation. This stood
In contrast to previous forms of slavery, where slaves were primarily prisoners of war who were freed after a period of time, initially, European colonists attempted to enslave Native Americans; however, Africans, because of their lower susceptibility to diseases and easy identification based on skin color, proved to be a more profitable economic commodity (Franklin, 1994). Also, colonial plantation owners served their own interests by elevating their White indentured servants to a higher position than Africans. By providing psychological race-based privileges for marginalized White groups, they largely precluded dissatisfied Black and White workers from revolting together against the landowners (Steinhorn & Diggs-Brown, 1999). This racial division, thwarting a natural coalition of economically marginalized peoples, continues in U.S. politics to this day.

As early as 1622, many of the American colonies passed antidilution laws to preserve these racial boundaries; however, these did not apply or were not enforced with respect to male slave owners and their female slaves. It was not at all unusual for these slave owners, usually aristocratic and prosperous White men, to coerce sexual relationships with Black women slaves. The offspring of these coerced relationships further augmented the skin color hierarchy in America, as described by Russell et al. (1992) in The Color Complex. Children were classified as “mulatto” (one-half Black), “quadroon” (one-fourth Black), and “oc- toroon” (one-eighth Black; Israel, 2001). During the era of slavery, slaves with a White father led a more privileged existence than their counterparts (Frazier, 1957). Lighter-skinned slaves were typically given more prestigious jobs, such as artisans or seamstresses, and darker-skinned slaves did more physically demanding, menial work, often as field hands (Blackwell, 1885; Frazier, 1957).

This within-group color hierarchy created friction between many darker- and lighter-skinned slaves and gave rise to colorism in Black communities that has existed since. Skin color privilege continued throughout American society after the abolition of slavery. Educational, economic, and occupational opportunities were more accessible to light-skinned Blacks during the era of de jure segregation, often perpetuated by segregated Black institutions. Lighter-skinned African Americans often avoided marriage with darker-skinned individuals and maintained or desired to maintain closer ties with White communities (Hunter, 2004). They also formed social clubs, such as the Bon Ton Society of Washington, DC, and the Blue Vein Society of Nashville, which restricted access based on skin color. These societies adopted formal and informal barriers to entrance, such as the “brown paper bag” test (skin tone had to be as light or lighter than the color of a paper bag), the “comb test” (a comb had to pass through hair easily), and painted doors (used to judge skin color). The formal traditions have since passed, but the names and legacy (i.e., practiced values) remain (e.g., “Blue Vein”). Many major urban cities across the United States have areas that were historically inhabited primarily by light-skinned Black Americans; these were often the most affluent elements of segregated Black communities. For example, one area in Harlem, known as Strivers’ Row, housed a number of light-skinned doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. Historically, Black colleges and universities also discriminated against applicants based on the color of their skin, using informal barriers such as the aforementioned paper bag test. Even relatively dark-skinned students admitted to institutions have been socially marginalized. All of these biases are driven by the implicit, unconscious (and often unintentional today) theme that Whiteness, and anything White-like, is superior, and Blackness, and anything dark, is evil or inferior.

**Developmental Significance of Colorism: Skin Color Biases and Attitudes as Risk Contributors**

Color consciousness and attitudes began at an early age. Much of the early literature regarding skin color preference involved preschool populations (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1939). Clark and Clark (1940) found that Black children as young as 3 years old had knowledge of skin color differences and could appropriately self-identify. It was posited that the children were not identifying on the basis of race because that concept was too advanced for their development. Instead, young children identified on “the basis of skin color which is to them a concrete reality” (p. 168). In a later experiment, children were given a Black and a White doll and were asked questions, such as which one they would “like to play with” or which one was the “nice doll” (Clark & Clark, 1947). The majority of the participants in that study demonstrated White preferences. The Clark’s concluded that the response pattern indicated Black self-hatred, a finding that was cited in the Supreme Court’s 1954 landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education. Other studies have found similar results, indicating that Black children display preferences for the color White and White people (Gospodarowich, 1998; D. J. Porter, 1971; Williams & Roberson, 1967). However, the Clark’s (1939, 1940, 1947) and contemporary studies have been criticized as having inaccurate interpretations or methodological flaws (Baldwin,
1979; Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974; Cross, 1991; Spencer, 1984; Spencer & Markus-Adams, 1990). Moreover, their interpretation of children’s preference behavior reflected the echoes of Black pathology and deficit-oriented perspectives alluded to earlier.

In contrast to the Black self-hatted theory, other researchers have shown that despite having a White preference (for dolls, pictures, or other objects), Black children display positive self-esteem and self-concept (Banks, 1976; McAdoo, 1985; Spencer, 1984). In this literature, researchers maintain that Black children’s personal self-esteem is independent of separate from racial preference behavior. Most of these studies actually assess self-concepts and racial attitudes in the same population, rather than making assumptions, to delineate the relationship of the two constructs. For instance, Spencer sampled 130 Black pre-school children between the ages of 4 and 6. She found that 80% of the sample obtained positive self-concept scores, while demonstrating pro-White biased cultural values. She concluded that Black preschool children separated personal identity (i.e., self-concept) from knowledge of racial attitudes. Similarly, Banks found that despite having pro-White attitudes, Black teenagers from predominantly White communities and schools still tended to have positive self-concepts.

As suggested by Spencer’s (1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1984; Spencer & Drenebach, 1990; Spencer & Markus-Adams, 1990) program of research, as opposed to those making negative inferences from the Clarks’ studies and promoting “self-hatred” conclusions (e.g., Cardnier & Overton, 1991; Pettigrew, 1966), in fact, young Black children may not internalize pro-White anti-Black messages. The developmentally appropriate explanation credits the “protection” emanating from normal levels of cognitive egocentrism (Piaget, 1932). Spencer (1982a, 1982b, 1985) notes that young children are appropriately self-centered and, in general, do not project their preferences inward. In fact, developmentally appropriate cognitive egocentrism serves as a protective factor that prevents the internalization of biased racial attitudes; and, thus, generally precludes the acquisition of low self-esteem.

Cross (1991) notes that even the Clarks’ data, it is not clear that Black children systematically preferred White dolls, and in any case, their preference behavior shifted with age; this is not unexpected, given Spencer’s (1985) integration of social cognition-dependent developmental processes into the analysis. That is, as children mature and increase their capacity to make inferences about cognitive, social, and affective phenomena, in effect and in necessity they shed what represented “protective egocentrism” and become more aware of how society views Blackness. Spencer (1995) describes developmental trends in color preference responses at four studies in different geographic regions of the United States. Data indicates that Black preschool children demonstrate Eurocentric attitudes, preferences, and color connotations through early middle childhood (approximately age 5). These attitudes and preferences reflect children’s early learning that all things White are more valued in society. However, children do not necessarily internalize potential negative affect due to cognition-linked egocentrism. The onset of concrete operational thought marks a shift in attitudes and preference toward a more Afrocentric orientation. Of particular importance, the end of egocentric thinking can be a source of risk: Once Black children have the veil of protective egocentrism lifted, they begin not only to be aware of and understand societal attitudes and stereotypes of color, but to view themselves in light of these. Data suggest that given the protective character of cultural socialization, many Black children resist potential dissonance by shifting their preferential behavior (i.e., becoming more Afrocentric; Spencer, 1983) rather than adopting low self-esteem; nonetheless, this shift itself diverts attention and psychic energy from other developmental tasks, such as academic engagement (see Spencer, 1999).

Nevertheless, the risks associated with race awareness and exposure to biased racial attitudes may be offset by protective factors. Black parents can, and often do, socialize their children to understand the importance and implications of their skin color. Spencer et al. (1997, p. 818) suggest that “minority parent child rearing efforts require, of necessity, providing explicit explanation of the meaning and significance of their youth’s [color and race].” Racial socialization can be a protective factor by decreasing the psychological impact of hostilities based on color and race (H. C. Stevenson, 1994). Protective socialization strategies encourage racial and cultural pride, and protective strategies focus on awareness of racism and related biases such as colorism. Some suggest this this is not just a protective factor but also a necessity for “raising physically and emotionally healthy children who are Black in a society where Black has negative connotations” (Peters, 1985, p. 161).

Color bias also has different implications by gender. For Black females, concerns about skin tone exacerbate the normative challenge of body image and appearance (Segal, Spencer, Goss, Harpalani, & Charles, in press); these occur because of the greater importance placed on physical attractiveness for females generally. Moreover, the specific developmental period also plays a significant role, given that more general concerns about appearance increase for...
all youth during adolescence. Thus, risks associated with colorism vary with gender, context, and development. Further, as suggested by Regan Good (2003), in an interview with Randall Kennedy concerning Kennedy’s book inter-
racial Injustices, structural impediments are linked to the persistence of the problem and concerted efforts across significant time will be needed for change.

Colorism and Stress Engagement: Tangible Experiences of Color Bias

For youth of color, experiences related to skin color bias are encounters of stress that must be negotiated in conjunction with normative developmental challenges. These are dissonance- and anxiety-producing experiences generally missing for Caucasian youth. That is, relative to individual context “fit,” in general, the experience of consonant conditions is more often the norm. To illustrate, media images, stereotypical labels, and books all communicate skin color bias. Advertising of tanning solutions suggests enhancement and not as a negatively perceived deficit. Russell et al. (1992) note that light to medium skin tones (and terms used to describe light skin) are typically linked to intelligence and refinement, whereas dark skin tones suggest toughness, meaness, and physical strength. Historically, slights and slurs convey negative attitudes about Black skin tones (K. T. Brown, Ward, Lightburner, & Jackson, 1998); one such catchphrase is “If you’re White you’re all right, if you’re yellow you’re stink, if you’re brown stick around, if you’re Black get back.”

In a 1972 study by Edwards, darker-skinned partici-
pants showed a slightly greater consciousness of racial discrimina-
tion than those of lighter complexes. Darker individuals also sensed greater hostility on the part of Whites than those of lightier skin tones. These findings are not surprising considering pro-White messages conveyed in American and other societies. These views are deeply im-
bedded within social structures and serve to perpetuate contemporary beliefs of White supremacy.

By the onset of adolescence, Black youth have well-as-
fined stereotypes about skin color (Parrish, 1945). C. An-
derson and Crotwell (1977) focused specifically on positive and negative stereotypical attributes that are associated with skin color. Overall skin color preferences tended toward lighter-brown colors, although darker-skinned teens valued darker skin more highly and light-skinned participants valued lighter skin color more highly. Light brown skin was chosen for items that gauged positive characteristics, such as “the nicest, the one best liked to marry” (p. 80). Likewise, for the items that gauged nega-
ive characteristics (e.g., who was the dumbest, the person one would not like to marry), subjects selected dark skin.

As noted, such encounters experienced by youth of color suggest an extension and exacerbation of stress related to body image and physical appearance that, in general, all adolescence experience and cope with.

Color biases can also worsen stress in the realm of inter-
personal relationships, where skin color may represent a source of acceptance or rejection. The significance begins at birth. As Russell et al. (1992, p. 94) note, “Many Black families can barely disguise their anxieties concern about the color and features of a newborn.” Given anticipated addi-
tional stress, families may pass on their anxieties about structural impediments associated with skin color as spec-
cific attitudes. Moreover, cultural socialization efforts that specifically communicate the history of skin color bias to children along the hierarchical system of slavery that pro-
duced it vary widely; accordingly, attitudes about skin tone vary (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). Given the dissonance-created character of skin color as a topic, relative to family re-
sponses, the relationship is neither simple not obvious. In some families, light skin color is prized in accordance with societal biases; however, other Black families may develop different preferences, conscious or unconscious, in light of historical influences such as the Black Power movement. In these families, dark-skinned members are preferred and light-skinned members may be viewed and subtly chastised as shameless remnants of slavery and miscegenation.

A belief sometimes hidden and independent of develop-
mental period, skin tone continues to affect relationships. For example, in a study involving two groups of undergrad-
uates and a group of graduate students at a historically Black university, Marks (1945) discovered that classmates who were lighter than average, but not at the extreme light end of the color spectrum, were perceived as more attrac-
tive and charming. Correspondingly, in another experi-
ment, very dark brown and dark brown skin tones were less favored (C. Porter, 1991). Other skin color studies have shown that medium complexes are preferred over the extremes. According to C. Porter, regardless of age or gender, children prefer honey brown tones to darker skin tones. She suggests different gender- and age-related ratio-
nals for preferences based on cognitive development, broadening intergroup social experiences, and specific de-
velopmental concerns. Children between the ages of 9 and 11 differed reasons related to desire for sameness and desire to be liked by others (e.g., “best friends are that color” and “wants to be like everyone else”). Older children, 12- to 13-year-olds, explained their preference based on physical attractiveness (e.g., “probably thinks she’s ugly with that
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color”) and the possibility that people are discriminated against on the basis of skin tone (e.g., “could get more jobs and people would talk to her more”). These findings underscores the significance of normative developmental tasks, such as forming peer relationships, in mediating the impact of skin color biases.

Skin color is, or is perceived to be, a factor in selecting romantic and marital partners (Bond & Cash, 1992; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Hunter, 1998). In a study with Black undergraduate females attending a southern university, the women were asked about their perceptions of skin color as an influence on mate selection (Bond & Cash, 1992). Regardless of their own skin color, most of the females believed that Black males preferred women with lighter complexion. Not only are light-skinned women preferred as mates, they are more likely to marry higher status husbands (Hunter, 1998). In their study, Hughes and Hertel reported that controlling for age, gender, education, occupational prestige, and parental socioeconomic status, light-skinned women were found to have a spouse with more education and higher occupational status. Obviously, the attainment of resilience (i.e., given the problem of structurally organized and long-term biases) requires specific coping strategies and supports.

Coping and Identity Challenges Related to Colorism

As noted previously, normative cognitive maturation makes awareness of discrimination concerning color bias both unavoidable and potentially acute. Reactive coping responses to experienced dissonance and potential problems lead to the enactment of strategies that may be either adaptive or maladaptive. Spencer (1995) points that perceptions of self and thoughts about how others perceive you influence behavior. Therefore, internalizing skin color bias can influence psychological equilibrium and require particular coping strategies. Determining how people perceive and interpret the meaning of their skin color is important for understanding coping processes and specific supports required.

On the psychosocial level, studies suggest that skin color is related to perceptions of attractiveness, self-esteem, and satisfaction. Status related to body image and physical appearance may be among the most palpable manifestations of skin color bias. A basic conclusion drawn in the early research was that lighter skin color was valued more than darker skin color and the valuing of certain skin tones negatively affected self-esteem, especially in children. However, given developmental differences in young children’s cognition, the inferences are not consistent with empirical demonstrations. Specifically, consistent with the doll studies, one should not assume negative outcomes in this domain; stress and coping responses to stress vary significantly within groups given variations in parental socialization strategies and early childhood experiences. Although focused on a very different developmental period, more recently, Coard, Breland, and Rackin (2001) examined the role of skin color as it pertained to self-esteem among 113 Black college students of various skin tones. The authors hypothesized that perception of and preferences for darker skin color would be positively related to higher levels of self-esteem, whereas perceptions of and preferences for lighter skin would be positively related to lower levels of self-esteem. In contrast to their hypothesis, they found that the more satisfied darker-skinned males were with their own skin color, the lower was their self-esteem. They suggest two possible explanations for their finding. First, for these dark-skinned males, satisfaction could exist on an intellectual level, but emotional inner conflict may still exist. Second, and more interesting, they suggest that dark-skinned individuals felt satisfied with their skin color, but believe others (Blacks and Whites) perceive their dark skin negatively. Coard et al. contend that given the importance darker-skinned participants attributed to others’ ideals, it is understandable that their self-esteem was compromised and reported as lower. However, as cognitively sophisticated young adults who do not deny or reject the fact of their own skin color, the findings might suggest that exposure to and awareness of social stereotypes, when considered together, may result in more dissonant sources of feedback for consideration in normative psychosocial processes.

Similarly, using a young adult sample, Altbe (1998) showed that body image and skin color in a racially diverse sample of college students using the Physical Appearance Discrepancy Questionnaire (Altbe, 1996); this measure asks respondents about their own physical appearance, ideal body image, and perception of physical traits believed most valued by their cultural group. Skin color was noted as a salient trait by all racial/ethnic groups in the sample: Black, White, Asian, and Latino. Asians reported valuing light skin the most, followed by African Americans. Conversely, all groups except Black females and Asian males responded that having a darker shade of skin color is on their list of the top five ideal traits. However, in the analysis of cultural values of attractiveness, 23.5% of Asians and 21.2% of Black Americans listed light or lighter skin as a culturally valued trait compared to 10.5% of Latin
and 8% of White Americans, who listed light or lighter skin tone as a trait valued by their culture (10.5% and 8%, respectively). In a study of adolescents, Pegley, Spencer, Gross, Harpalani, and Charles (in press) found that consensus and disagreement (i.e., respectively, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with skin tone) was more significantly related to a variety of measures of psychosocial well-being, including body image, than was skin tone itself. In their multifaceted sample, darker-skinned individuals were more likely to be dissatisfied than lighter-skinned individuals, although individuals rating their skin tone in the middle showed the greatest amount of satisfaction. Pegley et al. also found Asian/Asian American youth to be the most dissatisfied with respect to skin tone, and lighter-skinned individuals (of all racial/ethnic groups combined) had lower overall body image and less general positive attitudes. Although not speculated about by the authors, perhaps the latter finding is in fact keeping with media images of lighter-skinned persons and advertisements that focus on body image perfection, thus again subliminally suggesting a downside of privilege (i.e., sets of subliminally communicated problems associated with positioning stereotypically valued physical attributes).

These findings indicate that the relationships among colorism, coping, and psychological well-being are not independent of cognitive functioning and developmental status and, considered overall, are more complex than one might predict based strictly on societal biases. For immigrant populations, national origin may play a role; for example, Montalvo and Codina (2001) found that relatively dark-skinned Mexican Americans (born in the United States) had lower self-esteem scores than dark-skinned Mexicans born in Mexico. Future work can help link color biases and attitudes along with racial socialization more directly to racial and ethnic identity. Skin color, color biases, and related racial/cultural socialization have evident implications for the different phases of Cross's (1991) négroescence model, along with other racial/ethnic identity theories (Helms, 1990; Phinney, 1992); however, as suggested, the relationships are significantly more intricate than might be predicted based solely on societal biases.

This research underscores the necessity for a comprehensive, culturally and contextually sensitive framework of human development. As part of the normative development, processes associated with adolescence, youth negotiate challenges associated with physical appearance and societal standards of attractiveness; without a doubt, color biases exacerbate these challenges for darker-skinned youth of all ethnicities. However, many of their youth are able to cope successfully and to maintain positive feelings about self, as one might expect from a normative (as opposed to pathological) developmental perspective. Nonetheless, societal biases affect how youth are treated and, as illustrated in the next section, as consistently experienced social impediments, may affect their life chances.

Colorism and Life Outcomes

Empirical studies have illustrated that color bias can have an impact in multiple domains of life outcomes. For example, in the realm of education, studies have historically shown that in general, lighter-skinned Black Americans complete more years of formal schooling than their darker-skinned counterparts. Reny (1971), for example, noted that 11 out of the first 12 Black men who received doctoral degrees from American universities were of interracial parentage. As noted earlier, predominately Black universities historically discriminated against applicants based on their skin tone. Schools for light-skinned individuals stressed a liberal arts education, and schools populated by dark-skinned students were mainly oriented toward vocational training (Maddox, 1998). Light-skinned African Americans were more likely to engage in scholarly pursuits, and dark-skinned individuals prepared for vocational trades. Thus, lighter-skinned individuals (and often those of interracial background) had greater access to education—already a restricted commodity for all Americans and especially African Americans (Maddox, 1995).

Skin tone disparities in education, although generally unacknowledged, still exist. Studies indicate that lighter skin is positively correlated with education (Hughes & Hertel, 1990). Light-skinned Black Americans complete more years of schooling, on average, than their darker-skinned counterparts even when controlling for gender, age, and parental socioeconomic status. Keith and Herring (1991) report that educational attainment increases as skin color becomes lighter. In their study, they used interviewer assessment of participants' skin color. Each skin color category increased, as assessed by the interviewer, corresponded to one-half year of additional education. On average, "very light" respondents attained approximately 2 additional years of education over "very dark" respondents.

Income and occupational attainment is another area where color disparities are still apparent. Hughes and Hertel (1990) note that the effect of skin color on the salaries of lighter versus darker African Americans is as great as the effect of race on the earnings of White Americans and all Black Americans. The family income for those with
lighter skin was reportedly 50% more than for those families of lighter-skinned Blacks (Keith & Herrings, 1991). Additionally, Keith and Herrings found that the personal income of light-complexioned African Americans was 66% greater than their darker-skinned counterparts, and light-skinned people were more likely to be employed in professional and technical positions, whereas individuals with dark complexions were more likely to be employed as laborers. These findings suggest that, when considered jointly, colorism and racism are life course-relevant obstacles to the long-term resilience of many racially and ethnically diverse youth. Skin color among offspring even within families remains a genotypic determining outcome; colorism themes in general are sensitive, complex, and, increasingly, overtly discussed issues. Accordingly, parents are less likely to consciously and proactively focus on the training of nuanced cultural socialization tactics that would serve as protective factors as youth transition across time and place. However, many parents manage the challenge and, thus, enhance the resilient outcomes of their offspring. In general, when considering vulnerability and resilience, the topic of colorism as linked to cultural socialization across ethnic groups continues to need programmatic, sophisticated, and nuanced research efforts approached from a developmental perspective. Enhanced variability between and within groups due to special situations such as immigration status (and its timing) further complicates the issue and thus contributes to the issues of risk and vulnerability if not offset by equal levels of protective factors experienced as supports.

VULNERABILITY AMONG RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH: CULTURAL DISSONANCE

Based on basic tenets of classic dissonance theory, cultural dissonance refers to the cognitive and emotional stresses resulting from conflicting cultural values or norms confronted by individuals in culturally salient situations; they are hypothesized to be linked with social cognitive processes (see Spencer, 1982a, 1982b, 1984, 1985; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Cultural dissonance can take a variety of forms and be expressed through multiple domains of human development. Cultural practices that vary among groups are potential sources of cultural dissonance. Further, increases in rates of immigration within race may potentially exacerbate complex within-group cultural variation and dissonance as well. Unfortunately, underanalyzed perspectives are prevalent. The points of view ignore developmental processes, including youths own perceptions, historical factors, and contextual conditions. The short-sightedness interprets achievement gaps as emanating from youths internal characteristics as opposed to linking them with longstanding issues of absent privileges for some and a history of unacknowledged and intergenerationally transmitted broad privileges for others (see critical reviews and critiques by Spencer, 1999, 2001; Spencer, Cross, et al., 2003; and Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003). As illustrated by inferences made by Ogbo (1985) and colleagues, the implications of shortsighted misinterpretations of performance differences both within and between groups further complicate the design and implementation of social supports. Ordinarily overlooked has been the salience of stereotype threat for group performance patterns (see Steele, 1997, 2004; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat experienced by second-generation youth versus the perceptions and consequent coping of more recent immigrants provides the case in point. We suggest that when considered within ethnic groups, immigrants may perceive and experience differences in apparent sources of risk and psychological and social resource availability, which, considered together, potentially exacerbate overall vulnerability level (see Spencer, Kim, & Marshall, 1987). Accordingly, we consider selected themes to illustrate vulnerability associated with cultural dissonance.

Because the experiences of immigrants vary substantially by generational status, scholars distinguish between first-generation immigrants (or Americans), who were born overseas, and second-generation Americans, who are born in the United States as children of immigrants. The term 1.5 generation is sometimes used to describe youth who were born abroad but who arrived in the United States at an early age (usually before adolescence); these youth are technically first-generation Americans but share many of the experiences and challenges of the second generation.

The changing patterns of immigration along with the consistent fact of social cognitive development have refined cultural dissonance among youth as more important issues than considered in the past. Immigration accounts for a substantial percentage of U.S. population growth (Camarota, 2001); in particular, immigrant and second-generation children represent the fastest growing segment of the country's total population under the age of 18 years (Portnoy & Runhaar, 2001). Previous waves of immigrants to the United States came mainly from European countries; although they faced many challenges, assimilation was more accessible to them because of greater phenotypic similarity to the hosts, greater cultural consonance.
between European and White American norms, and legal definitions of Whiteness, which dictated eligibility for citizenship (Haynes-Lopez, 1996). The passage of the 1965 Immigration Act has led to over 40 years of sustained legal immigration, particularly from Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and East and South Asia; accordingly, there has been a significant increase in the size of the nation's population of people of color (Portes & MacLeod, 1999).

Of course, the exact nature and experience of cultural dissonance is dependent on the two sets of cultural norms or values that are in conflict: in the United States, this usually involves middle- or upper-middle-class White American values conflicting with some other set, as the former is usually considered the unacknowledged norm for all. This is also an area where it is necessary to distinguish finely between race and ethnicity, as there is tremendous ethnic variation within socially and politically constructed racial groups. Moreover, factors such as immigration history and socioeconomic status also impact the experience of cultural dissonance. In addition to the generational classification noted earlier, John Ogbo (1978, 1985, 1990) presents a controversial historical framework to understand the social and political positions of various racial/ethnic groups in the United States. He classifies American minorities into three groups: Autonomous minorities are small numerical groups that self-identify as a minority group in salient ways (e.g., Jews, Moslems). These groups are generally established populations in the United States, but they may continue to face forms of discrimination. Immigrant minorities are those who voluntarily come to the United States and have expectations of upward social mobility (e.g., many but not all Asian immigrant groups). As conceptualized by Ogbo (1985), subordinate or caste-like minorities were involuntary incorporated by White Americans through slavery or subjugation (e.g., Blacks, Native Americans).

Ogbo's framework specifies the varying historical relationships that different groups have with the United States. These structured relationships influence opportunity and desire for assimilation, along with other factors in the negotiation of cultural dissonance. However, a major critique of Ogbo's conceptual strategy is its penchant to make simplistic, deterministic assumptions about group psychology and cultural behavior from such sociological taxonomies (Ogbo, 1985; Fordham & Ogbo, 1986; for critiques, see Darnell, 2002; Spencer, Cox, et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 2001). Within-group diversity is a key issue when examining the historical, cultural, and political circumstances of racial/ethnic groups and resultant experiences and coping strategies required for healthy and psychosocial adjustment.

For example, Latinos would be split across Ogbo's categories of minority groups (see Gonzales, 2000). Many are recent voluntary immigrants and thus would best be described as immigrant minorities (e.g., recent immigrants from Central and South America), and some have the additional challenges associated with refugee status (e.g., Cuban Americans). Others fit better in the category of subordinate minorities (e.g., Puerto Ricans, some Mexican Americans). It is important to understand the historical relationship of particular Latino groups to this country and also to note within-group variation even if historical circumstances are the same; stress engagement associated with cultural dissonance can fluctuate (due to protective factors and their actualization as social supports), and coping strategies can also vary. Similarly, Asian American groups have diverse immigration histories. Although many (not all) Asian Americans can be described as immigrant minorities, there are significant differences in their particular immigration histories— even within particular groups (Prashad, 2008; Takaki, 1998). The historical era of immigration is particularly significant. Waves of immigrants from Japan, China, South Asia, and other regions began coming to the United States in the late 1800s. Immigration from these areas was outlawed by the early 1920s, but descendants of these early immigrants remained, and many have retained their particular ethnic identity rather than assimilating completely (Takaki, 1998). When Asian immigration occurred in significant numbers after 1965, the immediate waves of immigrants were largely educated professionals who secured immigration through occupational preferences; this wave laid a large part of the foundation for the "model minority" myth of Asian American academic achievement. However, more recent Asian immigrants have arrived largely on family preferences rather than occupational status; they are often less educated and work in lower status jobs. Of great significance is that stereotypes such as the model minority myth can obscure the challenges faced by this group given significant sources of within-group variability. Attempts to homogenize the group's experiences draw attention away from the larger issues of cultural dissonance faced by many Asian American youth regardless of their educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Accordingly, attempts to understand and support psychosocial processes are undermined.

Cultural Dissonance as a Risk Contributor: Individualistic versus Collectivist Societies

Societies are characterized by sets of cultural norms that vary and are always evolving. The differences between norms in and across societies can also be described in
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different ways. One such designation that may be useful to consider is the rubric of individualistic versus collectivist societies (Dondé, 2001). Individualistic societies, which include the United States, tend to follow an ideology that revolves around personal autonomy, independence, and self-reliance. These societies portray to value individuals who are able to separate themselves from others and from situational contexts. The independent self is constructed to be a fixed entity that supposedly does not change with social situations: “The independent self-system thus seeks to display or assert attributes or features of the self. Others in a social situation are important, but their importance is represented primarily as standards of social comparison or for feedback that can validate the inner attributes of the self” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 22). Of course, individuals may not always display such individualistic attitudes and behavior, but in an individualistic society, the collective social norms and values center on expectations of such independence.

Collectivist societies, on the other hand, strive to emphasize obedience and conformity. The primary stated goal in these societies, which include many Asian countries, is to shape individuals into interdependent beings who are defined by their relationships. The interdependent self is perceived as “fluid” (i.e., able to change when the social environment around one changes). As described by Markus and Kitayama, interdependent individuals are dynamic and defined by roles according to situation and context: “Such an interdependent self is not properly characterized as a bounded whole, because it changes structure with the nature of the particular social context” (in Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 23). Again, individuals in a collectivist society may not always model such attitudes and behavior, but this is the stated norm in a collectivist society.

Given the large differences inherent between these two types of societies, it is highly probable that immigrants from collectivist societies who move to the United States may experience cultural dissonance and show difficulties in adjusting to their new surroundings. When individuals choose to immigrate, they may come with practical knowledge of the country to which they are moving, but many will not be learned in the cultural and societal values, beliefs, and attitudes of the foreign country they are adopting as their new home. Even to the extent that they are aware of these, actual experiences of cultural dissonance present new social and psychological challenges for immigrants.

Moreover, three challenges are in some ways compounded for the children of immigrants, the second generation. Immigrants may already have a strong sense of ethnic identity and self from experiences in their native land; although cultural dissonance poses a challenge, they can draw on their own cultural capital as a resource to promote adaptive coping. The second generation, however, must undergo the challenges of identity formation difficult same way as they are experiencing cultural dissonance; in fact, the normative challenges of identity formation are exacerbated by cultural dissonance for second-generation youth.

Street Engagement Related to Cultural Dissonance

On a regular basis, tangible experiences of cultural dissonance create a “clash of cultures” for many immigrant and second-generation children. Mehra (1998, p. 133) addresses these processes specifically for Asian and South Asian American youth: “The second generation has been exposed to distinctly different language, goals, food, rituals, dress, music, landscapes, and values than their parents. There is a strong urge to retain ethnic identity while rapidly acquiring awareness of American values, partially due to financial gains.” Because of this disparity between their ethnic identity and their national identity, these children face a salient tension: the collectivist ideologies from valued families constantly conflict with individualistic ideologies from the surrounding environment. While navigating across varied social settings and associated social traditions, immigrant and second-generation children and adolescents must grapple with normative developmental tasks while also contending with the difficult challenge of successfully juggling opposing philosophies. There is inadequate developmental research on the specific content of the cultural socialization techniques proves effective for abating the additive and consequent tensions experienced by youth.

Two of the most salient areas where such conflicts come into play are in the choice of career and romantic relationships, as these are areas that can have long-term effects on the nature of relationships between parents and children. Given the different expectations of male and female children in many societies, gender can pose an additional risk here, exacerbating the tensions created by cultural dissonance. For example, some Asian and South Asian parents may be more protective of female children with respect to dating. Asian American children confront a social environment in the United States, including school, university, peer groups, and the media, that teaches them to stress autonomy and independence and to follow their own aspirations and desires. Youth recognize the availability of many options and are encouraged by American society to choose
for themselves among these. However, many Asian American children are also expected to obey their parents and fulfill their obligations to their families. Emphasis on autonomy and self-sufficiency is frequently misinterpreted by immigrant parents as selfishness or lack of caring (Mehta, 1998). As Eng (1999) notes, immigrant parents often feel that they have made many sacrifices for their children; they may employ guilt to compel children to follow their wishes. Many Asian American youth face these struggles; however, particularly for youth of color who are most vulnerable to the experience of cultural dissonance, it is critically important not to make deterministic assumptions about the experience of immigrant and second-generation youth or their parents. With proper understanding, both parents and peers or significant adults outside the family can serve as sources of support that help youth negotiate the varied sources of cultural dissonance.

It is imperative to note that immigrant parents themselves also continue to undergo a process of identity development; the duality of the role indicates that while being culturally socialized themselves by their children, and while adjusting their views, at the same time parents must engage in the normative parental task of socializing their children. In some families, it is possible for parents to accept and feel comfortable with their children’s choices to adapt and conform to their American surroundings. However, new situations and challenges arise throughout youth development that are fairly typical: dilemmas over schoolwork and friends, dating, college and career decisions, and marriage and childbearing. Parents may be more open-minded about some of these areas than others, and children may adopt different cultural values in these various domains.

Coping and Identity Issues Related to Cultural Dissonance

For various reasons, cultural dissonance is unavoidable for many youth. Cultural conflicts between immigrant parents and their children often reflect different belief systems; there are no necessarily right or wrong solutions to these conflicts. Also, as H. C. Stevens (1997) notes, cultural dissonance is not limited to immigrants and their children.

Due to differences in content and the cultural meaning of particular behaviors and sociocultural traditions (e.g., music, dress, dance, and adolescent social relations), as previously noted, many urban African American, Hispanic, and Native American youth may be compelled to employ different coping strategies across school and neighborhood settings. Of salience is that, as typically deployed by adolescent-stage individuals, particular adaptive coping strategies may seek to manage such dissonance rather than resolving it completely.

Phelan et al. (1991) present one framework to help explain issues of cultural dissonance; they define four patterns of interaction with regard to school, family, and peer transitions. In the congruent world/unchanging transitions pattern, social norms, expectations, beliefs about the world, and other factors that shape daily interactions are relatively consistent across school, peer, and family settings. Normative developmental challenges are present, but these are not exacerbated by cultural dissonance, as the larger social and cultural factors are congruent. This congruency pattern may be more common among many White, middle-class youth. Another type of interaction is different worlds/boundary crossings managed. In this category, norms and value differences exist across settings, but these are not very great, or they are managed adaptively. One may refer to this particular type as purist as there is more commonality across the settings. In the different worlds/boundary crossings hazardous state youth view their school, family, and peer settings as distinct with regard to cultural norms, suggesting clearly nonnormative conditions with significant consequences for transgressions. Language barriers may be salient, and parental values may be significantly different from those encountered in school. These two "different worlds" profiles are more common among immigrant youth, and the difference between the two may be a matter of available social support. One should add that the level of cultural awareness, content and salience of professional training, and charter of role-portrayal clarity play significant roles relative to the adults’ contributions as parental sources of support. The too frequent and valid reality is that all labeled supports, when considered from youths’ phenomenology, may be actually experienced as neither user-friendly nor reliable sources of support.

In the last of their categories, borders impenetrable/boundary crossings meaningful, Phelan et al. (1991) note that values, beliefs, and expectations across settings are characterized by so much cultural dissonance that interactions across settings are extremely difficult or not possible. The authors note that youth may resist crossing boundaries between settings altogether, leading to negative outcomes such as school failure or rejection by peers. As policies and incentive-linked practices, these situations may require even more social support to allow youth to cope adaptively and for adults to perform more responsively. In fact, this suggests an extraneous condition that requires both proximal adult and broad systems recognition.
of the condition’s problematic character for youth compet-
tence. Additionally, the situation suggests the needed in-
troduction, monitoring, and evaluation of culturally
sensitive and effective intervention strategies.

Considered proactively, the last two categories (i.e., dif-
f erent world/boundary crossings hazy/and borders
imperceptible/boundary crossings inconceivable), more
often than not, require a full and open discussion of race,
social class (i.e., as resource availability), gender, and eth-
nicity-associated issues. Each introduces significance
degrees of uncomfortableness for adults and policymakers.
Consequently, the foundational concerns articulated by
Phelan et al. (1991) are very seldom directly or indirectly
addressed, although “gap” portrayals are prominently
discussed in the news media. The systemic outcomes of effects
and inferred invisibility of the issues merely contribute to
stereotypes and an exacerbation of the troubling border-
crossing concerns described. The situation obfuscates
youths’ opportunities because the undergirding contribu-
tions of cultural dissonance are neither adequately under-
stood nor ultimately addressed.

Although cultural dissonance poses a significant source of stress for many youth of color, as suggested, proper (i.e., strategically implemented) resources enhance its success-
ful negotiation. It is important for these youth to develop a
strong sense of identity so they can maintain a coherent
sense of self across different settings. In addition, we
should remember that youth in the first category, congruent
worlds/smooth transitions, are also vulnerable; in fact, the
aforementioned drawbacks of privilege may be relevant here.
In lieu of challenges requiring the negotiation of some cul-

tural dissonance, these youth may not develop the coping
skills needed to cross cultural boundaries, and they may not
learn to be comfortable when placed in the minority status
or other conflict-generating situations (e.g., gender-based
changes in the roles available to women). With the growing
diversity of the American population, these skills are be-
coming increasingly important and, when present, poten-
tially serve as protective factors.

Identity challenges relating to cultural dissonance have
historically been viewed in light of the “melting pot” ideal,
emphasizing assimilation. The straight-line assimilation
model was developed in response to European immigrants’
process of ethnic identity assimilation. In this model, indi-

ciduals’ identification with mainstream U.S. culture in-
tcreases with succeeding generations as identification with
their native culture decreases. However, theorists believed
that the straight-line model of assimilation ignores the as-

similation process of immigrants of color (Portes &
Rumbaut, 1989). A model of segmented assimilation has
been proposed to reflect immigrant minorities’ process of
assimilation; in this model, immigrants and second-genera-
tion youth have more options in terms of identity develop-
ment (Zhou, 1997).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) investigated the ethnic iden-
tity of immigrants and second-generation youth in their
Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS). The
original sample for this study in 1992 included 5,262
ninth- and eleventh-graders from Miami/Lauderdale,
Florida, and San Diego, California. A follow-up survey in
1995 included 4,288 of the original participants. The
largest immigrant groups represented in the sample were
Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and West Indians in South
Florida and Mexicans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Laotians,
and Cambodians in California. The sample was evenly di-
vided with respect to gender, year in school (9th, 10th),
and birth status (foreign-born/U.S.-born). Researchers con-
ducted 54% of the interviews in Miami/Lauderdale and
46% in San Diego.

Portes and colleagues conceptualized immigrant youth
ethnic identity in terms of four categories: national iden-
tity, hyperethnic American, American, and panethnic.
A national identity (e.g., Chinese) reflects identification with
the native country; hyperethnic American (e.g., Chinese
American) reflects a bicultural identity that incorporates
features of the homelands and the United States; American
identity reflects lack of connection with the original home-

land and an adoption of “American” values (referring to
White American cultural terms); panethnic identity (e.g.,
Asian) refers to a decontextualized identification centered
on the political context of American racialization (Portes
and Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994). These identity categories
illustrate the segments of the population that immigrants
identity youth can identify with as they assimilate into the
United States.

In CILS, adolescents who were nationally identified
were more likely to be first-generation or 1.5-generation
immigrants (Kasinitz, O’Malley, & Mollenkopf, 1997; Portes
and Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994, 1996). Males
and youth with two foreign-born parents born in the
same country also were more likely to be nationally identi-
fied. Living in two-parent families in which both parents
are foreign-born is presumed to enhance children’s expo-
sure to their native culture and provide a consistent cultural
socialization message (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Youth
living in upper-middle-class families were also more likely
to identify nationally because they may have more reason to
associate pride and honor with their ethnic identity
(Rumbaut, 1994). In addition, parents’ economic advan-
tage serves as a protective factor, as they can provide their
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Finally, those youth choosing a panethnic identity were more likely to be living in inner-city neighborhoods and to be attending inner-city schools with native U.S.-born minorities (Pories & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994, 1996). It is possible that minorities with an immigrant background chose to identify with native-born minorities to fit in and also because they did not perceive the two groups as being dissimilar (Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994, 1996).

In fact, with regard to race relations, panethnic identity identified youth, particularly Black and Latino adolescents, expressed greater awareness of society's negative perceptions of visible minorities, along with the categories of racialization in the United States (e.g., Asian American; Pories & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994, 1996).

Consistent with a segmented assimilation model, data from CILS demonstrates that the process of ethnic identity for immigrant youth is not simple and suggests a dense web of context-linked psychosocial processes. From our view, a phenomenological perspective is necessary to understand more fully this process. Youth who are phenomenologically similar may choose to identify differently. Developmental trajectories are also important to note; in CILS, 56% of participants reported different identities during both the first and second waves of data collection. National identity was the most overall stability, and participants who reported discrimination were also more likely to have a stable ethnic identity. Having both parents born in the same country and speaking the parental language also increased the likelihood of identity stability across time, and females were more likely to show stability in identity than males (Pories & Rumbaut, 2001).

Of course, much future research is necessary for a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the identity processes of immigrant and second-generation youth. Moreover, a development-sensitive theoretical strategy should inform the process. An integrated sociological delineation of identity with psychological models such as those of Cross (1991), Phinney (1992), and Helms (1990) would benefit segmented assimilation models. In addition, reflecting the various components of PVEST, more developmentally sensitive theorizing will support future research efforts.

Cultural Dissonance and Life Stage Outcomes

Cultural dissonance has implications for developmental outcomes in a variety of domains, including education, health, and psychological well-being. However, its impact is further mediated by structural impediments represented by neigh-

children with resources to reinforce their ethnic identity, such as trips back to the family’s country of origin and involvement in ethnic social organizations. Also, as demonstrated by Cuban immigrants in Miami, economically advantaged families can provide their children with private, bilingual education, which serves to reinforce youth’s ethnic identity (Pories & Rumbaut, 2001). Nationally identified immigrant youth report feeling connected to their home country because they had strong family ties there, made frequent trips back, and had plans to return to live as adults (Waters, 1994, 1996).

Pories and Rumbaut (2001) also note the influence of political context on ethnic identity. Specifically, the Mexican-origin students in the California CILS sample showed an increase in choosing to identify as Mexican that coincided with the creation of Proposition 187. Proposition 187 sought to deny undocumented immigrants’ access to social and nonemergency health care services and public school education (Pories & Rumbaut, 2001). Mexican-origin participants who identified as Mexican did so largely in reaction to the threat posed by Proposition 187. Their identity choice was also an outgrowth of their increased collective political activity to prevent the passing of Proposition 187.

Youth who chose the hyphenated American identity status were more likely to be female (this finding was specific to the first wave of data collection), born in the United States, and to have one parent born in the United States and the other parent born abroad (Rumbaut, 1994). Females’ choice of a hyphenated American identity may be the outgrowth of their greater desire to incorporate all aspects of their experiences into their identity, whereas males, in a quest to simplify their lives, may be more likely to choose one identity over another (Rumbaut, 1994). Classic second-generation youth (children who are born in the United States to immigrant parents) may also choose to adopt a hyphenated American identity as a means to cope with pressure to identify with either their parents’ or American culture. Similarly, maintaining a bicultural identity in the presence of one foreign-born and one U.S.-born parent may also constitute a strategy to cope with cultural dissonance (Rumbaut, 1994).

Additionally, those with an American identity reported being more embarrassed when their parents did not know or follow American cultural norms. They also reported a preference for English and chose to solely speak English with their close friends (Rumbaut, 1994). Further, American-identified youth were most commonly found in suburban schools and had a more positive view of the United States in regard to factors such as racism (Pories & Rumbaut, 2001).
broaden character, family resources, and social policies (e.g., socioeconomic opportunities and immigration status) and by protective factors (e.g., cultural capital, social and economic supports). With respect to depression and self-esteem, Harker (2001) and Rumbsaat (1994) reported that first- and 1.5-generation immigrants had more positive outcomes than second-generation youth. One possible explanation for this is that first-generation immigrants reported greater levels of parental supervision and social support. Another possibility is that the two groups have different reformers others (Rumbaut, 1994); first- and 1.5-generation youth may compare their circumstances with those of people in their native country, as they were born there and have spent some time living abroad. They may feel that their situation is a significant improvement and, accordingly, not view or experience cultural dissonance in as significant a light. Conversely, second-generation youth are less likely to utilize their parents’ home country as a point of reference, and cultural dissonance may be a primary concern. Another explanation may be the role of cultural socialization and pride. In fact, Zhou (1997) examined within-group ethnic identity differences in self-esteem for Vietnamese immigrants and found that Vietnamese adolescents who either identified as Vietnamese or Vietnamese Americans had higher self-esteem than American and pan ethnically identified students. Zhou attributed this finding to tighter cultural connections and social support among the former groups.

Kao (1995) explores educational achievement among Asian American youth; her findings indicate that achievement for most Asian immigrant groups is largely impacted by socioeconomic status and family characteristics. Kao’s findings refute the model minority myth of Asian American academic achievement. A narrow focus on the educational success of Asian American youth is fact detracts attention from the social and cultural dissonance they may experience among peers. This is an area that requires much more research. Moreover, research questions that focus on and explore the experiences of low-income, Asian youth, as well as other ethnic groups, who do well academically and enjoy positive peer relations also deserve scholarly attention as resilient young people.

COMPETENCE-PURSUING AND RESILIENCE-DEMONSTRATING OUTCOMES AMONG RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH

Robert White’s (1959, 1960) classic theorizing concerning competence and effectiveness motivation suggests their presence as part of basic human functioning. Consistent with historical reviews (see Cross, 1979, 1991, 2003; Spencer, Cross, et al., 2003), research studies demonstrate that independent of objective social or economic resources available, parents and youth generally value academic success and have high aspirations for future attainments (e.g., Spencer, 1983; Spencer et al., 1993). Additionally, the several reviews presented suggest that for various reasons (e.g., immigration status), racial and ethnically diverse youth may be differentially burdened with adverse experiences; given particularly structured social conditions included as impediments for some and unacknowledged privileges for others. Regarding the former (i.e., experienced impediments and systemic challenges), the consequences for some may be associated with feelings of cultural dissonance and perceptions of insurmountable challenge. On the other hand, although generally ignored by media, many others demonstrate marked achievement independence of specific performance domain perturbed and character of challenges confronted. As suggested by and consistent with the developmental psychology concept of the sensitive period, flexibility and reversability are possible. The more significant and unfortunate conceptual issue is that the notion of recovery is too infrequently applied to ethnically diverse young people who are members of minority groups or, more generally, who grow up in families with few economic resources. Instead, as described and promoted, communicated are long-standing and entrenched sets of a priori assumptions concerning negative outcomes; subsequently, the images themselves may become translated into challenging contexts for self and others.

Specifically, frequently encountered are instances of devaluation perceived as stigma and stereotyping that require the individual’s responsive coping. In fact, relative to resilient outcomes, Yoder-Zimmer (1985) suggests that recoveries from long-term effects due to abrupt, traumatic episodes are possible. His conclusion stems from a review of classic resiliency findings and includes Werner’s (Werner, 1989, 2005; Werner & Smith, 1982, 2001) longitudinal research efforts with Kauai youngsters and Jerome Kagan’s (Kagan & Klein, 1973) observations and analysis of his work with Guatemalan children, along with references from other developmental scientists conducting cross-cultural work.

We bring up the evidence point that there continues to be some degree of difficulty or resistance to the introduction of alternative perspectives to account for the experiences of diverse American youth—particularly children of color—and immigrant youngsters. In our introduction of an alternative framework for explaining the “how” of human
development for diverse youth (see Spencer, 1995; Spencer & Harapanl, 2003), the intent was to explore human-devel-
lopment theorizing that would be sensitive to the unique sit-
uations of American minorities specifically, although inclusive of diverse ethnicities more broadly. In fact, the intro-
duction of PV E S T was neither intended to foster the-
eoretical controversy nor to create unnecessary complexity. The goal remains to provide a heuristic conceptual device that is inclusive of the broad array of human potential and experiences in diverse cultural contexts. In fact, our per-
spective is consistent with Alfred North Whitehead’s no-
tions concerning the role of new paradigms. He notes: “A
clash of doctrines is not a disaster—it is an opportunity” (quoted in Vander Zanden, 1985, p. 54).

We take the opportunity and use PV E S T as a concep-
tual tool for broadening our understandings about vulnera-
bility as experienced by diverse groups. The task entails
the consideration of human vulnerability that required the integration of both risks and protective factors; the latter also considers the role of privilege (generally an unack-
nowledged feature) as a salient protective factor. The in-
clusion has implications for our thinking about competence
and resilience.

Recent theories that emphasize positive youth develop-
ment, in fact, have infrequently afforded both a compe-
tence-exploring view (i.e., that also implicates the fact of
privileging opportunities for a select group; see McLanahan, 1989) and a resilience-explaining perspective. Accord-
ingly, PV E S T introduces an alternative approach as an
override option. As a systems theory, the framework pro-
vides a context-linked, nondeterministic (i.e., avoids uni-
directional and pathologizing points of view), and culturally
sensitive human development conceptual strategy. The
specific caution for broad sensitivity, we believe, may repre-
sent the needs of cultural minorities, including diverse
youth from low-resource families and those with a particu-
lar history, such as Native American people (Provenzo, 1986).
Without doubt, these youth, too, pursue normative
development goals of competence formation, albeit under
challenging conditions (e.g., see Fuchs & Hubrich, 1972). In
fact, as reported by Provenzo, Fuchs and Hau-
richr suggest the failure of American education to ade-
quately meet Native youths’ need for competence:

With major exceptions the history of Indian Education had
been the transmission of white American education, little at-
tended to the Indian children as a one-way process. The institu-
tion of the school is one that was imposed and controlled by
the non-Indian society, its pedagogy and curriculum little
changed for the Indian children, its goals primarily aimed at
removing the child from his aboriginal culture and assimilat-
ing him into the dominant white culture. Whether coercive
or persuasive, this assimilationist goal of schooling has been
minimally effective with Indian children, as indicated by
their record of absenteeism, retardation, and high dropout
rates. (Fuchs & Hau-rich, 1972, p. 19 as reported by
Provenzo, 1986, pp. 206-207)

According to Wenner (1972), often the value system com-
municated by the curriculum is at odds with group values
and their expression. He suggests that a Hopi child may at-
tempt to manifest the least (personal) effort as a way to di-
minish the embarrassment experienced by a less talented
classmate. It is not that competence supported by ef-
ficacy motivation does not exist. Conversely, individual-
level expression takes second place to Indian customs; in
the pursuit of competence outcomes, the latter places group
accomplishments over personal achievements (Fuchs, 1985).

Competence Theorizing and
Individual Vulnerability

As thoroughly reviewed elsewhere (e.g., Spencer, 1977, 1995), Robert White’s (1959) theorizing, first published
50 years ago, suggested that the progression of human de-
velopment is based on an intrinsic motivation; that is, hu-


cognitive and affective domains as individuals socially engage the normative stage-specific tasks of human development (see Havighurst, 1951).

One of the important and positive aspects of S. Anderson's and Messick's (1973) contribution to the discussion of competence is that they describe and clarify the broad range of both affective and cognitive dimensions included in the concept of competence. Their explicit detailing of both contributions supports analyses by traditional competence theorists and demonstrates associations between evolving social-cognitive processes and basic social and emotional development. Thus, early development of self-other distinctions provides the opportunity for incorporating and understanding context interactions, including important self-references that often emerge from such interactions. Combinatior with Flavaro's (1968) early description of social-cognitive processes as linked to basic social and communication skills along with recent and progressively elegant fine-tuning of these inferential processes by theory-of-mind researchers such as Frye and More (1991) and Repacholi and Slaughter (2003), several outcomes are evident. Specifically, it is your's early and progressive social-cognitive development that allows for the cognition-based awareness of others (i.e., their attitudes, beliefs, preferences, biases, and broad perspectives). The gradually unfolding process affords the recurrent consideration of "the other" in the construction of the self and the establishment and experience of social-emotional development. Too frequently and unfortunately, theorizing focuses either on cognition or on affect, without relating their psychological connectedness and unavoidable physiological interdependence. Given the reviews provided, it is evident that specifying these associations is of critical importance; their salience is associated with the varying characteristic of context quality, particularly as linked to group membership and evaluative judgments, and individual differences in sensitivity to their impact.

As individual's transition across settings and produce behavioral products (i.e., coping outcomes as either reactive responses or identifications adopted), variously described by an array of attribution theorists, outcomes are comparatively evaluated. Accordingly, given the recursive character of linkages between levels of the system and unfolding human development capacities, the individual's unavoidable cognitive and affective processes (experienced both psychologically and physiologically) are associated with the socially constructed character of the context. Consequently, responsive coping will be required and competence or fragility outcomes produced and evaluated. As a recursive system, vulnerability is affected due to changes in either risk level or protective factor level presence—thus continuing the cycle. As illustrated and described by Youngblood and Spencer (2002) regarding educational considerations needed for special needs populations and the goals behind Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legislation, we surmise that independent of assumed need level, supporting the basic intrinsic need for competence should be a core aspect of all inclusive programming. In general, then, when considering the entire life course and stage-specific systems perspective, a foundational understanding and productive coping outcome expected (independent of developmental status, inferred level of support available, or special assistance required) is the acquisition of an array of stage-specific competencies.

Competence generally refers to being robust, healthy, and proficient. As suggested by White's (1955, 1960) early essays on the topic, he urged the relevance to human development of an intrinsic motivation toward competence—toward effective interaction with the environment (as reported by Fink & Maddi, 1966, and reviewed by Spencer, 1977). Relatedly, Robert Havighurst's (1953) analysis of human development described sets of normative tasks that are linked with the several developmental periods and represent the several core domains of human functioning (i.e., social, cognitive, affective, and physical). For each period, mastery of a stage-specific skill set is required for general competence and the successful transition through the current stage and, ultimately, for achieving positive developmental stage-specific outcomes: that is, demonstrations of competence. Competence theorists such as White (1955, 1960) have been insightful in their multidimensional perspectives concerning competence. As described earlier, the pursuit of competence is a highly regarded achievement outcome prized by society, labeled by schools, and valued by families. However, literature indicates that the actual "practiced view" about competence formation is, at best, narrowly applied and nonholistic in character. As suggested elsewhere (see Spencer, 1977), when one notes the goals of education and then assesses the outcomes, Edmund Gordon's comments are insightful:

Although the goals of education tend to be stated in broad terms, when we attempt to assess education it is always to cognitive development and achievement that we first look for evidence of change. Too often we either stop with these first results or turn with less rigour to look at other areas as a second thought or as a rationalization for failure to find more impressive evidence in the cognitive domain (quoted in S. Anderson & Messick, 1973, p. 5)
As suggested by Spencer (1977), the outcome of the ap-
proach is an inadequate or shortsighted understanding
about how individuals come to function as competent mem-
bers of society. Alternatively, our approach has been to re-
tend to Gordon's long-term admonishment by addressing
simultaneously the multiple domains of human develop-
ment as linked to personal and group development along with
context features. Spencer's review and synthesis of com-
petence formation theory cites Smith's (1968, p. 272)
query, which remains generally unaddressed and, thus, still
holds sway today.

What do we know, and what do we need to know about the
conditions under which people come to function as competent
members of society? The question arises with urgency as the
first generation of crash programs to install competence in the
poor and "culturally deprived" comes under skeptical review,
and the path to the millennium remains to be discovered.

We are nearly 40 years past Smith's president pronounce-
ment and are 5 years into a new millennium. Unfortunately,
there appears to be no closer commitment to broad, multi-
ple domain-relevant analyses of youths' competence for-
mation processes for use in the design and structuring of cur-
ricula, contexts, and development-sensitive educational systems
and intervention/prevention programming strate-
gies and more general practices.

It is important to note that not all efforts expended in pur-
suit of competence formation are equally rewed. That is,
the environment presents different levels of challenge as well
as provides varying levels of supports and privileges. Of spe-
cial salience, although not frequently acknowledged, is that
the hurdles confronted are not independent of individual
and group members' characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, socio-
economic or immigration status, faith group) along with the
group's hierarchically placed in American society. Conse-
quentl.y, resilience (i.e., successful efl'ects achieved in the
face of challenge) may not always be the outcome. In fact, al-
though originally queried virtually 40 years ago by compe-
tence theorists in the mid- to late 1960s, lingering inferred
questions remain: How much challenge is motivating for re-

til results and stage-specific competencies? On the other
hand, how much challenge (given a lack of equivalence, cul-

instructive, customed, and specific support) is under-
taining of potential competence accrual and resilience?

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Infrequently explored perspectives provided by this review
and synthesis, we believe, afford significant insights for
conceptualizing the literature to date. The alternative
analyses do not only make available helpful conceptual de-

signs but suggest important directions for future research,
programming designs, evaluation efforts, and theorizing
about intra- and interindividual developmental processes.
For example, differential supports are provided and indi-

dividuals' efforts expended in pursuit of stage-specific com-

petencies as dictated by the normative developmental tasks
originally described by Havighurst (1953). That is, al-

through neither formally acknowledged nor openly dis-
cussed in the developmental literature, in general, for the
diverse groups considered, our review indicates particu-
larly patterned individual-context relationships. These are of
relevance for resilience theorizing and suggest the multi-
ple domains of human competence. More to the point,
there appears to be specific linkage between the hierar-
chically organized American social structure and youths'

experiences of excessive challenges versus available sup-
ports. In fact, the social arrangements translate into at least
two patterns. In one case, persistent impediments encoun-
tered as one transitions across time and place potentially in-
terfere with the assembly of competent outcomes; on the
other hand, and as suggested by McIntosh (1969), particu-
lar individuals may experience multiple sets of generally un-
acknowledged and highly ego-boosting privileges. The dif-
ferences are important for the allotment of resources and
future expectations for human capital investments.
That is, they impact current and future planning.

It is important to acknowledge that frequently ignored
are the ethnicity-linked mismatches for individual and con-
text associations and, on the other hand, the privileging ex-
periences of particular youth. The long-term and failed
appreciation of the dilemmas (1) tends to generate signifi-
cant levels of "social uncomfortableness"; (2) constrains and
spawns continuing social inequities; (3) generates, on occa-

sion, heated denials; (4) through stigma and stereotyping
spawns experiences of "stereotype threat"; and (5) invokes an
"official" policy-relevant response of "motivated for-
gottenness." The last is especially perplexing because dif-


culture youth routinely appear on textbook covers, are

included in textbook pages, and generate voluminous sub-
missions as research proposals in response to requests for
applications, which, too frequently, provide inadequate di-

versity of ethnic representation in the decision-making
processes of review and oversight teams. Salient for future
directions, remaining unresolved is the reality that differ-

cultural treatment only further exaggerates the noted lack of
fit for some and appearances of broad success for others.
Patterns of excessive social impediments are apparent, as

experienced particularly by visible and disfavored minority
group members (see Chestang, 1972a); on the other hand, also present are demonstrations of conspicuous renounce and supports experienced by others as White privilege (McIntosh, 1989). Laws may be viewed as a source of legal protection for all citizens. Unfortunately, socially structured impediments as social practices are not independent of race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, religious faith, skin color, and social class; nor are they always easily discernible, although their psychological impact is severe (see Chestang, 1972a, 1972b). The issues of visibility, identifiability, and stigma are important because they represent an individual's recognition of devaluation and difference; the discontent has implications for competence and effectiveness motivation. A review by Spencer, Kim, and Marshall (1987) describes the experiences of a underperforming ethnic minority of Japan (i.e., Buraka youth) and analyzes the youth's subsequent high-performance experiences in the United States, where they are treated as valued (i.e., "model minority") group members. The cross-national research reviewed by Spencer, Kim, and Marshall suggest the importance of the individual-context match (i.e., consonance) or mismatch (i.e., dissonance producing). Of particular importance, the degree of fit suggests experiences of privilege versus persisting (although generally unacknowledged) inequality.

The burgeoning Whiteness studies engineered by legal scholars (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2001) are insightful in their analyses of the myriad ways through which privilege is bestowed and enjoyed; similarly, the more general explosion of privilege by McIntosh (1989) and Luft (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Lestzesse, 2002) has made critically important contributions. Structured impediments that emerge from a hierarchically organized social system are hypothesized to contributing an impact. As obstructions, however, they are experienced by youth as cultural dissonance accrued as a function of a lack of fit between one's cultural distinctiveness and the characteristics of responses from particular contexts (see Spruener, 1999, 2001). Youths' responses to the degree of individual-context fit may result in subsequent challenges: adequate countering supports are required for offsetting their effects and for limiting overall stress. Their consideration has future implications for resource needs and their planned distribution.

On the other hand, and infrequently addressed, we can infer the need to deploy adaptive coping strategies that are minimally consequential for the individual (e.g., use of an economic privilege such as a "legacy admission" stand as opposed to choosing not to pursue postsecondary education or opting for a less prestigious college). Without supports, maladaptive reactive coping responses adopted, such as declining postsecondary educational options, may have dire consequences for identity processes and long-term stage-specific coping outcomes, such as the maximization of earning potential. Inevitably, although generally overlooked, the frequent and unquestioned use of available privilege may result in the failure to hones adaptive options as reactive coping strategies in response to normative and atypical challenges. Information gathered in the aftermath of the Columbine High School massacre along with other nationwide occurrences sheds in exploring questions concerning the frequently unacknowledged downside of privilege.

Persistent exposure to atypical levels of patterned obstacles on, or the other hand, to collective experiences of noticeable nonappearance of typical challenges may result in inauthentic self-constructions and difficult affective processes. A general example is inaccurate assessments of self-attributions and personal characteristics that inadequately linked effort with coping outcomes. Thus, on the one hand, examples of the former (i.e., atypical) levels of patterned obstacles may suggest inauthentic self-constructions concerning ability or performance potential (if one is confronted with too much challenge (e.g., inability inferred given confrontations with unacknowledged negative stereotyping). On the other hand, significant unacknowledged supports and few obstacles might suggest an inauthentic self-construction of ability (i.e., exaggerated intellectual or social prowess, suggesting beliefs of "earned" status).

The latter situation (i.e., atypically highly challenging contexts), even if accompanied with significant supports, may result in coping skill development and positive coping products that define and explain resilience (i.e., positive outcomes in the face of significant challenge). Without adequate supports, on the other hand, we can expect the successful adoption of maladaptive psychological coping skills that provide an identity of short-term salience although accompanied by less than viable long-term identifications and productive coping outcomes.

In the latter situation (i.e., unacknowledged disappearance of typical challenge), its accomplishment with unacknowledged and significant levels of support results in specific outcomes: a consequent state of privilege and psychosocial disconnection. Associated characteristics include narrowly developed social connectedness; rugged independence; limited, underdeveloped, and narrow sense of interdependence; and inadequate sense of responsibility (i.e., beyond the self). This suggests a failure to acknowledge and internalize social connectedness and sense of responsibility. We hypothesize, as a consequence, a level of personal psychosocial
Conclusions and Future Directions

Introducing young people to the concept of resilience is not enough. While the program of research by Spencer is scrutinized along with recent Whiteness studies (e.g., Tomey-Lopez, 1996; Ignatiev, 1995) and McIntosh’s analysis of White privilege (see Lothar & Becker, 2002; McIntosh, 1989), the combined perspectives afford broad, innovative, and analytic formulations; of particular importance, the synthesis suggests new criteria for the definition of resilience. As described by Spencer and Swanson (2000), we need frameworks that explain the variations in the character of youths’ life course transitions (i.e., toward increased vulnerability or the achievement of resilience). Illustrated as a dual-axis formulation of PVVEST to Figure 16.2, we infer that significant variations in the experience and prediction of resilience exist. The often patterned variability represents the character of youths’ transitions across multiple ecological contexts, as influenced by social structures made manifest through particular experiences in schools, families, peer networks, and neighborhoods.

Anne-Marie Amber’s (1997, p. 41) analysis provides conceptual balance and suggests that “a percentage of adolescence is cause a great deal of problems for parents, society and themselves.” The Colsonbhane massacre and many urban homicides are reminiscent of Amber’s analysis. However, as described by Spencer and Swanson (2000), many young people manage to engage in productive coping and to make their way through childhood.
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and adolescence without much disruption, and do not receive much publicity. As resilient young people, such youth grow up with an authentic sense of self and cultural connectedness (i.e., sense of cultural pluralism, defined as the value of one's own cultural niche although also respecting the cultural uniqueness of others), social equity, healthy ego functioning, and a sense of social justice.

In fact, the dual-axis formulation of FVETS shown in Figure 16.3 suggests the possibility of determining who is vulnerable or not and describing the conditions and variability of support available to them. Four quadrants of youth are depicted in the FVETS dual-axis coping formulation (typically, only two groups of youngsters are referred to in the literature). Quadrant I represents highly vulnerable young people who have particular and special needs. Considered in the literature that includes diverse youth, Quadrant I individuals have special needs and too frequently are inferred to be either minority, pathological, impoverished, or problem behaviors. The reasons for their challenges are generally thought to reside within the individual. They are usually listed in texts as highly vulnerable due to multiple risk factors assumed to be of their own creation (i.e., genetic predisposition, social class, temperament, or a physical or neurological malady).

The second most frequently referred to group, Quadrant IV, comprises everyone else who is doing well and is generally assumed to be White, middle income, and up until the mid-1970s narrowly conceived of as males. These youth are presented as the standard against which everyone else is judged. More specifically, these individuals are generally those demonstrating positive stage-specific outcomes when considered from the cradle to the coffin. Quadrant IV individuals are represented as the norm for evaluating the degree of atypicality of Quadrant I individuals. Stated differently, individuals who experience low levels of risk and enjoy the significant presence of protective factors are heralded as the standard of comparison utilized for comparison with all.

However, our literature review suggests that there are at least two other groups of underserved/known individuals. The first, Quadrant II, are those who have both low risks and low levels of protective factors (e.g., demographics of the Columbus High School Killers, who enjoyed low risks given affluence and safe neighborhoods but lacked close parental monitoring and social connectedness). These students are seldom carefully scrutinized by socializing adults, given the apparent absence of stereotype risk factors; in fact, the lack of external scrutiny and lack of supported and positive coping opportunities and history tends to increase their fragility and vulnerability in the face of acute challenge. The emotional pain associated with acute and often normative challenge, with the lack of honed coping skill and positive adaptive coping strategies, results in the use of maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., mass murderers or deviant organization memberships, i.e., Asayan Brotherhood, skinhead societies). Their various behavioral outcomes may not warrant significant attention; they are thus left to their own coping devices and are assumed to be healthy (i.e., their fragility is ignored).

Quadrant III individuals are infrequently the focus of media attention. They are represented by high risks but also have access to and make use of significant protective factors (e.g., high parental monitoring, supportive and available socializing adults; good adaptive coping skill development and use; and salient identifications, i.e., with faith groups, national identities, reference group orientation). We hypothesize that Quadrant III youth are the truly resilient individuals because they habitually demonstrate good and productive outcomes in the face of persistent challenge. For example, work by Spencer and colleagues suggest that parental monitoring matters (e.g., Spencer, Duesep, Swanson, & Cunningham, 1998; Spencer & Swanson, 2000), identity processes are supportive (Spencer, Cunningham, & Swanson, 1995), and neighborhood and family influences make a difference (e.g., Spencer, Cole, Jones, & Swanson, 1997). It is apparent from our dual-axis formulation of FVETS that we know the least about Quadrant IV and III. Further, what we assume about Quadrant IV is inadequate because, if considered closely, these youth are unsettled relative to resiliency presence or absence. If they are actually Quadrant II youth, the mislabeling is important, as opportunities are being missed for providing greater support. For determining their resiliency, different research questions will need to be asked because their current positioning suggests inordinately high levels of privilege versus true resiliency. Alternative queries of Quadrant IV should include exploration of identifications that suggest connectedness to others as opposed to a dependence on available supports and an absence of obvious challenge. For Quadrant III, it will be important to understand variability even within this group. That is, as previously, given the presence of high risk, how much risk can be handled with traditional supports, and how much risk (and its character) requires equivalent levels of significant support?

In this chapter, we attempted to detail the myriad challenges experienced by diverse youth and the unique sources of support. We suggest that human vulnerability represents the combination of risk level balanced against protective factors. It is evident that for some youth, there continues to be a significant focus on risks without equivalent analysis.
of protective factors and their translation into supports that differ for the many groups. For other groups, assumptions of privilege mask our potential understanding of youthful risk as a function of significant support and, for many, unacknowledged privilege. An understanding of all four quadrants of the dual-axis formulation of PVEST is required for designing contexts for maximizing resilient outcomes for all youth. Consistent with theorizing by Robert White, the characterization of behavioral outcomes as resilient is not possible without a full understanding of challenge, both stage-specific types with normative confrontations and the acute and atypical varieties. The insights have implications for future directions in that they add the design of supportive programming and policies to assist in obtaining authentic resilient outcomes for youth more generally. This can occur, for some, through providing customized supports for decreasing vulnerability through risk factor reduction. For those who enjoy unacknowledged privilege and infrequent authentic challenges, identity interventions that promote social connectedness and acknowledgment of mutual responsibility may be the type of interventions required.

We submit that the PVEST provides specific implications for future and policy directions needed for diverse communities of children-and-families. At a process-oriented and systems framework that enhances the interpretation of diverse expressions of human development, including the etiology and character of human vulnerability, it should be fine-tune future planning for specific groups' needs. As a context-linked, history-relevant, and culturally sensitive framework, it allows for the customization of strategies and supports for diverse groups, while intended for accomplishing the same outcome for all resilient outcomes in the pursuit of competence and efficacy motivation.

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