

Home Environment and Self-Efficacy Beliefs among Native American, African American and Latino Adolescents

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Abstract : Many minority adolescents in the United States live in adverse circumstances that pose long-term threats to their well-being. A strong sense of personal control and self-efficacy can help youth mitigate some of those risks and may help protect youth from influences connected with deviant peer groups. Accordingly, it is important to identify conditions that help foster feelings of efficacy in areas that seem critical for the accomplishment of developmental tasks during adolescence. The purpose of this study is to examine two aspects of the home environment (modeling and encouragement of maturity, family companionship and investment) and their relation to three components of self efficacy (self efficacy in enlisting social resources, self efficacy for engaging in independent learning, and self-efficacy for self-regulatory behavior) in three groups of minority adolescents (Native American, African American, Latino). The sample for this study included 54 Native American, 131 African American, and 159 Latino families, each with a child between 16 and 20 years old. The families were recruited from four states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, and Oklahoma. Each family was administered the Late Adolescence version of the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) Inventory and each adolescent completed a 30-item measure of perceived self-efficacy. Three areas of self-efficacy beliefs were examined for this study: enlisting social resources, independent learning, and self-regulation. Each of the three areas of self-efficacy was regressed on the two aspects of the home environment plus overall household risk. For Native Americans, modeling and encouragement were significant for self-efficacy pertaining to enlisting social resources and independent learning. For African Americans, companionship and investment was significant in all three models. For Latinos, modeling and encouragement was significant for self-efficacy pertaining to enlisting social resources and companionship and investment were significant for the other two areas of self-efficacy. The findings show that even as minority adolescents are becoming more individuated from their parents, the quality of experiences at home continues to be associated with their feelings of self-efficacy in areas important for adaptive functioning in adult life. Specifically, individuals can develop a sense that they are efficacious in performing key tasks relevant to work, social relationships, and management of their own behavior if they are guided in how to deal with key challenges and they have been exposed and supported by others who are competent in dealing with such challenges. The findings presented in this study would seem useful given that there is so little current research on home environmental factors connected to self-efficacy beliefs among adolescents in the three groups examined. It would seem worthwhile that personnel from health, human service and juvenile justice agencies give attention to supporting parents in communicating with adolescents, offering expectations to adolescents in mutually supportive ways, and in engaging with adolescents in productive activities. In comparison to programs for parents of young children, there are few specifically designed for parents of children in middle childhood and adolescence.

Keywords : family companionship, home environment, household income, modeling, self-efficacy

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