

Chapter 38

Black Parents as Achievement Socialization Agents for Black Girls: Building Bridges to Mathematics

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ABSTRACT

The achievement socialization of Black girls is highly dependent upon the interactions within their sphere of socialization. Black gender socialization patterns may build an academic resilience in Black women that gives them the capacity to navigate the U.S. educational system substantially better than their male counterparts. In this chapter, the authors describe how parents and teachers can leverage the racial, disciplinary, and academic identities of Black girls to increase their performance in mathematics. This chapter equips teachers and parents with explicit tools to build on the trends observed in prior research. These tools can help parents and teachers build bridges to mathematics success for Black girls.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How are Black parents uniquely situated to foster achievement in their Black girls?
- How does intersectionality shape Black girl cultural funds of knowledge?
- How is achievement socialization specifically beneficial to Black parents and their daughters?

Investing in girls and woman isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. -Jill Sheffield

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INTRODUCTION

Parents and teachers have the potential to influence the mathematics achievement of Black girls through socialization. Socialization is the process by which children's beliefs, goals, and behaviors are shaped to conform to their social group, so that they may become competent adult members of that group (Parke & Buriel, 1998). The achievement socialization of Black girls is particularly important because of the historic dual marginalization of Black girls in mathematics. The socialization process and subsequent identity development of Black girls is distinctive because of the interactions between racism and sexism, which perhaps are better conceptualized as gendered racial socialization (Thomas & King, 2007). This process has substantial ramifications for students as they navigate K-12 educational settings. Therefore, it is essential that Black girls be socialized to become competent members of the Black, as well as the mathematics community. In this chapter, we contend that although these processes can work separately, it is more efficient for parents and mathematics teachers to work together.

The achievement socialization of Black girls is highly dependent upon the interactions within their sphere of socialization. The sphere of socialization is comprised of socializing agents such as: (1) parents, (2) siblings, (3), teachers, (4) peers, (5) curriculum and curriculum developers, and (6) popular media (Leonard & Martin 2014). These socializing agents are important because they help to promote Black girls' identity construction. Three intersecting identities are important for the mathematics success of Black students: (1) racial identity, (2) disciplinary identity, and (3) academic identity (Varelas, Martin, & Kane, 2012). However, gender shapes the Black student experience in school, as well as in society. Hence, the socialization of Black girls is uniquely shaped by their dual existence as Black and female.

In the sections that follow, we discuss how dual marginalization can limit the mathematics potential of Black girls. Then we discuss how the achievement socialization of Black girls can be leveraged with regard to the effects of dual marginalization on Black girls. Finally, we explain how parents and teachers as socializing agents can help Black girls construct a positive racial, disciplinary, and academic identity. In the discussion that follows, dual marginality is examined as it relates to the Black female student experience.

DUAL MARGINALITY: INTERSECTIONS OF FEMININITY AND BLACKNESS

Black girls face dual marginalization in public schools and society. This marginalization affects their academic and professional trajectories, thus it is important to consider these challenges explicitly. Dual marginalization refers to the "double" or extended marginalization that occurs when a person is negatively affected by their existence in two marginalized populations (Young & Young, 2017). This dual marginalization can also be conceptualized as a form of multiple jeopardy. According to Tang (1997), female students of color routinely face "multiple jeopardy" because classroom interactions are mediated by both gender and racial status expectations. For example, many subject areas—such as mathematics or science—are unjustly identified as inherently male domains. As such, female students are consistently underserved and unrecognized for their abilities in these areas.

Given the persistence of the achievement gap, Black girls are faced with "double jeopardy" because Black students are often stereotyped as academically challenged. For Black girls in mathematics spaces, this double jeopardy can be devastating. Black students traditionally lack opportunities to fully participate in the mathematics classroom given their unique cultural attributes and funds of knowledge

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