

DBP Book Review

Name of Book: Maggie's American Dream: The Life and Times of a Black Family	Author: James P. Comer
Publisher: Penguin Books	Date of Publication: 1988
Name of Reviewer: Damani A. Piggott	Date of Review: 10/2006
Intended Audience (choose from Parents, Children, Professional, Other): Parents, older children, and professionals	
Purpose of the book: Dr. Comer, a renowned child psychiatrist and associate dean at the Yale School of Medicine, provides a very personal and poignant narrative of his own life path and the central, quintessential role of his parents and his environment in his developmental process. It is a work in three parts – each flowing into the other. The first is an oral history – a transcription of the experiences of a loving and devoted mother - her struggles, motivation and significant success in child rearing against economic, social, and historical odds. The second is the autobiographical account of Dr. Comer's formative years – his own struggles and the factors that contributed to his own highly successful developmental path. The third section provides some insight into how Dr. Comer's own experiences, including an examination of the factors that propelled his own achievements and that of his siblings, inspired him to create the Comer School Development Program – a program dedicated to successful achievement for all children through a holistic approach to child education and describes the initial launch and success of the program.	
Theoretical Basis: This work provides a window into the successful application of developmental principles to child rearing. Without the formality of a purely academic discourse, the six dimensions that Dr. Comer considers critical to children's learning and development – physical, ethical, social, linguistic, psychological and cognitive (principles he has incorporated into his school development program) – are evident throughout this narrative of his own life course.	

Strengths: This book is an inspiration for parents, older children, and professionals alike. It is a clear, eloquent, beautifully flowing story demonstrating the power of positive parental influence, community support, and mentorship. For older children, it is a story of courage and the ability to achieve and overcome. For professionals, it is a story of our responsibility and commitment to ensuring the success of all children – our ability to be agents of change. For all of us, it is a story of determination, hope, and promise.

Weaknesses:

Recommendation of Reviewer (please choose one and put "X" in box next to selection):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Highly recommend for all parents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Highly recommend for parents with specific problems/issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	May be useful to some parents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Would not recommend

Additional Comments: