
Access to Knowledge

An Agenda For Our Nation's Schools

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Overcoming Racial Barriers to Equal Access

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Précis

A previously underexamined aspect of race relations, overlooked both in explaining the variability of school achievement and in trying to equalize access to knowledge in schools, is the relationship of involuntary minority group populations to the dominant cultural group. John Ogbu distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary minority groups to explain success in American society and schooling.

Ogbu notes that cultural studies reveal that race alone does not explain variability in school achievement. Being a member of a racial minority group neither explains school success nor lack of it, in this country or elsewhere. Asian-Americans, for example, have done well in U.S. schools and so have some other immigrant minority groups. Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians, on the other hand, have done less well.

To understand relevant differences between these groups, Ogbu develops a structural picture of racial stratification. That is, when races are assigned different rungs on the social ladder, two types of barriers enforce that assignment. One, Ogbu calls instrumental barriers: fairly overt and visible exclusionary activities like discrimination in jobs, housing, and education. Other barriers he terms expressive: conscious and unconscious derogatory treatment of a minority group by members of the dominant group that satisfies the latter's psychological needs such as scapegoating. Members of these minority groups, in turn, develop coping and survival strategies that represent responses to the instrumental and expressive behaviors of the dominant group. These behaviors become culturally folded into the traditions of the minority group and are passed on from one generation to the next. Even if the dominant group takes action to eliminate these instrumental barriers and curbs its negative expressive behavior, imbedded minority group responses tend to persist because they are learned early in life and are not easily given up. These behaviors represent a cultural

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defense to derogatory treatment, and can foster a counterculture in opposition to the dominant group. Some black teenagers, for example, display negative attitudes toward school success: achieving success in school may seem like joining the oppressors. Minority group members themselves may not consciously recognize these behaviors for what they are, Ogbu believes.

Educators are asked to explore the history and nature of racial minority groups' coping responses, especially their expressive behaviors, which Ogbu says policymakers and reformers often are not fully aware of and do not adequately address as a barrier to school success. He focuses primarily on black students as examples but emphasizes that American Indians and Hispanic Americans originally from the southwestern United States are others for whom expressive responses to earlier domination and derogatory treatment by the mainstream group function as a barrier to school success. Ogbu distinguishes their experiences from those of other immigrant groups and shows how children from these involuntary minority cultures must fight against their own culture to be successful in schools. Schools are urged to develop programs that take these behaviors into account, understanding this critical dimension to removing racial barriers to knowledge.

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—The College Board

Variability is a common feature of the school performance of racial minority students in the United States and in other urban industrial societies, such as England, Israel, Japan, and New Zealand. In these and similar societies children from *some* racial minority groups do well in school, whereas children from *some other* racial minority groups do not. In the United States, for example, it is well known that Asian-Americans do well in school, but most American Indians, black Americans, and Mexican-Americans do not. In New Zealand the indigenous Maoris do less well in school than Polynesians from other islands, although the two groups belong to the same "race." Membership of minorities and the dominant group in the same "race" does not necessarily translate into equal school performance. Consider the case of Israel where Oriental Jews consistently lag behind the Ashkenazi Jews in school performance; consider, too, the case of Japan where the Buraku outcastes massively continue to underperform the dominant Ippon Japanese.

My conclusion from comparative research is that race is not a significant variable in determining school success or school failure except where racial groups are *stratified*. But then, racial minorities are not all equally affected by racial stratification, owing to differences in their initial terms of incorporation into the social arrangements under which they exist. Another conclusion emerging from comparative research is that racial barriers to school success are not captured by such popular concepts as "at-risk," "disadvantaged," and "the underclass" that are in their various definitions largely applied to black Americans and similar minority youths in the United States.

This chapter is more about the nature of racial barriers against minority school success than about how to overcome such barriers. The reason is that my own comparative research has focused on identifying and clarifying the nature of the barriers, in the belief that the first step toward overcoming the barriers is to understand them.

In the next section I explain what I mean by racial stratification and its relation to minority status. Then I describe the case of black Americans as an example of a racial minority in a stratified society. This leads to an analysis of the racial barriers to equal access to knowledge, or how racial barriers affect school adjustment and performance for blacks. A brief section follows on educational strategies of black youths. The concluding section makes some suggestions about how to reduce the barriers identified in the chapter.

Racial Stratification

Racial stratification exists when members of different, publicly recognized and named racial groups are not treated alike in the economic marketplace, for social positions, and for other purposes even when the persons involved have similar social-class background or similar training and ability. It is

customary for American social scientists and other scientists to think of racial stratification mainly in terms of prejudice and instrumental discrimination *against* the minorities. I suggest, however, that racial stratification also involves the adaptive or coping *responses* of the minorities. Each of these components of racial stratification has two faces: instrumental and expressive barriers *against* the minorities, on the one hand, and instrumental and expressive *responses* of the minorities, on the other.

Instrumental barriers are those that yield tangible gains for the dominant group, such as gains resulting from job, wage, and housing discrimination. Consider the case of AT&T that was investigated by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission: in 1974 the Commission reported that the giant company "saved" about \$362 million a year by not paying women, black, and Hispanic workers what they would have earned had they been white males (DeWare 1978). Expressive barriers are the conscious and unconscious treatment of racial minorities by members of the dominant group that satisfies the latter's psychological needs. They include scapegoating as well as personal, intellectual, and cultural derogation of the minorities. Instrumental responses of the minorities consist of the various ways they try to cope with their limited access to jobs, decent wages, education, housing, and the like, including efforts to circumvent, reduce, and eliminate those barriers. Expressive responses are conscious and unconscious responses the minorities make to their treatment that satisfy their own psychological needs, such as the need to maintain their sense of self-worth and integrity. In a racially stratified society such as the United States the expressive barriers and expressive responses are institutionalized as emotionally held beliefs that justify certain attitudes and behaviors toward members of the outgroup (DeVos 1967).

Racial stratification is maintained by the persistence of the instrumental barriers and instrumental responses as well as by the persistence of what DeVos (1984) calls "socialized feelings of aversion, revulsion and disgust" toward the minorities (i.e., expressive barriers) and socialized distrust and opposition of the minorities toward members of the dominant group (i.e., expressive responses).

In view of some claims about the declining significance of race in determining the life chances of black Americans, it is important to point out here that the expressive dimensions of racial stratification may persist after instrumental barriers have been eliminated or after racial minorities have gained more opportunities to hold traditional white middle-class jobs and other positions. DeVos (1967, 1984) has suggested that the expressive dimensions are more resistant to change because they have usually taken on a life of their own as "cultural solutions" to recurring psychological problems facing dominant-group members as well as recurring psychological problems facing racial minorities and because they are learned early in life in the family and peer groups. But there are also other reasons for their persistence. One is that policymakers and reformers are usually not fully aware of and do not

adequately address the expressive components of racial stratification. Another is that the minorities demanding changes do not themselves recognize their own expressive tendencies or the functions and consequences of such tendencies. In fact, minority spokespersons are likely to resist analysis pointing to their expressive behaviors and attitudes. Still another reason is the persistence of some vestiges of instrumental discrimination against the minorities; furthermore, some new forms of instrumental barriers may emerge, such as a *secondary job ceiling* that black Americans and similar minorities now seem to experience once they gain a foothold in traditional white middle-class jobs in the corporate economy and white-controlled institutions.

Racial Stratification and Minority Status

For the purpose of this chapter, we may distinguish two types of racial minorities by the initial terms of their incorporation: immigrant or voluntary minorities and castelike or involuntary minorities.

Immigrant minorities are people who came to the United States more or less voluntarily because they believed that this would lead to increased economic well-being, better overall opportunities, or greater political freedom. These expectations continue to influence the way the immigrants perceive and respond to their treatment by white Americans and the societal institutions controlled by the latter. The Chinese in Stockton, California (Ogbu 1974), and the Punjabi Indians in Valleyside, California (Gibson 1988), are examples of immigrant racial minorities.

Involuntary minorities are those who were initially brought into the United States society against their will, through slavery or conquest. Such minorities resent the loss of their former freedom, their displacement from power, and deprivation of their property. Examples of involuntary minorities include black Americans who were brought as slaves from Africa; American Indians, the original owners of the land who were conquered and shoved into "reservations"; and Hispanic Americans in the Southwestern United States who were also conquered and displaced from power.

I have described elsewhere how immigrant and involuntary minorities differ in their perceptions and interpretations of as well as responses to white treatment, and the effects of these perceptions, interpretations, and responses on their school adjustment and performance (Ogbu 1988, 1987, 1983; Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi 1986). Suffice it to say here that the immigrants come to the United States with expectations that greatly influence their responses to the barriers they encounter in society at large and in the schools. Like the involuntary minorities, the immigrants are confronted with economic, social, and political barriers; they may be given inferior and segregated education; they often suffer personal, intellectual, and cultural derogation; and they are often denied true assimilation into the mainstream of American life. Confronted with these *collective problems*, the immigrants tend to interpret them

as more or less *temporary problems* they will overcome or can overcome eventually with hard work and education. One thing that helps the immigrants maintain this optimistic view is that they compare their present situation with that of their former selves or with that of their peers "back home." Such a comparison yields much evidence to support the belief that they have more and better opportunities in the United States for themselves or for their children. Even if they are allowed only marginal jobs, they think they are better off in the United States than they would be in their homeland. Furthermore, they tend to believe they are excluded from better jobs because of their status as "foreigners" or because they do not speak English well enough or because they were not educated in the United States. On the whole, the immigrants tend to accept the folk theory of the white middle class that anyone can get ahead in the United States through hard work and good education, even when the immigrants are experiencing barriers in opportunity structure (Suarez-Orozco 1986; Gibson 1988).

Other factors that help the immigrants adjust are their nonoppositional social identity and nonoppositional cultural frame of reference. The immigrants, at least during the first generation, bring with them a sense of who they are which they had *before* emigrating to the United States. They perceive this social identity as *different but not oppositional or ambivalent vis-à-vis white American social identity*. The immigrants also are characterized by *primary cultural or language differences or both*, differences that existed prior to their emigration to the United States. That is, their cultural and language differences did not develop in opposition to white American culture and language or as a part of boundary-maintaining mechanisms between them and white Americans. Thus the immigrants generally interpret such differences as *barriers they have to overcome* to achieve the goals of their emigration, but they do not fear or think that they must give up their own culture, language, or identity in the process. Finally, the immigrants tend to trust or acquiesce to white people more than the involuntary minorities do. Even when the immigrants encounter prejudice and discrimination, they tend to rationalize such treatments by saying that as "strangers" in a foreign country they have no choice but to tolerate prejudice and discrimination (Gibson 1988).

All the above factors lead the immigrants to adopt and maintain attitudes and behaviors that are conducive to school success. Immigrant parents impress on their children the fact that they themselves have *suffered* to come to the United States in order to give them "American education" so that they can get ahead in the United States or "back home." Immigrant parents not only stress the importance of education but also take steps to ensure that their children adopt appropriate academic attitudes and study hard—whether the children be Chinese, Koreans, Latinos from South and Central America, or Punjabi Indians (Gibson 1988; Kim-Young 1987; Suarez-Orozco 1987; Ong 1976). Another reason these minorities are academically successful is

that they do not equate school learning with linear acculturation or assimilation into white American culture or with a loss of their language and cultural identity. Finally, the immigrants' school success is enhanced by their relatively positive and trusting attitudes toward the public schools and the school personnel, which the immigrants often consider to be superior to the schools and teachers of their homeland. Even when the immigrants meet with and resent prejudice and discrimination, they rationalize the experience in a manner that does not discourage their striving for school success (Gibson 1988).

The perceptions, interpretations, and responses of involuntary minorities are different. Not only do involuntary minorities not have "a homeland" situation with which to compare their present selves and future possibilities, but they also use white Americans as a basis for comparison and usually end up with negative conclusions and resentment. In their folk theory they "wish" they could get ahead through education and ability, but they know that they "can't" because of racial barriers which they interpret as part of their undeserved oppression. Some of their survival strategies compete with or detract from schooling as a way of getting ahead, and some produce role models that are counterproductive to school success. Their deep distrust of white Americans and the public schools makes acceptance of school rules of behavior problematic. And because of their oppositional social identity and cultural frame of reference, involuntary minorities do not interpret the cultural and language differences they encounter in school and society as barriers to be overcome, but rather as symbols of identity to be maintained; they have a tendency to equate school learning with linear acculturation or assimilation into white American culture or with a loss of their language and cultural identity. Consequently, there are both social and psychological pressures against crossing cultural or language boundaries, even in the school context. On the whole, the societal adjustment of involuntary minorities makes their school success more problematic than is the case for the immigrants. I use black Americans in the next section to show how the contrasting situation of involuntary minorities affects their school experience and school success.

Black Americans in U.S. Society

Instrumental Treatment: Economic Barriers

White instrumental discrimination against blacks has taken many forms, including economic, political, social, and educational barriers. I will use economic barriers as an example, since I have examined these historically in connection with black education. I will use "job ceiling" as a concept to explain how the economic barriers work against blacks. A job ceiling includes both formal statutes and informal practices employed by white Americans to

limit the access of blacks to desirable occupations, to truncate their opportunities, and to narrowly channel the potential returns they could expect from their education and abilities (Mickelson 1984; Ogbu 1978). Whites have historically used the job ceiling to deny qualified blacks free and equal competition for jobs they desired, excluding them from certain highly desirable jobs requiring education and where education pays off. In this way whites have not permitted blacks to obtain their proportional share of high-status jobs, and a disproportionate segment of the black population has been confined to menial jobs below the job ceiling.

For many generations the job ceiling was very low. In fact, before the 1960s the segregated institutions and communities serving blacks were the major avenues for occupational differentiation on the basis of formal education and ability. It was in these segregated institutions that blacks gained the best access to professional and other jobs above the job ceiling (Henderson 1967; A. R. Ross 1973), although they were not usually admitted to the very top-level positions, which were filled by whites (Frazier 1957; Greene and Woodson 1930; Johnson 1943; Marshall 1968; A. M. Ross 1967).

Outside the segregated institutions and communities, some blacks were employed in the mainstream economy above the job ceiling, but their employment status there did not parallel their educational qualifications. In general, black advances in mainstream employment, especially above the job ceiling, occurred mainly in periods of national crises (Myrdal 1944; Ogbu 1978). And it can be argued that the increase in black employment opportunities above the job ceiling since the 1960s has also been due to similar national crises and unique events that Myrdal long ago spoke of.

The pattern of black employment began to change in the 1960s when employment opportunities above the job ceiling increased as a result of deliberate government policies under pressures from civil right groups. Executive orders, legislation, and special programs such as affirmative action were used to change hiring practices not only within the government bureaucracy but also in the private sector. Thus Wilson (1979: 34) reports that the average number of recruitment visits of representatives of corporations to predominantly black colleges rose from 4 in 1960 to 50 in 1965 to 297 in 1970. Furthermore, black colleges that had not been visited at all in 1960, such as Clark College, Atlanta University, and Southern University, received 350, 510, and 600 representatives of corporations, respectively, in 1970.

As a result, the number of blacks who entered high-level jobs above the job ceiling in the second half of the 1960s rose dramatically (Brimmer 1974; Ogbu 1978; A. R. Ross 1973). The employment of blacks above the job ceiling has continued to grow. On the other hand, some blacks who have gained entry into high-level positions in the corporate economy and other white-controlled institutions appear to be experiencing a secondary job ceiling: they complain that they are not climbing the professional ladder as fast as their white peers are (Smith 1987).

Analysts generally agree that the favorable changes in opportunity structure that began in the 1960s have affected mainly middle-class blacks, especially blacks with college educations. No significant changes have taken place in the employment status of blacks who have not gone to college. There has been no comparable official policy to assist them. Of course, in the 1960s, when the pool of jobs increased owing to the Vietnam War and social programs, black employment increased at all levels of the occupational ladder. The decrease in the pool of jobs in the early 1970s not only slowed down the employment of blacks lacking college educations but also resulted in loss of jobs by those already employed, partly because they were the last hired and therefore the first to be fired. The loss of jobs among blacks without college educations has continued into the late 1980s; and under the economic policy of the Reagan administration black unemployment sometimes reached an astronomical level and remained consistently almost twice the national level. Blacks who have not gone to college thus have remained in their traditional marginal participation in which the linkage between schooling, work experience, and earning is relatively weak (Newman et al. 1978; Newman 1979; Ogbu 1978, 1981; Willie 1979; Wilson 1979).

Expressive Treatment: Intellectual and Cultural Derogation

Whites initially based their derogation of blacks on biblical doctrines, according to Myrdal (1944). However, after the eighteenth century, when it came to be accepted that man belonged to the biological universe, whites began to assert that blacks were biologically inferior. Nowadays many whites no longer openly admit that they think blacks are biologically inferior, but Gallup polls indicate that the belief persists.

The derogatory beliefs are expressed in many forms, all of which serve important emotional functions for white people. For example, until the end of the 1950s it was customary for whites not to publicly acknowledge black intellectual and other accomplishments. Thus Dick Gregory reports in his autobiography that in the 84-year history of his college "the outstanding athlete had never been a black." He himself helped to change this slight when he *demand*ed to be named and was named the best athlete of the year (1965: 87).

Another form of expressive exploitation or barrier is for white Americans to attribute to blacks undesirable personal traits. Guy Johnson (1944) presents a detailed summary of negative stereotypes of blacks in books and articles written by whites up to the late 1930s. Myrdal provides an even more elaborate and incisive account of ordinary white people's beliefs about the "in-born indelible inferiority of Blacks" (1944: 100). He notes that blacks are thought to be "the opposite of the white race," to stand "for dirt, sin, and the devil," "to be stupid, immoral, diseased, lazy, incompetent and dangerous to the white man's virtue and social order." These projections become insti-

tutionalized in white people's behavior toward blacks, in their jokes, and in their oral and written tales about blacks. The aversion that these projections arouse accounts in part, according to Myrdal, for white people's belief that blacks are unassimilable, by which whites mean that it is undesirable to assimilate blacks (Myrdal 1944: 54). Thus the long history of social and physical segregation of blacks was an attempt to "quarantine what is evil, shameful and feared in society" (100).

Finally, throughout much of the history of black-white relations in the United States white people have used blacks as scapegoats. One common pattern is for whites to hold blacks collectively responsible for the offense of a single black person. For example, following Nat Turner's "insurrection" in Southampton, Virginia, in 1831, the geographical mobility of all blacks throughout the country was restricted (Haley 1976; Styron 1966). And in the Rosewood Massacre of January 1923 (CBS Television Network 1984), the allegation that a black man raped a white woman in Rosewood, Florida, resulted in some 1,500 white men from nearby towns marching into Rosewood and killing 40 innocent black men, women, and children. Whites have also used blacks as scapegoats in times of political and economic hardship. For example, during the economic recession of 1934, antiblack violence occurred throughout the United States; Wallace (1970: 84) gives a report of the violence in Columbia, Pennsylvania. Even as recently as the early 1980s, white violence against blacks and other minorities increased in California during the economic recession (State of California, *Governor's Task Force*, 1982).

To summarize, the debate about the inferiority of blacks has continued to date in one form or another. In the early 1940s Johnson (1943) interviewed white Americans in all regions of the country and found that the belief in the inferiority of blacks was widespread and used to justify the segregation of blacks in public institutions like the schools, to segregate them residentially, to limit their social contacts, to confine them to jobs below the job ceiling, and, most importantly, to prohibit interracial marriage. A poll conducted by *Newsweek* magazine in 1978 found that although white beliefs in the racial inferiority of blacks had been decreasing significantly since the 1960s, a significant portion of the whites interviewed still held such beliefs. For example, about one quarter of the whites, or 25 percent of those polled, said that blacks had less intelligence than whites, and about 15 percent thought that blacks were inferior to white people (*Newsweek*, February 26, 1979, 48).

Black American Adaptive/Coping Responses

Instrumental Responses. When black Americans compare their present situation regarding jobs and wages with that of their white peers, they usually conclude that they are worse off than they ought to be for no other reason than that they belong to a subordinate racial group. Generations of shared knowledge and experience of discrimination appear to have led them

to believe that they cannot "make it" by merely following the rules of behavior or cultural practices that work for white Americans. Consequently, blacks have developed a folk theory of getting ahead that differs in some important respects from the folk theory of white Americans and that comprises the following survival strategies:

- Changing the rules. Because blacks do not really believe that the societal rules for self-advancement that work for white Americans work equally well for them, they try to change the rules. One example of this is the argument to abolish civil service tests on the basis of claims that they are designed to exclude blacks from jobs, not to enable them to get ahead (Ogbu 1977).
- Collective struggle. This strategy includes what white Americans legitimate as civil rights activities; but for blacks it also includes rioting and other forms of collective action that promise to increase opportunities or the pool of resources available to black communities (Newman et al. 1978).
- Clientship, or "Uncle Tomming." Black Americans have long known that one way to promote survival and self-betterment is through favoritism, not merit. They have also learned that favoritism can be solicited by being dependent, compliant, and easily manipulated; as a result, white Americans, both as individuals and in organizations, serve as patrons to individual blacks and to black groups and organizations. The federal government in particular has tended to assume the patron's role, serving as an employer, a sponsor of educational and other training programs, an adviser and protector of civil rights, and a distributor of subsistence assistance, or "welfare."
- Entertainment and sports. The strategy of entertainment includes activities of a wide range of performers, such as singers, musicians, preachers, comedians, disc jockeys, and writers (Keil 1977: 70). It satisfies people's need for entertainment and serves as a therapy to enable them to cope with the problem of subordination. In recent decades, entertainment and sports have become increasingly important in exploiting mainstream resources.
- Hustling and pimping. These are traditional strategies for exploiting nonconventional resources, or the street economy. Selling drugs is yet another kind of "hustle" (Foster 1975; Hammond 1965; McCord et al. 1969). And in the past "passing for white" was a strategy open to a limited number.

Over many generations the survival strategies became institutionalized and integrated into black culture. They have contributed to shaping the norms, values, and competencies of black Americans. However, with the

raising of the job ceiling and other changes since the 1960s, some of the survival strategies have undergone changes. For example, mainstream employment has assumed a greater role, especially among the more educated blacks. Entertainment and sports are increasingly directed at tapping mainstream resources. And "passing for white" is probably not as common as it might once have been.

Expressive Responses. Black Americans have also responded expressively to white treatment. They have done so by forging a *collective, or social, identity that is oppositional vis-à-vis* white American identity and by forging a *cultural frame of reference that is also oppositional to white American cultural frame of reference from the point of view of blacks.*

Black Americans developed a new sense of peoplehood, or social identity, after their involuntary incorporation into U.S. society. This identity was created as a result of discriminatory treatment, including denial of true admission into mainstream society by the whites, which blacks perceived and experienced as collective and enduring. It seemed that blacks could not expect to be treated like white Americans regardless of their individual differences in ability, training, or education, regardless of differences in place of origin or residence or differences in economic status or physical appearance (Green 1981). Furthermore, blacks learned that they could not easily escape from their birth-ascribed membership in a subordinate and disparaged group by returning to "a homeland" and that most could not escape by "passing for white" (DeVos 1967; Ogbu 1984).

Historical and comparative studies suggest that minority populations that have become "persistent" or "enduring" within nation-states usually have developed boundary-maintaining mechanisms that are both cultural and oppositional (Castile and Kushner 1981; DeVos 1967; Spicer 1966, 1971). Black Americans are no exception.

As an aside, I want to make it clear that I do not consider the *totality* of black American culture to be the product of black-white stratification. I believe that there are some genuine differences in content between black and white American cultures and that several factors contribute to these differences. Some contents of black culture may be of African origin; the exclusion of generations of blacks from certain cultural, economic, and sociopolitical activities could have effectively denied them the opportunity to develop certain know-hows and values associated with such activities and characteristic of whites; and the survival strategies of blacks for coping with economic and other realities could have resulted in cultural content that is not necessarily found in white American culture (Ogbu 1978, 1981, 1986).

But more germane to my present argument is the expressive or qualitative aspect of black culture that derives from black American experience under racial stratification and which differentiates black culture from mainstream

culture, that is, white American culture, even where the two cultures have similar contents.

Black Americans are characterized in part by *secondary cultural differences vis-à-vis* white American culture. Secondary cultural differences are those that emerge *after* a population has become an involuntary minority. Such a minority group tends to develop certain beliefs and practices, including particular ways of speaking or communicating as coping mechanisms under subordination, to protect their sense of self-worth or identity, and to maintain boundaries between them and their oppressors. These beliefs and practices may be new creations or simply reinterpretations of old ones. On the whole they constitute a new cultural frame of reference or ideal ways of believing and acting that affirm one as a *bonafide* member of the group.

A key device in the cultural frame of reference is *cultural inversion* (Holt 1972; Ogbu 1982b). In the present context this term has two meanings. Broadly speaking, it refers to the various culturally approved ways that black Americans express their opposition to white Americans. It also refers to specific forms of behavior, specific events, symbols, and meanings that blacks regard as inappropriate for themselves because they are characteristic of white Americans. At the same time blacks approve and emphasize other forms of behavior and other events, symbols, and meanings as more appropriate for themselves *because* these are not part of the white American way of life.

What I want to emphasize is that from the point of view of black Americans, cultural inversion results in the coexistence of two opposing cultural frames of reference guiding behavior *in selected areas of life*. One cultural frame of reference is viewed as appropriate for whites, but not for blacks; the other is accepted as appropriate for blacks but not necessarily for whites. Furthermore, the definition of what is or is not appropriate for blacks is emotionally charged because it is intimately bound up with their sense of collective identity, self-worth, and security. Therefore individuals who try to behave in the inappropriate way or who try to behave like whites, i.e., those who try to "cross cultural boundaries" *in forbidden domains*, may face opposition from other blacks. Their behaviors tend to be interpreted not only as "acting white" but also as betraying black people and their cause, as "trying to join the enemy."

The individuals trying to cross cultural boundaries or pass culturally may also experience, in the absence of peer pressure, what DeVos (1967) calls "affective dissonance." This is partly because their own sense of identity may lead them to feel that they are, indeed, abandoning or betraying black people and partly because they are not sure that whites will accept them.

Evidence of the oppositional cultural frame of reference or cultural inversion can be found in black speech, cultural beliefs and practices, notion of time, styles of thought or cognitive style, and in folklore, art, and literature.

With regard to speech, Holt (1972) suggests that inversion might have begun with black people's reaction to slavery. She says that black slaves recognized that for them to master white English was more or less to be subordinated by it because it would mean their acceptance of the white definition of the caste system. Black slaves, therefore, resorted to inversion as a defensive mechanism that allowed them to fight linguistic and psychological entrapment. The slaves gave words and phrases reverse meanings and thereby changed their functions. As Holt puts it,

White interpretation of the communication events was quite different from that made by the other person in the interaction, enabling Blacks to deceive and manipulate whites without penalty. . . . This form of linguistic guerilla warfare protected the subordinated, permitted the masking and disguising of true feeling, allowed the subtle assertion of self and promoted group solidarity (1972: 154).

Boykin (1986: 58) notes that linguistic studies show black culture is almost in dialectical opposition to the culture of mainstream America, and this seems to be corroborated by findings of Folb in her study of contemporary inner-city youths. Folb found that these teenagers inverted the meanings whites give to many conventional English words. For example, for the teenagers "bad" means "good"; "nigger" is a term of endearment; "cock" refers to female genitalia, whereas whites use it to refer to male genitalia; "stallion" is an attractive or lusty female as opposed to a sexually attractive male in white speech; "ragged" stands for exceptionally well dressed; "wicked" and "mean" are used to signify outstanding, satisfying, formidable, and stylish (Folb 1980: 230-260).

In the realm of behavior Haskins (1976) reports that in the neighborhood where he grew up, the black males upheld norms that were in opposition to those of law enforcement officers who represented the wider society. The black males saw themselves as living in a hostile environment created by white Americans. Therefore they developed their own criteria for judging one another that were different from the criteria used by whites.

Oppositional cultural frame of reference today is not confined to inner-city people. It has also been reported in clinical studies of middle-class blacks, including black executives in white corporations and black officials in white-controlled institutions. For example, Fordham (1984) reports one researcher as saying that black professionals who "make it" in mainstream culture are people who have succeeded in adapting to basic contradictions arising from different demands of black and white norms. And according to Taylor (1973), black executives who "have made it" in predominantly white corporations have had to renounce the black cultural frame of reference. That is, they have had to stop behaving like blacks, discard symbols used by black peers, and behave like whites with white symbols or act in ways that are alien to other blacks.

Distrusting Whites and White Institutions. Unlike immigrant minorities, blacks have developed a deep distrust of whites. The two races have been engaged in a perennial conflict over education, jobs, crime and justice, political rights, and residential rights, or housing. This conflict has left black Americans with the sense that they cannot trust white Americans or the institutions that whites control, such as the public schools.

In the next section I take the four dimensions of racial stratification (instrumental and expressive barriers, instrumental and expressive responses) and apply them to the public-school experience of blacks. I show how these factors enter into and affect black children's adjustment to school and their academic performance.

School Adjustment and Performance among Blacks

American racial stratification affects black children's schooling in two ways: through the way "the system" treats blacks (i.e., societal policies and practices, and within-school treatment of blacks) and the perceptions of and responses of blacks themselves to schooling. The continuing influence of these complex sets of factors cannot be fully comprehended or appreciated without some historical perspective, a perspective which I adopt in the following analysis.

Societal Policies and Practices

Formal education in the United States, as in other urban industrial societies, has usually been structured and perceived in terms of training in marketable skills and credentialing for labor-force entry, remuneration, and advancement. Consequently, in studying minority education, one must consider this wider context and meaning of schooling. In a racially stratified society with a job ceiling, the type of schooling provided for racial minorities is often one that prepares them for their respective place in the job market.

In the case of black Americans, there are two ways in which white Americans have historically prepared them educationally for their place below the job ceiling. The first ensures that blacks do not achieve educational qualifications that would enable them to compete effectively with whites for typical jobs above the job ceiling. The second mechanism discourages blacks from making great efforts to succeed in school, a problem I will discuss in connection with the perceptions and responses of blacks themselves.

The Design of Black Education. Today there are public and private efforts to give black children the same quality education as that provided to white children, but *before the 1960s* there was no explicit policy or goal to educate blacks and whites equally for occupational and social positions. Prior to that time the type of education given to blacks depended on how white

Americans perceived black positions and treated them (Ogbu 1978). For example, before the 1930s blacks in the South were typically said to need "industrial education," by which whites usually meant training in low-grade manual skills. Most financial supports from the states and Northern philanthropists went into industrial education programs. However, during the 1930s, when industrial or vocational education courses became the target of state and federal financial supports in order to meet the needs of the mainstream economy for workers with upgraded industrial skills, the money failed to flow into black schools (Ogbu 1978: 118). Commenting on this development, Myrdal (1944) notes that southern whites believed that blacks should get industrial education so long as that did not mean preparing them to compete effectively with whites for jobs.

Again, consider the shift in the 1960s. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Legislation and affirmative action programs gave blacks increasing access to higher-level jobs, jobs above the job ceiling that required more and better education than had been available to blacks. To ensure that blacks filling these new positions were "qualified," concerted efforts began to be made to "improve" their education, including active recruitment into predominantly white colleges and universities, so that within 10 years black college enrollment rose from 349,000 to 948,000 (Wilson 1979: 172).

I have described elsewhere (Ogbu 1978) the long history of inferior and segregated education of black Americans and how it complemented their inferior roles below the job ceiling. What needs to be said here by way of summary is that until recent decades, black education was different from white education; it was inferior to white education; and it was determined by white Americans' conceptions of the place of black Americans in the racially stratified order. The mechanisms by which the societal policies and practices kept black education different and inferior included segregation, exclusion from certain types of institutions and from certain types of education, inadequate funding and staffing, as well as different curriculum (Ogbu 1978).

Denial of Equal Rewards for Educational Accomplishments The second method by which white Americans have contributed to the twin problem of school adjustment and performance is by denying blacks access to jobs and wages commensurate with their educational credentials. Before the 1960s, blacks who had similar educational credentials to whites were often forced to take less desirable jobs, to receive lower wages, and to occupy lower social status. Nationwide, the more educated blacks, especially the college educated, suffered more discrimination in jobs and wages relative to whites (Ginzberg 1956; Kahn 1968: 12; Killingsworth 1967; Ogbu 1974, 1978).

Such treatment in the employment-opportunity structure affected black children's schooling in two ways. First, it caused some blacks to become disillusioned about the real value of schooling (Ogbu 1974), a point to which

I return later. Second, it was undoubtedly reflected in the way the schools socialized black children in their own reward system, which paralleled the reward system of the society at large. Black children were apparently not taught to get ahead or make higher grades through hard work and persevering academic effort. Furthermore, since local school officials were aware of the treatment of blacks in the adult labor market, they sometimes channeled black children into educational tracks that merely prepared them for their customary place in the employment structure, i.e., in jobs below the job ceiling.

I should point out that the problem of educational rewards has not totally disappeared. It is true that blacks are now hired and paid on the basis of school credentials, and it is also true that many have gained entry into jobs above the job ceiling. However, there is a widespread feeling among blacks in the corporate economy and mainstream institutions that they face a secondary job ceiling, i.e., that they are not given responsibility and not advancing in their jobs as their white peers are.

Treatment of Blacks within Schools

Gross mechanisms of discrimination like deliberate school segregation, differential staffing, funding, and the like, probably are no longer widespread because of legislative statutes or court rulings. But many schools continue to use subtle mechanisms to keep black schooling inferior to white schooling. Some findings from my own research in Stockton, California, from 1968 to 1970 show how minorities and whites may be in the same schools but do not necessarily receive the same education or learn similar rules of behavior for achievement. Take the case of 17 black and Chicano students whose records over a five-year period I examined. I found that all but one of them were given the same annual grade of C, regardless of how hard each child had worked and, strikingly, regardless of what teachers had to say in their written evaluations. There appeared to be little correspondence between the written assessment and the letter grades. On the whole, a child who received a C rating in first grade continued to receive the same rating in subsequent years, although the teacher at each subsequent grade level might write that he or she was "delighted" with the pupil's "progress." Since these children received the same average marks whether they worked hard or not, I have suggested that they were obviously not being taught to associate more effort or hard work with higher achievement (Ogbu 1974, 1977).

A typical example of lowered expectations of teachers and administrators was seen in one family where I was told the oldest son ceased to be "smart" because he was bored with courses that were too easy for him. When his parents approached his teacher and the principal to discuss the matter, the latter rejected their explanation and request for "extra work" for their son.

Their son's work continued to deteriorate and, at the time of my study, he was receiving mostly D's and F's in twelfth-grade courses.

Other researchers (Entwisle and Hayduk 1982; Berkeley and Entwisle 1979, cited in Jackson 1987) have uncovered additional school practices that may undermine the academic achievement efforts of black children: the assigning of report card marks on the basis of classroom "conduct expectations" rather than academic effort. Other subtle mechanisms include the use of biased textbooks and biased curriculum; testing, classification, and tracking; differential treatment of black children in the classroom and in disciplinary situations; prejudiced attitudes and expectations of white students and white school personnel; and lack of adequate understanding of and programs to deal with problems arising from cultural and language differences.

Perceptions and Responses of Black Americans

The extent to which black children, as a group and as individuals, succeed or fail in school depends not only on how white Americans and the schools controlled by the whites treat blacks but also on how blacks themselves perceive and respond to schooling. This section examines the adaptive or coping factors that affect black children's school adjustment and performance: status mobility frame of reference, folk theory of getting ahead in the United States, survival strategies, role models, collective or social identity, cultural frame of reference, and distrust of white Americans and the schools controlled by the whites. Because the coping responses have over time become an integral part of black cultural beliefs and practices, black students are not fully aware of how these factors affect their academic attitudes and behaviors, and they are often unaware of the nature of their own academic attitudes and behaviors. Nevertheless, such factors appear to have caused blacks to develop a *low-effort syndrome, or lack of serious, persevering academic effort as a norm* (Ogbu 1984).

Status Mobility Frame of Reference, Folk Theory, and Disillusionment. The fact that, under the job-ceiling phenomenon, blacks usually compare themselves with whites in terms of types of jobs they have, level of wages or educational payoffs, and related matters is problematic for their academic effort. When they make such a comparison, they usually conclude that they are worse off than they should be in spite of their education and ability because of the job ceiling operating against them. In the course of many generations of such an experience and comparison, blacks learn that they are not given the same chance to get the kinds of jobs and wages available to whites who have similar education. Eventually they come to see this treatment as part of an institutionalized discrimination against them which is not entirely eliminated by merely getting an education (Ogbu 1981b). Consequently, although their folk theory of getting ahead emphasizes the

importance of education, they know that they "can't" get ahead because of racial barriers. One result has been disillusionment about the real value of schooling, which has led to a failure to develop "effort optimism" (Shack 1970). By this term, Shack means being serious, determined, and persevering in academic work, test taking, and the like. He notes that because white Americans have been able to receive adequate payoffs for their educational efforts, i.e., to get jobs and wages commensurate with their training and ability, they have been encouraged to develop effort optimism toward school and work, which is summed up in the white maxim "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." On the other hand, because blacks have had to face the most sustained and extreme discrimination in American history—in particular a job ceiling—they seem to have learned that social and economic rewards are not proportionate to educational efforts; consequently, they have tended to develop a different maxim, "What's the use of trying?"

The disillusionment and its consequences for academic efforts are not of recent origin; nor are they unique to contemporary inner-city blacks. Indeed, early evidence of this comes from a speech made by John Rock, the first black to be admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court. Published in *The Liberator* in 1862, Rock's speech addressed the discouragement that came from limited opportunity for blacks in Massachusetts to achieve a better future through education, employment, or business, in spite of the prevailing ideology of equality of opportunity (cited in Gabelko 1984: 265). In the early decades of the twentieth century, black writers expressed the dilemma of accepting the American Dream with its ethic of individual hard work, thrift, and discipline, because racial barriers made the dream meaningless and irrelevant to black Americans (Sochen 1971). Carl Rowan (1975) has suggested that the dilemma probably continued up to the 1960s. And for some blacks, it persists to this day.

Witness the academic attitudes and efforts of contemporary inner-city black adolescents as described in *Newsweek's* "My Turn" column by a 15-year-old boy from Wilmington, Delaware (Hunter 1980). The article describes two types of black teenagers in the inner city. The "Rocks," who constitute the majority, have given up hopes of making it in mainstream economy through the white middle-class strategy of school credentials. They therefore stopped trying to do well in school or going to school at all. The "Ducks," or "Suckers," are the few, the "minority of the minority," who still hope to succeed through schooling. The "Ducks" are derided because they go to school every day and even want to go to college; they don't use drugs or alcohol. The "Ducks" are regarded as "wasting their time waiting for a dream that won't come true" because even their parents cannot find jobs.

I found similar disillusionment among blacks whom I studied in Stockton, California. When questioned directly, Stockton blacks would say that to get ahead, to get a good mainstream job, one should get a good education. But they did not seem to match their assertion with effort, even in guiding their

children. Part of the reason is that they did not really believe that they had an equal chance with whites to be hired for a job or promoted on the job because of education and ability or that they would do well in an examination designed by white Americans. They believed, instead, that for a black to be hired or promoted when competing with a white person, the black must be "twice as good" or "twice as qualified" as the white.

Black youths in Stockton, like their parents, expressed interest in getting education for mainstream jobs. But at the same time they, too, did not match their wishes with effort. They did not put enough time, effort, and perseverance into their schoolwork. This was not because they did not know what to do in order to do well in school, because they explained during research interviews that the reason Chinese, Japanese, and some white students did well in school was partly because they expended more time and effort than blacks in doing their schoolwork.

Competing Survival Strategies and Role Models. Black folk theory of getting ahead in America stresses other means of getting ahead than schooling, namely, survival strategies within and outside mainstream technoeconomic systems. The survival strategies affect black youths' schooling in a number of ways. For instance, when survival strategies, such as collective struggle, succeed in increasing the pool of jobs and other resources for the black community, they may encourage black youths to work hard in school. But this success can also lead the youths to blame "the system" and to rationalize their lack of serious schoolwork efforts. Clientship, or Uncle Tomming, is not particularly conducive to academic success because it does not create good role models for school success through good study habits and hard work. Instead, clientship teaches black children the manipulative attitudes, knowledge, and skills used by their parents in dealing with white people and white-controlled institutions. As the children become familiar with other survival strategies like hustling, pimping, and drug dealing, their attitudes toward schooling suffer. This is partly because the norms that support survival strategies like hustling may reverse the mainstream work ethic by suggesting that one should "make it" without working, especially without "doing the white man's thing" (Bouie 1981; Ogbu 1974). Furthermore, students who hustle regard social interactions in the classroom as opportunities to gain prestige by putting the other person or persons down. This may lead to class disruption and suspensions (Ogbu 1985, 1987).

There is some evidence that many young blacks view sports and entertainment, rather than education, as the way to get ahead; and their perceptions are reinforced by the realities they observe in the communities and society at large and by the media. One can easily understand why this would be true: blacks are overrepresented in lucrative sports such as baseball, basketball, and football. The average annual salary in the NBA is over \$300,000 and in the NFL it is over \$90,000. Many of the superstars who

earn between \$1 million and \$2 million a year are black, and these are people who may have had little formal education. Although the number of such highly paid athletes is few, the media make them and the entertainers more visible to black youths than they do black lawyers, doctors, engineers, and scientists (Wong 1987). As a result, young blacks tend to channel their time and efforts into nonacademic activities. There is some preliminary evidence, too, suggesting that black parents encourage their children's athletic activities in the belief that such efforts will lead to careers in professional sports (Wong 1987).

Identity and Cultural Frame of Reference. How do the oppositional identity and cultural frame of reference affect the school adjustment and performance of black children? First, the children take the cultural and language differences they encounter in school as symbols of identity to be maintained, rather than as barriers to be overcome. Black students perceive or interpret learning certain aspects of white American culture or behaving according to the white American cultural frame of reference as detrimental to their own culture, language, and identity. Consequently, they are less willing than immigrant minority students to make serious attempts to cross cultural and language boundaries. Second, also unlike the immigrants, black students tend to equate what is to be learned in school—the curriculum—the language of instruction, and the attitudes and behaviors that enhance academic success, with white American attitudes, culture, language, and behavior. Consciously or unconsciously, they do not appear to make a clear distinction *between* what they learn or do to enhance their school success, such as learning and using the standard English and the standard behavior practices of the school *and* linear acculturation or assimilation into a white American cultural frame of reference, i.e., the cultural frame of reference of their white "oppressors." The equation of standard English and standard practices of the school with a white American cultural frame of reference often results in conscious or unconscious opposition or ambivalence toward learning and using these essential elements at school.

We do not know at what age black children begin to feel the influence of the oppositional cultural frame of reference and identity, but the earliest evidence from research is among children approaching adolescence. The phenomenon is more commonly reported among high school and college students. Research among high school students shows that many tend to define academic tasks or behaviors as well as academic success itself as "white," "not black," i.e., not appropriate for blacks. In contrast, they define certain extracurricular activities traditionally open to blacks and where black students excel as appropriate for blacks. Black students who try to excel in academic work or who become involved in "white" extracurricular activities meet with strong peer pressure to give up such things. The students are criticized and called "Uncle Toms" (Petroni 1970), "crazy," and "brainiacs"

(Fordham 1985; Fordham and Ogbu 1986). But, as DeVos (1967, 1984) has pointed out with regard to involuntary minorities in Japan, even in the absence of peer pressure, some black students avoid adopting serious academic attitudes and perseverance at academic tasks partly because they have usually internalized the belief that such attitudes and behaviors are "white," and partly because they are not certain that they would be accepted by the whites even if they learned to "act white" and were rejected by their black peers. This state of affairs results in "affective dissonance" for such individual black students.

Take the case of black students in an almost all-black high school in Washington, D.C., reported by Fordham and Ogbu (1986). Here the students' peer culture strongly rejected striving for academic success because it was perceived as "acting white." The students regarded many behaviors associated with high achievement—speaking standard English, studying long hours, striving to get good grades—as "acting white." Students who were known to engage in such behaviors were labeled "brainiacs," ridiculed, and ostracized as people who had abandoned the group. The interviews with a number of bright students indicated that some had chosen to put "brakes" on their academic effort to avoid being labeled and harassed. Those who continued to try to do well in school felt compelled to engage in camouflage behaviors that discredited evidence of studying or working hard (e.g., verbally belittling the value of schooling, not speaking up in class, joining athletic teams or taking part in other peer group-approved extracurricular activities, or behaving like class clowns).

The pressure against "acting white" is not limited to lower-class or inner-city black students. It has been reported, though not systematically studied, for middle-class blacks in suburban and private schools (Abdul-Jabbar and Knobles 1983; Gray 1985). Self-reports verify that middle class and suburban black students face this problem and that it extends to black college students as well (Mitchell 1983; Gray 1985; Nemko 1988).

The twin phenomena of oppositional identity and cultural frame of reference present a dilemma for the black youth: he or she must choose between "acting white" (i.e., adopting attitudes and behaviors that are conducive to academic success but which other black students consider inappropriate for blacks) and "acting black" (i.e., adopting other attitudes and behaviors that black students approve as appropriate for blacks but which are not necessarily conducive to school success).

Distrust of Whites and the Schools, and Difficulty Conforming to School Norms. Blacks distrust white Americans and the public schools the latter control, as noted earlier. This adds to blacks' problem of school adjustment and performance. Blacks distrust the public schools more than the immigrants do because blacks do not have the advantage of a dual frame of

reference to allow them to compare the public schools they attend with the schools they knew "back home." Instead, blacks compare their schools with white schools, especially with suburban white schools, and usually end up with a negative conclusion; namely, that they are provided with inferior education for no other reason than their minority status. Since they do not trust the public schools and white people who control them, blacks are skeptical that the schools can educate their children well. This skepticism is communicated to black youths through family and community discussions and gossip and through public debates over minority education in general or over specific issues like school desegregation. Distrust discourages academic effort in another way: sometimes black parents and children question school rules of behavior and standard practices rather than accept and follow them as the immigrants appear to do. Indeed, blacks sometimes interpret the schools rules and standard practices as impositions of a white cultural frame of reference which do not necessarily meet their "real educational needs."

My ethnographic research in Stockton provides several examples of situations in which blacks (and Mexican-Americans) questioned the value of what they were learning in school: How "relevant" was a high school history textbook, *The Land of the Free*, to the experience of various minority groups in the State of California? What was the value of a preschool curriculum stressing social development rather than academic learning? What was the "real purpose" of tests—both those given at school and civil service tests—weren't they designed to keep minorities down?

The problems associated with the distrustful relations become more complicated because of the tendency of schools to approach black education defensively. I have suggested elsewhere (Ogbu 1988a) that under this circumstance, black parents would have difficulty successfully teaching their children to accept and follow school rules of behavior and standard practices that lead to academic success, and that black children, particularly the older ones, would also have difficulty accepting and following the school rules and standard practices. During my research interviews in Stockton, both black and Mexican-American youths admitted that they did not listen to their parents' advice concerning their school behavior (Ogbu 1974, 1984, 1987).

Black youths' educational strategies. The kind of educational environment that I have described in this section does not encourage blacks to strive for academic success because (1) the treatment of blacks by "the system" discourages academic "effort optimism" and (2) the black coping responses to racial stratification have jointly produced a kind of low-effort syndrome. Under this circumstance, however, blacks have also developed what I call "secondary educational strategies" to enable them to achieve some measure of school success. The secondary strategies operate at the community level (e.g., collective struggle to eliminate segregated and inferior education),

the family level (e.g., sending children to private schools), and at the individual student level (e.g., camouflaging academic striving). Because of lack of space, I will focus on students' strategies, summarizing what has been learned from research.

Among black students, especially older black youths, the collective orientation is *not* toward making good grades, even though they usually verbalize that good grades are a goal of theirs. There is little community pressure on them to strive toward academic success (e.g., there is no community gossip about or stigma on black youths who goof off and do not make good grades). Although families say that academic success is a goal for their children, their pressures for success are relatively weak. As for peer groups, their orientation is actually antiacademic success. Consequently, peer pressure is used to discourage striving for school success. Peers subject those who are trying to succeed to criticism and threat of isolation.

In this situation black youths who want to succeed academically more or less consciously choose from a variety of secondary strategies to shield them from peer pressure and other detracting forces. I have already touched on the secondary strategy of camouflage, by which a student conceals his or her real academic attitudes and efforts by pretending not to be serious about schoolwork and success. One technique of camouflaging is to become involved in athletics or other "team-oriented" and peer-approved activities. This appears to reassure peer-group members that one is not simply pursuing individual interests and goals or trying to get ahead of others. Another technique is to become a comedian or jester or class clown (Fordham 1985; Ogbu 1985). By acting foolishly, the youth satisfies the expectations of his or her peers of not being serious about school because the peers do not particularly condone academic success. The jester, however, takes schoolwork seriously when away from peers and does well in school. His or her academic success is usually excused on the ground that he or she may be "naturally smart." Academically successful males are the ones who more often play the class clowns.

A survey of ethnographic literature and related works suggests that academically successful black youths can be categorized according to the types of secondary strategies they use. The categories of successful black youths include the following: assimilators, emissaries, alternators, regulars, and ambivalents.

Assimilators are academically successful youths who *have chosen* to disassociate themselves from or repudiate black cultural frame of reference and identity in favor of white cultural frame of reference; their stance amounts to a kind of "cultural passing." These youths may have come to prefer white norms and values that are in conflict with the norms and values of their black peers (Fordham 1985). They tend to believe that to succeed in school and in other mainstream institutions they must give up their membership in

the black peer group or even the black community. So the price of success is peer criticism and isolation.

Emissaries are youths who play down black identity and cultural frame of reference in order to succeed in school and in mainstream institutions by mainstream criteria, *but they do not reject black culture and identity*. As a black school counselor once explained this position to me, their motto is "Do your black thing but know the white man's thing." Emissaries approach school learning or participation in other mainstream institutions with the belief that their success by mainstream criteria and standards is a way of demonstrating that whites are not superior to blacks and that their success is a contribution to the advancement of their race. But some emissaries may deny that race is important in determining their school success. By deliberately choosing to follow school rules of behavior and standard practices, emissaries may remain marginal to black peer groups. That is, they may not become encapsulated in peer-approved activities (Haynes 1985; Fordham 1985).

Alternators more or less adopt the immigrant minority students' strategy of "accommodation without assimilation" (Gibson 1988). These students do not reject black cultural frame of reference or identity, but elect to play by the rules of "the system." Their stance seems to be "When in Rome, do as the Romans." They also adopt definite secondary strategies to cope with the conflicting demands of peer groups and those of the schools.

Regulars are somewhat like alternators. According to Perkins (1975: 41), these youths are accepted as regular members of the street culture but do not subscribe to all its norms. They know how to get along with everyone without compromising their own values and without being encapsulated. They are not fully committed to street or peer culture. Regulars tend to have a good knowledge of the street culture, though, and this enables them to engage mainly in relatively safe activities and to know how to handle "trouble" successfully and to ensure that it does not recur (Perkins 1975: 42). The values of the regulars are like those of the mainstream. At school they are considered good students who conform to most conventional rules. They tend to maintain close family ties. Their school success lies in their ability to camouflage.

Ambivalents achieve school success at a relatively high cost, and their academic success can be erratic. These are black youths who are caught between the desire to be with their peers and the desire to achieve by school or mainstream criteria. Some do not successfully resolve this conflict; some do (Mitchell 1983).

Other black youths who are academically successful do not fit neatly into categories. They employ a variety of secondary strategies, like getting involved in church activities and support groups, finding mentors, and engaging "bullies" as protectors in return for helping them with homework. Many other youths are, however, encapsulated in peer groups that are not committed to

academic success, and as a consequence these youths do not strive for school success.

Recommendations

Racial barriers to equal access have been described in this chapter as coming from two sources. First and foremost are barriers from "the system," i.e., from the treatment of blacks by society at large and within the schools. This treatment adversely affects the quantity and quality of black education not only directly, but also indirectly by shaping black perceptions of and responses to schooling. The other source of barriers is the pattern of perceptions and coping responses of blacks themselves. The latter has produced a kind of low-effort syndrome in black academic striving. It follows from the analysis of the twin sources of the problem of blacks' school adjustment and performance that policies and programs to increase blacks' success in school must address the two sources of barriers to equal access.

Since the 1960s there have been major improvements in the black American opportunity structure as a result of civil rights pressures that had impacts on government policies and actions and on mainstream treatment of blacks. Since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, substantial progress has also been made in reducing gross official and unofficial barriers to equal access such as school segregation. Furthermore, some efforts have been made to improve the school experience of blacks and their educational access within the schools through compensatory education and other special programs. In all these changes, blacks as a group and as individuals have played a major role. As a result, black Americans have made significant gains in educational attainment, in employment above the job ceiling, in closing the wage gap, and in politics; the gap in school performance or test scores has narrowed somewhat.

It is gratifying to see current concern about equal access and the strides taken in this direction. At the same time it is important to point out that the changes have not been evenly experienced among blacks and that for a large segment substantial barriers remain, especially in the lower segment of the black population. The problem of the lower half is not that they suddenly became *different* or pathological, but that they have never been reached or helped as middle-class blacks have.

One prerequisite for eliminating the racial barriers is to recognize that real change will come about through continued effort to open up decent futures for racial minorities and not just by attempting to patch up supposed past and present deficiencies. What middle-class blacks have achieved did not come about from rehabilitation but through changes in opportunity structures in education and jobs and related domains. From a comparative perspective, it is not common for dominant-group members of a society to give up discriminating against racial minorities voluntarily; consequently, it is

important to continue vigorous civil rights activities to achieve these objectives.

The schools, for their part, must take steps to eliminate the barriers to equal access within them that were described earlier in this chapter. In addition, schools can and should establish programs to promote more trusting relations between them and minority students and communities. Trusting relations are likely to increase through open discussions of differences in the understanding of educational needs and process, areas of common interest and agreement, the responsibility of each side, and how the two sides can work together. Schools should also establish programs to enable black youths to increase their academic effort without experiencing negative social pressures from peers. Such programs should aim to make the youths aware of the reasons for, as well as the nature and consequences of, their low-effort syndrome. They should teach black youths how to adopt more pragmatic attitudes toward schooling, something like the stance of the alternators and the immigrants.

Black communities have a major role to play in turning things around, in changing attitudes, and in increasing the efforts of black youths toward schooling. Black youths will develop and manifest the norm of maximum academic effort and academic success when black communities assume greater responsibility for promoting such a norm. One step toward achieving this objective is to help children differentiate the attitudes and behaviors that enhance academic success from the attitudes and behaviors that result in loss of black culture and identity. Another important step is for black communities to help black children channel their time and efforts from nonacademic into academic activities. One suggestion for achieving this objective is for black communities to sanction, rather than merely verbalize, their wishes for appropriate academic attitudes and persevering effort as culturally rewarded phenomena. Black communities should provide their young people with concrete evidence that they approve, appreciate, and reward academic success in the same manner and to the same degree, at least, that they approve, appreciate, and reward success in fields such as athletics and entertainment.

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