Collective Identity and the Burden of "Acting White" in Black History, Community, and Education

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After more than 15 years of comparative study of minority education, I concluded that I would have to study two additional factors, namely collective identity and cultural frame of reference to more fully explain the variability in minority school performance. In 1986, I published an article with Signithia Fordham on how "oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference" or oppositional culture contributed to Black students' school performance. Many critics have misinterpreted the joint article and even constructed a dierent thesis of oppositional culture than the one we proposed in the joint article. The thesis is that Black students do not aspire to or strive to get good grades because it is perceived as "acting White." Furthermore, they have translated my cultural–ecological theory into an oppositional culture theory. I am writing this paper to correct the misinterpretations of the joint article in order to advance scholarship on the subject. I begin by explaining the meaning of collective identity and distinguishing it from other concepts of identity. Specifically, I summarize the evolution of oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference or oppositional culture among Black Americans and discuss the Black experience with the "burden of 'acting White'" in the contemporary United States. Finally, I suggest some continuity between Black historical and community experiences with the "burden of 'acting White,'" as experienced by Black students.

KEY WORDS: African American achievement; race identity; history of race and schools.

INTRODUCTION

Having conducted comparative research on minority education for more than 15 years, I came to the conclusion that discrimination in society and

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school as well as minority responses to the discrimination, though significant, are not enough to explain why there are differences in the school performance among minority groups. My comparative study suggested that two additional factors from the dynamics in minority communities also contributed to the school performance differences. In a joint publication with Dr. Signithia Fordham in 1986, we stated that the two additional factors were *collective identity* or *fictive kinship* and *cultural frame of reference* (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). We also reported a study of Capital High students in Washington, D. C. where we found that the two factors played a major role in the school performance of Black adolescents.

The joint article has generated responses from the academic community beyond what we anticipated. It is the subject of dissertation studies (Carter, 1999; O'Connor, 1996; Taylor, 2001), several publications (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey, 1998; Bergin and Cooks, 2002; Cook and Ludwig, 1997) and organized sessions at professional meetings (Epstein, 2003; Horvat and O'Connor, 2001). During the past 2 years, I have reviewed more than a dozen book and journal manuscripts on oppositional culture and schooling for publishers. Although it is gratifying to see the impact of the joint article on the academic community, the potential contributions of these activities to scholarship are limited by misinterpretations of the problem, replacing the thesis and making a different conclusion.

One of the shortcomings of current scholarship is the failure to distinguish among three different perspectives on collective identity, cultural frame of reference and the schooling of Black adolescents. This has resulted in the translating of my cultural–ecological framework into a single-factor hypothesis of *oppositional culture*. In effect, critics construct and study a different problem than the one we laid out in the joint article.

An equally serious problem is that there is no evidence that authors are aware that throughout their history Black Americans have experienced the "burden of 'acting White'" because of their oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference. Lacking this knowledge, critics ignore the historical and community contexts of Black students' behavior and focus almost exclusively on the transactions between the students and their school. Basing their analysis on data collected at the level of student–school transactions, it is not surprising that some critics accuse Fordham and myself of assigning a race label ("acting White") to a common ridicule, namely, teasing and harassment, endured by academically achieving adolescents or "nerds." They also believe that we have read too much into a "concept that they themselves manufactured."

The purpose of this paper is to correct these misinterpretations. I will start with the meaning of collective identity and how it differs from other identity concepts used in discussing Black students' experiences. This will be

followed by a brief account of the evolution of Black American collective identity, a presentation of my study of Black American experience with the "burden of 'acting White'" in contemporary United States, and conclude with an exploration of a possible continuity between Black historical and community experiences with the "burden of 'acting White'" and the experience of Black students that I and my students have studied in Stockton (1968–70), Oakland (1989–93), San Francisco (1991–92) and Shaker Heights (1997).

WHAT IS COLLECTIVE IDENTITY?

Some Perspectives on Identity

Psychologists have examined the development and school experience of minority children from a number of interesting perspectives as it relates to identity. Among them are (a) *the Ericksonian ego identity* (Hauser, 1972), (b) *ethnic identity* based on Erickson's theory (Phinney and Rosenthal, 1992; Phinney and Rotheram, 1987); (c) *racial identity* as measured by racial attitudes (Branch, 1999); and (d) *underclass oppositional identity* (Cross, Strauss and Fhagen-Smith, 1999, pp. 29–30). Among non-psychologists some have proposed (a) *negotiated identity* (Yon, 2000), and (b) *circumstantial/marketable identity or politics of recognition* (Cornell and Hartman, 1998). These are useful and interesting ways of looking at identity and minority status. But they have to be distinguished from collective identity as used in this paper.

What is Collective Identity?

Collective identity refers to people's sense of who they are, their "we-feeling" or "belonging." People express their collective identity with emblems or cultural symbols which reflect their attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and language or dialect. The persistence of a group's collective identity depends on the continuity of the external (historical and structural) forces that contributed to its formation. It also depends on the continuity of responses of the group (Castile and Kushner, 1981; DeVos, 1995; Spicer, 1966, 1971).

Collective identity usually develops because of people's collective experience or series of collective experiences. Warfare, conquest, colonization, forced labor, mass emigration, imposition of an outcast status and enslavement are examples of the collective experience that leads to the formation of collective identity (Castile and Kushner, 1981; DeVos, 1995; Spicer, 1967). Usually, the collective identity of an oppressed minority

group is created and maintained by two sets of factors: status problems and minority response to status problems.

Status Problems

Status problems are external forces that mark a group of people as a distinct segment from the rest of the population. A group so created is usually bounded and named. For example, the Emperor of Japan, by proclamation, created the Burakumin as an outcast group from the Japanese people when Japan established a four-rigid, caste-like stratification system placing the Burakumin as the outcast group during the Edoera in the 17th century. Before the establishment of the status groups, the people in the outcast category, the Burakumin, had been, like other Japanese, warriors, peasants and artisans. Designated as an outcast, the Burakumin (people of special hamlet or residential area) were assigned the role of slaughtering animals and executing criminals, functions which the general public perceived as "polluting functions" under Buddhist and Shintoist beliefs. Their social ostracism and discrimination have continued even after they were emancipated in 1871 (DeVos, 1967; Hirasawa and Nabeshima, 1995). Similarly, White Americans created Black Americans as a separate and an enduring segment of the United States society through enslavement. Status problems are collective problems which members of the subordinate group find difficult if not impossible to solve within the existing system of majority–minority relations. They include the following.

1. *Involuntary incorporation into society:* Usually these minorities do not become minorities by choice. Rather they are forced into minority status against their will by conquest, colonization, enslavement (e.g., Black Americans) or arbitrary subjection to the status of a pariah caste (e.g., the Burakumin of Japan).
2. *Instrumental discrimination:* e.g., denial of equal access to good jobs, education, political participation and housing.
3. *Social subordination:* e.g., residential and social segregation, hostility and violence; prohibition of intermarriage; requirement of the offsprings of intergroup mating to affiliate with one group with no choice. In some cases oppressed minorities are forced against their will to assimilate into the dominant group, although this assimilation usually results in marginalization.
4. *Expressive mistreatment:* e.g., cultural, language, and intellectual denigration.

Dominant group members stigmatize minorities' food, clothing, music, values, behaviors and language or dialect as bad and inferior to theirs. These

four mechanisms are used by the dominant group to create and maintain the collective identity of the minorities; i.e., to "carve them out" and maintain them as a separate segment of society with a distinct identity. The existence of the minorities with distinct collective identity remains as long as these mechanisms or mistreatment of the minorities remain (Ogbu, 2000).

The Response of Minorities to Status Problems

Both minorities as a group and as individuals feel the impact of status problems. The minorities experience their mistreatment regardless of their individual differences in education and ability, in status, physical appearance or place of residence. They know fully well that they do not have the option of membership in the dominant group; they also know that they cannot easily escape from their more or less ascribed membership in a subordinate and disparaged group. Individuals who "pass" physically or culturally often find that the social and psychological costs are very high. Oppressed minorities are bitter for being forced into minority status and subjected to oppression. They usually hold the dominant group responsible for their "troubles" (e.g., their inferior economic and political status, demeaning social positions, poor health and housing, and stigmatized cultures and languages or dialects). Under this circumstance, involuntary minorities respond collectively as a group and they also respond as individuals in ways that reinforce their separate existence and collective identity. Furthermore, their response often makes their oppositional collective identity vis-a-vis their perceptions of the collective identity of the dominant group. That is, their very attempts to solve their status problem lead them to develop a new sense of who they are, that is in opposition to their understanding of who the dominant group members are.

Cultural and Language Frames of Reference

Closely related to their sense of collective identity is the way minorities interpret the cultural and language or dialect differences between them and the dominant group. We use the term 'cultural frame of reference' to refer to the correct way of behaving and 'language or dialect frame of reference' to refer to the correct way of talking from the point of view of the minorities. Cultural and language frames of reference are closely tied to collective identity, so that we can speak of them as the cultural identity and the language identity of the minorities. Where the latter is oppositional, the former is usually oppositional. Furthermore, where that is the case, we can regard the situation as one of oppositional culture and oppositional language or dialect. The relationship—oppositional or non-oppositional—between the

cultural and language frames of reference of the minorities and that of the dominant group, determines to some degree the difficulty individual members of the minority group have in crossing cultural and language boundaries or learning to behave and talk like White people. However, this does not mean that all members of the minority group respond to the culture and language of the dominant group in opposition. As we shall see, minorities usually develop some strategies to deal with the demands that they behave and talk like dominant group members in order to achieve self-betterment in situations controlled by members of the dominant group.

THE CASE OF BLACK AMERICANS

Black American oppositional collective identity began to form before emancipation and has remained to the present. We have more information on the subject for more recent than earlier periods.

Pre-Emancipation Period

Status Problems

Enslavement and mistreatment under slavery: Black Americans became involuntary minorities when they were enslaved by White Americans. For more than 200 years they were denied basic human rights, exploited economically, politically, socially and expressively. They were tightly controlled by White slave owners who forced them to behave like slaves. They were forbidden to behave in certain ways considered White prerogatives and were punished if they disobeyed. For example, they were punished for learning to read and write, where slaves were forbidden these activities (Haley, 1976). Punishment was sometimes extended to all slaves on the plantation, not just limited to the slave who committed the offence. This collective punishment was important in the creation of Black collective identity.

The treatment of Blacks following Nat Turner's "insurrection" is a good example of the collective blame and punishment which increased their sense of being a separate people with a collective identity. A slave, Nat Turner, led an "insurrection" in Southampton, Virginia in 1831. Following this incident, the movement of *all* Black people throughout the United States was restricted. Blacks were forbidden to assemble among themselves. The restriction even applied to children. For example, Black children in Washington, DC. were no longer allowed to attend Sunday School with White children as they did previously for no other reason than that they were Black (Fordham, 1984; Styron, 1966).

Instrumental discrimination: During slavery, Blacks were excluded by law and custom from economic, political and other opportunities open to Whites.

Social discrimination: Non-reciprocal social interaction between Blacks and Whites was instituted during slavery. According to Starker (1971; pp. 6), the ritual of social interaction required Blacks and Whites to behave toward each other in certain prescribed ways. For example, they had to use certain prescribed forms of address that expressed the "ritual." Blacks addressed White slave owners as master *(massa),* mistress *(mistis),* miss *(missy),* boss or *buckra,* with or without given names. Slave owners addressed Blacks as aunt, uncle, mammy, sometimes daddy, boy (Starker, 1971; pp. 6). The etiquette also required slaves to behave in a certain manner when he or she was spoken to by Whites. For example, the slave had to "stand attentively, respond politely, bow servilely to the extent, at times, of extreme evasion and deceit" (Starker, 1971; pp. 7).

Expressive Discrimination: Expressive discrimination refers to White Americans' beliefs that Black slaves were culturally, linguistically and intellectually inferior to them; it also refers to the treatment of Blacks based on such beliefs. Historically, the overarching ideology of White American was that Black Americans belonged to a race that was inferior to the White race biologically, culturally and socially.

White denigration of Black culture began during slavery, with the myth that the slaves came from the "dark continent" of Africa that had not produced civilizations like other continents (Becknell, 1987). They forced the slaves to give up their African cultures and to adopt superior White culture. White cultural values, behaviors and speech were presented as correct or proper; in contrast, Black cultural values, behaviors and speech were presented as incorrect and improper.

In the case of language, slave owners took deliberate steps to rid the slaves of their indigenous African languages. There appeared to be a policy not to have several slaves speaking the same language on a plantation for fear that they would teach others their language, and that speaking the same language would make it easy for slaves to plan an escape or a slave revolt. To avoid such incidents, the slaves were forced to speak English. The language situation during slavery, especially the evolution of Black English dialects, contributed to the creation of Blacks as a separate and enduring people with a distinct collective identity.

Intellectual denigration was (and is) an expressive exploitation because it makes White people feel good to think that they are more intelligent than Blacks.

Black Response to Status Problems During Slavery

Response to forced incorporation: Black Americans began to develop their sense of collective identity and of belonging together during slavery. Collective experience of oppression and exploitation caused them to develop the sense of a Black community which embodied their collective racial identity. It has been suggested that racial identity was more important than class or gender identity for the slaves because they knew only too well that all of them, regardless of class or gender, could be punished for an offence of one slave; and they could also be rewarded because of the good deed of one (Green, 1981; Rawick, 1972). The racial identity formed during slavery has continued to influence Black perceptions of and responses to White treatment to this day. In my ethnographic research in Black communities, I have often found that regardless of social class and gender, Black Americans tend to code their experiences with White Americans and with social institutions in terms of race, and not class or gender.

The expressive response of Blacks was particularly important in their construction and maintenance of oppositional collective identity. As noted earlier, White people forced Blacks to give up their African cultures and languages. Under oppression, Blacks developed a new culture and an English dialect different from and oppositional to the White way of behaving and talking (Green, 1981). Another area of expressing opposition was religion. Black religion evolved to satisfy slave masters expectations that this would make it easier to control Blacks, but it turned out to be the opposite of those expectations. Reverend Calvin Marshall described this paradox as follows:

> (T)he (White)man systematically killed your (i.e., Black) language, killed your culture, tried to kill your soul, tried to blot you out–but somewhere along the way he gave us Christianity and gave it to use to enslave us. But it freed us because we understood things about it and we made it work for us in ways that it never worked for him (Holt 1972).

Black music was yet another aspect of cultural evolution for expressing difference and opposition to White domination and White ways. Blacks used their music not only to entertain, lighten the burden of their labor and other sufferings but also as a means of communication, especially the transmission of messages they did not want White people to understand. For example, when Harriet Tubman sang "Steal Away, Steal Away, Steal Away to Jesus" she was not pleading for Blacks to convert to Christianity. Rather, she was telling them to run away through the Underground Rail-

road to the North of the United States or to Canada (Baer, 1984; Becknell 1987; pp. 45–49).

The development of the Black English dialect was yet another means of expressing differences, toward collective identity. Blacks developed their dialect because, as noted earlier, slave owners forbaded them to speak indigenous African languages and required them to speak the English dialect. The slaves developed an English dialect that the slave masters did not and could not understand (Becknell, 1987; Holt, 1972).

Black American English dialect differs from White American Standard English in phonology, morphology and syntax. But these differences are not as important for oppositional collective identity as are differences due to secondary meanings. The secondary meanings arose from dialect inversions. The inversion was that Blacks assigned to words, phrases or statements reverse meanings or changed their functions from what they mean to White people. Thus, the same words appearing in both White English and Black English may have different and, often, opposite meanings. For example, the word "bad" which always means "bad" in White peoples' English sometimes means "good" in Black English.

According to Holt (1972) Black slaves developed their linguistic opposition because they recognized that to use English like their White masters would mean submitting to an identity defeat. That is, it would mean that they accepted definitions of their slave or caste status built into the White semantic system. Language inversion "emerged during slavery to fight both linguistic and psychological entrapment" (Holt, 1972; pp. 154).

The Burden of Acting White During Slavery

Black Americans became bi-cultural and bi-dialectical during slavery because they lived and worked in two different worlds which expected them to think, act and react in a particular way, depending on where they found themselves. In the Black community and among themselves, most Blacks felt at ease to talk and do things they would never attempt in a White environment. Conversely, in a White environment, Blacks talked and behaved as White people expected, which would be inappropriate among the Black community (Becknell, 1987; pp. 30).

As noted earlier, the ritual of social interaction between Blacks and Whites established during slavery required the two groups to behave toward each other in certain prescribed ways. Blacks were expected to act and react the way Whites wanted them to, otherwise, they would be punished or even put to death. As survival was the name of the game for Blacks, they talked and behaved the way Whites wanted.

Note, however, that Whites did not require Blacks to talk and behave the same way that White people actually talked and behaved; i.e., White slave owners did not require Blacks to "act White." In fact, Blacks were forbidden to talk like Whites; e.g., they were forbidden to learn to read and write. What the Whites wanted was for Blacks to talk and behave according to White people's construction of Black speech and cultural behavior. When in front of White people, Blacks tried to talk and behave out of compliance to what White people were demanding. But when they were among themselves, they acted according to their cultural ways that White people hardly observed.

The same situation existed with regard to speech. White English dialect was portrayed by Whites and Blacks as proper, correct, good and standard. Black English dialect, by contrast, was stigmatized as improper, incorrect, flat, country, slangish and bad. Although White people required Blacks to speak in a particular way, the requirement was not for Blacks to talk like White people actually talked; i.e., White people did not require Black slaves to speak "correct" or "standard English." Rather, they wanted Blacks to talk according to the White construction of Black speech based on Black "improper English." Blacks talked the way Whites wanted them to talk when with Whites out of compliance, but talked "Black" among themselves.

The burden of "acting White" before emancipation was how to comply with the White demand that Blacks should behave and talk like Blacks the way Whites thought that Blacks talked and behaved. It was not that Blacks should choose between behaving and talking the way White people actually behaved and talked and the way they themselves preferred to behave and talk.

There was no uniformity in Black response to this conflicting demand before emancipation. Rather, they evolved several strategies of coping with the "burden of 'acting White.'" This is evident in the variety of stock characters portrayed in novels, plays, drama, short stories and films of and about that era (Bogle, 1989; Nestby, 1982; Starker, 1971). The characters included accommodatative slaves, rebellious slaves, clowns, tragic mulattoes, Black mammies and coons. These characters represented different responses to the "burden of 'acting White.'" The accommodative slave (toms, servile Negro), for e.g., accepted his place as defined by Whites; and behaved and talked according to the White definition. The rebellious slave or "bad Negro" defied the law and the ritual of non-reciprocal social interaction. Black mammies were the nurturers of White offspring.

Black Collective Identity After Emancipation

Status Problems

Blacks continued to face status problems after emancipation. Instrumentally, they were subjected to extreme economic exploitation. They were

denied free and fair competition with Whites in employment, wages, promotion and entrepreneurship (Moore, 1981; Norgren and Hill, 1964; Novak, 1978). Before 1960, about the only places where Blacks could get jobs based on formal education and ability were segregated educational and health institutions serving the Black community (Frazier, 1957; Marshall, 1967; Ross, 1967).

Although school credentials were a requirement for employment in the wider society, White employers used a job ceiling to deny them access to jobs, promotion and wages commensurate with their qualifications.

In the social domain, residential, sexual, social and school segregation continued. Black people were residentially segregated by statute, regulatory authorities and custom (Ogbu and Margold, 1986). School segregation followed suit. In many states sexual relationship between white women and Black men was forbidden and severely punished when the taboo was violated (Johnson, 1943, p. 220; Myrdal, 1944). Until the year 2000, there was a culturally sanctioned rule backed by statutes in many states, namely, that biracial children should be defined as Black and should affiliate with Blacks (Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2002; Wright, 2001).

Ritual non-reciprocal social interaction continued. White people continued to believe that Blacks were inferior to them. These beliefs were expressed in their treatment of Blacks' jokes, novels, short stories, drama and movies (Johnson, 1931, p. 100). The beliefs aroused White aversion to Blacks and this, in turn, led to another White belief, namely, that Black Americans were not assimilable. Whites did not mean by this that Blacks were not capable of acquiring the education, economic status, and lifestyle of the White middle class. Rather, what they meant was that it was not desirable or acceptable to assimilate Blacks into White society to share their collective identity because they were colored and inferior (Myrdal, 1944, p. 54, 100).

Whites continued to make Blacks collectively responsible for the offence of a single Black person. For example, in Rosewood, Florida in January, 1923, about 1,500 white men from Rosewood and surrounding communities went to the Black neighborhood in Rosewood and killed 40 black men, women and children in retaliation for an alleged rape of a White woman by a Black man (CBS Television Magazine, 60 Minutes (August 5, 1984).

The threats of violence, punishment and the prevalence of lynching led Blacks to petition the United Nations in 1951 to intervene on their behalf (Patterson, 1951). Blacks suffered because Whites used them as scapegoats in times of economic hardships and political crisis (Frazier, 1957, p. 155–156; Shapiro, 1988). They were denied political power through disenfranchisement in the Southern states and through gerrymandering in the North.

Black Response to Status Problems after Emancipation

Blacks tried both as a group and as individuals to solve their status problems after emancipation. Blacks firmly believed that they were treated differently and badly because of their race and history. This interpretation of their social reality further motivated them to forge collective solutions to their collective status problems that reinforced their oppositional identity. Their collective solutions included the following:

Instrumental solutions: Blacks accepted the criteria of getting good jobs, decent wages and upward social mobility through education and hard work like Whites. But they soon realized that there was a job ceiling which prevented them from achieving these goals by merely meeting the criteria or rules that worked for White people. For this reason, they developed folk theories of getting ahead in spite of the job ceiling. As a group, they came to believe that they had to meet additional requirements, which included collective struggle at group level and clientship or uncle tomming, as individuals. The various forms of collective struggle up to the 1960s constituted modes of coping with the instrumental aspect of their status problems. They included the following:

Accommodation: Booker T. Washington's idea of accommodation under the caste-like system of the old South was advocated. He believed that Black Americans could achieve economic self-sufficiency through industrial education and vocational training for the Black masses and through independent business enterprise for the higher classes. He emphasized working within mutually separate collective identities for Blacks and Whites (Hall, 1979).

Integration with equality of opportunity: W. E. B. DuBois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) disagreed with Washington's view. By contrast, they demanded equality of opportunity with Whites and full acceptance by White people. Actually, some version of this strategy was initiated during slavery by free Blacks like Delany and Douglas. In the 1930s its advocates picketed and boycotted White business in Black communities that discriminated against Blacks (Drake and Cayton, 1970, Hall, 1979; p. 99). This strategy increased the tension and mistrust between Blacks and Whites. More importantly, however, they increased Black Americans' sense of oppositional collective identity (Becknell, 1987).

The third strategy was separatism. The separatists did not believe that it was possible to achieve a satisfactory solution to Black status problems within the American social and economic system. They believed that the solution was for Blacks to leave the United States society both physically and spiritually, while heading for places like Africa, Mexico, Latin America

or a part of the United States set aside for Blacks. The best known separatist movement was led by Marcus Garvey. It appealed to many Blacks, whether or not they formally belonged to it, because the movement promoted Black pride and collective identity (Hall, 1979; Redkey, 1969; Sygnnerstvedt, 1972, p. 133). Another influential separatist movement, especially in its early phase, was the Black Muslim Movement.

Social response: It took about 50 years for the social response to the post-emancipation status problems to crystallize. Locke (1925, p. 631) reports that during the first 50 years "the minds of Blacks were burrowed in trenches of the Civil War and Reconstruction." But underneath this was a psychological development that eventually enabled Blacks to liberate themselves from "the tyranny of intimidation and implied inferiority" (Locke, 1925, p. 631). The new era arrived in the mid-1920s when Blacks began to demand changes in their representation in the White minds or social image. Until then, the prevailing social image was expressed in the ritualized non-reciprocal interaction and forms of address carried over from slavery, as well as other renditions created by the Civil War (Locke, 1925, p. 631–632). By the 1920s, e.g., "Tom and Sambo" were no longer acceptable. Locke (1925, p. 632) notes that "The Negro today wishes to be known for what he is, even in his faults and shortcomings; (He) scorns a craven and even precarious survival at the price of seeming to be what he is not". Locke quotes an apt passage from a poem by Claude MacKay about the outlook of the *New Negro:*

> Mine is the future, grinding down today
> Like a great landship moving to the sea,
> Where the green hungry waters restlessly
> Heap mammoth pyramids and bark and roar
> Their eerie challenge to the crumbling shore.
> (Locke, 1925; p. 633).

Collective struggle against social discrimination went beyond ending non-reciprocal social interaction. Black Americans demanded social justice and acceptance by White Americans as social equals. Their strategies for achieving these goals included boycotts, protests, riots, civil disobedience, law suits and lobbying for legislation (Berry, 1971; Weisbrodt, 1991). White Americans, of course, resisted the Black collective struggle for social justice and inclusion. This resistance, in turn, made Blacks more disappointed and mistrustful of White people, a situation that further increased their sense of oppositional collective identity.

Black fear and experience of physical violence also promoted their sense of oppositional collective identity and group loyalty. Group loyalty was also

necessary because White violence was often indiscriminate (Fordham, 1985). The Rosewood incident described earlier was an example of White indiscriminate violence after the emancipation period.

Expressive responses: The emergence of the Harlem Renaissance and *The New Negro* also brought changes in the post-emancipation expressive adaptations of Black Americans. New interpretation of the *Negro Spirituals* is a case in point. Before the first quarter of the 20th century, *Negro Spirituals* were not accepted as original creations of folk hymns by Blacks. Instead, they were regarded as imitations of White Wesleyan hymns. Blacks were ashamed of this interpretation but by the 1920s they were courageous enough to reject the White interpretation that their hymns were not original. Equally important is that Blacks began to express their collective identity at this time in poetry, Jazz Art and culture (Hayes, nd; p. 666–677).

The Burden of "Acting White" After Emancipation

The burden of "acting White after emancipation, was different from the burden of "acting White" before emancipation. Recall that before emancipation "acting White" was that out of compliance Blacks had to behave and talk in the manner defined for them by the Whites to satisfy White people's expectations. Again, White people did not require that Blacks should behave and talk the way White people themselves actually behaved and talked.

However, after emancipation, Blacks were required to behave and talk the way White people actually behaved and talked: (a) in situations requiring the mastery of certain White knowledge, behaviors and speech, such as for formal education, upward social mobility and participation in societal institutions controlled by White people, while (b) Blacks were also now required to behave and to talk like White people to gain social acceptance and to be treated as social equals by White people. Blacks, therefore, now had to master two sets of cultural and dialect frames of reference: (1) Black ways of behaving and talking among themselves; and (2) White ways of behaving and talking in White-controlled situations. The co-existence of Black and White frames of reference, of course, has had a dynamic relationship and changed over time. What was not required of Blacks was to assume White people's collective identity.

But there was one additional problem: Blacks were often not rewarded or accepted as equal by Whites when they successfully learned to behave and talk like Whites or had obtained stipulated educational qualification.

Coping with the Burden of "Acting White" after Emancipation

After emancipation, Black Americans did not abandon their oppositional cultural and dialect frames of reference to embrace the White cultural frame of reference for education and upward social mobility. However, they accepted the need to behave and talk like White people (to "act White") for education, upward social mobility, equality and acceptance by White people. This was a dilemma for Black people. How they responded to this dilemma, i.e., resolved the tension between the demands that they act according to White frames of reference, rather than the Black frames of reference in situations controlled by White people, constituted their coping with the "burden of acting White." They developed five identifiable coping strategies.

Cultural and linguistic assimilation: Some Black people, after emancipation, chose to assimilate in culture and language. They tried very hard to emulate White people in behavior, speech and thought because they believed that their chances of success in education, employment in the corporate economy and in being socially accepted by White people would be better if they abandoned Black frames of reference and emulated White people. Becknell (1987) has described some techniques such Blacks used to assimilate: they straightened their hair with scalp-brushing chemicals because Black people's hair was stigmatized as "bad;" bleached their skin to look more White; some even stopped drinking coffee because coffee made a person "black;" pinched their nose to make it more pointed instead of flat; learned to talk like White people, including going for special coaching to talk more "properly;" distanced themselves socially from other Black people; and joined White churches.

Accommodation without assimilation: Another coping strategy for some was to more or less live in two worlds at different times: Black and White. Within the Black community they behaved and talked according to the Black frames of reference. In the White world, like school, work, and among White people, they behaved and talked like White people required. This category of Blacks could "go home again," according to Becknell (1987).

Ambivalence: The third coping strategy was ambivalence. Ambivalent Blacks knew, for instance, that "proper English" was necessary for school success and for getting good jobs. However, they also knew that no matter how hard a Black person tried to talk like White people, he or she would still sound Black. So, for them, trying to "talk proper" was only "puttin' on" or pretending to be White (Ogbu, 1999), Similarly, some ambivalents believed that the obstacles facing Blacks in employment, wages, promotion and education were racial; the fact that they were Black, not because they did not behave or talk like White people, was the key (Ogbu, 1999). I will give a concrete example later in the paper.

Resistance or opposition: Some Blacks opposed adopting White cultural and language frames of reference or "acting White" anywhere because they believed or feared that this would mean giving up their Black ways. It would also mean accepting White people's interpretation of the cultural and dialect differences between the two races. From their point of view, White people defined White ways as good and defined Black ways as bad. One informant in Oakland, California, gave a historical explanation of this resistance to "acting White" in the Black community. He said that, since slavery, White Americans have tried to get Black people to replace their inferior culture and dialect with superior White culture and language before White people would accept them. It began with teaching house slaves to imitate their White masters to make them different and superior over field hands. After emancipation, White people established "finishing schools" and "special education" to improve Black speech, manners and behaviors. These programs assumed that Black speech, manners and behaviors were bad and should be replaced with good White speech, manners and behaviors. A similar reason was given by some Black parents during ethnographic interviews in San Francisco for not wanting to speak standard English (Luster, 1992).

Encapsulation: Finally, some Blacks were more or less encapsulated in Black cultural and dialect frames of reference. They did not behave or talk like White people because they did not know how to rather than because they were opposed to doing so.

I have limited data on social sanctions or peer pressures against Blacks who chose any of these coping strategies to resolve the conflicting demands. Nor do we have data on how people handled or coped with the social sanctions. But there must have been consequences. More research is needed in this area.

Post-Civil Rights Era Black Responses to "Acting White"

Status Problems

Significant changes have occurred in the status problems of Blacks since the civil rights movement of the 1960s. These changes were most evident in the economic and political sectors. The factors that raised the job ceiling for Blacks included (a) executive orders (e.g., President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity in 1961); (b) federal legislation (e.g., Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); (c) the war on poverty; and (d) pressures from civil-rights organizations (Burkey, 1971; Ferman, Kornbluh and Miller, 1968). Although the changes have benefited mainly college-educated Blacks, not the Black masses, college-educated Blacks in the White establishments have complained of a glass ceiling. They say that they lag

behind their White peers in promotion because of their race (Benjamin, 1991; Case, 1995).

Social discrimination: This has decreased but has not been entirely eliminated. Hostility and violence are still directed against Blacks and other minorities in times of economic recession, such as during the 1980s (State of California, 1982). The definition of inter-racial children as Black and their affiliation with Blacks continued until the census of 2000. Children can now choose their affiliation. Residential and school integration is now more or less a matter of economic status, but segregation remains because of "White flight".

Expressive discrimination: Many Whites probably no longer believe that Blacks are inferior to Whites but the residue of this belief remains. A poll conducted by the *Newsweek* magazine in 1978 found that about one quarter of the Whites (25%) still believed that Blacks had less intelligence than Whites, and about 15% thought that Blacks were inferior to White people (Newsweek, February 26, 1979, p. 48). The publication of *The Bell Curve* by Herrnstein and Murray (1994) is a reminder that the Whites' belief in the inferiority of Blacks still exist even in White "scientific" circles. After a recent report in the *San Francisco Chronicle* about my research on Black academic performance, one reader sent me statistics on standardized test performance along with a lengthy letter on the genetic basis of the low score of Blacks. The debate goes on about Black genetic endowment for intelligence (The Gene Media Forum, 2002). As this goes to press, Black culture and language are still stigmatized.

Black Response to Status Problems in Post Civil Rights Era

The civil rights mobilization of the 1960s reinforced Black collective identity, especially with the emergence of the Black Power Movement. For Blacks, the ideology and strategies of the movement removed the stigma attached to being Black, increased race pride and provided a shared slogan that "Black is Beautiful." Thus, their response to the status problems complemented their collective identity as we find it today.

OPPOSITIONAL COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY BLACK COMMUNITY

Black Americans have always aspired to succeed like White Americans but they have always been aware of the obstacles facing them because of their status or race (Ferman, Kornbluh and Miller, 1968; Myrdal, 1944; Ogbu, 1978; Rowan, 1967; Sochen, 1972). Another obstacle is the "burden of 'acting White.'" Before and after emancipation, as well as after the civil

rights movement, they responded to this obstacle with one of the five culturally patterned strategies or copings described earlier: assimilation, accommodation without assimilation, ambivalence, resistance of opposition and encapsulation. Clearly, resistance or opposition has always been just one of the coping responses. It is probably by no means the most prevalent coping strategy during any of the periods.

Even though it is just one of the strategies for coping with the "burden of acting White," I focus on it in this section to show that oppositional collective identity or oppositional culture exists in the contemporary Black community or post-civil rights movement and provides the context for understanding why Black students label and avoid some attitudes and behaviors as "White."

In the 1980s, I studied the collective identity and frames of reference in the Black community by reviewing ethnographic and other literature (Ogbu and Margold, 1986). The latter included more than 50 Black American autobiographies (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). I discovered in this research six recurring identity themes: (1) oppositional collective identity, (2) oppositional cultural frame of reference, (3) strategies for coping with the burden of "acting White;" (4) interpretations of the coping strategies, (5) social sanctions or peer pressures against some coping strategies; and (6) coping strategies against the social sanctions. I will revisit each of these now.

Oppositional Collective Identity

One indicator of a sense of collective identity among contemporary Black Americans is the frequency that Black authors cite the passage about "double consciousness" from DuBois' (1982/1903) *Souls of Black Folks*. In the second half of the 20th century, a number of events have reinforced this double consciousness. Among them are the civil rights mobilization, the Black Power Movement and the Black Muslim Movement. As noted earlier, the Black Power Movement was particularly important in reinforcing the oppositional collective identity. Its ideology and tactics removed the stigma attached to being Black and increased race pride and provided an appealing slogan "Black is Beautiful." These practices removed the fear, shame and stigma as well as the social costs of being Black for those who wanted to express the outward symbols of Black collective identity. They began to display openly what they had always felt covertly, namely, that they were proud to be Black. The new public and psychological acknowledgement and the expression of Black collective identity have not been limited to activists or poor Blacks. They have reached every segment of the Black America. They have permeated the works of Black artists, performers and scholars

(Becknell, 1987). They have been embraced by Black professionals and the Black middle class in general.

This development was taking place during my ethnographic research in Stockton, California, 1968 and 1970, the hey day of the movement. Thus, I had a chance to observe identity transformations among both poor and middle-class Blacks first-hand. The transformation included shifts in identity labels from "Negro" to "Colored" to "Black;" changes in identity symbols, such as from processed to natural hair style; and changes in organizational membership, such as Black teachers in Stockton who refusal to join Black Teachers' Alliance in 1969 (because the term Black was bad and militant) to 100% membership by the same teachers in the Black Teachers' Alliance in 1972. The changes continued. During my research in Oakland in the early 1990s, a conference was organized in New Orleans by Blacks to change their collective identity label to African Americans. We also studied the response to this label change by Blacks in Oakland.

The strongest evidence of oppositional collective identity among contemporary Black Americans is linguistic. For example, Blacks use positive labels among themselves, such as "soul" (implying eternity, spirituality and transcendence); "brother and sister" (implying some of the closest of kin) and "bloods" (referring to the very stuff of life). In contrast, they label White people, particularly White men, "Ofays" (i.e., enemies, foes). According to Johnson (1972, p. 172), Blacks have only one positive label for White men, namely, "blue-eyed soul brother" which was usually reserved for "hippies" in the 1960s.

Oppositional Frames of Reference

The literature review provided evidence that Black and White cultural and dialect frames of reference are different and oppositional. For example, both Smitherman (1977, p. 75) and Boykin (1986, p. 63) describe Black culture as characterized by spirituality, harmony with nature, and being "in time" rather than "on time." Boykin (1986, p. 63) adds other areas in which Black and White cultures are also oppositional. For example, Blacks use more organic metaphors, have more preference for expressive movement, place more emphasis on inter-connectedness, and have a richer oral tradition. The two cultures differ in cognitive modes and non-verbal discourse (Shade, 1984); styles of walking, talking and gesturing (Folb, 1980:45), in attitudes (Davis and Watson 1985, p. 113; Folb, 1980, p. 45; Weis, 1985, p. 35). The strongest evidence of oppositional frame is in language use or communication (Boykin, 1986, p. 58; Daiby, 1972; Folb, 1980; p. 227–260; Holt, 1972; Smitherman, 1977). According to Daiby (1972, p. 175) Black

Americans believe that they have to be "one jump ahead" of White people in verbal communication. He goes on to say that the function of Black vernacular English has been to "strengthen the in-group solidarity of Black Americans to the exclusion of Whites, and to deceive, confuse and conceal information from White people in general" (Daiby 1972, p. 172).

Interpretations of Adoption of "White" Culture and Dialect Frames

An important clue as to how Black Americans interpret the adoption of White cultural and language frames of reference or "acting White" for professional success comes from a description in *Black Rage* of the dilemma of successful Black Professionals in White business. As the authors put it:

> The only way out, if indeed it can be so considered, is a poor one at best and the price paid for success is terribly high. *We speak of those Negroes who make it by emulating the White man. They accept as a fact that Negroes are not so smart as White people and decided to reject their blackness and, insofar as possible, embrace whiteness.* They identify with White men in every way and add to that contempt for black people. In the process they gain some of the "White man's magic." They acquire some of the superior qualities they attribute to him. They may as a result feel more competent, but it is a direct function of the feeling that "other Negroes" are incompetent. In this way they develop a contempt for themselves, because, however much they avoid it, they remain black, and there are things about themselves that will yet remind them of their blackness and those reminders will evoke feeling of self hatred and self-depreciation (Grier and Cobbs, 1968; *Emphasis added*).

Many authors state explicitly that they themselves and/or Black Americans in general see successful participation in White institutions (e.g., school, the corporate economy) as an assimilation, a one way acculturation or a subtractive process, that takes away their Black identity (Baker, 1987; Campbell, 1982; Davis and Watson, 1985; Mitchell, 1982; Steele, 1992; Taylor, 1973). Based on her ethnographic findings in a community college, Weis (1985) suggests that the students more or less interpreted mastering academic work as a one-way acculturation. A Black professor told the researcher that "a lot of Black students see (the academic world) as a White world...(If I) tell students, 'you're going to be excellent...' often times excellence means being...White....(and) that kind of excellence is negative here" (Weis 1985, p. 100–101). Labov (1972, p. 135) asserts that it is apparent to some Black youth "that accepting... School values (is) equivalent to giving up self-respect."

Some Black professionals in the corporations, according to Taylor (1973; p. 13), find that it is in their best interest to embrace, overtly the behaviors of Whites. He goes on to say that "the flight into the White role behavior is...at a high cost." This is because for a minority person to be accepted into the top echelons of the corporations, he or she (the minority professional) must "think, manage, behave like a majority group member and be White except in external appearance." (Taylor, 1973; pp. 16–17). Campbell concluded from her study of Black female executives that they are forced to pull away from their Black cultural identity, and to consciously modify their speech, their laughter, their walk, their mode of dress and their choice of car to conform to mainstream requirements. Thus, as Black executive women move up, they become isolated from those in their old world (Campbell, 1982; pp. 68–69, 70). Davis and Watson (1985) repeatedly mention the "phenomenal estrangement of corporate Blacks" from Black cultural traditions from their own families and communities, and even from their own pre-corporate life styles, ways of dressing, and sense of humor (see also Baker, 1987; Mitchell, 1982).

Coping Today with the "Burden of Acting White"

In the context of oppositional collective identity and cultural frame of reference as well as negative interpretation of "acting White," contemporary Blacks adopt definite strategies to cope with the demand that they adopt certain "White" attitudes and behaviors in White institutions and establishments. The strategies they use to resolve the tension between meeting the demands of the White controlled situations and the demands to conform to the Black ways are similar to the coping strategies of Blacks after emancipation. They include the following.

Assimilation or Emulation of Whites

Contemporary Black professionals in this category choose to abandon Black cultural and dialect frames of reference to behave and talk primarily according to White frames of reference. Like their predecessors they believe that their choice is more likely to help them succeed in education, upward social mobility in the wider society and acceptance by White people. Some other Blacks think that the assimilating Blacks not only reject Black dialect but also appear have a kind of linguistic self-hatred. Assimilationists try very hard to talk like White people. Some go for special coaching to "talk better" in order to keep their job or get pro-

moted. Some send their children to private school where they will learn to "talk better" or to ensure that they learn to "speak White" when they have to, such as at school, on the job, and in the company of "better class of people."

A strong evidence of the assimilation strategy can be found in studies based on William Cross' theory of negrescence (Cross, 1991) described earlier. Before being influenced by the Black Power Movement (1968–75) these professionals and well-educated Blacks had developed a negative self-image of themselves as Black people. However, when they became involved in the Black Power Movement they underwent a transformation from their pre-involvement identity (a non-Afro-centric identity) to a new identity that is Afro-centric (Cross, 1991; p. 190).

Accommodation Without Assimilation

Another strategy is accommodation without assimilation. Blacks in this category adopt White-cultural and language frames of reference where they have to in order to succeed in school or in other White controlled institutions that are evaluated by White criteria. They do not, however, give up their Black identity or cultural and language frames of reference. They learn and follow the standard practices for success in White Americans in their institutions, without giving up their racial identity and ways of behaving or talking (Haynes, 1985; Sowell, 1974). Marva Collins on (60 Minutes, Hewitt, 1979) will serve as a good example of accommodation without assimilation. She is a Black educator who realizes that Black colloquial language is "not considered good enough" when applying for a job. Her solution was to teach Black children to master and use standard English.

Some Black autobiographers mention two important functions of accommodation: (a) it helps Blacks to maintain their sanity in a racist society, and (b) it helps them get ahead in White establishments. It is in this vein that Wiederman (1985) writes of the "seventh sense" that Blacks need in order to stay sane in America.:

> It was a trick I learned early on. A survival mechanism as old as slavery. If you re born Black in America you must quickly teach yourself to recognize the invisible barriers disciplining the space in which you may move. This seventh sense you must activate is imperative for survival and sanity. Nothing is what it seems. You must always take second readings, decode appearances, pick out the abstractions erected to keep you in your place. Then work around them. What begins as a pragmatic reaction to race prejudice gradually acquires the force of an instinctive response (Wiederman, 1985, p. 222).

Edwards (1980, p. 120) sees the need to learn standard English and code-switch for upward mobility:

> My father always had a way of changing his voice when he was talking to White folks. We used to say that he could sound more like them than they could sound like themselves. He was just a regular every day "Blood" right up until a White person came on the scene. And then you never heard so many "gushes" and "golly, gee whizzes" in your life.

Ambivalence

I noted earlier that, after emancipation, some Blacks were ambivalent about adopting White behavior and talk in order to achieve success because they did not believe that the reason Black people are not as successful as White people was because they did not know how to behave or talk like White people. This was brought home to me in 1969 when I was attending a workshop on Black history and culture at the University of California, Los Angeles. One of my teachers narrated a story about a Black applicant enrolled in a program for training minority technicians in the Hollywood movie industry. The applicant was turned down because she did not speak "correct English." My teacher offered a different explanation; she said that until the late 1960s, Blacks could not work, rent or buy homes in Westwood or Hollywood even when they spoke perfect English. She said that the applicant was turned down because of racism.

Resistance or Opposition

Some are afraid that mastering proper English will cause them to lose their Black dialect identity. They do think that they should not give up their dialect because their collective identity requires them to talk like Black people, not like White people. Several Black women in San Francisco considered "talking proper" an attempt to dissociate oneself from the Black race, to show that one is superior to other Blacks and an act of betrayal (Luster, 1992). The women "consciously resisted learning and using standard English because they believed that it is a White imposition on Blacks."

Encapsulation

Some are encapsulated in Black cultural and dialect frames of reference and do not behave or talk like White people anywhere. The reason may be that they have not learned to behave or speak proper English.

Social Sanctions (Peer Pressures) Against "Act White" Today

The belief that adopting White attitudes, behaviors and communication style as a one-way assimilation or abandonment of Black identity and frames of reference leads to social sanctions against potential assimilation. Accommodators without assimilation are also potential targets of sanctions. Other Blacks are opposed to individuals in these categories who are perceived as trying to behave or talk like Whites in certain situations because such individuals are seen not merely as "acting White" but also as trying to betray the cause of Black people or trying to "join the enemy." The sanctions are both psychological and social.

Psychologically, some individuals trying to 'act White' may experience psychological stress or what DeVos (1967) calls affective dissonance. That is, because individual Blacks share the group's sense of oppositional racial identity the would-be assimilationists may feel that by behaving or talking like White people they are, indeed, abandoning or betraying their own people.

There was evidence in the literature of both psychological and social sanctions against "acting White." Some Black professionals not only fear that they are being co-opted by the White world, but also experience social pressures from the Black community. Take the case of Mitchell (1983, p. 22–23). Reflecting on her position as a Black professor at a major research university, she describes the dilemma for Black academics: "the Black community rates service to the community high and research low... also the type of research that the community regards as worthwhile is that which advocates change, helps to get money and speaks in plain language." In contrast, the university regards this type of research as particularistic and subjective.

The sanctions experienced most commonly by Blacks striving for academic and professional success are (a) accusation of Uncle Tomism or disloyalty to the Black cause or Black community (Petroni, 1970, p. 263); (b) threat of personal embarrassment and humiliation (Mitchell, 1983, p. 22–23); and (c) fear of losing friends and/or a sense of community (Abdul-Jabba and Knobles, 1983; Labov, 1972; Weis, 1985). The individual also feels the need to perform a social cost/benefit analysis of his or her chances for making it (Davis and Watson, 1985, p. 51; Mitchell, 1982, p. 35). He or she may experience intense frustration and the perception of a closing down of options (Davis and Watson, 1985, p. 74). In some cases, the latter has led to suicide, while some individuals suffer from self-doubts, guilt, alienation and paranoia (Luster, 1992).

Reports by Becknell (1987), Kochman (1987) and Luster (1992) as well as my own study in Oakland, California (Ogbu, 1999) provide evidence of

contemporary community pressures against "acting White," especially against "talking proper in the community" because it would mean denying and ultimately losing one's Black identity. Becknell (1987, p. 36) talks about the pressure this way:

> When I encounter a group of Blacks on the street in my home community, I can't go up to them and say "Good afternoon, gentlemen. How are you doing today?" (i.e., greet them in Standard English). They would laugh at me and then feel sorry for me. They'd think, "Poor Charles, when he left here for college, he was OK. (That is, he talked appropriately like us and maintained his Black identity). But now, look what they've done (i.e., White people or White educational institutions) to him!" (i.e., he has learned to "talk proper" or "act White").

According to Kochman (1987, p. 228)

> Black intonation patterns function as an inside (ethnic) boundary marker; those who do not manifest the distinctive Black intonation in their speech regularly acknowledge the adverse criticism they receive from other Blacks, the substance of which characterizes them as being "assimilation-oriented" or "acting White." I have observed often the nonverbal criticisms directed at these Blacks by other Blacks who do manifest such intonations (a criticisms also often verbalized about them later on, when the person is no longer present). The accused are often called upon to demonstrate the extent of their group affiliation in other ways, and may be further tested for their "Blackness" before the final judgment is rendered. (See also Ogbu, 1999).

Luster tells us that among Black women (and many were parents) who were attending a community school in San Francisco to get their GED, that the biggest opposition was against speaking standard English:

> There is a continual delineation and reinforcement of behaviors, practices, and attitudes that are "Black" (and appropriate) versus those that are "White" (and inappropriate)... "Acting White" is an acknowledged and identifiable practice within the community. The women who were both observed for more than a year and then interviewed consider "speaking proper" or using the Standard English is an attempt to disassociate oneself from the race; an attempt to demonstrate superiority, an act of betrayal. It angered and disgusted the community. The women consciously resisted learning and using the Standard English because it would mean accepting what the White society defines as right" or "White" to replace what the same White society defines as "wrong" or "Black." (Luster, 1992, p. 202)

I also found that talking proper was a strong signifier of "acting White" in Oakland, California. The parents I studied believed that talking proper in

the community was pretentious because, no Black person could really talk like a White person. Talking proper was not natural for Blacks. There was yet another reason for the opposition: Talking proper signified adopting White people's attitude of superiority toward Blacks. Here is how the community would treat a person trying to talk proper, according to my informants:

Parent 1: You know, talkin' all–you know, talkin' like White people.

Interviewer: Oh, talking–so people would not be interested in that...

Parent 1. No.

Interviewer: Ok. Well, how would they treat them?

Parent 1: Probably standoffish...Ignore them... Because they're trying to (show that they are) better than they are...Maybe that type of attitude.

Parent 2. People in the community will say, "He thinks he's smarter than everyone else, or he thinks he's White." We don't want to listen to this. I don't want to listen to this thing or that.

Parent 3: They (other Lafayette Blacks) would probably tend to be somewhat prejudicial of someone speaking very proper English, and they would probably make an assessment on that person's character as being "uppity" or... she is trying to be White, or something like that, you know.

Coping with Social Sanctions Against "Acting White" Today

Contemporary Blacks who must "act White" for whatever reason know full well that their behavior is not endorsed by the community. There are cultural ways of handling or shielding them from the social sanctions. The strategies found in both the literature and my ethnographic studies include the following:

Camouflaging: Involvement in the Black Struggle

This requires activities that give other Blacks the impression that one is for Black people, not for White people. Active participation in the civil rights struggle is a good way to camouflage. Middle class Blacks are expected to be involved in the collective struggle against White oppression. They have to demonstrate their concern for and loyalty to the "race" through "the struggle" to be accepted as good role models for Black youth. Some Black professionals I interviewed reported that they were accused on many occasions of not being for the race because they were "not involved". This is how one Oakland parent describes the attitude of the community toward a professional suspected of abandoning the community. This is

followed by a Stockton school administration's description of the dilemma of Black professionals:

Parent 5L: By now they've (i.e., successful Black professionals) gone somewhere else to live in a totally different neighborhood. So, you know, it's really hard to...

Interviewer: That's right. So, they've moved away from the community

Parent 5L: That's right.

School Administrator: Let me tell you something else about this community, about the Black people, that they don't have a lot of trust in each other, either you know.... The Black people who live in north Stockton, professionals). ... if they came to the Black community Council they would be literally attacked by the people from south Stockton (Black ghetto resident). They (from south Stockton Blacks) feel that they (north Stockton Blacks) have abandoned them for having moved up there. So, once you have become a professional, and successful, and others who are not, sort of cast dispersion on you because of it. It's a difficult thing to go back and serve, to help when people are challenging you every step of the way you know (interview, 1970).

Accommodation Without Assimilation

Convincing others that one is able to behave and talk like White people in White-controlled environments and yet behave and talk like Black people in the Black community is another way to handle social sanction. Some Blacks learn to live alternately in the Black world and in the White World (Becknell, 1987). Some Black parents in Oakland recognized the importance of code-switching behavior. One mother said that she mastered proper English to disguise her racial identity, minimize racial discrimination and increase her chances of getting a good job.

Parent: (Talking proper) is not a problem for me because I can change my tone of voice and speak in a different (way). Well, I appear to speak in a different—with an accent. Certain (White) people don't really know who they're talking to.

Interviewer: Okay.

Parent: Whereas if they were to see me, they would not (have agreed to what I said or wanted) ...because of the Afro.

Support Group or Mentorship

Black professional organizations or associations function to provide needed support to Blacks. Getting a mentor helps Black professionals

succeed in the mainstream. One function of the mentor is to serve as a stabilizing force against peer pressures and self-doubt. Mentors are very important even in professional sports, as can be seen in the experience of Abdul-Jabbal. Early in his professional sports career, a mentor provided him with tips on how to play. One of two other mentors who gave him emotional support, was a Muslim. His Muslim mentor admonished him to both take his religion seriously and affirm his U.S. citizenship and get all his rights as a citizen (Abdul-Jabbar and Knobles, 1983). However, the literature indicates that mentorship, is not frequently available to Black achievers. According to Davis and Watson (1985, p. 89), mentoring is limited by a lack of structural opportunity. They note that, "In the early 60's...Blacks always had a 'godfather' or corporate mentor who would look out for them. But that did not mean that the mentor would help Black employees rise through the ranks" (Davis and Watson 1985, p. 29–30).

COPING WITH THE BURDEN OF "ACTING WHITE" AT SCHOOL

I have discussed at length the collective identity and frames of reference among Blacks in contemporary United States because critics of the Fordham–Ogbu thesis focus almost exclusively and atomistically on Black students attitudes and behaviors in the school context, divorced from Black history and community. But Black students are products of Black history and members of contemporary Black community. They face the same dilemma, due to the same oppositional collective identity and frames of reference characteristics, as members of their community. Therefore, in examining the students' conduct, I will not repeat the above discussions of the dilemma of "acting White" among contemporary Black Americans. Suffice it to say that at school, students responded to required attitudes and behaviors labeled "White" like adult Blacks in White institutions and corporate America. Among the students, as among adults, there are assimilationists, accommodators without assimilation, ambivalents, resisters and the encapsulated. It is important to bear in mind that although Black collective identity and cultural frame of reference are oppositional, only one of the five categories of Blacks among both adults and students is explicitly opposed to adopting White attitudes, behaviors and speech. In my own study, I have generally found that there are relatively few students who reject good grades because it is "White." On the contrary, they want to make good grades and many report that they are well received by their close friends when they get good grades, such as when they get an A (Ogbu and Simons, 1994a, 95).

What the students reject that hurt their academic performance are "White" attitudes and behaviors conducive to making good grades (Ogbu

and Simons, 1998). In Shaker Heights, for example, they include speaking standard English, enrollment in Honors and AP classes, being smart during lessons and having too many White friends. In Oakland, they include talking proper, studying a lot or doing homework everyday, having mostly White friends, taking hard/advanced placement courses, acting like a nerd, taking mathematics and science classes, spending a lot of time in the library and reading a lot. Black students experience peer pressures from other Black students to discourage them from adopting such White attitudes and behaviors. Black students also experience peer pressures for other reasons than "acting White." In Shaker Heights, these include non-academic priorities like pressure to work too many hours on part-time jobs to pay-off credit card debts, as well as maintaining a certain lifestyle. Oakland students are pressured to sell drugs, smoke weed, cut classes, to hang out with friends and to believe that school does not matter. It is important to note that all peer pressures that hurt students' grades are not for preventing students from "acting White."

Coping with Social Sanctions Against Peer Pressures at School

Like the adults, Black students have strategies for coping with peer pressures. It is difficult to separate strategies for handling pressures against "acting White" from strategies for peer pressures for other reasons. Shaker Heights students reported three major ways they handled peer pressures. One was family upbringing and continued parental supervision, including screening their friends and monitoring their school work. The second was a student's own initiative, whereby he or she carefully chooses Black friends who are serious about school and about making good grades. Finally, some students interpret peer pressures as distractions from their goal of school success and take necessary steps to avoid them.

In Shaker Heights, the school made a significant indent into the peer pressures by establishing an academic identity program for achieving Black students, called The (Minority Achievement Committee Scholar) MAC Scholars. Academically promising students are invited to join the program. The scholars meet periodically to discuss how they can handle peer pressures and improve their school performance. They also have an annual award ceremony for academic improvement. Equally important is that they wear special symbols identifying them as MAC scholars and greet one another in a special way. Both of these express their pride in academic achievement. The MAC Scholars are generally admired as good role models by other Black students (Ogbu, 2003, p. 125–126).

The most common strategy in Oakland is camouflaging. A good example of this is to be highly involved or to excel in Black activities and avoid

"White" activities. Another common strategy is to help friends with their home-work or let them copy one's assignments. Some students act dumb in class or as class clowns. Some study in secret and their good grades, achieved "without studying," are attributed to the fact that they are "naturally smart." A few students get "bullies" to protect them in exchange for helping the latter with assignments. There seem to be more students in Oakland than in Shaker Heights, however, who "give in" to friends or yield to peer pressures and "let their grades suffer."

There are several things to be stressed as a conclusion. First, Black students face the same burden of "acting White" that Black Americans have faced throughout their history and still face in contemporary United States. Under this circumstance, they have developed culturally patterned ways of coping with the dilemma or the burden of "acting White" which one finds both in the contemporary Black community and among the students. Second, in the course of their history, Black Americans have had to cope with peer or community pressures against "acting White" and they have also developed strategies to handle such pressures. The social sanctions or pressures and the coping strategies still exist in contemporary Black community and are shared by Black students. Third, Black students experience peer pressures for other reasons than for "acting White". The peer pressures unrelated to the burden of "acting White" also contribute to their low school performance. Lastly, other and even more important contributors to their low school performance are societal, school and other community forces that discourage academic engagement (Ogbu, 2002, 2003; Ogbu and Simons, 1998).

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