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ABSTRACT

The school, often inadvertently and unconsciously, subordinates ethnic and racial minorities. School mechanisms have developed which tend to support ethnic isolation, perpetuate stereotyping and other myths, and in manifold ways differentially treat minorities. School segregation, ability grouping, student fees, and curricular or extracurricular offerings with middle-class-based grade, academic, or behavioral requirements for participation are examples of such mechanisms. The majority of Southwesterners rationalize the Mexican American subordinate social situation in simplistic and false terms. By stereotyping the Mexican American or by omitting his history, discrimination is perpetuated. Any school practice which discourages or impedes vertical mobility perpetuates low social status of the poor. Such practices damage the life chances of the many poor of Mexican descent. To maintain minority groups in subordinate social and economic positions is detrimental to the national welfare. Economic poverty and powerlessness go hand in hand, each affecting the other and influencing the individual's world view, personality, and behavior. Educators can compensate for powerlessness by becoming advocates for the poor or by encouraging equal status interaction and participation and by sharing decision-making powers. (JH)

SCHOOL DISCRIMINATION:

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CASE

by

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SCHOOL DISCRIMINATION: THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CASE

Thomas P. Carter*

The last two decades of our history have witnessed a social movement commonly referred to as the civil rights revolution. Articulate leaders have focused national attention repeatedly on racism, prejudice, and discrimination. The outcomes of this outpouring of emotions, logic, and ideals--combined with concerted group action--are manifold. Unfortunately, the results of this revolution are not all salubrious: rather they are a mixed bag of positive and negative developments. This essay examines the results of some fifteen years of fervor on one primary social institution, the school, and its relationships with one ethnic minority, the Mexican American. Regardless of this rather restricted focus, the points made may apply to other institutions and to other subordinate (minority) populations.

The civil rights revolution employs a rhetoric laced with allocations of racism. Usually such belief patterns are ascribed to the "white" majority, not to minority groups. However, racism is a generalized Western phenomenon. Regardless of race or ethnic group, most individuals socialized in America adhere to some degree to the highly questionable assumption that members of a given race share certain characteristics. Racism is the belief that ascribes personality, behavioral, or cultural characteristics to a racial group.

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These characteristics are seen to be determined genetically--as is the case with a Negro, a Jew, or a Mexican American. The confusion concerning race, religion, and national origin is common but unimportant for our purposes. Whether individuals are seen as inferior or superior due to any of these three factors represents merely a compounding and confusing of two similar omnipresent phenomena, ethnocentrism and racism. The social results of both are similar. Each population segment justifies and rationalizes its behavior toward the "out-group" on the basis of beliefs about the "inherited characteristics" of its own and the other group. Thus, Negroes fail to succeed in our society because they are child-like; Mexican Americans do poorly in school because they are lazy; or "whites" control America because they are aggressive and adaptable. As we all know, such beliefs are patent nonsense; nevertheless, we continue to justify social arrangements by reliance on such false overgeneralizations.

The stress on racism as a national aberration has had manifold effects. Initially, it made us conscious of racism and, to a lesser extent, ethnocentrism; however, the depth of this recognition is open to serious question. Most thinking people can now freely admit that racism exists. Nonetheless, the vast majority accept this only superficially; while accepting that a "good American" should not be racist, we fail to examine ourselves or our institutions for the manifestations of racism. It is no longer socially acceptable to be a racist in many circles. Yet little is done to eliminate racism. We may be approaching a stage where social and psychological mechanisms will "neutralize" the word and concept--racism may be well on its way to becoming a nonword and nonconcept. If this is occurring, the civil rights movement has availed little--mechanisms may be developing that insulate the "body social" from self-examination and change. Prejudice is a concept equally common to the movement. In this context, prejudice is little more than prejudgment based upon racist beliefs. As with racism, it is almost impossible to find individuals or groups

who admit to prejudging individuals on the basis of their race, ethnic group, or national origin. Yet prejudgment has become institutionalized, and nonracist justifications have developed to rationalize it.

Regardless of the justifications or reasons for the existence of racism and prejudice, the real problem is discrimination. Discrimination is behavior supported by a "mind set." The real difficulty is separating the "minds and hearts of men" from the behavior of men and the actions of institutions. Any action of an individual or institution which has as its ultimate outcome the subordination of a minority is discrimination. Racial discrimination continues to be widespread, although no longer as blatant or overt as in the past.

> For more than 300 years, [racial discrimination] was a central part of American life, particularly in the South. During these centuries, thousands of overtly racist laws, social institutions, behavior patterns, living conditions, distributions of political power, figures and forms of speech, cultural viewpoints and habits, and even thought patterns continually forced [non-white] Americans into positions of inferiority and subordination. It took the bloodiest of all American wars to abolish the most terrible form of legal subordination--slavery--just 100 years ago. But many other overtly racist laws and institutions remained in force until well after World War II. These include legally segregated schools, restrictive covenants forbidding nonwhites to live in certain neighborhoods, laws prohibiting interracial marriages, required racial separation of public facilities like bus seats and restaurants, and denial of the right to vote (1).

On the legal side, the "revolution" has caused elimination of racist legislation. While it is axiomatic that mores and beliefs cannot be legislated, legal changes do represent a national commitment at a high ethical level. This legal commitment is the very antithesis of movements in, for example, South Africa and Rhodesia, where racism and discrimination are becoming the law of the land. While progress is being made in our country, discriminatory or subordinating behavior continues based on racist beliefs.

Hopefully racism, prejudice, and discrimination are no longer endemic--only epidemic.

The Ideal vs. the Real

Youth and civil rights movements, by focusing American attention on racism and discrimination, are forcing us into a painful examination of ourselves, our institutions, and our belief in the "American dream." This nation professes to accept the maxim of equality of opportunity limited only by individual ability. Even though America is oriented toward that goal, such a completely "open society" has never been a functioning reality. In order to approach this ideal, every institutional structure or mechanism which differentially treats groups to their collective detriment must be eliminated. A discriminatory institutional structure "is any well-established, habitual, or widely accepted pattern of action or organizational arrangement, whether formal or informal ..." which functions to subordinate a group or category of people (2). The perseverance of such institutional discrimination in schools belies both a lack of faith in national ideals and a disrespect for the law. Educators must demonstrate, not with words but with deeds, that they are dedicated to bringing reality into alignment with the ideal. The school can function to supplement and incorporate equality of opportunity. However, to accomplish this and, in so doing, to reaffirm faith in the "democratic school" is an immense undertaking. The attempt must be made if this nation is to survive as a viable, though imperfect, democracy. The school is a most feasible place to start the essential chain of events.

Social scientists argue that schools reflect and are functionally integrated with the society they serve. This position is hardly news. A rural school tends to produce farmers and agriculturally oriented citizens, its curriculum laden with rural culture and local social patterns. Likewise, a Southern school reflects the caste-like society in which it operates: blacks are taught to be "good

Negro" Southerners and whites are taught their separate role. Such schools tend to be segregated, reflecting the social segregation of the area. Upper middle-class suburban schools unconsciously teach the young to play the elitist and separatist roles their parents enjoy. The school usually functions not to change its parent social and cultural world, rather to reinforce and perpetuate it. Educators are somewhat more idealistic, tending to argue the inverse. To them the role of the school is seen as producing individuals who are capable of rising above the cultural and social limitations of their parents. School people talk in terms of "education" to lead, to change, to cause youth to move toward a better individual self and toward creation of a better society. The "better world" is pictured in terms of the American dream of (a) individual perfection for the common good of the rational man, (b) equal opportunity, and (c) the eradication of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. At least verbally, many educators pursue this orientation with near-religious fervor.

Points of view of social scientists and those of educators appear conflictive. The result of this conflict is manifest in the common educational phenomenon of "letting actions speak louder than words." Educators vociferously preach the goals of "democratic education" (listen to any high school commencement address) while condoning or encouraging institutional structures which reflect bias and perpetuate local social arrangements. Actions violate the ideals professed. Young people are distraught; the hypocrisy they see in society is beautifully reflected in the schools they are forced to attend. Mexican American youth tell us they have had enough; ya basta! They demand that society and its dependent schools practice what is preached. Admittedly, the school cannot change society overnight; regardless, it can eliminate those practices which encourage unequal treatment and less than equal opportunity.

There are many reasons why schools do not change. Bureaucratic rigidity, with its built-in rationalizations and self-justifications, is one prime reason. Another is that schoolmen are so well-acquainted

with, so much a part of, their institutions that they honestly cannot see the subordinating results of institutional practices. It is like attempting to be objective about one's self and family. But the real problem is that, in order to stay in power, educators must reflect what the controlling elements of local society dictate. Educators in decision-making positions find it difficult, if not impossible, to counter the implicit or explicit desires of school board members and others in power. Minority group members are rarely in positions of power. Such conditions are difficult to circumvent. For many reasons, educators have not grappled with the fact that some of their acts of commission and omission are detrimental to certain groups.

The Obvious and the Not So Obvious

For the purpose of exposition, let us assume that all overt racial discrimination has disappeared. Nevertheless, the careful investigator will still observe that previously subordinated groups would continue (a) to be concentrated in traditionally minority occupations; (b) to be found in disproportionate percentages in the lowest social levels; and (c) to remain unequal with the majority socially and economically. In school, minorities would continue (a) to be concentrated in "nonacademic" curricula, (b) to be over-represented in the lowest ability groups and among the "mentally retarded," and (c) to fail to progress academically at rates equal to their majority group peers. What may be defined as organizational racism would continue to operate. Certain well-established mechanisms would preclude or discourage equal opportunity to enter, persist, and advance in either school or society. Regardless of whether they were established for racist purposes, certain institutional structures latently function to inhibit equal access and progress. Some discriminatory practices are so obvious that it is difficult to believe schoolmen do not recognize and eliminate them immediately. Whether educators employ nonracist or racist justifications for such mechanisms

is unimportant. Whether the subordinating practices are due to staff action or inaction is of equally slight significance. The outcomes are the same.

It is helpful to examine these subtle and not-so-subtle acts as they adversely affect the Mexican American. Four major school-related mechanisms are potentially discriminatory: (a) ethnic and racial isolation, (b) the ways children are "sorted" into curricular or ability groups, (c) the curriculum as it reflects stereotypes or other misinformation, and (d) the "hidden social costs" of school and how they penalize the poor. These are not discrete items; each interrelates with the others.

Ethnic Isolation

Two common school mechanisms tend to perpetuate ethnic separateness and the inherent inequality of opportunity it fosters. Segregation by schools is the most obvious. Rigid ability grouping or tracking is less obvious but equally discriminatory.

Ethnically and racially unbalanced schools are "alive but not so well." Segregation persists sixteen years after the Supreme Court decision that separate but "equal" school facilities are inherently unequal and thus unconstitutional. Regardless, some 50 percent of Mexican Americans in the Southwest go to elementary schools and 36 percent attend secondary schools where their group comprises the majority. Twenty-five percent go to elementary schools where 85 to 100 percent of the children are Mexican American (3). Historic discrimination against the Mexican American is supported and abetted by segregated schools. Courts have found that the Brown decision applies not only to blacks but equally to those of Mexican ancestry. In his decision to end ethnic isolation in Corpus Christi schools, Judge Seals argued from a legal, social, and educational point of view:

> While many of our institutions have a tendency to divide us, religious institutions, social institutions, economic institutions, political institutions, the public school institution, as I see it, is the one unique institution which has the capacity to unite this Nation and to unite this diverse and pluralistic society that we have. We are

> not a homogeneous people; we are a heterogeneous people, we have many races, many religions, many colors in America. Here in the public school system as young Americans, they can study, play together, interact, they will get to know one another, to respect the others' differences, to tolerate each other even though of a different race, color, religious, social or ethnic status (4).

This decision will probably be appealed by the school district. It is difficult to comprehend why the courts are forced to intervene and why "enlightened" educators appear to align themselves with local racial bias. There can be a number of explanations. It is a highly questionable assumption that schoolmen are highly conservative or racist. Yet, in defense of segregation, educators stress "pedagogical" and financial arguments. These are shopworn and tired, only the "evils of bussing" and the glories of the "neighborhood school" are new (but shallow) justifications. Many educators believe that remedial and compensatory education programs will resolve the academic problem even in segregated schools. These educators apparently disregard the bulk of research findings indicating that such programs are usually dismal failures (5). Most likely, the principal cause for educator support of the local mores is that politically and socially powerful segments within their communities prefer to "separate the races." Educational executives subservient to these segments are forced to search out and present "arguments" to justify school segregation. In frustration, some Mexican Americans presently argue that they too prefer segregation. Local bias may be getting the upper hand. Mores seem stronger than the law or professed values.

"Sorting" Mechanisms

Desegregation does not equal social integration. Separateness and ethnic cleavage continue in schools where groups are mixed. Rigid ability groupings or curricular groupings keep children apart. Mexican Americans are overrepresented in "slow tracks" and vocational curricula. Anglos are more evenly distributed (6). The U. S. Constitution quite clearly incorporates the legal basis of our national ideals and values. Judge Wright beautifully combined these aspects in declaring tracking in violation of the constitutional

guarantees to due process and equal protection:

> Even in concept, the track is undemocratic and discriminatory. Its creator admits it is designed to prepare some children for white collar, and other children for blue collar jobs. Considering the tests used to determine which children should receive the blue collar special, and which the white, the danger of children completing their education wearing the wrong collar is far too great for this democracy to tolerate (7).

If a disproportionate percentage of Mexican Americans are found in special education, certain classrooms, tracks, or curricula, then discriminatory practices may be operant. To the extent that standardized intelligence or achievement tests or biased teacher recommendations are employed in assigning individuals to such groups, blatant discrimination is obvious. If those in power support and encourage tracking, even if camouflaged by some new-fangled euphemisms, they implicitly support inequality of opportunity. They are equally at fault if they take no positive steps to eliminate such discriminatory treatment. The maintenance of disproportionate ethnic membership in curricular tracks is tacit acceptance of the basic tenet of racism: that certain groups are intellectually inferior.

Ethnic or racial isolation fostered by the school discourages one group in learning from and about the other while perpetuating the ethnic cleavage and the caste-like community the school so beautifully mirrors. Separation implicitly supports racism and prejudice by encouraging the stereotypes upon which both are based. Any school action or inaction that discourages "sustained-equal-status interaction" among differing cultural or racial groups supports the community social system of subordinate minority and superordinate majority groups. Children learn that their group is superior or inferior by practicing these relationships in school. Even if facilities are equal, children "get the picture," clearly recognizing that, in spite of what educators tell them, minority youngsters are not equal. Thus, being "less equal," it is logical that minorities continue to have less access to the "goodies" our society offers. Continued ethnic separation breeds inequality of opportunity, caste-

like community divisions, mutual stereotyping, and racism, the very conditions contributing to the social upheaval of our time. The school unfortunately tends to perpetuate society and the conditions within it that are among the principal "causes" of our grievous social and racial problems.

Myths and the Damage They Do

Teacher behavior and curricular content can be both prejudicial and discriminatory. Curricula usually present a distorted picture by either stereotyping the Mexican American and the "Hispanic culture" or excluding both altogether. Teachers employ stereotypes in numerous ways which tend to subordinate the minority.

Stereotypes and folk myths have much in common: both are widely accepted, socially useful beliefs and both are probably based upon some partial truth or simplistic explanation. According to Allport, a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its use is to justify conduct in relation to that group of people (8). Many educators adhere to and perpetuate the generally held Southwestern stereotype:

> the Anglo-Americans' principal assumptions and expectations emphasize the Mexican's presumed inferiority. In its most characteristic pattern, such inferiority is held to be self-evident. As one Anglo woman put it, "Mexicans are inferior because they are so typically and naturally Mexican." Since they are so obviously inferior, their present subordinate status is appropriate and is really their own fault. There is a ready identification between Mexicans and menial labor, buttressed by an image of the Mexican worker as improvident, undependable, irresponsible, childlike, and indolent. If Mexicans are fit for only the humblest labor, there is nothing abnormal about the fact that most Mexican workers are at the bottom of the occupational pyramid, and the fact that most Mexicans are unskilled workers is sufficient proof that they belong in that category.
>
> Associated with the assumption of Mexican inferiority is that of the homogeneity of this group -- that is, all Mexicans are alike. Anglo-Americans may classify Mexicans as being of "high type" and "low type" and at the same time maintain that "a Mexican is a Mexican." Both notions serve a purpose, depending on the situation. The assumption that

> all Mexicans are alike buttresses the assumption of inferiority by making it convenient to ignore the fact of the existence of a substantial number of Mexican Americans who represent all levels of business and professional achievement. Such people are considered exceptions to the rule (9).

This sort of perception has crept into history and other areas of curriculum. Educators desirous of eliminating the stereotyping on which discrimination is justified should examine carefully all teaching materials for anything supportive of such beliefs. Curricula are only slightly less prejudicial if they omit a realistic portrayal of the "Indo-Hispanic" participation in the historic and contemporary Southwest. Minimizing group contributions or stereotyping perpetuates what Henry refers to as "legitimate social stupidity" (10). Such "stupidity" exists in teachers' minds and in teaching materials because the majority of Southwesterners rationalize the Mexican American subordinate social situation in such simplistic and false terms. By stereotyping the Mexican American or by omitting his history, discrimination is perpetuated. Rather than modifying the quality of thinking of the total populatic the school supports it. Assuming the children actually internalize what they are taught in school (a questionable assumption at best), the Mexican American learns that he is either "inferior" or not worth mentioning; the Anglo learns that he is superior and that his ancestors built the Southwest single-handedly. Failure to rectify the situation implies that educators accept the validity of such myths.

However, the result of stereotyping is much more damaging than anything the child reads in his social studies text. Prejudgment of individuals on the basis of stereotypic expectations often results in group subordination. If teachers employ stereotyping, the administrator must logically assume that actions follow words and that the "self-fulfilling prophecy" is operative. Educators who say "Mexicans just can't learn--their parents don't push education" are automatically suspect. With little doubt, they behave toward "Mexicans" in ways that encourage academic failure. Expectations are low, efforts are slight.

If the school provides IQ scores to teachers, stereotypic expectations are "pseudoscientifically" supported. Many teachers fail to recognize that an IQ is not a measurement of innate intelligence but rather an indication of the amount of "standard culture" internalized. Commonly used group "intelligence" tests are constructed on the basis of Anglo middle-class culture and are generally normed on that social group. By their very nature, such tests are biased against the Mexican American or other culturally different populations. Only recently has the influence of false information on student academic achievement been documented carefully (11). Culturally different populations of children tend to perform poorly on standardized IQ tests; group scores are substantially lower than for middle-class or Anglo youngsters. Providing IQ scores to faculty members encourages teachers to prejudge the ability of the minority and to treat individual youngsters differentially--to their academic and personal detriment.

Notwithstanding this reality, IQ testing and related procedures are well established and difficult to modify. Nonracist educational justifications for their continued use are common. The mere existence of stereotypic belief patterns is prima facie evidence of suspected teacher behavior detrimental to the Mexican American. Prejudgment of the individual on the basis of exaggerated beliefs concerning the group is as common as it is difficult to eliminate. Teacher behavior based upon such beliefs can probably never be changed until the beliefs themselves are challenged. Administrator inaction to challenge stereotyping implies tacit acceptance of probable discrimination, as well as a lack of understanding of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Hidden Social Costs

Since education is the principal avenue "up the social ladder," any school practice which discourages or impedes vertical mobility perpetuates low social status of the poor. Such practices damage the life chances of the many poor of Mexican descent. By failing to compensate for the "inequality" of birth into poverty, the school

contributes to unequal opportunity. The school merely recycles the poor; low social status leads to poor academic achievement and early drop-out, which leads to continued poverty. To overcome such "disadvantagement," the school must (a) actively pursue special programs; (b) modify curricula to make them meaningful; (c) equalize financial effort, facilities, staff, and curricula; and (d) eliminate the "hidden social costs." The first three are so obvious that it is almost unbelievable that inequality persists. Rather than rehash the obvious, the latter point is examined.

Today, it is becoming somewhat common to glorify poverty for its virtues as a "pure life." Regardless of such idealizations, there are two principal weaknesses inherent to low social status: lack of money and lack of power. Little income means the poor have slight access to goods and services; this is readily understandable in terms of purchasing power and the acquisition of consumer goods, medical care, and other essential items. Powerlessness and little influence manifest themselves in lack of control by the poor over their lives. They find it difficult to modify their style of living, influence legislation, eliminate exploitation, or change the institutions affecting them most. Economic poverty and powerlessness go hand in hand, each affecting the other and influencing the individual's world view, personality, and behavior. The inability of the poor to provide either the necessary funds or the influence to guarantee equal institutional treatment for their children reflects the "hidden social costs" of schooling.

Middle-income parents are generally able to invest the money required in preparing their children for school, to see them through, and to help them if they have academic or other problems. The school operates on the assumption that it is a parental obligation to clothe, feed, and provide medical care. It is also assumed that parents can pay the "modest" costs of schooling. Both what the school expects of the home and the school fees are based on middle-class ability to provide. Practices reflecting this monetary ability

develop and become well established. If these same mechanisms are not modified in schools serving "poverty populations," the institution fails to compensate for the children's conditions of birth.

Potentially discriminatory institutional mechanisms obviously related to "purchasing power" include (a) "middle-class" dress or grooming codes; (b) lab, locker, breakage, or uniform fees; and (c) club and activity fees. Fees the "well-to-do" can afford may unjustly discriminate against the poor. Even the middle-class find such "normal fees" burdensome if they have large families. Many present arrangements to provide the poor with uniforms for physical education or other similar items may stigmatize the child. Hand-me-down clothes, "free haircuts," or gratis activity fees can be obvious to teachers and to the youngsters' peers. Providing distinctly marked or easily identified "free lunch tickets" is particularly demeaning. In spite of the relative ease of eliminating such obvious practices, they persist in many Southwestern schools.

Discriminatory curricular offerings or arrangements are much more difficult to locate and modify. Are courses structured in such a manner that they discourage entrance, persistence, and successful exit by the poor? As mentioned, the Mexican American and the poor generally reflect a low IQ; if a high IQ score is an entrance requirement into a given class or if because a school serves a "poverty pocket" certain academic curricula or tracks are not offered, discrimination is evident. If certain course offerings require the kind of background common to middle-class children, subordinating mechanisms are less obvious but still discriminatory. For example, some secondary schools offer only intermediate studio music classes, thus penalizing poor children whose parents are unable to provide home instruction.

Setting middle-class-based grade, academic, or behavioral requirements for participation in extracurricular activities is another potentially subordinating practice. Student participation in such activities is a well-documented corollary of early school drop-out (12). Any mechanism which discourages entrance and participation

in such activities as school politics, sports, or cheerleading probably lowers school holding power and tends to prohibit the very activities which could provide increased intrinsic reward and encourage better grades and more socially acceptable behavior. Naturally, if quality of dress or other obviously social-class-related characteristics are used to prejudge individuals or are supported by established mechanisms, discrimination is suspect.

Powerlessness is even more detrimental than lack of money. Middle-class parents exert a tremendous influence on all aspects of schooling; poor parents rarely apply sufficient pressure on the institution to change policies, staff, or curricula. Only in the last few years have economically disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups begun to acquire limited leverage and demand change. Regardless, the poor are apt to assume that educators are competent professionals who have their children's well-being at heart. Middle-class citizens tend to be the equals of educators and share more or less the same social background; they well understand how to manipulate principals and teachers. If they see the school as inadequate, middle-class parents rectify the situation by applying strong social and political pressure. The poor do not know what to do or how to do it; rarely do they have the base of power necessary to influence the institutions which most affect their lives. This lack of influence must be recognized as having an adverse influence on "poverty children."

The manner in which parents influence school decisions about their children is a case in point: parental behavior crucially affects counseling and track placement of youngsters. Middle-class parents know how the school works, better understand the influence of tracking on the life chances of their children, are not "afraid" of educators, and, most importantly, unconsciously know how to manipulate schoolmen for the benefit of their children (13). The poor generally are not so well informed. Their lack of knowledge and influence contributes to low participation by the poor in school-related

activities. Some mechanisms support this syndrome. Educators tend to encourage extreme social distance between poor parents and staff and between students and teachers. Many schools serving low social level areas are authoritarian, adhere to rigid academic and behavioral standards, and teach in rote and memoristic ways. Unfortunately, such schools tend to attract teachers and administrators who are most comfortable in such circumstances. Parents are often discouraged from interacting with the school. PTA or like activities are shunned due to the fact that they are scheduled at inappropriate hours, conducted in an unfamiliar language, or seen as demeaning due to the elitist behavior of staff. Lacking influence, the poor find it difficult to modify such school practices and staff behavior and to eliminate the "hidden social costs" of school. Rather than continue to be frustrated by their powerlessness, they fail to interact in meaningful ways with the school--thus supporting educators' beliefs that the poor are not interested in the education of their children.

Educators can compensate for powerlessness in two ways. Schoolmen can become the advocates for the poor. In assuming this role, educators ensure (through the force and power of their own initiative) that staffs be of comparable or better quality, that curricular offerings be appropriate, that facilities be equal, and that any institutional mechanism perpetuating inequality be eliminated (14). The other approach of "teaching the poor' to become socially and politically influential involves encouraging equal status interaction and participation and sharing decision-making powers. Such feats are difficult to accomplish since they involve treating the poor as social equals; this may threaten the very foundation of an educator's beliefs, as well as the very base of his prestige and power.

The background which poor children bring to school must be seen as a "given." Little the school can accomplish will radically affect the home socialization of children or the income of parents. However, the school <u>can</u> take positive steps to eliminate mechanisms

which additionally impede life chances. These mechanisms are subtle, difficult to isolate, and even more difficult to modify since they involve the functional interrelationship between school and community, as well as between staff and students.

In Closing

The school, often inadvertently and unconsciously, subordinates ethnic and racial minorities. School mechanisms have developed which tend to support ethnic isolation, perpetuate stereotyping and other myths, and in manifold ways differentially treat minorities. The hypocrisy of continuing these and the many other school practices not discussed, while extolling equal opportunity, is difficult to comprehend. However, law and values will probably continue to be ignored or circumvented until our society and its dependent schools recognize that to maintain minority groups in subordinate social and economic positions is detrimental to the national welfare. The crucial "hidden social cost" of institutional racism is that it hurts the nation. America cannot survive as a viable, though imperfect, democratic and economically productive society until the last vestiges of racial discrimination are dead and buried.

NOTES

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2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report I: Ethnic Isolation of Mexican Americans in the Public Schools of the Southwest. Washington, D. C.: The Commission, August 1970, p. 37.

4. Jose Cisneros et al. v. Corpus Christi Independent School District, U. S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Civil Action No. 68-C-95 (1970).

5. For information on compensatory education programs, see Stephen S. and Joan Baratz, "Negro Ghetto Children and Urban Education." Social Education, Vol. 33, No. 4, April 1969.

   Thomas P. Carter, Mexican Americans in School: A History of Educational Neglect. New York: The College Entrance Examination Board, 1970.

   George W. Mayeske, "Educational Achievement Among Mexican-Americans: A Special Report from the Educational Opportunities Survey, Working Paper." Technical Note 22. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, January 1967.

6. There is limited statistical information supporting this statement; however, see

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   Thomas P. Carter, Mexican Americans in School: A History of Educational Neglect (see n. 5).

7. Hobson v. Hansen, 269F, Supp. 410 (D.D.C. 1967).

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14. For information on this approach, see
Nat Hentoff, Our Children Are Dying. New York: Viking, 1967.