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AUTHOR Ogbu, John U.; Wilson, John, Jr.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the mentoring of African American youth, critiques the accepted theoretical basis for most programs, and offers an alternative framework. Following an introduction in section 1, section 2 describes conventional mentoring and contains two case studies of programs in the San Francisco Bay Area (California). A key finding of the case studies is that in many cases, the proteges did not feel a need for mentoring, and so entered the relationship with very different goals from those of the mentors. Section 3 discusses the theoretical assumptions behind planned mentoring that African American youth, especially males, are members of the "underclass" that emerged in the 1970s. This section argues that this is not a phenomenon that emerged so recently but rather a problem faced by African Americans as a minority group. Section 4 presents the paper's thesis that the absence of role models of mainstream success in the inner-city is due to adaptation to involuntary minority status, which produces traditional success models different from those of the mainstream and makes the adoption of mainstream role models problematic. Section 5 focuses on role models and folk-heroes of African American history and culture growing out of the adaptation to involuntary minority status. A total of 110 references is included. (JB)

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Professor John U. Ogbu
Alumni Distinguished Professor
(With the Assistance Of
Dr. John Wilson, Jr)
Department of Anthropology
And Survey Research Center
University of California,
Berkeley

Institute for Urban and Minority Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

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INTRODUCTION

The initial task of this paper was to review studies of mentoring minority youth in order to describe social and cultural differences in the behavior of both the youth and the mentors based on race, social class and ethnicity. The literature review would focus on help-seeking behaviors of the youth and the help-providing behaviors of the mentors. For example, among the youth, what are the factors or processes that lead them to change and how does change come about? What causes them to seek help and what prevents them from seeking help? How do these things differ by race, ethnicity, and social class?

This assignment assumed that there existed out there a body of basic research on youth mentoring, especially mentoring minority youth, which answered these questions. In fact, there are almost no such studies. Instead, one finds mostly propositions, speculations, program evaluations, and anecdotes. Such materials cannot be used to address the questions for the chapter.

After considerable thought we decided to proceed with the assignment with significant modifications. One modification is that we conducted two ethnographic case studies of mentoring programs to compensate for the inadequacy of basic research. Another modification is the elimination of the section on the literature review on help-seeking and help-providing behaviors because we found no relationship between these behaviors and mentoring.

Furthermore, we decided to focus this paper on mentoring African-American youth for two reasons. First, that the inclusion of Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans and other minorities raises the issue of disaggregation which is beyond the scope of this paper. Second, the authors feel there should be analytical distinctions made among different minority groups in the United States, especially between involuntary and voluntary minorities. These two types of minorities have different problems requiring different mentoring approaches and are not likely to respond similarly to the same type of planned mentoring. African Americans, some Hispanic American groups, Native Americans and Native Hawaiians qualify as involuntary minorities,

according to our typology. However, because of the disaggregation problem and paucity of research on mentoring, the chapter will focus on African-American youth.

The dominant intellectual assumption underlying current policies and programs on planned mentoring is based on the notion of class stratification, especially the emergence of the "underclass." This is particularly true with reference to African-American youth. Proposals to funding agencies, descriptions and evaluations of planned mentoring programs generally refer to the emergence of the underclass and its consequences for the development of African-American youth, especially African-American males (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988; Ferguson, 1990; Mincy, 1990a, 1990b; Mincy and Wiener, 1990). Although we do not reject out of hand the relevance of class to mentoring, we will suggest another framework to guide policy makers and mentoring programs.

The next section of this paper focuses on conventional mentoring. Section 3 discusses the theoretical assumptions behind planned mentoring, namely, the theory of the "underclass." An alternative framework, adaptation to involuntary minority status, is presented in section 4. Section 5 focuses on role models and folk-heroes in African-American history and culture growing out of the adaptation. In our conclusion, we suggest how the alternative framework might be useful in planning more effective mentoring.

SECTION 2
CONVENTIONAL MENTORING

What is mentoring? Flaxman, et al. (1988:ii) define mentoring as "a supportive relationship between a youth or young adult and someone more senior in age and experience, who offers support, guidance, and concrete assistance as the younger partner goes through different period, enters a new area of experience, takes on an important task, or corrects an earlier problem." Later in the same document (pp.1-2) they distinguish between natural mentoring and planned mentoring. Natural mentoring occurs when "adolescents and young adults use the guidance of someone other than a parent to help them pass through a stage of development or move through a new body of

learning." Planned mentoring, on the other hand, takes place when an adolescent or young adult uses a program deliberately designed to accomplish the same purpose.

Dominant Trend In Mentoring Studies.

Most research or writing on mentoring centers on mentoring in the work-place and is primarily concerned with adult experience. Only a small number of the mentoring studies discuss the special problems of women and minorities (Bolton 1980; Holcomb 1980; Sheehy 1979; and Kanter 1977).

Margolis (1981) conducted one of the few studies of mentoring among African-American students. The study found that African-American students are more likely to seek help from an academic counselor than from a psychological counselor.

We learn more about planned mentoring for African-American youths from a recent evaluation study by Ferguson (1990). Ferguson visited neighborhood-based programs in five cities, where he observed the programs as well as interviewed mentors and proteges. The purpose of the programs were to socialize 10 to 15-year-old African-American males from low-income families and neighborhoods. The rationale was that planned mentoring or "programmatic intervention" would benefit the children in their transition to adolescence. Some of the mentors were volunteers and others were paid staff. It is not clear how the children came to participate in the programs, i.e., whether they generally came voluntarily asking for help or were "recruited." It appears, however, from Ferguson's account that some of proteges and their parents participated reluctantly.

The programs that were evaluated sought to equip children with work and life skills. They were designed to do this in a social environment characterized by a "caring relationship" between the mentors and proteges. The mentors acted as teachers, resource brokers, and surrogate parents. They taught the children to expand knowledge of their options, informed them of the strategies they needed in order to exploit their options, and taught them skills necessary for implementing strategies and values that promoted healthy development and life choices. The proteges said in interviews that they benefitted from these programs. Ferguson claims that the "10 to 15-year-olds were eager to learn strategies for living healthy and productive lives. In addition to long-range strategies, the

proteges wanted ideas that they could apply in their everyday situation." (Ferguson 1990:24-25).

Our Case Studies In San Francisco Bay Area.

To make up for the lack of sufficient research on mentoring we studied two mentoring programs in the San Francisco Bay Area. We describe the relevant features of the programs here: sponsorship and goals, recruitment of mentors and proteges, operation, and outcomes. Our findings differ from those of Ferguson.

The first program we studied is sponsored by a private business company. Its main goal is to motivate high school students who have potential but are marginal in their motivation to work hard and graduate from high school and possibly go to college. If they go to college the company will provide them with a monthly stipend of about $600. School counselors recommend students to the program, and the student must sign a contractual agreement accepting his or her responsibilities. Both male and female proteges representing different ethnic groups, including African Americans, Latinos, and Asians, participate in the program, but most are African Americans. Unfortunately, the dropout rate from this program is quite high. For example, at the time of our study about half (6) of those who entered the program at the beginning of the school year had dropped out.

This program is run by one man who acts as the mentor for students and the director of the program. The mentor claims that he tries to develop good relationships with the proteges and act as a mediator between them and their teachers, their parents, and their peer groups. He sees teachers as a problem because they "turn off" the students, and he thus advises the proteges to be tactful and to learn to negotiate with teachers in the things they want. He also thinks that parents are a problem, so he advises the proteges on how to deal with their parents and mediates conflicts between proteges and their parents. According to the mentor, peer pressures constitute the biggest problem facing the proteges. The proteges are laughed at by their peers if they make a mistake or do not wear nice clothes, and they do not get support from their peers if they achieve academically.

The mentor has found that the proteges and their parents want college education but do not fully understand what is involved. So he helps them understand the demands of college education and advises them to think beyond the benefits. He acts as a surrogate father to students and feels that a lot of responsibility goes with this role.

The proteges and their families appear to have difficulties participating in the mentoring program. Due to other obligations and commitments, the mentor finds proteges and their families unwilling to commit themselves to attend the meetings of the program. When the mentor calls the proteges to schedule a meeting they seem annoyed and their parents get irritated. The mentor feels that the proteges are not committed to the goals and requirements of the program. Therefore, they tend to forget meetings or tell him that they have other things to do.

The program requires that parents participate with their children. But, as already noted, it is hard to get proteges to meet the requirement of the program, and difficult to get parents involved. He used one male protege who dropped out of the program as an example. The protege dropped out because he wanted to put more time into sports. He is a good basketball player who believes that sports are his ticket to a college scholarship because he has been told so by his coaches. Equally problematic is his mother's reluctance to participate because of other obligations. She claims that she can't invest the time required to participate in the program. A single parent, she is a supervisor in the County Social Service Agency.

When a meeting does take place the mentor and proteges discuss the importance of standards and why standards have to be met. The mentor says that it is difficult for some of the kids to maintain standards because they do not often get a chance to practice it in their own lives. Since standards are not promoted at home, the youth don't get the opportunity to practice them, and consequently they do not manifest them in their schoolwork.

Proteges are required to get involved in extra-curricular activities, such as student government and scholastic clubs, to maintain upper-level grades, and to volunteer to help other students. The idea is to encourage proteges not only to succeed academically but also to become responsible citizens or leaders. Unfortunately, most of the proteges think

that participation in the clubs is boring and as a result they may participate half-heartedly.

The second program we studied is a mentoring program sponsored by a neighborhood corporation. It takes young people from ages 13 to 18 and has three goals: to divert youth from drugs, to improve academic skills, and to keep youths out of the juvenile justice system. Twelve of the 108 youths served by the corporation are in this mentoring program.

The program recruits both the mentors and the proteges. It caters to students in one high school where most students are doing poorly and many have been in trouble with the law. The school does not send students automatically to this program but cooperates with the director in recruiting potential proteges. The director negotiates with individual students to participate in the program. Students are told that mentoring is available if they want someone from outside their family to talk to them. The director feels that recruitment is a major task: few kids have stepped forward indicating a need for a mentoring relationship. It also seems that their parents have not encouraged them to participate in the program.

Just as difficult is the recruitment of mentors. The director requires potential mentors to be caring and not judgmental and be able to set limits. When the program started, the director began by recruiting community activists. He wanted people with experience in raising kids, either as parents or part of extended families who were willing to give up their time. In addition, he wanted people involved in their work and who were able to talk about their work.

He first sent letters to 200 members of the neighborhood corporation, asking them to become mentors. He subsequently contacted those who expressed interest in mentoring the youth but ended up with only one volunteer. Next he met with the United African American Clergy to request time during their Sunday Service to appeal to their congregation. He got only one invitation from the local churches, where he recruited one mentor. He got most of his potential mentors by putting an ad in the Berkeley Express, a local newspaper. The ad produced 23 potential mentors. To ensure that mentors did not have a history of child or sexual abuse, they were interpreted and investigated by the

FBI, as stipulated by funding agencies. The result was elimination of several potential mentors because of prior convictions.

Before becoming mentors recruits were required to attend two or three training workshops. In the second workshop they met in groups of four, led by a counselor to talk about working with adolescents, about mentors' own insecurities, intervention strategies, and past experiences of other people who had worked as mentors.

Of the 15 recruits who went through the three training sessions, three were African-American men, three were African-American women, one was Hispanic, and eight were white. However, all the proteges were African American, Hispanic, or Asian. One white potential protege attended the first or matching meeting with mentors and never returned to the program. The director said that he had a lot of difficulty connecting mentors and proteges partly because mentors did not usually have enough time to work with the proteges. Another reason was that mentors and proteges often do not have compatible interests.

During an informal conversation the director indicated that there is an imbalance in the relationship between the mentors and the proteges. Most mentors, he said, are busy with their business and are also actively involved in their own lives. So they do not have much time to spend with their proteges, although they arrange time to talk with them over the phone. The kids, on the other hand, need attention almost 24 hours a day to get them to accomplish their tasks. The proteges are 18 to 19-year-old sophomores who have completed less than 100 of 250 units they need in order to graduate from high school.

However, we feel that the director's presentation of the problem is not entirely accurate. The problem is not that the mentors do not devote enough time for their proteges; rather, it is that the proteges do not usually feel the need to devote their time to the mentorship and many have difficulty seeing how the program addresses what they perceive as their real needs. This lack of interest on the part of the proteges was demonstrated at a reception for the mentors and proteges given by the neighborhood corporation. At the evening reception there was only one protege in attendance; the rest were mentors. A female mentor who had been working with a 17-year-old protegee for

eight months told us that the mentor-protegee relationship never really developed during the eight months it existed. During that time the mentor met with her protege only three times. Apparently the protegee did not want to meet with the mentor even though the mentor had told her that she was available any time she wished to meet or needed her for anything.

The problem in this case was that **the mentor and the protegee had different goals from the beginning.** The mentor was a successful catering businesswoman who hoped her protegee would see her as a role model by observing how she handled herself and her business to become successful. She invited the protegee to several catering events and encouraged her to work with her. But the mentor was unsuccessful because, as she explained, her protegee felt that she was "smart" and would become successful on her own, not because she had a mentor. The protegee was also distracted by other events in her life, such as her interests in boys.

The case described above seemed typical of the divergent goals of mentors and proteges. All the mentors, including the director of the program himself, seemed to approach mentoring with the zeal of a missionary. They all wanted to go into the lives of "underclass" youth and save them from the hazards of drugs, drug dealing, crime and poverty of their communities. This is evident in the director's approach to matching mentors and proteges. It is also evident in the statements of several mentors during the evening reception, from the coach working with jocks to a grandmotherly woman working with some young men in her neighborhood. All wanted to redirect the energies of the youth by getting them involved in some "legitimate" "mainstream" activities in athletics, and academic work.

What kind of mentoring relationship succeeds and what kind fails in this particular program? Although we have described the case of the catering business role model that failed, we want to describe another failed case and then an example of those that are successful. Both have important lessons for planned mentoring of minority youth. **The successful ones are not based on mainstream role models.**

Another failed mentoring relationship involved an African-American-American female mentor and an African-American female protegee. The mentor was employed as a job development counselor with the program. She tried to combine her work with the program with a mentoring role. The mentor, " Jane," said that her protegee, "Diana," was having problems at her job, and she felt that she would help her by becoming her mentor. So Jane proposed the mentoring relationship during a conversation.

Thinking that she had Diana's consent for the mentoring relationship, Jane set up several appointments for the two to meet, but Diana never showed up. Jane does not know why their mentoring relationship never developed even though she made every effort to contact Diana. She phoned her at her mother's house and at her boyfriend's house. But Diana never returned her phone calls.

Jane feels bad about the failure to establish a good mentoring relationship with Diana. She attributes the failure partly to the fact that she did not go through the mentors' training workshop. But what Jane does not understand is that she and her protegee might have different goals. We discovered this problem when we tried to contact the protegee. We tried on several occasions to contact her at her mother's home and at her boyfriend's home. When we reached her mother the latter responded in a hostile manner, saying that no one by that name lived there and abruptly hung up the phone.

We finally reached Diana late one night at her boyfriend's home and when she began to talk it appeared that she was under the influence of some substance: her speech was blurry and she laughed repeatedly in a sluggish manner. She told us that she never had a mentoring relationship with Jane because she did not keep their appointments. It was Jane, not her, who wanted the mentoring relationship. While we were trying find out more as to why she did not want the mentoring relationship with Jane she hung up the phone, having given us the impression that Jane was just another "do-gooder" attempting to save her from a life she apparently enjoys.

We turn now to a successful mentoring relationship between "Ryan" and "Terri". Ryan, the mentor, is a 24-year old African-American male and his protege, Terri, is a 16-year old African-American male student. According to Ryan, Terri has personal

problems. For example, he spends more time with his girlfriend than he does going to school. While Terri is 16-year old freshman in the high school, his girlfriend is a 22-year old single parent of an 18-month old son. She is now pregnant with Terri's child.

Ryan would like to see Terri complete high school, but fears that his emerging family will make it difficult. As a mentor, Ryan feels at a loss. He does not feel he can help Terri achieve the success of which Terri is capable. For example, Ryan believes that Terri is a potentially tremendous athlete but that his girlfriend's pregnancy will interfere with both his education and his athletic development.

Ryan at first tried to discourage Terri and his girlfriend from having the baby, but they were determined to have it. Now Ryan has resigned himself to the inevitability of its occurrence and is trying to encourage them to stay together and prepare for the child.

The relationship between Ryan and Terri is the most successful of all the relationships we saw between mentors and proteges at this program. It is ideal in the sense that there is some congruence between them, especially in age: Ryan is 24 and Terri is 16. Their relationship grew out of mutual friendship before it developed into a mentor-protege relationship. The relationship began in a basketball team where Terri was a player and Ryan a coach. When the Neighborhood Development Corporation started the mentoring program, Ryan chose Terri for his protege.

Ryan has another protege in the same program, Fred, who, like Terri is 16 years old and is also a gifted athlete. But unlike Terri, Fred is a dedicated student with an interest in biology. Like Terri,however, he is involved in a relationship with a girl older than himself. The relationship between Ryan and Fred developed out of a crisis situation. Fred had an argument with his mother and went to live with Ryan. He spent an entire summer living in Ryan's home. Fred returned to his mother's home when the school year began.

For Ryan, the mentoring relationship is like an extension of his own family where he plays the role of an older brother. In fact, he calls his proteges brothers. They come to him for advice, especially abut their girlfriends. Because Ryan is married and has a two-year old son, in some ways, his proteges can identify very closely with him. They ask him for money and he sometimes feeds them. He also gives them advice on life and their

career choices. They seem to be at a point where they are trying to decide what they will do with their lives as adults. For them that means what they will do to support themselves. Ryan asks them what they are good at. Since Fred is good at science and sports he suggests that he should find a way to combine the two. Because Terri has a problem with his knees, he doesn't expect him to be an active participant in contact sports very much longer.

Terri presents other kinds of problem for Ryan. Terri comes to him for advice not only about life, but also about school attendance. There are times when Terri would rather socialize with his friends than go to school. On several occasions, Ryan has found Terri at his girlfriend's home when he should be at school. Ryan has employed a tactic to get Terri to go to school. In addition, he tries to show Terri the options he has in life. Ryan feels that Terri, is a great athlete who has problems staying focused; he is easily distracted and cannot persist on the task at hand.

Ryan's work with his proteges takes a tremendous amount of energy and sacrifice. It takes a lot of time from his own marriage and his son. Last summer he and his proteges spent a lot time at basketball games and going to other sporting events. This year he has decided to introduce them to the theater because he likes plays. He says that his success with the proteges is due to his willingness to talk about anything. He has developed an objective approach, telling both Fred and Terri that they can tell him anything and he would not be offended. He has talked to them about the problems they would encounter in the future if they did not get a good education.

Ryan believes that his ability to work with the youth grew out of his own experience of growing up without parents. His mother died when he was still a child. He moved in with his brother and essentially raised himself. In spite of growing up without the benefits of parents, he had the benefit of a mother figure who served as a mentor for him. The woman was very active with the City's youth programs. She took him to different conferences and workshops on youth advocacy. As a result he began working with youth. Although he has no younger bothers and sisters, he has lots of nieces and nephews and he has grown accustomed to working with kids.

Mentoring has indirect benefits for Ryan as well. Ryan thinks he has a lot of growing up to do, and feels that if he didn't have these kids around him he might succumb to the many temptations he has to face. In addition, he feels they are an extended family more than mentoring proteges. He enjoys being around them and they keep him young at heart.

Our ethnographic experience leads us to a different conclusion about such planned mentoring programs than the conclusions of survey researchers or evaluators. We did not, for instance, find that the proteges are in the programs **because they themselves perceived a need for mentoring.** They are usually "recruited" because some institution (e.g., the schools) or someone thought that they needed the help provided through mentoring to keep them out of trouble or encourage their academic effort. Thus the goals of the proteges and their mentors are not usually congruent and for reasons described earlier, the mentoring relationship does not often succeed or achieve its purpose.

SECTION 3

UNDERCLASS STATUS: THE THEORY BEHIND PLANNED MENTORING

It is our impression that current planned mentoring policies and programs are based on the assumption that African-American youth, especially males, who are targets of these policies and programs are members of the "underclass." The underclass phenomenon is said to have emerged during the 1970s and is defined as that segment of the African-American population which is more or less believed to be incapable of preparing young people to succeed in school or grow up to participate effectively as adults in the wider society.

Children from the underclass come from poor neighborhoods where they are raised in female-headed, single-parent households. These neighborhoods have a high rate of joblessness due to changing family and economic structures, and there is increasing segregation not only by race but also by social class. The underclass neighborhood is characterized by concentrated poverty, which creates a flourishing condition for crime, drug abuse, dropping out of high school, and other dysfunctional behaviors.

It is further assumed that inner-city African-American youth, especially the males, lack significant adult males in their lives: no significant adult males in the family (due to absence of fathers), at school (due to absence of male teaches), in the community (due to unemployment and underemployment of the adult males) and in the work-place (due to unemployment or marginal employment). Because the middle class has moved out of the inner city, the inner-city youth are isolated from middle-class African Americans who could provide them with role models or models of success. Consequently, these youths need planned mentoring to "substitute for the missing adults in (their) lives" (Flaxman et al., 1988).

Indeed, in the theory of underclass it is asserted that before the "social dislocation" of the ghetto or inner-city, middle-class African Americans lived alongside poor African-American children and provided them with "mainstream role models and norms." But with elimination of racial barriers in jobs and housing, educated and employed middle-class African-Americans began to move out of the ghetto, leaving behind the uneducated, the unemployed, and poor African Americans. This out-migration of the middle class has resulted in a concentration of poverty in the inner city, which in turn, has produced today's underclass population. Wilson (1987), for instance, contends that in the past, middle-class families lived in the ghetto and provided it with "mainstream"role models, such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, social workers, and ministers. These middle-class people serviced the African-American community and their very presence provided stability to inner-city neighborhoods and reinforced and perpetuated mainstream patterns of norms and behaviors. This is a major factor that has deprived African-American youth of significant adults, especially significant adult males who can act as role models.

The most effective way to reverse the trends, i.e. to help African-American youth to achieve "success," according to mainstream definition, in terms of getting a good job that pays well and thereby eliminates problems of unemployment, poverty, crime, drugs and the like, is to get a good education or succeed in school. And since the traditional success-role models or middle-class African Americans are absent, planned mentoring will provide appropriate role models in the form of mentors. Therefore, mentors are conceived as people who can serve as tutors, life-skill teachers, academic advocates, and

intimate older siblings. They are supposed to make academic achievement more salient to the proteges; to promote academic performance by acting as mediators between teacher and student,and between teacher and parent. Mentors should help students and teachers to understand one another and serve as an academic resource for the proteges. Furthermore, mentors are expected to make the proteges feel that someone cares about their performance. Mentors should hold teachers accountable for the proteges' education as well as be available to help teachers; they should also assist the proteges to avoid disciplinary sanctions and to receive fair treatment.

A Critique Of The Framework.

We regard current assumptions that African-American youth should be targets of planned mentoring **because** of their underclass status as inappropriate on several grounds. The problems that planned mentoring seeks to eliminate–poor school performance, unemployment, crimes, drugs and the like–did not just emerge in the 1970s with the emergence of the underclass, they existed prior to the 1970s; in the past middle-class African Americans did not provide mainstream success models for poor African Americans. The problems that planned mentoring seeks to eliminate transcend class and geographical boundaries.

African-American youth problems existed before the alleged emergence of the underclass in the 1970s. As far as these authors can determine, African-American communities have historically been characterized by high rates of unemployment, underemployment, inadequate education, and poverty primarily because of racial barriers in opportunity structure. During and after slavery, African Americans did not have the same opportunity available to white Americans to achieve success according to mainstream definition (Blassingame 1972; Drake and Cayton 1970, originally 1945; Myrdal 1944; Ogbu 1978; Ransom and Sutch 1977).

There is evidence suggesting that school failure and other problems of African-American adolescents are not a recent phenomenon to be attributed to the emergence of their underclass status in the 1970s. These problems have been studied and documented since the 1930s (See Johnson 1941; Davis and Dollard 1940; Frazier 1940; David 1968;

Schultz 1969; Conant 1965; Staples 1982; Foster 1974; Wilkinson and Taylor 1977; Perkins 1975; Silverstein and Krate 1975).

Before the 1950s there were many "theories" purporting to explain the lower school performance of African Americans in comparison with white Americans but there were no programs to close the gap. In the 1950s social policy favored helping "the better than average or superior African-American students" rather than for the general improvement in the school performance of African-American children. The focus on "superior" African-American students was in response to the national concern with manpower development to meet the scientific and professional needs of the United States in the post-war era. This led to the establishment of the National Scholarship Service for Negro Students (NSSFNS) in 1949. The program selected "superior" African-American students in high school, prepared them through counseling and other ways for predominantly white colleges, where it supported them financially. By 1954 this program had placed some 2,300 African-American students in inter-racial colleges at the cost of $450,000 in scholarship aid (Ferguson and Plaut 1954:140). During the 1950s it was expanded to include able but not superior students who received compensatory treatment to enable them attend colleges (See Ogbu 1978).

Programs for talent search and development among African-American students continued on a limited scale until the early part of the 1960s when a combination of factors led to their replacement with more inclusive compensatory education programs. One of these factors was the need to deal with problems of urban juvenile delinquency; another was the desire to eliminate urban poverty in the U.S. Both juvenile delinquency and poverty were causally linked to "inadequate education," just as underclass status and its assumed associated problems of drugs, crimes, and teen pregnancy, are currently being linked to inadequate education. Eventually, the target population for "compensatory education" changed from the academically able African-American students to the "culturally deprived" African-American students. Today they are called children of the underclass, a change in terminology but not in characteristics or problems. The strategy for saving these children is no longer compensatory education; what is advocated is planned mentoring.

Available evidence suggests that the problem of school failure and the problem of transition to adulthood among African Americans transcend geographical and class boundaries. There is no doubt that among African Americans as among whites, the middle class do better in school than the lower class. Note, however, that the correlation is not as strong among African Americans as it is among whites. For example, a study of some 4,000 high school graduates in California in 1975 found that among African Americans (and Mexican Americans), "children from affluent and well-educated families (were) not benefiting from their parents' achievement and, like children from poorer (African American and Mexican American) families, (had) trouble getting into college." (Anton in Oakland Tribune Aug. 7, 1980, p.1). In a study of state-wide testing in California in 1987 Haycock and Navarro (1988) found that 8th grade African-American children whose parents had completed four or more years of college did less well than other African-American children whose parents had attended but not finished college (Haycock and Navarro 1988). More importantly, when African Americans and whites from similar social-class or similar SES backgrounds are compared, at every class level African Americans consistently perform lower than their white counterparts.

An example is the comparison of the test-scores of African American and white candidates taking the S.A.T. in the 1980-81 season. According to a report in the New York Times of October 24, 1982, (Slade 1982), African-American candidates from homes with average annual income of $50,000 or more had median verbal scores of about the same level as white candidates from homes with average annual income of $13,000 to $18,000; and African-American candidates from homes with average annual income of $50,000 or more had about the same median math score as white candidates from homes with average annual income of $6,000 or less. Who can dispute the fact that African-American candidates from homes with annual income of $50,000 or more are not underclass and probably do not live in the inner city?

The controversy over teacher testing in many states provides other evidence that the academic problem among African Americans is not an underclass phenomenon or product (See Gorth and Chernoff 1986; Chernoff 1977). Not long ago we attended a meeting of an African-American professional group where there was an extensive

discussion of a state-mandated test for certification. Many professionals at the meeting had a doctoral degree in their field but had difficulty passing the state examination. They took the test over and over again and were licensed when the norm for minorities was lowered. The teachers having difficulty passing a teacher certification examination and the professionals who passed the licensing examination only when the norm was lowered cannot be described as underclass African Americans from the inner city. Yet, in our interaction with the teachers and professional middle-class African Americans they do not hesitate to tell us that African-American children having problems in school are the underclass from the inner city. Apparently they do not perceive their own academic difficulties as the same kind of difficulties experienced by the inner-city youngsters.

The problem of school performance gap or school failure is not confined to the inner-city. They exist among middle-class African Americans who have fled from the inner-city to the suburbs. Let us start with evidence from our current research in Oakland, California. Some parts of Oakland are typical inner-city communities of the so-called underclass; some parts look like affluent suburbs. We have selected three high schools representing three different socioeconomic levels for comparison: High Schools A and B which may be said to serve the inner-city (underclass) neighborhood and a working-class neighborhood respectively. The third high school, C, serves the most affluent neighborhood in the city and contains a high proportion of white and Asian students. Compare African-American students with white and Asian students in these schools on two issues: Grade Point Average in general; and Grade Point Average in courses required for admission to the University of California. In none of the three high schools do African-American students achieve a 2-point average either on the general GPA or in the GPA in courses required for admission to the university of California. In contrast, Asian students (who are also minority students), like white students in the same schools, average at least 2 points or better in both the general GPA and in the required courses for admission to the University of California. Thus, in Oakland, California, African Americans who live in the inner-city as well as those who live in the most affluent neighborhoods perform less well in school than their white and Asian counterparts.

We find that African-American students in the inner city have the same academic problems as do African-American students in affluent suburban school districts–Arlington County, VA; Fairfax County, VA; Montgomery County, MD; Prince Georges County, MD. In all these suburban communities black students, especially African-American males, lag behind their white and Asian counterparts in all measures of school achievement.

There are three worrisome features of African-American school performance in the inner city as well as in the suburbs. First, although all minorities seem to start lower than their white counterparts in the early grades, other minorities, notably Asians, seem to catch up and even surpass their white counterparts as they progress through higher grades. For African-American students, on the other hand, the progression is in the opposite direction: they fall farther and farther behind and the gap between them and other groups widens over the years.

Second, of all the subgroups, African-American males fare the worst. Thus the "crisis" of African-American male school performance is not confined to the inner-city underclass population.

Third, not only is the average GPA and other test scores of African Americans lower than those of their white counterparts, but also African-American students are disproportionally underrepresented in courses that would enhance their chances of pursuing higher education. In the inner-city and in the suburbs, there is a tendency for African-American students to be underrepresented in advanced placement courses. A recent report in one affluent suburban school district notes that

> While African Americans are more likely than ever before to complete 12 years of schooling, they are more likely than their white counterparts to spend this time in curriculum programs emphasizing skills remediation, as opposed to acquisition of advanced knowledge and skills that would help them in higher education, etc. (Office of Research, Prince Georges County Public Schools, 1990).

Because the phenomenon of low school performance is found among poor and affluent African Americans–even when poor and affluent African Americans lived together–in segregated urban communities and because it continues to exist among both

poor and middle-class African Americans when the latter left the inner city, it would be a serious mistake to regard it as a the product of the underclass status emerging in the inner-city in the 1970s.From a comparative perspective, this appears to be a problem faced by African Americans as a minority group. It is not a class problem and certainly not the problem of the so-called "underclass" emerging since the 1970s.

SECTION 4
ADAPTATION: AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK

Our alternative view is that the absence of role models of mainstream success in the inner-city is due to adaptation to involuntary minority status. This adaptation (a) resulted in traditional success models that are different from those of the mainstream and (b) makes the adoption of mainstream role models problematic. It is necessary to understand both the adaptation and the traditional success models of African Americans in order to develop effective mentoring programs for contemporary African-American youths, especially those in the inner-city. Toward this end we will examine four aspects of the adaptation in this section: differential status-mobility system; the relationship between African Americans and white Americans and their institutions; and cultural and identity frames of reference of African Americans.

Status-Mobility System.

One useful concept in understanding the educational and social mobility experiences of any group or society is the **status-mobility system.** Three assumptions underlying this notion are that (a) in contemporary urban industrial societies like the United States, achieving a full adult status is the ability to hold a good job that pays well and with good chances for promotion; (b) school is designed to prepare and recruit people into the labor market; but (c) under structured inequality, there is an unequal opportunity in the labor market that affects the design and functioning of the education of subordinate groups, including the perceptions of and responses of subordinate groups to schooling. These assumptions are incorporated into the concept of a **status-mobility**

system (LeVine 1967). A status-mobility system is made up of content, folk theory, and strategies or methods of "getting ahead" or social mobility.

Inkeles (1968) has noted that jobs are the most important content of the status-mobility system in the United States. Full adult status in the U.S., especially for males, has traditionally been regarded as the ability to compete for and obtain a desirable job, earn a reasonably good income, manage one's own affairs, participate in the social and political life of one's community and establish and maintain a good and stable home and family. Others have also expressed a similar view that full adult status in the U.S. means first and foremost having a good job that pays well (Hughes 1950; Berg 1969; Liebow 1967; Miller 1971). They suggest that it is difficult for an American male to manage his own affairs, participate effectively in politics, and/or establish and maintain a stable family life without a good job that pays well. In the words of Herman P. Miller, "It is the job that counts."

School plays a crucial role in preparing children to achieve this full adult status, according to Inkeles (1968). That is, the education system recruits people into the labor market (Duncan and Hodge 1963; Fox and Miller 1966; Heller 1969; Kraus 1976). School fulfills this crucial role in three ways: teaching children beliefs, values, and attitudes that support the economic system; teaching them skills and competencies required to make the system work; and credentialing them to enter the work force. During their education children develop appropriate cognitive maps or shared knowledge of how the U.S. economic and status mobility systems work (Spindler 1974, 1976; Jencks 1972; LeVine 1967).

School succeeds in recruiting people to participate in the economic and status-mobility system when the recruits, especially as they get older, come to believe that their chances of getting ahead lie in succeeding in school and obtaining educational credentials. They usually arrive at this conclusion by observing older members of their community and by listening to and interpreting the experiences of older generations. But we must understand that for schools to succeed in teaching beliefs, values, and attitudes, children must see these confirmed by the experiences of older people around them. Positive perceptions and experiences of success among members of a population or community

eventually result in instrumental school behavior becoming culturally sanctioned. That is, they approve of and insist on working hard to get good grades and credentials as the appropriate and expected thing for children to do. When this is the case people who are successful in school as well as in adult life become the success models influencing parents in raising their children and also influencing children's ideas of who they want to be like as they get older.

When, however, a society is structured so that minorities have unequal opportunity to obtain a good education, or a desirable job when they have the education, or to earn a decent wage with their education and job, two new elements emerge modify the status-mobility pattern. One is the unequal power relationship that permits the dominant group to control minority access to both schooling and jobs. The other is the introduction of a job ceiling against the minorities by the dominant group. A job ceiling consists of formal statutes and informal practices or obstacles used by dominant-group members to limit the free and fair competition of the minorities for desirable jobs on the basis of individual qualification and ability (Mickelson 1984; Ogbu 1978). It is as if the status-mobility system operates with two sets of rules for self-betterment: one set for the dominant-group members and another for the minorities. Often, too, dominant-group employers **require additional qualification from minorities besides school credentials** when they apply for jobs or promotions. For example, in the past, white employers and supervisors required African Americans seeking employment, promotion, or public office to "uncle tom", or assume the role of the dependent, compliant client (Ogbu 1978). These developments affect the epistemologies of groups about the status mobility and minority schooling.

The unequal power relations and the job ceiling cause the dominant and minority groups to define "reality" for the minorities differently. For example, at some historical periods, dominant-group members may hold a utopian view of the status-mobility system, claiming that it is an open system in which everyone with necessary educational credentials or "qualifications" can achieve self-advancement or join "the mainstream." But this utopian view may co-exist with the practice of dominant-group employers requiring **additional qualification** from minorities besides school credentials when the latter apply

for jobs or promotions. And dominant-group members may explain the underrepresentation of minorities in the more desirable job categories as due to their individual or collective faults. Any relative lack of school success on the part of the minorities might be attributed to some "cultural, language, social or genetic" disadvantage of the minorities. Where they occur, dominant-group members rarely see the contradictions between their epistemology and practice.

For their part, the minorities define their "reality" differently. Minorities are rarely content with their menial positions. Nor do they endorse educational ideas that advocate preparing them for such positions. They do not see the status-mobility system as open or fair; however, different kinds of minorities tend to perceive and interpret the situation differently (Ogbu 1990a; 1991). Involuntary minorities, as we shall see later, often develop **an institutionalized discrimination perspective** whereby they argue that they cannot advance into the mainstream through individual efforts in school or by adopting the cultural practices of the dominant group (Ogbu 1981). They may believe, in contrast to the dominant group, that collective rather than individual efforts and other strategies offer the best chances for advancement or success in the mainstream system. The minorities' perceptions of schooling and their educational efforts tend to be consistent with their perceptions and interpretations of the status mobility system and other options. These perceptions, interpretations, and options determine the extent to which the minorities define school success as a satisfactory goal, accept the school's criteria for success, and culturally sanction and implement instrumental behaviors that enhance school success.

The point to stress is that in such a stratified society the dominant and subordinate strata do not usually share the same folk theories of getting ahead or the same images of successful people. The development and transition of young people to adulthood in the two strata are not influenced by the same success or role models. This is because involuntary minorities do not necessarily get ahead by emulating dominant-group members. Furthermore, although subordinate-group members may admire, prefer and want the positions available to dominant-group members, they are often denied the opportunities of attaining those positions and they themselves usually know that they

cannot attain those positions by merely following the rules that work for the dominant group. Out of their frustrations and necessity, the minorities develop "survival strategies" in addition to their conventional or "imposed" positions. Together these factors constitute the status-mobility system that furnishes the minorities with "success models". The survival strategies and folk heroes or success models of the minorities are not necessarily approved or regarded as "legitimate" by the mainstream, and some members of the subordinate group itself may disapprove or remain ambivalent about these "illegitimate" activities, role models and folk heroes.

Differential Opportunity Structure And Status Mobility System.

The historical experience of African Americans is an example par excellence of a differential status-mobility system characterized by a job ceiling. Beginning with slavery and subsequently, under castelike stratification, generations of African Americans were excluded from activities, jobs, and social positions requiring education and where education paid off in terms of good jobs, decent wages, and social prestige. Out of their frustrations, African Americans did not merely continue in their assigned menial positions; they also developed alternative folk theories about getting ahead in America, alternative strategies for survival, and an admiration for those who "succeed" outside the mainstream or "legitimate" strategies of the dominant group (Ogbu 1985). These differential theories, positions, role models strategies, and folk heroes or success models have been within the perceptual, auditory, and cognitive fields of generations of African-American youth, ultimately influencing their development and transition to adulthood.

Few will disagree that the differential factors were important during slavery or during the first two generations after slavery (Blassingame 1972; Ransom and Sutch 1977; Myrdal 1944; Ogbu 1978). However, many scholars now think that these factors are no longer or should no longer be important because of the changes that have occurred in the position of African Americans in American society. According to this school of thought, race is not a significant factor anymore; they say that it is now largely a matter of social class or underclass. From our perspective race continues to be a significant factor, as we will demonstrate below.

The Job Ceiling.

Although the exclusion of African Americans from achievement in the mainstream occurred in many areas--economic, political, social and educational--we will focus on economic barriers as an example because we have studied this problem in connection with the educational problems. We use the concept of "job ceiling" to show how the economic barriers worked against African Americans (Mickelson 1984; Ogbu 1978). Whites have used the job ceiling historically to deny qualified African Americans free and equal competition from jobs they desired, excluding them from certain desirable jobs requiring education. In this way white Americans have not permitted African Americans to obtain their proportional share of high-status jobs, and a disproportionate segment of the African American population has been confined to menial jobs below the job ceiling.

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

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

Let us take a closer look at the employment opportunities of African Americans in the South and in the North before the 1960s and after. Before the 1960s the South may be said to have had a biracial economy in which there were "white jobs" and "Negro jobs" (Myrdal 1944; Ogbu 1978). The racial division of labor was maintained through the

job ceiling. Case studies showed that regardless of the technological or other changes that occurred in the economy, the job ceiling continued to limit African employment opportunities during the period. Thus Henderson (1967) observed that:

> Whether on the assembly line or elsewhere in the plant or business, African Americans did not work side by side with whites, especially in jobs with advantages in income, responsibility, potential for upgrading, and cleanliness (p. 787).

He also found that African American's education, ability and skills continued to be underutilized because these were not the basis of their occupational status. In a study of 372 firms with federal government contracts, a study of employment practices of several southern states, including the state of Tennessee, and a study of African employment in Nashville all showed that African Americans were restricted to menial jobs not because of lack of education and skills but because of racial barriers. Summarizing the picture of African American employment in Nashville, Marshall (1968) states that:

> when Negroes were employed above the unskilled level it was mainly in the Negro community; 80 percent of the Negroes in Nashville were in menial, unskilled occupations. (Henderson) found, further, that there were very few Negroes in manufacturing jobs, that 80 percent of the unskilled jobs in Nashville were held by Negroes, that Negroes were not employed as managers, clerks, or supervisors in bus companies, though Negroes furnished the most lucrative market for the bus companies. He notes, however, that Negroes were hired as bus drivers in Nashville in 1960. Most Nashville Negroes also attended segregated schools and vocational training was available to them only in jobs they customarily held. The white schools offered courses in electronics, IBM, refrigeration, air conditioning, drafting, radio and television. The Negro schools offered courses in tailoring, bricklaying, cabinet-making, diversified occupations to include cook, maid, maintenance, and dietetics (pp 40-44).

Other researchers found African Americans in a similar employment situation between 1940 and 1960 in Birmingham, Chattanooga and elsewhere (Marshall 1968).

The changes or slight improvements that occurred in African-American employment opportunities in the South in the 1960s were largely due to non-economic

forces, such as national emergencies (the Vietnam War), political and social pressures (e.g., Title V11 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and the newly formed Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. The slight changes brought about by these developments have been well documented (See Hill 1968; Ladenburgh and McFeely 1969; Marshall 1967; Northrup and Rowan 1965). But later research indicated that racial barriers continued to limit African-American employment opportunities in both private industries and civil service (Ross 1973; Marshall 1968).

Racial barriers or job ceilings also operated to limit the employment of African Americans in the North between 1940 and 1960. A slight improvement in employment of African Americans above the job ceiling was due to (a) national emergencies caused by World War 11 and the Korean War; political and social pressures applied by African Americans and civil rights groups on federal, state and local governments to enact and implement fair employment practices legislation in the public sector; and the expansion of Northern African-American ghettos. The latter was important for the increase in the employment of professionals.

One of the best illustrations of racial barriers to African-American employment can be seen in the resistance to use African-American skilled labor by white management in industries with federal government defence contracts during the Second World War. As several studies have documented, white management and white workers tried to keep out African-American labor in spite of the national labor shortage (See Johnson 1943; Ross 1967; Weaver 1946). Moreover, it was more difficult for college-educated or middle-class African Americans to get jobs commensurate with their training, skills and ability in the general, mainstream economy between 1940 and 1960. There were only two areas in the wider society where middle-class African Americans made significant gains in employment, namely, in teaching and public administration, especially in the postal service.

The advances of middle-class African Americans from 1961 to the 1970s were due primarily to non-economic factors and non-educational factors, such as Executive Order (e.g. President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, 1961; Affirmative Action Programs;etc.); legislative actions at federal and state levels (e.g., Title

VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the War on Poverty; etc.); pressures applied by Civil Rights groups; and the "Collective Struggle" of the African American community (e.g., civil rights suits filed by NAACP, programs by the National Urban Leagues; boycotts and sit-ins, etc.); the Vietnam War, which caused a labor shortage; and efforts by various public institutions, such as public schools and the universities, especially institutions receiving state or federal monies, to "racially balance" their personnel. Some of these had direct or indirect effects on the employment practices of private business establishments, especially among those with federal contacts.

The senior author of this chapter was conducting ethnographic research on minority education in a Northern city in the late 1960s and early 1970s and had the opportunity to observe first hand how the schools, colleges and other institutions that were receiving federal and state funds became frantic to recruit African Americans in the South, and Mexican Americans in the Southwest so that they would not lose their funds.

Thus, we see that after the 1960s more opportunities opened for African Americans to obtain middle-class jobs dependent on education both in the South and in the North. But this development was not **normal** in the sense that African Americans achieve these positions simply because, like their white peers, they had the appropriate education. They still depended on special assistance, which is not necessary for their white peers to attain similar positions. More recent studies in the 1980s and 1990 suggest that (a) African Americans are not hired for wage-earning or professional jobs because they have the education and skills, i.e., because they are qualified; (b) that African Americans still need "sponsorship" of one kind or another to obtain jobs for which they have the eduction, skills and ability; and (c) African Americans who are hired experience or perceive differential treatment in advancement on the job (See Williams 1987; Jones 1986; Davis and Watson 1985; Ogbu 1990b).

Finally, even if significant changes have taken place in the opportunity structure of middle-class African Americans because of special government and other efforts described above, no significant changes have taken place in the employment status of non-middle-class African Americans, especially those without college education. There has been no comparable official policy to assist them. Of course, because of the Vietnam

War and social programs of the 1960s there was an increase in African-American employment at all levels of the occupational ladder. The decrease in the pool of jobs since the early 1970s not only slowed down the employment of African Americans lacking college education but also resulted in a loss of jobs by those already employed, partly because they were the last hired and therefore the first to be fired. Since the Reagan administration was in office the unemployment of non-middle-class African Americans has reached astronomical levels and remains consistently almost twice the national average.African Americans who have not gone to college thus have remained in their traditional marginal participation in which the linkage between schooling, work experience, and earnings is relatively weak (Ogbu 1990a).

This analysis of African-American historical experience with employment opportunities has three implications for planned mentoring. One is that the unemployment (and therefore, poverty) of urban African Americans is not simply the result of lack of education, skills, and ability. This is a segment of the U.S. society that has historically faced uncommon barriers in employment even for the most educated. Second, the unemployment problems existed prior to the 1970s when the so-called "underclass" is alleged to have emerged.

Third and most importantly generations of shared knowledge and experience of barriers in employment appear to have led African Americans to believe that they cannot "make it" by merely following the rules of behavior or cultural practices that work for white Americans. Consequently, African Americans have developed a folk theory of getting ahead that differs in some important respects from the folk theory of white Americans. The folk theory of African Americans includes the following survival strategies.

Changing the rules. Because African Americans do not really believe that the societal rules for self-advancement that work for white Americans work equally well for them, they try to change the rules.For example,they may try to change civil service tests by claiming that the tests are designed to exclude African Americans from jobs, not to enable them to get ahead (Ogbu 1977).

Collective struggle. This strategy includes what white Americans consider to be civil rights activities; but for African Americans it also includes rioting and other forms of collective action that promise to increase opportunities or other pools of resources available to African-American communities (Newman et al. 1978).

Clientship or "Uncle Tomming." African Americans have long known that one way to promote survival and self-betterment is through favoritism, not merit. They have also learned that favoritism can be solicited by being dependent, compliant, and easily manipulated. As a result, white Americans, both as individuals and in organizations, serve as patrons to individual African Americans and to African-American groups and organizations. The federal government in particular has tended to assume the patron's role: serving as an employer, a sponsor of educational and other training programs, as an adviser and protector of civil rights, and as a distributor of subsistence assistance, or "welfare."

Entertainment and sports (Keil 1977), **hustling and pimping,** and **drug dealing** are other survival strategies or means to self-betterment (Ogbu 1990b).

Over many generations the survival strategies became institutionalized and integrated into African-American culture. They have contributed to shaping the norms, values, and competencies of African Americans. However, with the raising of the job ceiling and other changes since the 1960s for some segments of the African-American population, some of the survival strategies have undergone changes. For example, mainstream employment has assumed a greater role among the more educated, middle-class African Americans. Entertainment and sports are increasingly directed at tapping mainstream resources. And "passing for white" is probably not as common as it might once have been.

Mistrusting Whites And Mainstream Institutions: Relational Adaptation.

Another aspect of the adaptation that has shaped the folk heroes success/role models of African Americans is the mistrust that African Americans have developed for white Americans and their institutions. African Americans do not, for example, trust the

public schools to provide their children with"the right education," and they find no justification for the prejudice and discrimination against them in school and society, which they consider institutionalized and enduring.

Cultural Frame Of Reference.

A third factor that has shaped the folk heroes and success models of African Americans is the possession of a cultural frame of reference which is oppositional. Like other involuntary minorities, African Americans are characterized by a secondary cultural system in which cultural differences arise or are reinterpreted **after** a group has become an involuntary minority. These cultural differences are not merely differences in concepts, contents, form and style. Instead, they are qualitative differences which emerge because dominant-group members, i.e., white Americans, denigrate the culture and language of the minorities and deny them true assimilation into the mainstream. The minorities develop certain beliefs and practices, including particular ways of communicating or speaking, as coping mechanisms. These cultural features may be new creations or simply reinterpretations of old ways. But they now constitute a new cultural frame of reference or an ideal way of believing and acting which affirms one as a bona fide member of a group.

Involuntary minorities feel that their cultural frame of reference is not merely different from but opposed to the cultural frames of reference of their white "oppressors." The cultural and language differences emerging under these conditions also serve as boundary-making mechanisms. Therefore, involuntary minorities do not interpret the language and cultural differences they encounter in school and society as barriers to overcome; they interpret such differences as symbols of their identity to be maintained. Their culture provides a frame of reference that gives them a sense of collective or social identity, a sense of self-worth.

One device that African Americans use to maintain their oppositional cultural frame of reference is "cultural inversion." In a broad sense, cultural inversion refers to the various ways in which African Americans express their opposition to white Americans. In a narrow sense it refers to specific forms of behaviors, specific events,

symbols, and meanings which African Americans regard as not appropriate for them because these are white Americans ways. At the same time they approve and emphasize other forms of behaviors and events, symbols, and meanings as more appropriate for them because these are not a part of white America's way of life. That is, what African Americans consider appropriate or even legitimate for themselves in terms of attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and behaviors or practices in some areas of life may be defined in opposition to the attitudes, beliefs, preferences and practices they attribute to white Americans who are their "enemies" or "oppressors."

The result is that for African Americans and other involuntary minorities there co-exist oppositional cultural frames of reference and guiding behaviors in selected areas of life. One cultural frame of reference is appropriate for whites; another is appropriate for minorities. Furthermore, the minorities' cultural frame of reference is emotionally charged because it is intimately bound up with their sense of social identity, self-worth and security. Therefore, individuals who try to behave in the non-appropriate way or who try to behave like whites (i.e., "cross cultural boundaries" in the forbidden domains), may face opposition from other members of the group. The latter may interpret their behaviors as "acting white" and accuse them of betraying their own people or as "trying to join the enemy." Some individuals trying to cross cultural boundaries or pass culturally may also experience what DeVos (1967) calls "affective dissonance," partly because their sense of social identity may lead them to feel that they are, indeed, abandoning or betraying their own people and partly because they are not sure that white people would accept them if they successfully learned to behave or talk like white people.

The target areas where oppositional cultural frames of reference are applied by African Americans and other involuntary minorities appear to be those areas traditionally defined as prerogatives of white Americans, first by whites themselves and then acceded to by involuntary minorities. These are areas long believed that only whites could perform well and few African Americans actually had the opportunity to try or were rewarded well when they succeeded. They are also areas where the criteria for performance have been established by white Americans and competence in performance judged by white people or their minority representatives, and reward for performance is

determined by white people according to white criteria. Intellectual performance (IQ test scores), scholastic performance, and performance in high-status jobs in mainstream economy represent such areas.

Collective Identity.

Involuntary minorities also develop a new sense of peoplehood or social identity **after** their forced incorporation into American society because of the ways they interpret the discrimination they are obliged to endure (Castile and Kushner 1981; DeVos 1984; Green 1981; Spicer 1966). Many African Americans believe that they cannot expect to be treated as white Americans, whatever their ability, training, education, place of origin, residence, economic status, or physical appearance. They know that they cannot escape from their birth-ascribed membership in subordinate and disparaged groups by "passing" or returning to their "homeland." African Americans do not see their social identity merely as different from that of their white "oppressors," but as opposed to the social identity of white Americans. This oppositional identity combines with their oppositional or ambivalent cultural frames of reference to make crossing of cultural/language boundaries very problematic.

SECTION 5

ADAPTATION AND SUCCESS MODELS/FOLK HEROES

What kind of success/role models and folk heroes would one expect to find in a subordinate minority group with the historical experience of African Americans in the opportunity structure? Certainly not the "mainstream role models" suggested by proponents of underclass theory.

Contrary to the claims by underclass theorists, the African American middle-class in the past was not like mainstream middle class and did not provide poor African Americans with "mainstream role models and norms." Although African Americans might be middle class by training, professional rank, social standing or material well-being in the African American community or (in rare cases) in the wider society, they knew (and it was common knowledge) they did not attain their positions by merely following the

rules of behavior for achievement that worked for white people. Nor did they necessarily function or enjoy the benefits in their positions like their white counterparts. For example, until the 1960s African American lawyers in Mississippi could not represent their clients in the court of law like white lawyers (Ogbu 1978; see also Powdermaker 1968).

Although this is not a subject that has received a systematic treatment by researchers, the senior author probed into the issue of African-American role models on four occasions. One was during ethnographic fieldwork in Stockton, California (Ogbu 1969); the second was an ethnographic study in West Oakland, California, in 1980-81 (Ogbu and Hickerson 1980); the third was a review of African American folklore in search of folk heroes (Ogbu and Elkins 1981). The fourth was a study of over 60 autobiographies of African Americans born between 1900 and 1950 (Ogbu and Simons 1988). In these studies we examined the relationship between role models and folk heroes and schooling. Specifically, we wanted to learn how their orientations toward schooling and their competencies might influence the schooling of African-American youth. We will first present the result of the folklore review; then we will describe the findings of the autobiographical study. The Stockton study raises the issue of the difficulty of whether contemporary middle-class African Americans can serve as role models for lower-class African American youths **even when they live in the same community.**

Folklore Heroes & Role Models.

To some people knowledge of the folk heroes and role models in African-American folklore does not appear to be relevant to mentoring African American youth in the 1990s. They wonder to what extent these characters are part of the intellectual repertoire of lower-class inner-city youth. They further contend that while the characters may exemplify principles and strategies, they may not be known to inner-city African-American youngsters to be emulated as role models.

These are understandable questions from people not familiar with folklore scholarship. From an anthropological point of view, folklore is a legitimate and an important source of ethnographic data for studying role models in a given society or

population, including African Americans in contemporary U.S. society. As William Bascom, a renowned folklore scholar has noted, folklore has proved useful for studying anti-colonialism and nationalism; and it has proved a useful source in the study of political attitudes and survival strategies of subordinate peoples (Bascom 1967, 1954). Bascom reports that folktales are used by slaves and subject people to express thoughts and feelings which are dangerous to express in conventional forms. Through folktales, subordinate members of society can describe the undesirable traits of their superiors, their oppression, as well as their ways of "getting even." By making such descriptions a part of animal stories, the story-teller is not in danger of punishment as long as he avoids personal names and employs the appropriate formulas (Bascom 1967).

Various scholars continue to document African-American folktales which still exist and are known by inner-city youngster (Abraham 1970; Dance 1978; Wepman 1974). Contemporary collections are, of course, modern versions of the traditional tales. However, present-day inner-city role models and folk heroes (e.g., hustlers and pimps) and their symbols have replaced the animal characters of the traditional tales, although they retain the same traits, as we will show below. The inner-city African American youth today know and reproduce these modern versions. Furthermore, they express the values and other attributes of the folk heroes and role models in the modern versions in the street as well as at school (See Foster 1974; Horton 1970; Ogbu 1985; Perkins 1975; Silverstein and Krate 1975).

For the purpose of this paper,we will divide the folk heroes and role models into three categories: negative folklore heroes; positive folklore heroes; and culture heroes. The culture heroes will be discussed in the section on autobiographies.

Negative Folklore Heroes include the trickster, bad nigger, and the slave hero or slave John. There are modern versions of stories featuring these characters in African-American communities today. Sometimes the characters are "mixed" in the modern versions. For example, in some modern urban versions of the trickster tales, the narrator may combine the characters of the trickster and the bad nigger or bad man.

The Trickster. Two essential characteristic of the classic trickster are (a) his physical strength (he is usually diminutive in size), and (b) his cleverness (the weapon by

which he defeats his more powerful opponents are wit and guile). The importance of the trickster in African-American folklore both during and after slavery reflects the powerless and vulnerable position of African Americans in American society, especially in the American South. The aggression and frustration created by this situation as well as the necessity for concealing these feelings gave rise to devious strategies of the trickster and to the frequent portrayal of the trickster within the framework of apparently innocuous non-human animal tales.

The Slave John is the human counterpart of the animal trickster tale. According to Levine, the tales of the slave trickster most often named John, may have originally been a collection of personal anecdotes and later transmuted into fictional form which extended their imaginative scope (Levine 1970). The slave and animal tricksters fulfilled both the didactic and psychological needs generated by the institution of slavery, their popularity continued if not enhanced after emancipation. Despite dramatic changes in the social condition of African Americans during the 20th century, African American folk culture, attitudes, and roles continue to reflect the trickster influence and the influence of the humble Slave John.

Bad Nigger is an epithet initially applied by white Americans to intransigent African Americans who were being punished in the stocks. But "bad nigger" or" bad man" became a "badge of honor" among African Americans themselves, because it designated one who refused to submit passively to oppression (Breasley 1939). The bad nigger, according to Levine, features prominently in African American folktale, toast and lyrics. Characteristics of the bad nigger style are hyperbolic boasts (frequently in lyric or song) of one's virility, courage, and strength. Breasley describes the honor that local African-American Southern communities accorded to those who successfully fulfilled this role. An important motive for the behavior of the bad nigger is to attain prestige. But in life as in folktale, the days of the bad nigger are usually numbered because after a series of triumphs over their rivals and/or the law, the majority of the tales and toasts end with the imprisonment or death of the protagonists.

Abraham (1970) suggests that the bad man in African American folktale,like the trickster, is a product of African American "conversion" (or "inversion") of the white-

imposed stereotype of the African American from a negative to a positive image. He asserts that by this process, "African Americans have been able to use the stereotypes as an aggressive weapon against the very society which imposed it" (pp 60-61). (See also Holt 1972). However, although the "inversion" functions psychologically to protect and enhance self-esteem, it also creates ambivalence "since both the white world and a large segment of the African-American community continue to regard them as negative"; furthermore, it results in behavior which is "noticeably destructive and, all too often suicidal" (pp 60-61).

Researchers suggest that both the badmen/bad nigger and the trickster traditions are present in contemporary urban African American culture. Abraham (1970) discusses the relevance of recent versions of these role models or characters in the African-American ghetto as they reflect a response to the continuing exclusion of African Americans from the social and economic benefits enjoyed by the mainstream society. He points out that contemporary representatives of the trickster and bad man are hustlers and pimps. The status symbols have changed, of course: for the hustler or pimp, clothes and cars have become the accoutrements of power and prestige, but the basic strategies for achieving these are much the same (Abraham 1970). Abraham cites a popular toast, "The Signifying Monkey and the Lion" as examples of the opposition of the "cat" and the "gorilla" in present-day ghetto version (p. 87).

The appropriateness of the trickster and the bad man strategies to the exploitative, unstable world of the hustler and the pimp is evident. Like the former, the pimp is a cultural hero because he achieves success not through conventional channels but in revolt against the moral and social values of the larger society. Furthermore, like the bad man who is willing to die to protect his reputation, part of the hustler's heroism consists of his recognition and acceptance of the fact that this is a game he must ultimately lose (Wepman 1974).

These folk heroes/role models–the trickster, the bad man/bad nigger, hustlers and pimps–insofar as they are viewed as positive role models for emulation by ghetto youth, might be expected to have an adverse effect on schooling. This is not so much because of particular traits associated with these heroes, nor is it simply the obvious fact that Brer

Rabbit and Stagolee lack an education; it is rather because of the social assumptions on which these roles are based. The goals of these folk heroes do not really differ from those of the average white middle class American: status, power and affluence. But the use of guile and/or violence to attain these goals and the rebellion against the legal and social codes of the larger, "oppressive" society constitutes a reversal of the values of the Protestant Ethic, because it presumes that conventionally "legitimate" avenues to success are closed.

Although toast heroes frequently express their contempt for the dull nine-to-five routine and romanticize the glamour and excitement of their own lifestyles, they also indicate an awareness of its personal costs. As many toasts point out, hustling and pimping are hard work (Valentine 1970), the risks are high and security is virtually nonexistent. Furthermore, the number of professional hustlers and pimps who achieve any real degree of financial success is minimal; yet this does not diminish the significance of the cultural myth. Finally, due to the instability of personal relationships in this exploitative milieu, the hustler, like the bad man, is an isolated figure who overtly rejects romantic attachments and recognizes that friendships are undependable and subject to frequent betrayal. What Wepman (1974) calls the "short-term outlook" of these heroes is a result of these factors, and it is clearly opposed to the kind of long-term effort and planning necessary for school achievement and professional career success in the mainstream.

We want to emphasize that the rejection of mainstream values in these toasts does not represent a conviction that financial stability and lasting personal relationships are inherently undesirable; but rather that it would be folly to invest one's time and emotional energies in an unattainable ideal. Yet, realistic though such an assessment may be, the fact that most of these heroes' careers end in death, imprisonment or financial ruin indicates a considerable ambivalence toward the values and lifestyles. Furthermore, recently militant political ideologies have encouraged a more negative evaluation of these activities, especially pimping, as socially destructive and personally degrading (Brown 1969).

The extent to which this folklore reflects the values by which many young African American ghetto dwellers actually live may be suggested by Keiser's study of the social values of African American urban street gangs. For example, "heart ideology," which governs a member's behavior in the context of a gang fight, is essentially identical to the ideal of reckless daring embodied by the bad man. Nor is this ideology necessarily confined to gangs; it is shared by ordinary Harlem and other ghetto youths (Brown 1965; Perkins 1975; Silverstein and Krate 1975; Thomas 1967).

"Game ideology," on the other hand, creates the expectation that individual interactions will consist, at least in part, of attempts to exploit one another through verbal manipulation which is a trickster strategy (see also Hammond 1965; Ogbu 1985). Yet, what Keiser refers to as "Brotherhood ideology," which emphasizes mutual aid and sharing among gang members, clearly represents an impulse to counter the divisive consequences of this exploitative orientation with an emphasis on unity within the gang. (Keiser 1969). In the monologue that concludes Keiser's study, the speaker, Cupid, indicates that he has high ambivalence toward gang fighting. But he also indicates that he has done most of his learning in the street and that schooling offers little which is applicable to ghetto life (See also Ogbu and Hickerson 1980, and H. G. Brown 1969).

Positive Folklore Heroes. As we have seen, the trickster, bad man, and hustler/pimp heroes of African American folklore represent attitudes and strategies that enabled African Americans to express pent-up aggressions, to achieve self-esteem and status, and even to acquire some material benefits. Still the gains of these heroes are both limited and transient, and the risks they run are grave. In this respect, they generate much ambivalence due to the destructive and anti-social aspects of their behavior because the African American community suffers more from their exploitative and violent behavior than white society.

There also exists other folklore hero[illegible]rving as positive role models in African American culture. This type of role model ma[illegible] designated as The Moral Hard Man. It includes two folklore heroes, John Henry and Shine, and the first two African American heavyweight boxing champions, Jack Johnson and Joe Louis. The latter are

included because their exploits in the ring against white adversaries transformed them into legendary figures during their lifetimes.

Like the bad man/bad nigger, these heroes possess extraordinary physical strength and endurance, and their style is that of direct confrontation. But note also that a hero of this type may also possess intelligence and verbal skill by which he may, like Shine, Jack Johnson and the latter-day hero, Muhammad Ali, defy white society with wit and style. However, the moral hero differs from the bad man by virtue of three important characteristics. (1) He usually conforms to the moral and social codes of the larger society with respect to public and private behavior. None of the moral heroes has ever exploited his own people. (2) The moral hero wins his victories without transgressing the law. (3) His victories are not purely individual but are viewed as representative and symbolic triumphs of the race as a whole. As Levine puts it (1970), the moral heroes

> triumphed not by breaking the laws of the larger society but by smashing its expectations and stereotypes, by insisting that their lives transcend the traditional models and roles established for them and their people by the white majority (p. 420).

John Henry is a popular African American folk hero also known among whites. The essence of the legend is that John Henry is renowned for being the strongest and fastest of all the steel drivers. He represents the triumph of the "natural man" over the dehumanizing fores of automation in modern society.

Shine, too, is a representative figure but of a different kind. While John Henry represents no threat to the racial status quo, Shine represents exactly the opposite kind of hero in that he does in fact refuse to sacrifice himself–either his life or his integrity–in the white man's interests. Furthermore, although the Shine story presents the conflict between African American and white America in much more explicit terms, Shine does not, like the bad man, express his rebellion through violence, but rather by turning his back on the sinking ship of white society (Abraham, 1970).

There is an allegorical implication of Shine's name (which is an African American slang, referring to a particularly dark-skinned African American) and by his situation as

the single African American man on a ship notorious for excluding African American passengers (Levine 1970).

In the story of Shine (and the Titanic) it is not the African American man, Shine, but the white society itself which is destroyed by its own technology. Shine can escape because he has no personal investment in the technology, telling the Captain "I don't believe your pumps is worth a damn!" We note that Shine turns down the very same status symbols that are eagerly sought by the trickster and the bad man and the hustler heroes: The captain, millionaires, and bankers offer him wealth and power,their wives and daughters offer him sex, but Shine is quite explicit about his reasons for refusing,

> You don't like my color and you down on my race,
> Get your ass overboard and give these sharks a chase.

And he tells the captain's daughter in one version

> One thing about you white folks I couldn't understand
> You all wouldn't offer me that pussy when we was on land
> (Levine 1970:429).

Also Shine's attitude is exactly the opposite of bad man's suicidal recklessness; his heroism consists in his prowess as a survivor. Although he would certainly like to be rich and powerful, his main concern at the moment is "to save this African American ass of mine," (Dance 1978: 217). In the water, Shine outswims sharks and whales, and when news of the disaster reaches ashore, he is already back home in a bar or on a street corner, getting drunk and often seducing large numbers of women, in a supreme display of indifference.

Jack Johnson. At the time when most sports were still dominated by whites it was not surprising that two African American heavyweight boxing champions rapidly attained a symbolic stature in the African American community comparable to that of a John Henry. In their public images, Jack Johnson and Joe Louis differed considerably. Johnson openly defied his adversaries, taunting the defending champion, Tommy Burns, who had accused him of being yellow, "Find that yellow streak–uncover it" (Levine 1970:430). Johnson expressed his defiance of white restrictions, not only through his fists, but also

through "his entire lifestyle: his fast-cars, fancy clothes, ready tongue, white wife (the first of three white women he married), and white mistresses" (Levine 1970:432).

Joe Louis cultivated exactly the opposite image of humility and respectability. Yet, beginning in 1908 and 1937 respectively, each of these men repeatedly and with impunity "stood as an African American man in the midst of a white society and beat representatives of the dominant group to their knee" (Levine 1970: 432). In the ring, both of these men, like John Henry and Shine, acted as "breaker(s) of stereotypes and destroyers of norms"; they proved that "defeat at the hands of the white man is no longer to be taken for granted." For this reason their matches were followed with anxious suspense and their victories celebrated with jubilation in African American communities across the nation, and enjoyment of these occasions was only enhanced by the hostility of the white press and white audience toward these athletes and the challenge they represented to the myth of white superiority. African Americans of all ages and from all walks of life identified with them, and their exploits were recounted again and again in jokes, anecdotes, and songs. Malcolm X has observed that as a result of Joe Louis's career, "Every Negro boy old enough to walk wanted to be the next Brown Bomber" (Levine 1970:438).

The figures of John Henry, Shine, Jack Johnson and Joe Louis provide more positive role models for emulation by African American youths than the heroes discussed previously. Within the African American community these heroes have traditionally fostered and reflected a growing sense of ethnic pride and solidarity, and their triumphs have had lasting symbolic value transcending the particular occasion.

However, although enhanced self-esteem should certainly contribute in a general way to African American efforts to improve their individual and group status, it cannot really be said that any of these heroes provide a particular incentive toward schooling achievement. John Henry and Shine were laborers, and Johnson and Louis were renowned as boxers, but none of their achievements were based on academically acquired cognitive skills. Rather their achievements were due to their physical strength and moral courage. Their careers reflect the restrictions imposed by the opportunity structure: John Henry does not and could not aspire to anything beyond his life as a steel

driver, and although Shine would have liked to be rich and powerful, he perceived the rewards held out by the representatives of the white society as a threat to his own moral and physical survival, and thus chose to remain as he was. In a somewhat different vein, Jack Johnson and Joe Louis provided dramatic examples of how African Americans might after all attain the American Dream of affluence and fame. However, their careers did not require academic preparation, but years of strenuous physical training.

This study of folktale and culture heroes shows that the social realism of African-American culture precluded the creation of fairy tales or Horatio Alger stories, at least among the lower class. Paupers in African-American folktale do not become princes, and shoe-shine boys do not become bank presidents, although in real life, they may occasionally become world sports champions. This does not mean that most lower-class African Americans do not desire to change their status and improve their economic situation; they certainly recognize that education is one means by which this may be accomplished. Although wish fulfillment plays an important part in these stories, they also have a didactic function in presenting strategies for psychological and physical survival in the real world. Actually, the majority of African Americans have been deprived both of adequate education and of opportunities to use the education when it has been acquired in high-status, well-paid careers. This has fostered the attitudes of rebellion and rejection of white society's norms which are expressed in so many of these folklore materials and which might be expected to conflict with the acceptance of the discipline and authority required for schooling. It has also generated alternative roles and strategies for achieving various kinds of success that do not require academic achievement.

Other Sources Of Influence On Role Models.

There are other factors that contribute to types of role models in the African American community. These include the various survival strategies that African Americans have employed "to make it" under the job ceiling and other barriers described earlier. Among these role models are African Americans who are engaged in changing the rules that they believe work against their advancement; civil rights leaders and activists, "uncle toms", entertainers and sports heroes, religious leaders, ordinary working

men and women, professionals in a restricted opportunity structure, and more recently, business people, especially the self-employed.

Role Models And Youth Development.

We turn now to the actual influences of role models on African American youth, starting with writers of autobiographies.

Role Models Of Autobiographers.

Many authors we studied did not come from middle class origins but managed to make it into that class. They were born between the late 19th century and mid 2oth century and many grew up in Harlem and other similar communities. What was their life experience? Who were their role models, mentors, and heroes, especially among those who made it into the mainstream? It is safe to say from our study that the only professionals mentioned as role models were teachers. We did not find other African American professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, social workers and the like mentioned as providing stability to the ghetto community or as functioning as "mainstream" role models "who reinforced and perpetuated mainstream patterns of norms and behaviors" (Wilson 1987). What we found, instead, influencing the lives of African Americans who made it into the mainstream, were oppositional public heroes, entertainers, sports heroes, family members, criminals, and teachers.

Public heroes: Entertainers, athletes and politicians. These are usually celebrities, especially entertainers, athletes, and politicians. Entertainment and sports produce most of the public heroes, perhaps because these are areas where African Americans have been traditionally allowed to achieve early success. Keil (1966, cited in Foster 1974) explains why entertainers and hustlers are admired.

> Both the hustler and the entertainer are seen as men who are clever and talented enough to be financial well off without working....If we are ever to understand what urban Negro culture is all abut, we had best view entertainers and hustlers (and drug dealers) as culture heroes....integral part of the whole...rather than deviants or shadow figures (p. 20).

In sports, Joe Louis was a role model for Malcolm X and many other African American youths. Tarry (1955) writes about boys "playing at boxing":

> The pride on the faces of little boys who laid boxing games and shouted:"I'm Joe Louis, the heavyweight champion of the world!" was something to see (p. 173).

Admired political heroes included oppositional leaders like Marcus Garvey and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. **The political heroes functioned as role models for the very reasons they were rejected by the white society.** Thus Wilkins (1982) who was growing up in the days of Powell, writes about the latter as follows:

> Many white people didn't think much of Adam. They viewed him as a gaudy, swashbuducking, uppity, crooked nigger; a disgrace to his people and to the Congress. I didn't see it that way. Adam had certainly played fast and loose with House expense accounts and airplane tickets, but compared to some of the white thievery that we knew went on unpursued on Capitol Hill, African Americans couldn't get too excited about what it was proved that Adam had done.
>
> What we saw, instead, was a nigger who wouldn't bow low to white folks. We saw a nigger who in the early days had cared enough to join a picket line to get African Americans hired in the stores on 125th street...We saw a man who, in the lonely days before there was a sixteen-member African American Caucus in the Congress, was brave enough to stand virtually alone in the well of the House and to attach the Powell Amendment, prohibiting federal funds from providing segregated services or purchasing materials fabricated in discriminating companies (p.324).

Family Heroes. Seventeen authors mentioned family members as their role models or success models, or folk heroes. Thirteen were women, including mothers, who were often described as domestics, sacrificing for their children and giving good advice (Washington 1984).

Criminals. Instead of professionals, criminals functioned as local heroes for poor African American children. Like poor elsewhere African American children admired criminals for their success. Louis Armstrong, for example, who grew up in the New Orleans ghetto at the beginning of the century, remembers that he "always felt inferior to the pimp" (1954:199).

Teachers and other natural mentors. Teachers who were mentioned by many authors constituted the largest group. The teachers covered all grade levels, from elementary school to professional school and from public school to teachers in prison.

Some of the teacher-mentors recognized that the authors had been placed in the wrong class or academic track in the school. Teachers inspired some of the authors intellectually as early as the elementary grades. The mentors included African American teachers in segregated schools, and at the high school level the mentors included white teachers.

Some of the other natural mentors were family friends whose intervention at the right moment helped the authors continue their education or music practice (as in the case of Armstrong, 1954). For Douglas (1958), Malcolm X (1965), and Abdul-Jabbar (1983) the mentors were religious leaders. Only in the case of Angelou (1969) was the mentor "a cultured neighbor" who introduced her to great books and to appreciate "those homely sayings (in which) was couched the collective wisdom of generations" (p.83).

Role models and Folk Heroes In West Oakland Ethnography.

In our study of role models and folk heroes in West Oakland (Ogbu and Hickerson 1980) we found that ghetto youth are influenced by both mainstream role models and ghetto-specific role models. Mainstream models are not emulated because their values and attributes encourage success in school and mainstream society. Rather, they are admired for their "struggle" against "the system" or for what they did for African Americans.

The mainstream role models or folk heroes admired by the African-American youth include historical figures like Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. Other "legitimate" role models and folk heroes are race leaders or civil rights leaders, sports figures, musicians, and political activists. Folktale heroes admired and emulated by African-American youth include cowboys and gangsters.

The cowboy and the gangster are particularly admired because of qualities that have been popularized by the mass media. Ghetto youth liked the cowboy for his wits, aggressiveness and skillfulness with firearms. They use cowboy terms in referring to one

another and to their community. Thus, a friend is called "partner" (pronounced "podna") or "sidekick." The male is referred to as "dude" and the ghetto community is called "Dodge" (in reference to Dodge City of "Gunsmoke"). They imitate the cowboy's mode of dress like wearing a hat or jeans. And young African Americans can be observed making the front end of their bikes rear up as if they were prize, spirited steeds.

We found that the "gangster" image was popular, perhaps, because it was romanticized in films like "Superfly," "Cotton Comes To Harlem," "Shaft," and the like. The television series, "The Untouchables," was also a source of models for emulation, especially among the males. The admired image conveyed by the series is that of an aggressive, male-dominated world in which men with little formal education live by their daring, wits and skills at fighting and manipulating others, including women, to achieve their ends.

The ghetto-specific cultural heroes and role models popular with the youth in our study included the hustler, the pimp, and preacher-hustler. (In the 1990s the youth in Oakland have added rappers in their repertoire of cultural heroes). We also found folktale heroes to be important, including the Signifying Monkey, Shine, and Brer Rabbit. The youth were familiar with many long narrative poems or "toasts" which extol the virtues of the folk heros, which may be an animal. The virtues that occur repeatedly in these toasts are daring or "heart," sexual prowess, verbal ability, and conning. Thus, in "The Signifying Monkey," the monkey insults the lion "by talking about his mama in a hell of a way." The lion is enraged and attacks the monkey; in order to save himself the monkey resorts to conning and verbal ability:

> Like a bolt of lighting and a barrel of white heat
> That lion was on that monkey with all four feet.
> The monkey said, 'Mr. Lion, let me get my nuts out the sand,
> And I'll stand up and fight you like a natural man.'
> The lion got up and squared off for a fight,
> And that lil'[Signifying Monkey jumped out clean outa
> sight (Ogbu and Hickerson, 1980, p. 4).

The majority of the youth we interviewed saw success in formal education as incompatible with success in the street, especially in the street economy. Many saw the school as a place where one goes to engage in social activities, athletics, sexual conquests,

or to act out personal or group rivalry, not for academic performance. Note the following exchange between the interviewer and a student, " Jesse":

> Interviewer: What about people who are good in school; are they hip to the street life?
>
> Jesse: Not really. They squares. Like I say, if you don't know the name, you can't play the game, you know; and like if you off in the school, well hey, that's where you need to be, cause you can't come out there and with that knowledge that you getting from the school and try to play it in the streets, cause you'll end up dead (Ogbu and Hickerson, 1980, p. 4).

Our general impression was that the youth did not believe that their future lies in "the system" or in the mainstream but in the street. And they saw mainstream role models and school success as incompatible with success in the street. We learned from our interviews that the youth were not really interested in learning the rules, attitudes, and behaviors that would enable them to become successful according to the definition of the mainstream. Rather, their major interest was in learning how to manipulate the system, how to deal with or respond to white people and the institutions, such as the white-controlled schools (Ogbu 1989b). From the point of view of the youth there appear to be four reasons why they were not directing their efforts to acquiring the knowledge and skills that would make them eligible for mobility into the mainstream. One was perceived racial discrimination. The second was that they do not perceive how what is learned in school will help them survive in the street. The third is that they interpret school learning as a subtractive process. Finally, they rejected "acting white."

Contemporary Middle Class As Role/Success Models: The Stockton Case.

We have seen that African American autobiographers rarely mentioned African American professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and social workers as their role/success models or mentors. In our West Oakland study the youth did not mention these professionals as their success models for the future. It was more or less the same in our ethnographic research in Stockton, California, from 1968 to 1970. Additionally, in the Stockton study we discovered some of the reasons why contemporary professionals in the system may not serve as effective role models.

During nearly the two years of ethnographic research in Stockton, California, we had the opportunity to study the problem of role models or "success" models for low-income African Americans. We collected data through participant observation at public meetings and conferences as well as in formal and informal interviews.

Our conclusion based on data collected in Stockton, California is that middle-class African Americans"in the mainstream" do not function effectively as role models even though they formally interacted frequently with the youth. We draw our conclusion from the following incidents.

Case 1. Disunity In African American Unity Conference

We observed several confrontations among local African Americans.One occurred just before a meeting of the Black Unity Conference, a local civil rights organization, in March of 1969. We had learned that some youth organizations were planning to boycott the meeting on the ground that it was being organized by the middle class. In discussing the upcoming event with some members of the youth organizations they said, "We don't associate with such people because they are 'uncle toms'." However, we persuaded some to come to the meeting despite their negative attitude. Soon after the keynote speaker finished and local leaders began to respond, the young people began to leave. When we asked why they were leaving one young woman replied, "I know Mr. X and Mr. Y; they used to be very active in such and such organizations and used to speak out on such and such issues. But now that they are working for....they don't speak out anymore, you don't hear them anymore. They don't do anything for their own people again."

Case 2. Are All Middle-Class Professionals Uncle Toms?

Our second example comes from a meeting of the African Ame[illegible]an Theater Club to elect officers and select patrons. The members of the Club included high school students, students from local universities and colleges, as well as some non-students. At the meeting members nominated 17 African American professionals from which to choose two patrons. Those nominated included the only African American lawyer in town, some medical doctors, social workers, and teachers. Every one of them was

rejected and accused more or less of being "an uncle tom." We ended up selecting a non-professional for a patron, primarily because he could speak out for his people, including the club.

Case 3. Ogbu Is An Intellectual and Not Black Enough.

Another incident deserves mentioning because it concerned us as researchers. It occurred at a conference of African American students at a local university. The conference organizers had earlier approached Dr. Ogbu, at that time a graduate student conducting his dissertation research in Stockton, to lead a workshop on students' social and economic life on university campuses. Ogbu accepted the invitation and spent time preparing to lead the workshop. However when the workshop was about to start he was told that he had been replaced. He later learned that the reason for his replacement was that he was considered an intellectual and not African American enough. Ogbu was not totally surprised; he had learned earlier in his research not to identify too closely with the establishment, even when dealing with adult African Americans and Mexican Americans. Instead, he emphasized his African origin and his interest in knowing something about American culture.

Case 4. Sponsored/Imposed Leadership And Role Models

We will briefly describe the peculiar position of the leadership in the African American community in Stockton. This case shows how leadership in African American (or any involuntary minority) community can be controlled by the white American majority.

An African American was sponsored by whites to be on the schoolboard in 1965 when Stockton, like the rest of the nation was civil-rights minded. At first he was appointed to fill a vacant seat on the board and then elected. Yet one of the unspoken rules of sponsored leadership or status mobility in a racially stratified society is that the sponsored minority leader must not be too outspoken about racial matters. By 1969 the sponsored African American member of the schoolboard had repeatedly violated this rule. For example, he was not only for school desegregation, he was the only member of

the schoolboard to vote to desegregate Stockton schools. For this reason his sponsors abandoned him and he "retired" and did not contest the election of 1969, although he was the most favored candidate among local African Americans.

Why Minority Professionals Make Poor role Models.

One reason middle-class African Americans or professionals do not function as effective role models in Stockton is that they occupy a peculiar position in the local social structure. As employees in local establishments they are compelled to serve two incompatible groups: local institutions controlled by the white middle class on the one hand, and their own ethnic communities on the other. As bureaucrats they are expected to apply the principles of universalism and functional-specificity, "universalistic in that universally applicable rules, and not particular statuses, are to be the determinant of conduct; and functionally specific in that they relate to specific contexts and not to the whole of individual's lives" (Fallers 1956, 1961; see also Weber 1947).

At the same time, however, African American professionals also serve members of their own ethnic groups, particularly the lower-class members. The latter expect and demand differential treatment from their own people "who have made it." They want these middle-class individuals to use their positions for the benefit of the group. In this respect, minority professionals are like African tribal chiefs absorbed into colonial bureaucracy. In both cases the individual occupying the status position knows that whichever way he chooses to play his role he will be blamed by one group.

For minority professionals the problem does not stop there. They are often not secure in their position even if they follow the bureaucratic principles to the letter. There is some feeling that one must somehow comply, either grudgingly or as a strategy for status mobility with the wishes of white bosses (real or imagined). This was evident in our Stockton study: some of the professionals we interviewed managed special programs serving minority children that they did not really believe were the remedies needed. Furthermore, after a high school crisis in 1969, none of the African-American or Mexican American school personnel who supported or spoke out on behalf of the students was subsequently selected for promotion to positions of vice-principals, principals, deans and so on. In fact, most of them left the school district at the end of the year. This means

that there are some valid grounds for the accusations by the lower class, particularly the youth today that some people achieve middle-class status by being "uncle tom" while others **maintain** their middle-class status in this way.

This is a serious problem because many minority-group members who occupy middle class positions in local establishments or institutions, including private business establishments, are found mostly in human relations or community relations departments, as was the case in Stockton. In these positions the minority professionals have maximum contact with their less advantaged brothers and sisters who expect them to act on their behalf while at the same time acting as representatives of the establishment (e.g. in social work, housing authority, police department, teaching). When these professionals are forced to defend the system for which they work, their situation simply becomes more difficult.

The point is that the position of middle-class professionals or leaders in the African American community may not make them ideal models of success to which lower-class African American youth may aspire. Thus, if the lower-class African American youth aspire to become like these successful professionals, they do so with a good deal of ambivalence.

The Stockton youth have the tendency to equate success in the mainstream as doing what the white man wanted them to do, following the white man's rules, and not using their own head. Therefore, pimps and hustlers are admired because they use their own head and work for themselves and not for the white man. Here is a relevant excerpt from an interview with a high school student and his mother.

Student: They say that the hustler is no good.

Mother: But he's black.

Student: This is good, you know; this is all he can survive. I am not going to say that this is all he can survive,but then, if he's got to survive somewhere, I mean, you know, toughest way, he's going to do it. and this is what I'm saying. He uses his head.

Mother: **And not the white man's head.**

Student: See? And as far as I am concerned, this is good because he is doing his own thing. **He is not doing the white man's thing.**

Anthrop.: All right. Would you recommend that many of us go into pimp business? Or, hustling business? That is, black business?

Student: Wait! If this is your own thing, do it.

Mother: In other words, he is saying, "If this is what you want to do, you do it, and not do what the white man wants you to do. Because this is the way it has been from generation to generation (i.e., the white man has been telling the Black man what to do).

CONCLUSION

The thesis of this paper is that the problems of contemporary African-American youth in the inner-city and elsewhere arise from the adaptation that African Americans **as a group** have made to an involuntary minority status. Within this group **there are class differences,** but we have found that the problems transcend class and geographical boundaries. The adaptation to an involuntary minority status produced for African Americans a cultural model of the U.S. society that is different from the cultural model of white Americans or the mainstream. A cultural model is basically people's understandings of their world which guide their interpretations of events in that world and their own actions in that world. (Folk theory or folk model is a comparable term.) (See Ogbu 1974, 1990a; also Bohannan 1957; Holland and Quinn 1987; Holy and Stuchlik 1981). The cultural model affects people's notions of how to get ahead in the U.S. society and the role of schooling in getting ahead.

Yet differences in cultural models, notions of getting ahead and the role of schooling and education are not evident from verbal responses to questions about these

matters. African Americans, for example, tend to respond as white Americans do, that in order to get ahead an African American needs a good education to enable him or her get a good job.

To learn what African Americans really believe about getting ahead and the role of schooling, as well as to learn the factors that shape their beliefs, it was necessary to examine their adaptation to involuntary minority status: experiences in the opportunity structure, including their status-mobility system; their relationship with white Americans and mainstream institutions; and their cultural and identity frames of reference. We concluded that these factors are reflected in the success models and folk heroes found in their expressive culture--folklore in particular and that these are different from those of white Americans or the mainstream. We further argued that modern versions of these folk heroes and role models of success are present in contemporary African-American communities, especially in the inner-city or the ghetto. We suggest that the success models that have traditionally influenced the development of African-American youth differ from those of the mainstream. Thus, we do not find mainstream success models prevalent in our study of African American autobiographies, nor in our ethnographic studies.

When we observe minority youth, inner-city African American youth in particular, we find that they are learning to grow up to be like the role models within their perceptual, auditory, and cognitive fields. These role models or "natural mentors" include not only those legitimated by the mainstream, such as teachers, social workers, civil rights leaders, athletes, and entertainers, but also other role models, such as pimps, hustlers, and drug dealers who are within the repertoire of their possibilities. Not all these roles require a great deal of educational investment and attainment. Furthermore, the role models or natural mentors most appealing to African American youth are those that do not stress formal education but other kinds of learning. We observe, for instance, that many young African Americans invest a tremendous amount of their time and resources in emulating athletes and entertainers, including current "rappers." Their hairstyles, their dress, their shoes, their postures and gestures all symbolize a strong orientation in this direction.

What are the implications of our analysis for mentoring African-American youth, especially African-American males? First, the notion that mentoring programs are designed to eliminate developmental and transitional problems due to underclass status emerging in the 1970s should be abandoned. The deeper historical and structural roots of these problems need to be understood and appreciated. We recommend that policies and programs should be designed not just to patch up supposed deficiencies of individual African-American youth but also to work toward (a) creating real future opportunities for them "in the mainstream" and (b) convincing them that real future opportunities exist for them in adult life.

Second, because of historical and structural factors, the culture in which African American children are growing up, a culture shared by the youth and the adults of their communities, does not appear to have a tradition of strong academic orientation. The ad with an African-American mother working as a domestic so that her son could go to college does not tell the whole story; in our study of the autobiographies only one author received an intellectual stimulation from a mentor, and there was only one author who reported that her parents consistently checked her schoolwork. When we observe minority youth and adults around them, we find a disproportionate orientation toward sports, entertainment, and drug dealing, not toward scholarship. Although sports and entertainment bring money and social prestige, the same rewards sought in mainstream success, these are not rewards for scholarly endeavors. Mentoring policies and programs should recognize this situation and find a way to increase the orientation toward scholarship.

Third, there is a subtle problem of opposition in the way that involuntary minorities like African Americans define mainstream strategies for success, including academic success. This problem is being further complicated by the slogan "cultural diversity." People **can** cross cultural boundaries, language boundaries, and cognitive boundaries and still learn. A serious problem arises where such boundary-crossing is interpreted as a subtractive or replacement process. What African-American youth and similar involuntary minority youth need to be taught is that boundary crossing in culture,

language and cognition can be an additive process. One does not have to give up his or her identity, language, or culture by learning and succeeding in the mainstream.

Fourth, it appears that African-American youth and their parents do not take the initiative in participating in mentoring programs. They are often "recruited" and because of this, they may not fully understand or appreciate mentoring, and thus participate grudgingly. This situation needs to be reversed, so that African-American youth and their parents will become more aware of the need for mentoring and take the initiative to participate in mentoring programs.

Fifth, our analysis suggests that the African-American community has an important part to play in solving the problems of contemporary African-American youth. African-American leaders and educators who are already aware of the importance of education in a world and society of changing economy and technology would do well to communicate this message to **their community**: to parents and other adult members, not just to the youth. The African-American community needs to become "culturally aware" of the situation, and this cultural awareness and knowledge should play an important role in raising children. Thus, children should come to school with a cultural knowledge that guides their school behavior and their participation in mentoring.

A final word for the African-American middle class, especially theorists of the underclass. In our comparative research we have discovered two models.In one model the minority members who become successful by achieving professional status as doctors, lawyers, corporate executives, social workers or professors, retain their social membership in the community even when they live outside it physically. They see their accomplishments as a positive influence for the community, and the community interprets their accomplishments in a similar manner. They participate in events in the community and have the opportunity to interact with the youth as community members who are outside their official roles as representatives of the welfare, police, school district, and corporate systems. The middle class professionals in this model have a real chance to serve effectively as success models for the youth.

In contrast, there is another model which, unfortunately, seems preferred by the contemporary African-American middle class and professionals. In this model success or

achieving middle class professional status is equated with "assimilation" and a credential to get away from those who have not made it both physically and socially. Thus, in this model, people seek educational and professional success in order to leave their minority community, although they may later return with "programs" or as advocates for those they left behind. They rarely participate in "community events" or try to build up the community qua community. They rarely interact with the youth outside their official or formal roles. We suspect that in this situation minority middle class professionals may not serve as effective models of mainstream success.

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