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ABSTRACT

Past attempts to develop an explanatory model for African-American school achievement have focused disproportionately on failure. But if one considers the long and persistent denial and limiting of educational opportunity to African Americans, from slavery to the present, and African Americans' corresponding achievements, the historically and educationally useful question becomes: How have African Americans succeeded in producing a leadership and intellectual class? This paper reviews the research on theories of African-American school achievement, examining the work of black family scholars on racial socialization, recent studies of the social construction of "whiteness," and ongoing investigations about the relative power of the cultural differences versus social mobility explanations of school achievement among racial minorities. The cultural differences model is problematized and reformulated to include the concept of whiteness as a social construction with a cultural corollary. It is argued that in order to achieve in school, African-American children have to develop competency in the negotiation of multiple identities, including membership in: (1) mainstream society; (2) the Black community defined as a racially discriminated group; and (3) a cultural group in opposition to which whiteness has been constructed as a social category. (Contains 201 references.) (MDM)

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Toward A Theory Of African American School Achievement

Theresa Perry

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COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS
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Toward a Theory

Of African American School Achievement

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The nation's schools must do more to improve the education of all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if families and communities work with children, with each other, and with schools to promote successful students.

The mission of this Center is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. A second important goal is to improve the connections between and among these major social institutions.

Two research programs guide the Center's work: the Program on the Early Years of Childhood, covering children aged 0-10 through the elementary grades; and the Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence, covering youngsters aged 11-19 through the middle and high school grades.

Research on family, school, and community connections must be conducted to understand more about all children and all families, not just those who are economically and educationally advantaged or already connected to school and community resources. The Center's projects pay particular attention to the diversity of family cultures and backgrounds and to the diversity in family, school, and community practices that support families in helping children succeed across the years of childhood and adolescence. Projects also examine policies at the federal, state, and local levels that produce effective partnerships.

A third program of Institutional Activities includes a wide range of dissemination projects to extend the Center's national leadership. The Center's work will yield new information, practices, and policies to promote partnerships among families, communities, and schools to benefit children's learning.

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Abstract

In this paper, the author presents an exploratory discussion of a theory of African American school achievement, engaging three scholarly conversations: the work of black family scholars on racial socialization; recent work on the social construction of "whiteness;" and the ongoing conversation among educational anthropologists about the relative power of the cultural difference versus social mobility explanations of school achievement among racial minorities.

The cultural difference model is problematized and reformulated to include the concept of "whiteness" as a social construction with a cultural corollary. The author contends that "whiteness" has been constructed in opposition to "blackness" in the white imagination.

Ogbu's social mobility model is reviewed and critiqued. Although his explanatory model powerfully explains variation and achievement among racial minorities, it does not explain African American school achievement. The author further contends that Ogbu does not adequately distinguish between racial and cultural identity; that he ignores the significance of "blackness" in the white imagination, and that he overlooks the powerful paradigm present in the literary and historical traditions of African Americans: freedom for literacy and literacy for freedom.

The author argues that in order to achieve in school, African American children have to develop competency negotiating multiple identities -- at the very least, membership in mainstream society, in the Black community defined as a racially discriminated group, and in a cultural group in opposition to which "whiteness" has been constructed as a social category. The author assumes that a gendered racial identity is negotiated. Further, the focus on group membership situates the competency demands in the arena of "being and doing." Finally, the paper explores the implications of this discussion for schools, families, and communities.

Introduction

Past discussions of and attempts to develop an explanatory model for African American school achievement have disproportionately focused on failure. The last decade's conversation about the relative power of the "cultural difference" versus "social mobility" explanations for school achievement have simply offered competing explanations for failure (Foley, 1991; Erickson, 1987; Ogbu, 1981a, 1983, 1990; Trueba, 1988). Often even success has failure as its sub-text: Barbara Sizemore (1985, p. 269) captured this in a critical discussion on effective schools, calling them "amazing abnormalities."

If one considers the long and persistent denial and limiting of educational opportunity to African Americans, from slavery to the present, and African Americans' corresponding achievements (Anderson, 1988; Weinberg, 1977), the historically grounded and educationally useful question is, "How have African Americans, over generations, succeeded in producing a leadership and intellectual class?" For educators and social scientists to ask repeatedly how to explain the school failure of African Americans seems counter-intuitive and ahistorical, if one remembers that before 1965 American society was essentially closed for African Americans. It is counter-intuitive if one agrees with Robert Lowe (personal communication, May, 1992) and Anderson (1988) that the history of American education is a history of the denial of educational opportunity to African Americans, a history of continuous struggle by African Americans to be educated for first-class rather than for second-class citizenship.

The preoccupation of scholars with explaining school failure is not only contradicted by history; it is also at odds with my experience as an African American. I grew up in the segregated South and have vivid memories of the denial of educational opportunity and the importance of teachers and learning. Even now, when African American friends my age speak of going home to the South, they talk about visiting their teachers. I remember the story a friend told about going home to Virginia when he was an undergraduate at Harvard. The women in his church would come up to him, put their hands in his in a practice called "palming," and give him a dollar, two dollars, a quarter, whatever they had, and tell him to keep on trying and doing good in school. Even now, in my mind's eye I can see the television images of Autherine Lucy and James Meredith as they sought admission to the University of Alabama and the University of Mississippi.

Within the African American narrative tradition, the strength and persistence of the belief in the importance of learning reads like a mantra. The entire school/community took on an air of celebration as Maya Angelou and her classmates prepared for graduation. All members of the school/community, students and teachers were involved in the preparations, building sets and preparing speeches, dramatic readings and songs. Maya was amply rewarded for her achievement, with a new dress for the occasion made by her grandmother, presents from almost all of her grandmother's customers, and a bound leather copy of the works of Edgar Allen Poe

from her brother. According to Maya, the graduates were treated like nobility (Angelou, 1969).

Carl Holman speaks about his mother's determination that her children finish high school and go on to college. Although at times quite ill, every evening, without fail, she wanted to know what her children had done in school and whether they had completed their homework (Holman, 1992).

At the urgings of his African American teachers, who knew his family was too poor to own a radio or subscribe to the newspaper, Carl Rowan became a paperboy, so that he could have access to a newspaper and keep up with current events. Rowan recalls the words of one of his teachers, Ms. Beesie, "If you don't read, you can't write, and if you can't write, you can stop dreaming." He goes on to say, "So I read whatever she told me to read and tried to remember what she insisted that I store away" (Rowan, p. 124, 1992).

Embedded in African Americans' written and oral tradition are stories of sympathetic white people who, in response to African Americans' desire for learning, secretly checked books out of white-only libraries for them.

Angela Davis recalls how her mother taught her to read when she was barely four years old, setting a quota for the number of books she would read each week. She remembers, as I do, the Birmingham Public Library, which was open to white people only, and "the hidden room in the building, accessible only through a secret back entrance, where a Black librarian had her headquarters. Black people could pass lists of books to her, which she would try to secure from the library" (Davis, p. 217, 1992).

Indeed, I am myself a product of the segregated South, of a separate and unequal education, who constantly heard from my parents and the adults in my community, "Get a good education, because it is something nobody can take away from you. "I remember the stories of past struggles for equal educational opportunity. Questions about how to explain the relatively low school achievement of African Americans strike a discordant note.

While the focus on explaining school failure is contradicted by history and my experience as an African American, this orientation is predictable if one relies on the explanatory models of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984) and Alvin Gouldner (1965,1970,1973). The ideology of America as a free and open society and the history of African Americans as an oppressed people; the notion of schools as primarily institutions of social mobility and the denial and limiting of educational opportunity: these contradictory realities are what require explanation. Would unequal achievement be discussed as inextricably linked to white supremacy and unequal opportunity, or would it be attributed to failings and weaknesses inherent in those who underachieve? Given the latter choice, we can readily understand the need for cultural and intellectual workers to constrain discourse about African American school

achievement "within an ideological space which does not seem ideological, and which appears instead to be permanent and natural, to lie outside history, to be beyond particular interest" (Hebidge, 1979, p. 16).

Notwithstanding the predictability of this discourse about failure, the contradiction was not lost on James Anderson (1988). In the epilogue of History of Black Education, 1800-1935, he observes (p. 285),

> It is ironic that in time a body of historical and social science literature was built up which tended to interpret blacks' relatively lower levels of educational attainment in the twentieth century as the product of initial differences in attitude or cultural orientation towards learning and self improvement. . . . A careful examination of blacks' enduring beliefs in education and their historic struggles to acquire decent educational opportunities against almost overwhelming odds leaves little room to attribute their relatively low levels of educational attainment to uncongenial cultural values or educational norms. That more was not achieved means little, for the conditions have been appallingly difficult.

Weinberg (1977, p. 139), in his discussion of Black education from 1950 to the mid-seventies, makes a similar observation:

> Constituting a movement whose moral grandeur cast a light far beyond their own ranks, blacks raised anew many questions of the public good. In education, the idea of the public school was tested once more. . . . A century after emancipation, the schools for blacks were unemancipated still -- often separate, unequal, dehumanized. The miracle was that the belief in learning among Blacks had not been contained or suppressed. Each time hope was crushed, by the courts or legislature or the educational establishment, it rose again. Occasionally, as in [Brown v. Board of Education] or the Civil Rights Act, public institutions supported this hope, encouraging expectation that, even when unfulfilled, nurtured new demands for equal and unsegregated education. Those who deplored low academic achievement among black children seldom acknowledged that, given circumstances of overwhelming educational oppression, it was miraculous that any survived.

Given the environment of African Americans, their collective history and memory as a people, the ideology of the larger society about them, their representation in the media, and the structuring of inequality in school and in the world, the logical, educationally useful, and historically grounded question should be, "How have African American families and communities, for more than 200 years, developed and socialized children to achieve in school?" The compelling question is, "What must African American parents and communities do to prepare their children for success in school?" How can African American parents develop and sustain in their children the desire to achieve in school and society, if effort and achievement are not fairly

rewarded? If one's identity as African American affects the society's response to effort and achievement, can the school achievement of African Americans be discussed without addressing motivation and its relationship to history, societal realities, and social environments? "A theoretical framework for the study of motivation [and I would add achievement] . . . must be particularly capable of addressing how individuals think, feel, and act, in response to the non-attainment of goals" (Graham, 1989, p. 64). An African American student at Northeastern University in my class on the Black family got to the heart of the matter when I asked how he would advise African American parents to socialize their children to succeed, and he responded, "You have to teach the child to work as if the society were open and fair, and at the same time, to accept the fact that because he or she is African American, it will not always be fair. It is not fully open; sometimes it is closed."

This paper was initially conceived of as a review of the literature in preparation for an ethnographic study, modeled on the work of Clark (1983), of how African American families and communities prepare their young children for school success. While the focus on success rather than failure, on family strengths rather than weaknesses, was compelling, this paradigm, nonetheless, underemphasized the significance of the school and larger structural realities, and assumed that the family/community was the primary locus of responsibility for school achievement. Further, as I read article after article that posited a relationship between family practices and school achievement, it became clear to me that cataloging the values, behaviors, and practices of the families of children who did well in school was not my primary interest. Regardless of intent, it seemed likely that these characteristics would inevitably emerge as a standard to assess whether the family was assuming adequate responsibility for their children's school achievement. But more important, behaviors, values, and routines were only important to the extent that they provided a window into African American family and community notions of the affective, cognitive, and social competencies required for academic achievement. I wanted to ask questions about achievement from the inside, from the perspective of African Americans as "rational and autonomous actors with guiding motivations and interests" (Foley, 1991, p. 68). It is not that I wanted to ignore family practices, but rather to explore a range of questions related to the psychology of achievement that took seriously the consciousness of African Americans as an historically oppressed people. Family practices were important to the extent that they were linked to African Americans' psychology of achievement, to community notions of what it meant to prepare children to succeed. It appeared that understanding the extra-cognitive competencies required for school achievement as well as African Americans' historic epistemology of schooling were both critical to my search for a theory of African American school achievement.

This paper has evolved from a traditional literature review into a search for a theory of African American school achievement. In pursuit of this topic, I engage three distinct scholarly conversations; the work of black family scholars on racial socialization; recent work on the social construction of "whiteness;" and the ongoing conversation among educational anthropologists about the relative power of the

cultural difference vs. social mobility explanations of school achievement among racial minorities. I ask, "What are the insights from these scholarly conversations that can inform my search for a theory of African American school achievement?"

I begin with a brief, selective overview of the evolution of the cultural difference explanation for school achievement. The work of Roediger, Ignatiev, Barbara Fields, Du Bois, Baldwin and others who argue that "whiteness" is not a natural category, but a social construction with a cultural corollary, is employed in my critique and proposed reformulation of the cultural difference theory. Ogbu's social mobility explanation for the school achievement of racial minorities is reviewed and critiqued. Although his explanatory model powerfully explains variation in achievement among racial minorities, it does not explain African American school success. I contend that Ogbu's conceptualization is flawed in that it does not adequately distinguish between racial and cultural identity; it too easily dismisses the significance of "blackness" in the white imagination; and it overlooks the powerful paradigm present in the literary and historical traditions of African Americans: freedom for literacy and literacy for freedom (Stepto, 1991; Anderson, 1988).

In discussing the work on racial socialization, I modestly revise and, using the work on the social construction of "whiteness," historicize Boykin and Toms' conceptual framework. They contend that in order to move toward adult competence, African American children have to acquire competence negotiating the demands of three distinct and conflicting "arenas of experience, three distinct realms of social negotiation . . . mainstream, minority, and Black cultural" (Boykin & Toms, p. 46, 1985). I argue that in order to achieve in school, African American children have to negotiate multiple identities -- at the very least, membership in mainstream society, in the Black community defined as a racially discriminated group, and in a cultural group in opposition to which "whiteness" has been constructed as a social category. This focus on membership situates the competency demands in the arena of "being and doing." Finally, I explore the implications of my search for a theory of African American school achievement for families, communities, and schools.

The "Cultural Difference" Explanation for Failure

The "cultural difference" explanation for school failure was initially located in discussions about whether the language of African American children was a barrier to school success. This was a predictable location for the cultural mismatch theory for, as Baldwin (1985, p. 650) notes,

> language is the most vivid and crucial key to identity. It reveals the private identity and connects one with, or divorces one from, the larger, public, or communal identity. To open your mouth in England is (if I may use black English) to "put your business in the street." You have confessed your parent, your youth, your school, your salary, your self esteem, and alas, your future.

Labov (1972a, 1977b) and others established that Black English was a distinct, rule-based language, capable of accommodating the full range of cognitive functions. This research convincingly refuted the claims that Black English was an undeveloped language with a restricted code. Not surprisingly, this research did not preclude teachers from making judgments about the intellectual capacity of African American children based on their speech, or from correcting their dialect reading of standard English text, a translation which suggests receptive competence in both standard and Black English. After much debate and discussion, the considered opinion was that Black English was not a barrier in itself, but was problematic only in terms of what it represented for teachers and the reactions it elicited from them.

In the early seventies, researchers (Cazden, John, and Hymes, 1972) were urged to move from a focus on the grammar of language to a focus on the rules of language-use in the classroom. Children, like adults, were thought to be members of "speech communities," usually paralleling the major divisions in society -- race, class, and ethnicity -- with different rules for communication, for asking questions, taking turns, getting the floor, expressing functional intent and emotions, exercising control, and so on. What happens when children come to school from speech communities which have different discourse rules, particularly for those speech events central to classroom discourse?

Research studies emerged (Scollon & Scollon 1981; Erickson & Mohat 1982, Heath 1983, Philips 1983, Florio 1978) documenting the existence of cultural conflict in the classroom, a mismatch between the rules of language-use of the child's home community and the rules of language-use required for full participation in the classroom. With this research came the call for culturally responsive pedagogy, based on a knowledge of and sensitivity to the culturally learned communication styles children of color brought to school. Let me, at this point, reference two examples, one from research and another from practice, both of which illustrate the cause/effect relationship frequently drawn between culturally responsive pedagogy and improved school performance in the cultural difference research.

In a series of controlled experiments, Au and Jordan (1981) compared the results that followed when different methods of discussion were used with two different groups of Hawaiian children after they had read stories; one group used the standard Anglo mainstream method of turn-taking where one person follows another, the other used "talk story," a traditional Hawaiian method of turn-taking, which permits overlapping talk and allows children to jump in and participate, not waiting until one child has finished talking. The use of talk story discussion following the reading lesson resulted in more enthusiastic participation by the children and increased reading comprehension as measured by a test administered immediately after the discussion.

Judith Richards (1993), a teacher in Cambridge, Massachusetts, recounts her experience in a third/fourth grade classroom of children of white and African American professionals and working-class Haitian immigrants. When she structured a math

problem-solving activity, the children of professionals invariably took the lead. However, when she embedded the same type of math problem-solving activity in a traditional Haitian folk tale, the Haitian children took the lead.

It seems reasonable that culturally responsive pedagogy would positively affect learning. In both of these instances, the cognitive task was simplified when students did not have to deal with both an unfamiliar speech event and instructional content. Further, using a familiar communication style could possibly reduce cultural dissonance, create a sense of membership, and symbolically affirm children who are members of racial minority groups (Erickson, 1987). Despite its widespread acceptance by many educators, the "cultural difference" explanation for school failure is problematic.

Problematizing the "Cultural Difference" Explanation

Ogbu (1981a) criticized anthropologists who conducted cultural mismatch studies for their proliferation of micro-ethnographies which reduced culture to de-contextualized practices; he argued for a conceptualization of culture as "lived experiences," ecological and historical. Perhaps Ogbu's most serious critique of "cultural difference" theory was his challenge of its explanatory power: it did not explain variation in school performance among racial minority groups, that is, why some groups with cultures different from the mainstream did not experience disproportionate school failure, but rather success.

Perry (1982), in her analysis of the Martin Luther King School v. Ann Arbor School Board case, argued that "cultural difference" theorists often presented cultural conflict as a no-fault situation, with the relationship of culture to power underemphasized, if not ignored. In discussing how culture was implicated in the school performance of the Black children from low-income families who were plaintiffs in the Martin Luther King case, Perry uses Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital." Using this concept, she examines how culture mediates inequality in an allegedly open integrated school, without the influence of individuals bent on denying educational opportunity to certain groups of children. According to Bourdieu, "cultural capital" includes values, dispositions, tastes, "habitas," institutionalized as the culture of power. Children from families occupying different positions of power in the larger society come to school with varying degrees of "cultural capital;" and like economic capital, "cultural capital" has an exchange value. School and its instructional practices are so organized as to afford automatic advantages to children who come with a lot of cultural capital and disadvantages to those who come with little cultural capital. While Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital provided a framework for understanding disproportionate school failure of low-income African American children from the Green Road housing project who attended the Martin Luther King School, an excellent school in a liberal town and community, it could not explain the underachievement of middle and upper class African Americans in this school and in other schools throughout the Ann Arbor school district. While the notion of cultural capital establishes a necessary link between culture and power, as a theory of class culture in

a democratic society it does not address the dialectics of race and class in American schools.

Aware of the significant challenges that had been leveled against the "cultural difference" theory by Ogbu and others, Erickson (1987) revises this theory. The notions of legitimacy, trust, and risk are central to his revision. Learning, he argues, is inherently an act of faith -- it requires risk and assent, a willingness to move from the known to the unknown. Cultural differences do not necessarily or automatically cause difficulty in school for racial minorities. It is only when cultural differences become "a negative phenomenon in the classroom," i.e., when a school is not a legitimate institution for the children and their families, that cultural boundaries are likely to be transformed into cultural borders, and are thus implicated in children's school performance.

The Social Construction of "Whiteness"

Historians and social scientists have argued that race and ethnicity are not natural categories, but rather are social constructions (Fields, 1981; Roediger, 1991; Ignatiev, 1991; Williams, 1990). Among these scholars, the work of Fields, Roediger, and Ignatiev have informed my analysis and recasting of the "cultural difference" explanation for school failure.

Using Irish Americans as a paradigm for white racial formation, Roediger and Ignatiev contend that "whiteness" is a social construction with a cultural corollary. In The Wages of Whiteness, Roediger (1991, p. 5) observes that while his experiences as a youth might have occasioned the book's major themes ("the role of race in defining how white workers look not only at Blacks, but at themselves; the pervasiveness of race; the complex mixture of hate, sadness, and longing in the racial thought of white workers; the relationship between race and ethnicity"), an understanding of "how and why 'whiteness' became so important to white workers" would necessitate historical research and conscious reflection. Looking back on his youth, he reflects,

> When I was ten, it suddenly became possible to hit little league pitching and, after my first (and only) five-hit game, the league's best player asked if I'd go to the carnival with him. This was a sign of acceptance, but as we walked to the fairgrounds the stakes increased. My new friend produced a long knife that he was not supposed to have and I was not supposed to know he had. `This,' he told me conspiratorially, `is a nigger gigger.' Neither of us knew if this meant that the knife was for attacking Blacks or a sort used by them. Neither of us knew any Blacks. None lived in the small German American quarrying and farming town in which we were growing up. Local folklore held that laws barred Blacks from being in town after sundown. And yet the value of that knife, in terms of preteen male bonding, attached at least as much to its name as to its fake pearl handle.

> Even in an all-white town, race was never absent. I learned absolutely no lore of my German ancestry and no more than a few meaningless snatches of Irish songs, but missed little of racist folklore. Kids came to know the exigencies of change by chanting, `Eeny, meany, miney, mo/catch a nigger by the toe' to decide teams and first batters in sport. We learned that life -- and fights -- were not fair: ` Two against one, nigger's fun.' We learned not to loaf: `last one in is a nigger baby.' We learned to save, for to buy ostentatiously or too quickly was to be `nigger rich.' We learned not to buy clothes that were a bright `nigger green.' Sexuality and blackness were of course thoroughly confused. (Roediger, 1991, p. 3)

> . . . We all hated Blacks in the abstract, but our greatest heroes were the Black stars of the great St. Louis Cardinals baseball teams of the sixties. The style as well as the talent, of players like Lou Brock, Bob Gibson, and Curt Flood was reverenced. More grudgingly we admired Muhammad Ali as our generation's finest sportsman. We listened to Chuck Berry and Tina Turner. . . . these tastes did not supplant racism.

Roediger acknowledges his debt to African American scholars Cyril Briggs, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Hazel Carby, Coco Fusco, Barbara Fields, and James Baldwin, all of whom have seen racism as a "white problem" and "whiteness" as socially constructed. As Fusco has said, "Racial identities are not only Black, Latino, Asian, Native American and so on, they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it" (quoted by hooks, 1989, p. 39).

In forging an understanding of how race and class interpenetrate, Roediger acknowledges a particular debt to Du Bois, from whose writings he takes the title of his book, The Wages of Whiteness. Du Bois saw white and Black workers as operating within racial categories. In Black Reconstruction, he has a chapter on "The Black Worker" and another on "The White Worker." Indeed, white workers were manipulated into racism -- they were the recipients of a racist ideology, they embraced and also resisted racism and racist practices. But perhaps more important, white workers came to define their interest as "white." According to Du Bois (1977, pp. 700-701), because of their "whiteness," white workers,

> were given public deference. . . They were admitted freely, with all classes of white people, to public functions and public parks. . . The police were drawn from their ranks and the courts, dependent on their votes, treated them with leniency. . . Their votes selected public offices and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it has great effect upon their personal treatment. . . White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously places, and cost anywhere from twice to ten times colored schools.

Roediger notes that in the thoughts of Du Bois, as important as were the concrete privileges that "whiteness" conferred on white workers, more important was the proposition "that white workers received `a public and psychological wage' (Du Bois, 1977, p. 700) for being white, `status and privileges' that compensated for `alienating and exploiting class relationships, North and South.'" White workers could and did define and accept their class positions by fashioning identities as "not slaves" and as "not Black" (Roediger, 1991, p. 11).

For both Roediger and Ignatiev, it was not inevitable that the Irish American worker should become "white." Irish Americans and African Americans lived side by side in urban areas, occupied the same low-level, undesirable jobs in transportation and domestic service; the negative images and stereotypes used to describe Blacks were applied to the Irish: according to nativist folk wisdom, Irish Americans were "niggers inside out." Into the early 1830's they lived together without significant racial tension in cities like Philadelphia and Worcester, participated in each other's celebrations, and at times intermarried. The material conditions of Irish Americans' lives were such that one could reasonably expect them to be natural allies of African Americans.

However, as Roediger reminds us (1991, p. 134), "Shared oppression need not generate solidarity but neither must it necessarily breed contempt of one oppressed group for the other." While it is understandable why the slave master might want to be white, Roediger is at pains to explain what would make the white worker organize his interest and personality around "whiteness" (Roediger 1991, p. 105). The conventional explanation of competition with black labor was not compelling. In the north, where white workers constantly proclaimed their whiteness, there were too few free black workers (and they were not usually treated as citizens) for them to be viewed as competition.

According to Ignatiev (1991), Irish Americans were not born white, they became white. He locates (p. 1) as a "turning point in their evolution towards membership in an oppressing race" the response of Irish Americans to the 1841 appeal from 60,000 Irish, including Daniel O'Connell, the great Irish political leader, asking them to join the abolitionists in "their struggle against slavery." This appeal was first read at Fanueil Hall in Boston. Four thousand people, including a large number of Irish Americans, attended the meeting and responded enthusiastically. The appeal argued that "slavery is the most tremendous invasion of the natural, inalienable rights of man"; it exhorted Irish Americans to resist slavery, to "join with the abolitionist everywhere," to "tell everyman that you do not understand liberty for the white man, and slavery for the Black man . . . to treat the colored people as your equal, as brethren. . . . to remember Ireland and continue to love liberty and hate slavery" . . . and "do honor to the name of Ireland" in America (Ignatiev, 1991, p. 8).

The natural tendency of Irish Americans to identify with African Americans and their struggle for liberation was transformed through the intervention of Irish American politicians and the Catholic clergy. Immediately after the address was read,

editorials and articles in the *New York Herald,* the *Boston Pilot*, and the *Boston Catholic Diary*, refuted its contents: The letter was fabrication; Irish Americans should not recognize foreign intervention into American affairs; Irish Americans should oppose being separated and addressed as a "distinct class of the community . . . they should see themselves in every respect as citizens of this great and glorious republic. . . ."; they were not brethren of the colored people (Ignatiev, 1991, p. 14).

The response of the Irish at Fanueil Hall, which Ignatiev evaluates as a reflection of their "natural love of liberty," was according to Roediger, "atypical of Irish-American opinion on slavery and race" (1991, p. 135). However this response is evaluated, it would be the first and last time the appeal would receive an enthusiastic response from Irish Americans. Eventually, the debate and controversy among Irish and American abolitionists and Irish Americans resulted in O'Connell distancing himself from the Garrisonian abolitionists because of their religious orthodoxy. However, his condemnation of slavery persisted, and at a time when the Repeal Movement in Ireland was particularly dependent on contributions from America. Aware that the Repeal Movement might suffer from his stance, he nonetheless sent a strong letter to the Irish American community condemning slavery, saying that the movement in Ireland did "not want blood stained money" (Roediger, 1991).

Roediger (1991) locates the construction of "whiteness" during the period between the American revolution and the Civil War. With the rise of republicanism, independence emerged as a white male value; at the same time the spread of wage labor brought with it a fear of dependency. The construction of "whiteness" provided a way for the white working class male to deal with these competing claims. And "in a society in which Blackness and servility were so intertwined, assertions of white freedom could not be raceless" (Roediger, 1991, p. 49).

White male workers defined themselves in counterpoint to Blacks -- to be white was to be not-Black, not-slave. White workers dealt with their fear of dependency on wage labor by distancing themselves and their labor from that of Blacks, substituting new terms for those that reflected servile relationships, "boss" for "master," "help" for "servant," "laborer" for "hireling."

"Whiteness" has a cultural as well as an ideological component. In discussing minstrelsy, a cultural corollary of "whiteness," Roediger draws on the work of Gutman, who documented how difficult it was for white workers to adapt to the discipline of industrial capitalism, and on Rawick's (1972) and Huggins' (1971) interpretations of minstrelsy. Roediger (1991, p. 97) describes minstrelsy as "the tendency of racist entertainers to project white male anxieties onto black face characters," providing a way for white workers to reconcile longings for their preindustrial past with their newly required discipline. By projecting onto Blacks their present and past longings, white workers via minstrelsy created a pornography of Black life. According to Roediger (1991, p. 14), "disciplined and made anxious by fear of dependency," the white working class constructed "an image of the Black population as `other' -- as embodying the pre-industrial, erotic, careless life style the

white worker hated and longed for. This logic had particular attractiveness for Irish American immigrant workers, even as the `whiteness' of these very workers was under dispute."

Minstrelsy allowed Irish Americans to relieve the tension created by conflicting desires and contemporary demands, by their "longings for" their "rural past" and their "need to adapt to the urban present" (Roediger, 1991, p. 119). It provided an outlet for erotic longings which the white worker did not have to own. Secure in their "whiteness," whites could be "black for a while;" their "pre-industrial joy could survive industrial discipline" (Roediger, 1991, p. 118).

Thus Ignatiev, Roediger and others contend that "whiteness" is not a natural category, but an ideological construction with a cultural corollary. "Whiteness" was created in opposition to how "Blackness" was imagined. To be "white" was to be "not-slave," "not-Black."

Decades ago, Ellison (1972) wondered about white youth who were enthralled with the music of Stevie Wonder, and yet who would shout racial slurs at African Americans if they came onto their white-only beaches. Today, Roediger (1993) wonders about contemporary youth who wear "Public Enemy" caps and at the same time sport belts emblazoned with the Confederate flag. Historically located in the latter-half of the nineteenth century, this complex admixture of longing and hate, which is central to the construction of "whiteness," extends to the present via contemporary minstrelsy and race bending. The arrival of hip-hop music on the popular culture scene has "created an entire subclass of wanna-bes....as millions of white fans of black rappers have adopted modes of dress, speech, and style that they consider black." We have also witnessed the emergence of groups like 3rd Bass, House of Pain, and Young Black Teenagers, all-white groups who feign a "strut and posture . . . 'blacker' than most of their fans, even more so than most blacks" (Ledbetter, 1992, p.112). These groups reflect the sentiment expressed by Janis Joplin years ago when she uttered that she just wanted to be black for awhile. Cornel West has termed this phenomenon "the Afro-Americanization of youth culture." Like the minstrels in times past, these youth, even in their black-face, continue to participate in white privilege. Kids can don black face but our institutions usually don't. In spite of the Afro-Americanization of popular culture and current thinking which posits that American culture and its canonical literature is critically informed by the African American presence (Morrison, 1991), most of our educational institutions continue to institutionalize "whiteness" as the culture of power.

How should this discussion of "whiteness" inform our recasting of the "cultural difference" explanation for school failure? If "whiteness" is constructed politically and culturally in opposition to "Blackness," African American culture will have a different cultural meaning in school and in society from the culture of other racial minorities. In thinking about how culture is implicated in school performance, the culture of racial minorities should be viewed as on a continuum, with Black culture at one end and white culture at the other. To the extent that the culture of a racial

minority approximates "Black as symbol" and those cultural features associated with "Blackness" in the white imagination, to that extent will culture be problematic for that minority. Stated another way, "whiteness" was not constructed in opposition to "Asian-ness," "Puerto Rican-ness," or other groups, but in opposition to how "Blackness" was imagined.

Revising Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, and incorporating an understanding of the dialectics of race and class in American society, African American children are afforded advantages if they possess a subset of those cultural features which represent "whiteness," a notion that has been defined in counterpoint to how "Blackness" is imagined. I would hypothesize that these include the ability to be reserved, to subordinate emotions and affections to reason, to constrain physical activity, and to present a disciplined exterior.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to ask what are insights from this discussion that can inform our search for an explanatory model for African American school performance. They are as follows:

1. In discussing the relationship of culture to achievement, we should ask what culture represents in the white imagination and what it symbolizes in American popular culture; what is its relationship to "whiteness" as a cultural category?

2. Discussions of the role of culture in mediating inequality in school performance should not assume that European conceptual models adequately capture the dynamics of race and class in this society.

3. Cultures of different racial minorities do not carry the same political and cultural meanings in American society.

The "Social Mobility" Explanation for Failure

At the center of Ogbu's analysis of African Americans' school achievement is their identity as a racially oppressed minority. Having examined achievement data for racial minorities in the United States and other countries, he suggests that being a racial minority does not in itself predict school failure. He notes significant variation in school performance among racial minorities in this country, and within racial groups in different geographical contexts. For example, whereas African Americans, Native Americans, and Chicanos experience disproportionate school failure in this country, Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, and Filipinos do not. Further complicating the picture, Chinese peasants and Burakumin (a despised class of ethnic Japanese) achieve academically in this country, while failing disproportionately in schools in Hong Kong and Japan.

Ogbu's (1983) comparison of the achievement data of racial minorities, plus his ethnographic study of school achievement among Chinese American and African

American children in Stockton, California, led him to conclude that being a racial minority does not necessarily predict school performance. Rather, it is the terms of the group's incorporation into the host society, and the group's social position in that society, which predict and explain school performance. On this basis, he develops an explanation for variation in the school performance of domestic minorities that is critically informed by his categories of "immigrant minority" and "castelike minority."

Ogbu's Definitions of Immigrant and Castelike Minorities

In a racially stratified society, all minorities experience social and economic discrimination and are the victims of racism, stereotyping, and a "glass ceiling." What distinguishes immigrant and castelike minorities is the attitude with which they face this treatment. Immigrant minorities come to this country voluntarily, usually seeking a better life. Accepting the white middle class theory of achievement -- if you work hard, you will get ahead -- immigrant minorities view their problems "as more or less temporary," linked to their status as new immigrants. They do not compare their life and treatment in the host country with that of the white mainstream group, but with their peers in their country of origin. In the context of this comparison, their life here appears better. Further, as immigrants, they retain the possibility of returning to their countries of origin.

Racially oppressed or castelike minorities, on the other hand, were brought into this country involuntarily, either through force, as in the case of African Americans, or by conquest, as with Native Americans and Mexicans in the Southwest. "Membership in a castelike group is permanent, ascribed at birth" (Ogbu, 1983, p. 171). Over generations they have occupied the status of oppressed peoples, been confined to low-level jobs, and had little or no political power. Typically, society has developed an ideology of racial inferiority to rationalize and explain their position. There is no homeland to which to return.

For castelike minorities, the point of comparison is the dominant group. If their life chances are less than or different from those of white America, they are not satisfied. According to Ogbu (1990, p. 65), "they wish they could get ahead through education and ability, but they know that they can't because of racial barriers which they interpret as part of their undeserved oppression." Moreover, whereas immigrant minorities tend to trust white Americans, castelike minorities do not. An instructive comment was made by an African American man interviewed by Janie Ward (1991, p.2): Ward asked, "If you were to create a racial survival kit, what would you put in it?" The man responded, "A set of eyes in the back of your head."

Notwithstanding their experience of discrimination, immigrant minorities vigorously embrace the dominant American ideology that hard work and education pay off and will lead to a better life. Castelike minorities, on the other hand, have lived here for generations observing the lives of their parents and other members of their communities and have come to believe that education does not necessarily lead to better jobs -- for members of their group. While castelike minority parents articulate a strong

belief in the importance of education for getting ahead and making it in this society, at the same time they communicate to their children an ambivalence about whether society will really reward them for their school achievement. This phenomenon has led to what Ogbu (1983, 1990) has called a lack of "effort optimism" (1990, p.81) among the children of castelike minorities. We are terming it the "dilemma of schooling for castelike minorities," the same dilemma described by my Northeastern University student quoted at the beginning of this paper.

A Critique of Ogbu's Theoretical Perspective

Ogbu's work is historical and ecological. In his theoretical papers and ethnography he pays serious and careful attention to societal issues, structured inequality, and ideology, and how they affect a child's home, community, and school environments, and ultimately the sense a child and his/her community make of school performance. In all of his work, Ogbu attempts to explain school achievement by understanding the individual and collective consciousness of the African American child as he or she goes to school, and how that consciousness has been affected by the job market and the schooling experiences of African Americans in general, and their families and communities, in particular. He questions how the social history of African Americans and their historic and contemporary relationships with the job market and schools have informed their epistemology of schooling, their folk theory of achievement. His struggle is to understand the psychology, motives, and intentionality of African Americans as they go to school.

He maintains that African Americans' fight for equal educational opportunity has left them with a deep distrust for schools and school people. To his credit, he acknowledges the importance of their history in forming the attitudes about school that African Americans pass on to their children. What is problematic, however, is his interpretation of African American educational history and how it has influenced contemporary attitudes. One would expect Ogbu, the anthropologist, to try to understand the meaning that African Americans themselves have attached to their educational history. Instead, he relies on a surface understanding of events and fails to probe for a deeper historical perspective, on the meaning African Americans have attached to their struggle for education.

African Americans' Epistemology of Schooling

A careful reading of African American educational history and a review of the writings of African American educators and political and cultural leaders suggests that from slavery to the present, African Americans have seen education as linked to their struggle for citizenship, and as a preparation for leadership. Further, within the African American tradition, school has not been conceptualized as simply an instructional site, a place to acquire skills. Rather, school has been conceived of as an appropriate place for African Americans to struggle for a redefinition of their social and political position in the larger society. According to Siu (1992), this conception of schooling is decidedly different from that of Chinese Americans. A review of

representative events in African American educational history and of select writings of Black educators, intellectuals and political leaders illustrate this point.

Historical accounts (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1980; Gutman, 1976; Du Bois, 1935 a and b, 1901; Weinberg, 1977; Harding, 1981) and slave narratives universally document the intensity of the slave and the ex-slave's desire to learn to read and write, the considerable risks they were willing to take in order to become literate, and their belief that literacy was symbolic of their status as free men and women, preparatory for citizenship and leadership. We learn of Mary Deveaux who, "unknown to the slave regime," ran a school in Savannah, Georgia, from 1833 to 1865 (Anderson, 1988, p. 7); of Scipio, "the slave who was put to death for teaching a slave child to read and spell," and the child taught by Scipio, who "was beaten to make him `forget what he had learned'" (Anderson, 1988, p. 17). And there is the story of Suzie King Taylor, of the Georgia Sea Islands, who was sent to Savannah to live as a free Negro, and who with others, "went every day with books wrapped in paper to prevent the police or white persons from seeing them. . . ." They went in "one at a time, through the gate, into the yard to the L kitchen, which was the school room." Susie recalls, "The neighbors would see us going in sometimes, but they supposed we were learning trades" (Taylor, 1968, p. 5, quoted in Weinberg, 1977, p. 14).

In the narrative of his life as a slave, Frederick Douglass ([1845] 1982, pp. 78-79) speaks about the meaning he attached to becoming literate:

> Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take a mile. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master -- to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world." Now, said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty -- to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when

I least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost or trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering . . . what he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated, that which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn.

After emancipation, the ex-slave's desire for literacy persisted, as did the attendant risks. The Ku Klux Klan deliberately targeted the Black school (Weinberg, 1977; Anderson, 1988; Butchart 1980). "Negroes were disliked and feared almost in exact proportion to their manifestation of intelligence and capacity" (Du Bois, 1935 a and b, p. 645). Nevertheless, the purpose of education for the ex-slaves remained "to put as great a distance between themselves and bondage as possible" (Butchart, 1980, as quoted in Andersen, 1988, p. 18). According to Du Bois (1935 a and b, p. 641), "It was only the other part of the laboring class, the black folk, who connected knowledge to power." Anderson (1988, p. 28) captures this aspect of the African American epistemology of schooling in the following:

> The prevailing philosophies of black education and the subjects taught in black schools were not geared to reproduce the caste distinction or the racially segmented labor force. . . . The black teachers, school officials, and secular and religious leaders who formed the vanguard of the postwar common school movement insisted that the ex-slaves must educate themselves, gather experience, and acquire a responsible awareness of the duties incumbent upon them as citizens and as male voters in the new social order. *Their thinking on these questions indicated virtually no illusions about the power of schooling to ameliorate fundamental economic inequalities. Rather it reflected their belief that education could help raise the freed people to an appreciation of their historic responsibility to develop a better society* and that any significant reorganization of the southern political economy was indissolubly linked to their education in the principles, duties, and obligations appropriate to a democratic social order. Ex-slave communities pursued their educational objectives by developing various strata, but the one they stressed the most was leadership training. They believed the masses could not achieve political and economic independence or self-determination without first becoming organized, and organization was impossible without well-trained intellectuals -- teachers, ministers, politicians, managers, administrators and businessmen. [Italics added.]

Contrary to current historiography, the debate between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington was not primarily about vocational vs. classical education. Hampton Institute was a normal school. The debate was essentially about how African American teachers, the backbone of their leadership class, would be educated, and what political and social philosophy would be passed on to this leadership class. The assumption, of course, was that these individuals were being educated for leadership. (For an analysis of this debate the reader is referred to pages 33-78 of Anderson's work.)

Many of us are familiar with Du Bois's (1923) early writings, and his notion of the "talented tenth." Although this has been critiqued as an elitist philosophy, embedded in it was the notion of education for leadership. However, Du Bois was not the first to propose this philosophy. Hazel Carby (1987), in her cultural history of nineteenth-century Black women writers, convincingly argues that the idea of a Black intelligentsia who would provide leadership for the race is presented in Francis Ellen Watkins Harper's 1863 novel Iola Leroy, as well as in her lectures. According to Carby (1987, pp. 84-85), in this novel:

> Iola and her brother Harry were presented as members of an intellectual elite: they were both educated in private secondary schools (though not colleges) in the North and were committed to devoting their skills to the moral and educational uplifting of the race. This commitment to the ideology of racial uplift was defined not as individual gestures by an educated hero and heroine, but within the development of a community of intellectuals. This community figured in the text through a doctor, minister, and several teachers represented as being responsible for contemporary issues.

When the novel chronicles the courtship and eventual marriage of Iola to Dr. Latimar, a Black intellectual, their mutual commitment to racial uplift is the tie that binds. In one conversation recounted in the novel, "a select group of men and women deeply committed to the welfare of the race" mention papers about issues of importance to the Black community ("Negro Emigration," "Patriotism," "Education of Mothers," and "Moral Progress of the Race") and then discuss them. According to Carby (1987, p.88), Harper uses this novel "as another platform to demonstrate to her readership, as she demonstrated to her audiences, the need for and the affectivity of a reasoning and educated elite."

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, W.E.B. Du Bois, Helen Whitings, Arna Bontemps, Carter G. Woodson, and many others launched an oppositional tradition in African American children's literature, to counter negative stereotypes, develop race pride, and convince young African Americans of their responsibility to fight and work on behalf of their community. This tradition clearly demonstrates the importance African Americans attach to the content and ideology of the books their children read (Harris, 1990).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, school has been one of the primary sites for the African American's struggle to redefine democracy. When students in Farmville, Virginia, walked out to protest the deplorable condition of their school in 1951, they became one of the catalysts for the Brown v. Board of Education case. It was a student leader, Barbara Johns, who orchestrated the assembly that led to the student walkout. It was the students who, in swift order and unknown to their parents, invited the NAACP to take on the case. The NAACP agreed, but only if the litigation extended beyond improved facilities to include integrated education. The following, from Branch's Parting the Waters (1988, pp.19-20), describes the role of student leadership in the Farmville strike:

> The trouble began on the morning of April 23, 1951, at Farmville's R.R. Moton High School (named for Booker T. Washington's aide and successor), when the school's principal was informed by telephone that the police were about to arrest two of his students down at the bus station. Failing to recognize the call as a ruse, he had dashed off for town. Shortly thereafter, a note from the principal was delivered to each classroom, summoning the whole school to a general assembly. All 450 students and twenty-five teachers filed into the auditorium, and the buzz of gossip gave way to shocked silence the instant the stage curtain opened to reveal not the principal but a sixteen-year-old junior named Barbara Johns. She announced that this was a special student meeting to discuss the wretched conditions at the school. Then she invited the teachers to leave. By now it had dawned on the teachers that this was a dangerous, unauthorized situation running in the direction of what was known as juvenile delinquency. Some of them moved to take over the stage, whereupon Barbara Johns took her shoe off and rapped it sharply on a school bench. "I want you all out of here!" she shouted at the teachers, beckoning a small cadre of her supporters to remove them from the room. . . Before the Negro adults had decided what to do, and before most of the local white people had noticed the controversy at all, Barbara Johns and her little band sent out appeals to the NAACP lawyers, who, completely misreading the source of the initiative, agreed to come to Farmville for a meeting provided it was not with "the children." When the lawyers told a mass gathering of one thousand Negroes that any battle would be dangerous and that the strike was illegal, it was the students who shouted that there were too many of them to fit in the jails.

In 1960, four African American students, enrolled at North Carolina A & T, staged a sit-in at a Greensboro lunch counter and challenged the south's public accommodation laws. Ten other Black colleges were located within 100 miles of North Carolina A & T, and within days thousands of African American students joined this effort. Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth understood the significance of the students' actions when he telephoned Ella Baker to tell her "This is it . . . you must tell Martin that we must get with this, the sit-ins might shake up the world" (Branch, 1988, p. 273).

Indeed, African American students were both leaders and cannon fodder in desegregation efforts North and South. In cities throughout the South -- Americus, Georgia; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; McComb, Mississippi -- they took the lead in the struggle against second class citizenship, whether in school or in the larger society, through voter registration and the sit-in movement. As in times past, more often than not, these struggles were waged with and alongside the adults in their communities. In southern Florida, the principals of Black schools routinely sent notices home with the children to inform parents about the voter registration effort (Weinberg, 1977) and in the thirties Horace Mann Bond and his students together conspired to conceal the school's classical orientation from northern philanthropists intent on supporting vocational education for African Americans.

Sometimes students, however, having learned well from their elders and the African American collective tradition about the aims and purposes of schooling, struggled against their teachers and principals, as in McComb, Mississippi, when students walked out to protest their principal's attempt to limit their participation in the civil rights movement (Weinberg, 1977). Vincent Harding, in Hope and History (1990), documents the central role African American youth played in our contemporary struggle to redefine the democracy. Their actions were aimed at redefining life in our nation's schools, but also in the larger society (Harding, 1990).

At the beginning of this paper, James Anderson comments how ironic it is that after African Americans' 300-year struggle against the denial of equal educational opportunity, a body of writings should develop attributing African Americans' relatively low school achievement to their not valuing education. It is equally ironic that Ogbu identifies collective action as an adaptive strategy developed by African Americans that is not supportive of school achievement. Vincent Harding (1990) calls the civil rights movement the "African American's gift to America." The Civil Rights Act, the culmination of years of litigation, marches, bombings, and beatings was borne on the backs of African Americans, children included. This Act has created possibilities, opened doors, and provided protection and legal recourse for women, and both immigrants and castelike minorities. It is ironic that Asian Americans, one of the minorities that has benefited enormously from these openings and protections, would come to be called "the model minority," a move clearly designed to distance them from African Americans.

When Ogbu maintains that African Americans' past schooling experience have resulted in conflictual relationships with school, he relies on a superficial interpretation of their educational history, and fails to probe for the meaning of their historic struggles for equal educational opportunity. If Ogbu had adequately grasped the meaning of African American struggles for schooling, I believe he would have seen that the paradigm of school as instrumental, as connected to the job market, which figures so significantly in his theoretical framework, is not appropriate for interpreting African American educational history. For better or worse, African Americans have been much more philosophical and ideological about the aims and purposes of education. The 1935 issue of the Journal of Negro Education in which African

American intellectuals discuss the pros and cons of waging a vigorous campaign against segregation, is a powerful example of this orientation.

Early on, becoming literate represented a move toward full citizenship; given this linkage, it is not surprising that African Americans were the first among native southerners to advocate universal and free schooling (Du Bois, 1935 a and b; Anderson, 1988). Later, a major educational debate would center around the social and political philosophy of the African American leadership class. The philosophy of the talented tenth articulated by Watkins and Du Bois, which we now critique as elitist, nonetheless contained the notion of education for leadership. Children's literature would become one of the contexts for discussing the functions of literacy. In the latter half of the twentieth century, education would be the battlefield where African Americans would attempt and in some measure succeed in redefining the democracy.

I would argue that education was valued in African American society before the 1960s, even if it was not necessarily going to lead to better jobs. Its aims and purposes were much broader. Perhaps one of the major flaws of Ogbu's analysis is his failure to grasp the historic meaning of education for African Americans, assuming that because it is viewed instrumentally by mainstream society, and by the African American communities he has studied, that this has been the case with African Americans historically. Certainly before the Civil Rights movement, education for work was not the dominant epistemology of schooling. From slavery to the present, school has been seen as an appropriate locus for the struggle to redefine African American social and political position in society. This reading of history has profound implications not only for how we think about the school achievement of African American children and what is and has been motivating for them, but also for comparative discussions of the achievement of all minorities. It reveals a serious flaw in Ogbu's conceptualization.

I maintain that the epistemology of schooling that appears over and over again in the African American intellectual tradition is one that links schooling to citizenship, leadership and racial uplift. In asserting this, I do not mean to suggest that this was the only epistemology or that it went uncontested. It *was* contested -- by Armstrong, the industrialist who supported and sponsored Booker T. Washington; by the Southern planters who viewed the "'nigger teacher' . . . as the most opprobrious epithet . . . in the southern vocabulary" (Du Bois, 1935 a and b); and by the owners of the steel mills in Fairfield, Alabama, who were crystal clear about the purposes of education, as they built company towns and company schools (Bond, 1969). The notion of schooling as primarily linked to work did not, however, gain hold among African Americans (Anderson, 1988).

Effort Optimism and African American Epistemology

Ogbu's theoretical perspective relies significantly on the notion that because education has not resulted in commensurate job-market rewards for castelike minorities, African Americans have developed a lack of effort optimism. It seems

reasonable that maintaining effort optimism would be critical for an historically oppressed people. Evidence suggests that maintaining effort optimism is both a dilemma and an adaptive behavior, even for successful African American professionals in mainstream society (Benjamin, 1991; Edwards and Polite, 1992). If this is a dilemma for African American adults, it is a pretty good guess that maintaining effort optimism would be a psychological issue of significant import for African American school children, particularly if they experience discrimination in school and society, without the benefit of environments or institutions which consciously develop and sustain effort optimism.

Further, it seems eminently reasonable for us to ask what it is that has historically sustained African Americans' desire to get an education and to achieve. We believe that an answer to this question can be found by turning to the intellectual tradition of African Americans and asking about their dominant epistemological constructions. What epistemological constructions were powerful enough to motivate and sustain the development of a class of Black intellectuals, to sustain among the people the desire for school achievement? The epistemological tradition of "freedom for literacy and literacy for freedom" that has supported effort optimism among African Americans has also created a class of public intellectuals from the Reconstruction to the present. Whether literary or legal scholars, philosophers, educators, or historians, African Americans feel the need to speak out on the dominant issues affecting the democracy. In our age, we know them as bell hooks, Cornel West, Derrick Bell, Henry Louis Gates, Jim Anderson, Asa Hilliard, Patricia Williams, to name a few. We would hypothesize that the African American epistemology of schooling has motivated the emergence of a disproportionately high number of contemporary public intellectuals.

If our society is still characterized by particularly virulent racism against African Americans, by an ideology of Black intellectual and cultural inferiority, and by structured inequality (Essed, 1991; Benjamin, 1991; Scott, 1991; Ward, 1991; Edwards & Polite, 1992), could it be that the predominating epistemology of the pre-Civil-Rights era remains the only one with sufficient power to develop and sustain within a majority of African Americans the desire to achieve in school?

But to what extent, in our post-Civil-Rights society, have African Americans retained the epistemology of schooling for leadership and racial uplift? The answer is unclear. Empirical data, and limited anecdotal evidence (videotape interviews of African American middle school students produced by Michigan State University), suggest it is being seriously contested if not replaced by the notion of schooling as primarily for work (Ogbu, 1990). The African American intellectual tradition suggests that schooling for work is probably not sufficient to sustain, in the historically oppressed, the desire to achieve in school, even in our present society, where white supremacy and racism persist.

Popular Culture and the African American Epistemology of Knowledge

To define the historic relationship of African Americans to schooling as conflictual, as does Ogbu, is to miss an essential part of the story. Schooling and literacy were a context for the oppressor class, to confine African Americans to a certain status. Likewise they have been seen as a context in which African Americans can struggle to redefine their relationship to the larger society. Using Erickson's (1987) notion of legitimacy, school is not automatically accorded legitimacy in the Black community. It continues to be difficult for African Americans, whether children or adults, to separate "questions of literacy" from "questions of literacy for what?" -- to view school simply as an instructional site devoid of political or ideological significance. Afrocentric rap music is illustrative of this point.

School figures prominently as the object of critique in rap music, the "revolutionary literature of young Black urban America" (Perry, 1993, p. 262). From M.C. Lyte's "Human Education Against Lies," to Leaders of the New School's "Teachers Just Don't Teach," to KRS One's "We Must Learn," the message is clear: formal schooling has failed to provide African American youths with a knowledge of their African and African American past. African American youth are, therefore, responsible for educating themselves. While critiquing formal *schooling*, the Afrocentric rappers do not reject learning or formal *education*. In fact, education "as symbol" figures significantly in Afrocentric rap music, represented in the names of rappers such as Wise Intellect and Special Education, in the names of rap groups such as Poor Righteous Teachers, in the titles of songs such as "We Must Learn" and "Human Education Against Lies," and in the use of the classroom as a setting for the rap artist or as the context for an entire album. Afrocentricity as represented in rap music is "the process of actively learning and reading . . . in addition to the stylistic expressions. . . ." (Perry, 1993, p. 9).

While relatively confident about the power of African Americans' traditional epistemology of schooling, we wondered about its continuity in contemporary society. Certainly, in the free-lance intellectualism of Afrocentric rappers, the liberatory purposes of education persist, Malcolm X reigns as one of their central cultural heroes "who only through his experience of study was able to transcend his existence as a thief" (Malcolm X, 1987). Queen Latifah, one of the most famous women rappers, establishes her lineage in her video "Ladies First" when she flashes images of African American leaders such as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Ida B. Wells, women with carefully articulated conceptions of education for leadership, racial uplift, and liberation.

What may be more important is that Afrocentric rappers do not view school as a neutral terrain; they see it as eminently ideological, again, as an appropriate site to struggle for the democracy. As perhaps the only group of youth in America with an ongoing public voice, African American youth, via rap music, participate in and have

informed the Black community's response to the national debate about schooling and the democracy, the debate about what Americans "should know, read, and learn."

The Psychology of Achievement and the African American Epistemology

Several questions emerge from our discussion of the African American epistemology of schooling, the primary one being: "Is it possible or desirable for African American parents and students, given their individual and collective consciousness about schooling, to depoliticize school, to view it as neutral terrain, as simply an instructional site?" This question should push us, in our ethnography of how African American families and communities prepare young children for academic achievement, to go beyond behaviors, expectations, and attitudes, to focus on racial and political socialization, to examine the meaning attached to school by families and communities and their institutions -- to probe for an understanding of the psychology that sustains the desire to achieve in the historically oppressed.

Ogbu's Use of History and Social Context

Ogbu's reliance on history in his attempt to understand the school achievement of racial minorities, African Americans included, is neither careful nor nuanced. He attempts to understand the present by reading into the past, failing to distinguish important periods in the history of African American education, notably the pre and post Civil Rights eras. Certainly the meaning of schooling, and the dilemma of how to sustain the desire to achieve in a society where effort does not always pay off, are decidedly different in these two periods. Ogbu's failure to carefully read Chinese American history led him to discount the influence of important variables on Chinese American school achievement: the recent immigration law, educational background, and the post-Civil-Rights entry/immigration of significant numbers of Asian Americans. Similarly, his failure to understand the complexities of African Americans' educational and intellectual history led him to conclude that African Americans were not achievement oriented. He interprets the current ambivalence about school achievement among the African American families and children that he studies as part of their historic past. Further, Ogbu minimizes the impact of the social context of the school in his discussion of the dilemma of schooling and the lack of effort optimism. But how did children understand school achievement in the pre-Civil-Rights, historically African American school? How do they experience it now in a predominantly African American school? In a predominantly and historically White school? In a Northern community, in a Southern community?

The Dilemma of Schooling/Achievement for Castelike Minorities

Ogbu has to be given considerable credit for locating at the center of his theoretical framework what we have called "the dilemma of schooling for castelike minorities." In his early work it was clear that he took this dilemma to be fueled by African Americans' experience in the labor market, by their folk theory of

achievement, as well as by the school experiences of their children. In his later work, it appears that he de-emphasizes the role of the experiences of African American children in creating and enhancing the dilemma of schooling. In none of his writing does he deal head on with the power of ideology and its contemporary representation in the media (Dates & Barlow, 1990), especially the mainstream ideology of African American racial and cultural inferiority. He fails to acknowledge the African American child's day-to-day experience of racism in the larger society, in stores, restaurants, etc. (Essed, 1991), and how these experiences might also be implicated in a lack of effort optimism. He comes amazingly close to a culture-of-poverty stance. Foley (1991) has made a similar point. Even if education leads to a good job, even if African American parents communicate clearly to their children that education pays off, these experiences can be neutralized if children experience school as unfair and discriminatory. In other words, a child's belief in the power and importance of schooling and intellectual work can be interrupted by teachers who explicitly or subtly convey a disbelief in the child's ability for high academic achievement.

Further, Ogbu describes the dilemma of schooling exclusively in terms of African American racial identity and discrimination, ignoring cultural issues. He describes the oppositional culture of African American youth as secondary cultural features, primarily style rather than substance, developed only as a way of adapting and reacting to a history of discrimination. And even though Ogbu is quick to add that he does not want to reduce African American culture to a reaction to oppression, in fact he does. We agree with Boykin (1978) and others (Thompson, 1983; Boone, 1990) that the cultural identity of African Americans includes African retentions, elements developed in reaction and adaption to a history of discrimination and oppression in the United States and interaction with Euro-American society. This concept of cultural identity does not figure in Ogbu's discussion of the dilemma of schooling, or in his representation of African American culture.

This is precisely the aspect of the dilemma that James Baldwin (1985, p. 652) speaks of so poignantly when discussing the Martin Luther King School v. Ann Arbor School Board case.

In this case the plaintiffs, fourteen parents from the Green Road low-income housing project in the liberal college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan, initially alleged that their children were being discriminated against, disproportionately assigned to special needs classes because they were poor. Eventually this case evolved into a language case with the plaintiffs contending that their children were being stigmatized and thus denied equal educational opportunity because their language, Black English, functioned as a barrier to their full participation in the school (Perry, 1982). Commenting on the case, Baldwin (1985, p. 652) frames the dilemma of schooling for African American children, rooted in their membership in a group that faces racial discrimination and is also culturally different.

> The brutal truth is that the bulk of white people in America never had any interest in educating black people, except as this could serve white

> purposes. It is not the black child's language that is in question, it is not his language that is despised: it is his experience. A child cannot be taught by anyone who despises him, and a child cannot afford to be fooled. A child cannot be taught by anyone whose demand, essentially, is that the child repudiate his experience, and all that gives him sustenance, and enter a limbo in which he will no longer be black, and in which he knows he can never become white. Black people have lost too many black children in that way.

Clearly, Baldwin is speaking about the dilemma of schooling for African American children whose culture is neither valued or acknowledged in the school, and for whom full participation in school requires that they in some way separate from, and relinquish identification with, that culture. Perhaps more important, Baldwin is talking about the dilemma of schooling that results when "whiteness" as a social category has been institutionalized and constructed in opposition to one's political identity and imagined cultural identity (Du Bois, 1935 a and b; hooks, 1989; Roediger, 1991; Morrison, 1989 and 1992; Ignatiev, 1991). He is speaking about what happens when full participation in school requires that the child be culturally white.

African American intellectual tradition is replete with testimonies of individuals who have grappled with the dilemma of reconciling one's dual sociopolitical identities -- American and African American; member and outsider; citizen, but without the rights and privileges of full citizenship (Johnson, 1912; Wright, 1968; McClain, 1986; Benjamin, 1991; Edwards & Polite, 1992; Early, 1993). In Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois (1989, p. 5) speaks about "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Chester Pierce (1989, p. 296), a psychiatrist at the Harvard Medical School, talks about the balancing act required of African Americans who at the same moment are required to function as member and as outsider, as the subject and as object of racism. He queries,

> How and when do we accommodate to racism versus how and when do we resist racism? Our constant problem is when and how do we seek assimilation in the total society, versus when and how do we insist on separation from the total society? Our ongoing existential doubt is whether we are warmly welcomed or merely tolerated by the general community. The psychological resolution of these conflicts on either a group or individual basis claims an extraordinary amount of our time and effort. The nature of the resolution is framed always by racism's inhibitors that define the limits of hope, desire, probability and possibility.

In Benjamin's study of the racism experienced by 100 Black professionals, she (1991) finds that 93% "believe that double consciousness leads to identity confusion and inherent contradictions in the collective psyche of peoples of African descent" (p. 5). The narratives, of African American professionals who have experienced this double consciousness, suggest a powerful continuity with the perspective of Du Bois

(1989), so much so that one of her interviewees commented, "The thing that is so discouraging is that when I read Du Bois' writings published in 1898, I would still think it was 1989 if you didn't tell me the year it was written, and that's when you feel it's sad" (p. 4). Consider the following reflections on double consciousness taken from Benjamin's study:

Informant No. 1

It presents a divided loyalty of wanting to belong, to love one's country, and wanting to be proud of it, but always being somewhat a stranger about one's own experience here. It forces Blacks to chose between [being] Black or American and being forced to choose is destroying part of one's self.

Informant No. 2

When you think of your self as an American, America doesn't think of you as an American. That's the problem. Sometimes you are forced to go back to your blackness, because America won't let you be an American, even though that's the way I grew up thinking. I am going to be smart. I am going to school and make it in society. You get a lot of knocks on your head by Whites in society, reminding you after all you are Black. Everything that's for me isn't for you as a Black. That's the real problem -- a Catch-22.

Informant No. 3

I'll never forget that experience when I was in Brazil at an international festival for the arts, where they brought Black folks from seventeen different countries. And we were in the hotel and different people were talking about their countries. As things developed, a Nigerian said, "I love my country." A Cuban said, "I love my country." A Panamanian said, "I love my country." I couldn't say that, and I have been here all my life. I've accomplished and I've suffered, but I would be hesitant to say I love this country.

Informant No. 4

Not since my early impressionable elementary school stage have I really felt pride and patriotism. The rude awakening of the need to constantly struggle for constitutionally guaranteed rights leaves a very bitter taste and a permanent sense of alienation and insecurity. Blacks constantly face issues of racism at home. This reality is so draining . . . .

It is currently fashionable for intellectuals of different racial and cultural backgrounds to view the dilemma of being American and African American as a nonadaptive cultural construction. While some African Americans acknowledge the persistence of this dilemma, others see it as a "muddle of ideas that purport to explicate an alienation between national and racial identity, casting them as 'warring ideals'" (Crouch, 1993, p. 84). However, Laraine Morin (Morin et al., 1993, p. 42) grounds this dilemma in her "lived experience":

> In one of my graduate school courses there were twenty-four of us, all of us experienced teachers, most of us in our thirties. I was the only Black

person in the course, in fact the only one in the program. One day we did an exercise in which everyone had to point out on a map where their families had come from. I was the only one out of that group whose grandparents, all four of them, had been born in the U.S. I realized then that if anyone had roots in this country, it was me. I was "All-American," a claim that nobody else in the room could make. At the same time, we all knew who was the most marginalized, who would be viewed in most circumstances with the most suspicion, whose capability and competency would be most questioned.

The Psychology of Biculturality in Post Civil Rights Society

The need and desire to be bidialectical and bicultural has traditionally functioned as a "given" among African Americans and has been institutionalized in their schools and community institutions. According to Delpit (1993, pp. 288-289), African American professionals who attended historically black schools remember teachers who were unambivalent about their need to become bicultural, specifically to acquire fluency in the dominant discourse.

> Their teachers successfully taught . . . the "superficial features" of middle-class Discourse -- grammar, style, mechanics.... And the students successfully learned them. These teachers also successfully taught the more subtle aspects of dominant Discourse . . . that students be able to speak and write eloquently, maintain neatness, think carefully, exude character, and conduct themselves with decorum. They even found ways to mediate class difference by attending. . . to the hygiene of students who needed such attention -- washing faces, cutting fingernails and handing out deodorant. . . . All of these teachers were able to teach in classrooms the rules for dominant Discourses, allowing students to succeed in mainstream America who were not only born outside of the realms of power and status, but who had no access to status institutions. These teachers were not themselves a part of the power elite, not members of dominant Discourses. Yet they were able to provide the keys for their students' entry into the larger world, never knowing if the doors would ever swing open to allow them in.

Such clarity about the capacity and the need for biculturality might not necessarily function as a given in the culture and "lived experiences" of "desegregated" schools. But we would argue that clearly it should.

If we accept the historical work of Roediger (1991) that "whiteness" as cultural identity has been constructed precisely in opposition to Blackness as it is imagined, if we also accept Boykin's (1985) notion that those features associated with Blackness are devalued in mainstream society, it is important to explore the psychology of biculturality and its relationship to school achievement. What happens when the need

for and possibility of biculturality is neither assumed nor institutionalized? What happens when African American children's schooling experiences reinforce the oppositional character of African American and mainstream culture? What role can the community play in affirming the possibility and nonoppositional character of biculturality?

In my observations of adult-child interactions I have seen how language can be the locus for biculturality. Among African American mothers, I have observed attempts, sometimes with children as young as three, to standardize their syntax, if not their phonology. School can sometimes reinforce this pressure. During my regular visits home at Christmas, I found my five-year-old nephew, after only four months in kindergarten, busily correcting the speech of family members whose phonology differed from that of standard American English. He entered school with fluency in the syntax of standard American English and with the phonology and syntax of standard African American English. After just four months in his racially balanced school, he had acquired a fair amount of fluency in standard phonology, and now consistently corrected his mother. Demonstrating his newly acquired fluency became almost a game. If his mother said, "Close the doe," he would say, "no, d o o r." She would respond with, "Okay, Javier, close the door." At five he had acquired fluency in standard American English, and was experimenting with an understanding of its appropriate context.

Clearly, in his school in Birmingham, Alabama, the possibility of biculturality was a given. Although Javier's teachers were helping him to acquire the standard code, they had done so in a way that did not imply a rejection of his home culture. But it has always been acknowledged that the use of mainstream and/or African American English is contextual: one can be called "uppity" for using formal codes in nonformal settings, or castigated when nonformal codes intrude into formal settings (Murray, 1978).

We will close this section of our discussion by reiterating that Ogbu locates the dilemma of achievement for caste minorities at the center of his discussion about achievement for African Americans. However, he underconceptualizes this dilemma, framing it solely in terms of African Americans' identity as members of a group that faces racial discrimination. He ignores the dilemma that emerges for members of a group with a distinct culture in contradiction to which "whiteness" has been constructed as a social and political category.

Explanatory Power of the "Social Mobility" Theory

Ogbu's (1990) theoretical framework has significant explanatory power. It is able to explain and predict the school failure of castelike minorities and the success of immigrant minorities. It does not, however, explain or predict the achievement of individual caste-like minorities (Erickson, 1987, and Foley, 1991). Operating within Ogbu's conceptual framework, Foley (1991) provides evidence that the oppositional culture of Mexican Americans helps rather than hinders their school achievement.

A more serious critique of Ogbu's theoretical model (1981b) is that it is overdetermined, failing to acknowledge or speculate about "mediating or moderating" influences (Dornbusch, 1989) of context: family; school; community; geographic region; historical period; or personality and temperament. Ogbu's multilevel framework accounts for the domains of family, peer group, community, and the larger society, speculating about the nature of the relationship between the different environments. He does not, however, acknowledge the influence of variations within these domains, and how these variations might affect his conceptual model.

Empirical Evidence and the "Social Mobility" Theory

As Erickson (1987) notes, the empirical evidence used to support this theoretical framework is thin, and I would add, mixed. The work of Ogbu, Signithia Fordham (1986), and Mickelson & Smith (1989) support Ogbu's contention that the lack of effort optimism among African American youngsters resides in their belief that academic achievement is oppositional to their cultural identity. But what is the source of this belief? Has the peer culture of African American youngsters taught them that being successful in school is the equivalent of "acting white, being raceless"? (Fordham, 1986). Or has life in the school been construed such that adaptation to white mainstream culture functions as a prerequisite to skill acquisition? It is not clear whether the students' belief that they have to give up their culture in order to succeed in school is primarily an artifact of their local school or a generalized belief among African American students deriving from concrete experience. In my 1982 analysis of the Martin Luther King case, I argue that in our postintegration, allegedly open society, cultural adaption would function as a prerequisite for skill acquisition, that culture would play a central role in mediating inequality in postmodern society. This was certainly the case with the children from the Green Road housing development.

It is also important to note that theorizing and empirical evidence support the idea that African Americans experience the adolescent identity crisis primarily around issues related to racial identity and employment, rather than ideology and the sexual/interpersonal (Aries & Moorehead, 1989; Phinney, 1990). If indeed this is the case, and if the school requires children to adapt culturally before they can acquire skills, then participation in school and commitment to school achievement would become decidedly more problematic for Black adolescents, especially when the school is not perceived as a legitimate institution.

From Interrogation to Theory Building

At this point it is perhaps appropriate to ask about the insights we have gained in our search for a theory of African American school achievement, having analyzed Ogbu's conceptual framework. The insights are as follows:

1. A theory of African American school achievement should be capable of explaining and predicting success as well as failure.

2. The dilemma of schooling for castelike minorities should not seen as created primarily by either the labor market experiences of African Americans or singularly by an empirically constructed folk theory of achievement. There is an historically grounded African American epistemology of school which must be figured into the development of a theory of African American school achievement. The concrete experiences of African American children in school, in society, and in their functional communities should also be considered.

3. The proposed theoretical framework should have a way of acknowledging the mediating and moderating influences of school, community, region, and a child's individual life experiences.

4. The dilemma should be framed by considering the African American as a member of a group that faces racial discrimination, and as a member of a culturally distinct group as well as a putative member of mainstream society.

5. It should be acknowledged that the dilemma of schooling will almost certainly be experienced differently at different developmental stages.

6. The framework should allow empirical studies to refine, alter, or legitimate aspects of the theory.

Toward a Theory of School Achievement for African Americans

In our search for a theoretical perspective on the school achievement of African American children, the focus of our discussion has necessarily been explanatory models for disproportionate school failure. Having examined the models with the most currency, "cultural difference" and "social mobility," the question is what elements from these models can be used to move us, not toward another model for explaining school failure, but toward a theory for African American school achievement. How can we conceptualize the psychological tasks African American children face as they attempt to achieve in school? What are the extracognitive competencies African American children must possess, given their identity as African Americans, in order to succeed in school as presently construed?

The work of Boykin and Toms (1985) has proved to be central in forging an answer to these questions. An examination of the "cultural difference" and "social mobility" explanations led me to conclude that an explanatory model for understanding African American school achievement would have to conceptualize the dilemma of school for African Americans in terms of both their racial and cultural identities. I began to understand that the traditional "cultural difference" explanation for school failure relied on a simplistic, nonideological, and ahistorical understanding of African American culture (Baldwin, 1985; Du Bois, 1935b; Roediger, 1991; Morrison, 1992; hooks, et al., 1991; Prager, 1982).

Reading Boykin and Toms' work led me to an understanding of how to combine the two frameworks with a focus on achievement rather than failure. Drawing on revisionist studies of African American families which emphasize adaptive behaviors, Boykin and Toms discuss the socialization of African American children for adult status in American society. Acknowledging the overwhelming difficulty and complexity of this task, Boykin and Toms maintain that African American parents have to socialize their children for three distinct and often contradictory "realms of experience...mainstream, minority, and Black cultural experience" (pp. 38-39). From an adaptive and affirmative perspective, they effectively combine aspects of the "cultural difference" and "social mobility" explanations for school failure. As stated earlier, their focus is on negotiating different roles rather than membership in distinct communities. Drawing on my critique of the "social mobility" and "cultural difference" models, and using Boykin and Toms' socialization framework, I contend that in order for African American children to succeed in school, they have to negotiate membership in three different communities: membership in a race discriminated group; membership in mainstream society; and membership in a cultural group in opposition to which "whiteness" has been constructed. Membership in these groups is not inherently contradictory -- but often is. In arguing that black children have to negotiate membership in three communities, I am not suggesting that these are the only identities possessed by African American children or adults. African Americans have multiple identities. However, given the ideology of the larger society, the way "blackness" is constructed in the white imagination, and the socio-political realities of race, some identities are privileged over others. We can further assume that the racial identity one negotiates in school is gendered. Figuring out how to achieve as an African American male in school is a distinctly different dilemma than it is for an African American female. In other words, to assert that one has multiple identities is not to assert they are all equal. It is the social context which privileges some identities over others. More specifically, school is constructed in such a way as to privilege these identities (racial identity, mainstream identity, cultural identity) over others and sometimes put them in conflict with each other.

I agree with Ogbu that the dilemma of schooling must figure centrally in an explanatory model for African American school success, even though I would argue for a broader conceptualization of the experiences that fuel this dilemma. How does the African American child, as a member of a group that has experienced and continues to face racial discrimination, maintain the desire to achieve if effort is not justly rewarded?

As a member of an historically oppressed group, the child must negotiate the reality of race discrimination. That African American parents intuitively understand this is evidenced by the fact that two-thirds of African American parents report engaging in racial socialization (Bowman and Howard, 1985; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor and Allen, 1990) practices designed to help their children "manage in a world and community where racial prejudice and discrimination are likely to be aimed at them" (Billingsley, 1992, p. 223). As Ogbu notes, immigrant minorities also negotiate discrimination. However, I would argue that being African American

complicates this dilemma given the persistence of the ideology of African Americans' intellectual and cultural inferiority and the image of black in the white imagination.

How old the child is when she or he confronts the need for competency in negotiating his or her identity as a member of a race-discriminated group depends upon context: family; school; neighborhood; community; and geographic region. It is a good guess that the child's competency negotiating this aspect of his or her identity over time will significantly affect school success. African American children who receive explicit messages about their racial identity have a higher level of academic achievement (Taylor, et al., 1990). Further, two recent studies of successful African American adults, The Black Elite by Lois Benjamin (1991) and Children of the Dream by Audrey Edwards and Craig Polite (1992) establish a strong relationship between racial identity and achievement. Both books attempt to gain an understanding of the psychology of African American achievement. For Edwards and Polite (p. 249), successful African Americans "have the ability to manage the racial perceptions that others have of them. While achieving Blacks don't necessarily dwell on race, they fully understand that race colors nearly all of their interactions with others -- particularly with whites."

According to Benjamin, "The Talented One Hundred have chosen to `build around the limits' of racism. They exhibit a high level of self-efficacy. . . . While acknowledging that a racist system contributes to constraining opportunities and producing negative stress, they incorporate both self- and system- responsibility for overcoming barriers to opportunities" (pp. 204-205). In both studies the ability to negotiate racism is seen as critical to achieving. In neither is it linked to the notion of negotiating one's identity as a member of a group that faces racial discrimination. For Edwards and Polite, it is one of a list of competencies. For Benjamin (p. 21) it is central to the psychology of African Americans who have achieved. The comment of one of her study participants illustrates this centrality.

> I think southern Blacks tend to have a kind of resilience to racism. You are able to expect it, see it, and understand it in ways that people who have not grown up in this kind of environment may not be able to catch the signals as fast. Once you know it, feel it, and understand it, you do not get preoccupied with it. You move on . . . you put a shield over one eye saying I know this is my racism eye, and the other eye I am going to keep on the ball in terms of where I am going.

What happens when a child faces overt or covert discrimination in school, by being rendered invisible, not touched or responded to, given a lower grade, or disproportionately blamed for disruptions? How does the child make meaning of and interpret these events? Is the child being discriminated against because of a personal failing? Is the problem located in the child or in the system? And there is the problem of maintaining a balance. What happens if the child puts "too much blame" on the system? How does one keep the child working and believing that effort matters, and yet socialize him or her to correctly interpret instances when it doesn't? From Siu's

(1992) discussion, it would appear that Chinese Americans, whether consciously or unconsciously, resolve this dilemma by socializing the child to blame him or herself for failure. For African Americans this would not have been an adaptive psychology, given their 300-year history and memory of effort and hard work not recognized or rewarded.

Whether the child is able to negotiate his or her role as a member of a discriminated group, and how the child interprets discrimination, overt or subtle, will undoubtedly be a function of how racial identity is viewed by the child's family, functional and geographic communities, and school. The child's racial socialization will undoubtedly influence competence in negotiating dual identities as a member of a race-discriminated group and hopefully, as a member of mainstream society.

This issue of mainstream society, and one's position in it, is not inconsequential. Where and how will the child position him or herself? As a member, or on the margins? This issue is necessarily connected to the child's present and future level of participation, psychological investment, and effort. This positioning is almost certainly influenced by the same factors I've been stressing: the child's racial socialization in the family and the community, and the child's positionality and experience of racial discrimination in the school. As the child matures, it is reasonable to expect that societal messages about what it means to be African American will compete with those communicated by parents and community, and depending on the strength of family and community, these messages could affect positioning.

We have argued that before the Civil Rights era, the primary epistemology of schooling in African American communities was not one that linked schooling mainly to the job market, but rather to citizenship and leadership. However, we now exist in a post-Civil Rights society. At this historical moment the African American child's experience of schooling as a member of a race-discriminated group is possibly not only different but in all likelihood more complex. The autobiographical writings of Maya Angelou (1969), Cornel West (1991), bell hooks (1991), Malcolm X (1987), and James Comer (1988 a and b), all of whom grew up before the Civil Rights era in a variety of social and geographical settings, attest to the importance of Black institutions, the school and the church, in confirming them as intellectual beings. According to West and hooks, the church was where they read poetry, gave speeches, and in general were rewarded and reinforced for their efforts to become learned and articulate. In that period, both the Black church and the Black segregated school functioned as essentially counter-hegemonic institutions.

But what happens when large numbers of African American children in our era don't participate in institutions that make a conscious and institutional effort to affirm and validate them as intellectual beings and provide a reason for intellectual endeavor which is not primarily grounded in "preparation for work"? If we concede that the traditional African American epistemology linked schooling, racial uplift, citizenship and leadership, what happens when the single epistemology to which the African child is exposed links schooling only to the job market? What happens when the child has

no institutional experience that consistently provides an answer to the question, "Literacy for what?" What epistemology of schooling is transmitted by parents and community to African American children who do well in school? This is an empirical question worth pursuing.

The narratives of African American teachers (Scott, 1979) suggest that they seemed to have understood implicitly the crucial need to motivate. They were not responding so much to a closed job market -- although it was closed -- as to the larger problem of effort optimism for the historically oppressed. These teachers did not ask their students to come to school ready to learn. These teachers understood that to motivate students, or in the words of Jaime Escalante, "to give them ganos," was essential to their role. Thus it is not surprising that these teachers speak in their writings about using assemblies to motivate students.

In thinking about the African American child's experience of schooling, it is important to situate ourselves politically, to reflect on the family's role in racial socialization, and to reflect on those institutional and communal experiences that help the child develop "effort optimism" and competency in dealing with discrimination. If negotiating one's identity as a member of a race-discriminated group conflicts with membership in mainstream society, so does negotiating one's identity as a member of a culturally distinct group. Ogbu (1990) convincingly critiques the "cultural difference" explanation for school failure. However, as we have argued earlier, he underconceptualizes culture, too easily dismisses its role in school success and failure, and evaluates as equivalent political entities the cultures of voluntary and involuntary minorities. Earlier I argued that a revision of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital as applied to the American context would allow us to reinsert the political into discussions of cultural conflict.

Again, according to Bourdieu (1977, 1984), depending on their status in the larger society children come to school with varying degrees of cultural capital -- attitudes, dispositions, tastes, experiences -- that are valued by the school. Further, schools automatically afford advantages to those with cultural capital, and disadvantages to those with little or none. Revising Bourdieu's notion, I maintain that within our "postintegration" society, a subset of what are essentially "dispositions and styles" function in school as prerequisites to skill acquisition. Cultural differences therefore do not automatically disadvantage racial minorities, whether immigrant or castelike, but the possession of a small subset of desirable cultural features seems to be a sine qua non for participation in schools that are construed as mainstream institutions.

Additionally, if you accept the notion of "whiteness" (Ignatiev, 1991; Morrison, 1992; Baldwin, 1985; Du Bois, 1935 a and b) as a social, cultural, and political category constructed in opposition to "Blackness" as it is imagined, the cultural features associated with "Blackness" carry a different salience. This is clearly what Boykin (1978) is getting at when, drawing on the work of Prager (1982), he argues that African American children have to negotiate a cultural identity that is not

only different but also oppositional. Here it is important to remember that Boykin is not using oppositional in the same way as Willis (1981) and Ogbu (1990): he is not talking about the resistance culture of youth; rather he is maintaining that mainstream culture is construed as oppositional to black culture. According to Prager (1982, pp. 188-119),

> it is not the mere fact that Blacks hold a dual identity in this country that has constrained achievement; to one degree or another every ethnic and racial group has faced a similar challenge. The Black experience in America is distinguished by the fact that the qualities attributed to Blackness are in opposition to the qualities rewarded in society. The specific features of Blackness as cultural imagery, are almost by definition, those qualities which the dominant society has attempted to deny in itself. For Blacks then, the effort to reconcile into one personality images that are diametrically opposed, poses an extraordinarily difficult challenge.

Boykin (1985, p. 43) outlines some important areas of opposition:

> Euro Americans find it easy to view spirituality as "voodoo," and superstitious, communalism as dependency, a movement of rhythmic orientation as hyperactivity, expressive individualism as being unsystematic and showing off, or see an affective orientation as immature, irrational, and too emotional. Such characteristics are ones that African Americans may habitually possess, implicitly value, feel comfortable with and yet overtly deny in themselves, if not denounce, particularly if their orientation is towards succeeding in mainstream society.

We assume that the modal African American child comes to school with varying degrees of fluency in mainstream and African American culture, influenced by the degree of fluency of these cultures in the home and the community. This assumption seems reasonable even if the child resides in a racially isolated community, given the impact of media on the lives of children. African American culture is not intrinsically problematic; whether possessed singularly or in combination with mainstream culture. It is problematic only because of what it represents to white America. It is problematic to the extent that it calls forth in the American mind those images that limit a teacher's ability to hold high expectations, to teach, and to assess the African American child as capable and ready to learn.

What are the conditions in a school that can make it problematic for the African American child who comes with varying degrees of biculturality? One issue is the level of cultural capital the child will need to access life in the school. There are two questions here: Does the school require a certain level of cultural capital as a prerequisite to participation? And, does the child have fluency at the level required? For the African American child the issue is not simply the amount of cultural capital required by the school, but also fluency in those dispositions that allow the child to be

evaluated as teachable, ready to learn; the ability to be reserved, to subordinate emotions and affections to reason, to constrain physical activity, to present a disciplined exterior. What complicates the picture even further is that these modes of behavior all reside in the domain of participation, with the possibility that altering behavior and affect in these areas could possibly constrain participation and investment in school.

It is possible for a school to be construed as mainstream and still not set culture up as a prerequisite to participation. The Southern Black Catholic mission school is a case in point. The schools had clearly defined notions about the behavior and values children would be socialized to adopt, and thus simultaneously pursued goals of both socialization and instruction. I believe that the capacity for a school to pursue these goals simultaneously is influenced by the school's legitimacy in the eyes of those it purports to serve.

The temptation is to assume that the presence of a dominant number of African American students in a school ensures that the cultural capital will not be an issue. This could very well be the case in an urban, predominantly African American school population, where the amount of cultural capital the students possess and the amount the school requires are nearly equivalent. Moreover, some schools may abandon the goal of helping their students acquire fluency in the dominant culture. In this environment, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the major variable is the student's fluency in these cultural features.

To limit our discussion to levels of fluency in mainstream and African American culture, however, is to ignore a critical variable involved in the African American child's attempt to negotiate dual identities as a member of mainstream society and as an individual with an African American cultural identity. To what extent is the possibility of biculturality assumed, ritualized, and institutionalized in the child's environment and experiences? Is it assumed that the child can, will, and needs to acquire fluency both in mainstream and African American culture? Is it understood that not only are these two cultures not oppositional but also that they can be integrated into the one self?

In this discussion we have explored the dynamics involved in the African American child's attempt to negotiate dual -- mainstream and African American -- identities. This discussion has proceeded in a sociopolitical landscape where the social category of "whiteness" stands in opposition not only to the socio-political reality, but perhaps more important, as a cultural category in opposition to "Blackness."

Summary and Implications

This paper was written in preparation for our ethnographic study of the ways that African American families and communities prepare children to succeed in school. At the beginning I observed that discussions about an appropriate explanatory model

for African American school achievement have disproportionately focused on school failure. I evaluated this approach as ahistorical and counter-intuitive, maintaining that the educationally useful and historically grounded question was "Given the historical experiences and individual and collective consciousness of African Americans, how can we explain the school achievement of African American children?" To ask the question in a different way, "What are the extracognitive competencies required of African American children who succeed in school?"

This paper has evolved into a search for a theoretical perspective for thinking about the school achievement of African American children. I began with a critique of two explanatory models for African American school failure: the "cultural difference" and "social mobility" questions. In my critique of the "cultural difference" theory, I agreed with those who have pointed to the failure of school ethnographers to systematically connect micro studies of cultural practices to the macro forces around us. Moving beyond traditional critiques, and relying on historical and contemporary theories of culture, I attempted to allow a more historically grounded and sophisticated understanding of the sociopolitical significance of African American culture to inform my critique and recasting of a "cultural difference" theory, one capable of being used to explain and predict school success as well as failure. Perhaps the most powerful idea that has informed my critique and recasting of the "cultural difference" theory is that within the cultural difference framework, the cultures of various racial minorities are incorrectly viewed as equivalent. Drawing on the work of Baldwin, Du Bois, Morrison, Roediger, Ignatiev, Boykin & Toms, and hooks, I argue that "whiteness" as a political and cultural category has been constructed in opposition to "Blackness." And as such, the cultural features associated with "Blackness" carry a different salience, in school, as well as in the larger society. In the case of school, I have argued that a narrow subset of features associated with "Blackness," in opposition to which "whiteness" has been constructed, often functions in schools conceived of as "white institutions," and that these features have become the sine qua non for school success.

In critiquing Ogbu's "social mobility" theory, I joined others in noting its overdetermined character, its inability to explain school success, and the thin and contradictory empirical evidence used to support the theory. I applaud Ogbu for situating "effort optimism" at the center of his discussion of the school achievement of historically oppressed minorities, while critiquing him for underestimating the influence of everyday racism, in school and in society, in reducing the level of effort optimism. Moving beyond observables and focusing on motives and intentions, Ogbu asks whether, given the historical experiences and individual and collective consciousness of African Americans, the rationale proposed for schooling (i.e., schooling for work) is powerful enough to motivate school achievement.

We have asked another question: "What was the traditional African American epistemology of schooling, one that had sufficient power to motivate African Americans in a society and at a time where education invariably did not produce commensurate material rewards?" In asking this question we have affirmed the

centrality of effort optimism in the psychology of African American achievement. Our investigation has suggested that from slavery until the Civil Rights era the dominant African American epistemology of schooling was linked to leadership, citizenship, racial uplift and freedom. Further, within the African American tradition, school has almost never been viewed as neutral terrain, but rather as an appropriate place to struggle for a redefinition of African Americans' social and political position in society.

Embedded in this epistemological construction are possibilities and problems: it is a powerful motivator for education in an unequal society, and a demotivator when and if school is evaluated as nonliberatory. In turning our attention to the traditional African American epistemology of school, the philosophy of schooling passed on to children and the practices in families, community, and school that consciously and/or unconsciously address effort optimism for the historically oppressed become important.

Drawing on our critique of the "cultural difference" and "social mobility" theories and the work of Boykin and Toms, I contend that in order for the African American child to negotiate school as presently construed he or she has to develop competency in negotiating his or her identity as a member of three groups: a racially discriminated group, a distinct cultural group "whose culture is not only different but oppositional" (Prager, 1982), and mainstream society. Further, these distinct identities can often be in conflict with each other. In this paper, I have explored some of the circumstances, experiences, and environments that mediate the child's ability to negotiate these three identities.

Finally, what are the implications of this discussion for the ethnographic study we are about to undertake, for researchers, for families and their communities, and for schools? We will attempt to get at the sense that the parents in our ethnographic study make of their racial world. We will do this by attending to several issues: The role that racism plays in their lives; their understandings of what they as African Americans have to do in order to make it in this society; the racial socialization of their children; why school achievement is important; and how these understandings and meanings structure their home and community lives and are communicated to their children.

Further, for researchers in general, this discussion suggests that research on schooling and African American children should pay more attention to achievement rather than failure, to the affective and cognitive competencies of the African American child who achieves in school. These studies should be ecological and psychological, paying serious attention to macro forces and the individual and collective consciousness. If the proposed framework has legitimacy, then research that explores the relationship of racial socialization to school achievement would seem to be in order. School ethnography aimed at understanding the forces that affect the school lives of African American children should consider the nature and source of the epistemology of schooling transmitted to those children who succeed.

If this discussion has legitimacy, it follows that African American families and their communities should shore up and create institutional and communal experiences and rituals that consciously motivate and provide a rationale for schooling broader than the job market. We suggest a re-energizing of the traditional African American epistemology of schooling, one that links schooling to citizenship, leadership, freedom and racial uplift.

In this era, well after the Civil Rights movement, biculturality still does not function as a given in some situations. Thus it is important for families, community agencies, and institutions to structure experiences where African American children experience biculturality as necessary, possible, and normative.

Our many conversations with parents and teachers who engage in antiracist practices suggest that even at the most progressive schools, African American children at a very early age can recall and discuss experiences of racism at school. As I have suggested in this paper, in order to achieve in school, African American children have to develop competency in negotiating their dual identities as members of a racially discriminated group and as members of mainstream society. If they are to do so, they need the help of African American parents. Further, African American parents must be willing to make explicit, discuss, and share their knowledge with school people about helping their children develop these competencies at different developmental periods.

We cannot underestimate the implications of this discussion for schools and educators. Schools should be willing to seek assistance in identifying subtle and unconscious racist practices in the classroom. Opportunities should be available for African American parents to talk with teachers about the racist and unfair treatment of their children in school, acknowledging that these practices are often unintentional. Stated negatively, the culture of the school should be examined to assess whether cultural adaptation is functioning as a requirement for both skill acquisition and for the full participation that is a prerequisite for acquiring skills; if it is, this could indicate a situation where the child has little choice but to reject achievement. Affirmatively, school personnel should be willing to discuss the relationship of curriculum content and staffing patterns to racial identity development and ultimately to achievement. From a utopian perspective, schools should strive to see themselves, as John Dewey conceptualized them, as laboratories for democracy. And if the society we want is a democracy predicated on a diversity of racial and ethnic origins, we believe that we have no choice but to reconstrue our schools as multicultural democracies. Within this conception of school, cultural codes are not seen as oppositional, and acquiring fluency in many different cultural codes is a goal eminently worthy of pursuit.

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