

(THE SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT  
OF  
MINORITY CHILDREN)  
NEW PERSPECTIVES

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*With appreciative thanks to all the  
Cornell "cognitive breakfasters" whose ideas and  
arguments helped to make this book possible.*



LAWRENCE ERLBAUM ASSOCIATES, PUBLISHERS  
1986 Hillsdale, New Jersey London

WILLIAM MADISON RANDALL LIBRARY UNC AT WILMINGTON

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## 3 The Triple Quandary and the Schooling of Afro-American Children

A. Wade Boykin

There is serious concern about the educational plight of those children who do not enjoy mainstream status in the American social system. The academic performance of minority children remains a persistent, troubling, and seemingly intractable national problem. Although recently released reports (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1982) give some cause for guarded optimism, significant alleviation of the problem continues to elude us (Boykin, 1983; Ogbu, 1978). Poor performance relative to mainstream children and a high incidence of school dropout are still the rule rather than the exception for these children, despite two decades of national concern. We must ask why there has been so little progress toward solving this problem, in spite of the apparent best of intentions and the commitment of very considerable resources. The question is particularly crucial today, at a time of declining political interest in minority affairs. Minority children no longer enjoy national attention, but their educational problems persist.

I believe that the problem continues because we have not adequately analyzed its causes. In particular, it is we as *psychologists* who have failed to ask the right kinds of questions. Although my own disciplinary training is in psychology, I have concluded that the situation of minority children in the schools cannot be understood in terms of the scholarly traditions of our field alone. Psychology may offer important insights, but only after we have overcome the arbitrary boundaries that divide it from other disciplines. In particular, we must consider issues of social structure and culture that have usually been defined as beyond the scope of psychology itself. Incorporation of such factors into our explanatory frameworks can take us a long way toward a proper understanding of the dilemmas faced by these children.

Consider the title of the present volume: "The School Achievement of Minority Children." Such a title, as well-intentioned as it may be, is crucially limited in scope. First, the problems that face "minority children" in American schools are not limited to the domain of academic achievement. Low "achievement" is not the only cause for concern; indeed, it may be just a symptom of more profound difficulties. Even if we could miraculously eliminate the performance gap between Euro-American and Afro-American children, other dilemmas would remain. The real issue is the process of schooling itself, as it is embedded within the postindustrial capitalist society of the United States. The individualistic, self-actional (as opposed to interactional), and noncontextual explanations typically offered by psychologists are simply inadequate to the task at hand. Schooling in America represents a form of social domination, or *hegemony*. The structure of society itself plays an overarching role in determining the nature of the schooling process. That process supports the existing social order in many ways: for example, it performs the critical function of socialization throughout most of the years of childhood (Carnoy, 1974; Parsons, 1959; Silverstein & Krate, 1975).

There is a second reason to question the title of this book. The apparently innocuous term "minority" tends to suggest that all the targeted groups are in essentially the same situation, that all of them are disenfranchised from the larger society in much the same way. It takes no account of the cultural integrity of different groups in American society. The separate identities of those groups must inform the way we think about the problems of childhood and schooling. Psychology has not adequately met its responsibility to deal with questions of culture (Cole & Scribner, 1974; Jones, 1983; Sampson, 1978). This chapter considers those questions in some detail, but its focus is restricted to Afro-American issues; limitations of space make it impractical to describe the distinct character of more than one cultural group. The Afro-American frame of reference is chosen because it has proven difficult to specify in the past, and some observers do not even acknowledge that it exists. Moreover, the school problems of Afro-American children have historically been the most visible and the most intractable of those of any minority group. Nevertheless, I hope that it may be possible to extend the form of the present analysis to other groups at a later time.

The first half of this chapter attempts to describe the psychological situation of Afro-Americans. After a brief discussion of the now-discredited "cultural deficit" approach, an analysis of the concept of *Black culture* is presented. That concept is important, but taken alone it does not give an adequate account of the psychological experience of Black Americans. It is supplemented here by the notions of *biculturalism* and *cultural patterning*, and by the special hypothesis that black culture is in almost dialectical opposition to the culture of mainstream America. It further is suggested here that Black Americans must negotiate simultaneously in three realms of experi-

ence: the mainstream, the African-rooted Black culture, and the status of an oppressed minority. That is, they face a triple quandary. Their position is further complicated by the prevailing hegemony of the Euro-American ethos, which makes it difficult even to consider alternative ways of structuring experience.

The second part of the chapter deals with the socialization and education of Black children. We consider the inevitable conflicts faced by children who must learn to negotiate in the three realms of experience, and the strategies that they adopt to deal with those conflicts. We examine the children's school experience, the ways in which coping strategies are expressed in school settings, and their effects on the learning process. The ideological functions of schooling in the prevailing hegemony of Euro-American values are also considered. Finally we suggest some alternative modes of education that may be more compatible with the realities of a pluralistic America, and some directions for research that might contribute to a better understanding of the issues involved.

## THE AFRO-AMERICAN SITUATION

### The Deficiency Approach

From the beginning of social science to about 1930, the dominant doctrine in matters of race and culture was social Darwinism (Hofstadter, 1955; Loye, 1971). Among other things, that doctrine placed Black people on a lower point on the evolutionary scale and thus implied that their culture was biologically inferior to that of White people. Against such a backdrop, the view that there are no inherent racial differences—that the deficiencies of Black people are environmentally based—appeared very progressive. This position, identified with the liberal tradition, has been dominant since the 1930s (Ginsburg, 1972; Valentine, 1968). It reached its zenith in the 1960s, when the idea that blacks were at a cultural disadvantage became the intellectual basis for the social intervention programs of the "Great Society" era (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). The academic difficulties of Afro-American children were attributed to an environmental deficiency of some kind: if that deficiency could somehow be counteracted, Blacks and Whites would function in fundamentally the same ways and the Afro-American academic problem would disappear.

From this perspective, Black children were seen as growing up in a web of social pathology and inadequate life experiences. The attitudes and behaviors produced by those experiences might enable the children to cope with their immediate environment, but left them unprepared to handle even the minimum requirements of the larger world around them (Deutsch, 1963;

Hunt, 1973; Marans & Lourie, 1967; Proshansky & Newton, 1973; Rainwater, 1966). Afro-American academic difficulties were typically explained in terms of the student's own inadequacies and problems. If Black children do badly in school, we must discover what is the matter with them: they may have maladaptive reactions to adversity or inadequate socialization experiences, especially in the home. This position is well expressed by Rollins, McCandless, Thompson, and Brassell (1974): "For inner city children, school failures often occur early, since they typically enter school poorly prepared to handle both the standard public school curriculum and the middle-class format of the classroom" (p. 167). Because these children are poorly equipped, they fail. That early failure becomes a continuing pattern; such children are said to be ". . . forever behind, confused, and as a consequence probably lose all interest in undertaking new academic tasks. As a result, inner city classrooms are filled with unhappy restless children who are relatively uninvolved in academic work and often are highly disruptive" (p. 167).

The modal intervention strategy in response to these problems was some form of remediation. "Culturally disadvantaged" and "learning disordered" are functionally similar labels (Feshbach & Adelman, 1974). Hence, the prevailing tendency was to devise ways of altering the cognitive, personality, and motivational dispositions of Afro-American children in order to exact from them competent task/test performance.

In recent years, this line of explanation has been sharply criticized. Critics argue that it does not really define the problem and that its concepts do not hold up under scrutiny; that it does not account for enough of the variance; and that it has not substantially altered academic performance (Allen, 1978; Bradley & Bradley, 1977; Caplan & Nelson, 1973; Labov, 1970; Ogbu, 1978; Ryan, 1971). Most important for our present purposes, the "deficiency" approach really does little except to find fault with Afro-Americans and their life experiences; it does not illuminate the real cultural basis of their orientation to academic settings and tasks (Gay, 1975; Hale, 1980, 1982). Despite these indictments, the model of "deficiency" and remediation still has many adherents. It cannot be expected to wither away under the heat of criticism, because — as we see in a later section — it is consistent with the underlying ideology of mainstream American society.

### On Black Culture

The "deficiency" approach assumes that so-called deprived children come from a group with no cultural integrity of its own. That assumption must be rejected. Because the Afro-American experience is not widely understood, and because failure to recognize the integrity of Afro-American culture is a basic weakness of currently dominant views (Jones, 1983), it is useful to mention some aspects of that experience here. Many of these aspects have been

described before, especially by scholars who emphasize its roots in traditional West-African culture (Akbar, 1976; Banks, 1976; Dixon, 1976; Gutman, 1976; Jones, 1979; Levine, 1977; Smitherman, 1977; Wilson, 1972; Young, 1970). Analysis of their descriptions suggests the existence of at least nine interrelated dimensions of Black culture (Boykin, 1983): (a) *spirituality*, an approach to life as being essentially vitalistic rather than mechanistic, with the conviction that non-material forces influence people's everyday lives; (b) *harmony*, the notion that one's fate is interrelated with other elements in the scheme of things, so that humankind and nature are harmonically conjoined; (c) *movement*, an emphasis on the interweaving of movement, rhythm, percussiveness, music, and dance, which are taken as central to psychological health; (d) *verve*, a propensity for relatively high levels of stimulation, to action that is energetic and lively; (e) *affect*, an emphasis on emotions and feelings, together with a special sensitivity to emotional cues and a tendency to be emotionally expressive; (f) *communalism*, a commitment to social connectedness which includes an awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privileges; (g) *expressive individualism*, the cultivation of a distinctive personality and a proclivity for spontaneous, genuine personal expression; (h) *oral tradition*, a preference for oral/aural modes of communication in which both speaking and listening are treated as performances and in which oral virtuosity — the ability to use alliterative, metaphorically colorful, graphic forms of spoken language — is emphasized and cultivated; and (i) *social time perspective*, an orientation in which time is treated as passing through a social space rather than a material one, in which time can be recurring, personal, and phenomenological.

There should be little doubt about the existence of these cultural manifestations in the lives of Afro-Americans. Some have argued that they reflect the existence of an entirely autonomous and intact Black culture that effectively insulates Afro-Americans from the mainstream of American society (Baratz & Baratz, 1970; Hannertz, 1969; Henderson & Washington, 1975; Miller, 1973; Stewart, 1970; Williams, 1974). This "cultural difference" view has been valuable in restoring a balance, correcting the notion that the fabric of Afro-American experience is weakly or incoherently organized. However, the cultural difference view may lack wisdom in certain respects. It underestimates the diversity and heterogeneity of Afro-Americans (Blackwell, 1975; Valentine, 1971), presenting instead a stereotypical portrait based primarily on the Black northern urban male experience (Akbar, 1982; G. Jackson, 1979). In fact, important regional differences in personality expression among Afro-Americans have been identified (Shade, 1978). In addition, statements of the cultural difference view often overemphasize the putative strengths of black people and ignore the possibility that the culture may have maladaptive features. Such exercises in psychological glorification are unrealistic (Allen, 1978; West, 1978).

Most important, the cultural difference position fails to acknowledge the commitments that Afro-Americans have made to mainstream American society. In Nobles' (1976) phrase, they may be of African root but they are of American fruit. The goals and values of child-rearing in Black families are much like those of the American middle-class ideal (Billingsley, 1969; Gottlieb, 1967; Kamii & Radin, 1967; Lewis, 1970), with a strong occupational and educational orientation (Hill, 1972; Moos & Moos, 1976). Black students have educational and vocational aspirations as high or higher as their white counterparts (Massey, Scott, & Dornbush, 1975; Milgram, Shore, Riedel, & Malasky, 1970; Picou, 1973; Simmons, 1979), and black teenagers hope to have life styles like those of the middle class (Gottlieb, 1967). Black parents have similar goals for their children. Those parents may approve of children using Black English at home and in the community, but they prefer the use of standard American English in school and at work (Hoover, 1978).

These facts imply that a wider conceptual framework is needed if we are to capture the richness and coherence of the Afro-American experience, and especially if we are to understand the schooling of Afro-American children. My own view is also based on the premise that there is a social-cultural integrity — not a disadvantage or a deficit — that informs the psychological lives of Black people. Yet this framework (Boykin, 1983) must also contrast with the cultural difference view in some respects, even while incorporating many insights from that position. For example, it must acknowledge that Black parents typically want their children to function successfully in mainstream America, even while they retain many traditional African propensities in their psychological transactions. The Afro-American experience is fundamentally bicultural.

### Biculturalism

Biculturalism is a way of life for all distinct social groups in America, but it is manifest for Afro-Americans in a special way. We have the burden of trying to fuse two cultural traditions that are sharply at odds: non-commensurable, if you will. Prager (1982) puts it this way:

It is not the mere fact that blacks hold a dual identity which 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 by 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, and it is the difference between blackness and whiteness that defines, in many respects, American cultural self-understanding. For blacks, then, the effort to reconcile into one personality images which are diametrically opposed poses an extraordinarily difficult challenge. To succeed in America

raises the risk of being told — either by whites or by blacks — that one is not 'really black.' No other group in America has been so acutely confronted with this dilemma, for no other group has been simultaneously so systematically ostracized while remaining so culturally significant (p. 111).

Prager's remarks provide a new vantage point for understanding one of the most important and often-quoted passages ever penned: "One ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Dubois, 1903, p. 17).

Given the prevailing doctrine that all groups in our society should ultimately become like Euro-Americans, it has been easy to see Afro-Americans as deficient deviations from the social ideal. Psychoculturally speaking, Black people in their "deficient" state are needed to provide living testimony of the cultural sanctity of being Euro-American: "Things may be tough for me, but thank God at least I'm not black."

To characterize Afro-Americans as culturally different from Euro-Americans is not graphic enough. To the extent that the Black experience reflects a traditional West African cultural ethos, the two frames of reference are *noncommensurable*. There are fundamental incompatibilities between them; they are not quite polar opposites, but they are almost dialectically related. The African perspective emphasizes spiritualism, whereas the Euro-American one emphasizes materialism. The former stresses harmony with nature; the latter stresses mastery over nature. The first relies on organic metaphors, the second on mechanistic ones. An orientation toward expressive movement contrasts with a compressive orientation toward impulse control. One culture emphasizes interconnectedness, whereas the other puts a premium on separateness; one values affect, and the other places reason above all else. An event orientation toward time contrasts with a clock orientation; and an orally-based culture, with one based on print. In African culture there is an interplay between expressive individualism and communalism, so that possessions belong to the community at large, and uniqueness is valued. Euro-American culture juxtaposes possessive individualism and an egalitarian conformity: private property is an inalienable right, and sameness is valued. The former has a person-to-person emphasis, with a personal orientation toward objects; the second has a person-to-object emphasis, with an impersonal (objective) orientation toward people (Boykin, 1983; Dixon, 1976; Dubois, 1972; Furby, 1979; Israel, 1979; Silverstein & Krate, 1975).

This incommensurability makes it difficult to put black cultural reality in the service of attainment in Euro-American cultural institutions, such as schools. The ideology that informs those institutions is a profound negation of the most central attributes of African culture. Other American social groups do not experience the same degree of conflict. The Asian frame of ref-

erence is distinct from both the European and the African, but the integration of the Asian cultural ethos into the Euro-American can be accomplished more readily (Caudill, 1952; Devos, 1982; Kitano, 1969). For example, the Japanese emphasize a self-cultivation that enables them to "more perfectly discharge obligations" toward family and society; that emphasis is distinct from, yet fairly compatible with, the effort-optimism of the Puritan work ethic (Dubois, 1972).

### Cultural Patterning

The cultural distinctiveness of Euro- and Afro-Americans is not a question of who has what and who doesn't. It is overly simplistic to say that White people are "this" way and Black people are "that" way. People perform behaviors for many reasons, and any given activity may have several "causes." Similar behaviors may be informed by divergent values, or divergent behaviors by converging reasons. (We must also remember that there are wide differences among individual Euro-Americans, as there are among Afro-Americans.) It is a mistake to consider only the surface characteristics of behavior and/or to seek singular causes. We must venture to understand cultural deep structure: it is the ordering, patterning, and meaning of a given complex of behaviors that undergird cultural distinctiveness, and not just the presence or absence of various traits (Gay & Abrahams, 1973). As Dixon (1976) has stated, instead of taking an either/or approach to distinctiveness, we should understand cultural expression as a function of weightings across the "expanse of potential cultural attributes."

In essence, culture implies that which is cultivated. It is not a matter of what is absolutely present or absolutely absent: certain behaviors may be found among all groupings of people. We may even find that a given behavioral style appears in several different cultural groups and takes almost equivalent forms. In order to apprehend a given group's cultural ethos, it is essential to look at the total pattern of behavioral attributes, the contexts of their expression, and the underlying matrix of factors that inform them. Water ( $H_2O$ ) and hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ) contain identical elements, but their physical properties are very different because the elements are present in different proportions. Table salt and hydrochloric acid are utterly unlike each other, although both have the same proportion of chlorine, because the chlorine is combined with a different element in each case.

By analogy, consider the role that "affect" may play in various cultures. The question is not whether the "affective element" is present or absent; no cultural group is devoid of affective expression. But groups differ in the emphasis placed on affect or in how it should (ideally) be integrated with reason, or in how it is expressed stylistically. Affect may be salient in cultures other than the African, but it is unlikely to combine in the same way with orality or

social time perspective or the rhythmic and percussive qualities of movement. Thus the integration of affect into the total cultural complexes will be different, and the reasons for its emphasis will diverge as well. The affective styles of two cultures can differ fundamentally even if they exhibit comparable amounts of laughter or "strong emotional expression"; they thus deceive the superficial observer into thinking that they are equivalent.

This principle is the basis of Nobles' (1976) "transubstantive error." If we give to, say, Chicanos and Afro-Americans a unidimensional assessment scale that was generated out of a Euro-American framework, we may find that they are equally displaced from the "ideal" end of the continuum. We then run the risk of treating them as culturally identical, when in fact they are fundamentally divergent. Our assessment device is not sensitive enough to discern the difference. The groups are just equally non-Euro-American on the construct that is measured by the device. Suppose, for example, that Afro-Americans and Chicanos both score further from the "reflective" end of a reflectivity/impulsivity scale than do Euro-Americans. It would be highly misleading to assert that Afro-Americans and Chicanos are impulsive, for their behaviors may be affirmations of quite different cultural ideals. Indeed, it is a fundamental mistake to suppose that "impulsive" (or "field-dependent," or "external in locus of control," etc.) are culturally relevant labels for Afro-Americans or Chicanos at all.

We have only begun to describe the biculturality of Afro-Americans. In particular, it is inappropriate to suppose that Afro-Americans possess two fully intact cultural systems. Given the ravages of racism and the historical discontinuities with the African past, it is obvious that American Blacks do not have an intact and untransformed African ethos. (Indeed, owing to the intrusion of colonialism, many present-day African systems are discontinuous with that ethos as well.) Yet, given the outgroup status of Afro-Americans, it is just as obvious that we have not wholly embraced or mastered Euro-American ideals either. In addition, racial and economic oppression have had their own impacts on the behavioral "grammar" of Afro-Americans. A more cogent way of capturing the richness and integrity of the Afro-American experience is needed.

### The Triple Quandary

One way to capture the richness and integrity of the Afro-American experience is to cast it in terms of the interplay among three realms of experiential negotiation: the mainstream experience, the minority experience, and the Black cultural experience (Cole, 1970; Jones, 1979). Mainstream forces are the most pervasive, and all members of the society have contact with the mainstream realm of negotiation. Young (1974) has observed:



Participation in standard American culture is characteristic of [Blacks] of all social classes, rural and urban. [Blacks] participate in work systems, judicial systems, consumption systems, bureaucratic systems both as clients and employees. They share values transmitted by general American institutions and by the mass media. (p. 406)

That participation, however, is tempered by concomitant negotiation through the minority and Black cultural realms. As we see shortly, it is also tempered by the hegemony of Euro-American values in every aspect of mainstream culture, a hegemony that defines all other values as essentially illegitimate.

The minority experience is based on exposure to social, economic, and political oppression. For Black people, this oppression is linked to race, but other groups as well have minority status, and not necessarily for racial reasons. That status produces adaptive and compensatory reactions, social perspectives, and defensive postures that help one to cope with the predicament created by the oppressive forces. This creates a minority experience that is shared, to some extent, by all oppressed people in this society. Nevertheless, each group also develops a unique set of adaptive reactions, based on the unique attributes that have made them a target of oppression. In particular, the dialectical cultural relationship between Euro- and Afro-Americans leads to a distinct Afro-American response.

Finally, Afro-Americans participate in a Black cultural experience that is rooted in a traditional African ethos. Some aspects of that culture have already been mentioned, and others are described below. The Afro-American's psychological repertoire is not merely expedient or defensive (see Blauner, 1970), and it does not just represent an inadequate imitation of White people. It is a culturally indigenous basis from which Afro-Americans interpret and negotiate social reality.

The conflicts created by these three realms of negotiation create a triple quandary for Afro-Americans. They are incompletely socialized to the Euro-American cultural system; they are victimized by racial and economic oppression; they participate in a culture that is sharply at odds with mainstream ideology. A similar position has been stated by the anthropologist/sociologist DeVos (1982):

True, the individual within a minority group is interacting basically with his own group, but such minority ethnic enclaves are seldom independent cultures that are totally free from alternative considerations. What one has to assess, therefore, is the relative degree and in what manner values originating in the dominant society penetrate a given subgroup. Second, adaptation is influenced by how the socialization pattern of any given group coincides or comes in conflict with that of the dominant society. Third, one must consider how this conflict is resolved both adjustively in certain defense mechanisms and adaptively in manifest behavior. (p. 103)

## Hegemony

The mainstream and the minority do not simply exist side by side: one of them has hegemony over the other. According to Apple (1979), hegemony "leads to and comes from unequal economic and cultural control". The term refers to "an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central effective and dominant system of meaning, values and actions which are *lived*," which constitute one's "ordinary understanding of man and his world," and are tantamount to one's "sense of reality" (p. 5). It embodies the expectations of the way people do things, the way people behave, the significant moments, traditions, and practices. It has to do with what is taken for granted. Hegemony is a difficult concept to pin down because it is essentially inseparable from the air around us. To understand hegemony, one must challenge the very aspects of society that generally go unchallenged (Wirth, 1936).

The principal vehicle of hegemony is ideology. An ideology consists of the creeds, opinions, and ways of thinking of a particular class or group. It is necessarily biased by the interests of that class or group (Persell, 1977; Schwebel, 1975). Those interests can be either *structural*—concerned with the distribution of power, wealth, and status—or *cultural*—concerned with the patterning of values, life styles, behavioral reactions, and beliefs. The ideology of the prevailing group in a given society necessarily serves to perpetuate the status quo. In America, it necessarily supports the existing unequal distribution of wealth and power in the society and the prevailing cultural ethos.

The intellectuals produced in a hegemonic system typically fail to understand that the status bestowed upon them is linked in a zero-sum relationship to the oppression of other groups. They uncritically accept certain "ideological categories" (Apple, 1979), such as value-free, dispassionate science or the abstraction and absoluteness of the individual; they rarely realize that their status depends on that acceptance. They do not comprehend that they are being rewarded for embracing those categories, for legitimizing the way the system operates. The approach they take to their responsibilities shields them from questioning the social system from which they themselves have profited. Thus educators, and for that matter educational researchers, can all too easily become personal agents of hegemony in spite of the best of intentions.

In American society, the prevailing ideology is based on the Euro-American frame of reference described earlier. It stresses acquisitive individualism—one's identity is based on what one acquires and possesses—and egalitarian conformity. It defines truth as objective empirical facts, neutrally derived through the elimination of the knower's standpoint from the knowledge gained (Boykin, 1983; Dubois, 1972; Israel, 1979). The system of things is mechanistically conceived and is to be understood on a materialistic basis. Humankind's mastery over nature is emphasized and is consistent with mastery over putatively less endowed peoples. Effort is valued for effort's

sake (effort optimism), and the cognitive takes precedence over the affective. The confluence of these considerations leads further to a brand of egalitarianism that sees equality, sameness, and uniformity as virtually synonymous; to a penchant for seeking universal laws and principles that are applicable to all individuals or groups; and to a premium's being placed on human perfectability (DuBois, 1972; Sampson, 1978).

The upshot is an approach to human diversity construed in terms of differing levels of competence. If individuals or groups are different, they are seen as less or greater than some reference group or reference point (Valentine, 1971). Those who differ from Euro-American cultural ideals are easily seen as inferior along a single linear dimension of human perfectibility. Either they are unable to (conservative doctrine) or haven't had the opportunity to (liberal doctrine) achieve the desired similarity—to embrace White middle-class beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior. The achievement of that similarity (melting into the pot) is understood to be the responsibility of the "deviant" individuals themselves (Sampson, 1977); they must acquire some "commodity" that they do not yet possess.

The prevailing cultural ideology sees social homogenization as a natural goal because it treats deviations from the cultural ideal as deficiencies and imperfections. In turn, the existence of those deviations provides support for the ideology itself: it becomes a convenient rationalization for the unequal distribution of wealth and status. It has been suggested that the maintenance of this structural sorting function is one of the major responsibilities of the American school system (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy, 1974; Persell, 1977). By sorting people according to their acquisition of skills and their behavioral repertoires, the educational system processes youth for the eventual assignment of status in the adult society. Such a sorting process might be considered just and fair if it were being conducted in a racially and culturally homogeneous society. America, however, is fundamentally pluralistic, so that the sorting out of "deviants" usually occurs along racial and cultural lines. Afro-Americans are often the most prominent examples of the problems and persecutions thus created.

The hegemony of mainstream American culture is strengthened by an insensitivity to the culturally bounded nature of the rules and measures themselves. The emphasis on universalism and mastery has resulted not only in a posture of cultural imperialism, but in a paradoxical denial of the importance of culture itself. As Khan (1982) put it:

. . . characteristic of . . . Western cultures of dominance are the twin notions that culture is dispensable and that it is detachable. First, culture is not seen to have any power in its own right. For many, it is an esoteric misguided system of beliefs and/or quaint behaviour held by others. This is the notion that "They have culture; we have civilization," or "We base our action on rational behavior; they have irrational beliefs." Following from this, "If they become

Westernized/English-assimilated, they will become civilized/rational beings." Therefore culture is dispensable, serving no useful functions. It only serves to mystify or to maintain conservative tradition. Second, there is the notion that culture is detachable from the social and economic system in which it has its reality. In these perspectives culture is taken out of context and three important relationships are ignored: between meaning and action, between the social system and its economic base, and between the individual and collective representations transmitted through cultural institutions and practices across generations. (p. 205)

This view is surely what Jones (1972) had in mind when he introduced the concept of *cultural racism*, defined as "the attitude characterized by ethnocentrism, coupled with the power to make normative one's ethnocentric values" (p. 173). For Jones this form of racism is more pervasive, more fundamental, and less well understood than either of the more "established" forms of racism, i.e. individual and institutional. When these attitudes get played out in actual behavioral transactions or have consequences for certain victimized groups, cultural racism becomes transformed into oppression. Freire (1973) calls it *cultural invasion*:

. . . the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their view of the world upon those whom they invade, and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression . . . it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the position of the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes. (pp. 150-151)

As we come to understand the workings of hegemony, we should recognize that racist individuals are not needed to maintain the system. It doesn't require malevolent people or malevolent intentions. Indeed, agents of hegemony can just as easily carry out their roles with the very best and sincerest of intentions. They need not even be Euro-Americans: surely many of the hegemonic agents that affect the lives of Black children are themselves Afro-Americans who may be taken as role models by the children. (See Rist, 1970, for an illuminating example.) Some of those agents may embrace hegemonic ideologies very tenaciously, trying to out-do White people in an attempt to diminish their own perceived marginality or to gain the perceived fruits of American society. At the very least, their reward for embracing those ideals will be to be told occasionally that they are not like the others of their race: they are "special" and act "better."

The all-encompassing, saturating character of hegemony makes it difficult to detect its presence, let alone struggle to diminish its influence or provide viable alternatives. A prevailing cultural ideology that espouses the acontextualization of the individual, promotes value neutrality, and denies that it is



either cultural or ideological makes it very difficult to formulate alternatives. A perspective that emphasizes the democratization of equality, human perfectibility, and the human being's right to mastery can pride itself on being morally correct while simultaneously imposing its will on others in the name of amelioration. If other systems are consciously considered at all, they can readily be dismissed as morally inferior. Hegemony is a self-reinforcing phenomenon that aids and abets the continuation of things as they are. In spite of the recent attention given to the amelioration of inequitable conditions in society at large (and especially in educational settings), the general direction of change in America has not been in the direction of those avowed goals. The gap between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and the powerless, is increasing rather than decreasing (Apple, 1979; Carnoy & Shearer, 1980). The gains made by Afro-Americans, women, and other disenfranchised groups have atrophied, if they have not been reversed. The distributions of health, nutrition, and education remain sharply unequal, and attempts to make such goods more widely available are becoming very unpopular politically. Hegemony is surely at the root of this "ameliorative stagnation": the social order naturally generates and reproduces inequality.

### THE SOCIALIZATION AND EDUCATION OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN

#### Socialization and Black Cultural Styles

The triple quandary has a far-reaching impact on the socialization of Afro-American children. Socialization into the American mainstream is culturally at odds with the imperatives of coping with a racially hostile society and also with negotiating in the proximal Black cultural context (which, as we have seen, is dialectically related to the mainstream itself). For this reason, inculcation of the values of the dominant order cannot be pervasive: other social-cultural influences will interfere. Rewards for being "properly" socialized into the wider society may not really be expected, and there will be a competing commitment to prepare individuals to be cynical, skeptical, and on guard. Even if Afro-American parents try to socialize their children primarily in terms of the ideals and values of mainstream American society, they are bound to encounter difficulties. Their facility with that socialization process, their commitment to it, and the resources they can devote to it are usually limited. Despite wide variation across households and neighborhoods, mainstream cultural ideals will be less pervasive and the corresponding behavioral repertoire less entrenched in Afro-American children than in their Euro-American counterparts. (See Staples, 1976, for a similar argument.)

The socialization of Black children is also affected by the aspects of their culture that arise out of the traditional African ethos. However, given the discontinuities with the African past as well as the long-standing influence of Euro-American values, it would be a mistake to suppose that they acquire a wholly intact African cultural scheme. I suggest that the African influence is effective in a more tacit way, by the conditioning of Black *cultural styles*. By cultural style, I mean a habitual, nonreflective pattern of behavior—an enduring and cross-situational motif rather than a conscious set of values. The relation between such a style and more explicit cultural values may take several forms.

Every cultural system has a broad set of beliefs that address universal concerns about the nature of the cosmos and humankind's relation to it, as well as about people's relations to one another (Dubois, 1972). Those beliefs become manifest in core cultural values that specify preferences, interests, and goals (Dixon, 1976; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), and these in turn may lead to the cultural styles I have described. In an intact monocultural framework like that of extant Euro-Americans, there is typically a hierarchical relationship among beliefs, values and styles (Young, 1974). Although no precise one-to-one relation may exist, there is likely to be a consistent correspondence between basic beliefs, articulated values, and stylistic manifestations. However, there is another possibility. Styles do not have to grow out of belief systems and values directly. They can also be conditioned within a child's familial rearing experience, without articulation of any corresponding worldview or values. Such is likely to be the case for Afro-Americans.

The African-based motifs of Afro-Americans are manifested in spite of the fact that Blacks are embedded in a Euro-American social reality. I contend that they largely reflect a tacit understanding of the beliefs and values that inform them, rather than an active articulation of those beliefs and values. There may be some instances where an explicit statement of the underlying values and beliefs is made, but even then their African origin will seldom be understood, and it is unlikely that they would represent a fully elaborated, coherently interwoven traditional ethos. Thus many Afro-Americans experience a kind of bifurcation: their explicit beliefs and values are shaped primarily by the dominant society; their habitual patterns of action and feeling come more from proxemic participation in family and community settings. This can happen because stylistic patterns are molded earlier in the socialization process than beliefs and values. The latter require greater awareness on the part of the developing child and are put systematically in place only when the child begins to interact with the socialization agents of the larger society (e.g., schools and school personnel). Those agents soon complement or supersede any earlier family-based attempts to teach mainstream values; they also counter whatever efforts may have been made to teach alternative values based (ultimately) on an African ethos.

It is crucial to distinguish between *tacit* and *elaborated* cultural styles. Tacit styles are forged implicitly out of the fabric of one's proxemic socialization experiences. Elaborated styles are inculcated under the explicit guidance of social beliefs and values, and typically result from the top-to-bottom elaboration of a homogeneous cultural ethos. (Tacit styles may eventually be linked to explicit expression, but that expression will not be fully articulated within a systematic cultural framework.) Black cultural motifs can exist alongside espoused Euro-American values because they were formed by a largely tacit cultural conditioning process. They flow out of the sights, sounds, rhythms, and life styles that are present in the proxemic environment of Black children. It can be persuasively argued that such styles are rooted in Africanity.

These culturally conditioned stylistic tendencies are difficult to put in the service of the goals of the dominant society. The attempt to do so is often maladaptive, because of the noncommensurate relationship between Black and Euro-American cultural ideals. The two stances are essentially incompatible. This may explain why low-income black parents who hold middle-class-like goals for their children so often fail to persuade the children to adhere to middle-class patterns of behavior (Kamii & Radin, 1967; Lewis, 1970). These parents may be providing their children with mixed socialization messages. One message is overt, verbal, and yet inconsistent; the other is tacit, behaviorally based, and more consistently reinforced in the child's immediate ecological environment. It is not difficult to conceive that the Black cultural conditioning process may take precedence during a child's formative years (Lewis, 1975). A more detailed elaboration of that process and of how it provides for the preservation of Black cultural motifs has been presented elsewhere (Boykin, 1983).

### Coping Strategies

These socialization conditions must also be understood in terms of the oppressive conditions under which Afro-Americans must live. It is difficult enough to negotiate between two dialectically opposed cultural systems. That difficulty is compounded by the effects of racial discrimination: the truncated opportunity structure open to Black Americans, which Ogbu (this volume) describes as a "job ceiling"; the low expectations for success via conventional and institutional routes. Indeed, those who bring up children in Black communities are in a perplexing situation. They may understand and even accept the goals of the Euro-American socialization process and value the benefits that accompany success in the existing social order, but they are fully aware that really accomplishing those ends is more apparent than real. The resulting ambivalence is part of the socialization message picked up by the next generation.

At the same time, parents and siblings and others in the immediate environment are modeling various strategies for coping with the oppression the children will surely face. Most coping styles conform to one or the other of two patterns, two alternative adaptive reactions to oppression. One of these is essentially a form of mental colonization, in which hegemony has become fully effective. In this pattern Black people do not seriously entertain any possibilities other than the existing situation, and essentially come to accept their lot. This leads to the adoption of one or more passive coping strategies. For example, Blacks may strive to out-white White people and get what Harrell (1979) calls "a piece of the action"; in trying to get their "fair share" of the American pie, they forego consideration of the inherent oppressiveness of the system itself. Another possibility is to assume subservient or "Uncle Tomming" postures in order to withstand at least the harshest manifestations of racial oppression (Ogbu, 1978). In this mode, Black people may come to identify with the oppressor and promote the "rightness of whiteness," even at the expense of the integrity of the Afro-American experience (Friere, 1973; Memmi, 1965). These postures of black self-hatred may not be widely prevalent (Baldwin, 1979; Banks, 1976), but Black communities have not escaped them entirely.

Passive coping strategies may take other forms as well. In the "survivalist" strategy, for example, one turns on one's own community without regard for others, adopting a "dog eat dog" philosophy simply in order to survive. Another possible attitude is passive resignation and acceptance of life as it is, trying not to get involved. Such apathy often leads to what is commonly known as a "welfare mentality," but it may have adaptive cardio-vascular consequences (Harrell, 1981).

Not all Black people who are victimized by oppression adopt passive coping styles. More active strategies arise out of resistance to oppression. One of these is dissembling (Williams, 1980), in which individuals conceal their true feelings and provide a pretense to the outside world of oppression. This is often done to camouflage small-scale subversive acts against the victimizers. Similarly, individuals may go along with the status quo while developing a cynical and hypercritical posture toward society and their own place in it. In the "get-over" strategy, they recognize that Black success in American society requires playing a kind of game; they strive to outfox the power brokers and credentialing agents, typically through cunning, expedience, and trickery, in order to gain the stamps of approval that signify success. A very different strategy is to resist oppression by defying the system, to be consistently against anything that "whiteness" stands for. One can adopt a survivalist strategy from this perspective as well, turning aggressive techniques outward toward the dominant society. Finally, some believe that oppression is best resisted by embracing a distinct system of values, such as the black nationalist movement (Harrell, 1979), that can serve an essentially insulating function.

This list is not exhaustive, and the strategies delineated here could be elaborated much further. Moreover, any one individual may use a mixture of several coping styles. The important point is that some such set of psycho-behavioral reactions and attitudes is required of everyone who occupies a minority status in this society. These forms of adaptation may help one to negotiate through harsh and oppressive realities, but they do not necessarily promote adaptiveness within the "proper" channels of mainstream America.

The triple quandary presents Afro-Americans with three realms that must be socially negotiated: mainstream American, Black cultural, and oppressed minority. These three domains require three distinct, largely nonoverlapping psychological and behavioral repertoires. Given the inherent limitations of time and space, it is apparent that being truly effective in any one realm will diminish effectiveness in the others. The three realms operate at cross-purposes in quite possibly a zero-sum game.

### Negotiating in the Three Realms of Experience

Afro-Americans must try to integrate three divergent psychological realities at once: mainstream, minority, and Black cultural. Given this triple burden, it is small wonder that traditional conceptual models conceived with the Euro-American in mind are ill equipped to describe the Afro-American psychological experience. The negotiational demands placed on Euro-Americans are much simpler. The three realms of mainstream, majority, and Euro-American cultural are essentially isomorphic, so their psychological/behavioral repertoires are more convergent and their demands can be more easily integrated. Thus, they provide for a more focused or concentrated codification of reality.

The contrasting negotiational schemes are illustrated in Figs. 3.1 and 3.2. The diagram of the triple quandary in Fig. 3.1 depicts the three realms as functioning almost independently of each other. Their only contact is through certain coping strategies: some passive strategies that derive from mental colonization are connected to the mainstream (e.g., "a piece of the action"), and some active strategies are related to Black culture (e.g., identification with Black nationalist movements). Figure 3.2 shows, on the other hand, that mainstream experience in America is tantamount to the Euro-American cultural experience; both are equivalent to the majority mentality itself.

The single arrow impinging on the individual in Fig. 3.2 is an attempt to depict the convergence of the three realms of Euro-American social negotiation. It shows why Euro-Americans have a highly focused codification of reality, to the point where they become oblivious to other honorable negotiational possibilities. Note that although, technically, the cultural system is organized from top to bottom (broad world views result in particular values

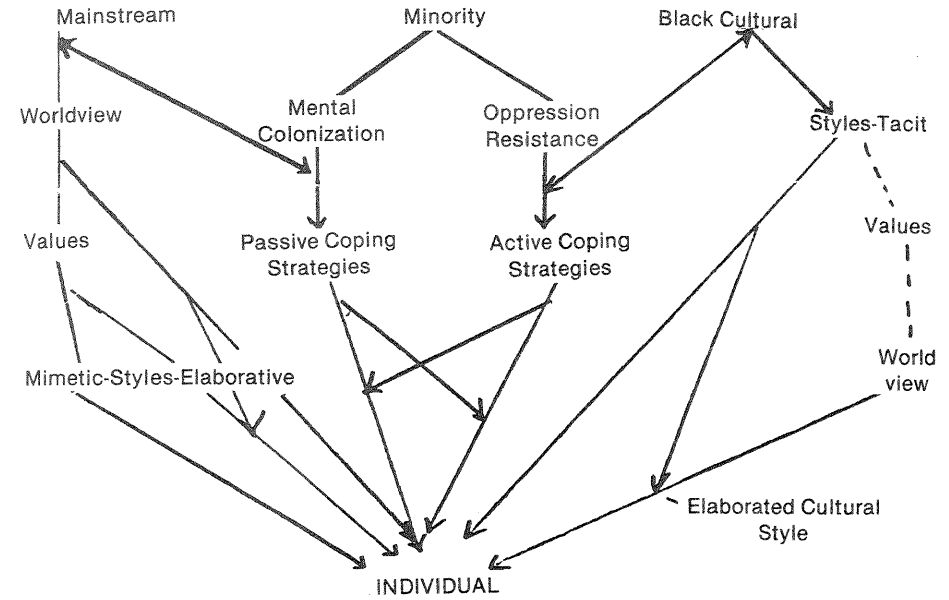


FIG. 3.1 Afro-American Negotiational Scheme.

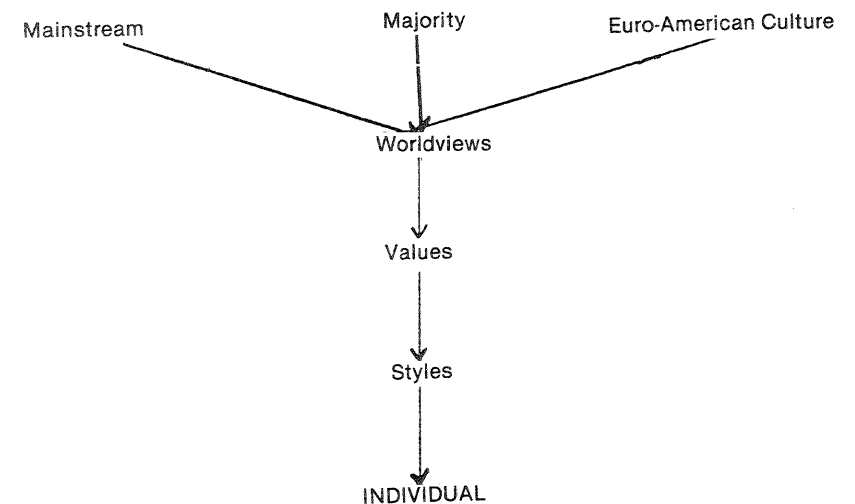


FIG. 3.2 Euro-American Negotiational Scheme.

that give rise to specific styles), it is acquired in the opposite direction. The Euro-American child learns the cultural styles first, as all children do. But, in the Euro-American case, these styles easily hook up later on with the corresponding values and beliefs, especially as the child begins to encounter formal schooling. The schools make the coupling process easy, because they espouse those beliefs and values themselves.

The situation of the Afro-American child is very different. The multiple arrows impinging on the individual in Fig. 3.1 show the complex combinations of experience that can characterize the socialization of any given Afro-American. These make themselves felt in particular ways during the educational process. Let us consider the implications of the triple quandary for the Afro-American school experience, with due consideration of hegemony and the social function of schooling itself.

### The Afro-American School Experience

As children mature, their behavioral styles, values, and belief systems become more stable. During the period when the young child's initial repertoire of styles is becoming stabilized, the sphere of primary socialization influence is the home and the immediate community. When that sphere enlarges to include social institutions such as the school, the child becomes increasingly attuned to the values that are promoted by those institutions. As mentioned previously, this process is relatively straightforward for Euro-American children because the institution just extrapolates from styles previously learned. The situation is very different for Afro-American children because the school requires them to acquire values and beliefs that are incongruent with the cultural styles they have learned at home. Thus it has often been suggested that a kind of mismatch or clash of cultures occurs when Black children enter school.

Such a conclusion has some merit, but it is too simplistic. It does not do justice to the interactional dynamics of the process of schooling or to the complexity of the Afro-American experience as depicted in this chapter. It implies that, because Black children are culturally Black, they cannot do well in Euro-American cultural settings. As we shall see, this would be a serious misrepresentation.

To understand the situation better, we must take into account four distinct planes of interaction between the child and the school: what children *do* or *do not do*, what they *can* or *can not do*, what they *will* or *will not do*, and what they *should* or *should not do*. Although these ways of construing the interaction are logically separate, most analyses have failed to distinguish between them. It is easy to see why. In a culturally homogeneous population, what children actually do in an academic setting is based on what they can do and will do, and on what they understand that they should do. Similarly, what

they don't do follows from what they should not, will not, and cannot do. Because White middle-class children participate in a relatively homogeneous cultural experience, they are likely to do what they can, will, and should do. Moreover, what the children themselves believe they should do is likely to be consistent with what their teachers believe: there is a congruence of value and belief. Separating questions of *will* and *should* from *can* is hardly necessary in such a context. In the case of Afro-American children, however, these distinctions become important.

What a child *does* or *does not* do is essentially the question of academic performance. It is what Black children do not do in school that created the need for the present volume. The issue of what a child *can* do, in contrast, is one of cognitive competence. In its strong form it implies maturational constraints or structural limitations on ability; in a weaker form it refers to what a child cannot do at present but could do in the future if conditions were favorable. *Will* refers to the child's motivation, reflecting issues of interest, preference, choice, persistence, and the effects of reward and punishment. The question of what a child *should* do reflects the values and beliefs that are brought to bear on his or her situation.

Given the bias toward cognitive interpretations in the Euro-American cultural ethos, *can* becomes the paramount question in analyzing the educational affairs of mainstream children. The mesh between competence and performance is the central concern (McClelland, 1971). When the typical Euro-American child does not perform, one tries to determine what he or she cannot do. It is usually taken for granted that the child wants to do well; issues of *will* and *should* are not seen as essential. These cultural blinders may explain why many analysts interpret the idea of a cultural mismatch as bearing only on competence, on what children *can not* do. Such assumptions are entirely inappropriate for children who begin with a different cultural style and encounter institutional contexts hostile to their well being.

Relations among the four planes of interaction are by no means straightforward for Afro-American children. When Black children don't do, there is no necessary implication that they cannot do (although this is possible). We must go beyond the *can/cannot* question to issues of *will* and *should*, i.e., to motives, beliefs, and values. It is more difficult to master three agendas simultaneously than it is to master one. Given the experiential complexity of the Black experience, there must be considerable confusion over the values and behaviors appropriate to academic settings. Then, too, it would be naive to expect value congruency between teachers and Black children. The academic dilemma of Afro-Americans must be understood in terms of the interrelations of cognitive, motivational, and value-belief considerations.

When they enter school, Black children naturally tend to apply the cultural and stylistic repertoire with which they are already familiar. This application is likely to have discouraging consequences. The child's "way of doing things"

is often dishonored in the school setting, and a different set of styles is imposed—one that is different and unfamiliar and even “ungrammatical” from the child’s point of view. It is reasonable to expect that children will be reluctant to give up the only way they know of interacting with the world and will resist having an alien set of styles imposed upon them. This situation can surely affect the child’s *will* to learn. Black children are told to act in a certain way because it is consistent with certain values and beliefs, but those values, often contemptuously thrust upon the children, are not extrapolations from their accustomed cultural repertoire. The child often will resist the demands being made and may view the accompanying values with suspicion or contempt. These circumstances can work against the children’s deciding that they *should* learn the material that is being presented.

Young children do not readily separate how people act from how they feel. Children who see that a teacher does not like what they do will quickly conclude that the teacher does not like them personally, does not honor them as individuals. If the teacher is simultaneously trying to impose an alternative set of values and beliefs that are incompatible with the child’s own views, it will be especially hard for the child to put his or her own learning styles in the service of the school’s requirements. There will probably be an adverse effect on interest, persistence, and attention to the academic activities promoted by the teacher. All of this is a tacit process. It goes on unreflectively, outside of awareness; even bringing it to the child’s attention may be of little use.

From the Black child’s standpoint, how might these inconsistencies be resolved? One method may be for the children to persist or increase their adherence to Black cultural behavior patterns, in spite of the teacher’s efforts to get them to do otherwise. Such a tactic might act as a shield against attempts to undermine or dishonor them. Consider the work of Piestrup (1973). She found that greater incidence of Black dialect usage in the first grade was associated with the very teaching styles that attempted to minimize and undermine such usage. Yet, in settings where a “Black Artful” teaching style was used, i.e. where Black and mainstream dialect switching was not discouraged and at times was even encouraged, use of Black dialect was relatively lower.

### Coping Strategies in School

Children who come to see the teacher as an oppressor may deliberately resist doing what the teacher thinks they should do. Such children may protect their own integrity by engaging in some of the coping styles discussed earlier. They may dissemble, for example, giving outer cues suggestive of cooperation while they are really trying to undermine the teacher’s efforts whenever they can. They may also respond by “getting over,” treating school as a big game of teacher against student. Because the teachers do not seem to have their real interests at heart, the children do not take the school’s instructional agenda as

their own. This subverts the learning process and replaces it with other goals that are to be attained through cunning or trickery. Children may even become contemptuous, cynical, and alienated from the school.

Children who come to view the educational context as hostile to their own interests and as undermining their integrity may (a) decide that what they *should* do is not what the teacher thinks should be done; (b) act in such a way that they *will not* do what the teacher wants, and (c) display what they *can* do in ways that are not in accordance with what the teacher prescribes. What such a child does in the academic setting is quite coherent and understandable, although perhaps not to the teacher. The child’s actions may represent an internally consistent resolution of what can, will, and should be done in an oppressive setting.

The teacher’s point of view is typically different. Teachers are likely to see the behavior of Black children as ungrammatical at best, inferior at worst. Because of the cultural blinders they often wear, teachers are usually oblivious to the possibility that other values may be competing with the ones they wish to inculcate. They tend to interpret the children’s unsatisfactory performance in either of two ways. Some teachers conclude that the children fail primarily because they are unsocialized—that they just have wrong behaviors and bad attitudes. Such teachers concentrate on altering the inappropriate behaviors and trying to instill the correct ones. Other teachers retain their focus on the *can’t do* problem and concentrate their efforts on trying to eradicate it, oblivious to cultural inconsistencies at the *will* and *should* levels. Such an attribute may contribute further to the cultural and negotiational impasse between teacher and students. In the end, both postures tend to exacerbate the problem, because they create situations in which behavioral control and discipline become elevated over all other pedagogical responsibilities.

As discipline and control come to occupy more classroom time, teaching time is proportionately reduced. Because it is axiomatic that amount of learning is directly proportional to time spent teaching, this means that the children now learn less than they did before. This intensifies the problem, so more social control is soon needed; teaching time is reduced still further as the cycle feeds on itself. Thus even actions that teachers undertake with the best of intentions may boomerang and end by solidifying negative attitudes toward students, creating an entrenched pessimism about their ability to learn. What keeps such teachers from becoming totally discouraged is the intermittent reinforcement they may receive from the occasional “successful” students, who likely abandon their cultural integrity and conform to the teacher’s dictates. When the teacher holds such children up as ideals to the rest of the classroom, the impasse deepens.

Who are the children who “succeed” in this way? In many cases, they are those who have adopted a very different coping strategy. Schools can and do function as agents of hegemony in this society. Black children may succumb



to that hegemony, and adopt passive coping strategies that are symptomatic of a mentally colonized state. They may deal with oppression by accepting the images presented to them by the institutions; they fall into line at the expense of retaining any esteem for the Black cultural ethos. They may deride the social time perspective as "CP time," or come to see an affective orientation as being "too emotional." They may view communalism as dependency, lack of commitment to academic material as laziness, and expressive individualism as "showing off". They may deride an orientation to rhythmic movement by saying that niggers just like to sing and dance. In this form of identification with the oppressor, the ways of Black folks are seen as inferior while the ways of White folks are actively embraced. These students, who often are among the most successful academically (Silverstein & Krute, 1975), try to shed their Black cultural background as fully as possible so they can conform to the Euro-American can-will-should solution.

Of course, the academically successful child is not always intellectually colonized. Similarly, it should not be assumed that if academically unsuccessful children are alienated, they have escaped the influence of hegemony. It is conceivable that the educationally-at-risk Black child who becomes alienated in the academic setting may simultaneously be paying homage to the value system that undergirds American society and the school itself. Although those values may be viewed with suspicion, they so saturate the world to which the child is becoming attuned that they are almost inescapable. Indeed, there is considerable latitude for diversity of expression within the triple quandary.

### Functions of Schooling

Our earlier discussions of hegemony implied that schools are multi-functional institutions. Not only do they operate to impart cognitive skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, they also serve a broader socialization function. As Parsons (1959) put it: "The school class can be treated as an agency of socialization. That is to say, it is an agency through which individual personalities are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles. (pp. 297-298)

Indeed as far as Parsons was concerned, from kindergarten through the high school years, school is the "focal socialization agent" in shaping the lives and destinies of America's children. He goes on to say:

The socialization function may be summed up as the development in individuals of the commitments and capacities which are essential prerequisites of their future role-performance. Commitments may be broken down in turn into two components: commitment to the implementation of the broad *values* of society and commitment to the performance of a specific type of role within the *struc-*

*ture* of society. . . . Capacities can also be broken down into two components, the first being competence or the skill to perform the tasks involved in the individual roles and the second being "role responsibility" or the capacity to live up to other people's expectation of the interpersonal behavior appropriate to these roles. (p. 298)

From Parsons we glean four distinct functions that are served by the schools. The first is training in cognitive skills, as conventional wisdom suggests. But those skills are imparted within a particular social and ideological context, and the fabric of that context is apparent in the other three functions: training in an appropriate behavioral repertoire, training in an appropriate commitment to the existing social order, and training in the appropriate system of values.

The particular behavioral repertoire deemed appropriate for schools in America is difficult to reconcile with Black cultural styles. The school's expectation is close to what Sampson (1977) calls "self-contained individualism." One is supposed to be intrapsychically self-sufficient, to behave rationally rather than emotionally, to be field independent, to display impulse control and movement compression, to have high need for achievement and delay of gratification. These characteristics are just the familiar aspects of the Euro-American ethos, but the workings of hegemony make them appear to be inevitable characteristics of education.

The schools meet their commitment to train for the existing social order in a curious way: they simultaneously homogenize their students and differentiate among them. School socializes as it stratifies. Once the children have been properly standardized, they can be evaluated on a single continuum. This seems to create a "fair" process for discerning differential talent and ultimately for creating the different stamps of educational approval that are assigned to individuals to regulate their entry into the labor market. Such an approach cannot be entirely successful, because it works at cross purposes with the reality of cross-cultural pluralism in America. Its failure undermines claims of fairness in assessment and delegitimizes the credentials themselves. Differential assessment may result just as much from the failure of the socialization/homogenization process as from cognitive or motivational limitations in the children themselves.

This characterization is important for the issue of societal commitment. If children who wind up with a relatively low stamp of educational approval (and thus are earmarked for low status positions in society) believe that the assessment process is fair, they are apt to accept their lot and become good social citizens. If they judge the process to be unfair, however, they will not readily accept its outcome. They will become alienated from the social order rather than committed to it. Although such an outcome does not change the stratification function of schooling (indeed, it makes stratification easier to



accomplish), those who emerge from the process near the bottom will be effectively disenfranchised. This scenario clearly describes the fate of all too many Black youth.

What about the school's function of creating a commitment to the prevailing value system? Consider this rather poignant quotation from Banks (1976):

The knowledge which becomes institutionalized within a society is often designed to support the status quo and to legitimize the position of those in power. Thus [it] frequently reflects the norms, values, goals, and ideals of the powerful groups in society, it often validates and legitimizes those beliefs and ideologies which are useful for powerful groups and are detrimental to oppressed groups. (p. 394)

Implied in this quotation are two distinct types of value systems. A commitment to the prevailing cultural value system would be only to the norms and values that are extrapolated from the behavioral styles discussed earlier. But there is also what might be called a "psycho-ideological" value system, in which a commitment implies valuing the vantage point of those in power. It implies valuing existing power relationships, conditions for dominance and submission, and the political organization of the social order. When Afro-American children are presented with this value system, they are being taught to see the world through the eyes of those who enjoy majority status. As a result, they often come to see the existing order as legitimate even though they are not part of it themselves. They may even come to internalize the very position of inferiority that they appear to have when viewed from the vantage point of the dominant group.

To say that the schools create commitments to the existing social order and its values is to say that they serve a colonizing function (Carnoy, 1974). Middle-class children are taught to be middle class. White children are taught the value of whiteness. Lower-class children are taught the inevitability of their low social and economic standing. Minority children are taught to be minorities. Afro-American children are taught the ordained inferiority of their blackness and the value of emulating white people (see Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy, 1974; Ogbu, 1978; Persell, 1977). To the extent that Black children accept that schools should "civilize" them (teach them the proper way to talk and think and interact), to the extent that they embrace the ideals of the meritocracy (so that they accept individual responsibility for their own failures), and especially to the extent that they come to view the world from the vantage point of the ruling order—to that extent, the result will be successfully colonized minds.

In this way we come not to hold those in wealth and power responsible for our failure, indeed for succeeding on the very backs of our failure; we hold

ourselves responsible instead. We don't get mad at those in power for possessing inordinate wealth. We envy them, want to be like them, desire the same wealth and power for ourselves. We even hold our own people in contempt for not striving to be like the privileged few. When this colonization process is successful, it makes the oppressed people partners with the ruling order in the perpetuation of their own oppression.

Even this depiction does not do full justice to the complexity of the triple quandary conjoined with the phenomenon of hegemony. For example, one can be alienated from the system at large even while coming to respect the values that it represents. It is possible to espouse those values in some form and at the same time view them with disdain, being unable to fathom any viable alternatives. One can become socialized to dishonor black cultural characteristics even while one is functioning, albeit unreflectively, in a Black cultural mode. Such paradoxes should not be unexpected. They pose a special challenge for those who are seriously intent on understanding the elaborations of Afro-American life.

### Alternative Approaches to the Education of Black Children

How can schools meet the needs of Afro-American children more effectively? We address this question first at the level of training in cognitive skills, and then consider other, more fundamental aspects of socialization.

It often has been suggested that the academic problems of Afro-American children might be alleviated if Black culture were brought into the classroom in a meaningful way (Gay, 1975; Hale, 1980; Miller, 1973). Ogbu (1978) has characterized this position as follows:

People in this [culturally based] position argue that the competence goals of the schools are probably different from the competence goals to which Black families have socialized their children. They suggest that to eliminate the conflict and increase Black motivation to perform in the classroom, the goals of education should be modified to make them more compatible with the values, goals, and learning styles of Black children. (p. 210)

However desirable this position may seem when it is stated in global terms, it has not been without its detractors. Ogbu points out that the advocates of the culturally based position:

... do not say exactly what they consider these values, these goals, and these learning styles to be. Their main point is that since Black parents are not able to socialize their children to acquire the White middle-class attributes that fit successful learning in school, the schools should modify their approach to fit the

qualities or skills possessed by Black children. One wonders how this modification would prepare Black children to participate competently as adults in a technological society requiring White middle-class qualities and competence. (p. 210)

This is a very cogent statement. Although this chapter has tried to describe Afro-American values and learning styles more precisely than the writers to whom Ogbu refers, it has not yet addressed his most significant criticism. Is it not true that success in America requires competence according to mainstream standards? Shouldn't Black children learn the academic skills that are required for gainful employment in our society? This is indeed a reasonable goal, but there is more than one way to approach it. At present, it is taken for granted that the process of teaching cognitive skills should be set in a particular cultural context, one that is informed by the dominant cultural ideals of the society. I suggest that we dis-embed the acquisition of skills from that context and place it in one that is more culturally congruent for Afro-Americans. If this is done, especially during the early years of school, the current negotiational impasse might be avoided. Teachers might not be so preoccupied with discipline and control at the expense of teaching; children might not become so alienated and cynical, or so mentally colonized. Once this had been accomplished, strategies for bicultural and bistylistic incorporation of cognitive skills might be implemented, enabling the children to adapt to a pluralistic society dominated by the Euro-American ethos.

The notion that schools teach cognitive skills in a particular context can be clarified further. For our present purposes, the context of schooling has three important manifestations. First, it refers to task *definition* itself: how a particular skill or competence is defined for students and how its purposes are presented to them. Second, it refers to task *format*: the manner in which the skills in question are acquired and performed. Finally, it refers to *ambience*: the environmental flux that envelops the task itself and forms the background for learning. All three of these manifestations have cultural implications and overtones; all three can be altered to provide greater cultural compatibility. The school's ambience can be made more conducive to task performance, task formats can be made less culturally stifling, and tasks themselves can be specified in a more culturally interpretable way. Boykin (1983) provides a fuller elaboration of curricular changes that would be consistent with the present analysis.

We must surely demand that the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic be taught and taught well. But we must do more than find better ways to teach them; we must also unhook them from the cultural chauvinism and psychoideological hegemony that prevails in the schools. The acquisition of skills must be embedded in value constellations that promote human welfare and do not degrade the pluralistic society that is America. As we have seen,

one of the functions of schooling is to support a particular social order. What social order should Afro-American children be committed to? Following Apple (1979), we can argue that it would be quite different from the order that prevails today: ". . . the progressive articulation of a commitment to a social order that has at its very foundation not the accumulation of goods, profits, and credentials but the maximization of economic and social equality" (p. 11).

Where might schooling fit in, in terms of helping to actualize such a commitment? A first step would be to abandon the present concern with the homogenization and differentiation of students and come to terms with the pluralistic reality of American society. An "equal-status pluralism" is required: not a ranking of individuals in terms of status and attainment, but a genuine acknowledgment of the meaningful social and cultural differences among American groups. White, Parham & Parham (1980) have suggested that we must give up our preoccupation with talent assessment and selection and concentrate instead on the development of the talents of people from culturally diverse backgrounds. This clearly implies a different function for schooling, one that accepts children for what they are and seeks to help them become competent adults by whatever pedagogical devices are appropriate.

What about values? The constellation of values offered by the schools should be a liberating one honestly assesses the reality of racism in America and promotes strategies for negotiating through the cultural environment that actually exists. Such a value system would emphasize collective responsibility while allowing for the vantage points of disparate groups. The Black community at large must come to see the limited utility in the current educational value system, which does not reflect the realities of racism and is not adaptive for people of minority group status. Such a system, although rewarding the individual efforts of a chosen few who conform to it, cannot be a beacon for generally, pervasively, and appreciably enhancing the life conditions of Black people. We need what Friere (1973) has called a "pedagogy of the oppressed": we must decolonize the schooling process and the knowledge that is imparted. The same skills should still be taught, but in a different context and from a Black social-cultural perspective. The kind of schooling that is required might appropriately be called "Afrographic" (Boykin, 1983) rather than Eurocentric.

### Research Directions

It would be premature to delineate concrete proposals for changes in the schools at this time. Such proposals must be based on research on Afro-American culture and schooling. Such research is desperately needed to clarify issues and put problems into empirical perspective. Research of this kind will have to depart from traditional paradigms in many ways: in terms of the

problems to be tackled, the way variables are conceptualized, the proper units of analysis, and the questions to be asked of the data and the functions that might be served. It seems appropriate to elaborate somewhat further on possible research directions.

First, more ethnographic research is needed to provide basic data on the texture of the Afro-American psychological experience itself. To understand the character of Black cultural styles and their manifestation in different contexts, we will have to go to street corners, basements, playgrounds, churches, and anywhere else that Afro-Americans congregate. Then, too, I advocate the study of "cultural contextual synergism" and initiated several projects to this end (Boykin, 1979; Boykin, 1982; Boykin & DeBritto, 1984). In this research the first step is to articulate a cultural style and the contexts that support it. The next is to adapt that style and those contexts to make them amenable to empirical testing. Then it becomes possible to create a microcosm of the teaching situation in which one can examine motivational factors and task performance, a "prescriptive pedagogy" (Boykin, 1977).

Our research has explored heuristic conditions that facilitate the task performance of Afro-American children. Those conditions are predicated squarely on the cultural integrity of Afro-Americans. In particular, our work has been based on the rhythmic-movement orientation and the concept of *verve*. It has produced encouraging results. There is no reason why a similar approach could not be taken to the study of certain adaptive or coping styles as well. Note that the aim of such research is not to discover particular "stimuli" that lead to given responses, but to explore the contextual variables that may affect or modify performance. One further word of caution is also in order. This method treats culture as an independent variable affecting task performance, but that is not the only or most crucial way in which culture affects education. When culture is properly understood as the very psychological texture in which schooling is situated, it can be "exploited" democratically to provide a more humane and effective education for all children in the pluralistic American order.

A second fertile area for research would be the study of ongoing personal interactions in classroom settings. What does the quality of the transactions between students and teachers, or among students themselves, portend for the learning process? Research of this kind has already been initiated. Piestrup's (1973) naturalistic study of teaching styles as they relate to reading proficiency and dialect usage is one noteworthy example. Another is McDermott's (1974) demonstration that students and their teachers can actively participate in "achieving" school failure. The work of Brown, Palincsar, and Purcell (this volume) should also be cited.

Because these studies were not conceived in terms of the present analytical scheme, they have not explored the implications of that scheme for classroom interaction. We need further research that takes cultural issues into consider-

ation explicitly. How do the participants in a classroom interaction respond to a culturally divergent stylistic overture? More generally, how do questions of culture get played out in educational settings? What coping strategies do students use to deflect attacks on their integrity? What strategies can help to keep a student on task even when countervailing forces are present? Which teaching styles are most compatible with which cultural and coping styles? Research in this domain is difficult, but it is also essential. Perhaps it can be complemented by laboratory research that uses controlled tasks and conditions.

Another domain that deserves serious consideration is the socialization processes that go on in Afro-American families and communities. How do Black children learn the cultural and adaptive styles that they display? How are they prepared to function in the mainstream, minority, and Black cultural realms of negotiation? Who are the major role models for each realm? Do family structure and level of material affluence interact with the socialization processes? What are the relationships among the cultural and adaptive styles displayed at home, those displayed at school, and school performance? These concerns illustrate the wide range of research questions that are begging to be addressed.

### Final Comments

Some fundamental assertions about the functioning of our society have been advanced here. American society is complex and culturally pluralistic. To treat its heterogeneity as if it simply reflected different degrees of compliance with one cultural standard is to misunderstand its true nature. We must begin by acknowledging the integrity of the diverse social-cultural frames of reference and understanding them on their own terms. Furthermore, we must find ways to incorporate that very diversity into the various social attainment processes. In particular, we must take account of the cultural diversity of the nation's children as it bears on their attainments in our schools.

Such a stance can generate new conceptual and empirical possibilities. It may help to lay the psychological foundation for different kinds of institutional practices and perhaps usher in a more humanistic complement of American values. Our focus would then shift from a premium on talent assessment and selection to one on talent development, as White et al. (1980) have already urged. This would be accomplished by discovering how to build on the various social-cultural frames of reference in the process of education itself. To the extent that this can be done, America will avoid the waste of human potential that we are witnessing today, and society as a whole will thrive.

None of this can be meaningfully accomplished without American society moving toward what has been called cultural democracy (Gordon, 1964; Kallen, 1924; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). Individuals should have the right

to identify with the life styles and values of their homes and immediate communities, while also becoming conversant with those of mainstream Euro-American middle-class society. They should not have to choose the life style they will pursue until they are old enough to understand the consequences of that choice. It will not be easy to attain such a goal, in view of the prevailing hegemony and ideology. Only by altering institutions and values to make them consistent with cultural democratic principles can we make such choices realistically possible. Eventually we may be able to create a social order that truly maximizes economic, social, and educational equality.

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## 4 Characteristics of Effective Schools\*

Ronald Edmonds

Although the other papers [in this volume] do have implications for the kind of work I do, I am not going to be able to attend very much to the issues they raise. If I were going to discuss them, John Ogbu's notion of the relationship between culture and education would drive me beyond a discussion of instructional effectiveness to a discussion of educational excellence. I would have to say, then, that a school that was excellent for black children would be substantially different from the kinds of schools I am going to consider. It would be different in the way it is governed: it would, for example, be governed by blacks. The school would be different in its curriculum because the curriculum would be derived from the needs of the community from which children come. It would even be different in the substance of what it teaches: for example, it would not fail to describe the intimate interaction between the American experience and the concept of racism. Nevertheless, these are not the issues I am going to talk about.

I am going to talk about an idea and its context. I begin with a couple of words about how I came to this work. I wasn't trained for it and didn't intend it. If somebody had asked ten years ago if I would be so preoccupied with it

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\*When Ronald Edmonds died on July 15, 1983, he had not yet completed a finished manuscript for this volume. The present chapter is based on a tape recording of his actual remarks at the Cornell Conference. I have lightly edited the transcript of that tape, but every effort has been made to preserve the exact original meaning as well as Edmonds' vigorous style. Although the bibliography is my own responsibility, I am grateful to Edmonds' colleague Professor Lawrence W. Lezotte of Michigan State University for assistance in identifying some of the works mentioned in the talk.