

## *Editor's Review*

### BLACK AMERICAN STUDENTS IN AN AFFLUENT SUBURB: A STUDY OF ACADEMIC DISENGAGEMENT

by John U. Ogbu

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Fifty years after the 1954 *Brown* decision, many are still intrigued by the (under)performance of Black students in America's schools.<sup>1</sup> Even though some challenge why educational institutions continue to evaluate these and other minority group members based on their ability to acquire dominant cultural ways of speaking, behaving, and interacting (Villegas, 1988), the question still remains: *Why is there a gap in the academic performance between Black and White students?* In the 1970s and 1980s, this achievement gap was cut in half; however, since 1988 the gap has widened (Haycock, 2001). What is even more intriguing is the low academic performance of many middle-class Black students. Many class-based analyses of the Black-White achievement gap would lead one to believe that middle-class Black students should enter school with the cultural and social capital needed to succeed, based on family socialization and upbringing. However, Ronald Ferguson's (2002) most recent research, which included students in ninety-five schools across fifteen school districts, suggests that many suburban Black students continue to underperform, even though they come from relatively privileged families.

Today, researchers continue to search for answers on how to close this gap. In their latest book, Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom (2003) discuss the "skills gaps" in reading, math, and science between Black and White students by examining national student performance data collected by National Center for Education Statistics. Since 1970, Black student progress has been most impressive in reading — peaking at the 28th percentile in 1988 (still far behind the average White student). However, at the high school senior level today, 77 percent of all White students read better than the average Black student, and only 23 percent of Black students read better than the average White student (a five percentage point decrease from sixteen years ago; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). In math and science, the picture is even more dismal.<sup>2</sup>

Despite decades of attention, there have been few, if any, adequate solutions offered for the academic achievement gap between Black students and White students. Scholars have attributed this long-debated dilemma to theories regarding genetic inferiority (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969);

structural and environmental factors (Boykin, 1986; Noguera, 2003; Oakes, 1985; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003); reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986; Bowles & Gintis, 1976); opposition (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986); and resistance (Cummins, 1996; Giroux, 1983; Kohl, 1994). Indeed, despite a history of significant educational advancement since 1954, an overwhelming number of Black students still fall prey to academic underperformance and failure in America's schools. A growing body of qualitative research draws upon Black students' voices — voices that too often are left out of the educational debate — to examine these students' performance in U.S. schools (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Carter, 2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Hemmings, 1996, 1998; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994; Nieto, 2004).

For several decades, the late educational scholar John U. Ogbu theorized about and studied the academic performance of immigrant and non-immigrant<sup>3</sup> (also referred to as voluntary and involuntary, respectively) minority students. Although often contested in the field of education for overgeneralizations regarding the academic performance of these students, Ogbu's work has been seminal in understanding the attitudes and behaviors of Black students in public schools. His final book, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement*, captures the complexities of examining the Black-White achievement gap in an ethnographic study of the well-known, upper-middle-class suburban Shaker Heights community outside of Cleveland, Ohio. For over eight months, Ogbu and his research team conducted group and individual discussions and interviews with students, school personnel, and community members, and conducted participant observations in four elementary schools, one middle school, and the community's high school.

Using a cultural-ecological theory, Ogbu examines several interlocking factors that might affect middle-class Black students' school performance and their academic engagement. According to Ogbu, the cultural-ecological theory of minority schooling considers two sets of factors that shape minority students' school adjustment and academic performance: 1) the way society and its institutions treat and have treated minorities (i.e. *the system*), and 2) how minorities interpret and respond to their treatment, which is dependent on their unique history and minority status in America. He refers to the second set of factors as *community forces*. Although used as an analytical lens in much of his prior research, in this study Ogbu expands the framework with a closer examination of the following for Black students: (a) their instrumental educational beliefs and behaviors; (b) their relationship with the educational system and the schools and their expressive beliefs and behaviors, including how they interpret and respond to cultural and language differences because of their collective identity; and (c) their educational strategies (p. 55). The primary focus of his Shaker Heights study is to illuminate why some Black students are disengaged from academic work, which leads to their underperformance. The data from this study illuminate the urgency to understand the presence of low-

achieving Black students not only in urban communities, but also in suburban communities; thus, class-based analyses of the problems that Black students encounter in schools are inadequate.

Because current research on Black students who attend suburban public schools is limited (Ferguson, 2002; Wells & Crain, 1997), this book is an integral addition to the Black-White achievement gap debate; the research draws heavily from Black students' voices to examine their experiences living and attending school in a racially integrated but predominantly White community. Ogbu asserts that current educational discourse continues to attribute Black student underachievement primarily to school and societal factors (e.g., tracking, stereotypical teacher attitudes and beliefs, social-class inequities, and cultural differences between home and school), representing the students as "victims or marginalized people who, with some justification, fail by 'resisting' the marginalization" (p. xix). Ogbu believes we do not hold the Black community and its students accountable for their roles in Black student underachievement. In this study, he "give[s] voice to [his] informants, whether they are students, school personnel, or parents" (p. xx) so they can explain their own roles in academic disengagement and performance.

Ogbu suggests that educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners must simultaneously consider *community forces* that inform Black student school success. He defines community forces as "the ways minorities interpret and respond to schooling . . . the beliefs and behaviors within the minority community regarding education that minority students bring to school" (pp. vii, xiii). Ogbu's focus on community forces challenges readers to examine critically the Black community's role in the racial achievement gap.

In this essay, I first provide an overview of academic disengagement and analyze Ogbu's critiques of conventional explanations for the low academic performance of many Black students and his perspective on exploring community forces as an alternative explanation. I then examine how the findings from his study inform the current discourse on system factors, their relationship to community forces, and their effect on Black student achievement. Finally, I discuss the utility of Ogbu's recommendations for narrowing the Black-White achievement gap and their place in current educational discourse on strategies for closing this gap.

### Academic Disengagement

In the first section of the book (chs. 1–3), Ogbu provides an overview of the Black-White achievement gap in Shaker Heights at all levels (elementary, middle, and high school), highlighting the fact that the gap is found in proficiency test scores, course-level enrollment, grade point average, high school graduation ranking, and college attendance. Based on existing research in this area, it is no surprise that the Shaker Heights community embodies the same racial disparities commonly found in schools throughout the United States (Haycock,

2001; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Ogbu also describes academic disengagement found in Shaker Heights among Black students. He suggests that Black students in these schools subscribe to a “norm of minimum effort” (p. 23), positing that “low-effort syndrome” — defined as low engagement in schoolwork and homework — contributes to Black student disengagement. For example, when asked what advice they would give to a relative who was transferring to a Shaker Heights school, Black students at all levels agreed that it takes hard work, studying, and applying oneself to succeed in school. However, many Black students in the study did not heed their own advice and reported doing “just enough to get by” in many of their classes. Interestingly, the students did not believe they lacked the intellectual ability to do the work; they merely chose not to do it or to enroll in higher level courses because it took extra effort. As one student stated, “I maintain a 3.0, but I won’t do anything over that” (p. 23). These types of responses from Black students encourage the reader to question the origin of these attitudes. Black students attributed their minimum effort to boring and uninteresting classes, a lack of motivation by school personnel, poor study habits, other priorities that derailed academic effort (such as part-time jobs), and peer pressures (i.e., “it’s not cool” to work hard or show you’re smart). It should be noted that these reasons provided by the students represent systemic and individual factors, indicating the complex nature of these students’ academic disengagement. Ogbu is right to highlight the students’ roles in this problem. However, his data indicate that the systemic factors also cannot be ignored.

### Explanations for Black Student Underperformance

A very engaging portion of the first section of the book is Ogbu’s critical examination of conventional explanations for Black underperformance. Because Black students’ performance on IQ tests did not predict their academic achievement in Shaker Heights, the reader must question the long-held assumption long held by many that Blacks are genetically intellectually inferior (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Additionally, Ogbu complicates the low teacher expectation hypothesis as a factor in Black student underperformance, given his findings that “low teacher expectations coexisted with students’ unwillingness or refusal to do class work or homework. . . . It was difficult to determine which came first” (p. 37). Based on their own research, many scholars would critique Ogbu’s assertion that teachers of Black students often enter the classroom with stereotypical beliefs about and attitudes toward Black students based on society’s framing of Blacks as a racial group prior to ever having met their students or witnessed their academic patterns (Irvine, 1990; Leacock, 1985; Rist, 1970).

Perhaps Ogbu’s biggest counterargument is to the cultural differences explanation that has been extensively discussed in the literature (Boykin, 1986; Gay, 1979; Hale-Benson, 1986; McDermott, 1987). Because he believes that

Boykin presents the most elaborate description of this explanation, Ogbu critiques Boykin's (1986) "triple quandary" hypothesis regarding Black students' ability to navigate a Black world and a White world.<sup>4</sup> Ogbu grounds his critique in his and other scholars' comparative research (Gibson, 1988; Johnson, 1999; Ogbu, 1987; Suárez-Orozco, 1989), challenging the reader to consider that several immigrant minorities, including Black (African and Caribbean) immigrants, outperform Black American students in public schools despite their cultural differences. Additionally, Ogbu states further that "the relationship between African cultures and White American culture is similar to the relationship between the cultures of immigrants from Asia, and South and Central America and White American culture" (p. 39). For Ogbu, these cultures are *different* from White American culture, but not *oppositional*. Therefore, he raises the question of why Black American students cannot get beyond cultural differences in schools when members of other minority groups do. Many have argued against this position, suggesting that this viewpoint does not consider the history of discrimination and oppression that Blacks have experienced in America and their skepticism about the "American Dream" (Ogbu, 1987; Perry et al., 2003). Similarly, the former position narrowly frames culture as monolithic for various racial and ethnic groups. As Noguera (2003) states,

Explanations of academic performance that emphasize the importance of culture generally ignore the fact that what we think of as culture — customs, beliefs, and practices associated with particular groups — is constantly subject to change. . . . The idea that culture could be treated as a static independent variable is very misleading and results in misconceptions. (pp. 45–46)

Noguera also reminds us that the success of immigrant minorities is relative. Research indicates that many immigrant students are *not* doing well in U.S. schools (Garcia, 2001; Valencia, 1991). To his credit, Ogbu recognizes in much of his prior research that the minority status of Blacks in America does inform their academic performance, and he makes it clear that he is not stating that cultural differences do not matter but that they cannot be the sole factor in Black underperformance.

Ogbu also believes that Boykin's (1986) argument that cultural racism and hegemony are manifested in the attitudes and actions of White school personnel toward Black students should be examined in a comparative perspective. He asserts that current educational discourse on minority education utilizes a distorted meaning of *culture* and the cultural role of schooling. Ogbu argues that

the curriculum and language of the public school are not intended or designed to replace the cultures and languages of ethnic minorities with those of mainstream White Americans. These knowledge and skills are "White" only in the sense that schooling in the United States is based on White culture and language

because White people are the dominant group in the United States that controls the economic and other positions in adult life. (p. 40)

Ogbu argues that the current discourse on minority schooling continues to view the purpose and function of public schooling as cultural transmission. He challenges us to move away from this viewpoint to consider schools as institutions that prepare students for their future adult cultural tasks and roles in society. Again, Ogbu bases his position on comparative data, indicating that any country's schooling will be based on the culture of the dominant group. While Ogbu shares one perspective on the purposes of schooling, history indicates that assimilationist ideology has historically been one of the primary goals of public schooling in the United States (Appleton, 1983). Although the purposes of American schooling are often debated, attempts to culturally assimilate all students to mainstream values, beliefs, and norms (which often reflect the White middle class) present educational tension for diverse students in U.S. schools (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Nieto, 2004). Even the amalgamation (or "melting pot") theory (Appleton, 1983; Gordon, 1964) has been ineffective as a framework for providing the knowledge and skills students need to be productive citizens in a democratic society. Given this country's increasingly diverse population, instructional strategies must be culturally relevant and culturally responsive (Gay, 2000; Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

### The Alternative: A Look at Community Forces

In addition to considering conventional explanations, Ogbu suggests that we consider the ways Black students perceive, interpret, and respond to education as a result of their unique history and adaptations to their minority status in the United States — community forces. Ogbu frames what is necessary to understand the role of community forces by comparing differences in the adaptations of immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities in the United States. He does a good job of contextualizing these differences based on the different modes of incorporation into U.S. society for both types of minorities. This is an improvement on his earlier work comparing the two groups (Ogbu, 1978, 1983, 1987). In this work, Ogbu considers each group's (a) frame of educational comparison; (b) beliefs about the instrumental value of school credentials; (c) relationship with school and school authorities; (d) issues of identity, culture, language, and ability; and (e) educational strategies for achieving in school.

What is controversial about Ogbu's discussion of community forces in this section are his broad generalizations about various minority groups. For example, Ogbu posits that immigrant minorities understand and evaluate public schools as a "delegate agency" designed to prepare them for social and economic upward mobility, while non-immigrant minorities are not sure that education is the key to success. He also suggests that while both minority types expe-

rience conflict with White Americans and mistrust them, non-immigrants are more concerned with how they are treated in schools and whether schools and teachers “care for them” than with teachers’ expertise in providing the skills that students need to be productive citizens in society. Lastly, Ogbu posits that immigrants who bring different cultures, languages, and identities to school are willing and able to adopt White or mainstream school behaviors and language, while non-immigrant minorities, who may perceive their cultures, languages, and identities as oppositional, are less willing and able to adopt White or mainstream school culture and language. These broad conclusions about immigrant and non-immigrant groups continue to be trends in Ogbu’s research and do not account for within-group and across-group differences in attitudes and behaviors toward schooling. Furthermore, several scholars have noted the importance of an ethic of caring in the education of diverse students (Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2004; Noddings, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999).

#### Societal and School Factors (Systemic Factors)

In the second section of the book (chs. 4–7), Ogbu uses data from the study to discuss systemic factors, such as race relations, Blacks’ internalization of negative beliefs by Whites about their intellectual abilities, tracking (or leveling), and the role of counselors and teachers that inform Blacks’ academic performance. His findings reinforce what many researchers have long concluded about the negative effects of societal and school factors on Black student achievement. For example, when asked how racism was perceived in the community and school, Black parents attributed the academic gap to racism. However, many of the White parents perceived race relations as harmonious, and White school officials attributed the academic gap primarily to socioeconomic status. When Blacks and Whites of the same SES were academically compared in Shaker Heights, Black students still had lower school performance, a finding that has been reported in other research (Ferguson, 2002). This supports the position that the academic achievement gap is, indeed, a racial gap and not an SES gap.

Findings from this study also indicate that Black students and parents have a strong mistrust of Whites based on cultural transmission, treatment of Blacks in the job market, and collective mistreatment. Because Black parents taught their children to be careful of teachers (whose ideas, words, and actions could not be trusted), schooling was rarely evaluated in terms of its pragmatic function and more often evaluated in the context of Black-White relations. This is a noteworthy finding that involves deeper exploration. Ogbu argues for a pragmatic trust from Black parents and students that would allow these students to overlook race relations and see teachers as knowledge and skills experts and schooling as a means to a future social and economic end. Given that many Black parents are sending their children to school with conflicting

notions of attaining academic success while keeping a critical eye on the “keeper of knowledge” (i.e., White school personnel), one could argue that it seems quite logical that Black students’ cynical attitudes toward schooling based on their minority status in the United States negatively inform their academic performance. Ogbu’s notion of a pragmatic trust might be too much to ask of the Black community, given Blacks’ history of mistreatment and “mis-education” in America.

The data also showed that Black students believed they were intellectually inferior to Whites and harbored feelings of self-doubt, hence, they often eliminated themselves from higher-level courses. Also, Ogbu found that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about Black students contributed to these feelings of inferiority. Even though teachers did not openly say that Black students did not work hard, they implied it in their actions. For example, some teachers admitted not assigning homework in their skills and college-prep classes (lower-level courses), which were primarily populated with Black students, because they believed the students would not do the work. Teachers also expected and demanded less work from these students during lessons than they did from students in their honors and AP classes. The teacher data are consistent with similar findings in the literature related to tracking and beliefs and stereotypes about Black students, particularly in lower-level courses (Irvine, 2003; Oakes, 1985; Nieto, 2004). As mentioned earlier in the essay, these findings raise the question of whether or not Black students’ “low-effort syndrome” is informed by teachers’ perceptions of them or whether teachers’ attitudes toward and beliefs about Black students are informed by Black students’ display of minimum effort. This critical issue, which Ogbu raises in this section of the book, warrants further investigation.

### Community Forces

In the third section of the book (chs. 8–12), Ogbu’s findings expand the discussion of several community forces that contribute to Black student academic disengagement. Black students reported feeling compelled to work twice as hard as their White peers, not only for academic success but also for positions in the labor market. These findings support Ogbu’s earlier work that attributes academic disengagement and oppositional frames of reference to schooling and unequal opportunities in society. Interestingly, the belief that unequal opportunity still persisted made some students skeptical of the real value of school credentials for upward mobility and motivated other Black students to work harder in school to compete with their White counterparts (i.e., the “prove myself” attitude). While some of Ogbu’s earlier work examines the hypothesis that Blacks do not perceive schooling as preparation for the job market, these new findings indicate that many of the Black students did not seem to have a good understanding of the educational requirements needed

for future jobs. Similarly, the students did not understand how their present course enrollment determined future enrollment and subsequent college preparation.

In the absence of perceiving schooling as a plausible means to achieve social and economic mobility, Ogbu's findings indicate that some of the Black students identified sports, athletics, entertainment, and drug dealing as alternative mechanisms for achieving the "American Dream." Hence, people most admired by the Black students were athletes, sports heroes, and famous entertainers (p. 255). These results challenge educators and researchers to consider further investigations into the devaluing of education as an avenue to upward mobility by popular culture, youth culture, and the media (Noguera, 2003). In addition to these new insights, Ogbu sets the stage for continued discourse regarding academic performance, peer pressures, and the collective identity, culture, and language that Black students value.

A highlight of the discussion on community forces is the students' description of language and dialect rules in the Black community. In Shaker Heights, Blacks had a bi-dialectical speech community; there were cultural rules for using Black English and Standard English within the Black community, White community, or at school; Black parents and students spoke of this. This new research represents some of the most comprehensive analysis of the appropriateness of linguistic code-switching. In fact, Smitherman (2000) posits that middle-class Blacks who learn the "speech rules" are more successful in school in the sense that they maintain "Black cultural capital" (Carter, 2003) and acquire cultural capital for school success. Other studies have found that Black students report acquiring this code-switching skill to adapt to predominantly White learning environments (Bergin & Cooks, 2002; Hemmings, 1996, 1998; Zweigenhaft & Domhoft, 1991).

The book would not be complete without revisiting Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) "acting White" hypothesis. In their research at Capital High in Washington, D.C., Fordham and Ogbu found that some Black students avoided attitudes and behaviors they perceived as "acting White" for fear that these ways would be detrimental to their collective racial identity. In this book, Ogbu asserts that researchers have misinterpreted his research with Fordham to mean that Black students refuse to make good grades because making good grades is a White behavior (see Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Carter, 2003; Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Harpalani, 2002; O'Connor, 1997, for examination of the "acting White" thesis). His data lead him to conclude that "Black students in Shaker Heights and probably elsewhere did not reject making good grades per se because it entailed acting White. . . . These students seemed to reject certain attitudes and behaviors that they perceived or interpreted as White, but that were *conducive* [italics added] to making good grades" (p. 198). These behaviors and attitudes included speaking Standard English and breaking speech rules by speaking Standard English at the wrong times, enrolling in honors and advanced placement classes, acting "smart" in class (e.g., raising

their hands to answer questions, always getting the answers right, always completing homework and schoolwork), and hanging out with too many White students who make good grades. Black students were also accused of acting White for reasons not related to academic success but to social acceptance. For example, dressing like White students, having a predominantly White peer group, and participating in sports traditionally dominated by White students (e.g., tennis, lacrosse) were considered “White” behaviors. As a result, many Black students who valued social acceptance by other Black students reported rejecting the above behaviors quite often.

Unlike his prior research, Ogbu provides a detailed explanation of the reasons Black students give for labeling certain attitudes and behaviors as acting White. These reasons primarily centered around ambivalence toward Blacks who were successful in White institutions or White establishments in society with regard to whether they had abandoned their racial identity. This ambivalence was often applicable to perceptions of Black students who were successful in school as well. Ogbu’s new data raise the question of how the Black community and schools can work to minimize this type of ambivalence and dismantle the perception of certain attitudes and behaviors as racialized.

Finally, this section provides an excellent chapter (ch. 11) on Black parents’ involvement in their children’s education at school and at home. Ogbu’s findings on parental involvement certainly steer this discourse in a new direction by specifically looking at parents’ educational strategies at home and at school (i.e., how the parents went about implementing their educational aspirations for their children). Ogbu found that the overarching “cultural model of pedagogy” of the Black parents was that teachers and the schools should make their children learn and achieve success. Given this ethos, Black parents’ school participation and involvement were dismal among working-class, middle-class, and professional parents. Similarly, parental involvement at home indicated a lack of close supervision of children’s homework, poor coaching on effective time management, lack of shielding from negative peer pressures, and ineffective methods for motivating children to engage in schoolwork. When one considers the community forces simultaneously with system factors, Black student academic disengagement becomes a huge dilemma in U.S. education.

### Policy Implications and Recommendations

The literature is replete with band-aid solutions for the Black-White achievement gap. However, policymakers and educational reformers offer sound recommendations for narrowing this gap. In the last chapter of the book (ch. 13), Ogbu discusses four policy approaches to improving the academic achievement of Black students: (a) choice, (b) performance contracts and merit pay, (c) cooperative learning, and (d) culturally responsive pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> While these approaches are not particularly new, he also offers specific recommendations for the Black community and the schools in Shaker Heights that

can certainly be considered at schools across the nation trying to manage the achievement gap. For the Black community, Ogbu suggests the following: enhance academic orientation with supplementary educational programs; develop a cultural context to increase the value of academic success and the visibility of academically successful Blacks as role models; establish a local ACT-So<sup>6</sup>; distinguish the affective from the pragmatic value of education; develop and institutionalize appropriate and effective parental educational strategies; and teach children how to work hard and persevere to make good grades. I find these recommendations sound and believe that if sincerely considered by leaders of the Black community, we can revitalize Black students' attitudes and beliefs about schooling in ways that enhance their collective racial identity and promote their future success. A major recommendation for the school system is to enhance the effectiveness of the MAC program in the school because it "integrates Black collective identity with academic identity" (p. 282).<sup>7</sup> Ogbu believes that the expansion of the program designed to increase the achievement of Black students will increase academic engagement. He also advocates for increased parent involvement by providing workshops on leveling and tracking and other structural features within the school that assist parents in helping their children make more informed decisions regarding their academics.

Though he often sparked controversy in educational discourse, particularly among researchers and scholars of color, John U. Ogbu was a leading scholar in the work on Black student achievement. His last book leaves educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners with complexities to resolve and inspires us to hear what middle-class Black students are saying about what is necessary to help them achieve at high levels. Although he is no longer here to challenge our thinking, his voice lives on in our memories, our writings, and our critical thinking on the achievement of students of color.

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## Notes

1. In this text, Ogbu's definition of Black students is restricted to non-immigrant Black Americans.
2. In addition to Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003), see Jacobsen, Olsen, Rice, Sweetland, and Ralph (2001), and Kober (2001).
3. Ogbu defines immigrant minorities as people who were not forced to become a part of U.S. society by the government or by White Americans. In this study, he restricts this concept to people who chose to emigrate to the United States permanently because they expected better opportunities (i.e., better jobs, more political or religious freedom, etc.) than they had in their homeland or place of origin. These people are voluntary minorities. Involuntary or non-immigrant minorities are people who are in the United States due to colonization or enslavement by White Americans. Involuntary minorities include Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Black Americans, original Mexican Americans in the Southwest, and Native Hawaiians.

4. Boykin's (1986) "triple quandary" states that Black students simultaneously have to deal with three different cultural experiences: (a) European American culture and African American culture, which is rooted in African culture; (b) cultural hegemony that arises from their social, economic, and political oppression as minorities; and (c) self-contradictory socialization of Black children by their parents (pp. 38–39).
5. See work by Gary Orfield and The Civil Rights Project at <http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/> regarding the effectiveness of charter schools. For more information on the effectiveness of choice, see the report from the National Working Commission on Choice in K–12 Education (November, 2003) entitled, *School Choice: Doing it the Right Way Makes a Difference*. See Mehan, Hubbard, and Villanueva (1994) for a discussion of programs like AVID, which offer minority students opportunities to learn and work collaboratively under the assumption that many minority groups value a community orientation rather than an individualistic orientation in learning; hence, cooperation and collaborative work are effective teaching and learning strategies. Also, for a discussion of culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching, see Gay (2000). See Ladson-Billings (1995) for a discussion of culturally relevant teaching.
6. In 1977, the NAACP created a program called the Afro-Academic Cultural and Scientific Olympics (ACT-So) to recognize the accomplishments of Black high school students. Students receive awards for accomplishments in architecture, biology, computer science, music, poetry, and many other areas. Ogbu believes that duplicating that type of program at a local level would enhance the academic engagement and performance of Black students.
7. The Minority Achievement Committee (MAC) was established in the early 1990s at the high school to "encourage higher academic achievement among Black students" (p. 8), particularly Black males. When the program began, the minimum GPA required for admission was 2.5. At the time of Ogbu's research, the minimum GPA requirement was 2.7. When the program was evaluated in 1996, results indicated that it was indeed effective in improving the academic achievement of Black males. The students exhibited higher GPAs and were less likely to drop out of school than their Black peers who were not in the program.

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