Culture and Learning

> [We] are not simply bearers of cultures, languages, and histories, with a
> duty to reproduce them We are the products of linguistic-cultural circum-
> stances, actors with a capacity to resynthesize what we have been social-
> ized into and to solve new and emerging problems of existence We are not
> duty-bound to conserve ancestral characteristics which are not structurally
> useful. We are both socially determined and creators of human futures.
> —Mary Kalantzis, Bill Cope, and Diana Slade, *Minority Languages*

THE TERM "CULTURE" can be problematic because it can mean different
things to different people in different contexts For instance, culture is
sometimes used as if it pertained only to those with formal education and
privileged social status, implying activities such as attending the opera
once a month In the present day, it generally is acknowledged that cul-
ture is not just what an elite group of people may do in their spare time,
but there are still various and conflicting ideas of what it actually means
in everyday life. Among many Whites in the United States, for instance,
culture is thought to be held exclusively by those different from them. As
a consequence, it is not unusual to hear people, especially those of Euro-
pean background, lament that they do not "have" culture in the same
way that African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, or
other groups visibly different from the dominant group "have" it In other
cases, culture is used interchangeably with ethnicity as if both simply
were passed down constant and eternal from one generation to the next.
At still other times, culture can mean the traditions one celebrates within
the family, in which case it is reduced to foods, dances, and holidays. Less
often is culture thought of as the values one holds dear, or the way one
looks at and interacts with the world.

In this chapter, I will explore the complex relationship between culture and learning. First, I will define culture through a number of interrelated characteristics that make it clear that culture is more than artifacts, rituals, and traditions. In fact, it is becoming increasingly indisputable that culture and cultural differences, including language, play a discernible although complicated role in learning. I will consider how culture and language influence learning by looking at some of the cultural discontinuities between school and home expectations of students from various backgrounds.

DEFINING CULTURE

Elsewhere, I have defined culture as "the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion" (Nieto, forthcoming). As is clear from this definition, culture is complex and intricate; it includes content or product (the *what* of culture), process (*how* it is created and transformed), and the agents of culture (*who* is responsible for creating and changing it). Culture cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are, of course, elements of culture. This definition also makes it clear that everyone has a culture because all people participate in the world through social and political relationships informed by history as well as by race, ethnicity, language, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and other circumstances related to identity and experience.

At least two issues need to be kept in mind if culture is to have any meaning for educators who want to understand how it is related to learning. First, culture needs to be thought of in an unsentimental way. Otherwise, it is sometimes little more than a yearning for a past that never existed, or an idealized, sanitized version of what exists in reality. The result may be an unadulterated, essentialized "culture on a pedestal" that bears little resemblance to the messy and contradictory culture of real life. The problem of viewing some aspects of culture as indispensable attributes that must be shared by all people within a particular group springs from a romanticized and uncritical understanding of culture. For instance, I have heard the argument that poetry cannot be considered Puerto Rican unless it is written in Spanish. Thus, the Spanish language becomes a *constitutive characteristic* of being Puerto Rican. While there is no argument that speaking Spanish is an important and even major aspect of Puerto Rican culture, it is by no means a prerequisite for Puerto Ri-

canness. There are hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans who identify themselves first and foremost as Puerto Rican but who do not speak Spanish due to the historical conditions in which they have lived.

The second consideration to be kept in mind is that the sociopolitical context of culture needs to be acknowledged. That is, cultures do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are situated in particular historical, social, political, and economic conditions, and therefore they are influenced by issues of power. The claim of Whites that they do not have a culture is a case in point. Whites frequently do not experience their culture *as a culture* because as the officially sanctioned and high-status culture, it "just is." Therefore, when Whites say that they do not "have" a culture, they in effect relegate culture to no more than quaint customs or colorful traditions. This stance is disingenuous at best because it fails to observe that Whites as a group participate disproportionately in a *culture of power* (Delpit, 1988) simply based on their race, although access to this power is not available to those who are not White (nor, it should be stressed, is it shared equally among Whites)

In what follows, I describe a set of attributes that are key to understanding how culture is implicated in learning, and how these notions of culture complicate a facile approach to multicultural education. These characteristics are complementary and interconnected, so much so that it is difficult to disentangle them from one another. I do so here only for purposes of clarity, not to suggest that they exist in isolation. The characteristics I review here include culture as *dynamic; multifaceted; embedded in context; influenced by social, economic, and political factors, created and socially constructed; learned, and dialectical*

Culture Is Dynamic

Culture does not exist outside of human beings. This means that cultures are not static relics, stagnant behaviors, or sterile values Steven Arvizu's (1994) wonderful description of culture as a *verb* rather than a *noun* captures this essence of culture beautifully That is, culture is dynamic, active, changing, always on the move. Even within their native contexts, cultures are always changing as a result of political, social, and other modifications in the immediate environment. When people with different backgrounds come in contact with one another, such change is to be expected even more

But cultural change is not simply a one-way process. The popular conception of cultural change is that it is much like a transfusion: As one culture is emptied out of a person, a new one is poured in. In this conception, each culture is inert and permanent, and human beings do not in-

fluence the process to any significant degree. But the reality is that cultures are *always* hybrids, and that people select and reject particular elements of culture as suitable or not for particular contexts. Cultural values are not gotten rid of as easily as blood, nor are new ones simply infused. For instance, there is ample ethnographic evidence that in spite of the enormous political, social, and economic changes among American Indians in the past 100 years, their child-rearing practices, although they have, of course, changed, have also remained quite stable (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). Likewise, among immigrants to the United States, there are indications that ethnic values and identities are preserved to some extent for many generations (Greenfield, 1994; McGoldrick, Pearce, & Giordano, 1982).

In some ways, we can think of culture as having both *surface* and *deep structure*, to borrow a concept from linguistics (Chomsky, 1965). For instance, in previous research (Nieto, 1996), when interviewing young people of diverse backgrounds I was initially surprised by the seeming homogeneity of the youth culture they manifested. That is, regardless of racial, ethnic, or linguistic background, or time in the United States—but usually intimately connected to a shared urban culture and social class— the youths often expressed strikingly similar tastes in music, food, clothes, television viewing habits, and so on. Yet, when I probed more deeply, I also found evidence of deeply held values from their ethnic heritage. For example, Marisol, a young Puerto Rican woman whom I interviewed, loved hip hop and rap music, pizza, and lasagna. She never mentioned Puerto Rican food, and Puerto Rican music to her was just the "old-fashioned" and boring music her parents listened to. Nonetheless, in her everyday interactions with her parents and siblings, and in the answers she gave to my interview questions, she reflected deep aspects of Puerto Rican culture such as respect for elders, a profound kinship with and devotion to family, and a desire to uphold important traditions such as staying with family rather than going out with friends on important holidays. Just as there is no such thing as a "pure race," there is likewise no "pure culture." That is, cultures influence *one another*, and even minority cultures and those with less status have an impact on majority cultures, sometimes in dramatic ways. Rap music, with its accompanying style of talk, dress, and movement, is a notable example among young people of diverse backgrounds in urban areas.

In terms of schooling, the problem with thinking of culture as static is that curriculum and pedagogy are designed as if culture indeed were *unchanging*. This issue *was well expressed* by Frederick Erickson (1990), who has argued that when culture is thought of as fixed, or simply as an aesthetic, the educational practice derived from it supports the status quo. This is because reality itself can then be perceived as inherently static.

Erickson goes on to say, "When we think of culture and social identity in more fluid terms, however, we can find a foundation for educational practice that is transformative" (p. 22). The view of culture as dynamic rather than fixed is unquestionably more befitting a conception of multicultural education as liberating pedagogy based on social justice.

Culture Is Multifaceted

Closely related to the dynamic nature of culture is that cultural identifications are multiple, eclectic, mixed, and heterogeneous. This means, for one thing, that culture cannot be conflated with just ethnicity or race. As an example, Mexican or Mexican American culture may be familiar to us because it concerns an identity based primarily on ethnicity, the best-known site of culture. But one also can speak, for instance, of a lesbian culture because as a group, lesbians share a history and identity, along with particular social and political relationships. Thus, one can be culturally Mexican American and a lesbian at the same time. But having multiple cultural identities does not imply that each identity is claimed or manifested equally. A wealthy light-skinned Mexican American lesbian and a working-class Mexican American lesbian may have little in common other than their ethnic heritage and sexual orientation, and the oppression that comes along with these identities. People create their identities in different ways: While one Mexican American lesbian may identify herself first and foremost ethnically, another may identify herself as a lesbian, a third as both, and a fourth primarily as a member of the working class.

Because culture is not simply ethnicity, even among specific cultural groups there are many and often conflicting cultural identities. Skin color, time of arrival in the United States, language use, level of education, family dynamics, place of residence, and many other differences within groups may influence how one interprets or "lives" a culture. Further, the intersection of ethnicity and social class, or what Milton Gordon (1964) termed *ethclass*, is a key factor in defining culture. For instance, as a young girl I was surprised to meet middle-class Puerto Ricans when I spent a summer in Puerto Rico. Given my experiences until that time as a member of an urban U.S. Puerto Rican family that could best be described as working poor, I had thought that only Whites could be middle-class. Although I spoke Spanish fairly well and thought of myself as Puerto Rican, I discovered that in some ways I had more in common with my African American peers in my Brooklyn neighborhood and school than with the middle-class Puerto Ricans I met on the island. I began to see that my Puerto Rican culture was in fact quite different from Puerto Rican culture as defined on the island. Years later I understood that these differences had to do with location, experience, and social class.

Another important aspect of identity has to do with how interactions with people of other cultural groups may influence culture and identity. This is certainly the case in urban areas, where the identities of young people of many diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds defy easy categorization. Shirley Brice Heath (1995) has suggested that young urban dwellers in the United States are creating new cultural categories based on shared experiences because, according to her, these young people "think of themselves as a *who* and not a *what*" (p. 45). They engage not only in border crossings, but also in what Heath called "crossings and crisscrossings" (p. 48). Given the growing presence of people in the United States who claim a biracial, multiracial, or multiethnic identity, ethnicity alone is unable to fully define culture. The multiple identities of youths have important and far-reaching implications for the development and implementation of multicultural education: It is evident that simplistic and bounded conceptions that focus just on specific racial or ethnic groupings fail to capture the realities of many urban youths who live with complicated and heterogeneous realities.

Culture Is Embedded in Context

To say that culture is embedded in context is to say that it invariably is influenced by the environment in which it exists. The culture of Japanese students in Japan is of necessity different from that of Japanese immigrant students in the United States or of Japanese immigrant students in Peru or Brazil. When culture is presented to students as if it were context-free, they learn to think of it as quite separate from the lives that people lead every day. It is what Frederick Erickson (1990) has described as the fragmenting of people's lives "as we freeze them outside time, outside a world of struggle in concrete history" (p. 34). Culture is commonly decontextualized. In the United States, decontextualization typically occurs in the school curriculum and in media images outside of school. A notable case is that of American Indians, who customarily have been removed from their cultural and historical rootedness through images that eternalize them as either noble heroes or uncivilized savages, and typically as a combination of both (Churchill, 1992). On the other hand, the history of oppression, dehumanization, resistance, and struggle of the many Indigenous Nations rarely is studied in schools. If there is any doubt about the image of American Indians held by most non-Indian children in the United States, ask even 6-year-olds and they will provide in precise detail the most stereotypical and ahistorical portrait of Indians, as Erickson (1990) noted, "outside time" (p. 34). If these children happen to live in a geographic region where there are no reservations or large concentrations

of Indians, they often are shocked to learn that Indians are still around today and that they are teachers, or truck drivers, or artists. Even when American Indians are included in the curriculum as existing in the present, the idyllic images of them tend to reinforce common stereotypes. For instance, while we may be happy to show students pictures of powwows, we are less likely to discuss how reservations have been used as toxic dumping sites.

A further example of how culture is influenced by context will suffice. Puerto Ricans generally eat a great deal of rice in many different manifestations. Rice is a primary Puerto Rican staple. There is even a saying that demonstrates how common it is: "Puertorriqueños somos como el arroz blanco: Estamos por todas partes" (Puerto Ricans are like white rice: We are everywhere), an adage that says as much about rice as it does about the diaspora of the Puerto Rican people, almost half of whom live outside the island. As a rule, Puerto Ricans eat short-grained rice, but I prefer long-grained rice, and other Puerto Ricans often made me feel practically like a cultural traitor when I admitted it. I remember my amazement when a fellow academic, a renowned Puerto Rican historian, explained the real reason behind the preference for short-grained rice. This preference did not grow out of the blue, nor does any particular quality of the rice make it inherently better. On the contrary, the predilection for short-grained rice was influenced by the historical context of Puerto Ricans as a colonized people.

It seems that near the beginning of the twentieth century when Puerto Rico was first taken over by the United States as spoils of the Spanish-American War, there was a surplus of short-grained rice in the United States. Colonies frequently have been the destination for unwanted or surplus goods from the metropolis, so Puerto Rico became the dumping ground for short-grained rice, which had lower status than long-grained rice in the United States. After this, of course, the preference for short-grained rice became part of the culture. As is true of all cultural values, however, this particular taste was influenced by history, economics, and power, which will be further elaborated in what follows.

Culture Is Influenced by Social, Economic, and Political Factors

As is evident from the above, intimately related to the fact that culture is bound to a particular context, is that it is greatly influenced by the political, historical, and economic conditions in which it is found. It exists not in isolation but through concrete relationships characterized by differential access to power. As a result, dominant social groups in a society often determine what counts as culture. This is why, for example, a dominant

132

cultural group unabashedly can designate itself as "the norm" and others as "culturally deprived" (Lewis, 1965; Reissman, 1962). Those who are so designated may not necessarily see themselves in this way, but naming by others takes on great power; eventually many of those who are designated as "culturally deprived" may learn to believe it. Yet "culturally deprived" actually means simply that the group in question does not share in the culture—and consequently in the power—of the dominant group. The paradox of this stance is that while Whites see themselves as culturally neutral or "cultureless," at the same time they insist, through constant messages in the dominant ideology, that theirs is the valued and valuable culture.

The theories of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) are significant here. According to him, it is not simply money, or *economic capital*, that determines one's standing in the social structure; equally important are what he has termed *social capital* and *cultural capital*. Social capital is made up of social obligations and networks that are convertible into economic capital. These will be considered further in Chapter 4. Cultural capital, which is more immediately important to us here, can be defined as the acquired tastes, values, languages, and dialects, or the educational qualifications, that mark a person as belonging to a privileged social and cultural class. Just as in the case of learning one's native culture and language, cultural capital is acquired in the absence of any deliberate or explicit teaching; it is therefore unconsciously learned. The initial accumulation of cultural capital, in the words of Bourdieu (1986), is "the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital" (p. 246).

In essence, then, culture is deeply entangled with economic and political privilege. That is, the tastes, values, languages, and dialects that have the greatest status are associated with the dominant social class *not because these tastes, values, languages, or dialects are inherently better but because they have higher social prestige as determined by the group with the greatest power* As a case in point, for many years linguists have proposed that Black English is a rich and creative variety of English, as logical and appropriate as standard English for purposes of communication (Labov, 1972; Smitherman, 1977). Yet the conventional wisdom still common among teachers is that Black English is simply "bad English." Thus, rather than building on students' native discourse—what has been termed *additive bilingualism* (Lambert, 1975)—most teachers simply attempt to eradicate Black English and replace it with standard English, a *subtractive* form of bilingualism. On the other hand, when expressions from Black English make their way into standard English because they are used by middle-class Whites, they immediately take on a higher social status and thus become acceptable.

The example of Black English underscores the impact that culture

may have on learning and academic achievement Most schools are organized to reflect and support the cultural capital of privileged social and cultural groups; in the United States, that group is middle-class or upper-class, English-speaking Whites. As a result of their identity and upbringing, some children arrive at the schoolhouse door with a built-in privilege because they have learned this cultural capital primarily in the same way as they have learned to walk, that is, unconsciously and effortlessly. Their culture, in this case, the variety of English that they speak, seems both natural and correct. Yet as suggested by Carol Lee and Diana Slaughter-Defoe (1995), because of the low prestige of Black English, "the influences of language on learning for African Americans are both complex and problematic" (p. 357)

This example also places in bold relief the arbitrary nature of cultural capital Paulo Freire (Shor & Freire, 1987) captured the frivolous essence of such designations when he asked, "When did a certain form of grammar become 'correct'? Who named the language of the elite as 'correct,' as the standard?" He answered his own question by stating, "They did, of course But, why not call it 'upper-class dominating English' instead of 'Standard English.' That authentic naming would reveal, instead of obscure, the politics of power and language in society" (p. 45). Further on, in discussing the same topic, he added, "This so-called 'standard' is a deeply *ideological* concept, but it is necessary to teach correct usage while also criticizing its political implications" (p. 71).

One could envision another, quite different, scenario. If, for instance, through some extraordinary turn of events, working-class African Americans were to become the esteemed social group in the United States, Black English probably would become the new standard. In turn, schools would make certain that the curriculum, texts, and other materials would reflect this new form of cultural capital; in addition, only those teachers who were intimately familiar with Black English and who considered it an innately superior variety of English would be hired. Accordingly, the children of working-class African American homes would enter school with a built-in advantage compared with other children, who would be considered "culturally deprived" because they did not have the cultural capital of Black English As far-fetched as this scenario is, given current economic and political realities in the United States, it serves as a graphic example of the capricious nature of determining whose culture becomes highly valued.

Culture Is Created and Socially Constructed

As discussed previously, culture often is thought of as a product-in-place, and as something handed down that must be kept the way it is. Not only

does this result in a static view of culture, but it also implies that culture is already finished. As we have seen, culture is constantly evolving, and the reason that it evolves is because *human beings change it* The action of people on culture takes place in big ways and small, by everyday people and by those who have power. When Jonathan Kozol (1978) went to Cuba to research the successful massive literacy campaign that had just taken place, he spoke with young people in schools, many of whom had been the teachers of the peasants who learned to read. He was awed by the young people's responses when he asked them what was meant by *history* He recounted that when he had asked that same question of students in Schenectady, New York, the answers had been fairly uniform: "History is everything that happened in the past and is now over. . . . History is what is done by serious and important people" (p. 176). In contrast, when he asked young people in Cuba the same question, their answers were starkly different: "It is the past, but there are things that we do now which will be part of history someday" (p. 176). These young people saw that history was not just what was written in history books, or the actions of "important people" in conquest, war, or politics. What they had done in the literacy campaign was also history.

In the same way, culture is what we do every day. Cultures change as a result of the decisions that we, as cultural agents, make about our traditions, attitudes, behaviors, and values. Were it not so, we would forever be mere pawns or victims of the actions of others. Sometimes, of course, cultural values develop as a result of victimization. The previous example of short-grained rice is a case in point. But even here, people took what they were given and made it a positive value. Without such valuing, short-grained rice would not have become part of the culture. The cuisine of poor people throughout the world is another illustration of how culture is created. Poor people often get nothing but leftovers, the parts of animals or plants that nobody else wants. What they have done with these remains has sometimes been nothing short of extraordinary. This is cultural creation in action. Put another way, in the words of Frederick Erickson (1997): "Culture can be thought of as a construction—it constructs us and we construct it" (p. 39). Culture, then, is not a passive legacy, but an active operation that takes place through contact and interactions with others. Culture is a social construction because it cannot exist outside of social contact and collaboration.

Culture Is Learned

Closely related to the fact that culture is created and socially constructed is the fact that it is *learned* That is, culture is not handed down through

our genes, nor is it inherited. This is very clear to see, for example, when children from a particular ethnic group (for instance, Korean) are adopted by families from another ethnic group (usually European American). Although the children may still be considered ethnically and racially Korean, they will in all likelihood be *culturally* European American, unless their parents made a conscious and determined effort to teach them the culture and history of their heritage while raising them, or the children themselves later decide to do so.

Culture, especially ethnic and religious culture, is learned through interactions with families and communities. It usually is not consciously taught, or consciously learned. That is why it seems so natural and effortless. Although this process does not hold true of all cultures—for example, deaf or gay culture—we predictably learn culture while sitting on our mothers' or grandmothers' laps, standing by our fathers, listening to the conversations of family members around us, and modeling our behavior on theirs In fact, most people do not even think about their culture unless it is in a subordinate position to another culture or—if they belong to a majority culture—when they leave the confines of home and are no longer part of the cultural norm.

That culture is learned is also apparent in the very concept of *biculturalism* Bilingual education, for instance, very often is called *bilingual/bicultural education* because it is based on the principle that one can learn two languages and two cultural systems in order to function and even to succeed in different linguistic and cultural contexts. This point was made in research by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994). Of the eight teachers she identified as successful with African American youths, three were White, and of them, one had a White culture of reference, another a bicultural culture of reference, and the third an African American culture of reference. However, becoming bicultural is not as simple as discarding one set of clothes for another Because culture is complex, "learning" a culture that is not one's native culture is an exceedingly difficult task, one accomplished only through direct, sustained, and profound involvement with it Because most teachers in the United States have not been through this it Because it can be difficult for them to understand how excruciating the process, it can be difficult for them to understand how excruciating the process is for their students. Furthermore, it is difficult to become bicultural in an untroubled sense because it means internalizing two cultural systems whose inherent values may be diametrically opposed.

In the United States, it is generally only students from dominated cultures who need to become bicultural as a requirement for academic and societal success. That they do so is a testament to great strength and resiliency. The fact that these newcomers, in spite of being young, feeling isolated, and facing what can be terrifying situations in unfamiliar envi-

ronments, nonetheless can incorporate the cultural motifs of disparate values and behaviors says a great deal about human tenacity. What they accomplish might best be thought of as *critical biculturalism*, a biculturalism that is neither facile nor uncomplicated, but full of inconsistencies and challenges

Culture Is Dialectical

Culture often is thought of as a seamless web of interrelated and mutually supportive values and behaviors, yet nothing could be further from the truth. Because they are complex systems that are created by people and influenced by social, economic, and political factors, cultures are also dialectical, conflicted, and full of inherent tensions. A culture is neither "good" nor "bad" in general, but rather embodies values that have grown out of historical and social conditions and necessities. As individuals, we may find elements of our own or others' cultures uplifting or repugnant. That culture is dialectical does not mean that we need to embrace all of its contradictory manifestations in order to be "authentic" members of the culture.

Young people whose cultures are disparaged by society sometimes feel that they have to accept either one culture or the other wholly and uncritically. This was found to be the case, for instance, among Romani (Gypsy) youth in research carried out in Hungary (Forray & Hegedüs, 1989). Prevalent gender expectations of Romani boys and girls tend to be fairly fixed and stereotypical. Yet because the family is often the only place where culturally dominated young people can positively strengthen their self-image, Romani girls may correctly perceive that breaking free of even limited expectations of their future life options also results in giving up their ethnic identity and abandoning their families. Through questionnaires collected from elementary school teachers of Romani children, it became clear that teachers' negative attitudes and behaviors concerning the fixed gender roles in the Romani culture were at least partly responsible for strengthening the expected gender-based behavior among girls in school. Had teachers been able to develop a more culturally balanced and sensitive approach, it is conceivable that the Romani girls might have felt safe to explore other options without feeling that they were cultural traitors.

That culture is dialectical also leads to an awareness that there is no special virtue in preserving particular elements of culture as if they existed outside of social, political, and historical spaces. Mary Kalantzis and her colleagues (1989) have described this contradiction eloquently:

> Preserving "communities" is not a good for its own sake, as if peoples should be preserved as museum pieces, so that they are not lost to posterity. "Communities" are always mixed, contradictory, conflict-ridden and by no means socially isolated entities. Active cultural re-creation, if people so wish, might involve consciously dropping one language in preference for another or abandoning some cultural tradition or other—such as sexism. (p 12)

The work of the Puerto Rican sociologist Rafael Ramírez (1974) is particularly relevant here Ramírez has suggested that we can think of every culture as a coin that has two contradictory faces or subsystems. He calls these the *culture of survival* and the *culture of liberation*, and each is important in defining the complexity of culture. The culture of survival embodies those attitudes, values, traditions, and behaviors that are developed in response to political, economic, or social forces, some of which may be interpreted as a threat to the survival of the culture in some way. They can either limit (e.g., the unequal treatment of women) or expand (i e., mutual cooperation) people's perspectives within a particular culture. In the case of the role of women, values and behaviors of both males and females grew out of the necessity to view women, because of their unique biology, as primary caregivers. The need to survive is thus manifested in many cultures in perfectly understandable, although not always ethical or equitable ways, given the history of the species. According to Ramírez:

> The culture of survival is characterized mainly by the contradiction that it sustains, affirms, and provides certain power but, at the same time, does not confront or alter the oppressive elements and institutions nor affect the structure of political and economic power that controls the system (p. 86)

Ramírez has defined the culture of liberation as the values, attitudes, traditions, and behaviors that embody liberatory aspects of culture. This face of culture, according to Ramírez, is part of the process of decolonization, and of questioning unjust structures and values, and it "comprises those elements that promote a new social order in which the democratization of the sociopolitical institutions, economic equality and cooperation and solidarity in interpersonal relations predominate" (p 88). In this way, Ramírez says, authoritarianism is contrasted with democracy, racism with consciousness of racial and ethnic identity, and sexism with gender equality. Human rights that are generally accepted by most societies can be included in the framework of the culture of liberation. As we shall see later, understanding the contradictory nature of culture is important if

students and teachers are to develop a critical, instead of a romantic, perspective of their own and other people's cultures.

LANGUAGE AS CULTURE

As we have seen in several examples above, language is deeply implicated with culture and an important part of it. That is, the language, language variety, or dialect one speaks is culture made manifest, although it is not, of course, all there is to culture. This explains why, for instance, so many assimilationist movements both inside and outside of schools—from the forced removal of American Indian children to boarding schools beginning in the nineteenth century, to the recent English-Only Movement—have had native-language devaluation and elimination as major themes. In a very real sense, language is power, and this truth has been at the core of such movements. In the words of Richard Ruiz (1991), "A major dimension of the power of language is the power to define, to decide the nature of lived experience" (p. 218). Doing away with a language, or prohibiting its use, tears away at the soul of a people. Consequently, it is not surprising that language often has served as a powerful symbol and organizing tool for language-minority groups. For instance, using the example of four Indigenous minority cultures (Navajo, Huala Pai, Maori, and Hawaiian), Carlos Ovando and Karen Gourd (1996) have shown how language maintenance and revitalization movements have been used by marginalized groups as major vehicles to attain power within society, to create a sense of peoplehood, and to challenge officially sanctioned structures and languages.

In the United States, attitudes about languages and language varieties other than the mainstream language have oscillated between grudging acceptance and outright hostility. These attitudes have been rationalized as necessary for political and social cohesion and for academic success (Crawford, 1992). Laws as well as school policies have reflected for the most part negative attitudes about native-language maintenance. Examples include the virtual disappearance of native-language instruction between the two world wars, recent court cases involving workers who dared to speak their native language among themselves, and even mothers who, in the privacy of their own homes, speak with their children in their own language, the language that reflects their nurture and love. This was the case of a young mother chastised by a judge for speaking Spanish to her child (cited in Cummins, 1996). Marta Laureano, who was

involved in a child custody case in Texas, was admonished by Judge Samuel Kiser that she was relegating her daughter to a future as a housemaid if she continued speaking Spanish to her. He also charged that speaking Spanish to her was "bordering on abuse" and ordered her to speak only English at home (Cummins, 1996, p. 21).

If research were to prove that maintaining native-language use was a detriment to learning, there might be some reason to consider assimilation as a positive process. This has not proven to be the case, however. David Dolson's (1985) research on the home language use and academic performance of Latino students, for instance, found that those from *additive* bilingual home contexts—that is, homes where Spanish continued to be used even after children learned English—significantly outperformed their peers from *subtractive* homes—where the Spanish was replaced by English. Moreover, he discovered that more Spanish at home usually resulted in better *English* skills as well, supporting the idea that Spanish-language use in the home fosters improved academic performance. Lourdes Díaz Soto's (1993) research among 30 Hispanic families of young children with low and high academic achievement found that parents of the higher-achieving children inevitably favored a native-language environment to a greater extent than those of lower-achieving youngsters. Her findings, rather than suggesting the suppression or elimination of native-language use at home and school—an attitude that is all too common in schools—support just the opposite.

Similar conclusions have been reached by researchers using the case of Black English or Black dialect. In one study, for example, dialect-speaking 4-year-olds enrolled in a Head Start program were able to recall more details with greater accuracy when they retold stories in their cultural dialect rather than in standard English (Hall, Reder, & Cole, 1979). A more recent research study by Geneva Smitherman (1994) concerning the impact of Black English Vernacular (BEV) on the writing of African American students echoed this finding among older students. Using essays written by African American students for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Smitherman demonstrated that the use of African American discourse style correlated positively with higher scores.

There is even some evidence to support the hypothesis that speaking only English may act as a *barrier* to academic success for bicultural students. Research by David Adams and his colleagues (Adams, Astone, Nuñez-Wormack, & Smodlaka, 1994) examining the predictive value of English proficiency, Spanish proficiency, and the use of each at home relative to the academic achievement of Latino students in five cities, found

that recent immigrants who were *more* fluent in Spanish performed better than did second- or third-generation Latinos. They also found a small but negative influence of English-language proficiency on the academic performance of the Mexican American students in the sample; that is, better English proficiency meant lower academic performance among Mexican American youths. How to analyze this finding? The researchers conjectured that there might be what they called a "counterforce" against the traditional relationship between English proficiency and academic performance. They continued, "This counterforce may very well be the peer pressure students experience which works against school achievement, in spite of the students' English-language proficiency" (Adams et al., 1994, pp. 11–12).

This research confirms that simply speaking English is no guarantee that academic success will follow. There seem to be several reasons for this. First, when children are able to keep up with their native language at home, they develop *metalinguistic awareness*, that is, a greater understanding of how language itself works, and of how to use language for further learning. Based on her extensive research concerning second language acquisition, Virginia Collier (1995) has suggested that practicing English at home among students who are more proficient in another language actually can slow down cognitive development because it is only when parents and their children speak the language they know best that they are working at their "level of cognitive maturity" (p. 14). Furthermore, given the negative attitudes that we have seen among teachers about languages and language varieties other than standard English, and especially about languages they consider to have a low status, children who speak these languages may become further alienated from school and what it represents. In essence, students may disidentify with school. For example, the research by Adams and his colleagues (1994) supports the hypothesis that the identification of second- and third-generation Americans with school and academic achievement is weak owing to the repeated and consistent school failure among some groups (Ogbu, 1987). Knowing English may not be sufficient to defy the weak identification with schooling.

LINKS AMONG CULTURE, LANGUAGE, AND LEARNING

Given the preceding discussion, it is indisputable that culture, language, and learning are connected. In what follows, some of the links will be made more explicit, beginning with a discussion of child-rearing practices.

Child-Rearing Practices and Learning

Child-rearing is above all a teaching and learning process, making the home the first context for learning. The earliest and most significant socialization of children takes place within their families and communities. Just as they learn to walk and talk, children also learn *how to learn* as defined within their particular cultural contexts. Children's interactions with parents or other caregivers thus pave the way for how they will fare in school. That is, where students' cultural values and behaviors "fit" with school policies and practices, learning can take place in a fairly straightforward manner; where they clash, learning may be experienced in a negative way

Early research on child-rearing practices often focused on maladaptive responses to school and helped explain the relative lack of success of children from nonmainstream families. A more positive approach was proposed by Manuel Ramírez and Alfredo Castañeda (1974). While granting that families of different cultural groups employ different child-rearing practices and that these practices influence children's learning in school, Ramírez and Castañeda suggested that, rather than expect families to do all the changing, schools too needed to change by responding to the different ways of learning that children bring to school. The child-rearing styles of caregivers from diverse cultures, according to these researchers, resulted in different *learning styles*, or diverse ways of receiving and processing information They concluded that the only appropriate response of schools in a pluralistic and democratic society was to develop learning environments that were, in their words, "culturally democratic," that is, environments that reflect the learning styles of all students within them This perspective was radically different from the usual expectation that all children arrive at school with the same ways of learning. Given the notion reviewed in Chapter 2 that schools create and perpetuate inequality through policies and practices, including the pressure to assimilate, the perspective suggested by Ramírez and Castañeda makes a good deal of sense.

Ramírez and Castañeda were among the first researchers to suggest that all learning styles, not just the analytic style generally favored by majority-group students and practiced in most schools, are suitable for academic work. They built on the theories of Herman Witkin (1962) that people have either a *field independent* learning style (usually defined as preferring to learn in an analytic matter with materials devoid of social context) or a *field dependent* learning style (understood as favoring highly social and contextualized settings). Based on their research with children of various cultural backgrounds, they concluded that European American

children tend to be field independent, and Mexican American, American Indian, and African American children tend to be field *sensitive,* the term they substituted for the more negatively charged *dependent* They suggested that students need to be provided environments where they can learn according to their preferred style, while also becoming *bicognitive,* that is, comfortable and proficient in both styles.

The proposition that students from diverse backgrounds use various approaches to learning and that schools need to make accommodations for them represented a considerable advance in both the theory and practice of education. Nevertheless, much of the learning style research can be criticized on a number of grounds. First, there is no agreement on the number or range of learning styles that actually exist. Second, this research has inclined toward overdetermination, basing students' learning styles almost exclusively on their culture when in fact we know that learning is a much more complex matter. Third, some assessment and *instructional strategies and adaptations developed as a result of the learning style research* have been overly mechanical and technical, although they might never have been intended to be used as such. For instance, one of the few reviews that looked seriously at the outcomes of adapting instruction to the visual learning style presumably favored by American Indian children concluded that there was virtually no evidence that such adaptations resulted in greater learning (Kleinfeld & Nelson, 1991).

An example of how this kind of research has been poorly used can be found in professional development workshops or education texts that provide lists of "attributes" of students of particular cultural backgrounds based on the learning styles they are reputed to have ("Vietnamese children are . . ." or "African American children learn best when . . ."). All too often, the effect of such categorizations is that the existing stereotypes of children from particular backgrounds become even more rigid More-over, categorizing students' learning styles based on race or ethnicity can veer dangerously close to the racist implications drawn from distinctions on IQ tests (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969). For instance, Asa Hilliard (1989) has voiced grave reservations about the use of the term *learning style* as an excuse for low expectations on the part of teachers, and on poor instruction based on these expectations. In this case, the remedy can be worse than the illness itself.

In spite of the theoretical and implementation problems with learning style research, Donna Deyhle and Karen Swisher (1997) suggest that ethnographic studies can prove to be insightful in providing evidence concerning the significance of child-rearing values on learning styles. In these studies, students' learning styles are gleaned from many hours of observation and analysis. Deyhle and Swisher believe that becoming

aware of students' preferred ways of learning can be useful, although it is by no means sufficient to guarantee that appropriate environments are created for student learning. Their reasonable conclusion is: "Knowledge of group tendencies presents a framework through which to observe and understand individual behaviors" (p 131). As we reviewed in Chapter 1, cross-cultural psychologists have developed a more conceptually sophisticated explanation for how families of diverse cultural backgrounds influence learning and the cognitive development of their children through their child-rearing practices and interactions, and based on the kind of ecological system in which they live (Greenfield, 1994; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994).

Although research in learning styles has brought the issue of culture and its possible impact on learning to the forefront, the field is fraught with conflict due to criticisms such as those mentioned above, among others (for an analysis of these, see Irvine & York, 1995). One way to ameliorate what can be the overly deterministic tone of this research is to speak of *learning preferences* instead of *styles* In this case, the implication is that numerous factors influence how people learn, and that in fact all individuals differ in some ways from one another in how they learn In any event, learning styles or preferences by themselves, although providing an important piece of the puzzle for understanding student learning, do not adequately explain the vastly different outcomes of student achievement Others have suggested a shift in focus from *learning style* to *cultural style* or *teaching style* (Hilliard, 1989/90; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Cultural, Linguistic, and Communication Discontinuities Between Home and School

The discontinuities experienced by students whose cultures and/or languages differ substantially from the mainstream, and how these might interfere with learning, are questions that have gained enormous significance in the past 2 decades, especially by educators using an anthropological perspective. One such theory, the *communication process explanation* (Erickson, 1993), is based on the fact that although students may be socialized to learn in particular ways at home, these cultural and communication patterns may be missing in the school setting. The research undergirding this argument has generally been ethnographic in nature, and it has been based on months, and sometimes years, of extensive fieldwork and analysis

Two significant early studies were groundbreaking in the field and serve as examples of this theory. Susan Philips's (1982) ethnographic research among American Indian schoolchildren on the Warm Springs Res-

ervation in Oregon concluded that the core values with which the children were raised—including harmony, internal locus of control, shared authority, voluntary participation, and cooperation—often were violated in the school setting. For instance, she found that the children did poorly in classroom contexts that demanded individualized performance and emphasized competition. However, they became motivated learners when the context did not require them to *perform in public and when cooperation was valued over competition*, as in student-directed group projects. Given the assessment practices of most schools, these students were at a disadvantage because their learning was not always demonstrated in the kinds of behaviors expected of them, such as individual performance and recitation.

Philips's insights were a powerful challenge to previous deficit-based conclusions that American Indian children were "slow," "inarticulate," or "culturally deprived," and that they were therefore incapable of learning. *Her research provided an alternative, culturally based explanation for the apparent discontinuities between home and school.* In a similar vein, Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) research in a *working-class African American community she called "Trackton" is a compelling example of cultural and communication discontinuities.* In her research, she discovered that the questioning rituals in which parents and other adults in the community engaged with children were not preparing them adequately for the kinds of activities they would face in schools. Furthermore, when Heath observed White middle-class teachers in their own homes, she found that their questions, both *to their own children and to their students, differed a great deal from the kinds of questions that the parents of children in Trackton asked.* Teachers' questions invariably pulled attributes such as size, shape, or color out of context and asked children to name them. Hugh Mehan (1991) has *called these questions "mini-lessons" that prepare children from middle-class homes for the kinds of questions they will hear in school.*

On the other hand, the parents of the children from Trackton asked them questions about whole events or objects, and about their uses, causes, and effects. Parents often asked their children questions that were linguistically complex and that required analogical comparisons and complex metaphors rather than "correct" answers out of context. The result of these differences was a lack of communication among teachers and *students in the school. Students who at home would be talkative and expressive would become silent and unresponsive in school because of the nature of the questions that teachers asked;* this behavior led teachers to conclude that the children were slow to learn or deficient in language skills. It was only through their fieldwork as ethnographers of their own classrooms that the teachers became aware of the differences in questioning rituals and of the kinds of questions that their students' families and other adults in the community asked. Teachers were then able to change some of their questioning procedures to take advantage of the skills that the children already had, building on these skills to then ask more traditional "school" questions. The results were striking, as students became responsive and enthusiastic learners, a dramatic departure from their previous behavior.

A. Wade Boykin (1994) also has reviewed the implications of cultural discontinuities for African American students. According to him, in general Black students in the United States practice a cultural style that he calls *Afrocultural expression* This style emphasizes spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, communalism, oral tradition, and expressive individualism, elements that are either missing, downplayed, or disparaged in most mainstream classrooms. As a result, there are often incompatibilities between Black students' cultural styles and the learning environment in most schools, and Black students may end up losing out. The problem is not that their styles are incompatible with learning, but rather that these styles are not valued in most classrooms as legitimate conduits for learning

These examples provide evidence that home cultures and native languages sometimes get in the way of student learning *not because of the nature of the home cultures or native languages themselves, but rather because they do not conform to the way that schools define learning* On the other hand, this cultural mismatch is not inevitable: There are numerous examples of research in the past 2 decades that has concluded that culture and language *can work in a mutual and collaborative manner to promote learning rather than obstruct it.* Teachers and schools, not only students, need *to accommodate to cultural and linguistic differences.* According to Margaret Gibson (1991), schooling itself may contribute unintentionally to the educational problems of bicultural students by pressuring them to assimilate against their wishes. Maintaining their language and culture is a far healthier response on the part of young people than adopting an oppositional identity that may effectively limit the possibility of academic achievement.

Other research has confirmed the benefits of maintaining a cultural identification. For instance, in her research among Navajo students, Donna Deyhle (1992) found that those who came from the most traditional Navajo homes, spoke their native language, and participated in traditional religious and social activities were among the most academically successful students in school. Similar findings have been reported for students from other cultural groups as well. A study of Cambodian refugee

children by the Metropolitan Indochinese Children and Adolescent Service found that the more they adapted their behavior to fit in with mainstream U.S. culture, the more their emotional adjustment suffered (National Coalition, 1988). Another study of Southeast Asian students found a significant connection between grades and culture: that is, higher grade point averages correlated with the maintenance of traditional values, ethnic pride, and close social and cultural ties with members of the same ethnic group (Rumbaut & Ima, 1987). Likewise, based on her extensive research with adolescent students of color of diverse ethnic backgrounds, Jean Phinney (1993) determined that adolescents who have explored their ethnicity and are clear about its importance in their lives are more likely to be better adjusted than those who have not.

Responses to Cultural Discontinuities

Because many children from diverse cultural backgrounds experience school failure, we need to address how cultural discontinuities between students' homes and their schools affect learning. There have been a number of attempts to adapt learning environments to more closely match the native cultures of students. Responding to cultural discontinuities takes many forms and can mean anything from developing specific instructional strategies to providing environments that are totally culturally responsive.

Culturally responsive education, an approach based on using students' cultures as an important source of their education, can go a long way in improving the education of students whose cultures and backgrounds have been maligned or omitted in schools. This approach offers crucial insights for understanding the lack of achievement of students from culturally subordinated groups. One of the best known of these is KEEP (the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program) in Hawaii (Au, 1980). KEEP was established because cultural discontinuities in instruction were identified as a major problem in the poor academic achievement of Native Hawaiian children. Educational modifications in KEEP included changing from a purely phonics approach to one emphasizing comprehension, from individual work desks to work centers with heterogeneous groups, and from high praise to more culturally appropriate practices, including indirect and group praise. The KEEP culturally compatible K-3 language arts approach has met with great success in student learning and achievement. Similar positive conclusions have been reached when the cultures of students of diverse backgrounds have been used as a bridge to the dominant culture (Abi-Nader, 1993; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Irvine, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In spite of the promising approaches highlighted by this research, a number of serious problems remain. For one, culturally responsive pedagogy sometimes is based on a static view of culture that may even verge on the stereotypical. Students of particular backgrounds may be thought of as walking embodiments of specific cultural values and behaviors, with no individual personalities and perspectives of their own. An unavoidable result is that entire cultures are identified by a rigid set of characteristics. Culturally congruent approaches, applied uncritically and mechanistically, fall into the same trap as monocultural education: that is, they may be based on an essentialist notion of culture that assumes that all students from the same cultural background learn in the same way. If this is the case, pedagogy and curriculum become, in the words of Erickson (1990), "cosmetically relevant" rather than "genuinely transformative" (p. 23).

A result of essentialist notions is that the diversity of individual students' experiences and identities may be overlooked, and their culture may be used to homogenize all students of the same group. This happens, for instance, when teachers make comments such as, "Korean children prefer to work on their own," because such statements deny the individual idiosyncrasies, preferences, and outlooks of particular students and their families. All cultures operate in synergy, creating new and different forms that borrow from and lend substance to one another. In other words, the multifaceted, contested, and complex nature of culture sometimes is not taken into consideration in culturally responsive pedagogy. Because cultures never exist in a pristine state, untouched by their context, any approach to meaningful and effective pedagogy needs to take into account how students' languages, cultures, and other differences exist within, and are influenced by, mainstream U.S. culture as well as by other subcultures with which they come into contact.

A culturally responsive stance sometimes considers those of nonmajority backgrounds to exist in complete contrast to the majority population, but this is rarely true. I recall, for example, the reaction of a young African American student after he visited an American Indian community in the Northeast: "They have VCRs!" he exclaimed in surprise tinged with disappointment. This young man attended a progressive alternative school with a multicultural curriculum with which I was associated many years ago. The school was a wonderful place in many ways, and the curriculum emphasized positive and liberatory aspects of the histories and cultures of people of color Nevertheless, we were not immune from falling victim to developing our own static, albeit more positive, romanticizing vision of what people of diverse cultures were like. In this case, in preparing students for the trip, we somehow had managed to remove all vestiges of materialistic contemporary life from Indigenous people, and

the result was that the children developed an unrealistic and partial view of an entire group of people.

These caveats concerning cultural discontinuities also were explored in research with a Mexicano community by Olga Vasquez, Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, and Sheila Shannon (1994). In a number of case studies of children from this community, they found that a great deal of *convergence* existed between the children's home and school language interaction patterns. Although these researchers did not question that cultural discontinuities exist, they rejected the suggestion that home–school discontinuity can predict the success or failure of an entire cultural group. Instead, based on research in which they saw firsthand the students' multiple linguistic and cultural skills, they urged educators to consider "the complexity of their students' experiences in a multilayered network of cultures and reference groups" (p. 187).

Finally, a focus on cultural discontinuities alone may hide the structural inequalities described in Chapter 2 with which so many students, especially those who live in poverty, contend on a daily basis. It is therefore necessary to look beyond cultural responsiveness alone to help explain student academic success.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS

What are the implications for teachers and schools concerning the links among language, culture, and learning? I would suggest that at least three issues need to be emphasized.

1. *Students' identification with, and maintenance of, their native culture and language can have a positive influence on learning* The judgment that cultural identification and maintenance are important for academic achievement is not new, but it bears repeating because it is still far from accepted in most schools and classrooms. Research in the past 2 decades consistently has found that students who are allowed and encouraged to identify with their native languages and cultures in their schools and communities can improve their learning. This finding is also a direct and aggressive challenge to the assimilationist perspective that learning can take place only after one has left behind the language and culture of one's birth. Research in this area has made it clear that students' cultures are important to them and their families. However, maintaining them is also problematic because the identities of bicultural students generally are disparaged or dismissed by schools.

2. *The role of the teacher as cultural accommodator and mediator is fundamental in promoting student learning* In much of the research reviewed, it

has become apparent that teachers have a great deal to do with whether and how students learn. Consequently, teachers' role as cultural mediators in their students' learning becomes even more urgent. In many cases, teachers need to teach children how to "do school" in order to be academically successful. This kind of mediation may not be necessary for the children of middle-class and culturally mainstream families, but very often it is required for students whose families do not have the high-status cultural capital required for academic success. Teachers need to support this kind of learning while at the same time affirming the cultures and languages that children bring to school as viable and valuable resources for learning.

3. *A focus on cultural differences in isolation from the broader school and societal context will likely not lead to increased learning or empowerment* Personal and institutional accommodations to student differences need to be in place in order for students to become successful learners. Obviously, these accommodations require drastic shifts in teachers' beliefs and attitudes, and in schools' policies and practices: Instead of simply tinkering with a few cultural additions to the curriculum or adopting a new teaching strategy, a wholesale transformation of schools is in order if we are serious about affording all students an equal chance to learn.

Cultural Problems in Minority Education: Their Interpretations and Consequences—Part One: Theoretical Background[1]

John U. Ogbu

Culture has featured prominently in minority educational research, policies, and intervention since the early 1960s. It is receiving even more attention today in minority education discourse due to the emergence of cultural diversity and multicultural education as popular national issues. A careful analysis of the new discourse suggests, however, that the issue has shifted from how cultural differences enhance or deter the school adjustment and academic performance of minority children to the problem of cultural hegemony and representation in school curriculum and other domains of education. But cultural diversity and multicultural education are only a partial solution to the problems of culture in minority education. This essay is in two parts. In part one I argue for a reconsideration of the earlier question about how culture affects minority school adjustment and academic performance. I also propose *cultural frame of reference* as a new level of analysis of the cultural problems that confront minority students at school. In part two I illustrate my points with two case studies from Minority Education Project in Oakland, California.

Culture has featured prominently in minority educational research, policies, and intervention in the U.S. since the early 1960s. It began with the designation of minority children as *culturally deprived*. By the mid-1960s ethnic minorities rejected this explanation. Instead, they argued that their children failed because the public school did not teach them in their own cultures and languages. Anthropologists supported the minorities, adding that cultural differences that resulted in cultural discontinuities and conflicts in teaching and learning were at the root of minority children's school failure (Philips, 1976).

Culture is receiving even more attention today in educational discourse with the emergence of cultural diversity and multicultural education as national issues. A careful analysis of the new discourse as represented in the literature, public debates, policies, and programs, suggests, however, that the discourse is

John U. Ogbu is Alumni Distinguished Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

no longer about whether and how cultural differences enhance or deter the school adjustment and academic achievement of minority children. Rather, it is about hegemony and inadequate representation in the curriculum and some other areas of education. Of significance is that even those minorities who have not traditionally done well in school think that more inclusion of their cultures and languages or having culturally diverse curriculum and the like will solve their school adjustment and academic achievement problems. It is, of course, very important that the schools should reflect the cultural diversity of the U.S. populations. But cultural diversity and multicultural education are only a part of the answer to the cultural problems of minority students.

In this paper I want to return to the earlier question about how culture affects minority school adjustment and academic performance for four reasons. The first is that this question is important and should not be abandoned. I have been surprised on occasions to hear public school officials say that multicultural education is not about raising minority children's academic performance; at least, it is not the primary goal. Rather the goals are to promote (a) social integration (i.e., promoting understanding between minorities and whites), (b) citizenship (e.g., less suspensions), and (c) self-esteem (i.e., the children should feel good about themselves). They admit, however, that these might eventually lead to higher academic performance. Second, in working with some agencies and schools trying to use culture to enhance minority children's school adjustment and performance I find some resistance to the suggestion that they study the cultures of the minorities they want to help or that they specify the cultural problems they want to address in the school. Instead, they want prepackaged "cultural solutions." Third, I want to introduce the concept of *cultural frame of reference* to raise the discourse on minority education and culture to a new level. Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of minority adaptation for subsequent school experience. Different minorities make different adaptations to minority status in the U.S.; and the differential adaptations affect their interpretations of, and responses to, the cultural problems they encounter in the public school.

PROBLEMS WITH CONVENTIONAL CULTURAL EXPLANATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

I consider three problems with current cultural explanations of and solutions to the academic problems of minority children. First, they are noncomparative; therefore, they ignore those minority groups who are successful in school, although they are not taught in their cultures and languages. The success of these minorities does not support the theory that minority children are failing in school primarily because of cultural differences. Second, there may well be

some cultural values, orientations, and practices among minorities (and among mainstream white Americans) that are not necessarily conducive to academic striving and success. Third, cultural compatibility and cultural incompatibility explanations fail to acknowledge that present and future participation of minorities in competitive national and global technology and economies does not, and will not, depend on minority cultural values, cultural practices, and languages. National and global technological and economic developments are at the heart of current school reforms. Whether minorities like it or not, their participation depends and will depend on their acquisition of appropriate language, knowledge, skills, and credentials to compete successfully for positions in complex economic and technological systems. Education that promotes better intergroup relations, better citizenship, and better self-esteem, and preserves or incorporates minority cultures and languages into the curriculum, but does not provide the minorities with the academic credentials, professional skills, and appropriate language to participate in the technological and economic domains, is not a reasonable solution to the problem of those minorities who have not traditionally done well in school.

Furthermore, the fact that minorities are becoming "the majority" by their numbers in some states is not a consolation. Teaching minorities in their cultures and languages but not ensuring that they learn math and science, which are not a part of their cultures, languages, and identities, will surely limit their economic and political advantages as "the majority population."

Comparative research shows that *some* minorities do well in school, although they are not taught in their cultures and languages; *other* minorities facing similar cultural and language differences do not do well in school (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991). In some cases minority groups who are doing well in school differ most from the dominant group in culture and language. For example, students from Mexico, after learning English, appear to be more successful than native-born Chicano students (Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Valverde, 1987; Woolard, 1981). Another example is that East Asians differ more than West Indians from the white British in culture and language; they do better than West Indians in British schools (Ogbu, 1978; Taylor and Hegarty, 1985).

Another evidence that cultural differences per se do not determine minority adjustment and school performance is found by comparing the school performance of the same minority group in different settings. A good example is the Japanese Buraku. In Japan itself, Buraku students continue to do poorly in school when compared with the dominant Ippan students. But in the United States the Buraku do as well as other Japanese Americans (DeVos, 1973; Ito, 1967; Shimahara, 1991). Another example is that West Indians do better in U.S. schools than they do in British schools.

Cultural differences do not affect the education of all minorities in the same

way. To understand why and how cultural differences affect minority education I explain the meanings of (a) culture, (b) cultural differences, (c) cultural frame of reference, and (d) minority status in the United States.

CULTURE, CULTURAL, DIFFERENCES, AND CULTURAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

What Is Culture?

Culture is a people's way of life. It has five components: (a) customary ways of behaving—of making a living, eating, expressing affection, getting married, raising children, responding to illness and to death, getting ahead in society, and dealing with the supernatural; (b) codes or assumptions, expectations, and emotions underlying those customary behaviors; (c) artifacts—things that members of the population make or have made that have meaning for them; (d) institutions—economic, political, religious, and social—*the imperatives of culture* that form a recognizable pattern requiring know-how, skills, and customary behaviors in a fairly predictable manner; and (e) social structure—the patterned ways that people relate to one another. Culture influences its members, even though the latter create, change, and pass on their culture to their children who, in turn, further change it (Cohen, 1971; Edgerton and Langness, 1968; Jacob, 1993; LeVine, 1973; Spradley, 1979).

People behave, think, and feel in "cultural worlds," and each human population lives in a somewhat different cultural world. Culture is a framework within which members of a population see the world around them, interpret events in that world, behave according to acceptable standards, and react to their perceived reality. To understand members of different populations (e.g., African Americans, Chinese Americans, mainstream white Americans, the Navajos, etc.) it is necessary to understand their cultures (Edgerton and Langness, 1968).

An example of a cultural or customary way of behaving in the U.S. is the American ritual of caring for the mouth (Miner, 1956, pp. 503–507). But it is not enough to observe that Americans perform the ritual of brushing their teeth every morning, that their homes have shrines for this daily ritual, and that occasionally they consult a "holy-mouth-man," called *dentist,* who specializes in the magical care of the mouth. One must also understand the reason for this customary behavior, namely, that Americans believe that there are debility and disease in the body that must be prevented from breaking out and harming their mouths.

Another cultural behavior characteristic of one segment of the U.S. society is the "stylin' out" of the black preacher through a special "code talk" (Holt, 1972). It is difficult for mainstream white Americans to understand the black preacher's language and style. The reason is that the preacher's code talk devel-

oped as a specialized communication style to facilitate in-group feeling and to conceal black aspirations and feelings from the dominant white society.

Cultural Differences

Cultures differ at two levels. First, they differ in the components indicated above, namely (a) customary ways of behaving, (b) codes or assumptions, (c) artifacts, (d) institutions, and (e) social structure. Second, they differ in frames of reference (i.e., ideals). I explain the first level with four examples, focusing primarily on customary behaviors and the underlying assumptions (i.e., rules and meanings of the behaviors).

My first example is where the same overt behavior—*raising eyebrows*—has different meanings in different populations. In mainstream white American culture raising eyebrows means a surprise. For the people in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific it signals an affirmative answer. In Greece it is a sign of disagreement (Taylor, 1980).

A second example is about the same goal—achieving upward social mobility or getting ahead in society—accomplished by different customary behaviors in different cultures. Mainstream white Americans emphasize individual competition in getting ahead. They assume that social mobility, upward or downward, depends on an individual's ability or fate. Lowland Christian Filipinos achieve social mobility through group cooperation. They believe that social mobility depends on one's ability to cooperate with others. The Kanuri of northern Nigeria exhibit a third variant. Among them, an individual achieves social mobility through a patron-client relationship. An aspirant for upward social mobility usually attaches himself to and serves a patron who rewards him with desired position or wealth *after* the aspirant has served the patron and demonstrated his "trust" by showing loyalty, obedience, servility, and compliance to the patron (Cohen, 1965).

Third, cultures differ in the use of language to code environment and its members' experiences in that environment. Thus, some concepts that one finds "natural" in his or her own language are not necessarily universal. The reason members of a population do not have a given concept is not that (a) they do not have the biological structures or genes for those concepts, (b) their parents failed to teach them the "missing concepts," or (c) as individuals they "lag in development," for yet unspecified reasons. They do not have the concept because concept is not part of their coded environment, activities, and experience.

One result of differential coding is that one culture may have several terms for a given phenomenon, while another culture has only one term and a third culture has none. Here are some examples: (a) English speakers have several terms for ideas and objects associated with *flying,* such as fly (n.), fly (v.) pilot,

airplane. Hopi speakers have only one term. (b) English speakers have two terms for *snow*, Eskimos have several terms, and the Ibos of Nigeria have none. (c) English speakers have several terms for describing *coldness*, such as cold, ice, and snow; Aztecs have one term. (d) Hopi speakers have two terms for *water*, depending on whether it is standing still or in motion; English speakers have only one term for water (Fishman, 1964).

My final example is the differences in mathematical concepts and customary behaviors. Closs (1986) reports that the Western (or U.S.) mathematical system emerged from cumulative efforts of peoples of diverse cultures (e.g., Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians, East Indians, Persians, and Mediterraneans). After thousands of years this system became a part of Western culture and is now designated as Western mathematics. There are, however, other mathematical systems in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Australia that differ from the Western system. One difference is that the Western mathematical system uses 10 as the basis of number grouping (i.e., it is a 10 system), whereas I come from a culture, the Ibo culture in Nigeria, whose mathematical system uses 20 as the basis for number grouping (i.e., the math system of *my non-Western culture* is a 20 system). The Ibos share this 20 system with several populations in the Americas and elsewhere: (a) the Inuit region (b) native peoples in some parts of Mexico, (c) Central America, and (d) parts of California, as well as (e) the Celtic of northwestern Europe, (f) the Ainu of northeastern Asia, and (g) the Yoruba and Ganda in Africa (Closs, 1986, p. 3; Crump, 1990; Lancy, 1983).

Cultures also differ in customary mathematical behaviors. The difference between mainstream white Americans and the Kpelle of Liberia in West Africa is a case in point. I briefly summarize the study by Gay and Cole (1967) of mathematical concepts and behaviors in the two cultures.

Americans and the Kpelle are similar in arithmetic concepts because both people classify things. But they also differ because the Kpelle do not carry out such an activity explicitly or consciously like the Americans. Furthermore, the Kpelle do not have concepts of "zero" or "number." Neither do they have concepts for describing operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, even though in their daily mathematical behaviors they add, subtract, multiply, and divide things. Finally, although the Kpelle, like the Americans, measure length, time, volume, and money, they do not measure weight, area, speed, or temperature.

These types of cultural differences cause real problems when people from different cultures come into continuous interaction in the wider society or in school. They encounter misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviors. However, over time and under appropriate circumstances the interacting parties learn to understand each other, acquire the competence of the other interacting group, and learn to behave in a culturally appropriate manner.

In anticipation of my later discussion of culture and school learning, the

following points should be kept in mind. Children in every population successfully learn their culture, including the meaning of raising eyebrows, how to get ahead, their language, mathematical concepts, and behaviors. How children learn these things differs from population to population. How they learn them in their respective populations differs from how things are learned in school (Scribner and Cole, 1973). School learning for children of every population is culturally discontinuous (Ogbu, 1982). When children go to school they are expected to learn both what the school teaches (the school culture or curriculum) and the learning style of the school. In many cases this transition happens; in some cases it is more problematic. To understand why it is more problematic for some groups than for others I introduce the concept of cultural frame of reference and discuss its role in cross-cultural learning and behavior.

Cultural Frame of Reference

One feature of contact deserving a serious conceptual consideration is cultural frame of reference. A cultural frame of reference, from the point of view of members of a given population, refers to the correct or ideal way to behave within the culture (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, preferences, practices, and symbols considered appropriate for members of the culture). There usually exists in a culture a widely accepted and sanctioned cultural frame of reference that guides people's behavior.

When people from two populations come into continuous interaction they bring with them respective cultural frames of reference that may be (a) similar (e.g., mainstream white Americans from Los Angeles interacting with mainstream white Americans from San Francisco), (b) different (e.g., Americans interacting with Russians; see Richmond, 1992), or (c) oppositional (e.g., mainstream white Americans interacting with the hippies in the 1960s; see Yinger, 1982).

Cultural frames of reference that are different and not oppositional have usually existed *before* two populations come into continuous contact. For example, Punjabi Indians in California spoke Punjabi, practiced the Sikh, Hindu, or Moslem religion, had arranged marriages, and males wore turbans *before* they came to California, where they continue these beliefs and practices to some extent. Elsewhere I have designated the kind of cultural differences that do not involve opposition as *primary cultural differences* (Gibson 1988; Ogbu, 1992, 1994).

The origin of oppositional cultural frame of reference is different. Cultural differences involving opposition usually develop among subordinate groups *after* two populations have come into continuous contact. I have designated such cultural differences elsewhere as *secondary cultural differences* (Ogbu, 1982). These differences arise as a kind of solution to status problems faced by the subordi-

nate group. They usually result in formation of an oppositional cultural frame of reference. Continuous contact situations giving rise to status problems include but are not limited to colonization, conquest, exile, immigration/migration, minority status, persecution, refugee status, slavery, social movement (including religious movement), trading relations, and all forms of subordination.

Continuous contact is necessary but not sufficient for an oppositional cultural frame of reference to emerge. There are two other conditions. One is that the relationship between the interacting populations should be characterized by status or collective problems that the subordinate population cannot solve ordinarily within the existing system of intergroup relations.

The other necessary condition is the *impact* of the collective problems on individual members of the subordinate group, i.e., how, as individuals, subordinate-group members experience these problems in their lives. This condition is readily observed when an oppressed group attempts to solve its status problems through a social movement: a liberation, messianic or revitalization movement (Cantril, 1963; Lanternari, 1963; Sheperson and Price, 1958; Thrupp, 1962; Touch, 1963; Worsley, 1968).

The difficulties and frustrations experienced by the members of a subordinate group propel them to forge collective solutions to their collective problems. A crucial part of forging successful collective solutions usually entails agreeing to accept some criteria, norms, or standards for defining the group's status and for deciding who is a *bona fide* member. The norms define attitudes, behaviors, and speech styles for members that are "good" and "bad." The "good" attitudes, behaviors, and speech styles constitute the content of their new cultural frame of reference. Note that the approved attitudes, behaviors, and language are not a matter of individual preferences but are shared by the membership. Because they are shared, those attitudes, behaviors, and way of talking become a part of the subordinate group's culture repertoire and, as noted above, become incorporated into their cultural frame of reference (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

The cultural frame of reference of the subordinate group may include attitudes, behaviors, and speech styles that are stigmatized by the dominant group. It often excludes the attitudes, behaviors, and speech styles of the dominant group rejected by the subordinate group. Consequently, the cultural frame of reference of the subordinate group is not only different from that of the dominant group; it is also oppositional to it.

From the point of view of the members of the subordinate group there coexist two opposing cultural frames of reference: one is appropriate for the dominant group, the "enemy," but not for subordinate group members; the other is appropriate for subordinate group members. The attitudes, behaviors, and speech styles of the dominant group are symbols of opposition and disaffiliation, while those of the subordinate group are symbols of group identity and affiliation with the subordinate group. The subordinate group members find

ways to avoid manifesting attitudes of behaving or talking like participants in the cultural framework of their enemy, the dominant group. They may express their oppositional cultural frame of reference in day-to-day attitudes, speech, and behaviors as well as in rituals, literature, folklore, music, and theater. In some things, subordinate group members show their opposition by trying to "outdo" the dominant group to prove they are "better" than what the dominant group thinks of them. As long as the two populations—the dominant group and the subordinate group—operate in two separate cultural worlds, by law (e.g., *de jure* social and economic segregation) or custom (e.g., de facto social and economic segregation) there are no cultural problems because such a situation does not require crossing cultural boundaries.

Cultural frames of reference are intimately related to collective or group identity, i.e., "ingroup feeling" of belongingness. Where cultural frames of reference are not in opposition, collective identities of populations in continuous contact are also not in opposition but different. But where cultural frames of reference are in opposition, the collective identities of the populations in continuous contact are also oppositional.

Among subordinate peoples with oppositional cultural frame of reference, the perceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate for group members is emotionally charged because it is intimately bound up with their sense of self-worth and security in the face of denigration by the dominant group. Therefore, individual members who try to cross cultural boundaries or act like members of the dominant group, i.e., the "enemy," in selected domains may experience anxieties as well as opposition from their peers (Bruner, 1975; DeVos, 1980).

Once established, a cultural frame of reference may persist beyond the lifetime of its creators; it persists as long as it continues to serve the functions that brought it about. It may also take on a life of its own and act as a ready-made solution for subsequent generations confronting collective problems similar to the one faced by their predecessors. (DeVos, 1980).

The ability of people from different cultures to cross cultural boundaries depends partly on their cultural frames of reference being similar, different, or oppositional. It is easiest for people with similar cultural frames of reference to cross cultural boundaries (e.g., mainstream white middle-class people from Los Angeles and San Francisco); next are populations with *different* but not oppositional cultural frames of reference (e.g., French and Americans; immigrant minorities in the U.S.); finally, crossing cultural boundaries is most problematic for populations with *oppositional* cultural frames of reference (e.g., colonized people involved in messianic movements; involuntary minorities).

In the U.S. both immigrant minorities with nonoppositional cultural frames of reference and nonimmigrant minorities with oppositional cultural frames of reference are expected to attain upward social mobility by behaving according to the cultural frame of reference of the dominant white Americans in school and the workplace. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 represent schematically the situation facing
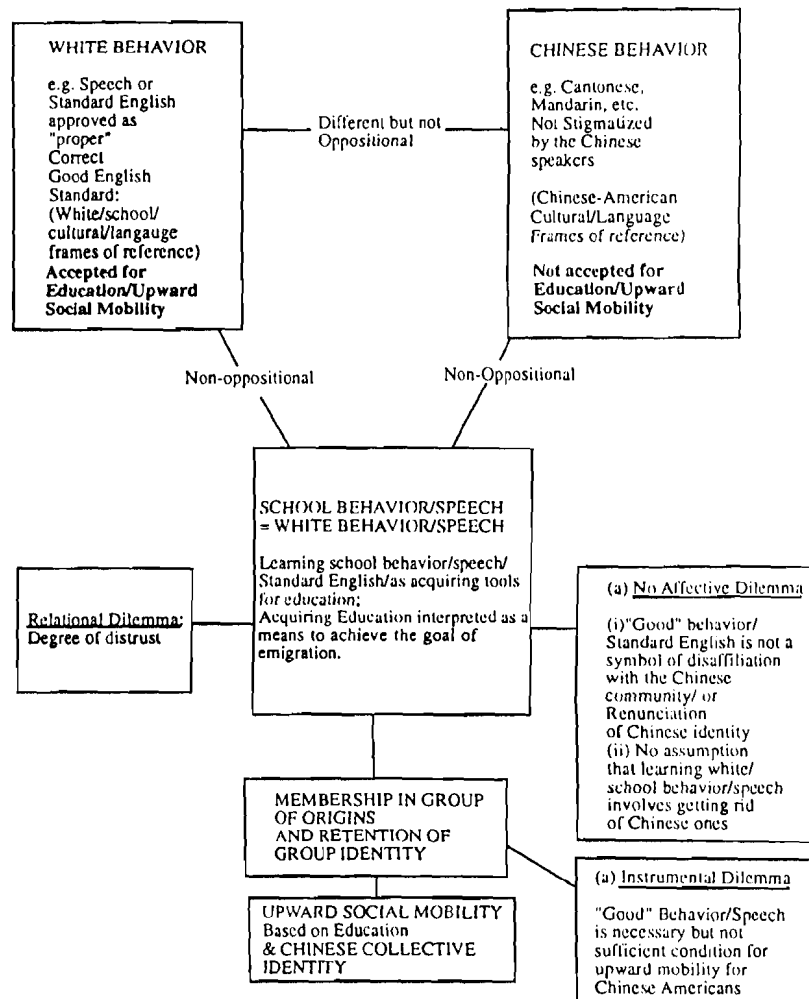
FIG. 1. Interpretations of schooling: voluntary minorities.

FIG. 2. Interpretations of schooling: involuntary minorities.

the two minority types with respect to the relationship between cultural frames of reference and upward social mobility. Both types of minorities know that their own minority cultures and languages (hence, their cultural frames of reference) are not accepted for self-advancement in the larger society. They know that they have to acquire the cultural frame of reference of the dominant group as presented at school or at the workplace to attain upward social mobility.
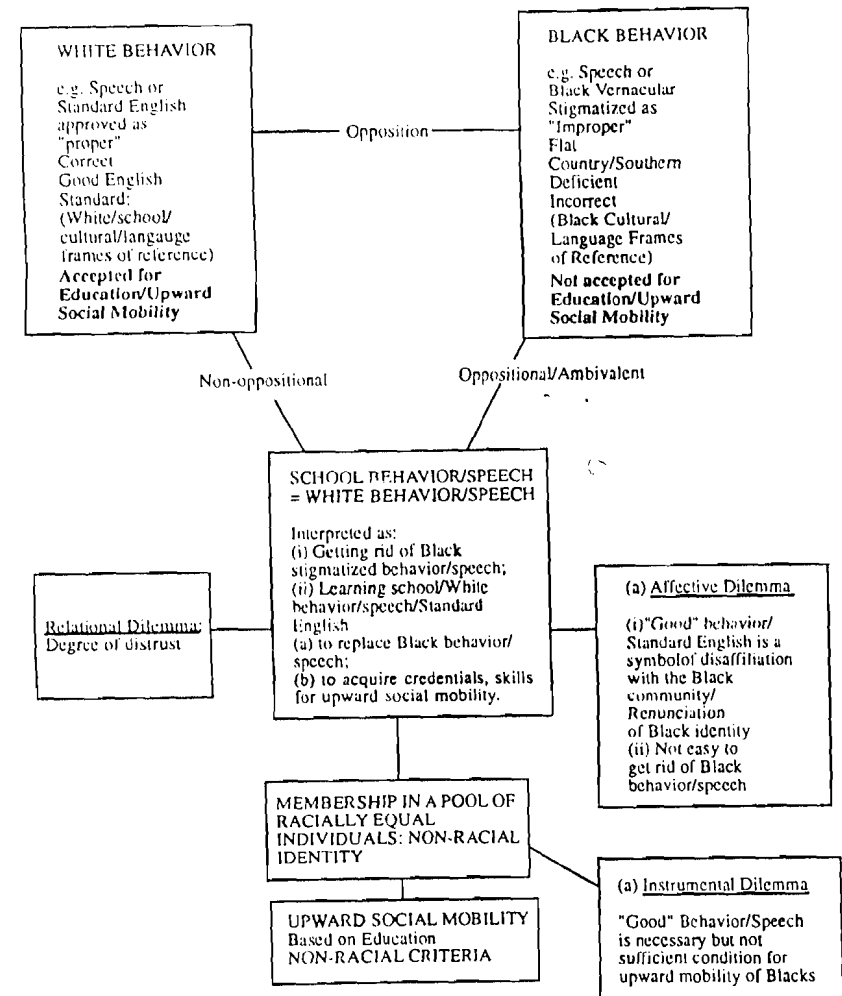
However, they differ in how they interpret what behaving according to the dominant group's cultural frame of reference means, in their responses to the requirement and in their ability to cross cultural boundaries. The situation regarding learning the standard English in school will illustrate the problem. The cultural frame of reference to be acquired at school includes speaking standard English, which is the language of the white (see Figs. 1 and 2).

Voluntary or immigrant minority groups who do not have oppositional cultural frames of reference cross cultural or language boundaries more easily. This is partly because they do not experience what DeVos (1980) calls "affective dilemma." Take the case of Cantonese-speaking Chinese immigrants. They know even before they emigrated to the U.S. that the standard English of the mainstream white American, not Cantonese, is the approved language for upward social mobility. They know that their Cantonese is a different language, is not stigmatized by white Americans, and is not oppositional to the standard English. Immigrant Chinese children are not asked by the public schools or employers to give up their Cantonese so that they will be able to learn the standard English. Nor do the Chinese assume that they have to give up their Cantonese *before* they can successfully learn the standard English. Chinese immigrants simply learn English as an additional language, a tool, with which to achieve the goal of emigration, namely, self-advancement. Moreover, the Chinese community supports the children's learning of the standard English because they think it is good to know how to speak it. The Chinese do not imagine that learning the standard English is detrimental to their language identity or group membership.

Another reason the immigrants are able to cross cultural boundaries is that they came to the U.S. knowing that they would have to learn to act according to the cultural frame of reference of the mainstream white American at school and work in order to achieve the goal of their emigration. They therefore consider not knowing how to act according to the mainstream white American cultural frame of reference as a problem and interpret the cultural and language differences between them and mainstream white Americans at school and at work as *barriers to overcome*. Although the immigrants may not get jobs and wages equal to their white peers for their success in learning the standard English and subsequent school success, they consider what they get "better" than what they would have achieved "back home." That is, they have a positive "dual frame" of status mobility.

Non-Western peoples attending Western-type schools also cross cultural boundaries selectively without affective dilemma. Take the case of the Toba Batak in Indonesia. Among them, learning to behave in nontraditional ways (e.g., acquiring Western-type education, technological skills, etc.) for self-advancement is interpreted as becoming "modern" (Bruner, 1975; DeVos, 1980).

It is nonimmigrant minorities with oppositional cultural frames of reference who experience the most difficulties in crossing cultural boundaries at school and the workplace. One reason discussed already is that they developed an oppositional cultural frame of reference to solve collective economic, social, and psychological problems in their relationship with the dominant group or their "enemy." Under this circumstance they interpret the cultural differences they encounter as *markers of group* or *collective identity* to be maintained and

as boundary-maintaining mechanisms between them and the dominant group. In segregated areas of life this is not a particularly serious problem since much cultural boundary crossing is not involved.

However, when these minorities are required to operate according to the mainstream white American cultural frame of reference they face an affective dilemma. Like the Cantonese-speaking immigrant Chinese, black Americans, for example, know that the standard English, not black English vernacular, is the approved language for upward social mobility in the wider society; they know that they are expected to learn it in order to get ahead. They also know that their speech is stigmatized by white Americans. White Americans, for instance, regard black speech as "improper," "flat," "country" or "southern," "deficient," and "incorrect." Some blacks have, at least partially, internalized this stigmatization, and have come to believe that their speech is "improper," etc. The affective dilemmas faced by blacks and similar minorities arise partly from white and school attitudes toward their languages: The schools and white employers expect these minorities (a) to give up or get rid of their ethnic dialects or languages and (b) to imply in their expectation that in order for the minorities to successfully learn the "proper" or "correct" English they must first give up their "incorrect" dialect or speech. Involuntary minorities also contribute to the affective dilemmas because they also assume (a) that they have to get rid of their "improper" dialects before they can learn the "proper" English. Furthermore, (b) they assume that they are learning the "proper" English *to replace* their own minority dialects. Unlike the immigrant Chinese, the nonimmigrants do not think that they are acquiring an additional language as a tool to achieve a goal. They think of the situation as learning something that will change their language identity: it is a subtractive learning and replacement, not an additive learning.

Thus, although nonimmigrant minorities *want* to learn the standard English for self-advancement, they face at least two affective dilemmas in doing so. One is that within their community "talking proper" or speaking the standard English has been regarded historically as a symbol of disaffiliation with the community. "Talking proper" does not have the same positive value and community support noted for the Chinese immigrants. So, the nonimmigrant may be discouraged from learning or using the standard English for fear of peer or community response.

The second problem is that it is not easy to get rid of minority speech. Even when individuals take special lessons or coaching on standard English, they often come out sounding like minority speakers.

The instrumental dilemma faced by the nonimmigrants has more of an adverse effect on behaving according to the white cultural frame of reference than that faced by the immigrants. Nonimmigrant minorities do not assume that learning the standard English is primarily acquiring additional language to

achieve a goal. They know from a long history of discrimination that "good speech behavior" or "talking proper" is a necessary but not sufficient condition for upward social mobility for minorities. Because they do not have a "back home" situation, these minorities usually compare the jobs and wages they get for speaking good English and for their education with those of their white peers. They generally conclude that they are rewarded with less jobs and wages because of their minority status. They have "a negative dual frame" of status comparison.

In summary, unlike immigrant minorities, the nonimmigrants with their oppositional cultural frames of reference face affective dilemmas when they have to behave according to the cultural frame of reference of their "enemy" in school or the workplace. Although *they want to* behave according to the mainstream white cultural frame of reference (e.g., speak the standard English) for self-advancement, they also consciously or unconsciously tend to interpret their behavior as giving up one's cultural or minority identity.

Bruner (1975; DeVos, 1980) illustrates this problem with the case of Native Americans. According to Bruner, until recently, Native Americans assumed that in order to become "modern" or attain upward social mobility in the wider U.S. society they had to renounce their minority identity. This generally aroused a sense of betrayal to one's group, the fear of isolation from the group, and uncertainty of acceptance by the white society. This tended to discourage individuals from trying to succeed in education and professionally.

Minority Status

As might have become obvious by now, regardless of their origins, minorities in the U.S. encounter cultural and language problems in society and school. But they differ in the degree to which they succeed in overcoming these problems. Comparative research suggests that voluntary minorities are more successful than involuntary minorities in solving the cultural and language problems, i.e., in being able to cross cultural boundaries.

Voluntary minorities are people who have moved to the U.S. more or less voluntarily because they believe that this move will result in more economic well-being, better overall opportunities, and/or greater political freedom. Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and West Indians are examples of voluntary minorities. Chinese Americans are a voluntary minority group because neither the U.S. government nor white Americans forced them to come or conquered and took over their land. Voluntary minorities bring with them cultural/language frames of reference that are different from, but not necessarily oppositional to, mainstream white American cultural/language frames of reference.

Refugees who were *forced* to come to the United States by war, famine,

political persecution, or other circumstances in which the U.S. government and/or her allies were involved are not voluntary minorities. The reason is that the refugees *did not plan* their coming to the U.S. with the expectation of achieving self-betterment through hard work in a land of opportunity. *Migrant workers* who came to the U.S. initially to seek temporary employment are *not* voluntary minorities, regardless of how long they remain. Likewise, *binationals* such as those found among Mexicans living in the U.S. are not voluntary minorities. The binationals work in the U.S. but maintain residences in both the U.S. and Mexico. They maintain contact with their native communities in Mexico and remain integrated in the social life of those communities. They use their earnings in the U.S. to accumulate animals, stocks, and land and to establish small businesses in Mexico. These accumulations, in turn, increase their obligations and ties to their place of origin in Mexico (Baca, 1994).

Involuntary minorities are people who were originally brought into U.S. society more or less *permanently against their will*, through slavery, conquest, or colonization (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans). Black Americans were originally brought by white Americans to the U.S. as slaves. In contrast, black people coming from Africa and the Caribbean in this century come either as voluntary minorities (i.e., immigrants) or refugees. (See Ogbu, 1994, for details of the distinction.) Involuntary minorities develop an *oppositional* cultural frame of reference *after* their forced incorporation.

Cultural and language differences and conflicts in U.S. public schools are interpreted differently and, therefore, have different implications for voluntary minorities (e.g., Chinese Americans) and involuntary minorities (e.g., black Americans). In Part Two (to appear in *The Urban Review*, Vol. 27, No. 4) I will describe the cultural problems and how these minorities interpret and respond to them.

NOTES

1. I want to make some points perfectly clear so that white Americans and minorities will not misread or misinterpret this paper. First, I do not mean or imply that white Americans and the U.S. society are not responsible for the problems encountered by the minorities in trying to succeed in school and society because the immediate difficulties of the minorities I describe are the result of their own adaptive responses to their treatment by white Americans and societal institutions controlled by the whites. The treatment of the minorities by the dominant group and the institutions controlled by the dominant group have caused the minorities to respond in ways

that may adversely affect their striving for school and postschool success. For nonimmigrant minorities the ultimate cause of their interpretations of cultural and language differences are white treatment, including forced incorporation of the minorities into U.S. society. Second, by analyzing minorities' interpretations of the cultural and language differences they encounter and the implications for their responses to schooling, I am not blaming the victim. At the same time, I do not deny that the victim can contribute to his or her own victimization. Third, no one should interpret this essay to mean that schools and society can do nothing to improve the school and postschool success of minorities. Nor should it be interpreted that nothing can be done to change the situation. My purpose in writing this essay is to make certain things explicit that have hitherto not been recognized as a part of the problem of schooling for minorities. I believe that by making these factors explicit, educational policymakers, schools, and interventionists will take them into account in formulating policies and designing programs to improve minority students' school success. I also believe that minorities themselves will give serious thought to these factors and that their reflections will contribute positive change.

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