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Affirming Diversity

The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education

Third Edition

Sonia Nieto

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Toward an Understanding of School Achievement

There's so much to learn and that's all I want to do is just learn, try to educate my mind to see what I could get out of it.

Paul Chavez, interviewee

As improbable as it might sound, these are the words of a young man who was suspended and expelled from school on many occasions. A gang member with a difficult family life, Paul had managed to be accepted into an alternative school, where he was experiencing academic success for only the second time in his life. As you will see in his case study, which follows this chapter, Paul is resolute about continuing his education and becoming a teacher or counselor in order to help young people like himself. But given his background and experiences, few people would have believed that he was capable of learning. Conventional theories of academic success or failure do not explain cases such as Paul's.

The simple dichotomy traditionally used to explain the school failure of students, particularly those from culturally diverse and poor backgrounds, presented in the preceding chapters, can be summarized as follows: School failure is the fault either of the students themselves, who are genetically inferior, or of the social characteristics of their communities, which suffer from economic and cultural disadvantages and thus are unable to provide their children with the necessary preparation for academic success.¹ Alternative explanations are that school failure is caused by the structure of schools, which are static, classist, and racist and represent the interests of the dominant classes, or by cultural incompatibilities between the home and the school.²

In this chapter we will review a number of theories about the complex conditions that may affect school achievement, then consider how these conditions, acting in tandem, may influence the academic success or failure of students. With this discussion as a basis, case studies of two students who have not been successful in school, Ron Morris and Paul Chavez, will be presented. Both of these young men were written off by their respective schools and teachers as incapable of becoming successful students. Their cases demonstrate that learning can take place even in the most difficult personal and societal circumstances.

DEFICIT THEORIES REVISITED

The theory that genetic or cultural inferiority is the cause of academic failure has been a recurrent theme in U.S. educational history. Throughout the past half century, much of the research on school failure has focused on the inadequacy of students' home environment and culture. In an early review of research concerning the poor achievement of Black children, for instance, Stephen Baratz and Joan Baratz found that most of it was based on the assumption that Black children were deficient in language, social development, and intelligence. This assumption resulted in blaming students' failure to achieve on their so-called deficits; singled out for blame were children's *poorly developed language* (more concretely, the fact that they did not speak standard English); an *inadequate mother* (the assumption being that low-income Black mothers were invariably poor parents); *too little stimulation* in the home (that their homes lacked the kinds of environments that encouraged learning); *too much stimulation* in the home (their homes were too chaotic and disorganized or simply not organized along middle-class norms); and a host of other, often contradictory hypotheses. Baratz and Baratz found that the homes and backgrounds of Black children and poor children in general were classified in the research as "sick, pathological, deviant, or underdeveloped."³ Such caricatures, which continue to exist, are of little value to teachers and schools who want to provide all children with a high-quality education.

The case studies of Ron Morris and Paul Chavez that follow this chapter are compelling examples of life in difficult circumstances: Both live in poverty with large families headed by single mothers; both have been involved in antisocial and criminal behavior; and both have had negative schooling experiences. One might be tempted to write them off because of these circumstances, but as you shall see in their case studies, both Ron and Paul are now learning successfully in alternative schools. Deficit explanations of school achievement cannot explain their success.

The popularity of deficit theories has waxed and waned during the past three decades as newer and more comprehensive explanations for school underachievement have taken root. But these viewpoints held great sway during the 1960s, and they were responsible for much of the social and educational policy in the following decades. Genetic and cultural inferiority arguments have left a legacy that is still apparent, as we saw in the previous chapter, for example, in the way that bilingual education continues to be conceptualized as a "compensatory" program. The rationale for compensatory education was that children from so-called "deprived homes" needed to be compensated for their genetic, cultural, or linguistic deprivation.

An early critic of deficit theories, William Ryan, turned the argument of cultural deprivation on its head by claiming that it was a strategy to "blame the victim." In a book that had a great impact in challenging the theory of cultural inferiority during its heyday in the 1960s, he stated,

We are dealing, it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally depriving schools. And the task to be accomplished

is not to revise, amend, and repair deficient children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children.⁴

Theories of genetic inferiority and cultural deprivation popularized during the 1960s have left their mark on the schooling of poor children and children of color. These theories are not only classist and racist but also simply inadequate in explaining the failure of so many students. Although the social and economic conditions of their communities and families can be significant contributing factors in the academic failure of students, they alone are not the cause of student failure or success. Moreover, students' home and family situations are seldom subject to change by the school. Since schools cannot change the poverty or living conditions of students, the challenge is to find ways to teach children effectively in spite of the poverty or other disabling conditions in which they may live.

Students' identities—that is, their race, ethnicity, social class, and language, among other characteristics—can also have an impact on their academic success or failure, but it is not these characteristics per se that *cause* failure. Rather, it is the school's *perception* of students' language, culture, and class as *inadequate* and *negative*, and the subsequent devalued status of these characteristics in the academic environment, that help to explain school failure. In Paul Chavez's case study, his early gang affiliation had a decided effect on the academic expectations that teachers had of him.

That the behaviors of middle-class parents of any race or ethnic group tend to be different from those of poor parents is amply documented. Parents living in poverty may be either unaware of the benefits of what middle-class parents know by experience or unable to provide certain activities for their children. Middle-class parents, for example, tend to engage in school-like prereading activities much more regularly than do working-class parents. Schools deem other activities in which middle-class parents and their children participate as essential to educational success: going to the library on a consistent basis, attending museums and other cultural centers, and providing a host of other experiences that schools and society have labeled "enriching."

Whether these activities are in fact enriching is not in question; the problem is that the activities of poor families, some of which may be just as enriching, are not viewed in the same way. For example, many poor families travel either to their original home countries or to other parts of the United States from where they originally came. Children may spend summers "down South" or in Jamaica or Mexico, but what they learn on these trips commonly is ignored by the school in spite of its potentially enriching character. It never occurred to me, for example, that my own experience of visiting family for an entire summer between my fifth and sixth grades might be of interest to my teacher or classmates. Mind you, my teachers never told me this directly, but I had already gotten the message that issues of consequence to my family carried no great weight in school. That I perceived this to be the case is a shame: When I think of the giant tarantula I caught, froze, and brought home, or of the many things I learned about living on a farm, or of how my

Spanish substantially improved that summer, I can only conclude that these things might indeed have been interesting to my teacher and classmates.

Students' ability to develop literacy and other academic skills as traditionally defined by schools is necessary for academic success. But if defined only in this way, academic success is dysfunctional because it encourages students to lose part of their identity in the process. Students' abilities to use the skills, talents, and experiences learned at home and in the community to further their learning must also be included in a definition of academic success.

Shirley Brice Heath's classic research with a Black community that she called "Trackton" is an compelling example. She found that the kinds of questioning rituals in which parents and other adults engaged with children were not preparing the children adequately for school activities.⁵ In observing the White middle-class teachers of these children, she found that the questions they asked the students were qualitatively different from the kinds of questions to which the children were accustomed at home. Teachers' questions, for example, concerned pulling attributes of things out of context and naming them (e.g., to identify size, shape, or color). In contrast, in their homes the children were asked questions about whole events or objects as well as about their uses, causes, and effects. The questions their parents asked them often required the children to make analogical comparisons and understand complex metaphors. These questions often were linguistically complex and they required a sophisticated use of language on the part of the children. Often there was no one "right" answer, because answers usually involved telling a story or describing a situation.

The result of the different kinds of questions asked in the different contexts was a perplexing lack of communication in the school: Normally communicative students were silent and unresponsive to teachers' questions, and teachers assumed that their students were deficient in language or unintelligent. There was nothing *wrong* with the questions asked by the families in Trackton; they were simply different from those asked in school and therefore they placed the children at a disadvantage for school success.

Through a research project with Heath, the teachers became aware of the differences in questioning rituals, and they began to study the kinds of questions that adults in Trackton asked. Some of these could be called "probing questions" and teachers began using them in their school lessons. Teachers were then able to use these kinds of questions as a basis for asking more traditional "school" questions, to which children also needed to become accustomed if they were to be successful in school. The results were dramatic: Children became active and enthusiastic participants in these lessons, a dramatic change from their previous passive behavior.

This felicitous example of learning to use the culture of students in their education contradicts the scenario of failure in many schools, where parents are expected to provide help in ways they may be unable. Some parents are unaware of how to give their children concrete support in areas such as homework, but this lack of support in itself does not necessarily produce school failure. For example, in her research with Punjabi students, Margaret Gibson reported that most parents

were not able to give their children the kinds of support generally deemed as essential for academic success by schools.⁶ Yet the majority of students she studied were academically successful. The parents' articulated support of education, their use of discipline, and the faith they had in the rewards of education were all crucial to the success of their children.

Blaming parents or children for academic failure begs the question, for the role of schools is to educate *all* students from all families, not only the most academically gifted students from economically advantaged, mainstream, English-speaking, European American families. Because schools can do nothing to change a student's social class or home background, it makes sense to focus on what they can change: themselves. As we saw in Chapter 6, schools sometimes think that they must start out with poor children or children of color as if they were blank slates. In effect, this means tearing down the building blocks the children already have in order to start from a middle-class foundation. School-related skills are of course necessary for academic success, but there is no reason why they cannot be built on the linguistic, cultural, or experiential foundation that children already have. The fact that some children come to school with a rich oral tradition is a case in point. Perhaps their parents never read stories to them but instead *tell* them stories. This experience can either be dismissed by schools as trivial or it can be used as the basis for learning.

Genetic and cultural inferiority theories are not a thing of the past. As recently as 1994, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray resurrected the argument that genetic inferiority was the root cause of the academic failure among African American students.⁷ Although widely discredited by serious scholars as both ethnocentric and scientifically unfounded (see note 16 in Chapter 4), genetic and cultural inferiority theories survive because they provide a simplistic explanation for complex problems. Moreover, by accepting theories of genetic and cultural inferiority, the detrimental effects on student learning of structural inequality, racism, and poverty do not have to be considered.

But we also need to understand the power of what has been called the *cultural capital* of dominant groups. According to Pierre Bourdieu, cultural capital can exist in three forms: dispositions of the mind and body; cultural goods, such as pictures, books, and other material objects; and educational qualifications. In all three forms, transmission of cultural capital is, according to Bourdieu, "no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital."⁸ That is, the values, tastes, languages, dialects, and cultures that have most status are invariably associated with the dominant group. As a consequence, the weight of cultural capital cannot be ignored. To do so would be both naïve and romantic because power, knowledge, and resources are located in the norms of dominant cultures and languages. To imply that working-class students and students from dominated groups need not learn the cultural norms of the dominant group is effectively to disempower the students who are most academically vulnerable. But the curriculum should also be relevant to the cultural experiences and values of students from subordinated groups. A complete education needs to include *both* the norms and canon of the dominant *and* of dominated cultures because

including culturally relevant curriculum is a valuable way to challenge a monocultural canon.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION REVISITED

The argument that schools reproduce the economic and social relations of society and therefore tend to serve the interests of the dominant classes, articulated first during the 1970s by scholars such as Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis, and Joel Spring placed schools squarely in a political context.⁹ According to this theory, the role of the schools was to keep the poor in their place by teaching them the proper attitudes and behaviors for becoming good workers, and to keep the dominant classes in power by teaching their children the skills of management and control that would presumably prepare them to manage and control the working class. Schools therefore reproduced the status quo and not only reflected structural inequalities based on class, race, and gender, but also helped to maintain these inequalities.

Economic and social reproduction theorists maintain that the "sorting" function of schools, to use a term coined by Spring, is apparent in everything from physical structure to curriculum and instruction. For example, the schools of the poor are generally factory-like fortresses that operate with an abundance of bells and other controlling mechanisms, whereas the schools of the wealthy tend to be much more "open" physically and emotionally, allowing for more autonomy and creative thinking on the part of students. Likewise, relations between students and teachers in poor communities reflect a dominant-dominated relationship much more so than in middle-class or wealthy communities. The curriculum also differs: More sophisticated and challenging knowledge is generally taught in wealthy schools, whereas the basics and rote memorization are the order of the day in poor schools. The "sorting" function of the schools results in an almost perfect replication of the stratification of society. Although the theories generally concerned the United States, they are true of all societies.

This thinking revolutionized the debate on the purposes and outcomes of schools and placed the success or failure of students in a new light. The benign, stated purpose of U.S. schooling to serve as an "equalizer" is seriously questioned by these theories. For example, that the majority of students in urban schools drop out is not a *coincidence* but actually an *intended outcome* of the educational system. That is, according to reproduction theory, some students are intentionally channeled by the schools to be either fodder for war or a reserve uneducated labor force. Schools do just exactly what is expected of them: They succeed at creating school failure.

The arguments of the social reproduction theorists are compelling and they have had a tremendous impact on educational thinking since the 1970s. But by concentrating on the labor market purpose of schooling, they tend to fall into a somewhat static explanation of school success or failure. School life, according to this analysis, is almost completely subordinated to the needs of the economy, leaving little room for the role that students and their communities have in influencing

school policies and practices. Put in its most simplistic form, this analysis assumes that schooling is simply imposed from above and accepted from below. But schools are complex and perplexing institutions and things are not always this neat or apparent.

Economic and social reproduction theories provide a more persuasive analysis of academic failure than either genetic and cultural inferiority or cultural incompatibility theories because they place schools in a sociopolitical context. But these analyses are also incomplete. They can fall into mechanistic explanations of dynamic processes, assuming a simple cause-effect relationship. Such theories fail to explain why students from some culturally dominated communities have managed to succeed in school, or why some schools in poor communities are extraordinarily successful in spite of tremendous odds.

Another problem with economic and social reproduction theories is that, in emphasizing the role of social class, they almost completely neglect gender and race. But social class *alone* cannot explain why schools are also inequitable for females and for students of racially and culturally subordinated communities.

An additional problem is that the lengthy struggles over schooling in which many communities have been historically involved—including the desegregation of schools, bilingual education, multicultural education, and access to education for females and students with special needs—are not taken into account. If education were simply imposed from above, these reforms would never have found their way, even imperfectly, into the school. Some theorists such as Michael Apple have suggested that schools are a product of such conflicts and that the purposes of the dominant class are never perfectly reflected in the schools, but resisted and modified by the recipients of schooling.¹⁰

Economic and social reproduction theories help explain how academic failure and success are not unintended outcomes but rather logical results of differentiated schooling. They also help remove the complete burden of failure from students, their families, and communities to the society at large, and they provide a *macroanalytic*, or societal, understanding of schooling. But social reproduction theories generally fail to take cultural and psychological issues into account. They are therefore incomplete.

CULTURAL INCOMPATIBILITIES REVISITED

Another explanation for school failure is that it is caused by cultural incompatibilities; that is, because school culture and home culture are often at odds, the result is a "cultural clash" that produces school failure. According to this explanation, it is necessary to consider the differing experiences, values, skills, expectations, and lifestyles with which children enter school and how these differences, in being more or less consistent with the school environment, affect their achievement. The more consistent that home and school cultures are, the reasoning goes, the more successful students will be. The opposite is also true: The more that students' experiences, skills, and values differ from the school setting, the more failure they will experience.

This explanation makes a great deal of sense and it explains school failure more convincingly than simple deficit theories. That some students learn more effectively in cooperative settings than in competitive settings is not a problem *per se*. What makes it a problem is that many schools persist in providing competitive environments *only*. Given this reality, cultural differences begin to function as a risk factor. This reasoning turns around the popular conception of "children at risk," so that the risk comes not from within the child but develops as a result of particular school policies and practices.

Likewise, the fact that some students enter school without speaking English is not itself a satisfactory explanation for why they fail in school. Rather, the interpretation of their non-English speaking status, and the value or lack of value given to the child's native language are what matter. Whereas in some schools a student might be identified as *non-English-speaking*, in another school that same child might be called *Khmer-speaking*. The difference is not simply a semantic one, for in the first case the child is assumed to be *missing* language, but in the second case, the child is assumed to possess language already. This was the case with my daughter Marisa, as I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 6. And because language ability is the main ingredient for school success, how schools and teachers perceive children's language is significant.

The cultural mismatch theory is more hopeful than deterministic explanations such as genetic inferiority or economic reproduction theories because it assumes that teachers can learn to create environments in which all students can be successful learners. It also respects teachers as creative intellectuals rather than as simple technicians: Teachers are expected to be able to develop a critical analysis of their students' cultures and use this analysis to teach all their students effectively. Gloria Ladson-Billings, in coining the term "culturally relevant teaching," has suggested that this kind of pedagogy is in sharp contrast to "assimilationist teaching," whose main purpose is to transmit dominant culture beliefs and values in an uncritical way to all students.¹¹

Although the cultural mismatch theory is more comprehensive than the cultural or genetic deficit theories, and without their implicit racist and classist overtones, it too is insufficient to explain why some students succeed and others fail. The extraordinarily high dropout rates among American Indian and Alaska Native students, higher than all other racial or ethnic groups in the United States, is a case in point. According to Richard St. Germaine, addressing cultural discontinuities through the curriculum can help, but this strategy alone is only a partial solution because the structural inequality that produces enormous poverty is left untouched.¹²

Olga Vasquez, Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, and Sheila Shannon studied the role of language and culture in an immigrant Mexican community. They recommend that teachers learn to take advantage of students' linguistic and cultural experiences and their families' resources for learning, but their research also led them to conclude that the cultural discontinuities theory alone is inadequate in predicting the school success or failure of an entire group of people. They suggest, for instance, that an emphasis on cultural differences results in overshadowing other

conditions that influence learning, including school climate and teaching styles. In their research, they found a good deal of linguistic and cultural flexibility among the children and families they studied. Some used language in ways similar to middle-class homes, others used language that reflects their Mexican heritage, and some used unique speech patterns depending on the situation. According to these researchers, the Mexican culture in the United States exists within "an intersection of multiple cultures and languages rather than isolated and impenetrable to outside influences."¹³

The research by Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon points to a major weakness of the theory of cultural discontinuity: Scanty attention is given to cultural accommodation or biculturation, just to mention two responses to cultural diversity experienced by immigrants. No culture exists in isolation, and a rigid interpretation of the theory of cultural discontinuity presupposes that all children from the same cultural background are the same. As a result, little regard is given to individual and family differences or school conditions that can also influence learning.

Another problem with the cultural discontinuity theory is that it cannot explain why students from some cultural groups are academically successful, even though by all indications they should not be. Margaret Gibson's ethnographic research has documented that although culturally very different from most of their peers, Punjabi students have been quite successful in school.¹⁴ Their grades and high school graduation rates equal or surpass those of their classmates in spite of severe handicaps: Their families are primarily farm laborers and factory workers and many are illiterate and speak little or no English; they generally have to become fluent in English in nonbilingual settings, and very few of them have received any special assistance; and they have been subjected to tremendous discrimination by both peers and teachers. Also, their home values and the values practiced by the school are in sharp contrast. Given this situation, their cultural background should predispose them to school failure. That this is not the case leads us to other explanations, one of which concerns the differences between voluntary and involuntary immigrants.

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE VERSUS THE "MINORITY" EXPERIENCE

A traditional argument to explain differences in academic achievement is that it will take students who are not doing well in school a generation or two to climb the ladder of success, just as it took all other immigrants to do so. This argument is a specious one because the educational and historical experiences of African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos are markedly different from those of other ethnic groups. For one, American Indians, African Americans, and many Mexican Americans can hardly be called new immigrants. Many have been here for generations, and some for millenia; furthermore, some Asians have been here for four or five generations and although many do well in school, others are not as successful.

It is clear that certain peoples represent unique cases of subjugation in U.S. history. This is true of American Indians, who were conquered and segregated on reservations; African Americans, who were enslaved and whose families were torn apart; Mexican Americans, whose land was annexed and who were then colonized within their own country; and Puerto Ricans, who were colonized and still live under the domination of the United States. In addition and probably not incidentally, they are all people of color, and the issue of race remains paramount in explaining their experiences.

In an alternative explanation of school failure and success, John Ogbu has suggested that it is necessary to look not only at a group's cultural background but also at its situation in the host society and its perceptions of opportunities available in that society.¹⁵ He classifies most immigrants in the United States as *voluntary immigrants*, and racial minority group immigrants as either *voluntary* or *involuntary minorities*, that is, those who come of their own free will as compared with those who were conquered or colonized. The latter groups have been incorporated into U.S. society against their will: American Indians, Africans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, among others. According to Ogbu, voluntary immigrants include all European and some Southeast Asian, African, and Central American immigrants, among others. The distinction is not always easy to make, because those who appear on the surface to be voluntary immigrants may not be so at all. But it remains a crucial distinction in explaining the present condition of many groups, including their educational experiences.

Ogbu has concluded that students from particular backgrounds experience a great variability in academic performance, and such variabilities often can be explained by the sociopolitical setting in which they find themselves. These students are not always racially different from the dominant group in a society, but they have lower social and political status. Other differences may also help explain their marginal status, especially their social class, gender, and native language. It is not their differences that make them marginal, but rather the *value* placed on those differences by the dominant society. Several extensive reviews have documented that socially and politically dominated groups have experienced the most severe academic disadvantage.¹⁶ In Japan, for instance, students of Korean descent and students from the Buraku caste tend to do quite poorly in Japanese schools because both are perceived in Japan as less valued than the majority population. Yet when they emigrate to the United States, they are equally successful in school as students from the Japanese majority. In addition, their IQ scores, a supposedly immutable indication of intelligence, also rise when these children emigrate to another society. Their dominated and devalued status in their home country seems to be the deciding factor because those who are in minority positions in their own countries are not subject to the same caste-like status in another society and may therefore be more successful in school.

The same phenomenon has been found among Finns, who do poorly in Swedish schools but quite well in schools in Australia. Their history of colonization and subsequent low status in Swedish society seems to be the key ingredient. In New Zealand, the native Maori perform less well in school than immigrant

Polynesians (who share a similar language and culture), and the Samis in Norway and Irish Catholics in Belfast also do less well than their dominant-group peers.

Similar results have been found closer to home. For example, newly arrived immigrants tend to do better in school and have higher self-esteem than those born in the United States.¹⁷ Their self-esteem and school success depend not just on their ethnicity but also on their interaction with U.S. society, and on the strength of the self-concepts they have developed in their home countries, where they are not seen as "minorities." Similarly some research has concluded that American Indian students, especially in urban settings, are almost completely cut off from their tribal roots, and this has negative consequences both for their self-esteem and their staying power in school.¹⁸ Again, the differences in these situations seem to be the sociopolitical context of schooling.

The visions, hopes, dreams, and experiences of voluntary and involuntary minorities also need to be kept in mind. According to Ogbu, most voluntary minorities have a "folk theory" of school success that sees the United States as a land of opportunity, where one gets ahead through education and hard work. According to this view, even a relative newcomer with few skills and little education can succeed economically. Their children can experience even more success if they work hard in school and apply themselves. The fact that they may have to undergo great sacrifices, including racism, economic hardships, and working at several menial jobs at the same time, is understood and accepted.

In the case of the Punjabis studied by Gibson, there were few employment and educational opportunities and sometimes even more discrimination in their home country than in the United States. Given their new situation, immigrants such as the Punjabis are happy to make great sacrifices for what they consider to be certain gains. Gibson found that they were more than willing to play the school game by the established rules.¹⁹ Immigrants coming from war-torn countries or refugee camps, or who have experienced the death of loved ones, may not consider living in an urban ghetto and engaging in backbreaking work to be a severe hardship. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, for example, documents the extraordinary success of many Central Americans, who go to the same schools and live in the same impoverished and crime-filled neighborhoods as Mexican Americans, who on the contrary have been much more unsuccessful in the schools.²⁰

Ogbu claims that the major problem in the academic performance of children from what he calls "castelike" minorities is not that they possess a different language, culture, or cognitive or communication style. The problem lies instead in the nature of the history, subjugation, and exploitation they have experienced *together with* their own responses to their treatment. Caste-like minorities in the United States tend to perceive schooling as providing unequal returns. In their communities, the children do not see their elders getting jobs, wages, or other benefits commensurate with their level of education.

Also, given the long history of discrimination and racism in the schools, involuntary minority children and their families are often distrustful of the educational system. Children in these communities have routinely been subjected to what Cummins calls "identity eradication,"²¹ where their culture and language have

been stripped away as one of the conditions for school success. These negative experiences result in their perception that equal educational opportunity and the "folk theories" of getting ahead in the United States are myths. The "folk theories," however, are readily accepted by immigrants who have not had a long history of discrimination in this country.

It is not unusual for students from caste-like minorities to engage in what Ogbu calls "cultural inversion," that is, to resist acquiring and demonstrating the culture and cognitive styles identified with the dominant group. These behaviors are considered "White" and include being studious and hardworking, speaking standard English, listening to European classical music, going to museums, getting good grades, and so on. Even extremely bright students from these groups may try just to "get by" because they fear being ostracized by their peers if they engage in behaviors that conform to the mainstream culture. They must cope, in the words of Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu, "with the burden of acting White."²² They see little benefit in terms of peer relationships in being successful students. Those who excel in school may feel both internal ambivalence and external pressures not to manifest such behaviors and attitudes. In their research in a predominantly African American school, Fordham and Ogbu found that successful students who were accepted by their peers also were either very successful in sports or had found another way to hide their academic achievement. According to Ogbu, involuntary minority parents, who themselves have had a long history of discrimination and negative experiences at school, may subconsciously mirror these same attitudes, adding to their children's ambivalent attitudes about education and success.

Many involuntary minority students choose to emphasize cultural behaviors that *differentiate* them from the majority and are in opposition to it, or what Ogbu calls *oppositional behavior*. Such behaviors include language, speech forms, and other manifestations that help to characterize their group but that are contrary to the behaviors promoted by the schools.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE IMMIGRANT AND "MINORITY" EXPERIENCES

The theories of John Ogbu and other educational anthropologists who were investigating the schooling experiences of immigrant students appeared together for the first time in the *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* journal in 1987, and they have had a profound influence on educational thought since then.²³ These theories have been enormously helpful in explaining the differences in the school experiences of students of various backgrounds. But the theories have also been criticized as being incomplete, ahistorical, and inflexible in allowing for individual differences. For example, Ogbu's theory may result in placing an inordinate responsibility on students and families without taking into account conditions outside their control that also affect learning. In addition, Ogbu's theories do not explain the long struggle of African American people for educational equality and the tremendous faith so many "involuntary minority" communities have had in the promise of education.

His explanation of *oppositional culture* has been criticized as being dangerously close to the old concept of *the culture of poverty*, a deficit theory developed by Oscar Lewis in the 1960s and roundly criticized for its racist and ethnocentric overtones.²⁴

In 1997, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* again addressed the issue of ethnicity and school performance, returning to the theories of Ogbu and others that had been introduced a decade earlier. In this issue, the authors attempt to complicate the immigrant/involuntary minority typology presented in the 1987 issue.²⁵ According to Margaret Gibson, the editor of the newer issue, recent studies in the United States pose a direct challenge to Ogbu's framework, especially because of its inability to account for intragroup variability: That is, why do some "involuntary" minorities do well in school while others do not? Some scholars and educators have found these theories too dichotomous and deterministic. For example, the typology does not neatly fit all groups, such as Mexican Americans, who share elements of both voluntary and involuntary minorities. Another major criticism discussed in the 1997 issue is the almost complete absence of gender and generational differences in the original theories.

Specifically, the newer issue of the journal compared some countries in Europe to countries such as the United States that are dominated by immigrants in order to determine whether or not Ogbu's model can be applied in other countries. Gibson concludes that Ogbu's typology works better in "new nations," that is, traditional immigrant-receiving countries such as the United States, Canada, and Israel, and less well in the "old nations" of Europe that once were colonizers and now are receiving large numbers of immigrants. But even in the United States, Ogbu's model does not explain generational differences: Recent studies have found that the second generation of "voluntary minorities" is experiencing as much school failure as more established "involuntary minorities" because they do not wholeheartedly accept the "folk theory" of success as did their parents. They are also less likely to perceive the long-term benefits of hard work and study.²⁶

Another criticism has to do with the role and influence of oppositional culture. As viewed by Ogbu, oppositional culture is detrimental to academic success because, in rejecting behaviors and attitudes that can lead to success, students are in effect jeopardizing their own futures. The possibility that African American students could be *both* oppositional and academically successful is not presented as a possibility in this theory. In contrast to this viewpoint, in research with six highly successful African American high school students, Carla O'Connor found that a collective orientation had the effect of facilitating a sense of hope and promoting academic achievement. The six students she studied were acutely aware of racism and other injustices and they were oppositional to the extent that they actively resisted injustice. But their opposition did not mean that they rejected the strategies they needed to become successful students.²⁷

O'Connor concluded that opposition is not always damaging to students. When it leads to the active resistance of oppression, it can actually motivate students to learn so that they can change. Likewise, David Gillborn, who has studied youths of various backgrounds in Great Britain, suggests that the dichotomy between resistance and conformity is too simplistic because it overlooks the great

complexity of students' responses to schooling. That is, accommodation does not guarantee that success will follow, nor is it the only way to be academically successful; similarly, opposition does not necessarily lead to failure.²⁸

To understand this process more clearly, we now turn to a consideration of the concept of resistance.

RESISTANCE THEORY

Resistance theory, as articulated by scholars such as Henry Giroux, Jim Cummins, and others adds another layer to the explanation of school failure.²⁹ According to this theory, *not learning* what schools teach can be interpreted as a form of political resistance. Frederick Erickson maintains that whereas cultural differences may cause some initial school failures and misunderstandings, it is only when they become entrenched over time that *not learning*, a consistent pattern of refusing to learn, becomes the outcome of schooling.³⁰

Resistance theory is helpful because it attempts to explain the complex relationship of disempowered communities and their schools. Students and their families are not only victims of the educational system but also actors. They learn to react to schools in ways that make perfect sense, given the reality of the schools, although some of these coping strategies may in the long run be self-defeating and counterproductive. Herb Kohl, in describing what he labels as students who refuse to learn, has concluded, "Over the years I've come to side with them in their refusal to be molded by a hostile society and have come to look upon not-learning as positive and healthy in many situations."³¹

There are numerous examples of students' resistance, and they range from innocuous to dangerous: inattention in class, failure to do homework, negative attitudes toward schoolwork, poor relationships with teachers, misbehavior, vandalism, and violence are all illustrations of students' resistance. We see many of these manifestations of resistance in the case study of Ron Morris that follows this chapter. Ron stated that he would actually decide when he was going to be destructive in school. He did this, he said, because he was not learning anything new, and what he did learn mattered little in his daily life.

The most extreme form of refusing education is dropping out. Michelle Fine's study of a large urban school found two major reasons for students' decisions to leave: a political stance of resistance and disappointment with the "promise of education." Many of the students she spoke with were articulate in their resistance to school; even some of those who stayed were unsure what benefits they would derive from their education.³²

But what causes students to resist education and otherwise engage in behaviors that might ultimately jeopardize their chances of learning? There is no simple answer to this question, but one probable response is a school climate that rejects students' identities. This is nowhere more evident than in Ron's case study. He was eloquent in describing how he felt the first time he found himself and his people in the curriculum. His reaction was to want to come to school every day because, as he said, "This is real!"

In his research among Yup'ik students and teachers, Jerry Lipka found that resistance was virtually nonexistent, and he concluded that resistance theory "makes much less sense in a classroom where the teacher is your uncle or your aunt and where most of the school employees come from your community."³³ This being the case, what are the implications for students of culturally dominated backgrounds? Does it mean that they always need to be taught by teachers from their own cultural communities? This situation makes sense in some places, but it is untenable and unrealistic in others. A more comprehensive view of students' academic success or failure is needed.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE VIEW

No simple explanation accounts for student achievement or failure. As we have seen in this chapter, most explanations have been inadequate or incomplete: Some have failed to consider the significance of culture in learning; others have not taken into account the social, cultural, and political context of schooling; and still others have placed all the responsibility for academic failure or success on students and their families. Even the persistence of racism and discrimination, or the presence of unjust policies and practices in schools, or the role that schools play in reproducing existing societal inequities do not by themselves explain school failure.

Underachievement, as Jim Cummins has suggested, is also the result of the interactions between teachers, students, and their families.³⁴ When teachers respect and affirm the identities and experiences of students and their families, they also change the nature of the interactions they have with them, and this can help promote student achievement. In both the case studies of Ron and Paul, the staff's closeness with students and their families has paid off in the students' growing association with school and learning.

Also, how students and communities *perceive* and *react* to schools is another consideration in explaining school achievement. But in spite of the perceptions and reactions of particular groups to schools, there are always individual exceptions. Not all African American students, even those from economically oppressed communities, fail; some do not see school success as "acting White;" likewise, not all voluntary immigrants are successful in school. Unless we look at individual cases as well as at entire groups, we fall into rather facile but not always accurate explanations of failure. These can lead to stereotypes and inappropriate educational expectations.

But the policies and practices of schools, and the hopes and expectations they have for students, are also key variables in explaining student academic achievement. In Paul's case study, you will see the positive effect that participating in developing the school rules had on him. In the case of Ron, he characterized the curriculum in his former schools as meaningless because it "is not gonna let us know who we really are as people." On the other hand, he described the curriculum in his new school as respecting his identity and experiences.

When teachers and schools believe their students are capable learners and they create appropriate learning environments for them, young people are given

clear and positive message about their worth and abilities. Research on academic behavior among high-achieving African American students, for instance, found that a *combination* of school characteristics *and* individual actions of students together contributed to the achievement differences between high- and low-achieving students.³⁵ Although African American students with above average reading scores resembled their lower scoring peers in family and school social conditions (including low socioeconomic status, single parent households, and higher rates of segregated schools), the schools attended by higher achievers had a more positive environment and a higher commitment to students. The researchers concluded that *rather than family background*, it was the conditions established by the schools that explained the differences.

Looking beyond just cultural and social class characteristics as determining school achievement can also be empowering because teachers and schools can do something about student learning. School characteristics that have been found to make a positive difference in educational research studies include an enriched and more demanding curriculum, respect for students' languages and cultures, high expectations for all students, and encouragement of parental involvement.³⁶

Reforming school structures alone will not lead to substantive improvement in student achievement, however, if such changes are not accompanied by profound changes in what we believe students deserve and are capable of learning. In short, changing policies and practices is a necessary but insufficient condition for improving academic achievement. For example, in research on six high schools that were successful with Latino students, Tamara Lucas, Rosemary Henze, and Rubén Donato found that, in addition to the structural conditions they reviewed, the most significant element in explaining their success was a belief that all students were capable of learning.³⁷

Learning environments that may seem at first glance to be totally culturally inappropriate for some children, can in fact be effective. The so-called "Catholic school effect" is a case in point. In some ways, nothing seems more culturally incompatible for African American and Latino students than a Catholic school: Bilingual programs are usually unavailable; classes tend to be overcrowded; and formal environments that stress individual excellence over cooperation are common. Yet Catholic schools have been successful environments for many Latino and African American children, especially those from poor communities. The literature points to the fact that Catholic schools, because of restricted resources, tend to offer all students a less differentiated curriculum, less tracking, and more academic classes. They also have clear, uncomplicated missions and strong social contracts.³⁸ What may at first glance appear to be incongruous in terms of cultural compatibility is explained by school structures that imply high expectations for all students.

This discussion leads us to the conclusion that school achievement can only be explained by taking into account multiple, competing, and changing conditions: the school's tendency to replicate society and its inequities, cultural and language incompatibilities, the unfair and bureaucratic structures of schools, and the political relationship of particular groups to society and the schools. But it is tricky business to seek causal explanations for school success and failure. How numerous

complex conditions are mediated within the school and home settings can also explain students' academic success or failure. All of these conditions help explain in a more comprehensive way the massive school failure of many students. This is the sociopolitical context of multicultural education and it forms the basis for the conceptual framework that has been developed here.

● SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have explored a number of theories regarding conditions that influence school failure and success. The deficit theories popularized in the 1960s were responsible for much of our educational policy during that time and into the present. These theories assumed that children from culturally diverse families or poor neighborhoods were either genetically or culturally inferior to culturally dominant children from the middle class.

An alternative explanation developed during the 1970s was that schools were responsible for school failure because they reproduced the economic and social relations of society and therefore replicated structural inequality. During this time, the cultural mismatch theory was also developed. According to this theory, schools are unsuccessful with a substantial number of students because there is a mismatch between their home cultures and the culture of the school. The argument by John Ogbu and others that there is a crucial distinction between caste-like minorities and immigrant minorities was also developed during the 1970s. This theory argues that cultural differences alone cannot explain the differential school achievement of distinct "minority" groups.

Finally, resistance theory has helped us understand that students and their families are frequently engaged in some form of resistance to the education to which they are exposed. Resistance may be either passive or active and it may have consequences that are counterproductive to the interests of the students who engage in it. Alternatively, resistance can lead to a critical awareness of structural inequality and a desire to succeed academically in order to make change, as we shall see in both case studies that follow this chapter.

I have attempted to develop a comprehensive view of school achievement by providing an analysis and critique of each of these theories. It is clear that no single theory of academic achievement entirely explains why some students succeed in school and others fail. Rather, we need to understand school achievement as a combination of *personal, cultural, familial, interactive, political, and societal* issues, and this means understanding the *sociopolitical context* in which education takes place.

● TO THINK ABOUT

1. What does William Ryan mean by "culturally depriving schools"? Can you give some examples?
2. Find out about some of the culturally enriching activities your students are engaged in with their families and communities. How can you use them to create a more culturally affirming classroom?
3. Joel Spring has claimed that our public schools perform a "sorting" role, placing students in school according to their social class. Think about your own experiences and observations, then describe some examples of this "sorting" function.
4. Think of your own students. How accurate do you think John Ogbu's classification of *voluntary* and *involuntary minorities* is? Consider both the advantages and disadvantages of this theory.
5. Think about schools and classrooms with which you are familiar. Have you noticed examples of *student resistance*? If so, what are they and what is their effect?
6. You and a group of your colleagues need to determine why a particular student has been doing poorly in your classes. What will you look at? Why?

Case Study: Paul Chavez

"I don't want to speak too soon, but I'm pretty much on a good road here."

Speaking in an earnest and intense tone, Paul Chavez¹ thinks carefully before sharing his thoughts about the importance of school, the "hood," and his family. Paul is 16 years old and he has already lived a lifetime full of gang activity, drugs, and disappointment. The signs are evident, from his style of dress to the "tag" (tattoo) on his arm, to his reminiscence of "homeboys" who have been killed. Describing himself as Chicano and Mexican American, Paul's is the third generation in his family to be born in Los Angeles. He does not speak Spanish, but says that both his mother and grandmother do even though they too were born and raised here.

Paul lives with his mother, two brothers ages 19 and 9, and two younger sisters. Another brother, 21, does not live at home. His mother is currently trying to obtain her high school equivalency diploma; she failed the test once, but is studying hard to try to pass it next time. She and Paul's father have been separated for about four years, and Paul describes the entire family as "Christian" and says they are all deeply involved in the church except him. His mother is a church leader and his brother is a Bible study leader. Even his father, a recovering alcoholic, who has "lived on the streets" for years and spent time in prison, is now living in what Paul calls a "Christian home," probably a halfway house.

The one-family homes in Paul's East L.A. neighborhood hide the poverty and despair that are easier to see in other urban ghettos, with their high-rise tenements and projects. Here, the mostly Latino families struggle to maintain a sense of community in the well-kept homes on small lots. However, signs of gang activity are apparent in the tags on buildings and walls, and Paul says that an outsider suspected of belonging to another gang is likely to get jumped merely for walking down the street.

School problems began for Paul when he was in third or fourth grade, and he was suspended on numerous occasions for poor behavior. The problem was not lack of ability (his teachers always felt he was smart), but rather lack of interest. He was more interested in belonging to a "school gang," a group of young boys looking for boys in other classes to fight. In spite of the lure of gangs, he remembers fifth grade as the best year he had in school, and he attributes this to Ms. Nelson, the most caring teacher he ever had until now. Paul already wore gang-affiliated attire and he had a reputation as a troublemaker, but she did not let this get in the way of her high expectations of him. It was in her class that he became interested in history, and he still recalls being fascinated by the American Revolution.

By the time he began junior high school, peer pressure, family problems, and street violence brought the situation to a head. Seventh and eighth grades were Paul's worst years, and he did very little schoolwork. He was expelled in eighth grade, and although he was told by school authorities to attend an alternative school in another district, he refused to go and instead stayed home for six months. By ninth grade he was heavily involved in gang activity, joining

the 18th Street Gang. Paul says this gang has thousands of members, not only in L.A. but also in other cities and even in other states. Thirteen of his cousins are or have been in the same gang, as has an older brother, so the role of gang as "family" is even more revelant in his case. An uncle and a cousin have both been killed as a result of their gang activity.

Encouraged by his mother, Paul tried to enroll in another program, but again was expelled after a few months. Then he heard about and applied to the Escuela de Dignidad y Orgullo (School of Dignity and Pride), a high school for students who have dropped out of other schools. Heavily Chicano, the school is characterized by a multicultural curriculum with a focus on Chicano history, and it relies on student and staff involvement in its day-to-day operations. The school boasts a variety of services for students, and the staff includes counselors, a psychologist, a probation officer, and several teachers. Paul has not formally been arrested, but because of his previous problems he agreed to a voluntary placement with the probation officer, as he explained during one of his interviews, just to "keep me on the right road."

The road, however, has been far from easy for Paul. He was also expelled from Escuela de Dignidad y Orgullo, and it was only after trying another program and then several months on the street that he realized he wanted to return. All of his friends have quit school, Paul says, and he fears ending up like them. He was accepted once again, although it was not automatic, and he has been doing well since he came back two years ago. Now he spends most of his time at school, doing homework every day when he gets home, and working after school at the local city hall, a job the school found for him. A summer job arranged by the program is also in the works. Paul says that this school is different from any other he has attended because the entire staff cares about and encourages the students, and because Chicano culture and history are central to the curriculum, which makes it a more exciting place to learn.

At this point in his life, Paul even goes to church twice a week with his mother, not because he wants to but because it is one of her rules for living at home. But his philosophy is to take life one day at a time because the lure of gang life is still ever-present. He has not quit the gang, and it is obvious that he is at a crossroads in his life. The next several months may determine which direction his life takes: either an escalating life of crime on the streets or a more promising, albeit less exciting, future of education and work.

Paul's case study highlights two goals he has had for a long time: to be respected and to make something of himself, two goals that are frequently at odds. Another theme that became quickly apparent was the strong influence of his mother and family on his life.

"Everybody's Gotta Get Respect"

I grew up . . . ditching school, just getting in trouble, trying to make a dollar, that's it, you know? Just go to school, steal from the store, and go sell candies at school. And that's what I was doing in the third or fourth grade. . . . I was

always getting in the principal's office, suspended, kicked out, everything, starting from the third grade.

My fifth grade teacher, Ms. Nelson . . . she put me in a play and that like tripped me out. Like why do you want *me* in a play? Me, I'm just a mess-up. Still, you know, she put me in a play. And in fifth grade, I think that was the best year out of the whole six years [of elementary school]. I learned a lot about the Revolutionary War, you know. . . . The fifth grade was a grade I'll always remember. Had good friends. We had a project we were involved in. Ms. Nelson was a good teacher. . . . She just involved everyone. We made books, this and that. And I used to like to write, and I wrote two, three books. Was in a book fair and this and that. She did pretty nice things. . . . She got real deep into you. Just, you know, "Come on, you can do it." That was a good year for me, the fifth grade.

I don't know why I got in the gang. I got in just to be in a gang, be somewhere, be known from somewhere. And plus my whole family, I got 13 cousins who are from the 18th Street Gang, so we're pretty much all in it. We're deep in it. . . . We're still there. And I'll be in it forever I guess, 'cause it's my neighborhood and it's just like that over here.

Like you see older cousins going out to parties with girls, you know, talking about the neighborhood [gang] and what happened and this and that. . . . And I remember like two or three years before I got in the neighborhood, I was like . . . "I want to get into the neighborhood. I want to get into 18, get my tag, and this and that." And . . . for that to be a goal for you, that's kind of sick, you know, to be in a gang? And that's the way I thought, you know. . . . It was like, I had a lot of influences on my life . . . more negative than positive, and that's what happened.

My most troubled years was my junior high years. . . . Seventh grade, first day of school, I met this guy and then from there we started to form. And every junior high, you're gonna have a group, okay? You're gonna have a group that you hang around with. . . . And it got to we just started always starting trouble in classes. Whatever period we had, we just started trouble in. And me, I have a great sense of humor, right? I can make people laugh a lot. So then I was always getting kicked out of the classroom. And so what that got me was kind of, I guess popular, right where girls were always around me and . . . I had a big group. . . . But like I was always the one clowning, getting in trouble. So it kind of like set a path for me where I was like all right, so I clown and get popularity. All right, I understand now the program.

I [wasn't] in a gang, but I was dressing pretty still gang affiliated. And so people looked like, "Well, where you from?" "I ain't from nowhere." And that kind of like got me to want to *be* from somewhere so I could tell 'em, "Well, I'm from here. . . ." Those were the years in seventh grade and I was fighting with eighth graders. . . . I'd be in a dance, a little Oriental kid would come up to me and she goes, "I know you, you're Paul" this and that. They would know me. . . . It made me feel good.

I'm into drugs. I'm into weed, marijuana. I like smoking. I always did, you know? Drinking, yes. . . . I've done primos. You know, you get a joint and

you put crack inside of primos, smoke it. I don't fuck around with hitting the pipe, freebase, heroin or coke, shooting up slam. None of that shit.

Being in a gang, you think about who you're retaliating, you know, just another Chicano brother. And that's kind of deep. Well, why you're gonna be from a neighborhood, have pride, this and that, and take out your own *raza*, you know? So that kind of always caught me in my mind. . . . You see a lot of your own people just going down because of your neighborhood. And it's a trip. And you got a lot of homeboys that come out from the system, the jails, and it's real segregated in there, you know, the Blacks and Chicanos. And they even got the border brothers, the ones from Mexico who don't speak no English. They're even separated from the Chicanos, the Sureños, that's right from South L.A. . . . Okay, they're paranoid in there, and everybody is like, "What's up with the Blacks? It's on, it's on. We're gonna have a war." And everybody, then they turn little things into big things. . . . So it's really just a race war going on in the inside, and they bring it out to us.

So you get a lot of this negative stuff in the neighborhood, and a lot of it just you either got to take it in, and just dish it out. . . . Like I figure people are just sitting up there watching us killing each other.

See [my gang], we have enemies. See, we're in West L.A., South L.A., Northside and the Eastside, Centralside, and South Centralside. So that's thousands of gang members. So we make enemies everywhere. So we don't get along with nobody. . . . The whole [gang] system is run by youngsters just taking out people for stepping on shoes, you know?

A good time is just where nobody fights, none of your homeboys fight each other. . . . I mean there was a time when we partied and a homey got shot and had to go and, "What happened? Homey is bleeding to death right there." So it's like man, take him to the hospital. That's not a good time. . . . We paint murals for the homeboys, "Rest in Peace." We do all that, you know, barbecues, we have car washes [to raise money] when a homeboy pass away.

It's really hard when you get involved in the neighborhood and you get close to people, and your homeboys pass away. It happened to me already too many, like two times already. . . . Homeboy gets passed away and you get a lot of hate, you know, a lot of hate towards the other neighborhood. And then you get a lot of love towards your neighborhood 'cause you go and you see your homeboys all getting together.

I think right now about going Christian, right? Just going Christian, trying to do good, you know? Stay away from drugs, everything. And every time it seems like I think about that, I think about the homeboys. And it's a trip because a lot of the homeboys are my family too, you know?

It has a great hold on you, and it's like I talk to my cousin. He's still into it real deep. I'm not really. Don't get me wrong: I'm from the neighborhood, but I'm not really deep into it, you know what I mean? . . . But it's like I talk to 'em. "Yeah, we were with the homeboys on the Eastside, blah, blah, blah, this and that," and I'll be like, "Damn," and I think, "I wish I was there getting off on drinking and shit."

I had a cousin, he was 16 in '89 when he passed away. He was my cousin, family, from 18th Street too. And what happened, see, he passed away and that's another tragedy. It's just, you see so much. I'm 16 and I see so much. First his dad passed away and then my cousin, my uncle and my cousin. And you think, "Man, all this because of a gang!" And there's times when you just sit and you think, you sit and you think and you say, "Why? Why? Why? What is this? . . ." But you don't know why, but you have it so much inside of you. . . . It's hard, it's not easy to get rid of. It's something you don't want to get rid of. I don't want to get rid of, but you just got to try to focus on other things right now. . . . I'm from a gang and that's it, and just 'cause I'm from a gang doesn't mean I can't make myself better.

But me, I do care. I have a life and I want to keep it. I don't want to lose it. I have two little sisters and I want to see them grow up too, and I want to have my own family. So, I got the tag, I got a big 18 on my arm where everybody could see it, and that's the way I was about a year ago. You know, man, if you would be talking a year ago I'd be like, "I'm from the neighborhood." I'd be talking to you in slang street all crazy, you know? Now I'm more intelligent.

I try not to get influenced too much, pulled into what I don't want to be into. But mostly, it's hard. You don't want people to be saying you're stupid. "Why do you want to go to school and get a job?" I was talking to my home-boy the other day so [he said] ". . . school? Drop out, like . . ." "Like, all right, that's pretty good. Thanks for your encouragement" [laughs]. See, they trip like that, but they just mess around. That's just a joke but it's like you just think about things like that. I guess your peers . . . they try to pull you down and then you just got to be strong enough to try to pull away.

I got to think about myself and get what I got to get going on. Get something going on, or else nobody else is going to do it. And, yeah, it's true. It is like that. It's where you're starting to think a little different. You sort of know what's happening. All they're thinking about is partying, this and that. Nothing wrong with it, but I got to try to better myself.

Making It Better

I guess in a lot of ways, I am [successful]. A lot of things I'm trying to achieve. Starting something, *already* you're successful, you know? But finishing it, it's gonna make you more complete, successful and complete. Got to have your priorities straight. Get what you got to get done, and get it done, and just be happy when you're doing something.

I came to this school and it was deep here. They got down into a lot of studies that I liked, and there was a lot going on here. But see, I was me, I was just a clown. I always liked to mess around, so they gave me chance after chance. . . . I took it for granted and they kicked me out. They booted me out, right? . . . So I went back to that other school . . . and it was like, "This thing is boring. Nothing going on." And so I called over here and I go, "I need another chance," this and that, to get back into school. So they gave me

another chance and that's why I'm here right now, 'cause they gave me a chance.

They get more into deeper Latino history here, and that's what I like. A lot of other, how you say, background, ethnic background. We had even Martin Luther King. We had Cesar Chavez. We had a lot of things.

I never used to think about [being Chicano] before. Now I do . . . being Brown and just how our race is just going out. . . . You know, you don't want to see your race go out like that.

[Chicano], it's what you make it, you know? . . . Let's say I'm Chicano and I dress like a gang member. They're gonna look at you like one of those crazy kids, you know, Mexican kid, Chicano kid. But if you present yourself nice or whatever, it really depends how your outer appears. Like people say it's just *from the inside*, but it's really what's on *the outside*, how you look on the outside, like tattoos and that. So it's like I get discriminated because of a lot of things, and I can't really pinpoint it. So it's like I don't really know if it's 'cause I'm Brown or if it's 'cause of my gang tattoo, so I can't really pinpoint. But for me, as far as me being Chicano, it's prideful, it's pride of your race, of what you are.

[Chicano young people] have some pretty trippy insights of life. It's like they know how to talk to people and they know how to give presentations, you know what I mean? Like what we're doing right now [*referring to the interview*]. . . . A lot of the things they say is pretty deep.

[In this school], they just leave the killings out and talk about how you can make it better, you know what I'm saying? . . . Try to be more of the positive side of being a Brown person, that's what I'm talking about.

A lot of the other alternative schools you can't go because of your gang. It's all gang affiliated. Every single alternative school is gang affiliated. This is the only one where it's all neutral.

[To make school better I would] talk about more interesting things, more things like what I would like, students would like. And I would just get more involved, get more people involved. Get things going, not just let them vegitate or . . . on a desk and "Here's a paper," teach 'em a lesson and expect them to do it. You know, get all involved.

Put some music in the school. I mean, put some music and get some like drawings. . . . Get a better surrounding so you feel more like the 'hood, you could learn more, you'll feel more comfortable. This [school] is pretty good, but if you had somebody kicking it, put like a character on the wall of something . . . yeah, like a mural or something, it would be more like a more comfortable setting to work.

Try to find out what we think is important. Try to do the best you can to try to get it. The kids want it, they're gonna use it. If they don't want it, they're not, so. . . . I remember the *Diary of Anne Frank*. I was pretty deep into the Nazis and Jews and so that was pretty cool.

There's a lot of different teachers, you know? You can't say really, but [I would want them to have] more patience and more understanding. That's it.

We're not your kids; we're your *students*. You teach us and don't try to control us. I don't know, like a lot of them say, "Oh, my kids . . . you got to obey the rules, face the consequences." Well, how about if we *all* obey the rules and we *all* face the consequences? Why does it always have to be "you guys" face the consequences? Why can't it be like we all do it, you know what I mean?

I think [multicultural education] is important because that goes back to segregating. You got to get to know everybody more better. If you understand them better, you're gonna get along better. So, yeah, I think that would be good.

I'm getting out all I can get out [from his school]. There's so much to learn and that's all I want to do is just learn, try to educate my mind to see what I could get out of it. Anything I can, I'm gonna get out of it.

I try not to expect too much from people. I've been let down a lot, and I just try not to expect too much from people. I just do what I know I can and that's it. . . . No, they didn't let me down *here*. . . . Mostly everybody all encourage me. Like Ms. Falcón right now, you know, "How you doing?" It's all encouragement. Sometimes, I think, "Trip out, like people are always happy [here]."

I was here when they barely opened this school and . . . I brought my mom and my dad and we had a couple of kids here and the staff here. What we did was wrote all the rules, just made an outline of how the school was gonna be. People are gonna get treated right, what you could wear. Everything was done with each other, you know? It wasn't just talked about with the staff and brought to the students, it was the students *and* the staff.

[*What would have made school easier for you?*] If you had asked me that question a year ago, I would have said, "no school!" School would have been made easier if it wasn't so early in the morning [*laughs*]. . . . But school, it will be better if more activities [are] going on. People wouldn't just think of it as a routine, people got into it really where it really meant something. . . . But it's both on the students' part and the teachers' part. It takes both.

The classes [should have] more better learning techniques. It's an advanced age. We got a lot of computer things going on. Get a lot of things going with computers and a lot of things that are going to draw the eye. Catch my eye and I'm gonna be, "oh, all right," and gonna go over there and see what's up.

I think they should get more of these aides, assistants, to be parents, okay? 'Cause the parents, I notice this . . . a parent in a school is more like they got *love*. That's it, they got love and they give it to you. They give it back to more students. I think they should get more like parents involved in the school like to teach this and that. Get more parents involved in the classroom too. Parents have a lot of things to say, I would think, about the schools.

[Teachers should] not think of a lesson as a lesson. Think of it as not a lesson just being taught to students, but a lesson being taught to one of your own family members, you know? 'Cause if it's like that, they get more deep into it, and that's all it takes. Teach a lesson with heart behind it and try to get

your kids to understand more of what's going on. And don't lie to your kids, like to your students, saying "Everything is okay and 'just say no to drugs'; it's easy." Let them know what's really going on. Don't beat around the bush. Let them know there's gangs, drugs. "You guys got to get on with that. That's for kids. Do what you got to do and stay in education." They're starting to do that more now. . . . Try to get a dress code going on. I never used to like that but that's a pretty good idea, you know? . . . But not really a strict dress code, but just where you can't wear . . . gang attire.

It just catches up to you later on. It does because when you're in the 10th grade and you sit down to do fractions and you can't do a problem 'cause you didn't really learn the basics, it all catches up. When I was in junior high, I didn't do math the whole seventh and eighth grade. I never did a math paper. Maybe turned one or two in, but it was like, I don't like math and it all catches up to you. . . .

Now I take every chance I get to try to involve myself in something. Now it's like I figure if I'm more involved in school, I won't be so much involved in the gang, you know? . . . It's what you put into it, what you're gonna get out of it. And you know, sometimes I tell myself like accountants are always working with numbers, and I say, I want to be an accountant because I want to do something where I got to work hard to try to get it, and show that I could learn math and do it real good. That's just the kind of person I am, where if I can't do something like just to trip myself up, I want to do this. You know, just so I can learn it more real good and show 'em that I can . . . try to make an example out of myself of everything I do.

[Good grades] make you feel good, getting A's. See this "gang member type man" getting A's. . . . I get pretty good grades. I get A's, B's, and C's. That's better than all F's on report cards that I used to get, all failures in all six subjects.

I could be [a good student]. I am when I want to be, you know? But like if I want to be a clown and mess around I could be a real bad dude, defiant in the classroom. That's what I usually used to get kicked out for. . . . Well, I am right now. I'm a good student.

After when I get my diploma, it's not the end of school, it's the beginning. I still want to learn a lot more after that. I basically want to go to college. . . . That's what I want to do. Get more schooling so I could learn more.

Probably I would want to be either a teacher, a counselor, something like working with youngsters to share my experience with them, you know? 'Cause I know there's a lot of people out there who talk down to youngsters, you know what I'm saying? Instead of talking *with* them. And just try to understand what they're going through.

I mean, you can't get a teacher, put 'em in a classroom with a bunch of kids from the neighborhood, and the teacher lives in [another neighborhood] and expect to understand. I have problems at home, a lot of problems. And to come into school and for a teacher to come with a snotty attitude, I'm gonna give it back. That's the way it is.

I don't want to speak too soon, but I'm pretty much on a good road here. I'm pretty much making it. Trying to make something out of myself. I'm on that way, you know, I'm going that way.

You can't talk about next month, at least at this time. . . . I'm just today, get it done. That's it. The best I can.

And I just, I'm tripping out on myself. I don't believe I'm doing this. But I don't really like to build myself too high . . . because the higher you are the harder you're gonna fall. I don't want to fall.

Family Support: "I Had a Love That Kept Me Home"

I like kids, I like kids a lot. They see me and, "Gee, that guy is scary. He's a gang member . . ." This experience the other day when I was at work: I was working in [a day care center]. And I walked in and the kids were looking at me like and whispering. . . . And this one kid, this Oriental kid, came up and we started playing. The next thing I know, she was sitting on my lap and all these kids just started coming towards me. And they know, they could feel I love kids.

I don't know why but I love kids, 'cause I look at them and you see, sometimes I look and I pity 'cause I say, "I hope none of the kids go the wrong way." Then I look and I say, "Some of these kids are gonna be something." And when you got to think like that and look at kids and say, "Man, you're gonna grow up in a rough world," it's kind of messed up. You already know this world is kind of destructed out there. It's just sick out there. People, you know, kids killing kids, babies, mothers killing their own babies. It's like animals killing their own young. It's a trip out there. Nah, you can't trust nobody but your mom. Man, that's it, just your mom.

You need to educate your mind. . . . Somebody gets born and throw 'em into the world, you know, they're not gonna make it. You get somebody, you born 'em, you raise 'em, you feed 'em and encourage 'em, and they're gonna make it. That's what the reason for going to school is. A lot of it, of my going to school, is 'cause of my mom. I want her to be proud and her to say that I made it and this and that.

My dad was becoming an alcoholic. He was drinking a lot, and he was basically just partying all the time all week, doing drugs. . . . I didn't really have a father figure, but I had a dad; a dad but not really a father. . . . So my mom basically raised us all alone.

He didn't live with us at all. He lived with us when I was born. He wasn't there because he was always partying with his friends . . . He moved out and then he lived on with his sister. He lived on the streets basically for about four years. And now he decided that ain't the life that he wants to be, living in the streets. So he went in a Christian home trying to better himself, try to make a change for the good.

My mom doesn't curse. She hasn't drank in about six years. She's, you know good. She used to be a heavy drinker.

My mom used to run with gangs when she was young. My mom and my father both belonged to gangs. . . . They're out of it. . . . They don't mess around no more.

I learned a lot of morals from my mother. Respect, how to respect people. . . . If my mom wasn't in church, she wouldn't be there for us, I don't think. She would be trying to find a way to seek to comfort herself, you know what I mean?

My mom, she's real strong and real understanding. Not strict, but more understanding, you know? She don't really compromise with me. Usually what she says is what she says, that's it. . . . My mom, I wouldn't change nothing, nothing [about her]. My dad, I would . . . just have him be there for me when I was younger. I could have turned out different if he was there, you never know.

It's hard for me to talk to my mom or my dad, but I talk to my mom about a lot of things like girlfriends, things that happen. Like when homeboys die, I don't go talking to nobody else but my mom. My homeboy just passed away about a month ago or two months ago, and I just remember I was in my mom's room. My mom was ironing and I just started crying, and I don't cry a lot. I started crying and I started telling her, "I hurt, Mom. I don't know why, but I hurt so much . . ." 'Cause I had been trying to, how do you say, run from it, I'd been trying to put it off, like my homeboy's gone, 'cause we were pretty close. . . . So I was like, "It hurts, Mommy." She said, "I know, in your gut," like this and that. So we talked. We get pretty much into it.

She dropped out in the 10th grade and she was pregnant. And she says, "I want you to do good. Don't be like me, going back to school when it's already kind of late, you know." It's never too late but you know what I'm saying. She was like, "Just learn now, Paul. Do it the first time right and you won't have to do it again . . ."

My mom wants me to go to school basically so I could have a good house and home when I build up my family, and so we won't have to be five people living in a three-bedroom home, with not that much money to live on, you know?

My mom makes a good living, not in money but in moral standards. We're happy with what we've got and that's just the bottom line. So I go to school for my mom, try to help her and try to help me.

My mom, she's not really [involved in school]. She's too busy doing her own thing. She gets out of school, makes dinner, cleans the house, goes to church, comes home, irons for my two sisters. She doesn't really have time for all this. . . . She'll come in and she'll talk to my probation officer, talk to Isabel [a staff member], different people, yeah . . . pretty much involved when she can be.

You're gonna realize that you got to learn from day one . . . and education will never end. It's only when you stop it and. . . . I realize that now. . . . But see, me, I never really had somebody to push me. My mother pushed me and my mom, she just got tired. "Paul, you're too much for me." My father

he never really pushed me. . . . He talked to me. That was like, "Education, Paul, education," you know? And getting letters from my dad in jail, "Stay in school," and that's all. He said some pretty deep things, understanding things to me. . . . And my dad always knew the right words to say to me that kind of encouraged me. And my mom, they both encouraged me.

If it wasn't for the family, the love I get from my family, I would look for it in my homeboys. I never had to do that. I just wanted my homeboys to party. . . . A lot of my friends, they go to homeboys to look for just to kick it with somebody. See, me, I had a love that kept me home, that kept me in my place.

I remember I used to just take off from Friday night to Monday morning, come home. My mom be worrying all night, "Where is this guy?" and I was in the street. And that was like every weekend. Till now, I stay home every day and I'm just going to school. . . . I come from work, do my homework, whatever. Go to work, come home, go to church, 'cause I go to church with my mother.

My mom, she's really proud of me. My friend was telling me that she was at church, at Bible study, a gathering at home of church people. And she was crying. She was proud. She said, "Your mom was talking about you and she was crying. She's real proud." And that's my mom, she's real sensitive. I love my mom so much it's even hard to explain. And she thinks, she tells me, "You don't care about me, Paul," this and that, 'cause like it's hard for me. . . . It's hard for me to show my feelings.

COMMENTARY

Luis Rodríguez, author of *Always Running, La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A.*, whose experiences parallel Paul's in many ways, describes gangs in this way:

Gangs are not alien powers. They begin as unstructured groupings, our children, who desire the same as any young person. Respect. A sense of belonging. Protection.³

Looking back on his own youth and fearing for the future of his son, who was following the same path, Rodríguez wrote his book to encourage people to understand that gangs, in spite of providing belonging, respect, and protection to their members, represent an unhealthy and self-destructive response to oppression. Gangs emerge when communities are deprived of basic human rights. But according to Rodríguez, few young people would choose gangs if they were given decent education, productive jobs, and positive channels for social recreation.

In an ethnographic study of eight middle school students, all immigrants from Central and South America, Susan Katz came to similar conclusions. The students joined gangs not because of the violence, but because they wanted to affiliate with a group that would provide friendship, support, and cultural identity. In school, the students heard mostly negative messages about Latinos, who were "supposedly stupid, gang members, thieves, prostitutes."⁴ Katz concluded

that schools may unwittingly contribute to young people's gang involvement by failing to provide the strong cultural identity and support that students need. Although none of the young people she interviewed was in a gang when she began her study, most were by the time she had finished it.

Schools' unintentional complicity in turning students toward gangs was confirmed by Harriet Romo and Toni Falbo. In their research with Mexican American high school students in Texas, they found that although school policies such as "no pass/no play" send the necessary message that academics are more important than extracurricular activities, they also can have a negative effect: Such policies can sever the positive relationships that students at risk of failure have with more wholesome activities.⁵

The yearning for respect, which is after all just another word for a sense of competence, is what Paul described when he talked about joining first what he called a "school gang" and later the full-fledged street gang. Young men and women in desperate economic straits are turning in ever larger numbers to "*la vida loca*," or the crazy life of gangs. Los Angeles alone is estimated to have 100,000 gang members in 800 gangs, and in 1991, a peak year for gang activity, nearly 600 youths were killed, mostly by other youths.⁶

The rage felt by young people when their dreams are denied or suppressed is turned inward, resulting in such things as drug abuse or suicide, or turned outward, evident in the unspeakably violent actions against their own *raza*, as so poignantly expressed by Paul. Rodríguez describes this violence as emanating too often from the self-loathing that is the result of oppression: "And if they murder, the victims are usually the ones who look like them, the ones closest to who they are—the mirror reflections. They murder and they're killing themselves, over and over."⁷

Latinos are more likely than any other group to report the presence of street gangs in their schools.⁸ Yet blame for gangs and for other manifestations of oppression in our society cannot be placed on schools. The issues are simply too complicated for simplistic scapegoating, and they include massive unemployment, a historical legacy of racism and discrimination, and a lack of appropriate housing and health care, among others. In addition, families struggling to survive on a daily basis can seldom do much to counteract the lure of gangs and drugs, with their easy money and instant popularity, that influences so many of their children. As Paul says, his mother, try as she might, just got tired ("Paul, you're too much for me," she said).

Although schools can neither do away with gangs nor put a stop to the violence taking place in communities across the United States every day, they *can* make a difference. Paul was quick to place the responsibility for his past on his own shoulders, rather than blaming teachers. But when he thought more deeply about it, he also recognized that particular teachers and schools *did* make a difference. This is nowhere more evident than in the case of Ms. Nelson or, years later, in his alternative school.

Although Paul has been taught that what's on the inside of people is what counts, he is right to conclude that "it's really what's on the outside" because

he has been judged by teachers and others for his style of dress and his tattoos. Research by John Rivera and Mary Poplin corroborates Paul's experience: Through interviews with students of diverse backgrounds in four schools in California, they cite the case of a young student who talked about the negative reaction teachers had toward some Chicano students: "Teachers see you as a *cholo*, gangster, lowlife, drug dealer, etc., and that makes them treat you differently than everyone else because they stereotype us and don't give us a chance to show them what we can do."⁹

Chicano parents and their children often have high aspirations, but unless these are somehow incorporated into the culture of schools, they make little difference. For example, using national statistics, Daniel Solorzano found that when social class is controlled, Chicano eighth graders had even higher educational aspirations than did White students.¹⁰ But there is a tremendous mismatch between the high educational aspirations and low educational attainment of Mexican American students. Although Chicanos have one of the highest levels of academic failure in the United States, they also have great faith in education and a history of struggle to secure the benefits of equal educational opportunity for their children.¹¹

This finding challenges the conventional wisdom that Chicano youngsters and their families do not care about education, and it shifts the focus to the context and structure of schools. In other words, policies and practices need to be reviewed to make education more engaging and positive for all students. In this regard, Solorzano suggests that schools need to develop strategies that use a "cultural continuities" approach rather than a cultural deficit approach to improve the achievement of students from dominated groups.

Paul's is a good example of how cultural continuities can make a positive difference in education. Aside from Cinco de Mayo festivities, his school experiences until now have been devoid of any mention of Chicano history and culture. His words make clear that studying his culture fascinates and motivates him to learn. He is also thinking critically about what it means to be a Chicano, and he recognizes the importance of including the history of different groups in the curriculum.

There is a notable connection between a positive identity and strong self-esteem: One researcher found that adolescents who have explored and understand the meaning of ethnicity in their lives are more likely to demonstrate better adjustment than those who have not.¹² It is not simply a question of feeling good about themselves; rather, a strong sense of identity is essential for giving young people a sense of their own dignity and worth. Including their experiences in the school's curriculum is one way that Paul and his classmates are given the opportunity to develop this sense of dignity and worth. His statement that Chicano students have "some pretty trippy insights on life" is an acknowledgment of their value.

Paul's suggestion that more Chicano school aides should be hired because they "got love and they give it to you" reminds us of the powerful influence of family on Latino culture. Even families in difficult circumstances want the best

for their children, but often they are unaware of how to provide it for them. His father's insistence on "Education, Paul, education," if unaccompanied by structural support to help him stay in school, is of little help. Paul clearly understood this when he said that although his parents supported him, they never really pushed him.

Paul Chavez has been fortunate to be in the alternative school he now attends, and it seems to be acting as a safeguard to keep him at some distance from his gang. The policies and practices of his school are geared toward creating a positive learning environment: There is no tracking; staff interactions with students are positive and healthy; students are involved in the school's governance; there are high expectations and demanding standards of all students; and their languages and cultures are an intrinsic part of the school's curriculum.

One cannot help but remember, however, that Paul is only 16 years old, a tender age with so many difficult situations and easy temptations still facing him. It may take much longer to turn his life around. In spite of his own strong motivation and eloquent insights, his school's caring, his mother's love and strict discipline, and his growing realization that gang life is no solution to the problems facing Chicano youth, he still has a long and hard road ahead of him.

TO THINK ABOUT

1. What can teachers and schools learn from Paul's fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Nelson? Give specific suggestions.
2. What support services do you think are needed in schools such as those in Paul's neighborhood? Why?
3. Take a look at the recommendations that Paul made to improve schools. Which do you think make sense? Why?
4. Why do you think Paul never thought about being Chicano before? What kinds of ethnic studies would be important for students at different levels?
5. How can schools use the tremendously positive feelings about family that Paul and other Latinos have?

Case Study: Ron Morris

"I just felt like the realest person on earth."

Ronald Morris,¹ who describes himself as Afro-American, looks older than his 19 years, not just because of his 6'4" frame, but in temperament as well. He is eloquent, exudes self-confidence, and has a highly expressive face and easy smile. Ron has five siblings and lives with his mother, three sisters, three nieces, and two nephews in a housing development in Boston, Mass., just a few blocks from the Antonia Pantoja Community High School, the alternative school he attends. The school was named for an educational leader in the New York Puerto Rican community who in the 1950s was the major inspiration for Aspira, an agency that promotes education among Puerto Rican and other Latino and inner-city youth. Ron's older brother is in jail and his older sister, whom he describes as "dropping kids," is currently living in a shelter until she finds an apartment. He says his neighborhood is "wild, very wild," because of the constant shootings and drug activity.

Ron's neighborhood was in the news recently because a nine-year-old boy was shot by gang members and several of the students from the school Ron attends were grazed by the bullets. This kind of incident has become almost a daily occurrence in this community, and Ron has not been spared from the ever-present violence.² Several months before he was interviewed, Ron was leaving the "T" (subway) station in his neighborhood with his paycheck in his hands when a young man went after him, wrestling him to the ground attempting to get the check. Ron heard shots and suddenly found himself on the ground and wounded. The assailant put the gun to Ron's head, and as Ron got up and ran, he was shot a total of six times. Miraculously, no vital organs were hit and most of the bullets left his body. One, stuck in his hip, is to be removed this month.

A kindergarten teacher's aide who retired four years ago, Ron's mother exerts a strong influence on him and gives him a great deal of support for continuing his studies, urging him to make something of himself. Ron has not seen his father since he was eight or nine years old. Ron's educational history has been a checkered one: He was held back twice, once in fourth grade and once in sixth, and he moved from school to school many times. He was thrown out of one junior high school and sent to another one, where he graduated from eighth grade. After that, he attended two high schools before being expelled and sent to his present school. Coincidentally, the counselor at the school Ron is now attending was the eighth grade teacher he referred to in the interviews as the teacher of "the first real class I ever had."

To graduate from the Boston Public Schools, students need to have accumulated 105 points, but when he began classes at the Pantoja Community High School two years ago, Ron had zero points toward graduation even though he had been in high school for two years. Because this alternative school offers an accelerated program in which students can earn credit for their effort and performance in classes and through individual projects, he has been able to

catch up with his points and expects to graduate by the end of this year. The school, a partnership between the Boston Public Schools, the city, and the community, offers a variety of educational, creative, vocational, and cultural opportunities for its 50 students, many of whom had no previously successful experiences in school. In addition to his regular classes, Ron is participating in a small tutorial—an advanced history class offered by a renowned retired professor who taught at Boston University and Harvard. Ron loves this class because students get to examine original documents and tapes about the Cuban Missile Crisis in order to come to their own conclusions about what decision they would have made.

The multicultural curriculum of this alternative school is one of the features that makes it appealing to Ron and the other students. Others include its philosophy of empowerment, democracy, and student and staff collaboration and participation. The school also has an active sports program, and the basketball team won all of its tournaments with other schools throughout the entire Boston area last year. Ron was one of the star basketball players and he hopes to resume playing as soon as his injuries heal completely.

Ron's lack of personal success with education had left him feeling disillusioned about his future, but his experiences at the Pantoja Community High School seem to be turning that around. Although his first goal was to become a professional football player, he has developed more realistic goals and is considering a future as a physical therapist, perhaps for a sports team. Staff at the school are helping him make these consequential decisions by providing him with brochures and information on different professions and colleges. Ron had always thought he could not afford to go to a four-year college and instead had planned on a community college, but his advisers are giving him information on scholarships and they have spoken to him about the possibility of transferring to a four-year college after attending a community college. His future plans also include a nice house and a family.

During the first interview, Ron confided that he was about to become a father with two different young women. Although he said he was willing to take responsibility for the children and he had an ongoing relationship with one of the young women, he also seemed determined to continue his education in spite of his situation. In fact, it was at this point that he talked most fervently about wanting to go to Harvard.

The major themes that emerged from interviews with Ron focused on how schools and his own attitude were complicitous in creating failure, on the key role of the curriculum in teaching young people about who they are, and on his growing sense of responsibility for becoming a better student.

Creating Failure

Depends on how I felt that day [whether I was a good student]. I could come to school and say, "Okay, I'm a do all my work. I ain't gonna mess with nobody." I know this will never happen. Nobody can make me do what I don't want

to do. I do it because I felt like doing it. And sometimes I used to say, "Let me do this work." I come to school, kids be playing. They like, "Come on, Ron, come on, Ron. Let's play, let's go do this, let's go do that." I used to go, "Nah, man, chill . . . [I wanna] do my work."

Teachers used to be like, "Why don't you do this all the time? . . ." And then it was like a habit so the teachers knew it was like okay, one day Ron is gonna come in and do his work. For the rest of the week, he's gonna be destructive. And then it went to, okay, Ron is gonna come and do his work in two days and the rest of the week be destructive. Three days, and so forth, until it was, okay, Ron comes in every day and does the work.

And then the work started getting boring to me 'cause it started getting easier and easier. Then it was getting repeated and repeated. It was like, Ron's gonna come to school now every day and be destructive because he's not learning anything new. And I would have that in my mind. I would actually sleep on that thought: "I'm gonna come to school and I'm gonna destroy it. I will come to school and just mind be gone, just terror, terror." Worst student [that school] ever had for two years. They used to always tell me that. "You are the worst student."

It wasn't that [all] the teachers would tell me. It was this one particular person, the coach of the basketball team. He was Black. He was also either the dean of discipline or the assistant principal. He used to put us down, and then he'll come to us and try to teach this: "You shouldn't be acting like that. You're Black," and stuff like that. And I used to get offended. . . . Me and him used to go at it all the time. Basically I think he's the reason why I got thrown out. He just didn't like me.

The first day [at the new high school] I got into a little problem with kids from the neighborhood, from another neighborhood. And they called me into their office like a couple of days later. And they were basically trying to tell me they didn't want me there because of where I lived and where most of the other kids who went there lived. Like the majority of boys who went there were from this other development.

I didn't really like [school]. I used to always want to skip and go home or smoke or come to class and create ruckus or something. You knew what you was going to class for. You was going to class to get taught really nothing. And I'm not just saying history. All classes are basically boring. Like, Okay, say you learn a new level of math after you pass. Like from the 10th grade down, math is repeated until you take algebra. . . . The problems may get longer, but it's the same thing.

Basically to me, everything is like a repeated pattern. Like science, you learn the same science till you get to high school. Instead of teaching you something different, they give it a new name. They call it biology. It's just earth science. They're just teaching you more about cells. You've learned about cells in earth science. And chemistry is basically an advanced form of biology. They just using elements. Everything repeats itself. . . .

You can get all the good grades in the world. What did you learn? You can take a straight honor roll student and take somebody like a bum off the

street who lived life on the street. You can take the straight A student and they can be talking and I done seen this happen. The bum just knows more. You look at the straight A student like them grades don't mean nothing. Like Chinese people aren't smart, they just apply the self to the work. They come to school on time. They do what they need to achieve that A. Who knows if they're learning anything? You can't say they smarter 'cause they get straight A's. They do what they have to do to get A's. I can get straight D's or straight F's and still know more than half the people in the classroom.

The Boston Public Schools, your reputation follows you. So if you went into one of the guidance counselors and said, "I want to get into college," the guidance counselor went, "Well, I'll talk to you later." And then later would be like too late. You're already graduated, you don't know anything. It's too late.

Two or three years from now, you'll see that same guidance counselor. You may not be what you wanted to be but you didn't sit there and take any old job. You went and got you a nice, good-paying job. You know, probably got a kid now or something. And then the same guidance counselor say, "Well, you've changed a lot." And you look at him and say, "Yeah, I woulda been better. I woulda went to college if you woulda paid me any attention."

When a teacher becomes a teacher, she acts like a teacher instead of a person. She takes her title as now she's mechanical, somebody just running it. Teachers shouldn't deal with students like we're machines. You're a person. I'm a person. We come to school and we all act like people.

[I want teachers to know] that not all of us men are gang members and drug dealers, just a major stereotype. And our women aren't lazy. Things that they say bother us. I want [them] to know that even though we're still going through a little hardship, I'm still proud to be Black and we shouldn't be put down.

[In school], they didn't really teach anything. I went to school. I come in, you sit down, you learn. Like in history, you learn the same thing over and over and over again. I learned some sort of history in the sixth grade and some sort of history in the eighth grade. I get in high school and I'm thinking, "Okay, I'm going to learn a whole new history." I get to high school for the first time, I had the same thing I had in the eighth and sixth grade! You keep asking yourself why they keep doing this? Why they keep doing that? And you see it as "Okay, they don't want you to learn anything."

They talked about Christopher Columbus like he was some great god or something. . . . You went through three different segments of Christopher Columbus. You're saying now, Okay, he's got to be a fake. He's a fictional character. They just keep pumping him up. He's turning from this to this. . . . Then you just get tired. Okay, forget Christopher Columbus. . . . Who cares about Christopher Columbus? He didn't do anything.

You learned about all explorers and Malcolm, a little bit about Malcolm X, a little bit about Martin Luther King. You learned a little bit about slavery, a little bit about this. You learned a little bit about everything. You learned it just so many times

You just want to say, "Well, isn't it time that we learned something different?" There's more than just what's in this book, 'cause what's in this book is not gonna let us know who we really are as people. So you have to give us some more, which they wasn't trying to give.

[Teachers should] probably just see what the students like and teach it how they would understand it and so that it's more helpful to them. . . . More discussion instead of more reading, more discussion instead of just letting things be read and then left alone. People read things and then don't understand what they read.

Like if school was more, not all fun and games, but it was more realistic than just reading and doing the work and then you leave. You sit there for 45 minutes doing nothing, just reading a whole book and the teacher is doing nothing but letting you read, and she's probably reading the newspaper or eating gum. And that's why the dropout rate is why [it is] because they just come to school and they ain't teaching us nothing, so why am I gonna sit here? I'm a just go somewhere, just drop out. It's the learning style. It's the way they being taught. They feel that they not learning anything so they don't want to be here.

Classes would be like at least an hour, hour and a half. You can't learn anything in 45 minutes. That 45 minutes go by like this [snaps fingers]. Classes need to be like an hour, hour and 45 minutes 'cause you need the time to read and discuss. You just don't need the time to read, give a paper, and leave. . . . These classes, you could take your time and think and talk about things. Then you do the work 'cause you have all the time. Classes have got to be structured like that, more discussion. Not all that sitting there and you read this, do the work.

Like I take Spanish and then after Spanish, I'll take Seymour [the Advanced History tutorial]. Spanish always ends too early. I don't get enough. I'll be dying to learn how to speak Spanish. . . . She'll be right in the middle of something real good and it be 12:15 and I'll be, like, "God!"

I like history and the way [Seymour] teaches it, and it's just that his method and the material that he has to cover the history, it's like the reading is so real. The message here is just so powerful. . . . Instead of just reading, we discuss. We'll read like a certain section and we'll discuss that section. Why was it written like this and what do I think it means? What is the real meaning behind what they're saying? And do I really believe that this could have happened, that could have happened? . . . And he makes sure that you understand it fully before he lets you go on.

Curriculum and the Challenge of Identity

My identity as an Afro-American—it's like I can never change that. I can never be anything different. I can never be another race. I'm always going to be Afro-American, and I'll always be looked at differently.

Being Afro-American is a challenge. . . . It's just proving to yourself every day in life. You always prove to yourself, "I can do better than what they want me to do." Knowing that they just threw you out in the jungle just to die anyway.

. . . I don't want to die because I couldn't survive out there. I want to die because I got old and it's time to go. Heart just stopped kicking, of natural causes.

We need more Black people in politics. We don't have no spokespeople in the Senate and City Hall and the Congress. Nobody's up there speaking for us and if there are Black people up there, they're not speaking for us. . . . We don't have no voice. Our voice is just like whispers. They can't hear it. There's too much noise, too much confusion.

Proud to be Afro-American? Well, yeah and no. Yeah, I'm proud to be Afro-American because I'm a Black male and all this and I have so many dreams and so many ways of being, that I come from a great race of kings and queens who went through slavery and our race still survives and all that.

And no, because I have to accept the term Afro-American because I was born in America. I wasn't born where my ancestors come from. I'm not as pure as my ancestors were because your family's been raped and developed these different things. . . . Sometimes that makes me sad when somebody can say, "Well, look at you. You got a White person's nose," or you got this or you got that.

Even though [White students] sit there and White history is the basic history, they don't really know anything about White. They look at it as White people have always been on top, which is not true for about—they don't know about before five, six thousand years ago. Nobody even knew who White people were. To me, that's crazy. Everybody's running around not really knowing who they are. People think they know who they are. . . . They think they know what their history is.

[I felt comfortable in school] once in eighth grade. Just this case, a history class I had. Just made me want to come to school and made me want to say, "Okay, now that I know there are so many false things in the world and that there's so much out there for me to learn, stop bullshitting."

It was a Black African history class. It was titled that. It was just so different from the textbook style. . . . It was no books. It was just documents and papers and commonsense questions and commonsense knowledge. You'd just sit there, be like, "This is real! This is really what it is." And this Black history class, like people was thinking, the school system, at first they wanted him to teach it 'cause it was like okay, he's just trying to make the Black people, pump 'em up and stuff like that. But they was never in the class.

It was basically about Black people, but it showed you all people instead of just Black people. It showed us Latinos. It showed us Caucasians. It showed us the Jews and everything how we all played a part what society in any country is like today. I just sat in that class, and I used to go to that class once a week 'cause it was only a once-a-week class. I'd sit and just be like, I was just so relaxed. I just felt like the realest person on earth.

Taking Responsibility for Becoming a Better Student

My mother wants me to become the best Black man that ever lived on the face of this earth! That is her. She'll start every conversation off with me,

"What are you gonna do now? Go get a job. Go to school." I mean, I could wake up in the morning late for school. . . . "All he does is sleep, hang out all night . . ." I be upstairs and I wish this woman would shut up! But she's right. I gotta do something. I got to get out now. I have to. It's time for me.

Me and my brother were like the biggest burdens on my mother, 'cause even though my oldest sister was having these kids, but me and my brother were like, he was on the streets. We were doing bad. She knew we was doing bad. Always called, like every other weekend, in jail: "Mom, we're in jail. Come get us out." And things she used to do like she used to leave us in jail. . . . One time I was in jail for like three months. She didn't come visit me. She didn't write. When I called, she didn't even want to speak. I was like 13, 14.

And then . . . it just popped in my head: I was like, "If we was acting more like men, we wouldn't be in jail doing all this dumb stuff, you idiot!"

The difference between me and my brother, if my brother was sitting here talking to you, the only thing you would notice different between me and him would be the way he looked. Me and him were the same people. We thought the same. We knew what each other wanted.

I go to my brother for advice when things go bad. I like to talk to my brother. . . . Like I could talk to my mother about it, but like she never ran the streets. My brother ran the streets. He sees things how I see it and he can talk to me.

We used to go to court. . . . I used to get up and just say something and they would release me. Personal recons [recognizance]. Then I'd go home. You know, just come back to court. I'd go back to court and just beat the case, period. And then I'd always think about, "Why do I keep going to jail? Why do I always keep . . . doing all this stuff to my mother?"

[My brother] was caught in a deep thing. He was selling drugs. He has two kids like I do from two different women. And he was trying to take care of his kids and sell drugs at the same time, but had little petty cases. And I used to tell him like, "Come on, man, chill out. You got two kids, man. Stop selling drugs. Get a job. The little petty cases are gonna catch up to you." He didn't graduate from high school. He got his GED [general equivalency diploma] in jail.

And my mother used to always, she like, "Y'all two are stressed. Y'all two are killing me." And she used to be like, "When I'm gone, there ain't no other mother in the world. Nobody gonna treat you like Ma did." She used to just say things. It was like she was talking to us as our mother.

I didn't want to be one of the kids who was always living with their mother. I always wanted to show my mother I could survive on my own because those are the things that she taught me. She taught me responsibility. She taught me how to survive. She taught me these things.

I'm trying to get into Harvard. . . . My mother told me I could do it. . . . She'd say things like, "If them women [the two women who were pregnant with his children] really understand what it is for you to be the correct father to your children, they won't burden you. They'll let you become these things,

and they'll let these things happen so their kids won't have a typical Black future," as if they're still living in the same house and I'm working making \$6 an hour and killing myself and child support is taking all the money. And it's like them women really don't want that type of atmosphere for their kids and stuff, which I don't want, then they got to let you achieve.

[I want] to provide for my kids. I need the education. I have to. I can't just graduate out of high school and stop going to school, to just accept a diploma. It's nothing. . . . I need a real job.

At least I can take one of my kids away from what I lived through. And the other one, I can show the other one to be proud to say, "That's my father, ex-gang member and ex-this and ex-that. He became something in life." So my kid can say, "I'm gonna grow up to become somebody."

I don't want my kid to say, "Okay, my father graduated high school. That's the end of my father's life. He's nothing. He doesn't make enough. I don't get everything I want at Christmas." It's scary sometimes. I don't want my kid to wake up like that.

[Pantoja Community High School] is more out to help you achieve instead of just sitting there doing nothing.

Now I'm not in that, "They're not teaching me nothing, why should I come to school?" type thing. Here, as a difference in Boston Public Schools, it's more direct, it's more learning. You learn more. You learn differently. . . . I'm not learning what the book wants me to learn about Christopher Columbus. I'm learning what, who Christopher Columbus really was, what he really did. I don't want to know what people *thought* he did and what they thought he *should* of did. I was learning a better structured history. . . . [Now I'm studying] the Cuban Missile Crisis and Native Americans in two different history classes.

It's realistic and my beliefs as an Afro-American are respected. If I come to class and don't like the class being taught because it's like that, you're not gonna say, "Well, you got to sit there and learn anyway." At least I had the chance to talk about it. . . . It's not like the Boston Public Schools. . . . "So, you don't want to learn about this class? Who cares? . . ." It's more realistic. If you don't want to learn about that, you have the option of talking about it or not.

[Teachers here] understand my identity and culture. They respect it. . . . When I go to Sandy's class [Humanities] and I'm sitting there sometimes, and like she gets these things and we be reading and discussing it. And then it never ceases to fail. Somebody always has something to say about White people. . . . She's White and we're Blacks and Latinos, and we're just trying to dog her. But she doesn't sit there and get all stressed on it. . . . She respects, she know this is how you feel, and if that's how you feel and that's what you say, say it, okay? You go, "All right," and you just speak about it and she accepted it.

She gives us funny little things. Like she gave us this one thing called "The Day that Wasn't." And at first, I was like, "Come on, now. This is kids' stuff." And I was reading it. And I kept reading it. You know, as you went along, it was like, "Yeah!" 'Cause it was like about identity, 'cause the people

kept telling the bear that he wasn't a bear. Finally he just believed that he wasn't a bear. And so the winter came around and then in wintertime he noticed he was always tired. And then he went to sleep in a cave. And then he finally figured out that, "Hey, I'm really a bear!"

That's like some people. Some people don't believe just who they really are. Some people want to be different people. Some Blacks want to be White. Some Whites want to be Black. Why [not] accept what you got? You can't change that. . . . It was like, "Come on, Sandy. Why do you want us to read this?" Then it occurred to me.

I'm learning like in a more accelerated way because not only do I get the opportunity to teach myself because of the material I have to teach myself with, but the teachers are there actually to help you learn too. . . . I may read a book and be like, "Okay, what do they really mean?" And then I talk to one of my teachers and maybe one may not know it, but somebody will be able to tell me. It's not just the teachers. It's the staff, everybody. . . . Everybody's there for each other.

I could be getting a better [education] if it wasn't for me. I'm the only one holding me back, just me. The little things that I do just hold me back. Being late, just little things. The little dumb things that I do hold me back.

I have to just stop all that foolish stuff that I be doing. I have to put that stuff behind me. I'm too old now.

My friend Ernie is like, he's focused. If I could just borrow his head for a couple of months, I would be just like better off than I am now. But since I can't borrow his head, I can like borrow ideas from him. Me and him talk a lot.

[I'm a good student] almost. Not there yet. Have to work on being on time. That's the key thing, being on time. . . . Still very talkative, very talkative. Oh, I could talk a whole class!

When I start college, I'll have to get out of that late mentality. Always wanting to be late. Always knowing, okay, I don't have to go to school today but if I go tomorrow, I know I'm good and fast enough to make up for today's work. But then college isn't like that. . . . It's much like harder, 'cause like college, every day they're teaching you something different. So I'm a know I have to be more on track.

I would have to try to take care of my responsibilities to the fullest, but I know that I don't. So I have to take care of my responsibilities more. And stop being a pain to my mother. I don't think she like that. She's getting tired of that.

I'm not perfect. I wouldn't call myself a good student. I call myself an all right student. I know what's right and what's wrong. I just have to apply [myself] to it.

If you'd asked me about two, three years ago, I'd a told you I didn't have the slightest idea why I came to school. It's stupid, it's boring. They don't teach me nothing. I don't learn anything. I should just stay home. But you're asking me that now in the Pantoja [Community High School]. . . . You'd have to ask me a two-part question: What do I think about school then, and what do I think about it now? Now I think about it differently because I'm not in

the Boston public schools. I'm here, I'm learning, I'm learning more from people who know. It's not a book. Boston public schools give you a textbook. Here it's, "I can teach you through experience, through documents, through this, through that."

Once you change like from that childhood atmosphere, 'cause you're older now. You're like, "Okay, I'm 17, 18, think I can still act like a kid and get over in life?" This [school] teaches you that acting like a kid all your life ain't gonna get you over in life unless you're gonna be a comedian. If your goal is not to be a comedian, then why would you want to act like a kid all your life?

Boston public schools didn't train you for life. All they train you for is to know what they want you to know so you can only get so far as what you got. Meaning, if you believe that what they taught you was all real and all this, and went to college and got a degree or something, just went through life thinking what you learned at Boston public schools was right, what you learned in your regular high school was the real deal, you would probably be a confused soul. You'd die wondering why everything is like this.

I'm learning how, instead of planning for the day, like you would normally do, I'm planning for the future.

COMMENTARY

Educational failure is not created by young people alone and is not simply the result of poor academic skills, poor parenting, lack of proper nutrition, or even abject poverty. Nor is educational failure simply the result of disruptive and violent students or overcrowded schools. For African American students, racism and low expectations can also be formidable barriers to school success, and all of these conditions can combine to result in academic failure.³ Ron seems to understand that failure is created by a multiplicity of conditions, which can include some of those just listed as well as stagnant pedagogy, lack of financial resources and commitment, and a disinterested public, but also include students' own attitudes and behaviors. This understanding helps make Ron's case study a complex and intriguing one that places in bold relief the responsibility that must be borne by all those who claim to care about the educational health of our society.

According to Ron, his failure was created by a boring and irrelevant curriculum, a lack of trust on the part of teachers and guidance counselors of his capability to learn and succeed, the lure of the streets, and his own negative attitude about learning. Especially critical of the curriculum, what he calls "a repeated pattern," Ron feels it is based on myths that prevent students from developing a critical perspective about who they are and what they are learning. His distaste for traditional school curriculum leads him to question the value of grades, and even to suggest that "a bum off the street" might be more intelligent than a straight A student. Ron also criticizes the pedagogy of traditional schools and offers suggestions to help make the curriculum more helpful

to students: longer classes, more discussion, and primary sources as the basis of the curriculum. These suggestions are strikingly consistent with the thinking of current educational reformers.⁴

Strongly tied to the irrelevance of the curriculum, in Ron's eyes, is cultural identity. He speaks poignantly about the challenge of being Afro-American, but he also ponders the miseducation received by all students of all backgrounds ("They think they know what their history is," he says of White students). In one of the most telling moments of the interviews, Ron describes the Black African History class he had in eighth grade as "This is real!" and muses, "I just felt like the realest person on earth." The fact that the teacher of this particular class was not only a gifted educator but also African American cannot be underestimated, although Ron quickly points out another Black teacher whom he feels was the reason he was thrown out of one of the schools.⁵

How families contribute to the academic success of their children is the subject of an ongoing study of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning Project. Three important and recurring themes have emerged in the preliminary findings that give insight into how families prepare and support their children's academic achievement: African American families of academically successful children provide extended family and community support, provide racial socialization, and act as teachers in the home.⁶ Yet extended families in most communities are quickly becoming a relic, and many parents, especially single parents, are forced to cope with the burden of raising their children alone, with few resources and little community support.

Ron's mother raised him, he said, to be responsible and proud of himself. He said, for example, "My mother wants me to become the best Black man that ever lived on the face of this earth!" a good example of what is meant by "racial socialization." Like many African American families, she felt a deep sense of responsibility to prepare her children to face obstacles in the general society by emphasizing pride in their race.

Ron's newfound enthusiasm for school and his emerging educational success is consistent with a recent survey of a large number of young African American men in four cities, which found that caring teachers, appropriate youth programs, and part-time or summer jobs, in conjunction with parent involvement, are conditions that support their high school graduation.⁷ Specifically, they found that those who stayed in school were more likely to be in an academic program, and almost three-quarters of those who stayed in school reported that their teachers were interested in how well they were doing in class and gave them hope for the future.

In spite of his mother's guidance and her insistence that he go to school, study, and be serious, Ron ran the streets with his brother and got into trouble for years. He is finally taking responsibility for his life and his education. Ron is doing well in school and planning for the future, and he reflects critically on his past activities and how they held him back. His attitude about school has changed dramatically, and the alternative school he is attending is no doubt at least partly responsible for this change. Staff at the school respect his culture, he says, and they provide stimulating activities, both curricular and extracurricular.

He enjoys this school because he is treated as an adult. Ron is committed to completing his education and has high hopes, some would say even unrealistic expectations, of attending a college such as Harvard.

Ron is also facing formidable challenges in the months and years ahead. He will become a father of two children soon, and he seems somewhat oblivious to how this monumental change will affect his life. Although he says he wants to shoulder some of the responsibility for at least one of the children, it is unclear how he can do so, graduate from high school, go on to college, find some kind of employment, and be on his own, as he says he wants to be. The complex and competing messages that Ron Morris has picked up from his family, schools, peers, and society are evident in his interviews: Be proud, become somebody, trust in yourself, be tough, be a man. How he resolves some of the contradictions he is facing, especially how to become both a good student and a responsible father at such a young age, will certainly be major issues for the decisions he will make in the near future.

TO THINK ABOUT

1. What does Ron's case study teach us about the reasons for students' lack of academic success? How can you apply what you learned through his case to the situation of other students?
2. Why do you think Ron called the Black African history class "the first real class I ever had"? What do you imagine was the content of this class, and how did it differ from other history classes?
3. Culture and identity are major issues for Ron. What implications does cultural identity hold for school curriculum?
4. What do you think about Ron's ideas for the future? What would you tell him if you were his guidance counselor?
5. Before attending this alternative school, Ron had not experienced a great deal of academic success. What features of this school do you think might be useful for other nonalternative schools to know about?

• NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. For full expositions of these arguments, see, for example, Carl Bereiter and S. Englemann, *Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Arthur R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" *Harvard Educational Review*, 39 (1969), 1-123; Frank Reissman, *The Culturally Deprived Child* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).
2. See Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Joel Spring, *The Rise and Fall of the Corporate State* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).
3. Stephen S. Baratz and Joan C. Baratz, "Early Childhood Intervention: The Social Science Base of Institutional Racism." In *Challenging the Myths: The Schools, the Blacks, and the Poor*, Reprint Series no. 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, 1971).
4. William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 61.