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Forming Academic Identities: Accommodation without Assimilation among Involuntary Minorities

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Institutional mechanisms influence students' ideology, which in turn has a positive influence on their academic performance. Latino and African American students who have participated in an untracking program for their high school careers develop a critical consciousness about their educational and occupational futures. The Latino and African American students in this untracking program become academically successful without losing their ethnic identity. They adopt the strategy of "accommodating without assimilating," a pattern that Gibson associates with voluntary minorities but not involuntary minorities. IDEOLOGY, ACHIEVEMENT, MINORITY STUDENTS

Students from linguistic and ethnic-minority backgrounds and low-income families do poorly in school by comparison with their majority and well-to-do contemporaries. They drop out at a higher rate. They score lower on tests. Their grades are lower. (Coleman et al. 1966; Haycock and Navarro 1988; Jencks et al. 1972). And most importantly for the topic of this paper, they do not attend college as often (Carter and Wilson 1991; Center for Education Statistics 1986).

Students from linguistic and ethnic-minority backgrounds are expected to compose an increasing percentage of the U.S. population through the early years of the 21st century (Carter and Wilson 1991; Pelavin and Kane 1990). Jobs that require higher education are expected to increase in number (CSAW 1990; NCEE 1990). The current census data, however, show that students from linguistic and ethnic-minority backgrounds are not enrolling in college in sufficient numbers to qualify for the increasing number of jobs that will require baccalaureate degrees. If the enrollment of students from underrepresented backgrounds in colleges and universities does not increase and if these same students do not obtain college degrees, then the nation will not have achieved the educational and economic and social equity that it has sought. Neither will it have the skilled workforce it needs to ensure a healthy and competitive economy. Nor will it have the well-educated and thoughtful citizenry it needs for a vibrant and energetic democracy. Indeed, if the current college enrollment trends continue, then the social and economic gaps that exist between ethnic groups in the United States will widen.

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We have been studying an "untracking" program in San Diego that is closing one of the educational gaps between minority and majority, low-income and upper-income students: college enrollment. The San Diego untracking experiment places students from low-income ethnic- and linguistic-minority backgrounds in college prep classes along with their high-achieving peers. In addition to placing high- and previously low-achieving students in the same heterogeneously grouped courses, this program provides the students with a special elective class that emphasizes collaborative instruction, writing, and problem solving.

In a previous report (Mehan et al. 1992), we described the commendable college-enrollment record of the graduates of this program, compared to San Diego and national averages. As we conducted interviews of the untracked students and observed them in their classrooms and out of school, we discovered additional social consequences of this untracking effort that extend beyond its manifest educational consequences.

The African American and Latino students in the untracking program formed academically oriented peer groups and developed strategies for managing an academic identity at school and a neighborhood identity among friends at home. From these new voluntary associations, new ideologies developed. The students' belief statements displayed a healthy disrespect for the romantic tenets of achievement ideology and an affirmation of cultural identities, and they acknowledged the necessity of academic achievement for occupational success. Gibson calls this ideology, and the course of action that flows from it "accommodation without assimilation" (1988). This is a unique ideology, not usually expressed by low-income Latino and African American youth. Gibson found it operating among *voluntary minorities* (such as Sikhs, Japanese, and Chinese) but not *involuntary minorities* (such as Latinos and African Americans).

In this article, we present the contours of the accommodationist ideology that we found among the Latino and African American youth in this untracking program. Then we describe some of the cultural processes and organizational practices that seem to have nurtured its development. Before doing so, we place this discussion in the context of the debate attempting to explain the educational inequities that break out along class, ethnic, and gender lines in the United States.

Explaining Educational Inequality

Why are students from minority and working-class backgrounds not as successful in school as their middle- and upper-income contemporaries? Why is there a strong tendency for working-class children to end up in working-class jobs? One of the most persuasive explanations of the inequality in educational outcomes is *reproduction theory*, which suggests that inequality is the consequence of capitalist structures and forces that constrain the mobility of lower-class youth.

The Reproduction of Inequality by Economic and Cultural Means

Bowles and Gintis posited a correspondence between the organization of work and the organization of schooling which trained elites to accept their place at the top of the class economy and trained workers to accept their lower places at the bottom of the class economy (1976). The sons and daughters of workers, placed into ability groups or tracks that encourage docility and conformity to extremal rules and authority, learn the skills associated with manual work. By contrast, the sons and daughters of the elite are placed into tracks that encourage them to work at their own pace without supervision, to make intelligent choices among alternatives, and to internalize rather than externally follow constraining norms.

Bourdieu and Passeron provide us with a more subtle account of inequality, by proposing cultural elements that mediate the relationship between economic structures and the lives of people (1977; cf. Bourdieu 1986). Distinctive cultural knowledge is transmitted by the families of each social class. As a consequence, children of the dominant class inherit substantially different cultural knowledge, skills, manners, norms, dress, styles of interaction, and linguistic facilities than do the sons and daughters of lower-class origin. Students from the dominant class, by virtue of a certain linguistic and cultural competence acquired through family socialization, are provided the means of appropriating success in school. Children who read good books, visit museums, attend concerts, and go to the theatre acquire an ease, a familiarity with the dominant culture which the educational system implicitly requires of its students for academic attainment. Schools and other symbolic institutions contribute to the reproduction of inequality by devising a curriculum that rewards the *cultural capital* of the dominant classes and systematically devalues that of the lower classes.

Bourdieu and Passeron's more nuanced view (1977) overcomes the some of the problems in Bowles and Gintis's economic formulation (1976), but the representation of the cause of inequality contained in cultural reproduction theory, while powerful, still suffers from an overly deterministic worldview. It emphasizes structural constraints while virtually ignoring the social organization of school practices and individuals' actions (Mehan 1992). Students are treated mainly as bearers of cultural capital—a bundle of abilities, knowledge, and attitudes furnished by parents (Apple 1983; Giroux 1983; MacLeod 1987). As a result, we second the motion made by Giroux and Simon (1989) and MacLeod (1987), who call for a reflexive relationship between social agency and social constraints.

Resistant and Oppositional Behavior: Students' Contributions to Their School Failure

A series of articulate ethnographies have begun to establish a balance between structural determinants and social agency in explaining in-

equality. While acknowledging that structural constraints inhibit mobility and that school practices contribute to inequality, they focus on students own contributions to their difficulties. In these ethnographies, students from lower-income, ethnic- and linguistic-minority backgrounds have been represented as having a belief system that is different than the mainstream. While mainstream students are characterized as believing in the value of hard work and individual effort (oftentimes called the *achievement ideology*) low-income and minority students either directly challenge or disengage from the prevailing ideology of American society. Either they do not buy into, or they have given up on, the belief in hard work and individual effort. If they have beliefs at all, they are said to be antiestablishment. If not anti-intellectual, they are at least antiacademic because these students see little reason for their coursework and cannot envision how schooling will help them achieve their goals (LeCompte and Dworkin 1991).

Willis's 1977 study of disaffected white working-class males in a British secondary school is the hallmark study in this so-called resistance tradition. He found the "lads," a group of high-school dropouts who rejected achievement ideology, subverted teacher and administrator authority, and disrupted classes. Willis says that the lads' rejection of the school is partly the result of their deep insights into the economic condition of their social class under capitalism. But their cultural outlook limited their options; equating manual labor with success and mental labor with failure prevented them from seeing that their actions led to dead-end, lower-paying jobs. Blind to the connection between schooling and mobility, they *choose* to join their brothers and fathers on the shop floor, a choice apparently made happily and freely from coercion. Thus, what begins as a potential insight into the social relations of production is transformed into a surprisingly uncritical affirmation of class domination. This identification of manual labor with masculinity ensures the lads' acceptance of their subordinate economic fate and the successful reproduction of the class structure.

Following in Willis's path, MacLeod (1987) and Foley (1991) invited us to listen to the antiestablishment ideology of the working class. Like the lads in England, the sons of the working class in the United States have developed a critique of the capitalist system which rationalizes their lack of academic and economic success. The "Hallway Hangers" in Boston and the "vatos" in South Texas realize that, no matter how hard they work, they will still be relegated to low-paying jobs or, worse, no jobs at all. These words are translated into deeds; they withdraw from academic pursuits, act up in class, ignore assignments and homework, and cut classes. Their critique, like that of the "lads," is somewhat shortsighted, however, because their ideology leads to actions that contribute to their stagnant position in the status hierarchy.

Ogbu's research into the folk models of schooling associated with voluntary minorities and involuntary minorities sharpens the opposi-

tional and resistant representation of minority and working-class youth (1978, 1987). Voluntary minorities (such as Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese) accept school norms, work hard, and alternate their academic identity at school with a nonacademic identity with friends, Ogbu says. African Americans and Latinos have a different folk model of schooling that encourages different patterns of behavior. These involuntary minorities tend to equate schooling with assimilation into the dominant group, a course of action that they actively resist. As a result, they do not try to achieve academically; instead, they engage in collective actions of resistance against school and societal norms.

Ogbu implies that the ideology that African Americans, Latinos, and other encapsulated minority groups have developed contributes to their relatively poor academic and economic success. Because it is collectivist and oppositional, the ideology of involuntary or encapsulated minorities has led them to adopt strategies that scorn the idea of individual achievement that is so important in American society, in favor of collective strategies that blame failure on racial discrimination and other structural forces.

Labov reported that low-income black students formed group identity based on in-group linguistic codes, Black English Vernacular (BEV), for example (1982). While these communication patterns help maintain group cohesion, they also have alienating effects. BEV use—like rap and raggae—distinctive dress, and demeanor are a source of distinction and pride (from the low-income black student's point of view) but are signs of opposition and irritation (from the white teacher's point of view). In Labov's study, the folk model within the low-income black peer culture required speech that was markedly different from the "good English" expected in school. Students who spoke "school English" and did well in school marked themselves as different and risked rejection by their peers. Because they valued peer praise, these students opted out of academic pursuits and into oppositional pursuits, which meant they spent more time resisting authority and being confrontational and much less time and effort in their schoolwork (1982).

Fordham and Ogbu (1987) expanded Labov's argument. Because involuntary immigrant groups still experience prejudice, they have come to believe that social and economic success is only possible by adopting the cultural and linguistic patterns of the majority culture. This puts high-achieving blacks in a bind, because they must choose between maintaining their ethnic identity or striving for high achievement, which their ethnic peers regard as acting superior, or "acting white." To resolve this dilemma, many blacks reject academic life in favor of an oppositional lifestyle.

Apple and Weis contribute to this tradition by saying that U.S. working-class students see schooling as tacitly teaching middle-class norms, values, and dispositions through institutional expectations and the routines of day-to-day school life (1983). Working-class subcultures oppose

the rigid rules, the respect for external rewards, the orderly work habits, and the demand for subordination.

Solomon reports a similar pattern among West Indian children in a major Canadian city (1992). These newly arrived immigrants come to school with beliefs and actions that work against their academic success. These attitudes lead them to respond to their treatment by the school in a manner that compounds their problem: they form separatist groups, they do not follow school rules, and they play sports rather than do schoolwork. Solomon, like Foley, MacLeod, Ogbu and Weis, and Willis before him, gives student subcultures some political savvy: they oppose school culture because they see limited economic opportunities ahead of them. The net result is that these newly arrived immigrant students fail, in spite of their expressed desire to succeed in school.

Weis places the history of school antagonisms between blacks and whites in the history of relationships between blacks and whites in the wider society:

The fact that blacks constitute a castelike group in American society means that student culture will automatically take a somewhat different shape and form from that of the white working class. Student cultural forms is [*sic*] also affected by the nature of the historic struggle for particular groups. [1985:132]

In short, poor black and Latino students are said to have an ideology and a course of action that directly challenges conventional American wisdom about the relationship between academic performance and occupational success. When black high school students rebuke their black peers for "acting white," they are actively resisting white structure and domination (Fordham and Ogbu 1987). Likewise, when black college students go through the routine of schooling but exert little effort in their study, they are resisting an education that they see as "only second best" to that available to whites (Weis 1985). So too, when West Indians in Toronto form separatist groups, refuse to follow school rules, and play sports to the exclusion of their schoolwork, they are creating a "lived culture" that contributes to their own school difficulties (Solomon 1992). The ideology and practice of resistance contribute to the lowly position of blacks and Latinos in the occupational structure, according to "resistance" theorists, because working-class students refuse to develop the skills, the attitudes, the manners, and the speech that are necessary for the achievement of success in capitalist societies.

The agency attributed to students, then, distinguishes these ethnographic accounts from the theorizing of either Bowles and Gintis or Bourdieu and Passeron. Unlike the students in Bowles and Gintis's rendition who passively internalize mainstream values of individual achievement or the students in Bourdieu and Passeron's theory who simply carry cultural capital on their backs or in their heads, these working-class, linguistic- and ethnic-minority students make real choices in their everyday lives. While at first glance, the working-class

students' rebellious behavior, their low academic achievement, and their high dropout rate seem to stem from dullness, laziness, inability to project themselves into the future, and lack of self-discipline, their actual causes are quite different. Their unwillingness to participate comes from their assessment of the costs and benefits of playing the game. It is not that schooling will not propel them up the ladder of success; it is that chances are too slim to warrant the attempt. Given this logic, the oppositional behavior of MacLeod's Hallway Hangers, Foley's vatos, Willis's lads, and the others is a form of resistance to an institution that cannot deliver on its promise of upward mobility for all students.

Adding the notion of *resistance* to the lexicon employed to understand inequality in schools, then, reveals the contributions that social actors make to their own plight. As Ogbu phrases it, this line of research shows how victims contribute to their own victimization (1991).

Institutional Arrangements Mediating the Relations between Social Constraints and Educational Outcomes

We encountered a set of institutional arrangements in which the sons and daughters of the working poor develop a much different ideology and adopt a much different course of action than has been previously described. Poor African American, Latino and European American high school students who have participated in an untracking program express a belief in their own efficacy and a belief in the power of schooling to improve their lives and the lives of others. They translate belief into action by participating actively in school. Yet they do not adopt a romantic or naive commitment to achievement ideology. They are all too aware of the barriers erected in front of them by the history of racism and discrimination. To handle the complexities of the world that they confront, they adopt strategies that many researchers have attributed to recent immigrants to the United States (Cummins 1986; Gibson 1988; Gibson and Ogbu 1991; Ogbu 1978, 1987; Suárez-Orozco 1989), but not to encapsulated minorities: they maintain their ethnic identity while actively engaging schooling.

The AVID Untracking Program

These students who accommodate to the norms of school and society without assimilating or compromising their ethnic identity participate in an "untracking" program in San Diego high schools, called AVID, an acronym that stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. The idea of untracking low-achieving students was introduced to San Diego in 1980 at Claremont High School, a predominantly white school, by Mary Catherine Swanson, then a member of the English department, as a way to educate minority students bused to that school from predominantly ethnic-minority schools in Southeast San Diego under a court's desegregation order. Unwilling to segregate African American

and Latino students into a separate, compensatory curriculum, Swanson and the Claremont faculty placed the bused students in regular "college-prep" classes.

The expressed goals of the AVID untracking program are to motivate and prepare underachieving students from underrepresented linguistic and ethnic-minority groups to perform well in high school and to seek a college education. Since 1991, 14 other "city schools," 50 high schools in San Diego County, and 84 high schools outside the county have introduced AVID programs.

AVID coordinators select students for the untracking program. Low-income, ethnic- and linguistic-minority students in the eighth or ninth grade who have average-to-high achievement test scores but low junior high school grades are eligible for AVID. Once teachers identify these high-potential/low-performance students, their parents are advised. Those parents who agree to support their children's participation in the academic program sign contracts to have their children participate in AVID as soon as they enroll in high school.

Once selected, students take a special elective class as part of their course load. This class emphasizes writing, inquiry, and collaboration (Swanson n.d.). Writing is seen as a tool of learning. Students are taught a special form of note taking, the Cornell system, in which they are to jot detailed notes from their academic classes in a wide right-hand margin and, as homework, develop questions based on the notes, in a narrow left-hand column. The questions students develop as homework are supposed to be used the following day in the AVID class. In addition to note taking, the students are supposed to keep learning logs and practice "quick writes" to facilitate their learning (Swanson n.d.).

Inquiry refers to the instructional strategy that teachers and tutors are to employ with the students in the elective AVID class. The program provides tutors (usually students recruited from local colleges, some of whom participated in AVID while they were in high school) to assist AVID students. Tutors are trained to lead study groups in specific subjects, such as math or English, based on the students' notes and questions. Tutors are not to give answers: they are to help the AVID students clarify their thoughts based on their questions. AVID encourages the use of the inquiry method so that the AVID class does not become a glorified study hall or homework session (Swanson n.d.).

Collaboration is the instructional strategy that organizes students to work together to achieve instructional goals. Collaborative groups or study teams enable students to serve as sources of information for each other. Collaboration, AVID asserts, shifts the responsibility for learning from the teacher who directs lessons, to the students who participate in them (Swanson n.d.).

The AVID central office suggests a basic plan for the weekly instructional activities within AVID classrooms. Two school days are designated tutorial days. On these days students are to work in small groups

with the assistance of a tutor. On the other two days, writing as a tool for learning is emphasized. On these days, students engage in a variety of writing activities, including essays for their English classes and essays for college applications. One day a week, usually Fridays, is a "motivational day." Guest speakers are invited to address the class, and field trips to colleges are scheduled on these days.

The Academic Consequences of Untracking

This untracking program has been successful in preparing its students for college. In 1990 and 1991, 253 students who had participated in the AVID untracking experiment for 3 years graduated from 14 high schools in the San Diego City Schools (SDCS) system. In those years an additional 288 students started the program but left after completing one year or less. We interviewed 144 of the "graduates" and 72 of the students who left the program within one year (Mehan et al. 1992).

Of the 144 students who graduated from AVID, 72 (50 percent) reported attending four-year colleges, 60 (42 percent) reported attending two-year or junior colleges, and the remaining 12 students (8 percent) said they are working or doing other things. The 50 percent four-year college enrollment rate for students who were "untracked" compares favorably with the SDCS's average of 37 percent and the national average of 39 percent. It also compares favorably with the college enrollment rate of students who started but did not complete the untracking program; 31 percent of them enrolled in four-year colleges within a year of graduating from high school.

Furthermore, the untracking experiment assists students from low-income families and the two major ethnic groups that are underrepresented in college. African Americans and Latinos from AVID enroll in college in numbers that exceed local and national averages. Of the Latino students who participated in AVID for three years, 44 percent enrolled in four-year colleges. This figure compares favorably to the SDCS's average of 25 percent and the national average of 29 percent. African American students who participated in AVID for three years also enrolled in college at rates higher than the local and national averages: 54 percent of black students in AVID enrolled in four-year colleges, compared to 35 percent from the SDCS and the national average of 33 percent.

AVID students from the lowest income strata (parents' median income below \$19,999) enrolled in four-year colleges in equal or higher proportion to students from higher income strata (parents' median income between \$20,000 and \$65,000). Furthermore, AVID students from families in which their parents do not have a college education enrolled in four-year colleges more often than students from families with parents who have a college education.

Students who completed three years of AVID enrolled in college in greater proportion than students who completed one year or less of

AVID, regardless of the family's income level: 60 percent of three-year AVID students from families who earned less than \$20,000 enrolled in college, compared to 29 percent of one-year AVID students whose families were in this income bracket; 44 percent of three-year AVID students from families in the \$20 to 39 thousand income range enrolled in college versus 30 percent of one-year AVID students whose families were in this range; 59 percent of three-year AVID students whose families were in the \$40 to 59 thousand range and 43 percent of the one-year AVID students whose families were in this income range enrolled in college.

The Social Consequences of Untracking

Improving the college enrollment of students from underrepresented linguistic- and ethnic-minority backgrounds is the expressed purpose of the AVID untracking program. And our research shows that the program is successful in this regard.

As we conducted interviews of the AVID students and observed them in their classrooms and out of school, we discovered additional social consequences of this untracking effort that extend beyond its manifest educational consequences. The African American and Latino students in AVID developed a reflective system of beliefs, a critical consciousness if you will, about the limits and possibilities of the actions they take and the limitations and constraints they face in life.

After we describe our research methods, we present the contours of the accommodationist ideology that we found among the Latino and African American youth in this untracking program. Then we describe some of the cultural processes and organizational practices that seem to have nurtured its development.

Data and Methods

We used materials from many sources in this study: official school records, interviews of students, teachers, parents, and school officials, as well as observations in classrooms. The San Diego City Schools (SDCS) kindly supplied us with the Cumulative School Records (CSRs) of AVID students in the classes of 1990 and 1991. We used information from the CSRs to determine students' ethnicity and to calculate their academic record in high school (AVID classes taken, CTBS scores, college-prep courses taken and completed, etc.).

Of the 1,053 students enrolled in AVID in 1990 and 1991, we found 253 students in 14 high schools who had completed three years of AVID during their high school careers when they graduated. We also identified 188 students who had entered AVID in the same academic year as the "untracked" group but did not complete three years of the program. Instead, they left after one semester or one year.

In order to determine students' activities since they graduated from high school, we attempted to interview the 253 graduates of the classes of 1990 and 1991 and the 188 students who started but did not complete AVID. We were able to interview 144 of the program grads and 72 of the AVID comparison group. We asked both groups of students about their activities since they graduated from high school, that is, whether they had enrolled in four- or two-year colleges, were working, or were doing other things. In order to place students' college enrollment and work information in context, we asked students about their family background (e.g., parents' education, languages spoken in the home). We also discussed their high school and AVID experiences with them. This information helped us answer the question: *does* untracking work?

We recognized that, in order to answer the question of *how* untracking works, we needed to go beyond correlational data and examine school practices and cultural processes. To do so, we conducted case studies of four of the San Diego high schools that are participating in this untracking experiment. We chose the four schools—Churchill, Monrovia, Pimlico, and Saratoga (all pseudonyms)—based on their ethnic enrollments, their college enrollment rate, and of course, their willingness to participate in the study. From October 1991 to August 1992, we observed in AVID classrooms, and Hubbard and Villanueva interviewed AVID teachers, students, and their parents from these four schools. In some cases we also observed in the academic classes that AVID students take and interviewed the parents of AVID students.

The Development of a Reflective Achievement Ideology

The involuntary-minority students in AVID have developed an interesting set of beliefs about the relationship between school and success. They do not have a naive belief in the connection between academic performance and occupational success. While they voice enthusiastic support for the power of their own agency, their statements also display a critical awareness of structures of inequality and strategies for overcoming discrimination in society.

Belief in Individual Effort, Motivation, and Opportunity

AVID teaches a version of achievement ideology, telling students they can be successful (which AVID defines as going to college) if they are motivated and study hard. The AVID coordinator at Saratoga High School stated this philosophy succinctly when greeting her incoming freshman class:

The responsibility for your success is with you. AVID is here to help. Your goal should be to go to a four-year college. There is lots of work to be done, but you will have more help, support, and love than you will ever need.

Interviews with AVID students suggest that they internalize this ideology, articulating success in a way that reflects the message that AVID teaches. The following students highlight the value of motivation in providing equal opportunity:

Before AVID I was unsure about college. I was always changing my mind. AVID teaches you that you have the same opportunity to get to college as anybody if you just stay motivated.

I am more motivated to go to college because AVID made me want to go. Before I got into AVID, I didn't think I had many opportunities. I thought I couldn't afford it and that I couldn't get good-enough grades. Mrs. Lincoln says we can get financial aid. And well, now my grades are really good.

These students assert that their opportunity to achieve success is the result of their individual effort:

I have a better opportunity than others because I am really striving for it. AVID helps me know what to do. I try hard; so I have to say I have the opportunity because of who I am. I have my own individual identity and not the identity of a group of people.

Students also echo the sentiments of the AVID program when they claim that they have the same opportunity to achieve as anyone else, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. An African American male at Saratoga maintains that he has an opportunity to succeed because "the key to success is your own body, your own self."

Experience with Prejudice and Discrimination

AVID students' believe in individual effort, motivation, and opportunity. But these students also recognize that the world out there is full of discrimination, prejudice, and racism.

Many AVID students have personally experienced prejudice. In a group discussion Lea Hubbard had with African American AVID students at Saratoga, David and Rocky, two Saratoga seniors, said that they had stopped at a traffic light and that a white man in the car next to them got out of his car and pulled a gun on them for no reason. They took off "like fast." AVID students have experienced scrutiny and harassment from the police in ways that resonate with the tales told by Anderson (1991:190-206). Here are some incidents that these students rattled off to Hubbard during that discussion which suggest that the police define their social-control work as keeping middle-income white neighborhoods "safe" from low-income blacks:

Rocky and two other friends were walking home from a school dance behind some white guys. A police patrol stopped and harassed them, but never stopped the white guys.

Kam was at home one night when cops just burst into his home without reason and left without explanation.

When Lea Hubbard said to them, "It sounds like you are getting a bum deal," the boys agreed. But they were not resigned to these conditions; they believed they could overcome them: "If you work hard, you will succeed."

Dora, a black female student at Saratoga, relayed similar experiences to Lea Hubbard in an interview:

I'm gonna tell you something—I don't care if I should—but there's a whole lot of racism. My friend and I were alternates on the flag team . . . and when they needed to replace some permanent members, they got two new white girls and not my friend and I.

Khalada, another African American female student at Saratoga, also expressed an awareness of discrimination. She said her mother told her that she had to watch out. She might be friends with whites now, but when it came to the business world later, they would let you down.

Experience with prejudice and discrimination is not confined to black and Latino students. John Sing, a junior in AVID at Saratoga, is an ethnic Chinese born in Vietnam. Although he is doing well academically (carrying a 3.3 GPA), he confided to Lea Hubbard that he is afraid of the verbal portion of the SAT because he considers it a racist test. He is also afraid that his chances of going to college will be hampered by a quota system, which limits the number of Asian students, and that "there are lots of Asians smarter than me."

Strategies for Dealing with Discrimination

AVID students are not only aware of these structures of discrimination, but they have developed strategies for dealing with them. When Hubbard asked Dora about what happened after the flag-team incident (reported above), she said:

My mom raised heck. [But] teachers don't care. They just think they are here to teach: "You've got to get yourself through." Except for three teachers. Mrs. Lincoln is one of them. Teachers don't say you are capable. No one really cares.

Later in this interview, she reinforced her earlier statement that individual motivation overcomes racism:

Most blacks in the community are faced with prejudice and will be held back, not me.

Tipoli, a Saratoga junior, recognized there are barriers erected in her path and in the path of African American students generally:

I think teachers expect more out of us [blacks]. Colleges recruit blacks because of sports, but they don't get an education. That's dumb. There's lots of hurt and prejudice. People need to learn about different cultures and read about black people. They always look at us when we study about slaves as if we were slaves.

In addition to her general appeal for more culturally sensitive curricula, her more personal strategy for dealing with prejudice is to "go to college. I want to be there. It's the only way to get a job."

This opinion was reinforced by David, an African American student, who says he does not have an equal opportunity to succeed because of his race:

There is more pressure because we are black and we are athletes. They are always looking to us to do the right thing, and if we do anything wrong, we're nobody.

Before he became involved with AVID, David said that his athletic prowess would lead him to success. Since he has been in AVID, his strategy for dealing with the prejudice he has experienced has changed; now he plans to get good grades and not rely on athletics as his ticket to success.

Several African American males reported tales of systematic discrimination at the hands of a particular counselor at Saratoga. In a group interview with Lea Hubbard, they reported that this counselor repeatedly tells African American males that they "won't make it to a big time college." One student reported asking for information about a four-year college and being told, "What for? It's just a waste of your time and mine. You won't make it anyway." The counselor then gave him only information about two-year colleges and vocational schools. Even though the students say they have protested the counselor's ill treatment of them, he is unwilling to help them. When one male student tried to add a chemistry course to his schedule, this same counselor said no and that "he didn't need that for what he was going to do after graduation. Only college-bound kids need academics." To deal with this prejudicial situation, the AVID students have devised ways to avoid this counselor. Instead of going to him for advice, they rely on the AVID teacher to counsel them about college. They also advise each other and make it clear to new AVID students that they should avoid this counselor.

Students report incidents at Monrovia that suggest they are victims of backlash from their academic teachers. It appears as though some teachers think that AVID students are only in advanced classes because they are AVID students. This "sorting privilege" can operate against AVID students. One Monrovia student commented that her advanced-English teacher told her on her first day that "she wouldn't make it in her class." Her AVID teacher intervened on her behalf the next day, telling the English teacher that "the student would make it because she was getting

extra help from AVID." The student finished the semester with a grade of B. Hubbard asked the student why she felt she was able to succeed. She said:

I knew if I tried, I could, and I really wanted to show her I could do it. [The AVID coordinator] told me to work with the tutor. But boy was I hurt that [the advanced-English teacher] thought I couldn't do it. I know it was because I was a minority student. She didn't even know my ability.

Some African American males in AVID students talk about their race strategically. In doing so, they sound like the "Brothers" in MacLeod's 1987 ethnography of urban youth. The Brothers said they thought they had more opportunity to succeed than their parents because of the influence of governmental civil rights laws. Darius, a black male from Saratoga High School, is typical of many African American males in AVID in this respect. He feels he has a better opportunity because of his race. Colleges, especially those in California, are trying to meet affirmative-action goals, he says. Therefore, they recruit African American males such as himself to meet quotas. That is, in a civil rights climate, his race gives him an advantage, a fact that he can use strategically.

Discrimination can cut two ways. Darcey, one of a minority of white students in AVID, indexed what would be called reverse discrimination. He says that he does not have an equal opportunity because of his race: colleges are accepting Asians over white kids.

Accommodation without Assimilation

AVID students recognize that academic performance is necessary for occupational success, but they have not bought the naive proposition that their individual effort will automatically breed their success. The Latino and African American students in AVID (which Ogbu would call "involuntary minorities") have also developed provocative beliefs and practices about culture contact. They affirm their cultural identities while at the same time recognize the need to develop certain cultural practices, notably achieving academically, that are acceptable to the mainstream. Following Gibson (1988), we talk about this aspect of their ideology as "accommodation without assimilation."

Marta Garcia represents many Latino students in AVID who affirm their cultural identity while achieving academically. Marta confided to Lea Hubbard that her Latino cultural background is very important to her. In fact, when she was in third grade, she pledged to become perfectly bilingual, maintaining her native Spanish while developing acceptable English and academic skills. She has fulfilled this promise to herself and entered the University of Ihao Americana, Tijuana, Mexico, in the fall of 1992.

When Lea Hubbard and Irene Villanueva interviewed Marta's Spanish-speaking parents, it was clear that Marta's identification with her

Mexican heritage has been kept actively alive by her intense involvement with her parents. Spanish is the predominant language in the home; the family takes frequent trips to Mexico; religious and cultural symbols are prevalent in the home. Marta's parents respect her bicultural moves. On the one hand, they are pleased that Marta and her friends are respectful of their background. On the other hand, they encourage the academic path their children are taking. It is perhaps symbolic of the way the parents are juggling these two worlds that Marta's older brother, also an excellent student, will be attending college with Marta.

Marta has two close friends, Serena and Maria, both of whom are in AVID. These girls reinforce each other's love of their cultural heritage and desire to succeed. They often discuss college plans and share their concerns and excitement in Spanish, a sure sign of their cultural accommodation.

Another sign of Serena's accommodation is found in her interactions with her mother about college. Serena's mother is a widow who speaks very little English and works as a domestic and food-services worker at the University of San Diego. Serena interacts with her mother in Spanish at home but seldom about academic matters, apparently. Mrs. Castro told Irene Villanueva that she provided Serena with general moral support (*apoyo moral*) but felt ill-equipped to provide the detailed technical skills Serena needed in school. Mrs. Castro always supported Serena's plans to go to college, although she did not want her to leave the San Diego area in order to pursue this goal. She is pleased, therefore, that Serena will attend the University of California at San Diego. When Irene asked Mrs. Castro about Serena's financial aid, Mrs. Castro laughed in an embarrassed way because she was completely unaware of what Serena will be receiving, what her fees are, or how they will be paid. Serena has assumed all the responsibilities associated with college matriculation and, in the process, simultaneously maintained her family life with her mother and her school life with her friends.

Managing Dual Identities

The space AVID has created is productive, because it helps AVID students foster academic identities. But this same space also creates problems for AVID students, because they must deal with their friends who are academically oriented and their friends who are not academically oriented. AVID students develop a variety of strategies for balancing or managing this dilemma.

Gándara found that college-bound Latino students used "denial" as a strategy to keep up their grades while still keeping up their friendships (in press). One Latino student told her, "I didn't let on that I was studying or working hard. I mean you were cool if you didn't study."

While some AVID students submerged their academic identity entirely, most students maintained dual identities, one at school and one in the neighborhood. Because they were segregated by classes at school,

it was not difficult to keep the two peer groups separate. At school, they were free to compete academically; at home in the afternoon, they would assume a different posture.

Laura is a Latina who lives in what she described as “the ghetto”:

You don't know how awful it is there. They don't give a damn about themselves. My mom doesn't have any education. My friends in the neighborhood think I am really stupid for staying in school. They tell me that, since I have enough credits to graduate, I ought to quit school and get a job. They think the most important thing is to get married and have babies.

Laura wants to be a lawyer, and she knows the only way to achieve that goal is to “put forth the effort and go to college.” But she also wants to keep her friends. So she is active in AVID during school hours and continues to date boys from her neighborhood and go to the movies with her girlfriends who live on her street.

An African American male from Monrovia said in so many words that he lives two lives. Chris said he really wants to go to college and that AVID provides him a place where his academic pursuits are encouraged and where he has academically oriented peers. But he has street friends, too. While he feels they are “wasting their lives” because “they are into being bad,” he still hangs out with them. Chris also spends some of his free time as a peer counselor for Saratoga's African American students. His counseling activities bridge the two different worlds that he occupies.

The story of Hazzard, an African American male who attended Pimlico High School, exemplifies a third strategy for managing dual identities. He brought his nonacademic friends with him into academic settings. Hazzard was a member of a gang when he was selected into AVID. He retained his gang friends, while simultaneously developing new acquaintances in AVID. Like other AVID students, he wanted to go to college. He was, in fact, accepted at the University of California at Berkeley, San Diego State University, and a local junior college. Instead of enrolling at the Berkeley campus, he said he chose to attend the college closer to his home so that he could stay with his friends. Indeed, he brought them to classes with him. Hazzard was doing what he needed to do to pass academically, while retaining his membership in his peer group.

These “border crossing” strategies (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba 1991; Giroux 1992; Rose 1989) have special utility for minority students because, by the time they graduate, they will have had experience in moving between two cultures. They will have interacted with high-achieving Anglos and still be comfortable in the company of friends who would never leave the fields or the barrios or go to college (cf. Gándara, in press).

Group Formation and the Construction of Academic Identities

The African American and Latino students who participated in the AVID untracking program for three years developed strategies for managing dual identities and developed new ideologies. Importantly, these ideologies were neither conformist nor assimilationist. Instead, their belief statements displayed a healthy disrespect for the romantic tenets of achievement ideology and affirmed their cultural identities, while acknowledging the necessity of academic achievement for occupational success.

In the next few pages, we describe the institutional arrangements and cultural processes that contributed to the formation of academic identities and the development of a reflective achievement ideology.

Isolation of Group Members

In order to transform raw recruits into fighting men, the military isolates them from other, potentially conflicting social forces. Religious orders and gangs operate in a similar manner, shielding their recruits from competing interests and groups (Goffman 1964; Jankowski 1991).

Whether intentionally or not, AVID has adopted this principle. AVID selects promising students and isolates them in special classes that meet once a day, every day of the school year. Once students are in these classes, AVID provides them social supports that assist them through the transition from low-track to academic-track status. These scaffolds include explicit instruction in a special method of note taking, test-taking strategies, and general study tips. The note-taking technique stresses compiling and abstracting main ideas and generating questions to guide students' reading. Students are expected to apply these techniques in notebooks that they keep for their academic courses.

Test-taking skills were taught in all AVID classrooms, albeit differentially emphasized. At a minimum, students were given drill and practice on vocabulary items likely to appear on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). When a more-extensive approach to test preparation was taken, students were provided explicit instruction in ways to eliminate distracting answers on multiple choice questions, strategies for approximating answers, and probabilities about the success of guessing. One AVID teacher devoted two successive weeks to SAT preparation, including practice with vocabulary items, administering practice tests, reviewing wrong answers, and teaching strategies for taking tests. This teacher reviewed the kinds of analogies typically found on the SAT with her students so that they could practice the kinds of problems they would encounter on their tests. This teacher also sent her students to an expert math teacher for assistance on math test items. She reinforced this teaching by explaining that she was teaching them the same academic tricks found in the expensive Princeton Review SAT preparation class.

While note-taking skills, test-taking strategies, and study tips were taught routinely, by far the most prevalent activity in the four AVID programs we studied during 1991–92 school year revolved around the college-application process. Procedures for filing applications, meeting deadlines for SAT tests, and requesting financial aid and scholarships dominated discussion. At Pimlico High, for instance, students must complete a weekly AVID assignment in which students do writing and/or reading tasks directly related to college. The junior class at Saratoga received a handout, *Choosing Your College*, containing a checklist of information typically found in college catalogs. Students were instructed to fill in the information for that college according to the assigned checklist. This task presumably made them more familiar with college catalogs and would help them choose a college to fit their personal needs.

By dispensing these academic tricks, AVID is giving students explicit instruction in the hidden curriculum of the school. That is, AVID teaches explicitly in school what middle-income students learn implicitly at home. In Bourdieu's terms (1986), AVID gives low-income students some of the cultural capital at school that is similar to the cultural capital that more economically advantaged parents give to their children at home.

Public Markers of Group Identity

In addition to isolating students and providing them with social supports, AVID marks their group identity in a public manner. The special class set aside for their exclusive use is one such marker. Instead of going to shop or driver's education for their elective class period, they go to the AVID room, a classroom identified by signs and banners. Students often return to the AVID room at lunchtime or after school to do homework or socialize, actions that further mark their distinctive group membership.

AVID students are given special notebooks, emblazoned with the AVID logo, to take AVID-style class notes. These notebooks signal their membership in this special group. Some schools have designed distinctive ribbons and badges that AVID students wear on their clothes. Others have adorned their graduation gowns or mortarboards with AVID ribbons. Still other AVID classes publish a newspaper that reports the accomplishments of AVID students. All of these actions further distinguish AVID students as members of a special, academically oriented group.

These markers influence teachers as well as students. Teachers report that, when they saw AVID students with notebooks, taking notes in class and turning in neat assignments on time, it indicated to them that AVID students were serious.

Formation of Voluntary Associations

Special classrooms, badges of distinction—these are physical, material markers that define the space for AVID students to develop an academically oriented identity. Within this space, AVID students develop new academically oriented friends or join academic friends who were already in AVID.

Several Saratoga students told us that they really did not know anyone in AVID when they joined, but after a few years almost all their friends were from AVID. These friendships developed because they were together in classes throughout the day and worked together in study groups. Coordinators encouraged these friendships by minimizing competition. The AVID coordinator at Monrovia High School, for example, told her students that they should think of themselves on “parallel ladders with each other. There should be no competition between students, but rather an opportunity to share notes and to help one another.”

Some AVID students did join AVID to be with their friends. Cynthia, a Latina from Monrovia High School, said her friends were already in AVID, and because they were doing well, she wanted to be with them. Now all her friends are in AVID. Thomas, an African American male at Saratoga, said that he told his two good friends from elementary school that “they had to get into AVID because it would really help with their grades.” He even called one of his friend’s mother to convince her that AVID was good for her son. These three boys have remained good friends for their four AVID years and always study together.

AVID encourages the development of academically oriented associations among students through formally organized activities such as college visits. AVID coordinators take their students to such colleges as San Diego State University (SDSU), the University of California at San Diego (UCSD), the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and the University of Southern California (USC). Of particular note, the AVID coordinator at Pimlico High takes her AVID students on a two-week trip to traditionally black colleges and universities in Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, every other year. In addition to the usual college tours and dorm sleepovers, the current generation of AVID high school students meet AVID students who enrolled in these schools in previous years.

Less formal activities also do this work of developing academically oriented associations. Students in AVID classrooms often talk among themselves and discuss matters relevant to their adolescence. Students use this period of time to bounce their values and troubles off one another, to test their principles and ideas, and to react to others. In those schools where African American and Latino students are bused in, the AVID classroom may be the only time minority students see each other during school hours. In those classes in which older and younger AVID students mix, the younger students observe older students’ behavior and how teachers interact with them.

The longer students are in the program, the more ties seem to intensify. A Latina who attends Monrovia articulated these sentiments. AVID provides a different environment for her. "At home they expect me to get married. Here they expect me to go to college." Because of the pressures she receives from home, Maria attributes much of her academic success to the girlfriends she has cultivated in AVID. She studies together with her two friends and:

[we] chat a lot about college and what we want out of life. Our study group really opens up a lot of issues. Everyone is really motivated to go to college. It really helps to be around others that want to go. It makes you want it more.

We thought the highly visible markers of AVID (the notebooks required to be carried to classes, the special class periods established for them, the college visits arranged for them, the newspapers they publish) would stigmatize AVID students in the eyes of their peers. But this marking process has had the opposite effect. AVID students reported that their friends who were not in AVID were jealous. They wanted to be in AVID for the camaraderie to be sure, but also because they wanted to take advantage of the resources that AVID made available to its students, such as information about scholarships, college-entrance exams, and visits to colleges.

Many Monrovia AVID students told us in interviews that their non-AVID friends were jealous and "wanted into" the program. One Latina student stated that her friends, who were mostly white, felt racially threatened by the advantages given to AVID students: "They don't like AVID because they feel racially threatened. They don't really know what it is. They are jealous and think AVID is unfair." Another Latina student, Maria, expressed a similar view:

Many are really jealous of the help that AVID gives me. One friend told me that it wasn't fair that [the AVID coordinator] helped me with my composition. [But] they forget that I don't have a mother to proofread my papers like they do. I can't get any help from my parents."

Ngoc, a Vietnamese student who attended Monrovia High School, suggested that this jealousy can take on overtones of reverse discrimination; his friends think that the only reason he got into USCD was because he was in AVID: "They think that AVID can get you in," he said. While these peer attitudes lead Maria and Ngoc to feel defensive about their participation in this untracking program, such attitudes also seem to fuel an increased commitment and loyalty. Pressure from outside the group creates a bond inside the group. Many students felt they were lucky to be "chosen" for the program and know that they were chosen because they need help academically.

Conclusions

The actions that working-class African American and Latino youths take against limitations in the capitalist system have been blamed for their poor academic performance. The sons and daughters of the poor withdraw from academic pursuits because they realize that their access to high-paying jobs is limited. Their critique is limited and ironic, however, because their unwillingness to play the academic game ensures that they will stay in lowly economic positions.

Ogbu maintains that the status that African Americans, Latinos, and other involuntary immigrant groups have in the power structure contributes to this condition. While voluntary minorities accept achievement ideology, involuntary minorities tend to equate schooling with assimilation into the dominant group, an equation they detest. As a result, they do not try to achieve academically: instead, they engage in collective actions of resistance against school and societal norms. Ogbu implies that the collectivist and oppositional ideology that blacks, Latinos, and other involuntary minority groups have developed contributes to their relatively poor academic and economic success. They fail in school because they blame failure on racial discrimination and other structural forces and do not take personal responsibility for their own actions and individual initiative, a course of action that Ogbu feels is fundamental for success in American society.

We did not find an oppositional ideology or pattern of resistance among the black and Latino students who participated in the AVID untracking program. Instead, we found that AVID kids formed an academic identity and developed a reflective and critical ideology. Strictly speaking, their ideology was neither conformist nor assimilationist. Instead, it included a critique of many tenets of achievement ideology, an affirmation of cultural identity, while acknowledging the necessity of academic achievement for occupational success.

By isolating students for significant portions of the school day, marking them as members of a special group, and providing them social supports, AVID fostered the academic identity of its students. This newly acquired academic identity posed problems for AVID students who had many nonacademic friends, however. AVID students resolved this dilemma by managing dual identities, an academic identity with academic friends at school, and a nonacademic identity with friends after school. This border-crossing strategy is useful for minority students, because it provides them experience in moving between two cultures, a high-achieving academic culture and a supportive community culture.

AVID students face discrimination and racism to be sure. But these antagonisms do not result in the acts of cultural inversion suggested by Winis, MacLeod, Foley, and Ogbu. In fact, AVID students invite us to reexamine the typology Ogbu constructs that designates separate and distinct ideologies for voluntary and involuntary immigrant groups.

The blacks and Latinos who participate in AVID do not fit the typology proposed by Ogbu. While many African American students in AVID describe a system that is not sympathetic to students in general and discriminatory to blacks in particular, they speak of their own opportunity in terms of their own individual hard work. One black male from Saratoga summarizes this argument for us:

We know that the teacher is not doing what's right. He is a real racist jerk, but if you work hard, you will succeed. If you get good grades, he can't hurt you.

The ethnic and linguistic minority students in this untracking project seem to have developed an ideology, a consciousness if you will, that is neither oppositional nor conformist. Instead, it combines a belief in achievement with a cultural affirmation, becoming more critical than conformist.

The ideology of AVID students, which is simultaneously culturally and academically affirming, puts a new twist on the traditional connection between academic achievement and economic success. Black and Latino AVID students sense the need to develop culturally appropriate linguistic styles, social behavior, and academic skills. And they develop these skills, but without erasing the cultural identity of theirs that is nurtured and displayed at home and in the neighborhood.

Furthermore, these students' ideology provides an interesting counterpoint to the ideology of resistance. Here we encounter circumstances in which members of ethnic- and linguistic-minority groups eschew oppositional ideologies in favor of the "accommodation without assimilation" belief system (Gibson 1988), which is presumably reserved for members of voluntary immigrant groups (Cummins 1986; Gibson and Ogbu 1991; Ogbu 1978; Suárez-Orozco 1989).

In a sense, AVID students (who are successful by anyone's standards) have developed the ideology that Fine seems to think is reserved for the rejects of the educational system (1991). She found that high school dropouts had developed a much more sophisticated critique of class, gender, and ethnic politics than high school graduates, who naively accepted the connection between hard work and academic success. It is important to note that AVID produces minority students who are successful in school and who have developed a critical consciousness. This means that a critical consciousness is not reserved only for the students rejected by the system. We have uncovered at least one set of social circumstances in which a critical consciousness develops among students who are academically successful.

In closing, we want to make a final comment about the concept of resistance which resides in many parts of reproduction theory. Our study shows that the expressive and behavioral repertoire of Latino and African American students is much more extensive than is portrayed in reproduction theory. The actions of Latino and African American students in AVID were not limited to opposing or resisting structures of

constraints; they took positive courses of action to achieve socially accepted goals and attempted to break down constraining barriers. The students in our study did not passively respond to structural forces; rather they shaped and defined those forces in creative ways.

Circumscribing students' actions as only negative or oppositional produces a limited portrait of their social agency. Having witnessed a wide and diverse range of students' actions, it is clear to us that we need a more subtle and inclusive conception of social agency in order to understand how the inequality between rich and poor, "majority" and "minority," is sustained generation after generation. This more comprehensive sense of agency to which we have alluded in this study attempts to capture the processes by which people give meaning to their lives through complex cultural and political processes while appreciating the power of the constraints under which they labor (cf. Giroux and Simon 1989:147).

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Notes

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