# Chapter One
# Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspective

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Anthropologists have been concerned with the problems encountered in school by non-mainstream children—lower class, minority and immigrant children—from the beginning of the twentieth century (see Hewitt, 1905). Although they did not conduct ethnographic studies in schools until recent decades, leading anthropologists of every generation since the turn of the century have written about the school experience of these children (e.g., Boas, 1928; Benedict, 1943; Mead, 1943; Powdermaker, 1943; Redfield, 1943). Ethnographic research on minority education began in the 1950s, expanded in the 1960s and 1970s and has grown substantially since then. Moreover, anthropologists have become actively involved in the application of their knowledge to the solution of various problems faced by minorities in school.

These developments have resulted in constructive and empirically based criticisms of the way in which schools educate minority children. Suggestions for and efforts to improve minority children's school experience are also now based on ethnographic evidence rather than on speculation. Yet, upon close inspection, there appears to be at least one important reason for caution: most anthropological research has focused on the school experience of minority groups who are not particularly successful in school—usually nonimmigrants. That is, we have been concerned primarily with the

school experience of those minority groups who did not choose to come voluntarily to the countries in which they now reside in order to improve their social, economic and political status or to achieve other desired ends. Ethnographers have generally found that among nonimmigrant minorities a disproportionate number of children experience social adjustment problems and are not academically successful compared with other children. They have also discovered that these minority children often differ in significant ways from dominant-group children in culture and communication and in terms of power relations. From these observations, ethnographers have concluded that the minority student's disproportionate school failure is caused by discontinuities in culture, communication and power relations. And sophisticated ethnographic techniques have been developed to study and demonstrate how these discontinuities cause school failure as well as how school failure can be prevented.

Recent ethnographic studies among immigrant minorities suggest, however, that our conclusions about the relationship between discontinuities in culture, language and power relations on the one hand, and on the other, minorities' disproportionate school failure or success may not be applicable to all minority groups. Some of these ethnographic studies indicate, specifically, that there may be different patterns of adaptation in school which lead to differential school success for immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities, partly because of different historical experiences which lead to different adaptive responses. The main task of this volume, then, is to make a comparative examination of the extent and nature of the differences and similarities in the general adaptive responses and their impact on the schooling of the two types of minorities. The major question is why immigrant minorities are relatively more successful in school than nonimmigrant minorities in spite of the apparent similarities in the cultural, linguistic and structural barriers facing both types of minorities.

## A Comparative Framework

In order to achieve our comparative goal the authors of the chapters in this volume were asked, as far as possible, to address the same issues, to use the same framework and the same concepts in organizing their chapters and to provide the same kinds of quantitative



data. More specifically, each case-study author was asked to consider the following: the history of the minority group, its contemporary status and its pattern of school performance. Other factors to be addressed were the barriers to school adjustment and school success the minority group faced, such as societal, within-school and community barriers, including cultural and language factors, the factors facilitating school adjustment and success and the minority group's folk theories of success. Not all the case studies addressed these issues to the same degree because the nature of the data available to each author differed. It needs to be pointed out, moreover, that the initial studies were not designed with the present comparative framework in mind.

## Conventional Explanations of Variability in Minority School Performance

Several explanations have been proposed to account for the variability in the school performance of minority children. Jensen, for instance, has claimed that black Americans are less successful in school than white Americans because they are not endowed with the type of genes that enhance white "intelligence" and success in school (1969). However, a theory based on genetic differences, such as Jensen's, cannot explain why the Japanese Buraku outcastes do less well than the majority of Japanese when attending schools in Japan (Shimahara, in this volume) but are as successful as the majority of Japanese when both groups attend schools in the United States (Ito, 1967). Some scholars have argued that cultural and language differences create conflicts in teaching and learning situations and that these conflicts, in turn, adversely affect the school success of minority children (e.g., Erickson and Mohatt, 1982). The proponents of this view do not explain why and how other minorities in similar situations manage to cross cultural and language boundaries and do relatively well in school (see Gibson, in this volume; Suarez-Orozco, in this volume).

Some social scientists promote the view that the academic problems of minorities and lower-class children, the so-called "children at risk," are attributable to social class variables. It is said, for example, that black children do less well in school than white children because more blacks than whites come from lower-class or "underclass" backgrounds (Bond, 1981). Middle-class blacks are said to be as

successful in school as their white middle-class counterparts (Van den Berghe, 1980; Wilson, 1980). Unfortunately, this argument is not supported by available data. Research generally shows that at any given class level black students, on the average, do less well than their white counterparts (Jensen, 1969; Slade, 1982; Wigdor and Garner, 1982). Furthermore, the academic achievement gap between the lower class and the middle class is smaller among blacks than among whites, and black students' school success is not strongly correlated with social class, i.e., with parents' education, income or socioeconomic status (Slade, 1982; Haycock and Navarro, 1988).

From a comparative perspective these and other explanations of variability in minority school performance are lacking in three ways. First, they ignore the historical and wider societal forces that can encourage or discourage the minorities from striving for school success. Second, they do not consider a group's collective orientation toward schooling and striving for school success as a factor in academic achievement. They assume that school success is a matter of family background and individual ability and effort. And third, the theories fail to consider the minorities' own notions of the meaning of and the "how-to" of schooling in the context of their own social reality.

Thus, conventional explanations have given insufficient attention to understanding why minorities behave the way they do from the point of view of the minorities themselves; instead, they have evaluated the behaviors of minorities from the perspective of the dominant group's perceptions of their own social reality or from the perceptions and interpretations that the dominant group members have of the social reality of minorities. Consequently, current explanations of the variability in the school performance of minority students have usually been constructed without the benefit of what the minorities themselves think, and, from my point of view, these theories cannot adequately account for the variability in the school performance of minorities who are members of the same social class as dominant group peers or who are from different social classes. Nor can they explain adequately the variability in the school performance of children from minority groups who experience cultural and language differences or conflicts in school, nor the performance variability among members of the same minority group either from the same social class or from different social classes. To construct a more adequate explanation of the variability in the school success of minority children, it is necessary to incorporate the



perceptions and understanding that the minorities have of their social realities and of their schooling. Toward this end, I suggest the concept of "cultural model" as a useful tool.

## Cultural Model

In plural societies such as the United States, Japan and New Zealand, different segments of the society, such as the dominant group and the ethnic/racial minorities, tend to have their own cultural models—their respective understandings of how their society or any particular domain or institution works and their respective understandings of their places in that working order. The cultural model of the dominant group, like the cultural model of a given minority group, is neither better nor worse than other models. As Bohannan (1957:5) put it in his study of the justice system among the Tiv of colonial Nigeria, "The folk systems [or cultural models] are *never* right nor wrong. They exist." Their purpose is to guide behaviors and interpretations.

In the domain of education or schooling the cultural model of the dominant group coexists with those of various minorities. The cultural model of each group—minority as well as majority—exists to provide group members with the framework for interpreting educational events, situations and experiences and to guide behavior in the schooling context and process. Since differing cultural models provoke different behaviors, the cultural model of a particular group is connected to some degree with the relative academic success or academic failure of its members. The theories reviewed earlier do not necessarily reflect the realities they attempt to explain because they do not include the cultural models of the minorities and their consequences for the academic behaviors of the minorities (Ogbu, 1974).

## An Emerging Explanation from Comparative Research

Findings from comparative research indicate that what distinguishes minority groups who are doing relatively well in school from others who do less well is not that the former possess a particular type of genetic endowment, nor that they inhabit a cultural environment

which enables them to develop the type of cognitive, linguistic, motivational and socio-emotional attributes characteristic of the middle-class members of the dominant group, nor that they attend schools that are without defects. Nor are the major distinguishing features the particular minority groups' experiences of economic, political or other discriminatory treatment at the hands of the members of the dominant group, nor the cultural and language barriers they encounter in school—although all these factors are important. Rather, the more academically successful minorities differ from the less academically successful minorities in the type of cultural model that guides them, that is, in the type of understanding they have of the workings of the larger society and of their place as minorities in that working order. In addition, the minorities differ in their cultural models of their social realities because of differences in their histories. Note, however, that within a given minority group, too, there are subgroup and individual differences in school success attributable in part to differences in the influence of the cultural model.

## Minority Status and Cultural Models

There are two forms of historical forces which shape the different cultural models of minority groups who are relatively successful or unsuccessful in school. One is the initial terms of incorporation of these minorities into the society in which they now exist; the other is the pattern of adaptive responses that the minorities have made to subsequent discriminatory treatment by members of the dominant group.

### Initial Terms of Incorporation

Minority groups have been incorporated into their various societies either voluntarily or involuntarily. Those who have been incorporated voluntarily are immigrants. *Immigrant minorities* have generally moved to their present societies because they believed that the move would lead to more economic well-being, better overall opportunities or greater political freedom. These expectations continue to influence the way they perceive and respond to treatment by members of the dominant group and by the institutions controlled by



members of the dominant group. In the present volume the immigrants are represented by Hispanics from Central America in San Francisco (Suarez-Orozco), Mexicans in the Central Coast area of California (Matute-Bianchi), Koreans in the United States (Lee), Sikhs in Britain and in the United States (Gibson and Bhachu), Turks in Australia (Inglis and Manderson) and West Indians or "Down Islanders" in the U.S. Virgin Islands (Gibson).

In contrast, nonimmigrant minorities, whom I designate *involuntary minorities*, are people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest or colonization. They usually resent the loss of their former freedom, and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression. Involuntary minorities in this volume include American Indians (the Ute) in Utah (Kramer), blacks in Stockton, California (Ogbu), Burakumin in Japan (Shimahara), Koreans in Japan (Lee), Maoris in New Zealand (Barrington), Crucians in St. Croix (Gibson), and "Chicanos" in California's Pajaro Valley (Matute-Bianchi).

### Subsequent Discriminatory Treatment

Both immigrant and involuntary minorities experience prejudice and discrimination at the hands of members of the dominant group. Both may be relegated to menial jobs, for example. They may also be confronted with social and political barriers, given inferior education and derogated intellectually and culturally, and they may be excluded from true assimilation into the mainstream society.

Unfortunately, not all contributors to the volume have documented the discriminatory treatment of immigrant minorities in society at large and in the schools, although we know from other sources that this discrimination exists. Inglis and Manderson tell us, instead, that Turkish immigrants in Australia are employed mostly in unskilled and semiskilled jobs because of their low educational attainment and that the Australian government provides assistance to the immigrants. I suspect that research with an ethnographic base would reveal discriminatory treatment. "Down Islanders" in St. Croix, according to Gibson, hold jobs in tourism that the native Crucians regard as a new form of slavery. And Koreans in the United States are underemployed and underpaid for their educational qualifications. Although almost all the authors are silent about discriminatory

treatment of immigrant minorities in school (Gibson and Bhachu provide the fullest discussion), it does not follow that the immigrants are not discriminated against (see Ogbu, 1983).

There is more documentation of the discriminatory treatment of involuntary minorities by the dominant group. The discriminatory treatment of black Americans is perhaps the best known and the most extensively documented (Frazier, 1957; Newman et al., 1976; Drake and Cayton, 1970). I will use the concept of a *job ceiling* to illustrate their treatment in the economic sector. A job ceiling includes both formal statutes and informal practices employed by members of the dominant group/whites to limit the access of blacks to desirable jobs, to truncate their opportunities and to narrowly channel the potential returns they can expect from their education and abilities (Mickelson, 1984; Ogbu, 1978). Using a job ceiling, whites have effectively denied generations of blacks equal opportunities to compete for desirable jobs, as well as equal wages and opportunities for promotion on the job based on education and ability. The case of AT&T settled by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in 1974 is a good illustration of the economic exploitation of minorities through a job ceiling. It was found that the giant company "saved" over $362,000,000 a year by not paying black, Hispanic and female workers what they would have earned if they had been white males (DeWare, 1978). The discriminatory treatment of blacks in Stockton, California that is described in this volume follows the national pattern: blacks in Stockton faced a job ceiling and residential segregation, as well as cultural and intellectual derogation. Other involuntary minorities described in this volume have also faced a job ceiling and derogatory treatment: Mexican Americans in the Central Coast area of California; the Burakumin and Koreans in Japan; Maoris in New Zealand; and Ute Indians in Utah. Many of these minorities have also faced inferior and segregated schools as well as discriminatory treatment within the schools, in the form of discipline, for example.

## Minority Responses: Immigrants

When confronted with these collective problems, immigrant minorities and involuntary minorities tend to interpret them differently. These responses form part of the contents of the cultural models of the minorities. The immigrants appear to interpret the economic, political



and social barriers against them as more or less temporary problems, as problems they will or can overcome with the passage of time, hard work, or more education. Furthermore, the immigrants have a positive dual frame of reference which allows them to develop or maintain an optimistic view of their future possibilities. This frame of reference entails comparing their present situation with their own former situation or with that of their peers "back home." When they make this comparison they find a great deal of evidence that enables them to believe that they have more and better opportunities in their host society for themselves or for their children. And because of this positive dual frame of reference with respect to status mobility, the immigrants think that even if they are allowed only marginal jobs they are better off in their host society than they would be in their homeland. This viewpoint is reported among Punjabi Sikhs in "Valleyside," California (Gibson and Bhachu, in this volume) and Central American Hispanics in San Francisco (Suarez-Orozco, in this volume). With regard to Central American Hispanic immigrants, Suarez-Orozco (in this volume) writes:

> Recent Central American immigrants developed a dual frame of reference with which they evaluated their current lot and anticipated the future. The overwhelming majority of my informants came to believe that they had more and better opportunities to get ahead in the United States than at home.

Another significant feature of the immigrants' response to barriers is that they tend to interpret their exclusion from better jobs and other positions as attributable to the fact that they are "foreigners," or that they do not speak the language of their host society well, or because they were educated elsewhere. From these perceptions and interpretations, there emerges among the immigrants a folk theory of getting ahead in the host society in which education plays a central role. Suarez-Orozco (in this volume) reports that among Central American Hispanics in San Francisco "education was the single most significant avenue to status mobility in the new land." The Sikhs also believe that their best weapon against job discrimination is good education. As Gibson states: ". . . most believed that employers generally hire those best qualified. They assumed that their children, armed with U.S. credentials, would be competitive in the American job market. They respect U.S. laws safeguarding individual rights. They believed, moreover, that employment opportunities in America are far better than

in India, or in Britain" (Gibson and Bhachu, in this volume). It is important to note that the immigrants do not necessarily bring the folk theory stressing success through education from their homeland. Rather, they tend to develop this theory when they arrive in their host society. This theory contrasts with their experiences and perceptions of their homeland situation.

The immigrants also develop survival strategies to cope with some of their problems. With respect to barriers in the structure of opportunity that exist in the new country, their survival strategies include the option of returning to their homeland or emigrating to other societies. In addition, immigrants tend to explore economic resources and niches not wanted by members of the dominant group or other members of their host society. Thus, as indicated earlier, "Down Islanders" take jobs in the tourist industry which the native Crucians regard as "another slavery" (Gibson, in this volume).

The response of immigrant minorities to cultural and language differences is influenced by the fact that they arrive in their host societies with prior differences in culture and language as compared to the dominant group. I have designated the immigrants as characterized by *primary cultural/language differences* (Ogbu, 1982) because the differences between the cultural systems of the immigrants and the dominant group members of their host society existed *before* the immigrants emigrated. The Punjabi Indians in California, for example, speak the Punjabi language, practice the Sikh, Hindu, and Moslem religions, have arranged marriages and, in the case of male Sikhs, wear turbans. These practices all existed *before* the Punjabis emigrated from India. Once having arrived in the United States Punjabis continue these beliefs and practices to some extent. However, like other immigrant minorities, Punjabis interpret some of the cultural and language differences that they encounter in school and the workplace as barriers they have to overcome in order to achieve the goals of their emigration (Gibson and Bhachu, in this volume). They try to overcome them by selectively learning the English language and other cultural features of the American mainstream without interpreting such behaviors as giving up their own culture and language.

Another factor that aids the immigrants is the nature of their social identity. They bring with them a sense of who they are which they had before emigration, and they seem to retain this social identity at least during the first generation, even though they are learning the



language and culture of the mainstream of their host society. Thus, the Sikhs of Valleyside (Gibson and Bhachu, in this volume) held on to their "positive sense of cultural identity, even superiority [which] protects them to some extent from the impact of majority-group pressures to assimilate." One informant told Gibson, "if we become like them, we shall fail," referring to the ways of the American majority. Gibson goes on to say that the Sikhs know very well what they like and dislike about American mainstream culture.

Similarly, West Indians/Afro-Caribbeans in the United States clearly recognize their different identity and want to retain it. Fordham (1984), Bryce-Laporte (1973), Raphael (1963) and others report that West Indians in the United States try to maintain their separate identity by disassociating themselves from native black Americans. Rather than seeking to become citizens, they prefer their "foreigner" status, since citizenship would result in their being treated like native black Americans. And they have a pragmatic reason for wanting to retain their separate identity as "Afro-Caribbeans"—it helps them improve their economic status. The point to stress is, however, that in all these cases—Sikh, West Indian, and others—the social identity existed *before* emigration and was not developed in opposition to the social identity of the dominant-group members of the host society.

One other thing that distinguishes immigrants and helps them to adjust and adapt is the degree of trust or acquiescence they have toward members of the dominant group and the institutions the latter control, such as the schools. The immigrants appear to rationalize and to acquiesce to the prejudice and discrimination against them by saying, for example, that they are strangers in a foreign land and have no choice but to tolerate prejudice and discrimination as a price worth paying in order to achieve the goals of their emigration (Gibson, in this volume; Suarez-Orozco, in this volume).

## Minority Responses: Involuntary Minorities

Involuntary minorities differ from the immigrants in their perceptions, interpretations and responses to each of the sets of factors discussed above. To begin with, involuntary minorities interpret the economic, social and political barriers against them differently. Because they do not have a "homeland" with which to compare their present situation, involuntary minorities do not interpret their menial jobs and

low wages as "better" than the situation of others like them in a foreign country. Instead, they compare their status with that of the members of the dominant group and usually conclude that they are worse off than they ought to be for no other reason than that they belong to a subordinate and disparaged minority group. Involuntary minorities thus have a negative dual frame of reference with respect to status mobility. Unlike immigrants, they do not see their situation as temporary; on the contrary, they tend to interpret the discrimination against them as permanent and institutionalized.

In discussing their folk theory of getting ahead, involuntary minorities often express the wish that they could get ahead through education and ability as members of the dominant group do, but they know that they cannot. They have, therefore, come to realize or believe that it requires more than education, individual effort and hard work to overcome the barriers against them in the society's opportunity structure. Consequently, they develop a folk theory of getting ahead which differs from that of the members of the dominant group in some important respects. For instance, their folk theory tends to stress collective effort as providing the best chances for overcoming the opportunity barriers. Blacks in Stockton, California (Ogbu, in this volume) and Burakumin in Japan (Shimahara, in this volume) illustrate this tendency.

Because involuntary minorities do not believe that the societal rules for self-advancement work for them, as they do for members of the dominant group, they usually try to change the rules. For example, they may try to change the criteria for school credentials and for employment in the mainstream techno-economic system. The "collective struggle" strategy is used effectively by involuntary minorities, such as blacks in the United States and Burakumin in Japan, to change those rules for advancement that these minorities believe work against them. Collective struggle is, however, one of several survival strategies that involuntary minorities develop to eliminate, lower, or circumvent the barriers they face in trying to get a good education, to obtain desirable jobs, and to advance in other ways. In the case of involuntary minorities in the United States, collective struggle includes what white Americans legitimate as "civil rights activities," but for the minorities it includes rioting and other forms of collective action that promise to increase opportunities or the pool of resources available to the minorities. Other survival strategies are found in



patron-client relationships, sports, entertainment, hustling, drug dealing and the like.

As for cultural and language responses, involuntary minorities are characterized by secondary cultural difference systems. A *secondary cultural system* is one in which the cultural differences arose *after* the group has become an involuntary minority. In other words, involuntary minorities tend to develop certain beliefs and practices, including particular ways of communicating or speaking as coping mechanisms under subordination. These beliefs and practices may be new creations or reinterpretations of old ones. For example, Gibson (in this volume) reports that Crucians developed their oppositional culture ("reputation" as against "respectability") through a combination of their "African past" and a coping response to their subordination. The secondary cultural system, on the whole, constitutes a new cultural frame of reference or ideal way of believing and acting that affirms one as a bona fide member of the group. Involuntary minorities perceive their cultural frame of reference not merely as different from but as in opposition to the cultural frame of reference of their dominant-group "oppressors." The cultural and language differences emerging under this condition also serve as a boundary-maintaining mechanism. For this reason, involuntary minorities do not, unlike the immigrants, interpret the language and cultural differences they encounter in school and society as barriers they have to overcome. Rather, they interpret these differences *as symbols of identity to be maintained*. The cultural frame of reference gives the minorities both a sense of collective or social identity and a sense of self-worth.

With regard to identity, involuntary minorities develop a new sense of peoplehood, or social identity, *after* their involuntary incorporation into the society where they now live. This identity is based on their interpretations of subsequent discriminatory treatment, including denial of equal treatment and true admission into mainstream society. Koreans in Japan, for example, are permanently classified as "aliens" by the Alien Registration Act of 1947 (Lee, in this volume). In some cases, involuntary minorities may develop a new sense of peoplehood in the face of forced integration or forced assimilation into mainstream society. This oppositional identity seems to have been partly operative in the case of the Maoris of New Zealand (Barrington, in this volume) and Ute Indians in the United States (Kramer, in this

volume; see also Castile and Kushner, 1981; De Vos, 1967, 1984; Spicer, 1966, 1971).

Involuntary minorities also develop an oppositional identity because they perceive and experience their treatment by members of the dominant group as collective and enduring. They believe that they cannot expect to be treated like members of the dominant group regardless of their individual differences in ability, training or education, regardless of differences in place of origin or residence, and regardless of differences in economic status or physical appearance (Green, 1981). Furthermore, involuntary minorities know that they cannot easily escape from their birth-ascribed membership in a subordinate and disparaged group by "passing" or by returning to a "homeland" (see De Vos, 1967; Ogbu, 1984). They do not see their social identity as merely different from the social identity of their "oppressors," but rather as oppositional to the social identity of the dominant group members. The oppositional identity combines with the oppositional cultural frame of reference to make crossing cultural boundaries and engaging in cross-cultural learning more problematic for involuntary minorities than for the immigrants, since utilizing the cultural frame of reference of the dominant group is threatening to their minority identity and security as well as to their solidarity. Therefore, individuals who try to behave as members of the dominant group do are discouraged by peer group pressures or by "affective dissonance" (De Vos, 1978:22, 1984).

Finally, involuntary minorities distrust members of the dominant group and the societal institutions controlled by the latter. In their history, involuntary minorities have experienced many situations that have left them with the feeling that they cannot trust members of the dominant group and their institutions. The schools are usually not trusted to provide minority children with a good education. Unlike the immigrants, involuntary minorities find no justification for the prejudice or discrimination that they experience against them in school and society other than the fact that they are disparaged groups. Furthermore, unlike the immigrants, they see the prejudice and discrimination against them as institutionalized and enduring. The discriminatory treatment and prejudice have, of course, usually been documented, as is the case for black Americans (Frazier, 1957; Drake and Cayton, 1970; Newman et al., 1978; Ogbu, in this volume).



In sum, the cultural models of immigrant minorities and those of involuntary minorities differ in these key elements: (1) a frame of reference for comparing present status and future possibilities, (2) a folk theory of getting ahead, especially through education, (3) a sense of collective identity, (4) a cultural frame of reference for judging appropriate behavior and affirming group membership and solidarity, and (5) an assessment of the extent to which one may trust members of the dominant group and the institutions they control, such as the schools. The different cultural models resulting from these differing theories and frameworks are learned by the children of the respective minority types, and these shape the attitudes, knowledge, and competencies the children bring to school.

## Minority Status, Cultural Models and School Success

### Immigrant Minorities

The cultural model of the immigrants enters into their schooling by influencing their educational attitudes and strategies. The nature of the contents of the cultural model—the frame of comparison with respect to status mobility, the folk theory of getting ahead in the host society, survival strategies, trusting/acquiescing relations, social identity and cultural frame of reference—affects the minorities' orientations toward schooling and their responses to schooling. The nature of the contents of their cultural model leads the immigrants to adopt pragmatic or instrumental attitudes and strategies that are quite conducive to school success.

The immigrants' dual status-mobility frame of reference, folk theory of success, and survival strategies lead them to emphasize education for their children. Among the Sikhs for instance, there is a belief that school success determines later success in the job market. Parents, therefore, strongly admonish their children to follow school rules of behavior for academic achievement even when such behaviors are contrary to parents' own cultural values. Parents advise their children: "Obey your teachers. Do your schoolwork. Stay out of trouble. You're there to learn and not to fight. Keep trying harder. Keep pushing yourself." According to Gibson and Bhachu (in this volume),

Sikhs counsel their young to place schoolwork first, ahead of housework, jobs and especially social activities, including those sponsored by the schools. They expect their children to do well academically. They urge them to do better by seeking help from their teachers.

Although they recognize language and cultural difficulties the children experience in school and discriminatory treatment by the school, parents place academic responsibility on the children themselves. As Gibson and Bhachu report with respect to Sikh parents in California:

> Sikh parents are not naive about the difficulties their children encounter in school. They simply brook no excuses for poor performance. Their children, as they see it, have far better schooling available to them in Valleyside than would have been the case in India. It is their responsibility to make the most of their opportunities.

Likewise, in Britain, Sikh parents believe responsibility for school performance rests with the child. Poor performance is strongly discouraged:

> Being a poor student is tantamount to being a failure as a social being. Children who bring home poor report cards are told they have not tried hard enough and are made to feel a failure. When word of their poor performance reaches relatives and family friends, Sikh young people may even be ignored socially. This sanction proves an excellent deterrent for bad behavior and helps instill a desire in the young to acquire educational qualifications. Such pressures fall most heavily on boys, for whom educational achievement is considered essential. (Gibson and Bhachu, in this volume)

It is of greater significance that parents do not stop at verbal admonition but carefully monitor the academic behavior of their children. Thus, Gibson and Bhachu write that:

> Parents monitor their children's out-of-school activities carefully, even during the late teenage years, in order for them to avoid "bad company" that might distract from the main goal of getting on in the educational system. Young people are taught that their teens are a time for diligence in school and that they will be able to enjoy themselves socially later on, once they are through with their studies. They are particularly discouraged from wasting emotional energy at this point in their lives on cross-gender relationships.



The educational attitudes and strategies of other immigrant minorities are similar. Gibson (in this volume) reports that Down Islanders are influenced by their cultural model to pursue education. They emphasize education because they believe that good education will enable them to overcome the effects of job discrimination. For Koreans in the United States (Lee, in this volume) and Hispanics in San Francisco (Suarez-Orozco, in this volume), obtaining American education was a primary goal of emigration. As Suarez-Orozco reports for the Central American immigrants in San Francisco:

> Many Central American parents articulated the notion that a primary factor in the decision to emigrate was the future welfare of their children. As one mother from Nicaragua put it, "We came here for them," referring to her five children. She added, "So that they may become somebody tomorrow."

The nature of the immigrants' cultural and language differences as well as their collective/social identity also enables them to cross cultural/language boundaries and learn successfully in the schools of their host society. The primary cultural differences of the immigrants initially cause problems both in their relationships with their teachers and other students and in the actual process of learning. But the problems are attributable to differences in cultural assumptions, not to social opposition and, because they are not oppositional, they tend to diminish over time. For example, Central American Hispanic immigrant children enter San Francisco public schools from a cultural background that stresses getting ahead on the basis of who you know or "because of your name," rather than on the basis of educational credentials.

Punjabi Sikhs enter Valleyside public schools with the cultural assumption that children must defer to teachers and other adults, in contrast to the schools' expectation that children will defend their ideas even when such ideas conflict with those of the teacher. Sikh children also face problems of gender relations in school. They are brought up to avoid eye contact with members of the opposite sex, but in the classroom they are expected to look directly at teachers and classmates of the opposite sex when addressing them and when being addressed or be thought impolite. Still another problem is that immigrant minority

children may bring to school a style of learning that is quite different from the style emphasized in school. In the case of Chinese immigrant children for example, their traditional style of learning emphasizes external forms and rote memorization rather than the observation, analysis and comprehension stressed in American schools (Ogbu, 1983). Then, too, immigrant minority children come to school lacking fluency in the language of instruction. In the case of the Chinese and some other minorities, the children's language differs from the English language structurally and in other important respects.

Immigrant minority children, therefore, initially have difficulties in school because of these cultural and language differences, but they eventually adjust and learn more or less successfully. Why? First, the immigrants succeed in overcoming cultural and language barriers because of the response of the schools to these problems. The extent to which the immigrants cross cultural/language boundaries and learn depends in part on what schools do to help them. But, second, it also depends on the minorities' own perceptions of and responses to the cultural and language differences facing them. In the latter case, the immigrants are aided by the non-oppositional nature of their cultural/language differences and identity as well as by the goals of their emigration.

As we have seen, the cultural and language differences faced by the immigrants existed before they emigrated; they did not arise as a part of the immigrants' coping mechanisms under subordination or to protect their identity. Consequently, the immigrants see the cultural/language differences as *barriers to be overcome* in order to achieve their long-range goals of employment, good wages and other benefits, rather than as *markers of social identity to be maintained*. For the immigrants, overcoming the cultural/language differences is not only essential for their social adjustment and academic success but is non-threatening to their own culture, language and identity. They generally adopt what Gibson (in this volume) calls the strategy of "accommodation without assimilation." That is, while they may not give up their cultural beliefs, cultural practices and language, they are willing and actually do strive to "play the classroom game by the rules" and try to overcome "all kinds of difficulties in school because they believe so strongly that there will be a payoff later."

Thus, in the Sikh community in Britain, it is strongly believed that one should understand the way the majority society operates and



gain the social skills and personal networks that open doors. Gibson and Bhachu go on to say that a successful and respected Punjabi is one who demonstrates competence in the ways of the non-Punjabi world. Consequently, parents expect their young to become proficient in both the cultures of the Punjabi immigrants and Punjabi settlers, as well as that of the wider white community in which they find themselves.

Because the immigrants perceive the cultural and language differences as barriers they have to overcome, they do not go to school expecting to be taught in their own language and culture. Rather, they usually expect and are willing to learn the school culture and language, although they do not necessarily do so without difficulties. The immigrants are able to cross cultural boundaries because primary cultural differences and the problems they cause tend to be specific in nature so that they can be identified through careful ethnographic research. This identifiability and specificity make it possible to develop appropriate policies and programs to eliminate them or reduce their adverse effects.

Finally, the immigrants' trusting or acquiescing relationship with the schools and with members of the dominant group who control the schools also facilitates their school success. Although immigrant minorities may be attending segregated and/or inferior schools, their overall evaluation of their educational opportunity is not disillusioned for three reasons. One is that the immigrants, at least in the United States, tend to regard the public schools as offering an education far superior to what they knew of schools in their homeland. They may not recognize the segregated and inferior schools as inferior, since their frame of comparison is the education in their homeland, not the education of the dominant-group members of their host society. A second factor is that the immigrants believe that they are treated better in the public schools than they would be treated by the schools of their homeland. Immigrant minorities often say that they are both surprised and appreciative of the fact that they receive free textbooks and other supplies (Suarez-Orozco, in this volume). Third, even when the immigrants recognize, experience and resent prejudice and discrimination in school, as in the case of the Sikhs, they appear to respond in a manner that does not discourage them from doing well in school. They rationalize the prejudice and discrimination by saying that as "guests in a foreign land they have no choice but to tolerate prejudice and discrimination." Sikh parents impress this attitude on their children

and place the responsibility for school success on their children themselves (Gibson and Bhachu, in this volume).

As a result of these perceptions, responses, or adaptations, the immigrant community, family, and children adopt schooling strategies that enhance academic success and promote social adjustment. At the community and family levels some of these categories include encouraging or guiding children to develop good academic work habits and perseverance through gossip and related techniques. Parents and other adult members of the community communicate to children clear instrumental messages about education: namely that education is a sine qua non of getting ahead in the host society and that it is also a means of overcoming or reducing discrimination in employment. Parents and community members tend to insist that children follow school rules of behavior that enhance academic success. For their part, immigrant minority children seem to respond positively to their parents' advice and training and to parental and community pressures. The children try to develop and maintain serious academic attitudes, value making good grades, respect school authority, follow school rules of behavior and standard practices, and invest a good deal of time and effort in their schoolwork. If language problems persist, older children tend to select courses requiring less use of language. They also avoid fields of study which prepare them for jobs where there is a job ceiling or discrimination against members of their group.

## Involuntary Minorities

Like the immigrants, involuntary minorities encounter economic and social barriers in the society at large, and at school they encounter interpersonal and intergroup problems as well as academic learning problems because of cultural/language differences, but they are less able than the immigrants to overcome these problems. Therefore, they tend to experience more prolonged social adjustment problems and persistently higher rates of school failure. While they generally verbalize their desire to make good grades, there is less community and family pressure to achieve such a goal. As for peer groups, their collective orientation is actually the opposite of what it is among the immigrants: it is anti-academic success. Consequently, peer pressures among involuntary minority students are used to discourage utilization of those strategies that enhance school success. There are complex



"community forces" which make it more difficult for involuntary minority students to overcome their initial school problems. I will now discuss some of the community forces that arise from the involuntary minorities' cultural models and show how such forces enter and affect their educational process.

*Dual Status-Mobility Frame.* As noted earlier, involuntary minorities, unlike immigrant minorities, did not choose to move to their present societies motivated by the hope of economic success or political freedom. Nor do they compare their situation to the conditions of their peers "back home," or to a less favorable former status. The only comparative frame of reference they have is to the members of the dominant group of their respective societies; and when they compare themselves with dominant-group members, involuntary minorities invariably conclude that they are worse off then they ought to be because of the way they are treated by the dominant group. They become resentful, especially because they attribute their poorer conditions to what they perceive as institutionalized discrimination perpetuated against them by dominant-group members and by dominant-group-controlled institutions such as schools. This assessment leads to disillusionment and lack of optimism about effort.

A comparison of two Hispanic groups studied by Suarez-Orozco (in this volume) illustrates the problem of involuntary minorities. Suarez-Orozco notes that Mexican American informants, members of an involuntary minority-group, "had no 'here' and 'there' reference matrix. Rather, while considering educational issues there was a perception of a basic continuity in the pattern of exploitation and crushed efforts; and they could produce countless vignettes of systematic exploitation, both expressive and instrumental." In contrast: "Central American immigrants endured hardships, racism, and marginality in reference to two issues: a perception that no matter how bad things seem to be [in the United States], they are not as bad as they would be at home [i.e., in Central America], *and* anticipation of a better tomorrow in which they came to view the United States as a land of opportunity." Among blacks in Stockton, an involuntary minority group, the perception of a job ceiling as relatively permanent produced disillusionment and low optimism about effort. A similar situation exists for the Koreans and Burakumin in Japan (Lee, in this volume; Shimahara, in this volume).

*The Folk Theory of Success.* Involuntary minorities emphasize the importance of education in expressing their folk theory of getting ahead but this verbal endorsement is not usually accompanied by the necessary effort. This discrepancy is attributable in part to the fact that historically involuntary minorities did not get the same opportunity to benefit from their education as members of the dominant group with respect to jobs, wages and other working conditions. Eventually the minorities came to believe that discrimination against them is institutionalized, and that it is not eliminated entirely by getting an education (Ogbu, 1982). Thus, during my fieldwork in Stockton, blacks complained that they had to work twice as hard as the whites or be twice as good as the whites if they competed for the same job or social position. One result is that the minorities did not develop "effort optimism" toward academic work (Shack, 1970). That is, they did not develop a strong tradition of cultural know-how, hard work and perseverance toward academic tasks. In Stockton, minority parents also appeared to be giving their children contradictory messages about getting ahead through education. While doing fieldwork there, I found that on the one hand parents were telling their children to get a good education in order to get a good job. On the other hand, the actual texture of the parents' lives with respect to low-level jobs, underemployment and unemployment, conveyed a contradictory message, which was powerful enough to undo their exhortation. Unavoidably, minority parents discuss their problems with "the system" as well as the problems of their relatives, friends and neighbors in the presence of their children. The result is that involuntary minority group children increasingly become disillusioned about their ability to succeed in adult life through the mainstream strategy of schooling (Hunter, 1980). This problem is not, of course, limited to black Americans, but can also be seen in the experiences of other involuntary minority groups such as the Burakumin (Shimahara, in this volume) and Koreans in Japan (Lee, in this volume).

*Incongruent, Detracting, Competing Survival Strategies.* The folk theory of getting ahead among involuntary minorities stresses other means of getting ahead than schooling, namely, survival strategies within and outside the mainstream techno-economic system, as discussed earlier. Most of the available data on survival strategies relate to black Americans, but there are indications that other involuntary minorities have them as well (see Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi, 1986).



These survival strategies affect minority youths' schooling in a number of ways. One is that they tend to generate attitudes and behaviors that are not necessarily conducive to good classroom teaching and learning. When survival strategies such as the collective struggle that the civil rights movement entailed succeed in increasing the pool of jobs and other resources available to minorities, they may encourage minority youths to work hard in school. However, such success can also lead the youths to slacken their efforts, blame "the system" and rationalize their lack of serious effort at schoolwork. Other survival strategies such as clientship or Uncle Toming among black Americans are not particularly conducive to academic success because they do not create good role models for school success through good study habits and hard work. Instead, clientship, for example, teaches minority children manipulative attitudes, knowledge and skills to deal with the members of the dominant group and their institutions. As the children become familiar with other survival strategies like hustling and pimping as well as drug dealing, their attitudes toward schooling are adversely affected. For example, in the norms that support some of these survival strategies, such as hustling, the work ethic is reversed by the insistence that one should make it without working, especially without "doing the white man's work." Furthermore, for students who are into hustling, social interactions in the classroom are seen as opportunities for exploitation, i.e., opportunities to gain prestige by putting the other person or persons down. This may lead to class disruption and suspensions (Ogbu, 1981, 1987; see also Matute-Bianchi's description of Chicano students, in this volume).

Another problem is that survival strategies may compete seriously with schooling as methods of getting ahead, leading young people to channel their time and efforts into non-academic activities. That is particularly true as involuntary minority children get older and become more aware of how some adults in their local communities "make it" without mainstream school credentials and employment (Bouie, 1981; Ogbu, 1974). Kramer, for example, reports (in this volume) that Ute Indians felt that education was not particularly important as indicated by their frequent reference to the fact that some of their Tribal Council leaders had only a few years of elementary school. Among black Americans there is some evidence that many young people view sports and entertainment, rather than education, as the way to get ahead, and their perceptions are reinforced by the media

and by the realities they observe in the community and society at large. Blacks are over-represented in such lucrative sports as baseball, basketball and football as well as in boxing. The average annual salary in the NBA and in basketball is over $300,000 and in the NFL it is over $90,000. Many of the superstars who earn between $1 million and $2 million a year are black and these people may have had little education. While the number of such highly paid athletes are few, media exposure makes them and the entertainers more visible to black youngsters than black lawyers, doctors, engineers and scientists (Wong, 1987). There is some preliminary evidence, too, that black parents encourage their children's athletic activities in the belief that such activities should lead to a career in professional sports (Wong, 1987).

Under these circumstances, involuntary minority students, like their parents, may express high interest in doing well in school and in obtaining good school credentials for future employment in mainstream economy, but they do not back up their wishes and aspirations with effort, even though they know that it requires hard work and perseverance to succeed academically (Ogbu, 1977). The lack of serious academic attitudes and effort appears to increase as the students get older and become more aware of their own social reality or come to accept the prevailing beliefs about their social reality.

*Oppositional Cultural Frame of Reference and Identity.* Crossing cultural/language boundaries represents another barrier to social adjustment and high academic performance among involuntary minority group students because such minority groups form and maintain an oppositional cultural frame of reference and identity. Unlike the immigrants, involuntary minority students do not interpret the cultural and language differences they encounter in school as barriers they have to overcome and do not, apparently, make concerted efforts to overcome them. Rather, they interpret the cultural and language differences as markers of identity to be maintained. Moreover, they do not appear to make a clear distinction, as the immigrants do, between what they have to learn or do in order to succeed in school (such as learning the standard language and the standard behavior practices of the school) and the dominant-group's cultural frame of reference (which may be seen as the cultural frame of reference of their "oppressors"). As noted earlier, involuntary minority students appear to interpret learning certain aspects of the dominant group's cultural frame of reference as detrimental to their own culture, language and identity.



Therefore, when they *equate* the standard language and behavior practices required at school with the dominant group's language and culture, this results in conscious or unconscious opposition or in ambivalence toward school learning. I should add, however, that in Stockton, blacks express opposition to school learning because they interpret this learning as obeying white people's orders as blacks did in the days of slavery. Gibson (in this volume) also reports that among the Crucians there is some feeling that homework or other forms of schoolwork are slavery. It follows that involuntary minority students who adopt attitudes conducive to school success or who behave in a manner conducive to academic success are often accused by their peers of acting like their enemy, i.e., like their "oppressors." Among U.S. blacks, such students may be accused of acting white or acting like Uncle Toms (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Petroni, 1970). They are accused of being disloyal to the group and to the cause of the group, and they risk being isolated from their peers. But it is not only social pressures or peer pressures that keep involuntary minority students from striving to achieve academic success. There are also psychological pressures. For example, De Vos (1967) has noted that even in the absence of peer pressures, involuntary minority students may avoid adopting serious academic attitudes and avoid persevering in academic tasks partly because they have internalized their group's interpretations of such attitudes and behaviors and partly because they are uncertain that they would be accepted by members of the dominant group if they succeeded in learning to act like them. They fear that if they did act like the dominant group, they would lose the support of their own groups. This state of affairs results in "affective dissonance" for the individual (De Vos, 1978:22). Difficulties in the educational context arising from this oppositional process are explicitly reported in this volume for most of the involuntary minorities—the Crucians, black Americans, Maoris, Mexican Americans and the Utes.

Thus, as Petroni (1970) has pointed out, the dilemma of involuntary minority students is that they have to choose between academic success and maintaining their minority cultural frame of reference and identity—a choice that does not arise for the immigrants. Under this circumstance, involuntary minority students who want to achieve academic success are compelled to adopt strategies that promise to shield them from peer criticism and ostracism.

*Distrusting the System.* The deep distrust that involuntary minorities have for members of the dominant group and the schools they control adds to the minorities' difficulties in school. The minorities distrust the schools more than the immigrants do because the former lack the advantage of the dual frame of reference that allows the immigrants to compare the schools they now attend with the schools they knew "back home." Indeed, involuntary minorities compare their schools with those of the members of the dominant group and usually conclude that theirs are inferior for no other reason than that they are minorities. Having concluded that their schools and education are inferior, they divert their emotion and efforts in a continual quest for "better schools and better education." The message is also communicated to children quite early that the schools they attend and the education they are receiving are inferior, a message that contributes to the development of distrust for the system.

Since involuntary minorities do not trust the schools and those who control the schools, they are usually skeptical about the schools' ability to educate their children. This skepticism is communicated through family and community discussions and gossip, as well as through public debates over minority education. Even minority school employees participate in the transmission of skepticism to the children, as I found in my research in Stockton: black school employees were very skeptical about the efficacy of the educational programs they were implementing. Another factor discouraging academic effort is that involuntary minorities—parents and students alike—tend to question school rules of behavior and standard practices, rather than accept and follow them as the immigrants appear to do. Indeed, involuntary minorities sometimes interpret the school rules and standard practices as an imposition of the dominant group members' cultural frame of reference, which does not necessarily meet their real educational needs.

I have suggested elsewhere (Ogbu, 1988) that under these circumstances, it is probably difficult for children of involuntary minorities, especially the older ones, to accept and follow school rules of behavior and to persevere at their academic tasks.



## Variability Within the Adaptation

In the preceding pages, I have argued that the cultural models of two types of minorities—immigrant and involuntary minorities—enter differentially into the process of schooling and affect their school adjustment and performance differently. However, I do not claim that all immigrant minority students are academically successful and all involuntary minorities are academically unsuccessful. What I have described is what appears to be the dominant pattern for each type. Within each type, as within each minority group, there are several culturally available strategies that enhance school success. But the two types of minorities differ in the degree of support, especially peer support, for individuals utilizing the strategies that enhance school success.

Among the immigrants, the collective orientation appears to be toward making good grades or doing well in school. There are pressures from the community (e.g., gossip), from the family (e.g., placing responsibility for success on the individual child) and from peer groups (e.g., ridicule and isolation) that support making good grades. Individuals who are subjected to criticism and possible peer isolation are youths who do not achieve academically (Yu, 1987). Partly because of the community, family and peer pressures, immigrant minority youths tend to utilize those strategies that enhance academic success (Ogbu, 1987).

Among involuntary minorities, on the other hand, the situation is different. While making good grades is generally verbalized as a goal, there is less community, family and peer pressure to achieve this goal. There is, for example, no stigma nor is there gossip against youths who do not make good grades. As for peer groups, the collective orientation is actually anti-academic success. Consequently, peer pressures are used to discourage strategies that enhance school success. And youths who are successful or who are behaving as if they wanted to succeed are the ones subjected to peer criticism and possible isolation. In this situation, youths who want to succeed academically are compelled to adopt a variety of secondary strategies that enable them to conceal their real attitudes and efforts from their peers and thus shield themselves from peer pressures and other detracting forces. The secondary strategies are utilized in addition to the conventional strategies adopted by immigrant minorities, which include serious academic attitudes, hard

work and perseverance. The secondary strategies provide the context in which the minority youths can practice the conventional strategies without penalty.

A good example of secondary strategies is camouflage among black youths. One technique of camouflage is to become involved in athletic or other team-oriented activities approved by peers. Involvement in athletic activities reassures peer group members that one is not simply pursuing individual interests and success in order to get ahead of others. Another technique of camouflage is to become a jester or the class clown. By playing the role of the clown the jester satisfies the expectations of his or her peers by pretending not to be concerned with academic excellence which the peers do not endorse. However, the student is merely concealing his or her real academic interest, efforts and attitudes. Such an individual is careful not to brag about his academic success and the success can then be attributed to the fact that he or she is naturally smart since no one thinks that he or she studies or is serious about academic success.

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