"Black" Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth

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Previous literature has failed to empirically demonstrate the conceptual distinction that social scientists make between "dominant" and "non-dominant" cultural capital. This article provides evidence of the coexistence of these two forms of capital within the social and academic lives of poor ethnic minority students. Using in-depth interviews with 44 low-income African American youth, I illustrate how these students negotiate their perceptions of the differential values placed by educators on these two forms of capital. Often, scholars research the effects of (dominant) cultural capital in social reproduction across various social classes, but not the influence of (non-dominant) cultural capital on status relations within socially marginalized communities. By taking into account the interplay between these two forms of capital in the lives of low-income minority students, researchers might develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of how culture ultimately affects the prospects of mobility for lower status social groups.

Over the years, we have heard scholars, researchers, policymakers, teachers, and various laypersons lament how many low-income and underachieving students of color do not have the cultural "know-how" to succeed in the upper echelon of academic institutions and social and professional organizations. "The kids just don't know how to act!" they exclaim. "Why don't they behave 'regularly'?" Concerned observers wonder how these kids might obtain attributes that would make mainstream individuals more comfortable with them, and, in turn, make these kids more upwardly mobile. Resorting to academic jargon, and invoking the conceptual trademark of the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, one might wince at the youths' apparent lack of "cultural capital."

This situation begs for examination: how does the interplay between social stratification and cultural production within schools and communities explain persistent academic achievement gaps among various racial and ethnic groups? Two particular frameworks with much currency in the literature on educational inequality are *cultural capital* and *oppositional culture* theories. Both posit that social and economic inequality yield disparate outcomes for students of subordinate class or racial and ethnic backgrounds because such inequalities undermine some groups' beliefs and expectations about their chances for academic success. Almost three decades ago, Bourdieu introduced his notion of cultural capital to explain how individuals' access to certain cultural signals (such as attitudes, preferences, tastes, and styles) either

enables or limits their entry into high status social groups, organizations, or institutions. He maintained that schools help reproduce a stratified class system by bolstering the dominant social group's cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977a, 1977b; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Anthropologist John Ogbu's oppositional culture theory sheds further light on the role of culture in explaining significant racial and ethnic differences in academic achievement. Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1988) argues that racial discrimination and limited socioeconomic prospects compel some ethnic minority groups to maintain culturally different approaches to opportunity structures. Thus, a legacy of slavery and racism in the African American social experience, for example, predisposes many African American students to lower their aspirations for schooling because they believe that high academic achievement only benefits White, middle class students. Put more simply, such achievement comes to be perceived as "acting white" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986).

Integrating Bourdieu's and Ogbu's arguments, we might conclude that social, economic, and political conditions compel African American students to develop alternative cultural responses to opportunity that prevent them from gathering the requisite cultural capital for academic, and ultimately socioeconomic, success. There is considerable debate about the applicability of these two frameworks, however. First, while many American scholars appropriate Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, linking it to the attributes of the primarily White, middle and upper socioeconomic classes in the United States and the reproduction of status attainment (DiMaggio 1982; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; DiMaggio and Ostrower 1980; Lamont and Lareau 1988), others draw attention to the ethnocentric bias in the conventional use of cultural capital. Cultural capital's significance is often predicated on the experiences of the dominant social class; the multiple ways cultural resources of other groups also convert into capital are ignored (Erikson 1996; Hall 1992; Swartz 1997). This article demonstrates the variability of cultural capital and of the ways in which a group of students use both "dominant" and "non-dominant" cultural capital.

Second, recent research contests the viability of oppositional culture theory, showing that African American students of all socioeconomic backgrounds adhere strongly to dominant achievement ideology (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Cook and Ludwig 1998; Datnow and Cooper 1997; Ferguson 1998; Ford et al. 1994; O'Connor 1997; Tyson 1998). Some argue that these students do not reject academic achievement, but rather resist the cultural default—that which is regarded as "normal" or "regular"—namely, white, middle-class standards of speech, dress, musical tastes, and interactional styles (Carter 1999). Many of these social behaviors constitute what we mean by cultural capital. Yet, as my analysis will show, the maintenance of different cultural (and not necessarily "oppositional") repertoires dictates that these students convert their own cultural resources into capital to maintain valued status positions within their communities.

Cultural capital is context-specific and its currency varies across different social spaces where struggles for legitimation and power exist. In the past, some sociologists have distinguished between dominant and non-dominant forms of cultural capital, albeit using different terminology (see, for example, Hall 1992; Lamont and Lareau 1988). Yet, most of the literature on cultural capital theory tends to ignore the non-dominant form. To fully understand why many low-income African American students maintain different cultural repertoires, social scientists need to understand not only how myriad cultural resources convert into capital within the wider society, but also how this occurs within lower status communities. As I will show, some ethnic minority students employ dominant and non-dominant cultural capital alternatively across settings to pursue different ends. They recognize the higher value which is placed on the former outside of their communities. Yet, many still have some difficulty in effectively juggling both "non-dominant" and "dominant" cultural capital, especially when they interact with their teachers in school. As I describe in the article's second half, the research participants in this study perceived how school administrators and teachers sorted and selected them based on their very different cultural attributes. Their descriptions of

the conflicts reveal that their responses often violated teachers' expectations about appropriate student comportment.

I have several objectives for this article: 1) to show empirically how both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital coexist; 2) to show how a group of youth, already exposed to socioeconomic challenges, perceive their differential values; and 3) to argue that cultural capital theorists should be more specific in their use of the concept and more carefully acknowledge its multidimensionality. My data indicate that the differential values placed on both "dominant" and "non-dominant" cultural capital by students and educators ultimately affect the prospect of mobility for low-income African American students.

Theoretical Framework: Dominant and Non-Dominant Cultural Capital

The term "dominant cultural capital" corresponds to Bourdieu's conceptualization of powerful, high status cultural attributes, codes, and signals. Cultural capital provides individuals with an ability to "walk the walk" and "talk the talk" of the cultural power brokers in our society. Similarly, "non-dominant cultural capital" embodies a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles. Non-dominant cultural capital describes those resources used by lower status individuals to gain "authentic" cultural status positions within their respective communities. Different, though interconnected, these two forms of capital represent variable cultural currencies, the benefits of which vary, depending upon the field in which the capital is used. For example, in one setting, youth might employ dominant cultural capital instrumentally to gain academic and socioeconomic mobility. In another setting, they might utilize their non-dominant cultural capital to express in-group affiliation.

In these examples, dominant cultural capital has an instrumental (or rational) purpose, while non-dominant cultural capital has an expressive purpose. However, it is conceivable that dominant cultural capital may be used for expressive purposes and non-dominant cultural capital may be used for instrumental purposes. Given the high value assigned to intelligence and success in our society, individuals often use dominant cultural "know-how" to express their intellect or to signal their educational backgrounds. Several times I heard my research participants proclaim their awareness of how cultural gatekeepers use dominant linguistic and dress codes as signals of intelligence and respectability. In contrast, they would employ non-dominant cultural capital instrumentally to gain acceptance as "authentic" members from co-ethnics, to foster group cohesion, or even to build a youth culture that takes on social movement status, as in the global hip hop movement (Dyson 1993; Kelley 1994; Rose 1994).

One of the most apparent instrumental purposes of non-dominant cultural capital is to navigate the terrain of ethnic authenticity. Racial and ethnic groups create cultural boundaries to demarcate both intergroup and intragroup differences. That is, groups create internal cultural boundaries to separate the "real" ("authentic") from the "not real" ("inauthentic") co-ethnic, and individuals construct self-conscious ways in which they use "natural" and specified characteristics to signify group affiliation (Tuan 1999). As groups socially construct what is authentic, their members use myriad in-group cultural codes and signals. Hence, authenticity work requires signifiers (Peterson 1997), and these signifiers often embody non-dominant cultural capital. For instance, within certain intra-racial and intra-ethnic social spaces, individuals' authentic cultural status depends upon the degree to which they can "do" and "act" race or ethnicity. In his rich ethnographic portrait of the social dynamics of late 20th century Harlem, John Jackson (2001) describes the way African Americans use racial and class-based social performances to signify "blackness" among themselves.

As I will show, my research participants used similar signifiers. However, my discussion goes beyond mere illustration of cultural signifiers to show how these youth actually utilize

their cultural performances as power resources to socially control one another. They employ valued in-group cultural resources to influence each other's perceptions of their cultural competences. For example, in many instances, the degree to which these African American youth adhere to certain speech codes, dress styles, music preferences, and other attributes framed as "black" affects their movement within the social spaces dominated by their co-ethnics. I refer to this process as "cultural status positioning," indicating individuals' use of cultural capital to acquire symbolic forms of recognition.

Not only does cultural status positioning indicate movement up and down the social ladder within my research participants' communities, but it also highlights how they resist the despair and hopelessness brought about by a limited opportunity structure (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1974, 1978). Instead of continuously viewing their worth from the dominant social group's standpoint, they produce semi-autonomous and resourceful cultural "tool kits" (Swidler 1986) with which to evaluate their own and each other's social actions. Previously, both sociologists and social psychologists have discussed how certain cultural processes provide dominated individuals with an alternative means of judging their self-worth and maintaining high self-esteem (Crocker and Major 1989; Duneier 1992; Lamont 2000). Likewise, non-dominant cultural capital—which I will call "black"[1]—fostered my research participants' sense of self, group belonging, and group cohesion.

The acquisition of non-dominant cultural capital does not necessarily signify a rejection of commonly shared values regarding social, economic, or educational attainment. However, full reliance on non-dominant capital to maintain one's cultural status position does provide a challenge to socioeconomic mobility, since dominant cultural capital facilitates success within mainstream institutions and organizations. Nevertheless, some individuals employ both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, negotiating strategically between their community, family, peer, and school spaces. The data will show that most students recognized the benefits of both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, particularly when they commented on the context-specific nature of cultural capital (although they do not employ such academic jargon). Those individuals who choose the balancing act of maintaining both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital are likely to acquire valued status positions within both their lower status community and the wider society. This option, however, may require continuous negotiations in which the student must continually read the social situation to weigh the costs and benefits of his or her actions.

Description of Research and Methods

This study is informed by "grounded theory" approaches and methods (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The research allows study participants to present their own personal perspectives—revealing how they "make sense" of the world, given present and past social experiences (McCracken 1988; Patton 1990). I collected data from a sample of 44 low-income African American youth, ages 13 to 20. The sample is composed of 59 percent females and 41 percent males. These youth participated in a larger study of 68 low-income African American and Latino youth living in Yonkers, New York that examined how perceptions of race, ethnicity, and gender relations informed their schooling behaviors and career aspirations (Carter 1999). I interviewed the participants over a 10-month period from November 1997 to August 1998. All of these students came from poor families and lived in low-income government-subsidized homes, where my interviews occurred.

Yonkers is the largest city in mostly suburban Westchester County and the fourth largest city

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1. I use specific capitalization rules throughout the paper for the terms "black" and "white." When the terms are used to refer to a person or a group of persons, I capitalize them. When they are used to refer to an abstraction, idea, or thing, I use the lower case forms.

in the state (population 189,000 in 1990). Yonkers resembles other U.S. cities in many ways: it includes both a poor urban center whose residents are disproportionately people of color and wealthy surrounding suburban neighborhoods whose residents are disproportionately White. The city's public school system faced a major challenge in the 1980s, when the United States Department of Justice, the federal Office for Civil Rights, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) charged city officials and the Board of Education with intentionally maintaining racially segregated schools. In May 1986, federal appeals court Judge Leonard Sand ordered the school district, found guilty as charged, to develop a plan that would ameliorate the problem of school segregation. The plan created by the Yonkers Board of Education sought voluntary school desegregation through choice, centered on magnet schools and a series of student transfers. Later that year, school officials instructed Black, Hispanic, and White students to board school buses and crisscross the city to attend newly created magnet schools.

At the time of interview, 84 percent of my study participants were enrolled at one of the public magnet schools in the restructured Yonkers School district. Despite its desegregation efforts, the percentage of students of color in the Yonkers School district increased by half from 47 percent to 70 percent between 1985 and 1997. Over 62 percent of my study participants attended classes composed predominantly of African American and Latino students, while about 16 percent reported that Whites were the predominant racial group in their classes. In contrast to the high concentration of students of color in these schools, of the 824 teachers in both the middle and high schools in Yonkers, 82 percent were White, while only 10 percent identified as Black, 7 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Asian (Brenner 1998). The majority of the remaining study participants, who were not enrolled in school at the time of their interview, had already obtained either a high school diploma or a GED, and several of these had some college experience.

Semi-structured, open-ended individual interview protocols explored beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors pertaining to racial and ethnic group relations and identity; beliefs about the opportunity structure and pathways to success and achievement in this society; academic and career aspirations; "appropriate" ethnic or cultural behaviors among peers and family (e.g., speech, dress, codeswitching); and participation in various school activities. On average, interviews lasted about 75 minutes. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed, then coded and analyzed.

"It's Where You At": Cultural Capital and Context

Out of high school and holding down a part-time job as she helped her mother support her younger brothers and sisters, 19-year old Loresha Lincoln consciously worked to embody both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, negotiating strategically between her community, family, peer, and school spaces. My conversations with her and others provided insight into how the variable currencies associated with dominant and non-dominant cultural capital achieve different ends. Moreover, respondents' descriptions revealed their use of both forms of capital for expressive and instrumental purposes. Instrumentally, they employed their "black" cultural capital to cultivate their African American peers' acceptance of them as authentically "black"—to "buy" them membership into a group above and beyond what ascribed traits had already given them. Likewise, some study participants used dominant cultural capital for instrumental purposes to "buy" either an academic or employment opportunity or perhaps even to influence a judge's impression in a court of law. Consider the following comments by a young African American woman named Loresha.[2]

2. To protect their identities, pseudonyms are used to refer to all study participants. I attempted to retain the distinctiveness of the respondent's real name, thereby illuminating the difference between the naming styles generally employed by African Americans and those employed by Whites. This difference in naming patterns between Blacks and Whites, across educational levels, highlights another taste factor in the repertoire of Black cultural capital (Lieberson and Bell 1992).

If I'm talking to my friend or father, like "Yo, whasup, whatever?" And when I call my job, I have a different attitude towards the whole situation, you know. I don't talk with slang. I make sure everything is correct. But I don't know. Personally, I think . . . for a black person to "act white" . . . like when he arrives [at home] I think he don't have to do that. But like even if he's in school, he can act like that in school. Maybe it'll get him somewhere. You know? And when he goes out . . . I don't know . . . don't have to act like that. You can just be yourself. But there is going to be times in your life where you are going to have to put on a little act, or a little show to get the extra budge or whatever, you know.

Here, Loresha referred specifically to the currency of language and speech, and she underscored the shift in social performances she undergoes as she moves from family, home, and community to work. While she acknowledged the necessity of employing dominant language at work or even at school, she felt just as strongly that in more personal social spaces a Black person did not have to employ the same linguistic codes as those displayed at work. For Loresha, a different linguistic currency operates in these personal spaces. Furthermore, the urge to employ the linguistic currency used at work and school—conventional spaces of dominant social control—in the more intimate spaces of home and community, precludes a [Black] person from fully being himself or herself.

Avery Adams, a 14-year old male inexperienced in the world of work, affirmed Loresha's point by creating cultural lines of demarcation between "the street," the school, and even the legal system, once again highlighting how context matters. (PC is the interviewer.)

PC: Among your friends and with your family, are there any expectations about how you should act, whom you should hang out with, how you should talk?

AVERY: Yeah, it depends on where you at. If you on the street, you gotta talk like you know what I'm saying, like you in the street. If you in school, you got to talk like [something else] in school. It's where you at in terms of how you present yourself; you know what I'm saying?

PC: It's like you have to have many faces?

AVERY: Yeah, we all have to do that, you know. We all gotta front [put on a façade]. It's like when you want that job, you gonna like kiss a little butt. (Laughter.) It's like we all have to do that. We have thousands of faces, many different faces. When you on the job, you're not the same person. You on the street, you don't see that person [from the job]. It's obvious. You see it. Like right now, I'm with you. I'm acting pretty laid back with you, but I'm like on the street, "What up, nigger, ya'll chillin?[3] What up?" But like in court, I'm going to be quiet. I want to win the case, so I'll be respectful. In school, I'll sit back, be quiet and . . . go to sleep (Laughter).

First, Avery referred to different linguistic currencies deemed appropriate in variable social settings, including in a job interview where the norms of deference operate; the school—where the norm of quietness put him to sleep, as he admitted laughingly; and the "street." The latter is a social space often ridden by poverty, unemployment, and crime, a place dominated by a cultural "code of the street" (Anderson 1999). Second, Avery managed impressions through his different presentations of self (Goffman 1959). Yet, the actual physical setting does not necessarily have to change for a new disposition to emerge, as Avery suggested when describing his "laid back" presentation of self with me during an interview (which was held in his home, a space where usually he might act and speak differently). Avery noted the contextual (and perhaps even generational) difference between himself and me. Moreover, he explicitly stated that he would act differently with a co-ethnic peer on the street than with a co-ethnic adult in an interview setting. This illustrates how cultural codes can be deployed differently among Blacks even when they share an ethnic identity.

Loresha and Avery's commentaries are just two examples of the many instances in which my study participants made distinctions between contexts and suggested how different

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3. Avery's usage of the term "nigger" here is different from the historically derogatory connotation steeped in the oppressive racist experiences of African Americans. Rather, his usage demonstrates that many young African Americans have appropriated the term as a pseudo-endearment.

types of cultural capital operated within various social spheres. Most commonly, study partici-pants discussed differences in linguistic capital, although others also referred to more objectified forms such as music. Presumably, dominant cultural capital could "get [you] some-where" (and even that was a questionable "maybe") in specific contexts such as courtrooms, perhaps allowing one to "win the case," according to Loresha and Avery. Yet, how do non-dominant cultural resources translate into capital?

My analysis found two ways in which study participants created non-dominant cultural capital out of various attributes and used this capital to acquire "authentic" status positions. First, they signified which cultural goods served as capital when referring to either one another's stock of cultural attributes and codes. In turn, they used indications of these cultural attributes as signifiers of either "black" in-group or "other" out-group cultural membership. Second, they used the specified attributes as power resources in their daily negotiations with each other. Continually, signs of what existed as capital emerged when study participants reproached co-ethnic peers who demonstrated either a lack of appreciation for, or seemingly little awareness of, valued cultural attributes such as black youth speech codes, musical tastes, and interactional styles. In instances when peers lacked "black" cultural capital and employed purported "white" cultural markers, it cost them the status of "authentic" group membership in the judgment of other youth in the study. Thus, the degree to which my study participants employed the appropriate cultural capital had a significant impact on their cultural status positions.

A Matter of Authenticity: Cultural Markers and Group Membership

Establishing authenticity is complicated. The process of deciding who is in or out is slip-pery, particularly when it comes to race and ethnicity. In her book *Money, Morals, and Manners*, sociologist Michele Lamont reveals how upper-class, high status White men set symbolic cul-tural boundaries that not only create groups, but also potentially produce inequality because they are the essential medium through which individuals acquire status, monopolize resources, or ward off threats (1992:12). Similarly, I found evidence of how this group of low-income African American youth set symbolic boundaries to acquire status among themselves and to ward off outsiders, particularly other non-Black youth. As they laid these symbolic bound-aries, they also evaluated which of their co-ethnics was most worthy of "black" cultural mem-bership based on their use of specified resources. In some moments, phenotype determined a peer's group membership. At other times, racial group membership entailed much more than the biological. Hence, respondents frequently judged each other's authenticity, or rather their legitimacy, as "real" Black persons. In these moments, my study participants revealed that they used cultural authenticity as a basis to draw boundaries not only between themselves and other ethnic groups but also to socially control the cultural behaviors of other co-ethnics.

Paradoxically, while their actions signaled the belief that we do not belong to simple race groups, their commentary occasionally belied this belief. During discussions of their percep-tions of what it means to be "black" and their social positions vis-à-vis Whites, my study par-ticipants frequently made explicit remarks about various cultural resources functioning as important markers of in- and out-group membership. For example, while speaking to me in the living room of his home, Marcus exposed certain ethno-cultural boundaries as he described perceived differences between Black and White students' styles:

> MARCUS: Like you know how the White people usually talk like [he alters his voice to demonstrate], "Oh yeah, that's cool" and all that stuff. If a Black person goes, "Oh that's butter" or "that's phat," that's like acting black. That's what that means.
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> PC: Does it go beyond language? Is there anything else?
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> MARCUS: Yeah, how you dress, what kind of music you listen to, and how you act, stuff like that.

Marcus distinguished between the speech codes and word choices of Blacks and Whites. Similar to the processes documented by Donna Gaines in *Teenage Wasteland* (1991)—a book about a group of suburban White youth from mixed class backgrounds—Marcus and his peers distinguished themselves through different dress and musical tastes. While Gaines' research informants sorted themselves into different cliques such as the "jocks" and the "burnouts," my informants constructed boundaries around race and ethnicity, powerful social forces through which they translated many of their daily experiences.[4]

A ninth grader, John, described how musical tastes reinforced the racial boundaries between Black, Latino, and White students in his school. When I asked him why these groups segregated themselves from one another (based on his previous comments), he said: "Cause it's like the White people listen to that alternative rock and roll, heavy metal stuff, and whatever they listen to. And the Black and Spanish probably listen to R&B and rap." When I asked another student, Pashan, what would happen if someone entered her community listening to classical composers such as Beethoven and Mozart, she responded: "I'd be like get out of here, especially if they came . . . with a big radio listening to Beethoven. That is not 'flavors'" [African American urban youth slang for "in" or "fashionable"].

Cultural capital theorists would conventionally characterize a familiarity with, and taste for, Beethoven and Mozart as dominant cultural capital. With youthfulness, a different taste culture (Gans 1975), and even recognition of the renowned classical composer, Pashan claimed that popular R&B crooners MA$E or Usher were more "flavors" than Beethoven. Incidentally, only one of the students in this study participated in a school band or orchestra, two popular extracurricular activities in a significant percentage of the nation's public and private schools that yield some dominant cultural capital (DiMaggio 1982).[5]

Repeatedly, I heard descriptions of what blackness entailed from Marcus, John, Pashan, and their peers. For the majority, dress, musical, and speech styles appeared to be the most salient signifiers of their racial identity—"being black." Some linguists argue that a primary function of "black talk" is to create a coherent, culturally positive self-image. "Though many of the words and phrases may sound harsh and even obscene to outsiders, this language is essential to the cultural enrichment of African Americans" (Major 1994:xxxii). These youth utilized their brand of "black" cultural capital to reinforce their collective or group identity, giving them the power to discern who belongs and who does not.

Not surprisingly, their awareness of African Americans' socio-historical experiences influenced how the study participants set the initial contours of group membership. Moreover, as they described what "being black" meant to them, their commentaries shed light on the potential psychosocial value of various cultural markers. When I asked Rayisha to discuss how she and her friends negotiate the meanings of race within their respective communities and school spaces, she explained to me their use of various events and cultural practices such as "stepping" (a syncopated foot-stomping dance used as a symbolic form of solidarity within African American fraternities and sororities, especially on college campuses):

PC: What does being black mean to you?
RAYISHA: Special . . . being black means to me to be special. We all, all of us is . . . special. As the years go by, we are strong. And each generation has an advantage. Each generation we get stronger, and people look down on us and we know they do. But we look at them and say, 'Yeah. We're here.' Well, my friends and me sit around and talk about being black, we always talk about it.

4. I also found evidence that my study participants maintained subgroups within their racialized peer spaces at school. Thus, they maintained and constructed different identities for "jocks," "preps," and "nerds," to name three groups specifically mentioned during my interviews (for discussion of these social groups, see Gaines 1991; Kinney 1993).

5. This analysis does not allow us to infer the degree to which poverty and class background preclude these students from participating in extracurricular activities like band and orchestra.

> Always. We talk about how they do with hiring. We need to do this. This is how we were raised. If you live in Yonkers, you know the Uptown Steppers. They're Black. All of them. And I think it's twelve of them; it's eleven girls and one boy, and they're all black. One may be half Spanish . . . Well, it's a black thing . . . going to a fashion show [at her high school]. Well, I'm not going to say because it's black . . . it's not a black thing. If you want to make it a black thing, you can make it a black thing. And then there's this White kid [who wanted to try out for the group but did not because it was mostly Black]. But if they wanted to step, why didn't they try out? Just because it's the color of your skin don't mean we're not going to let you in. . . . We're not racist.

Rayisha and her peers use stepping as a marker of group identity ("If you want to make it a black thing, you can make it a black thing"). These events fostered a sense of connectedness and made Rayisha feel "special" despite her allusions to historical social disadvantages faced by Blacks in U.S. society. That is, Rayisha indicated that she did not evaluate her self-worth by the harshness of racial experiences that African Americans confront, but rather she and her peers evaluated themselves based on their collective resilience and the production of their own cultural resources.

I gathered, however, that the risk of exercising these practices within multi-racial schools entailed others perceiving the exclusivity of these activities, although Rayisha strongly proclaimed that she and her peers were "not racist" and did not exclude others because of the color of their skin. Her apparent concern with being perceived as "racist" as a result of the cultural ownership that she and her peers had taken of stepping indicates how sensitive "race talk" continues to be in our society and within schools (Pollock 2003). Nevertheless, Rayisha indicated that if one lived in her hometown and was Black (and also was presumably a contemporary), then some knowledge of the Uptown Steppers would reveal his or her ethnocultural identity, membership, and authenticity.

Samurai, another of Rayisha's contemporaries living across town, wrestled similarly with the slipperiness of rendering certain practices as essentially "black" by excluding others of different races or ethnicities. On the one hand, their peers' ascribed ethnic identities would not preclude them from partaking in certain cultural practices. On the other hand, their ascribed identities, in addition to the manner in which they deployed cultural cues, determined whether or not they could be considered "authentic" members of the group. Samurai made this point as he explained to me how Jaime, an adolescent non-Black Puerto Rican male living nearby, attempted to use his awareness of rap music as currency to gain acceptance among his African American neighborhood peers:

> SAMURAI: A person that's not Black [might try] to be somebody they always wanted to be or a person that they look up to. Like you might have Jaime, he might try to be like me or Michael . . . Yeah, he want to get everything I get, and I'm Black and he might listen to Spanish music. Once I start listening to DMX—everybody around the block listens to DMX—then he wants to listen to DMX, he don't even know what he's talking about; he just want to be Black but not black like the color but the person that I am.
> PC: Why does this guy try to be like you?
> SAMURAI: Cause he's in the middle, because Black people are all around him. Like mostly, it's more Black people over there than Spanish . . . so he's in the middle and he's like surviving with all these Black people . . .

Samurai not only acknowledged the constructed social and cultural practices that he associated with "blackness," but he also recognized the phenotypic factors conventionally used to ascribe racial identity ("but not black like the color . . ."). He suggested that Jaime attempted to "act black" like his neighborhood peers by borrowing a musical taste for DMX, an internationally renowned rap artist. Rather than accept the possibility that the music of a hometown native would appeal naturally to Jaime, or even recognize the contributions made

by Latino music artists to hip hop culture, Samurai uses DMX's rap music as an important cultural marker to set the boundaries between his culture and Jaime's. Furthermore, although from Samurai's perspective Jaime could acquire an understanding and appreciation of this music and fit in socially, Jaime's fair skin and known Puerto Rican heritage precluded any fully "authentic" membership in the cultural sphere of his African American peers. Samurai, like Rayisha, pointed out that although their non-Black Latino and White peers could embrace important cultural markers to gain acceptance among their Black peers, ascribed racial and ethnic identities put certain constraints on their status among Black youth.

Marcus, Rayisha, and Samurai all reveal how they and their peers mark the boundaries of in-group membership within their schools and neighborhoods. By establishing the means of access to "authentic" black membership, they created capital out of a set of tastes, understandings and appreciations for particular cultural styles. As Pashan—a high achieving student—said, this creative process generated territorial feelings about who could legitimately embrace these cultural cues: "Yeah, among my friends . . . if they see like a White person dressing baggy, they get really, really upset. Like they say, 'Oh they're trying to be black' and stuff."

Extending the economic metaphor implicit in the concept of cultural capital, I understood from my informants' declarations that their tastes are prized resources that distinguish them from other social groups. If everyone held these tastes, the value of these resources would diminish, creating a loss of distinction or even a lessening of individual and group worth. Thus, the value imbued in their "black" cultural capital compelled these students to be territorial and protective of their resources. They used categorization, identity, comparison, and psychological distinctiveness to make in-group-out-group distinctions (Tajfel 1974). The mere possession of shared phenotype did not automatically make one a Black person or a member in good standing of the group (Fordham 1988). Ascribed blackness was a necessary but insufficient condition for "authentic" membership, especially if a peer's behavior, attitudes, and activities were perceived as being at variance with those cultural codes thought to be appropriate and group-specific.

Transgressing those cultural boundaries could even affect romantic attractions. Sixteen-year old Wilson, who revealed to me his fondness for both poetry and girls, frowned as he described a girl whom he perceived as "talking white" and admitted he would not be attracted to her because he "would think [that] something would be wrong with her." The girl to whom Wilson referred resembled Adrienne, a bright and confident 15-year old who was one of the few teens in my sample sanctioned for her failure to embrace the speech codes of fellow poor Black peers and who had been referred to repeatedly as "White girl" by boys in her school. Interestingly, after I completed a one-on-one interview with Adrienne and invited her to participate in a group interview with other girls from her neighborhood, she declined because her relations with them were not cordial. Those other girls believed that Adrienne thought "she was better than they," since she rejected their linguistic and other cultural codes; they did not consider her to be one of them.[6]

Wilson's view about the girl who "talked white" was consistent with the views of both Joyelle and Pashan, who said that they "would think that something would be wrong" with their Black friends if they came to school listening to Beethoven. Whereas a taste for Beethoven would function as capital in the cultural repertoires of the ("white") middle and upper classes, Joyelle suggested that another musical taste is necessary for one to have Black *youth* cultural capital. She hinted that those Black "young people" who did not share her taste for rap music had something "wrong with them," particularly since they would be emulating the "regular people." (Occasionally, study participants normalized the cultural experiences of

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6. Elsewhere, I reveal that those students whom others felt were behaving as if they were superior were likely to be described as "acting white" and sanctioned accordingly (Carter 1999).

White youth and often unconsciously rendered behaviors that they associated with Whites as "regular" or "normal.")[7]

My interviews also drew attention to how age influences the social terrain on which different cultural resources are valued and utilized. Very likely, because of generational status, the specificity of embodied and objectified forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) differs for children and adults, even though the mechanisms through which they work remain similar. Hence, in Joyelle's example, a Beethoven aficionado not only possessed musical tastes that exceeded the narrow cultural boundaries set by the peer group, but the Beethoven fan was also implicitly older. Young Black people, according to Joyelle, distinguished themselves from the "regular" [White] and the older [both Black and White]. Thus, when my interviewees described their cultural resources and the capital associated with them, they characterized their social lives not only from a racial, ethnic, or class standpoint, but also from a youthful one. To summarize, these New York-based youth made the implicit value of "black" (or non-dominant) cultural capital known through repeated statements about their cultural preferences and practices, which demarcated "black" cultural membership from other racial or ethnic groups.

Dual Capitals: A Matter of Balancing Acts

Normative beliefs and expectations dictate that individuals strive for assimilation into mainstream social and economic institutions. Group ties and cultural processes influencing my study participants' desires for "authentic" status positions, however, frequently counteract these strivings. The energy most of them invested in the acquisition of "black" cultural capital outpaced the vigor with which they sought dominant cultural capital. In comparison, others, negotiating strategically between multiple social spaces, utilized both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital. Moesha, a young woman who a year after graduating from high school had taken a few college courses and entered the workforce, declared as much while using speech style as a signifier of racial and cultural difference:

> We're [African Americans] not ignorant; there are just certain ways that we talk to each other. It might not seem right, but that doesn't mean we're dumb. See I know people, who can act ignorant [clownish] as anything, but they are also smart, and they can also talk in an intelligent way. It's just that when you talk with your friends, you talk in a certain way. Or when you're at work or wherever you're at, you have to act intelligent.

Moesha acknowledged the expressive purpose of Standard English and its ideological link to intelligence in dominant settings. At the same time, she acknowledged the value and function of "black" speech codes between herself and her African American friends. Not only did she recognize it, but Moesha also bought into the idea that to be more socio-economically mobile, she had to employ dominant language capital practically. At the same time, Moesha imbued the style of talk shared among her co-ethnics with a value that fostered community and group cohesion. Consciously, she chose to draw on her familiarity with black speech codes to signify her authenticity—currency that allowed her to comfortably invoke the collective "we" in her characterization of the African American community. Still, for Moesha and a few others, some tensions between their dominant and "black" cultural capital emerged. Many of these tensions stemmed from whether others would question their black in-group membership when they employed dominant speech codes within social spaces regulated by their peers. In those moments when my study participants failed to display their "black" cul-

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7. Another informant commented that White youth preferred "regular" dress, unlike the styles for which she and her peers had a taste—a further indicator of my study participants' normalization of Whites' cultural tastes and styles in general.

tural currency, they were likely to be sanctioned as "acting white" or "other," which easily jeopardized their authentic status (Carter 1999).

Nineteen-year old Bettina supported the hegemonic value of "good English" and understood it as a form of cultural capital ultimately translatable into either symbolic or economic capital, provided that other structural factors (e.g., racial discrimination) did not preclude her upward mobility. Still, although Bettina, a collegian, acknowledged the need to have dual cultural (i.e., linguistic) capital, her peers sanctioned her for always employing white linguistic codes:

> PC: So people [frequently] say that [you talk white]?
> BETTINA: Yes!
> PC: Why are they saying that to you?
> BETTINA: Because I'm different. I mean there are times when I know how to have fun. I know how to relax; I know how to have fun. But there's also times when if I know if I'm going to the doctor's, or if I have to go to a preliminary meeting about this or that, I know how to talk. I know how to dress, and I know how to act.

Bettina also believed she had to use dominant cultural capital for higher socioeconomic attainment in wider society. Knowing "how to have fun" and to "talk black" if she desired, Bettina revealed her ownership of "black" cultural capital, as well. Possessing both dominant and "black" cultural capital, she could code-switch and decipher which "act" was appropriate, based on the context. Her tendency, however, was to privilege Standard English over the linguistic codes of her peers, making her "different," invoking questions about her authenticity, and subjecting her to accusations of "talking white." Yet, she believed that the socioeconomic benefits of dominant cultural capital outweighed the reward of her contemporaries' full acceptance of her as "authentic."

Having graduated from high school and entered college, Moesha and Bettina adopted a strategy that appeared to work for them, as it does for many upwardly mobile African Americans who are employed in white-dominant workspaces. Compelled to adhere to the various cultural tastes rewarded in that space, they negotiated with multiple forms of cultural capital. Hence, inside either the school or the office door, their dominant cultural capital supplanted their own ethnic capital to signal "intelligence" and similarity to powerful superordinate group members who may devalue their "black" cultural capital. Conversely, once they returned home, they often chose to exchange dominant capital for black cultural capital to avoid being accused of "acting white," and to signal that they were bona fide and authentic group members.

Race, School, and Different Cultural Capital Forms

Earlier, I showed how young African Americans understood that variable types of cultural capital existed within different social spheres. Yet, the question remains: what precluded many of these students from effectively balancing between their use of both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, especially in school? While a thorough exploration of this question goes beyond the scope of this article, my data reveal that students frequently refused to fully seek the acquisition of dominant cultural capital at school, especially during those moments when they perceived that school officials demeaned their own cultural resources. Yet, I found no evidence that their preferences for "black" cultural capital lessened their desire for high academic and career aspirations. Eighty-four percent of my study participants aspired to attend college. Constrained by limited family means, however, one-quarter less (64 percent) expected to attend college. The same percentage aspired to white-collar, professional and/or managerial careers, which suggests that these youth affirmed the values of mainstream society.

Nevertheless, a significant number of those in the study shared their perceptions of problematic relationships with teachers, who they felt expected little of them and their classmates. Their perceptions resonated with findings from research on the relationship between teacher-student social background mismatch and teachers' evalutations of students. Karl Alexander, Doris Entwisle, and Maxine Thompson (1987) found that teachers' own social origins exercise a strong influence on how they react to the status attributes of their students. In particular, low-status and minority pupils experience their greatest difficulties in the classrooms of high-status teachers, who evaluate these pupils as less mature and less capable.

For example, while discussing some of her school experiences, Nina, who had just graduated from high school and was trying to figure out how to pay for college, described the cultural cues that she felt teachers used in the classroom.

> Like I say, I mean . . . the way you present yourself to someone, that's the approach that they take upon you. And some Black kids, you know, when they go to school, the first thing the teacher looks at is how you present yourself. So you come to school with the baggy pants and hat to the back, with the radio, they look at you and be like, "I'm not going to waste my time." But they see the other, like you know, not the whole [person] White or Black, but when they see another fellow, or male or female you know, quiet, and then that's the one they'll spend more time with. But not knowing that person came with the baggy pants, could be more intelligent, you know, have more intellectuals [sic] than a quiet person.

Nina referred to two relevant styles or cues that garner teachers' attention: dress and demeanor. In her view, those students seen as unintelligent did not conform to the dominant expectation of clothing and deportment that teachers associate with intelligence and diligence.

Similarly, Moesha, who earlier disclosed her awareness of the benefits of both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, discussed student-teacher relations in her high school, sharing her perceptions of how teachers valued passivity in the classroom. According to Moesha, her teachers did not tolerate assertive students, and Moesha did not respect this practice.

> There were like certain teachers, they would give you attitude for no reason. And you're like . . . I didn't do anything. But for me, it was only like for certain friends that I had [who] were outspoken, and me I was very passive. I'd let whoever say whatever. And [my friends] weren't like that. I guess . . . for my friends, I didn't like the way that the teacher would talk to them. I had friends that . . . were very smart. They were very, very smart, and the teachers think that because they are a certain way, and they act a certain way, that they are not smart. And that's not true. They are; they are very smart. It's important that you learn about people.

For her own part, Moesha had learned how to circumvent these problems by conforming and understanding what practices warranted teacher's high regard. Yet, she was very aware that the interactional styles valued by teachers often led them to ignore very intelligent students, if students either critiqued or resisted the intellectual and political girdles of schooling (Fine 1991; Fordham 1993).

Evidently, some students were not like Moesha and Bettina (self-admitted bicultural navigators). These students did not commonly alternate between dominant and non-dominant cultural currencies. Jermaine notes this practice as he discusses the differences between how Black and White youth navigate their home and outside world spaces.

> Black people have a certain style . . . way of talk. You know what I think . . . I got a good example. The way most Black kids when they come off the street and come in the house, they can talk the same way that they talk outside in their house. Now I have seen plenty of White kids, on the streets; they talk a certain way outside their homes, but when they go home, and it's a whole different thing. When they go home and they are around their parents, it's like they are two different people.

Here Jermaine suggests that many Black students comport themselves consistently. Although some recognize the lines of cultural demarcation across different social spheres, many

present themselves similarly in each of those spaces. Hence, some Black students bring virtu-
ally the same interactional styles into both the classroom and situations outside the school
walls (Goodwin 1991). I noticed many instances of loud verbal play among my female study
participants, a communicative style that might easily be misunderstood by an outsider who is
unfamiliar with it. Frequently, the students volleyed quick-witted quips back and forth in
their verbal duels with one another. These duels would often carry over into the classrooms—a
point that several of my female informants shared with me. Rayisha, a self-reported "big
talker" in class, discussed how her grades suffered because she believed that her teachers sanc-
tioned her for her talkativeness. In addition to "three [unexcused] absences," Rayisha admit-
ted that her talkative nature created both academic and disciplinary problems in school. She
was unafraid to tell a teacher what she felt and told me how she tried to convince one class-
mate "to stand up for herself" and challenge a teacher about a grade that the classmate had
received. Without a doubt, Rayisha needed guidance in how to effectively engage teachers
and not compromise her educational performance. At the same time, she required more
teachers like her favorite, Mrs. Thompson, whom Rayisha described as an authoritative
teacher who demonstrated her "care" for students with faith in their abilities and a large dose
of "tough love." Rayisha believed that unlike several of her other teachers, Mrs. Thompson
did not dismiss her as an intransigent student with limited academic potential.

Their own voices prevented my study participants from being invisible to peers, teachers,
and other adults alike. Yet, the talkativeness and sassiness (deemed as "loudness" and often
identified as problem behavior among Black students) do not preclude a mastery of the cogni-
tive skills required to perform satisfactorily in modern schools (see also Fordham 1993). How-
ever, if these students do not conform to the cultural expectations of the school, then they are
likely to either be expelled or to drop out after continual conflicts with school authorities
(Fine 1991). Students suggested that teachers acted as gatekeepers, enforcing the stratification
system, granting rewards to those students who embrace the "right" cultural signals, habits,
and styles (Ballenger 1992; Farkas et al. 1990; Heath 1982; Lamont and Lareau 1988). While
schoolteachers and authorities reward many students for conformity and obedience (Bowles
and Gintis 1976), these traits are insufficient criteria for better grades. Indeed, Karen Gallas
(1998) found that silence can suppress the achievement of some students, particularly female
students. A year after I completed my interviews, the *New York Times* reported that the Yon-
kers school district had recognized the cultural gaps between its students and teachers. To
ameliorate the problem, the district had ordered its teachers to take part in a summer program
designed to help them recognize the different learning styles and backgrounds of multicultural
student bodies (Brenner 1998).

I began this section describing students' perceptions of the way in which conspicuous cul-
tural differences influenced teacher assessments; in the latter part, I described how students
responded to a conflict they perceived as real, though highly problematic. My data suggest a
paradox: poor Black students' non-dominant forms of cultural capital yield social benefits and
rewards within their communities, but within the school walls, students find that officials
devalue precisely these cultural attributes. Further research is needed to evaluate the impact
of this cultural strain on student academic performance.

Discussion and Other Considerations

This article offers evidence of how cultural capital extends beyond the dominant social
class' cultural resources. Cultural capital is multi-dimensional, producing status shifts not only
within the social hierarchy but also within the social spaces of subordinated groups. In addi-
tion, cultural capital is context specific; the value of different cultural attributes changes
depending upon either the situation or the reference group. Recognizing the value of non-
dominant cultural capital does not devalue dominant cultural capital, however (Aschaffen-

burg and Maas 1997). As previous research has shown, dominant cultural capital plays a critical role in social, academic, and economic attainment. Yet, the possession of non-dominant cultural capital is critical to status positioning within socially marginalized groups.

My data describe one form of non-dominant cultural capital, which is based on the cultural practices and meanings of poor, African American youth living in Yonkers, New York. In their schools and communities, these young persons achieved racial and cultural authenticity through performances and practices they framed as "black." In their desire to maintain a unique identity in a racially hierarchical society, not unlike their middle-class adult counterparts who keep African American culture alive through their own tastes and practices (Benjamin 1991; Landry 1987), they created codes for authentic membership. In principle, these codes operated similarly to those conventionally associated with cultural capital. Styles, tastes, preferences and certain understandings marked one as either "in" or "out." Furthermore, these data hint at how non-dominant cultural capital provided my young research participants with resources to increase their sense of self-worth through their own cultural production. Previous research by Mitchell Duneier (1992) and Michele Lamont (2000) document similar modes of self-worth evaluations among poor and working class Black male adults, dominated groups who elevate their sense of self through cultural autonomy. Whether or not the processes described in this article have lasting consequences for identity, self-confidence, or other psychosocial outcomes is an important empirical question that requires further research.

Certain cultural proclivities should have no bearing on individuals' abilities to master many skills; yet, many perceive that they do. Previous research shows that non-dominant cultural tastes and preferences can influence the impressions of powerful gatekeepers in the school and workplace (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Moss and Tilly 1996). Similarly, my study participants shared stories of how they clashed with teachers over stylistic differences. They sensed that their cultural presentations of selves negatively influenced teachers' evaluations. A significant number of these students sought mainly to build their "black" cultural capital, and carried that intent to school. For example, Rayisha's grades suffered because of conflicts with teachers over style; there were many others like her. Other students juggled both "black" and dominant cultural capital, strategizing how they would attain both authentic in-group status and academic mobility. Moesha and Bettina represented this group. How and why some of these youth choose to juggle both sets of cultural capital—an act which is conceivably more beneficial—is another area for further empirical investigation.

Members of the African American community often achieve racial authenticity through class-inflected performances and practices (Jackson 2001). In fact, many of the cultural styles that characterize "blackness" emerged from the urban "ghetto"; today these styles are promulgated by the popularity of hip-hop or rap music, an oft-used mechanism of social commentary on poor, black life (Kelley 1994). Still, the values and meanings of "black cultural capital" may shift with the individual's class position. Recently, Katheryn Neckerman, Prudence Carter, and Jennifer Lee (1999) introduced the idea of a "minority culture of mobility," which encompasses a set of cultural elements differentiating the Black middle class from the White middle class and the Black working and lower classes. This minority culture of mobility emerges from the distinctive problems and interactions that upwardly mobile African Americans encounter in their inter-racial contact with Whites and their inter-class contacts with other Blacks. Within this African American culture of mobility, Blacks develop their own forms of cultural capital and shape the contours of their middle-class ethnic group through art, music, fiction, and other cultural tastes, expressive styles and interactions. Similar patterns occur among upper class African Americans as well, in addition to the dominant cultural resources that they acquire through schooling, social networks, and in their professional lives (Graham 1999). Further research might even find that the cultural capital of racial and ethnic minorities within these higher socioeconomic strata has economic returns.

Notwithstanding documented cultural differences across class, some notions of blackness transcend the boundaries of class. From journalists' accounts (Kaufman 1996) to scholarly

research (Pattillo-McCoy 1999) to popular television sitcoms ("Moesha"), we find that low-income African American youth share cultural meanings with their middle class counterparts. For example, in her ethnographic portrait of the Black middle class on Chicago's South Side, Mary Pattillo-McCoy describes how black English, with "unifying potential and performative value" serves "as an innovative cultural construction shared among African Americans across class lines . . . It solidifies the cultural bonds between members of a heterogeneous African American population" (1999:10).

Are there other forms of non-dominant cultural capital, or even other forms of "black cultural capital?" Conceivably, other ethnic groups racially identified as "Black" possess their own cultural capital portfolio. Multiple "black" identities exist, as sociologist Mary Waters (1999) shows in her study of Black West Indian immigrants. Sociologists have argued that varying levels of social distance and different methods of incorporation or segmented assimilation into U.S. society create comparatively disparate social experiences for various groups (Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Portes and Zhou 1993; Steinberg 1989). Historically, African Americans have fought for full economic, political and civic participation through civil rights struggles. Because of these struggles, a cultural identity shared with other racial and ethnic minority groups has not necessarily been their intended destiny. The history of African American slavery has shaped African Americans' perceptions of white domination. These perceptions diverge significantly from those held by racial or ethnic groups who voluntarily immigrated to the U.S. (Ogbu 1978). Other research shows that the social distance between African Americans and Whites differs significantly from the distance between Whites and other racial and ethnic groups (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Hraba 1996; Massey and Denton 1993; Rogers 2001). Hence, the degree of social distance may influence the extent to which immigrant and other native minority groups assert their own forms of cultural capital. Certainly, comparative research could examine how and why non-dominant cultural capital develops among different ethnic minority groups.

With respect to the question of the effect of my study participants' life stage on their actions, I acknowledge that the cultural forms these students associated with blackness resemble many of the elements of urban youth culture (Hall and Jefferson 1993; Kelley 1994). Not only do these findings highlight how the youth whom I interviewed used their designated cultural attributes to maintain status positions among themselves, but they also demonstrate how they established their own cultural capital vis-à-vis adults, who may employ other cultural means to position themselves. At the same time, I avoid subsuming my larger argument under an adolescent development framework, since a focus only on the developmental stage of youth would eclipse other important sociological characteristics, particularly my study participants' positions in the broader structure of race relations. As Nina, Samurai, and others boldly tell us, they perceive and respond to the powerful forces of race mediated through interpersonal relations at school and within their peer groups (Tatum 1997). These forces are powerful enough to compel them to invoke the language of race and ethnicity, without prompting, in their descriptions of schools, teachers, and friends. Through the lens of race and culture, my study participants perceived that teachers evaluated them as deficient based on the teachers' and the schools' standards of cultural decorum. They understood that most Whites with whom they came into contact used Standard English primarily, the language that facilitates success in U.S. schools (although it is not a sufficient condition by itself). At the same time, they did not believe their own speech styles to be incompatible with school success.

Paradoxically, individuals reveal their agency in either context, whether they choose to adhere to black cultural capital or dominant cultural capital, or both. Some individuals such as Bettina forsook perceived "black" authenticity in exchange for the benefits of dominant cultural capital, recognizing its potentially higher socioeconomic returns. And certainly, the potential socioeconomic returns of dominant cultural capital are the emphasis of many sociological studies of racial, ethnic, and class inequality. Yet, in their consideration of the role of

culture, such studies fail to raise a critical awareness of the value of non-dominant cultural resources within low-income racial and ethnic minority communities. Instead, they disclose the severe academic, economic, and social consequences of these youth's failure to subscribe fully to dominant cultural resources. An "oppositional" description of these cultures often ignores the social and beneficial roles of substantively different cultural portfolios among various racial, ethnic, and class groups (see also Deyhle 1995). If social scientists desire a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted processes affecting academic achievement, status attainment, and socioeconomic mobility, then future research must pay more attention to the function, value, and interplay of both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital.

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