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CULTURE AND GHETTO RELATED BEHAVIOR

Lessons learned in the Bronx and the Bijlmer[1]

Aan beide zijden van de Atlantische oceaan, voeren invloedrijke onderzoekers vaak 'cultuur' aan als de bron van gedragspatronen in stedelijke achterstands-buurten en overbelaste scholen. Maar wat wordt eigenlijk bedoeld met de term 'cultuur' in deze 'culturele' verklaringen (die opmerkelijk genoeg zelfs naar voren wordt gebracht door onderzoekers die bekend staan om hun structurele benadering)? Paulle's participerende observatieonderzoek gedurende zes jaar op twee gedepriveerde scholen in de Bronx en de Bijlmer laat het belang van een alternatieve culturele verklaring zien, die onderzoekers dreigen te missen als ze de term 'cultuur' te pas en te onpas en onnadenkend gebruiken als verklaring van wat dikwijls wordt aangeduid als 'getto-gedrag'.

Whether Western European countries have neighborhoods that genuinely deserve to be called 'ghettos' or not, it seems fair to say that 'ghetto related behavior' (Wilson 1996) can no longer be seen as an example of American exceptionalism. From overwhelmed schools in the *banlieue* of France (Bourdieu et al. 1999) to high rates of violent and criminal activity in the worst *achterstandswijken* of the Dutch *Randstad* (cf. Van Niekerk 2000a: 198), there is massive evidence of youth in countries with full-blown welfare states exhibiting (or getting caught up in) exactly the forms of behavior Wilson had in mind when he developed his now famous term.[2]

Not surprisingly, in the United States as well as in European countries without American-style 'hyperghettos' (Wacquant & Wilson 1989), social scientists have generated steady flows of 'culture'-based explanations of ghetto related behavior as they have taken root in specific contexts. On both sides of the Atlantic these days, one regularly comes across invocations of 'culture' as a significant – if not as the primary – source of troubling forms of urban (self) marginalization. More surprisingly perhaps, even leading proponents of heavily 'structuralist' analyses of urban marginalization (such as William Julius Wilson) have regularly ended up explaining here and now, on the ground manifestations of ghetto related behavior *not* in terms of (macro or micro) structural

constraints – or some other causal forces – but, rather, in terms of 'culture.' This raises a number of questions. Most basically, what exactly do leading researchers of urban exclusion mean by the term 'culture' when they invoke it as a spring of specific forms of behavior.

What 'culture' is (not) in specifically 'cultural explanations'

The answer to this query is not as self-evident as it might appear. There are broad definitions of culture that subsume entire social settings (ghettos, nations, the Western world, etc.) and virtually everything that goes on in such configurations (political shifts, economic relations, ideological debates, evolving forms of masculinity, etc.). However, when social scientists offer specifically 'cultural explanations' of particular types of behavior, it is clear that they are not referring to 'culture' in the widest sense of the term. Broad definitions of culture would have to cover all types of human behavioral patterns and practices not determined by the dictates of biology and, by implication, all types of social structures, institutions and social dynamics that one finds in a given setting or in the life of a given group. Such a conceptualization of culture is clearly *not* what researchers have in mind when they attempt to explain specific types of behavior in terms of 'culture' rather than in terms of, for example, structural constraints. Nor do cultural explanations of specific types of behavioral responses tend to stick to the narrow sense of 'culture' closely related to the arts (*e.g.*, high, middlebrow and low 'culture'). Rather, cultural explanations are based on (implicit) distinctions between 'the cultural' – more narrowing defined – and, for example, 'the social-structural' (or the political-economic dimension). Indeed when it comes to cultural explanations, 'the essential core of culture consists of...ideas and especially their attached values' (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952: 47). Ideas, values, cognitions, ideologies, webs of meanings, beliefs – surely these are what receive pride of place in most 'cultural explanations' of specific behavioral patterns even when no definition of culture is made explicit. Furthermore, as Waters (1999: 99) has pointed out, 'Cultural explanations imply that members of [a given] group exhibit certain behaviors because of values...and not because of reactions to the particular situation they find themselves in.'

Not, then, invisible forces exerted by broader structures, not transformative micro-situational pressures emanating from vibrant rituals based on forms of physical co-presence, not the (collective) passions that well up in the lived bodies of exposed and expressive adolescents (or adults), and not the mental processing that takes place beneath the level of consciousness and discourse – none of these potential triggers of responses are what leading scientists emphasize when they offer their 'cultural explanations' for actual on-the-ground forms of ghetto related behavior.

Over-stretched and under-theorized: Immersion based mysteries

When we overstretch a concept like culture we end up killing it. But culture is no exception in this sense. If everything is 'violent,' or 'structurally determined' or 'intensely emotional,' then violence, structure and emotion become useless conceptual tools. Similarly, when we conceptually abuse a term like 'culture' (while on our way to making 'cultural explanations') our research becomes unnecessary confused and confusing. As will become clear below, this is precisely what is happening in a great deal of work on ghetto-related behavior. The term 'culture' is being at once over-stretched and under-theorized. Needless to say perhaps, this does not imply that we ought to reject the term altogether. This does imply, however, that tough questions need be posed about how notions of 'culture' have been conceptualized and deployed. The task, that is, is to improve research into highly at risk urban populations by means of throwing out the proverbial bath water while keeping in mind that the baby, the term 'culture' itself, is indispensable. 'Culture' needs to be rescued, not abandoned; sociological questions about culture and ghetto related behavior need to be re-imagined, not ignored.

Concerns about the mis-usage and mis-conceptualization of 'culture' were more or less foisted upon me during the period (*i.e.,* between 1996 and 2002) that I ethnographically examined – and attempted to teach in – deeply troubled secondary schools of New and Old Amsterdam (Paulle, 2005). More to the point, direct observations in what I refer to as two fields or figurations (*i.e.,* the two neighborhood schools I call Johnson High and the Delta School) – and concurrent periods of immersion in various worlds of sociological theory and research – compelled me to reflect on the social unconscious lurking behind several leading explanations of ghetto related behavior. The years of observant participation lead me to contend, moreover, that precisely that which is left out of most 'culture'-based explanations of 'ghetto related behavior' turn out to be – at the most fundamental level – what actually fuel disruptive, aggressive and (self-) destructive responses in high stress schools of urban exile. In brief, the queries raised in this article emerged out of simultaneous periods of absorption in academic theory and ghetto related practice. How could it be that there is such a large gap between the leading sociological explanations of here-and-now ghetto related behavior and what I experienced and recorded as the actual determinants of ghetto related behavior in my two schools? How can we re-define and re-locate 'culture' so that this term might be more useful in terms of advancing explanations of what goes on in places like the overwhelmed schools that some might associate with the 'Black Atlantic' (*e.g.,* Gilroy 1993, 2000; Sansone 2003)?

The goal of Part One will be to identify a number of (heavily) culturalist arguments entrenched in three of the main streams of research into urban marginality in advanced societies.[3] Part Two uses lessons learned from my

own ethnographic research – as well as the work of thinkers such as Durkheim, Goffman, Elias, Collins and Bourdieu – to articulate what readers might see as a more balanced and ultimately more useful analytic strategy for explaining the (self-) destructive mechanisms and meanings at work inside and outside the educational reservations of the new urban poor. My research in the Bronx and the Bijlmer does not amount to a rigorous testing of the theories presented in Part One. It is my hope, nonetheless, that the coming pages will contain fresh questions and insights that can help us advance our understandings of the cultural norms and behavioral forms emerging in the worlds inhabited by the truly disadvantaged.

1   Culturalist postulates and ambiguities in three approaches to ghetto related behavior

A   The Wilson Approach to 'new' urban poverty: The dialectic of detrimental social structures and maladaptive cultural responses

Beginning in the 1970s a trilogy of at once empirical and theoretical works by William Julius Wilson (1978, 1987, 1996) has been massively influential on the research into the dynamics of modern-day urban exclusion in the us.[4] Wilson's contributions – along with those of, most notably, Douglas Massey – are famous for being based on strongly structural analyses of the crisis in ghettos of the United States. Starting with *The Declining Significance of Race*, Wilson (1978) argued that for the first Post-Civil Rights generation, racial inequality in America – including 'black-white' inequality in terms of educational outcomes – had become principally a matter of *social class*.[5, 6, 7] In 1987, with the publication of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson took on the harrowing decline of 'black' dominated 'inner-city' neighborhoods since around the mid-1970s. Again Wilson argued that political economic factors were by far the most important part of the story.[8]

Enter 'ghetto specific cultural characteristics'

While never departing from his compelling ('under')class-based analysis, in *The Truly Disadvantaged* Wilson (1987: 18) began discussing what he called 'the dynamic interplay between ghetto-specific cultural characteristics and social and economic opportunities.' Here Wilson dared to edge very close to the famous analyses of Lewis (1966) on the 'culture of poverty' and Moynihan (1965) on the 'tangle of pathologies' that entrap so many 'Negro families.'

Two points related to Wilson's second major study will now be highlighted before we move on. The first point relates to the possibility that the 'culture of

poverty' might have a life of its own. Although he did not argue this explicitly, Wilson's analysis clearly leaves the door open for the possibility that a 'culture of poverty' (and cultural adaptations embedded in a 'tangle of pathologies') might continue to guide and constrain the behavior of ghetto residents even after certain oppressive political economic opportunity structures have been radically improved. Wilson claimed that documenting quasi-autonomous (or at least durable) and often deeply (self-) destructive aspects of 'inner city' cultures frightened many progressive scholars out of the ghetto (or led them to sanitize what they found there). By throwing his weight behind the likes of Moynihan and Lewis, Wilson clearly implies that even this most dreaded of potential findings should not deter us from carrying out the necessary work of documenting how the symbiosis of structural and cultural dimensions generates and perpetuates forms of urban (self-) exclusion.

The second major point I will stress here relates to Wilson's contention that the task of studying such structural/cultural interweaving requires the use of 'research strategies ranging from survey to ethnographic to historical.' Simply studying what ghetto residents are likely to say is not enough. Without historically informed research and without sustained participant observation, this interweaving of material and symbolic structures and processes will remain an enigma.[9]

In the third book of the trilogy, *When Work Disappears: The world of the new urban poor*, Wilson (1996) traded in the problematic term 'underclass' for 'new urban poor.'[10] As the title indicates, the emphasis in this study remained on the structural (*i.e.*, political economic rather than cultural) level. Conversely, in *When Work Disappears* Wilson developed more thoroughly his ideas on how 'culture' relates to 'ghetto related behavior.' For this he turned to the work of revered educator and psychologist Kenneth B. Clark,[11] ethnographers, such as Elijah Anderson (1990) and Ulf Hannerz (1969), and key sociological thinkers, such as Bourdieu.[12]

Exit ghetto specific cultural characteristics? Exit clarity?

Up to this point the model presented by Wilson appears to be coherent and un-ambiguous. Now, however, we must thicken – and confuse – the plot. In *When Work Disappears* Wilson (1996: 69) repeatedly discusses research suggesting that cultural values of inner-city residents *do not* explain ghetto related behavior. Here we find Wilson, one might argue, breaking with his earlier arguments about the role of ghetto specific cultural characteristics. Wilson (1996: 179) even cites survey data on cultural values suggesting that people in 'inner-city' neighborhoods most plagued by ghetto related behavior do not 'verbally endorse' substantially different sets of normative commitments (with regard to, for example, work and educational achievement) than do most Americans. He contends that, what the media would have us believe is – namely that the

norms and values of ghetto residents lead them to self-destructive behavior – is not supported by the available quantitative research. Here Wilson comes close to asking a really interesting question: do people engage in 'ghetto related behavior' no matter what they say or consciously think (during moments when they are participating in surveys or being interviewed by researchers)? Instead of asking this question – *and instead of questioning assumptions about 'culture' determining here-and-now actions* – Wilson (1996: 70) ends up making arguments about how 'the decision to act in ghetto-related ways, although not necessarily reflecting values, can nonetheless be said to be cultural.'[13]

'Decisions' to engage in ghetto specific behavior that are made without influence of values but that are still cultural? Wilson's (1996) argument about how 'ghetto specific cultural characteristics' intertwine with and at times generate 'ghetto related behavior' seems to rest on the claim that 'skills, habits and styles' – *that operate (largely) beneath the level of consciously held values* – explain what is distinct about (ghetto related) behavior. The reader's confusion about what these *cultural decisions* might be based upon if they do not reflect consciously held values, is something Wilson never felt he needed to clear up. One is left wondering whether Wilson should continue to write about how 'ghetto specific cultural characterizes' generate 'ghetto related behavior' if this is his understanding of 'culture' (and culture-based decision making processes). My argument is not that, in itself, Wilson's analytic move is problematic. The problem, as I see it, is that Wilson's most mature – and highly unconventional – approach to 'culture' is poorly worked out and potentially very misleading. The result of this lack of clarity (and of Wilson's inability to trade in 'culture' for a term like 'habitus')[14] is that some of the most influential researchers attempting to put Wilson's ideas to work 'on the street' are missing the subtlety of Wilson's new argument. In Anderson's (1999) study of 'codes,' for example, 'street' and 'decent' behavior is the result, most directly, of opposing 'value orientations.' Time and again, Anderson bases his analyses of ghetto inhabitants' actions – in and out of overwhelmed public schools – on consciously held values.

B The Willis-Ogbu Approach to poor educational outcomes: The centrality of conscious cultural agency, degrees of resistance and (ethno-racial) identities

Clearly poor educational outcomes, and disruptive conduct in school, are part and parcel of what we are calling ghetto related behavior. And equally clearly, the two founding fathers of what we might consider the second stream of contemporary urban theory, Paul Willis and John Ogbu, have shaped the way countless researchers have approached disruptive in-school behavior and low levels of educational achievement.

Willis' Lads: Working class youth subcultures and self-destruction

Willis' classic monograph of macho, working-class, English secondary school 'lads,' *Learning to Labor* (1981 [1977]), beautifully brought to life his notion of peer-group based 'counter-school cultural production.' (Willis grew up in a working class milieu is from the same sort of English Midlands city as his 'lads.') The 'resistant,' or 'anti-school' cultural forms Willis documented among the adolescent boys he studied were, according to his analysis, produced in highly volitional and conscious ways. Precisely because they were so keenly aware of the cultural values that led them to disrupt their educational environments, locating the seeds of their actions required merely that Willis record his conversations with the 'lads.' Thus we see the great irony of Willis' most famous study. The lads' volitional acts of 'cultural agency' ended up being extremely self-destructive in terms of objective life chances. A resistant 'peer group culture'—*in the form of an ideology[15] that could easily be put into words* – led the youth to reject school, condemning them to a life on the economic margins of an economy that was soon to de-industrialize.[16]

Ogbu: Cultural resistance meets ethno-racial identity formation

According to (the Nigerian-born) Ogbu (1974, 1978), all minority youth face the dilemma of either submitting to an inferior status that implies a profound sense of inadequacy or, on the other hand, developing an 'adversarial stance' towards stigmatizing 'white' dominated institutions and practices. This second option implies that the youth must generate a sympathetic view of 'their' heritage, rooted in a strong sense of cultural and ethno-racial distinction. The secret to understanding how minority youth will handle this dilemma is found *not in socio-economic differences, but in aspects of ethno-racial group identity formation.* As Ogbu (1991: 14-15 in Model 2003: 278, *my emphasis*) wrote, many African American and Latino youth in 'inner cities' come to the conclusion that 'they are worse off than they ought to be *for no other reason* than that they belong to a subordinate and disparaged minority.' These 'minority' (as opposed to sub-proletarian or radically destabilized) youth come to believe, he argues, that 'it requires more than education, individual effort, and hard work to overcome barriers against them.' As a consequence of these 'conscious reflections,' Ogbu argues, these minority youth *willfully choose a subculture* of 'sports, entertainment, hustling, drug dealing and the like.'

The key question from this perspective is, therefore, which minority youth choose for more adversarial personas and which minority youth volitionally select non-oppositional types of ethno-racial identities. The clear message is that conscious deliberations about 'ethno-racial identities' shape behavior – and academic performance – in decisive ways. Ogbu (1989) explained the relative success of disadvantaged Chinese-American youth in Oakland in terms of

their non-adversarial 'ethno-racial identities.'[17] With respect to the oppositional stances of non-'white' pupils, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) further developed the more specific hypothesis that motivated (or pro-school) African American students (and other 'involuntary minorities,' such as Native Americans) face the 'burden of [being perceived by other pupils to be] acting white.'

Fordham and Ogbu's theory based on the 'burden of acting white' (or pressure not to 'sell out') has proven extremely influential.[18] Far from unaware that many researchers argue that this burden is either non-existent or more related to class than race, Ogbu (2003) has studied the relatively poor educational outcomes of African American youth in a decidedly upper middle class suburb of Cleveland.[19] While arguing that racism contributed to the poor outcomes to some degree, Ogbu concluded that fundamentally, the poor outcomes came from *within the culture* of the African American students, who, despite their (parents) high socio-economic status, associated excelling in school with 'acting white.' Although Bourgois (1995)[20] and Anderson (1999)[21] at times lend empirical support to the *Ogbu Approach*, the most frequently cited ethnographer associated with this largely anti-Wilson stance on what we might call the 'race versus class debate' is Fordham (1996).[22]

In sum, whether socio-economic structures, structural 'ethno-racial' divisions, or a mix of the two are posited as the backstage (historical) determinants, the emphasis in the ethnographic analyses of here-and-now behavior is essentially the same in the work of Willis and Ogbu. What are emphasized, time and again, are the more or less 'oppositional' ideologies of relatively fixed peer group formations. *No matter how the students and groups are classified, the researchers are telling us, adolescents follow more or less 'oppositional' norms because they are members of distinct cultural groups.* And oppositional cultures lead youth to behave in disruptive ways and, eventually, to low levels of academic achievement.

The problems I have with this culture-based stream of research have already been partially addressed and will be further elaborated upon in the coming pages. In what immediately follows, however, a third approach to processes of urban marginalization will be discussed.

C The Portes-Zhou Approach to (the prevention of) ghetto related behavior: Social control, buffers, feelings of shame, and self-defeating 'native sub-cultures'

Both parents and children are constantly observed as under a 'Vietnamese Microscope.' If a child flunks or drops out of school, or if a boy falls into a gang, or if a girl becomes pregnant without getting married, he or she brings shame not only on himself or herself but also to the whole family.[23]

The third approach, the newest of the three, emphasizes social embeddedness in more or less thoroughly regulated social networks created by various

(immigrant or native born) 'ethnic' groups. As the quote above illustrates, additionally, at least some of the researchers working with this conceptual framework also rely quite heavily on something we have not yet discussed: the way in which socially embedded emotions – such as shame – can guide and constrain behavior. As we will see below, the work of Wilson and Ogbu has been highly influential on the stream of theory-building and research work I associate with (the Cuban born) Alejandro Portes and (Chinese-American) Min Zhou and, more broadly, the work of the researchers who now combine notions of social capital and 'segmented assimilation.'[24, 25] For reasons to be explored below, on the other hand, the researchers working in this stream justifiably contend that they are breaking new ground.

When integration becomes dangerous

The scholars forging what I will label the Portes and Zhou Approach have overthrown the 'straight line assimilation' (or 'acculturation') assumption. This was the old, taken-for-granted notion that immigrants and their offspring would become less marginalized as they became more 'Americanized.' The general claim made by Portes and Zhou is that embeddedness in thick and strong 'ethnic networks' can offer the children of newcomers to US ghettos a life saving *buffer* from the destructive power of 'native,' and especially lower class African American, 'subcultures.' Without this crucial social shield, Portes (1995) argues, 'downward assimilation' will tend to occur among lower class newcomer youth. In other words, the more 'Americanized' the lower class ('second generation') immigrant youth in ghetto neighborhoods and schools become, the worse their educational outcomes (and correspondingly, their level of well-being) will be (Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

At first glance, therefore, it appears that these scholars are combining something new with an approach strongly influenced by Wilson's work on ghetto formation and Ogbu's work on subcultures of intentional and 'unintentional minorities.' As Portes and Zhou (1993: 83) argue, in many 'inner city' settings across the US, the children of immigrants are taking on 'the adversarial subculture developed by native youth to cope with their difficult situation.' In what follows I will argue, however, that Zhou and Bankston, who are currently conducting some of the most important research on schools and educational outcomes within this stream, have generated findings that imply the need to break away from the work of Wilson and to a larger extent, Ogbu (and by extension, also Willis).[26]

Studies by Zhou (1997) and Zhou and Bankston (1998) offer grounded and revealing examples of how 'buffers' created in 'ethnic networks' work when they do work and, consequently, fail to work when they do not. According to the two authors, because of the social capital – and socializing power – of the highly organized and disciplined Vietnamese community, even in the worst

neighborhoods and schools of New Orleans, Vietnamese youth do not adapt to ghetto life in ways that are anywhere near as self-destructive as their non-Vietnamese ghetto counterparts. Stabilizing social relations and micro-managed practices within the 'ethnic community' enable or exhort the Vietnamese youth to avoid the negative social pressures that are literally all around them. The 'disruptive elements' which dominate their impoverished, violent, and drug infested neighborhoods are essentially kept at bay by the powerful Vietnamese buffer. The result, according to the authors, is that the Vietnamese kids are highly successful because they do not 'Americanize.' In vernacular terms we might say, you can put the Vietnamese youth in the ghetto (and ghetto school), but because of the buffer, you cannot put the ghetto into the Vietnamese youth – at least, not very often.

From social control to emotional restraint

Zhou and Bankston illustrate how the children of Vietnamese immigrants in poor sections of New Orleans are forced to internalize strict social constraints. The key result here is not so much a conformist attitude or ideology but, rather, the galvanization of specific types of emotions. Namely, the Vietnamese youth are socialized in such a way that they come to fear shaming their families (to a much greater extent than the non-Vietnamese youth in the same ghetto). Looking back on what has been discussed so far we might say that, with the introduction of this concept, we bring in a third attribution of primary causal significance. Wilson attributed causal significance to economic domination. Willis and Ogbu based their analyses on consciously held cultural beliefs. And here we find levels of social control and emotional restraint being granted pride of place. Zhou and Bankston argue that high degrees of social constraint – and socialized feelings of shame – allow Vietnamese youth to overcome the obstacles with which they are confronted. The right emotional dispositions – the right types of, we might say, deeply engrained 'affective styles' (Davidson 2003) – make it possible for the Vietnamese youth to dodge the darkest pressures of the ghetto.[27]

On the failure of 'natives' and non-Vietnamese 'newcomers': What happened to levels of social control and emotional constraints?

Reading Zhou and Bankston's work, one would expect that the typically more (self-) destructive practices of the non-Vietnamese ghetto youth would be seen in terms of a relative lack of access to consistent, safe, and ordered socialization processes in different social networks. It follows logically from the crux of their argument, in other words, that the lack of strictly ordered social relations – and the lack of socially induced feelings of shame (related to things like gang membership, pregnancy or failing grades) – should be the main explanation for the

distinct adaptations of the less successful non-Vietnamese youth in ghetto New Orleans. But such an answer seems to have been unacceptable from the start. Instead of extending the persuasive logic of their own findings, Zhou and Bankston end up either neglecting the destructive adaptations of the 'native' or 'American' (*i.e.,* non-Vietnamese) youth altogether, or scurrying back to Ogbu's arguments about *conscious and volitional cultural opposition of stigmatized (involuntary) minorities.* Certainly there is no discussion of the possibility that the social-psychological dimension (*e.g.,* a lack of feelings of shame) would have to be brought into the analysis to understand the relative failure of the non-Vietnamese youth.

One major problem inherent in this appropriation of an Ogbu-style explanation for the disruptive behavior and poor educational outcomes of the non-Vietnamese youth is this: in terms of educational outcomes, the Vietnamese youth from the ghetto are doing better than most lower class 'whites' who can hardly be conceptualized as voluntary or involuntary 'minorities' (suffering from the burden of 'acting white').[28] That is to say, when it comes to the touchy issue of why 'native' ghetto residents are getting caught up in 'ghetto related behavior' – and why other newcomers (*e.g.,* Hispanics) are not able to shield their young from the 'subculture' of the 'natives' – the authors suddenly revert to a mix of arguments based on 'oppositional culture' (Willis 1981), and more significantly, the 'oppositional minority identity'/'burden of acting white' (Ogbu & Fordham 1986). The way in which levels of social control and predictability induce types of affect management seem to fall by the wayside. One cannot help but wonder if these path-breaking scholars still suffer from the fear of being perceived to be 'blaming the victim.'

2   Lessons Learned in Schools of Exile

As mentioned above, between 1996 and 2002 I taught in and conducted ethnographic research in and around two secondary schools that many commentators would be quick to label 'failing.' My research in the Bronx (based in Johnson High School) and the Bijlmer (based in the Delta School) focuses on everyday forms of social interweaving and the informal adaptations of pupils across the two settings. Various forms and cultural norms associated with ghetto related behavior are part of, but certainly not all that, the research attempts to address. Without delving into or attempting to substantiate the empirical findings that emerged out of my ethnographic comparison, the following subsections will address the theoretical implications of the research that are most relevant to the present discussion.

Beliefs trigger behaviors or behaviors (in interaction rituals) trigger beliefs?

My research in the Bronx and the Bijlmer illustrates that beliefs, and often consciously held beliefs that could be put into words, were important determinants of a range of more or less (self) destructive or 'pro school'/'pro social' behavior. Cultural symbols and meanings mattered greatly. My research does not however support the conclusion that the more powerful youth in either setting typically engaged in more disruptive or aggressive behavior primarily because of their 'oppositional' norms, 'street' value orientations or resistant 'black (or minority) identities.' Indeed for a number of reasons to be discussed below, my research suggests that adequately understanding the pupils' webs of beliefs and what went on in their two schools more generally requires that we get beneath what might be called the cognitive/cultural level of analysis.

The most elementary point to be made here is that, from the insider's perspective, the highly disruptive, aggressive and sporadically violent behavior in the two schools appeared to be at least as generative of beliefs as it was generated by them. In at least one sense, that is, beginning explanations of the youths' widely divergent behavioral patterns with consciously held beliefs (or the 'cultures,' narrowly defined, of the various individuals or peer groups) seems to risk putting the cart ahead of the horse. Inside both schools, ritualized practices – based on forms of physical co-presence and homogeneity of movements at the most basic level – engendered forms of what Durkheim dubbed 'collective effervescence.' The more or less intense collective emotions and transpersonal energies unleashed in these everyday interaction rituals (to use Goffman's famous term) heavily influenced the youths' practical senses of group cohesion. In other words, as reading Durkheim's *Elementary Forms* might lead one to envisage, these shared passions and mimicked gestures charged up certain types of ('street' or 'anti-school' or 'nerdy') beliefs and symbols that, in turn, sustained viscerally felt solidarities and influenced further lines of action.

On one hand, therefore, the youths' actions, thoughts and feelings were – first and foremost – situated and governed from the 'outside.' Their thoughts and feelings (both individual and social) came to life, we might say, only when the situational ingredients were in place.[29] 'External' micro-level pressures, but also school-wide figurational forces of the type that micro-interpretive sociologists often overlook, actively transformed the youth throughout the school day. (As Mead would have predicated) the students' energy levels, moods and conscious thoughts were not 'their own' in the sense that they emerged out of unfolding interactions. From this perspective, the more or less 'street' attitudes, value orientations, and moral stances that the youth had – at certain intervals – did not result, primarily, from either unwavering systems of beliefs or from the cultural interpretations of self-enclosed (and disembodied) entities.

Rather, they emanated from the flows of emotions and energy to which the differently positioned youth were exposed.

From within and without: Durable dispositions, forms of capital and practice

On the other hand, how each youth was situated – or embedded – in his or her educational setting depended heavily on, in Bourdieu's terms, the sets of dispositions (habitus, second nature, feel for the game) that he or she brought into the school setting (the game itself). These sets of dispositions – *i.e.*, these largely pre-reflexive ways of making and being in the world previously acquired in the two educational settings as well as in other fields of practice (in Bourdieuian terms) – were quite deeply entrenched and durable. These nearly automatic ways of perceiving, feeling and sending off signals to others could not be simply reduced to here-and-now situational conditions. The youths primeval likes and dislikes, their most visceral senses of self and other, could be adequately grasped only in connection with knowledge about what they were and had been exposed to far outside of the walls of the school.

This brings us to a crucial insight in the youths' socialized second natures. In both educational settings, the youths' pre-conscious schemes of appreciation and 'lived' capacities for emotional self-restraint could serve as vitally important power resources. The fact that the different types of habitus led to certain youth and peer groups being either more dominant or more dominated leads to the following conclusion: In Bourdieu's (1986) terms, the second natures of the youth took on the form of centrally important differences in types and amounts of cultural capital in the 'embodied form.' In terms of here-and-now dominance within the two schools (*e.g.*, the power struggles and coping practices observable in a classroom or hallway), the youth were anchored in hierarchically structured positions by virtue of the practical senses/power resources that they brought to the two educational settings. The further development of what were called 'fabulous' – or 'hard,' or 'wild' – second natures was stimulated by the fact that such second natures functioned as power granting resources in the two schools.

This is not to say that 'other' forms of capital (or cultural capital in other forms) were utterly insignificant. Economic capital (which often took the form of expensive clothing, footwear and jewelry) and in many cases clearly gendered physical capital (*e.g.*, a 'hot' body, an athletic physique or plain old physical strength) also played important roles in terms of opening and closing position-taking possibilities. And these two forms of capital were highly convertible. As sixteen-year-old soon-to-be mother in one of my history classes at Johnson High put it, 'Hell yeah girls be gettin' guys wit' money to take them shoppin' ... if they got body.' Additionally, social capital which was often based on informal networks that existed before the youth entered their schools, and which often transcended the walls of the schools (as membership in gangs the Bronx made

clear), enabled and constrained the ways that the youth took up positions in the two schools' social, spatial and symbolic spaces. Basing the analysis on what happened in the here-and-now and on the micro-situational level is certainly *not* necessarily the best way to make sense of the power resources and position-taking possibilities at the disposal of the various types of youth and peer groups. For example, the youth who experienced the greatest levels of exposure to relatively well educated, stable and stabilizing adults clearly tended to avoid the 'thug' dominated 'hot spots' and, generally speaking, they tended to do much better in terms of formal – or longer-term – educational outcomes. Not surprisingly, these were the youth who seemed to believe most fervently and frequently in 'pro-school' behavior. The youth who arrived at the two schools via the most disrupted (and often physically violent) habitus formation trajectories tended to do the most poorly in terms of achieving formal educational goals, they tended to be the most prone to 'hot spots' and ghetto related behavioral responses. These were the youth that appeared to be most frequently focused on, and seemingly enamored of, symbols and codes of the 'street.'

In sum then, while highlighting the force of more 'external' and highly fluid (or game-like) figuration forces that might be associated with energizing interaction rituals, the ethnographic evidence also supports the conclusion that each pupil was guided from 'within' – at the most fundamental level – by a quite durable and pre-reflexive feel for the game.[30] There were youth that might be classified (especially by outsiders) in terms of various of 'colors' and 'ethnic cultures' that were – no matter what types of situations they faced – more emotionally stable and disposed to use foresight; and, at the other end of the spectrum, youth that were less stable, less capable of modulating strong emotions when they arose and less capable of using foresight. In both settings the dominant youth tended to be the less stable, more disruptive, more explosive, and more belligerent youth. The more powerful youth attending the two schools tended to have types of second natures (and thus sets of embodied power resources) that enabled and enticed them to be dominant in the two schools in the here-and-now. These more powerful youth also had second natures that predisposed them to adapt in ways that were, in terms of longer-term success in the two educational systems, self-defeating. The seductiveness of the 'hot' and rhythmic moments – the 'muscular bonding' that followed from singing, dancing and gesturing together in time – led the youth who had access to (or who were drawn into) the hot spots to almost automatically accept the heavy costs that so often came along with membership in the most disruptive peer groups. Once inside the most invigorating and 'street' and 'bad' spheres of interaction, once emotionally and cognitively 'entrained' (as Collins says perhaps alluding to Weber's famous remark about ideas and 'switchmen' on the tracks of history) in these powerful micro-figurations, beliefs about 'doing the right thing' and 'staying out of trouble' seemed to be non-existent.[31] In other

words, the at once individual and collective senses of 'livin' large' during 'hot' moments set the 'bad' kids up for educational outcomes that they did not desire for themselves during their calmer moments – *i.e.* during the moments when they were not, as even the most 'problematic' kids in the Bronx habitually said, 'caught up in the wrong crowd.' (As 'bad' and 'caught up in the wrong crowd' imply, when more conventional symbols and cultural beliefs were charged up, righteous indignation towards those perceived to be guilty of transgressions were often provoked – even among the youth who were generally previewed to be 'bad' or 'wild' or 'straatkinderen' themselves. This habitually led many of the so-called 'bad' kids to feel disgusted about their own previous feelings, thoughts, and actions.) Especially in terms of formal success in the two school systems, that is, steep prices were often extracted from the youth who drifted into the more proud (in the short term), more energizing, more domineering, and ultimately more (self-) destructive peer groups. From this perspective we can conclude that the dominant (who had sustained access to the most effervescent spheres of transaction in the two worlds apart) were, to speak with Bourdieu 'dominated by their [own] domination.'[32] More generally, that is, the two non-selective educational settings appeared to be largely overwhelmed by youth who were themselves overwhelmed. If we insist on saying that the two schools 'failed' we must, from this perspective, conclude that this was the case because the teachers and administrators (and parents and non-disruptive youth) were unable to find ways to stop the dominant youth from self-destructing. And, more pointedly perhaps, the two schools 'failed' because of the high percentages of de-stabilized youth they were forced to accept.

The hidden injuries of a quasi-welfare state

This last sentence begs questions about the broader fields within which the two schools were embedded. In terms of explaining ghetto related behavioral patterns across the two schools, my research *does not* indicate that the more intense poverty, inequity and insecurity in the Bronx led to more rebellious ideologies among the students of Johnson High – not, that is, if we imagine that such ideologies somehow existed outside of everyday situational dynamics. Rather, the higher levels of degradation, inequality and insecurity in the Bronx seem to have led, most fundamentally, (1) to a greater number of frenzied and violent interaction rituals in and around Johnson High; and (2) to a greater number of youth attending Johnson high who were guided from within by unstable – and deeply self-destructive – second natures. More intensely 'street' symbols and cultural beliefs were charged up in the Bronx to be sure. But taking more or less street (or, for that matter, more or less 'nerdy') symbols, beliefs, codes, or ideologies as our point of analytic departure would be to miss the appropriate point of analytic departure and to risk placing far to much causal weight on the symbolic dimension. It seems plausible to assume, that is, that

the greater levels of material and physical insecurity in New York translated into – most significantly – greater numbers of emotionally intense, 'street' ideology fueling encounters and higher percentages of youth with incoherent and belligerent feels for the in-school game. This is what led to comparatively greater levels of suffering in and around Johnson High. In other words, there is every reason to suspect that differences in term of levels of inequality and degradation – which clearly relate to macro-level state policies – resulted in the greater number of unstable situations and emotionally unbalanced and (self-) destructive youth in the Bronx.

The three streams of urban theory revisited

These findings at once support, challenge and further elaborate various components of all three of the sociological approaches to contemporary urban exclusion that were discussed in Part One of this article. Without reiterating their main themes, this subsection attempts to make clear how my work relates to those of the researchers working in these three reasonably distinct streams of research. I will begin by emphasizing the points where my own findings support the findings of some of the key researchers associated with these three approaches.

The first 'school' discussed above was what I dubbed the Wilson School. Clearly, the conclusions presented here in no way challenge the practice, well established by sociologists such as William Julius Wilson, of taking longer-term, macro-level, and especially political-economic structures as the point of analytic departure. The stages for the dramas that I participated in and observed were set long ago by deeply racist policies such as 'redlining' in the United States (see Wilson 1987; 1996), by generations of economic dislocations in the US, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, by the shift to post-industrial economies in cities like Amsterdam and New York, and state policies associated with the alleviating of poverty. The staff members (and, for example, the parents) in the Bijlmer were backed up by the Dutch welfare state in countless ways and the staff members (and parents and students) in the Bronx were hung out to dry by the 'conservatives' who have done everything in their power to dismantle the basic structures of the quasi-welfare state that was erected after the Second World War in the United States. As will be further articulated below, my research question the findings offered by Wilson and his followers when it comes to their overuse, and confusing use, of 'culture' as a means of explaining on-the-ground behaviors.

The second approach discussed in Part One was the Willis-Ogbu Approach. Although Willis put much more emphasis on the causal significance of 'cultural resistance' and consciously held 'oppositional' or 'conformist' ideologies than I do, my research findings support the work of Paul Willis, and the many ethnographers of educational settings who continue to follow his lead, in that I

also emphasize the centrality of the 'informal' and the power 'from below' that is wielded by members of certain peer groups. Like Willis in his most famous study, I arrive at the conclusion that – in terms of longer-term life chances – the most powerful peer groups are actively participating in their own subjugation. As students of Ogbu would be quick to point out, additionally, my research indicates that ethno-racial identifications influenced both peer group formations and formal educational outcomes. This finding lends support to the claim that the relative failure of the less successful youth might have been alleviated, to some degree, had they had more nurturing and helpful ethno-racial (and/or religious) senses of self. The empirical research presented here also illustrated that – as Ogbu would have predicted – youth who were defined as being 'black' were overrepresented among the most disruptive and belligerent peer groups in both schools. On the other hand, Ogbu's (and Fordham's) famous 'burden of acting white' theory is not supported by my study. The youth – with various skin tones and of various nationalities – who were perceived by the most disruptive youth to be committed to doing well in school were not seen as 'acting white' so much as they were perceived to be either irrelevant ('nobodies') or simply uncool and undesirable ('nerdy'). The less prestigious youth did not feel that they were 'acting white' so much as acting 'normally.' Half-jokes about being a 'bounty' or an 'oreo' (*i.e.*, candies that are black on the outside and white on the inside) played very small roles in the youths' discourses. Comments about being, or not being, for example, a 'real nigga' or a 'real Antillean' related at least as much to 'having game' and being 'hot' as to skin colors or ethnicities. Most fundamentally, my research does not lend support to the claim that how youth chose to deal with identity formation issues were of primary importance in terms of either their behavioral patterns or their educational outcomes.

The third 'school' discussed above was the Portes and Zhou School. The most important claim put forth by researchers working in the Portes and Zhou School is that the lower class newcomers to American ghettos begin assimilating 'downwards' because of the detrimental influence of the 'sub-culture' of ghetto youth who are 'native-born.' My research in the Bronx both supports and questions the validity of this assertion. The work conducted in the Bijlmer flatly challenges the validity of this claim.

The central point of convergence between the investigation done in the Bronx and the main claim put forth by scholars like Portes-Zhou relates to the fact that the recent arrivals did indeed tend to be – on the whole – less disruptive and hostile. For example, the 'bi-lingual' (Spanish speaking) section of Johnson was universally perceived to be less 'wild' than the 'mono-lingual' section of the school that (mis)served African American youth and (first, second or third generation) pupils who had been in the United States long enough to speak better English than Spanish. The briefly sketched story of a youth from Ghana offered detailed ethnographic evidence supporting the idea that 'buffers' formed by ethnic groups can – potentially – protect lower class newcomers

from the 'disruptive elements' who are 'native' to the ghetto. On the other hand, my research in the Bronx does not support the general argument put forth by Portes, Zhou and their co-authors for several reasons. There were many youth born in the United States who were neither committed to destructive cultural beliefs nor destructive in terms of their actions. There were also first-generation immigrant youth in the Bronx – *e.g.*, the 'rude' Jamaicans – who were extremely disruptive and aggressive from almost the moment they arrived. From this close up perspective, we might say, the 'disruptive elements' in the Bronx were not 'the natives' but, rather, the most destabilized and distressed youth – whether they were born in the United States or not.

The fieldwork in the Bijlmer did not generate any support for the central claim made by Portes, Zhou and their followers. Over 95 percent of the youth attending Delta were from what Portes and Zhou would call first or second-generation immigrant families and none of them could be said to have been exposed to the negative effects of a 'native underclass subculture' for the simple reason that they were not brought into contact with more than a handful of native Dutch youth. Whatever caused the 'ghetto related behavior' in the Bijlmer – it was not the negative influence of what Portes and Zhou classify as 'natives' (cf. Van Niekerk 2000: 198; 2002).

A few final thoughts

> When I talk of [any given] field, I know very well that in this field I will find 'particles' (let me pretend for a moment that we are dealing with a physical field) that are under the sway of forces of attraction, of repulsion, and so on, as in a magnetic field. Having said this, as soon as I speak of a field, my attention fastens on the primacy of this system of objective relations over the particles themselves. And we could say, following the formula of a famous German physicist, that the individual, like the electron, is an *Ausgeburt des Felds*: he or she is an emanation of the field.[33]

> The logocentrism and intellectualism of intellectuals...[has] prevented us from seeing that, as Leibniz put it, 'we are automatons in three-quarters of what we do', and that the ultimate values, as they are called, are never anything other than the primary, primitive dispositions of the body, 'visceral' tastes and distastes.[34]

This article has demonstrated that, when it comes to 'ghetto related behavior' – and especially when it comes to often heard claims that actual, on the ground ghetto related behavioral forms derive from 'cultural' repertoires – some fresh theoretical and empirical questions need to be asked. Whether native-born, second generation immigrants, or newcomers – whether 'black,' 'brown,' or

'white' – the youth in the Bronx and the Bijlmer did not do things like physically attack their teachers or 'drop out' of school primarily because of the 'street' value orientations they acquired. Neither consciously held values nor group based normative models were primarily responsible for triggering the outbursts that caused so much mayhem in the two schools. Nor were cultural beliefs, most basically, what forced and held the 'nerds' together and out of the 'hot' spots and 'wrong crowds.' It seems that what is missing from culture-based analyses of what happens when things fall apart in our most troubled urban schools are (1) largely unconscious feels for the 'games' in which lower-class urbanites find themselves and (2) insights about the ways that situational dynamics in these fluid (or game-like) settings influence the bodily states and collective emotions. Cultural beliefs and symbols are important elements of what goes on in such settings – so important in fact that we should go through the trouble of empirically and theoretically working out how they are socially charged up, reproduced, and (potentially) transformed.

At the most fundamental level and from within, broken habituses – which served as power resources in the short term – were what lead the dominated to dominate themselves and to effectively (although not necessarily consciously) destroy their educational environments. The youth in Johnson High and the Delta School ended up doing things like striking out at teachers, 'dropping out' and believing (temporarily) in the code of the street because of the emotional engagements in which they were engulfed, because of the ritualized bodily states they found themselves in, and because of the more or less 'civilized' second natures that they had acquired. When scholars of the urban scene overlook unconscious minds, lived bodies and collective psychological dimensions of life in troubled settings, or when they reduce this dimension of life to either social structural or cultural dimensions, or when they fail to see the importance of peoples' abilities to remain calm (*i.e.*, the high level of emotional self-restraint inherent in the more stable habitus) in potentially explosive situations no matter what they say about how one should conduct one's self in such situations, they make it impossible to adequately grasp what actually triggered – or halted – the very behaviors that they set out to study.

Notes

2 Evidence of 'ghetto related behavior' inside turbulent schools of the Netherlands is not hard to find. The Dutch Educational Inspection Authority (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2004a; 2004b) recently warned that the physical safety of students and personnel could not be adequately insured in 38% of the lower level (or 'pre'-) vocational secondary schools (vmbos) in the four largest Dutch cities. According to these reports, during 2002 and 2003, such troubled schools were plagued by 'crisis situations' that occurred 'commonly.'

3 Although most of the academics who will be cited in Part One are (or were) based in the United States, I stress that demarcations between American social science and European social science are less sharp than many would lead us to believe. For example, most of the American-based researchers mentioned in Part One of this article were not born in the United States. And their approaches – including their culturalist assumptions about what orchestrates here-and-now behavior (among teens) in 'inner-cities' – are exported to places like Europe on a grand scale. Likewise, these 'Made in the usa' approaches to urban marginalization are without exception founded on empirical work and guiding concepts produced by the mostly German and French (first and second generation) 'fathers' of sociology. Indeed from William James to William Julius Wilson, 'American' social science research has always been, and continues to be, hugely shaped by – and generative of – what goes on in leading research institutions of the 'old world.' The American pragmatist James studied in Europe and his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1982 [1902]) deeply influenced what is arguably Durkheim's greatest contribution, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1965 [1915]). The most recent work of arguably the greatest living (American) sociologist, Randall Collins (2004), is enormously indebted to *The Elementary Forms*. The grounded research and theoretical training of Loïc Wacquant have deeply influenced Wilson's thinking about ghettos and Wilson has also been influenced directly, as we shall see below, by Wacquant's mentor: Pierre Bourdieu.

4 One would be very hard-pressed to find a single ethnographer of 'inner-city' neighborhoods or schools in the United States who has not been influenced by Wilson's most celebrated works. Additionally, researchers of urban marginality in the Netherlands, such as Kees Schuyt, Godfried Engbersen (*e.g.,* Engbersen et al. 1993, with a foreword by Wilson), Mies van Niekerk, Talja Blokland, and Marion van San have all been heavily influenced by what we might think of as the *Wilson Approach*. Elijah Anderson's (1999) *Code of the Street* might be said to represent the most influential recent example of a study based on everyday life in ghettos (and ghetto high schools) that explicitly attempts to apply the model crafted by Wilson.

5 Analyzing the first Post-Civil Rights generation, and controlling for class and parental education levels, Wilson (1978) found that the infamous 'black-white' educational gap disappeared completely. Not race, and not culture, but class – that is where Wilson initially located the explanatory power.

6 Dalton Conley has recently offered what appears to be strong support for Wilson's earlier class-not-race-agreement. In *Being Black, Living in the Red* (1999: 80) Conley sums up his findings on educational inequality with the following statement: 'Overall, blacks do worse than whites (the result one expects from anecdotal information and summary statistics), but when the differences in economic endowments that African Americans and whites bring to educational systems are taken into consideration, blacks do better than whites in some measures and the same as whites in others.'

7 Parallel findings have been reached in the Netherlands. Paul Hustinx and Wim Meijnen (2001) illustrated that children of 'very poorly' educated non-'native' parents in the Netherlands *do better* in terms of educational outcomes than do children of equally poorly educated native Dutch parents. Hustinx and Meijnen are stirred to make the following claim: 'At the end of the day we can conclude that being part of the lowest social strata translates into less negative consequences for minority pupils than for non-minority pupils. To a significant

degree, therefore, we can say that there is less of a social milieu effect for minorities' (2001: 60, *my translation*).

8 As Wilson (1987: 12) wrote, 'One does not need to 'trot out' the concept of racism to demonstrate, for example, that blacks have been severely hurt by de-industrialization because of their heavy concentration in the automobile, rubber, steel, and other smokestack industries.

9 It is strange, therefore, that the broad respect for Wilson in the Netherlands has not translated into greater levels of institutional support for ethnographic and historical analysis. Ethnography is shunned, for example, within Holland's prestigious Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (scp). But this is hardly a Dutch problem. While the incarcerated population of the United States has exploded to over 2,100,000 human beings over the past three decades there has been a steady decrease of amount of ethnographic work focusing on what is actually happening to these lost souls day in, day out inside 'the big house' (Wacquant, 2002). As the academic power brokers sing praises to Wilson, they also disregard his advice on the types of research projects that should be getting funded and carried out.

10 The blurb on the front cover (italics in original) of this book comes from no one less than the now fully vindicated Senator Patrick Moynihan: 'Wilson's masterwork ... *the* agenda for the nation and the generation ahead.'

11 For example, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of social power,* in which Clark (1965: 11) argued that: 'the dark ghetto's invisible walls have been erected by the white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and – above all – economic colonies. Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters.'

12 In the following quote Wilson (1996: 73; *italics added*) explicates the ideas at the very core of his most considered writings on ghetto related behavior: 'As Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated, work is not simply a way to make a living and support one's family. It also constitutes a framework for daily behavior and patters of interaction, because it imposes *disciplines and regularities*. Thus, in the absence of regular employment, a person lacks not only a place in which to work and the receipt of regular income, but also a *coherent organization of the present* – that is, a system of concrete expectations and goals. Regular employment provides an anchor for the spatial and temporal aspects of daily life ... In the absence of regular employment, life, including family life, becomes less coherent. Persistent unemployment and irregular employment hinder rational planning in daily life, the necessary condition of adaptation to an industrial economy.'

13 In an attempt to elucidate this line of reasoning Wilson (1996: 71-2) offers the following quote from Ann Swindler (1986, *italics in original*): 'Students of culture keep looking for cultural values that will explain what is distinctive about the behavior of groups or societies, and neglect other distinctively *cultural* phenomenon which offer greater promise of explaining patterns of action. These factors are better described as culturally shaped skills, habits and styles than as values or preferences.'

14 As (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 474) wrote while elaborating his re-worked notion of habitus, '...the ultimate values, as they are called, are never anything other than the primary, primitive dispositions of the body, 'visceral' tastes and distastes.'

15 As Stanley Aronowitz wrote in the introduction to the version of *Learning to Labor* re-printed for the us market (Willis 1981: xiii), 'This is the enduring contribution of *Learning to Labor*: it helps us to understand that people cannot be filled with ideology as a container is filled with water.'

16 The list of influential studies based on dichotomous 'peer group cultures' is a long one. For example, the 'hallway hangers' versus the 'brothers' (MacLeod 1995); successful 'black' students who feared being labeled 'other' because of 'acting white' versus less successful black' students who did the negative labeling (Fordham 1996), etc. Other ethnographies

where the work is based on peer group cultures have relied on three-part categorizing schemes. For example, the 'wild' versus 'in-betweens' versus the 'tame' (Ortner 2002). In her study of classification schemes in her own high school, Ortner (2002) discusses how these sorts of categorization schemes have been the stuff of ethnography of educational settings since this genre took off in the early 20th century – long before Willis' hugely influential study. I refer the reader to her work for a concise overview of these developments within the US.

17 Despite a list of disadvantages (*e.g.*, related to language skills and low economic status) these students' grade point averages (GPAs) ranged from 3.0 (good) to 4.0 (perfect).

18 As Harpalani (2002) recently noted: 'In the 15 years since this article was published in the *Urban Review*, the 'acting White' hypothesis has gotten much attention, and especially uncritical attention, in the media. Fordham (1988; 1996) has published other works expanding on the original 1986 article, and the 'acting White' hypothesis has been cited, again usually without criticism, in other major academic works (*e.g.,* Massey & Denton 1993; McLaren 1998). Additionally, popular books seeking to exploit the deficit-oriented, cultural deprivation arguments about African Americans and education have also made wide use of the 'acting White' hypothesis (*e.g.* McWhorter 2000 see Gunn, Harpalani, & Brooks, 2001 for a critique). More recently Collins (2004), drawing from the work of Anderson (1999) has also uncritically discussed this burden felt by 'blacks' in 'black schools.'

19 Ogbu showed in this study that, on average, 'black' students earned a 1.9 GPA while their 'white' counterparts held down an average of 3.45.

20 One of Bourgois' (1995: 170) informants in 'Spanish Harlem' spoke about 'turnovers ... people who wanna be white. Man, if you call them Spanish, it would be a problem.' The importance of the pressure not to be labeled a 'turnover' or a 'wanna be' was, it must be pointed out, insignificant compared to the immense power of deeply rooted political economic oppression in Bourgois' largely Marxian-and-Willis inspired analysis.

21 Anderson (1999: 97) remarks that, '[t]o accept the school would be to give in and act white, to give up the value of the street for some other thing.'

22 Citing the work of Kohl (1994), Ogbu's associate Fordham (1996: 39) writes of racial minorities' 'willful rejection' of ideologies and 'of whatever will validate the negative claims of the larger society.'

23 Zhou and Bankston 1998: 207.

24 As far as I know, this term was introduced by Portes and Zhou (1993).

25 The influence of Bourdieu is also palpable here. The failure to cite or engage the work of Bourdieu – or Elias' earlier work on *social network figurations* and *embeddedness*, which Bourdieu knew quite well – is strange, given the fact that Portes (1998) himself has been very explicit about deploying a Bourdieu-inspired notion of 'social capital.'

26 Waters' (1999) influential study of immigrant dominated schools in high poverty sections of New York offers an example of a study – which at times profits from the utilization of ethnographic data collection techniques – that goes back and forth between what I am calling the Portes-Zhou approach and the Willis-Ogbu approach.

27 As we saw above, when he adopted the ideas of Bourdieu, Wilson also stressed the centrality of coherence and organization, rather than frenzy. This would seem to suggest a link to the work presently being discussed. But these concerns about predictability and social control were always related, in Wilson's thinking, to jobs and unemployment. This is clearly not the case with Zhou and Bankston. For them, the organization of the present relates to social embeddedness in rigidly controlled 'ethnic networks,' not in families, or even communities that are gainfully employed and disciplined by connections to the world of work.

28 There is reason to believe, in fact, that 'Asian Americans' tend to do as well if not better than those labeled 'white' or 'European American' in the United States school system more generally (Green & Foster 2003).

29 Readers familiar with Collin's most recent book will immediately recognize his influence. As Collins (2004: 4) put it, 'My analytical strategy (and that of the founder of interaction ritual analysis, Erving Goffman), is to start with the dynamics of situations; from this we can derive almost everything that we want to know about individuals, as a moving precipitate across situations.' As will become clear below, however, I hold that is a crucially valuable yet ultimately quite limited way to make sense of what went on in the two schools.

30 Bourdieu (2000: 215) elegantly encapsulated these ideas when he wrote that 'there are the tendencies immanent in the social universes ... which are the products of mechanisms independent of consciousnesses and wills, or of rules or codes' and there are 'the tendencies immanent in agents in the form of habitus.'

31 Collins (2004: 374) argues that membership in an Interaction Ritual generates inter-subjectivity, the 'lenses through which we see, ' the 'very structure of consciousness.'

32 Bourdieu (2001 [1998]: 69) attributes this memorable phrase to Marx but offers no reference to a specific work.

33 Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 106-107, see also Emirbayer 1997: 287 n8.

34 Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 474.

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