Reexamining Resistance as Oppositional Behavior:
The Nation of Islam and the Creation of a Black Achievement Ideology

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Influential work on oppositional culture explains involuntary minorities' disadvantage as the result of a culture that discourages academic effort by branding it as "acting white," which leads students to resist schooling. Much of this work depicts involuntary minority cultures as internally uniform. This article challenges the oppositional-culture explanation in three important ways: (1) by demonstrating that through the religious tenets and practices of the Nation of Islam (NOI), young female members develop a black achievement ideology, resulting in the adoption of the kind of studious orientation to school that is usually demonstrated by voluntary immigrant groups; (2) by demonstrating the ways in which black people differentially make sense of and enact what it means to be black that challenge previous binary or dichotomized accounts of black oppositional social identity; and (3) by illustrating how resistance for NOI young women is transformative, as well as reproductive, of existing patterns of social, racial, and gender relations. The evidence, from a two-year ethnographic study of female high school students who were in the NOI suggests a systematic reexamination of the oppositional theory and its main suppositions.

The oppositional-culture explanation for racial disparities in educational achievement, introduced by Ogbu (1978, 1991), suggests that individuals from historically oppressed groups (involuntary minorities) display their antagonism toward the dominant group by resisting educational goals. According to this line of argument, castelike minorities (including native-born blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and American Indians) withdraw from academic pursuits because they believe that racial discrimination and prejudice limit their access to high-paying jobs. Ironically however, in their unwillingness to play the "credentializing" game, they reproduce existing class relations and remain mired in subordinate economic positions (Solomon 1992; Willis 1977).

In contrast, individuals from the dominant group and groups who migrated to the United States on their own accord (voluntary-immigrant minorities) maintain optimistic views of their chances for educational and occupational success. A key component in this explanation is the difference between the migratory trajectories of involuntary and voluntary minorities and their children.

Voluntary minorities, on the one hand, tend to develop positive attitudes regarding their chances for success and remain optimistic in their outlook on educational advancement. On the other hand, involuntary minorities, in response to unfavorable conditions, tend to behave in four ways: First, they equate schooling with assimilation into the dominant group. Second, they do not try

to achieve academically. Third, they pay a unique psychological wage, which Fordham and Ogbu (1986) referred to as the "burden of acting white," if they do try to achieve academically. And, finally, they engage in actions of resistance against the school and societal norms.

In the case of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a religious organization composed primarily of black Americans, I did not find patterns of oppositional behavior in the way this construct has been traditionally documented and defined. Although an oppositional-culture frame of reference was evident among the young women whom I studied and observed, it was distinct in character from that offered by Ogbu and his associates and did not produce the academic outcomes that are commonly associated with this model (Ogbu & Simons 1998).[1] Instead, I observed an involuntary-minority culture of mobility whereby involuntary-minority students in the NOI resisted schooling and societal practices that they viewed as being at odds with their religious tenets and practices, yet drew on the moral, spiritual, and material resources facilitated by their tightly knit community to achieve social mobility and academic success.

Previous research that assigned involuntary minorities an oppositional orientation to educational and social mobility neglected the class and cultural heterogeneity inherent within all minority communities. Even poor minority neighborhoods are culturally diverse and include people who hold to conventional norms of behavior, those who choose a street-oriented or oppositional lifestyle, and those who vacillate between the two (Anderson 1999; Patillo-McCoy 1999). Other theories of black educational underachievement are underdeveloped as well, first, because of their tendency to reduce the relationship between cultural identity and academic engagement to a zero-sum game for involuntary minorities and second, because of their inability to capture the ways in which blacks (or other racial-ethnic groups) maintain their own cultural identities and strategies for collective mobility in the context of discrimination and group disadvantage (Flores-Gonzalez 1999; Foley 1990; Hemmings 1996).

This article seeks to complicate and extend previous accounts of a unidimensional oppositional social identity that have frequently been ascribed to involuntary-minority individuals and communities by focusing on the experiences of seven young women in the NOI.[2] More specifically, I demonstrate that involuntary minorities do not have to choose between performing well in school and maintaining their racial-ethnic identities. Instead, I show that it is possible simultaneously to be an "involuntary"; an "oppositional"; and, to a certain degree, a "model" student (Hemmings 1996).[3]

To illustrate the ways in which a group of low-income black students associated school success neither with acting white nor with a middle-class trait, I invoke the concept of organizational habitus (McDonough 1997; see also Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell 1998). *Organizational habitus* refers to a set of dispositions, perceptions, and appreciations transmitted to individuals through a common organizational culture (McDonough 1997). Although Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized and wrote about habitus as a function of social class, less attention has been paid to incorporating race into structures that shape habitus, as well as the ways in which organizations, such as the NOI, act to shape structures that influence individuals in everyday life.

I use the notion of organizational habitus to gain a better understanding of the ways in which the NOI as a religious organization transmits racial and religious ideologies to individual actors, which work, in the school context, to enhance educational outcomes.[4] Race and religious orientation not only influence individual members in the NOI, but play an important role in shaping how the school acts and reacts to NOI members. The interaction of race and religion influences how NOI young women construct their academic and social identities, as well as the strategies they choose to succeed in school.

This article is divided into four sections. The first section explains the historical origins of the NOI's black achievement ideology—a central component of the NOI's organizational habitus—and its relation to the formation of an oppositional social identity.[5] The second section describes the research setting and methods. The third section presents the

research data and suggests that it is how members of an involuntary-minority group construct their racial-ethnic identities, internalize and display an achievement ideology, and are guided by forces in the community that affect their performance in school. The final section illustrates the ways in which black people differentially make sense of and enact what it means to be black that challenge previous binary or dichotomized accounts of black oppositional social identity.

ORIGINS OF THE NOI'S BLACK ACHIEVEMENT IDEOLOGY

In the United States, although all Muslims may be called Muslim or refer to their religion as Islam, the experience of black American Muslims is different from that of Muslims who were born and raised in Muslim countries or in an immigrant Muslim cultural milieu.[6] The earliest black American Muslim communities were established in reaction to racist practices, evasive actions, and exploitative relationships fostered by segregation during the Jim Crow era (Gardell 1996). The black social and cultural institutions and ideologies that emerged out of this social context constructed what Lipsitz (1988) referred to as a "culture of opposition." According to Lipsitz, these cultures of opposition constituted a partial refuge from the humiliation of racism, class pretensions, and low-wage work for blacks and allowed them to nurture collectivist values that were markedly different from the prevailing individualistic ideology of the white ruling class. Ironically, then, segregation facilitated the creation and development of the NOI.

The expressed goals of the NOI are as follows: (1) to gain self-determination in North America—not in Africa as preceding movements, such as Garveyism or the Moorish Science temple, had proposed; (2) to reconstitute the black nation by embracing blackness as an ideal (according to the NOI, the black man is the original man, and all black people are members of the NOI, whether they are conscious of it or not); and (3), to achieve collective economic independence

through individual achievement (Lincoln 1973). These goals, in conjunction with the belief that a black man variously named W. D. Fard or W. F. Muhammad was God in the flesh and that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was his prophet, are some of the essential elements that constitute the NOI's black achievement ideology (see Table 1).

This dialectical understanding of white power and black resistance suggests that the NOI's black achievement ideology offers a set of cultural tools that provides strategies for educational and economic mobility in the context of historical discrimination and group disadvantage. The NOI's black achievement ideology is not a whole culture but, rather, a set of cultural elements that are relevant to the problems of educational and economic mobility in the face of instrumental discrimination (e.g., in employment and wages), relational discrimination (e.g., social and residential segregation), and symbolic discrimination (e.g., denigration of the minority culture and language) (Massey and Denton 1993).

Within the NOI, the black achievement ideology often coexists with an oppositional social identity. Members of the NOI are often familiar with each ideology, and the relative influence of both is dependent on the social context, as well as individual factors, such as personality or school or work trajectories. Thus, even though oppositional social identity may seem antithetical to the NOI's black achievement ideology, historically the two emerged in tandem, as dual responses to conditions of racism and group discrimination.

In short, rigid morals, self-determination, nontraditional Islam, and black nationalism are the key elements that constitute what I refer to as the NOI's black achievement ideology. The black achievement ideology is a theory about the world—how and why it was created and how human beings relate to and should act in the world (Gardell 1996). Since the black achievement ideology in this context is essentially a religious construct, it provides adherents with a frame of reference that governs their interpretation and experiences in the world.

Table 1. Differences and Similarities Between Achievement Ideologies[a]

Nation of Islam's Black Achievement Ideology	Mainstream Achievement Ideology
Differences	
Absolute ethnic difference and racial consciousness	Pluralism and color blindness
Institutional discrimination is a pervasive factor that can impede mobility	Institutional discrimination does not exist or is minimal
Visibility: Loud or overt cultural nationalism	Invisibility: Quiet or cryptonationalism
Resistance to cultural assimilation via cultural preservation	Cultural assimilation
Collectivist values and community goals, informed by Islamic law and a work ethic	Individual achievement, individual goals informed by the Protestant work ethic[b]
Nontraditional Islam: The belief that a black man, variously named W. D. Fard or W. F. Muhammad, was God in the flesh and that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was his prophet	Modernity: The belief in Judeo-Christian or secular values
Similarities	
Self-reliance, hard work, sobriety, individual effort and sacrifice	

These principles are collectively termed the "achievement ideology" because of the widely shared belief that adherence to such values brings monetary rewards, economic advancement, and educational mobility.

[a] Admittedly the terms *black achievement ideology* and *mainstream achievement ideology* are unsatisfactory ways of naming the processes of cultural mutation, yet as processes of inclusion and exclusion, as well as mobility processes, they are integral to identity formation and defining community boundaries.

[b]Weber (1958) argued that "the Protestant ethic," "the inner-wordly asceticism" rationally expressed in work as a calling, resulted in the creation of "the spirit of capitalism." A similar process can be discerned in the NOI's version of the Protestant work ethic, which because of its ban on wastefulness and demands for hard work, has resulted in the formation of an economic empire with assets that have been estimated to be as much as $80 million (Mamiya 1983:245).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Despite the fact that Islam is well on its way to surpassing Judaism as the second-largest religion in the United States—dwarfing Protestant denominations, such as the Episcopal church—there has been little qualitative research on it (Essien-Udom 1962; Gardell 1996; see also Halasa 1990; M. Lee 1996; Lincoln 1973).[7] Studies on the NOI, with some notable exceptions, have been based mainly on secondary sources, partly

because of the NOI's unwillingness to be the object of inquiry.

The study presented here, which was based on participant observation, field notes, and recorded interviews, began in September 1996 and ended in August 1998. During that time, I—a young black, non-Muslim, man— conducted an ethnographic study of Eastern High (a pseudonym), an urban high school located in a predominantly black neighborhood in West Philadelphia. The social fabric of Eastern High, including demographics (98 percent black), attendance, suspension rates, dropout rates, poverty levels, and test scores—parallels other comprehensive high schools that suffer from deindustrialization, resegregation, and the transition to a postindustrial economy. For example, in 1995–96, the average daily attendance at Eastern High (total population 1,700) was 76 percent, 40 percent of the student body was suspended at least once, and roughly 40 percent to 50 percent of the ninth graders who entered in fall 1990–91 failed to graduate four years later. As an indication of students' economic status, 86 percent of the student population at Eastern High were from low-income families or families who were then receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (now Temporary Assistance to Needy Families).

When I began collecting data, the goal was to examine the relationship among black students' self-perceptions, aspirations, and low academic achievement.[8] However, after two years of fieldwork, extensive participant observation, and intensive interviews with 50 students, 10 teachers, 2 administrators, and 6 members of the community, what emerged was not a group of low-achieving black students. Instead, the interviews, together with participant observation, directed my attention to a group of high-achieving black students with a history of disciplinary problems and resisting school authority.[9] By high-achieving students, I mean those who were in good academic standing with at least a B grade point average (GPA), were on schedule to graduate in four years, were college eligible, and were not in danger of dropping out. These students, according to interviews with the students and staff, had developed an interesting set of strategies for maintaining

their academic, racial, and cultural identities at school while resisting schooling and societal practices that they viewed as being at odds with their religious tenets and practices.

Clusters of interviews with these students, all American-born young black women who had converted to the NOI, became the basis for my use of the extended case method, which ascertains a social phenomenon by looking at what is "interesting" and "surprising" in a particular social situation (Burawoy, Camson, and Burton 1991). Consequently, from an initial group of three 11th-grade female students, snowball sampling, which was based on mutual associations, produced three more 11th-grade and one 10th-grade female students.[10] All seven primary participants came from low-income families in which no parent had an advanced degree (see Table 2),[11] and all self-identified as black.

To test whether the general cultural norm of peer sanctioning for high achievement was prevalent among female students in the NOI, I conducted intensive in-depth life-history interviews and focus groups with these students. I ended up with an average of three or four interviews per week that became the basis for detailed case studies in which every attempt was made to understand the young women's entire networks of social relations and socioeconomic circumstances that may have influenced their orientation to school and achievement.

As my field notes and interviews began to accumulate, analyses of issues and themes across individuals and groups became increasingly possible. It also became possible to analyze the school as an institution and, finally, to analyze the importance of the relationship between external community forces and academic achievement for the seven primary participants.[12]

The advantage of focusing on a small number of participants lies in the detail and richness of the data gathered. Although the small sample may limit generalization of the results, my findings are consistent with those of recent related research on school success and ethnic identity cited earlier. Most interviews took place at school. However, informal discussions and conversations took place in lunchrooms or hallways or outside the tem-

Table 2. Summary of Interview Data

Name	Grade	Highest Parental/Guardian Level of Education	Mother's or Grandmother's Occupation	Family Structure
Aisha	11th	High school dropout	Dishwasher	Single parent; resides with mother; has no siblings
Erikka	11th	High school diploma	Provider of care to the elderly	Parents separated; resides with mother and three siblings, one older
Kesha	11th	High school diploma	Disabled	Resides with grandmother; has one younger sibling
Latasha	11th	High school dropout	Unemployed; living on welfare	Single parent; resides with mother; has two siblings, one older
Rochelle	10th	High school dropout	Employed at local fast-food restaurant	Single parent; Resides with mother; has two older siblings
Safiya	11th	High school diploma	Unemployed; living on welfare	Parents separated; Resides with mother; has one younger sibling
Tiffany	11th	High school dropout	Unemployed; living on social security	Resides with grandmother; has no siblings

ple. Most interviews were audiotaped. School records, school reports, and other school documents complemented the observations, interviews, and focus groups.

Although the research described here focused on the experiences of seven young black women, gender was not a major focus of the analysis. To be sure, gender has been shown to influence students' school experience and social identities (Collins 1990). However, in this article, gender is addressed only to the extent that the primary participants were all young women. As a result, my findings may not reflect similar individual and organizational interactions experienced by young men in similar settings.

The Setting and Establishing Rapport

I attended Eastern High three to five days a week to assess how school culture and cli-mate influenced the participants' everyday lives. Given my frequent presence and constant interaction, I established good rapport with the participants. However, like many other qualitative-oriented researchers, I view the research act as one that is far from value free (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Part of the research endeavor is the process of making meaning—not just observing, but shaping, interpreting, and framing the research process. Consequently, rather than ignore my own subjectivity, I engaged in formal systematic monitoring of myself throughout the course of the data collection, which enabled me to monitor my personal and professional growth and evolution in the research process. Toward this end, I wrote self-reflective memoranda, shared the manuscripts of analyzed data with the participants, and discussed emerging themes with colleagues who were familiar with the project.

Moreover, I believe that my background

shaped my role as a researcher. First, I am a black man in my late 20s who grew up in Pennsylvania, about two hours from the area in which the research was conducted. Second, I grew up in a single-parent female-headed household, as did all the primary participants. Third, my adolescent schooling experiences were entirely within public institutions.

Given my background as a young black non-Muslim man, I am often asked how I was able to establish rapport with the young women in this study and how I was certain that I could adequately appreciate the standpoint from and context within which they lived. My ability to establish rapport was greatly enhanced by my being of the same race as the primary participants (individuals who share the same race as NOI members are often viewed as potential members). In other words, even though there were gender differences—and, to a lesser extent, class differences, given my mother's advanced education—to overcome in establishing a connection with each student, race was always the same. Consequently, our commonness as "blacks" who were committed to community development and nation building provided the bridge that we needed to connect with one another, while other shared experiences (parents' divorce, the universal traits of adolescence, or shared hobbies) served as additional reference points.[13]

Rapport was evidenced by displays of affection from the primary participants (friendly greetings), the sharing of personal confidences, and the open expression of trust (many participants called me to asked about preparing for college). Moreover, I was able to interact informally with the primary participants while I observed them at the school. Often these informal interactions served as icebreakers before the interviews.

However, my findings must not be viewed as some objective representation of the "truth" about the social world of the NOI or of Eastern High. Rather, my findings are my most accurate representation of the perspectives that were gathered during this study.

RESULTS

Becoming a Member of the NOI

The NOI is an extremely hierarchical organization. To transform raw recruits into NOI members, young Muslim brothers visit jails and penitentiaries, pool halls and barbershops, college campuses and street corners. The goal of this proselytizing is to "restore black people in America to their original industrial and commercial greatness so that African Americans can become self-sufficient in the production of food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, and employment" (Gardell 1996:319).

The NOI's recruitment efforts have been particularly successful with respect to incarcerated criminals and drug addicts. Its members' record of rehabilitating former convicts and addicts has been acknowledged by social workers and documented by scholars and journalists alike (Lincoln 1973:84).[14] In addition, true to its ideology of "do for self," the NOI rejects the American welfare system. Although he did not condemn Americans who live on welfare, the present leader of the NOI, Minister Louis Farrakhan Muhammad (1991), warned of the system's consequences: "Welfare if you turn it around means farewell. It means bye to the spirit of self-determination. It means so long to the spirit that God gives to every human being to do something for self. It makes you a slave. Welfare, farewell."

Discussions with the primary participants about their life experiences before they joined the NOI showed how conversion not only introduces new sets of beliefs but, more fundamentally, entails the displacement of one universe or discourse by another (Snow and Machalek 1984). The following interviews with Latasha and Erikka demonstrate the ways in which acculturation into the NOI positively influenced their racial identity, educational aspirations, and desire to uplift the black community:

> Latsha: Once I joined the NOI, I started getting a real education—a black education—an education that made me see the truth about me and my history . . . and that made me see who I really was—a black queen. . . . Now I

love my black skin—not that I didn't before—but I don't think I was aware before like I am now of what it means to be black. . . . We have a great history—that's way different than the white lies that white people tell—and now I feel more responsible and proud to be what I am, and I work harder in school because I know I have to put Islam and submission to the Will of Allah first in everything I do. . . . And that gives me power—lots of power—I feel powerful like nothin' can hold me back from gettin' my goal of goin' to college and raisin' a family.

These students also stated that both their mindsets and their behavior changed after they joined the NOI.

> Erikka: Before joining the NOI. I didn't do well in school. . . . I wasn't focused; . . . I was unsure of myself, . . . but the Messenger teaches us that you have to take responsibility for your own success. . . . He teaches us that no individual in the Nation stands alone because we are one Nation—the last independent nation on earth. . . . I mean a real nation within a nation—with our own flag, laws, rules, and stuff. . . . And with all these strong black people behind me, . . . I feel like I can do whatever it is that needs to get done.
>
> AA: But what is it that you're trying to accomplish? What are your personal goals?
>
> Erikka: Well, I know for sure I want to graduate from high school, . . . go to college, . . . and get a good job.
>
> AA: And has the Nation helped you accomplish these goals?
>
> Erikka: Yea. Like I just said, . . . before I joined the Nation, I wasn't doing that well in school. . . . Studying was hard for me . . . 'cause no matter how hard I studied, I still got bad grades. . . . And then when I joined the Nation, this sister took me by the hand and taught me how to study.
>
> AA: What do you mean how to study?
>
> Erikka: You see, now when I sit down to read something, I got a system. . . . I get my notebook out . . . I get my dictionary . . . and sit and really read . . . you know, . . . not just memorize the words, but really try to understand what their trying to say to me. . . . And then I write out questions . . . just so I can really figure out if what there saying is true . . .

and if it really makes sense. . . . What I'm saying is . . . not only did sister Muhammad (the sister who pulled her aside) teach me how to study, . . . but she made me believe that I was smart. . . . I went from studying once or twice a week to five or six hours a day.

By marking their members as part of a special group and providing them with a black achievement ideology, as well as a visible means of support, the NOI fosters the development of new social and academic identities. An important component of the conversion process is the development of a dual frame of reference. Women in the NOI, although not voluntary immigrants, acquire a dual frame of reference that works in a similar manner as it does for immigrants. That is, instead of associating being black with underachievement or with the social pathologies that are often ascribed to black youths and those of other minorities, young women in the NOI use previous economic and political oppression, as well as religious socialization, as catalysts to make present sacrifices more tolerable. Safiya's description of her preconversion attitudes and behaviors illustrates this point:

> Before I joined the NOI, I was all wrong—I smoked weed a lot, . . . I hung out with the wrong people, . . . didn't do well in school. . . . Basically, I was like a lot of these other [black] students who don't even like themselves or their own people, . . . and with me, you could tell I was all wrong because I would fight for mines . . . or talk about other people. . . . I've even watched fools get killed. . . . It's like slaves of the past gonna be slaves of the future unless you make a change, . . . but we're taught [by the NOI] the other way around. . . . It's foolish not to love yo' self and yo' people, especially if you want to get anywhere, . . . you have to love yo' self and work hard.

Aisha, who before she joined the NOI, "was about relaxin" reported:

> Before I joined two years ago, I used to kick it all the time and watch music videos. . . . Now I organize meetings, go to study group. . . . I don't even watch TV. . . . I do fund-raisin,' bake sales, and stuff. . . I speak Arabic. . . I eat right. . . I read more. . . I am more focused. I think . . . I think about the world in a different way. . . . I feel more awake . . .more con-

scious . . . like I'm tryin' to liberate myself and my people. . . . I wasn't about that before.

A teacher who knew Aisha before she joined the NOI commented:

> Teacher: When I first met her, I didn't think she was going to make it at this school . . . knowing where she grew up and the type of neighborhood she comes from and who her friends were, . . . but she is a totally different person now, . . . and I suppose a lot of students change at this age, . . . but you rarely see kids change from bad behavior to good behavior so dramatically—not the way that Aisha did.
>
> AA: And what do you think accounted for the change?
>
> Teacher: What jumps out at me are her religious beliefs. . . . I think they had a lot to do with it. . . . It's like she took on a different culture, . . . so now she's a different person—she dresses different, acts totally different, hangs out with different people—so in my opinion, her conversion to Islam had a lot to do with her improvement in school—not just educationally, but socially and emotionally.

To seal the conversion or personal rebirth, converts to the NOI first have to cast off their old selves and take on new identities, which involves changing their name, religion, language, style of dress, moral and cultural values, and very purpose in living. To commemorate their rebirth, converts drop their last name and becomes known simply by their first name and the last name of Muhammad (referring to W. D. Muhammad, the founder of the NOI).

For the young women in the NOI, changing their name was important because it signaled a change in social networks, conversion of their identities, and collective ownership and formal membership in the organization. Conversion also had a strong effect on the young women's educational aspirations and performance in school.

From the Burden of Acting White to the Honor of Being Black

Young women in the NOI present a special challenge to the thesis of the burden of acting white proposed by Fordham and Ogbu

(1986). More specifically, the organizational habitus of the NOI has inverted the cultural construct of acting white, so that instead of associating it with positive educational outcomes (i.e., academic achievement) and potentially negative cultural outcomes (disassociation from black cultural forms), the NOI associates it with negative attitudes and behaviors that do not conform to the notion of uplifting black individuals or the black community. Conversely, the NOI associates being black with positive educational and cultural outcomes. Thus, by changing a community's interpretation of both itself and its history and redefining morality and acceptable social behavior, the NOI has been able systematically to create an organizational habitus that encourages achievement for its members, resulting in the transformation of the burden of acting white into the honor of being black. The following comments from the interviews illustrate this point:

> AA: What does acting white mean to you?
>
> Erikka: To me, actin' white means gettin' by the easy way—like takin' things that don't belong to you . . . or cheatin'. . . or not workin' hard, . . . but actin' like you somethin' you're not . . . like actin' like you don't want to be black. . . . That's what actin' white means to me—actin' fake.

Safiya expressed a similar view:

> I would say lookin' down on poor people. . . .or you know . . .people who ain't doin' too good—that's what actin' white means to me. . . . And I see lots of kids in this school actin' a fool—like white people got a hold of their minds—and those are the kids who I try to talk to, . . . so I can shake em' up. 'Cause they're ain't nothin' wrong with being poor.

One member, Rochelle, spoke of elements of hip-hop music as acting white:

> I think a lot of hip-hop music is actin' white. I know that sounds funny, but I think it is. . . . A lot of these so-called artists be fillin' our heads with garbage and filth . . . and to me, that's just another way to keep the white man on top—just another form of white supremacy . . . another way white people got black people miseducatin' each other.

When I asked Rochelle to describe for me

what she thinks of when she thinks of black culture, she responded:

> When I think of black culture, I think about how great we are, how we are really the chosen people—black gods in a lost world, the creators of all science, wisdom, and history. . . . That's what we learn at the temple, and that's what I think about. . . . I think about how just cause you see black people perpetuatin' ignorance . . . don't mean you have to act ignorant, ... and just cause you see ignorance, that ain't black culture.

The notion of black greatness and entitlement is central to understanding the organizational habitus of the NOI. The following field note from my observations at a local temple the young women regularly attended illustrates how the NOI combines black and religious nationalism in a way that makes the imagined community of the NOI a priority over other racial and ethnic communities.

> Minister: Black people, you have been brainwashed into thinking that this country doesn't owe you anything. . . . But I ask you, have we put our blood, sweat, and tears into this country?
>
> Congregation: Yes, Sir!
>
> Minister: Have our women broken their backs for the white man? Cooked his meals, . . . raised his children, . . . and taken out his trash?
>
> Congregation: Yes, Sir!
>
> Minister (voice strong and proud): White people don't think we deserve what we deserve. . . . And after all we've done for this country,. . . they still don't want to treat us right. . . . But I say, don't let em' brainwash you . . . don't let em' trick you into not getting' what you deserve. If you're going to college and there is only a handful of scholarships for us black folks, . . . you are entitled to those scholarships. . . . If you are going for a job and there are only a handful of jobs for us black folks, you are entitled to those jobs. . . . But don't stop there . . . 'cause [you are] black kings and queens—divine creators of the universe—and you don't have to beg the white man for anything. . . .You have to learn to do for yourself.
>
> Congregation (with vigor): Yes, Sir!

> Minister: How else are we going to build a better future for our nation and our children? How else are we gonna build a nation unless we have a strong black family? . . . We need to have our own economic institutions. . . . We already have our own companies, . . . we've built our own industries. . . . We own this building—this land that I am standing on. . . . We own ourselves. . . . And that's why we don't need the white man . . . because we are independent. . . . Isn't that right?
>
> Congregation: Yes, Sir!

In group interviews, all seven young women spoke of how these aspects of the NOI's creed are drilled into them. Kesha explained that once she joined, she could no longer "flirt with boys anymore or go out dancin' and actin all crazy." Tiffany and Latasha discussed how they have been told countless times that "black people are supreme" and that "black people are the original people" or "How important it is to avoid drugs and alcohol to keep the mind and the body clean." Latasha added: "Once I really believed this, I knew nothin' could stop me from achievin' my goals." The goal of this form of indoctrination is to get converts to adopt a new frame of reference that restructures their perceptions and "sense of ultimate grounding" (Heirich 1977:673).

My field notes and transcripts of interviews illustrate the ways in which the organizational habitus of the NOI has inverted the racial code that equates acting white with school success and instead equates the notion with historical, psychological, institutional, and subjective levels of oppression. In this manner, NOI women not only demonstrate the heterogeneity of the black experience, but illustrate the ways in which black people differentially make sense of and enact what it means to be black that challenge dichotomized or binary accounts of how black cultural identity is implicated in the underperformance of black youths.

Non-NOI Attitudes Toward NOI Students

Although the seven young women had strong opinions about acting white, no one in the school expressed animosity toward them

for doing well in school. They were not sin-gled out or harassed because of their acade-mic accomplishments. They were not labeled, ostracized, or physically assaulted for doing well in school, as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) reported happened to the black high achiev-ers they studied. Yet, the high achievers in the NOI were not simply seen as another group among the few high achievers at the school. Rather, interviews with students and teachers revealed that although these young women enjoyed high social and academic standing, they also had a reputation for being disrup-tive and argumentative.

NOI Women as Strong Academic Performers The NOI young women were seen as high academic achievers. The follow-ing excerpts, taken from group and individual interviews with non-NOI students, demon-strate the extent to which the NOI members were viewed as strong academic performers by their peers and as offering help to others:

> Them Islamic heads are serious people. . . . I always see them studyin.'

> They work hard. . . . That's why I think people respect them 'cause they're serious about their business—they're the hardest-working students at this school.

> They help me out. . . . I ask them for help because they really know what their doin'. . . . They help me get better grades because they take studyin' seriously, and they're just down for black people. . . . They ain't afraid to say the truth. . . . That's what I like about them, they'll tell anybody to their face what time it is.

The teachers had similar responses to the NOI students. They reported that when they saw NOI students coming to class on time, taking notes in class, and turning assignments in on time, it indicated to them that these students had a strong desire to excel in school. In interviews with the 10 teachers, 7 specifically identified the NOI young women as strong academic performers:

> Teacher: Sometimes they dominate class dis-cussion, but that's because they want to be the best they can be—and I admire that. . . . I also think that other kids can learn from it. . . . Look at the example they're setting—[they] come to class on time, study hard, [are] pre-pared, and get good grades. . . . They're almost perfect students, . . . but I'm not say-ing I agree with everything they do or stand for. . . . There are some things about them that I don't respect.

> AA: For instance?

> Teacher: Their religion.

Another teacher added:

> I think they get more attention than the other kids because of the way they dress—both good and bad. . . . But overall, they complete all their assignments on time and bring a crit-ical perspective into the classroom. . . . In fact, they're frequently the ones who challenge stu-dents on topics we're discussing in class or their personal beliefs. . . . Sometimes that can become a disruption, though 'cause they don't know when enough is enough. . . . And they kind of have an arrogance about them—like a gang mentality. Maybe it comes from them studying together or just hanging out, . . . but if you mess with one, you're messing with them all. . . . For the most part, though, they're good kids—not angels—but good kids.

Studying Together The NOI young women were not solitary learners. Instead, they formed academic communities that were composed of other NOI young women who shared a common purpose. The following interview with a teacher illustrates this point:

> Teacher: I offer my classroom for anybody to come [after school, and often . . . it is only the NOI girls who come into the study hall. . . . They study hard; . . . they ask each other ques-tions and help each other with their home-work. . . . They're definitely good at working together, . . . and I think that's why they—at least the students who attend my study hall—do well in school.

> AA: How do you know they do well in school?

> Teacher: I saw a couple of their names on the honor roll.

The NOI young women participated in for-mal and informal study groups in which they would ask each other questions, critique each other's work, and help each other with home-work problems. Their collaboration was guid-

ed by the NOI's formal study-group sessions, which emphasize a merger, rather than a separation, of academic and social identities (Treisman 1985). The following field note illustrates how the NOI's formal study-group sessions systematically taught the NOI students to form academic communities in which their social and academic identities could begin to merge:

> One evening, around 7 o'clock, I went to an NOI study group held at a local temple. As I joined the group, Brother Muhammad (the study-group instructor) briefly explained to me general tips for note taking. . . . He stressed compiling main ideas and generating dissenting views to help potential members, such as myself, ascertain "the truth." He also gave general instructions about how to sit and behave. . . . Here, he emphasized sitting upright and erect. . . respecting one another, . . . and helping each other's moral and spiritual development. . . . Last, . . . he expressed the importance of keeping this notebook and the accompanying strategies that he just shared at all times. . . . He said "being consciously reflective would help me grow and develop as a man." At the end of the study group, the students broke up into two small groups. . . . One group practiced vocabulary words and analogies—"the kinds of problems that individuals may encounter in rhetorical debate," said Brother Muhammad, and another group practiced math. . . . In this group, one of the members explained that he could teach us better "math tricks than the white students use in their schools" and emphasized that "it was important for us to study together so that we can have each other's backs in a world full of white duplicitousness and deceit.

I attended many other study groups, and each time a number of supplementary educational activities were emphasized: writing, inquiry, collaboration, role modeling-mentoring, and exploring careers.[15] By encouraging the use of academic techniques in their religious indoctrination, the NOI gives explicit instruction in the invisible culture of schools. Bourdieu (1986) labeled the invisible culture that the NOI teaches "cultural capital." The organizational habitus of the NOI gives low-income individuals some of the cultural capital in the temple that is similar to the cultural

capital that more economically advantaged parents give to their children at home (Bourdieu 1986).

NOI Women in a Dysfunctional School At Eastern High, the NOI young women were strong achievers in the midst of a dysfunctional school.[16] As evidence, I observed teachers not only allowing, but encouraging the students to watch the Jerry Springer show on a daily basis. The following field notes highlight the students' low level of expectations and the teachers' meager instruction and support, as well as the ways in which the NOI young women responded to this dysfunctional educational environment:

> One morning in October, I went to observe a Spanish class. . . . Two students in the NOI were the first people to arrive—the teacher arrived 15 minutes late. . . . The 2 students in the NOI were among 7 students who actually stayed . . . and about 10 more students actually showed up but left. . . . When the regular teacher finally arrived, the teacher promptly put in a Jerry Springer tape in English—not as an educational exercise, but as a way to "kill time and make sure students' behaved." The 2 students in the NOI were the only students to ask the teacher for a homework assignment and to sit in the back of the class and complete their work. All the other students either listened to Walkmen, played cards, or left. . . . This teacher practices this sort of instructional neglect and blatant disregard for the teaching standards two to three times a week.

In other classrooms, I observed similar instances of institutional and instructional neglect:

> On a midmorning in November, I was observing a health class. Two NOI young women were in the class (different students from those in the Spanish class). Again, the teacher, as well as the instructional assistants, arrived late. . . . Besides handing out some below-grade-level handouts, . . . the main instructional activity was to turn on a "boom box," place it in front of the classroom, and abandon the students to "educate" themselves for the entire period. The teachers in this school practice this sort of instructional neglect and blatant disregard for the teaching standards daily. The young women in the NOI initially responded by complaining directly to the

teacher about the lack of "real education" offered at the school. . . . However, by the end of the month, they had resorted to skipping the class altogether. . . . Instead of going to class, they began to go to the library or into the hallway to do their homework and study for other classes.

The young women in the NOI not only voiced the power of their own agency, but their statements about Advanced Placement courses also displayed a critical awareness of structural inequality, as this comment by Tiffany illustrates:

> We don't even have any Advanced courses at this school. . . . And we have been the ones askin' for them—like almost beggin.' How do you expect us to go to college if we don't have the same chance to learn?

Although many students at Eastern High "acquired ritual competency," as Goffman (1959) termed it, by putting their heads down, listening to Walkmen, sleeping in class, reading magazines, engaging in practical jokes, and becoming part of the "dropout rate"—which Fine (1991) more accurately called the "push-out" rate—the NOI students did not. Instead, I encountered a set of institutional arrangements in which the NOI young women developed a different ideology and adopted a different course of action than has been described by previous research. More specifically, the NOI provided highly valuable forms of academic and social support by connecting these seven young women (and other members of the NOI) to an organizational collectivity that was committed to helping them achieve.

Resistance as Oppositional Behavior The NOI young women expressed a belief in their own efficacy to improve their lives and to uplift the black community. They translated this belief into action by actively participating in classroom discussions and resisting school practices that they viewed as being at odds with their religious tenets and practices. The following field note illustrates one of the ways in which cultural differences between the NOI students and school authorities became politically charged and created conflict:

On a Tuesday morning in mid-March, around 10 o'clock, I went to observe an American History class. . . . In the midst of distributing a written quiz, . . . the teacher made the following statements: "You know I don't trust any of you. . . . All students will cheat if they get a chance, and I'm paranoid . . . because I don't trust any of you in this classroom.

Immediately three female students in the NOI (Tiffany, Safiya, and Latasha) protested. . . . Tiffany led off by saying that she was "very insulted, and unless she received an apology, she wouldn't take the quiz." Safiya said that "her religion doesn't permit her to cheat— cheating is for white people." And Latasha followed by stating succinctly: "You ain't no teacher to me . . . 'cause you act like a white lady [the teacher was black]. . . .You don't teach us nothin' that's gonna make us smart. . . .You just give us the same book to read over and over again, . . . and then you be actin' all paranoid and everthin'. . . We don't even need to cheat . . . and white people ain't shit."

The teacher responded in a voice full of authority: "I am the teacher, . . . and you are not allowed to talk to me like that in this classroom. . . . Do you understand me, young lady? . . . . I don't care if you think that you are holier than thou . . . wearin' that stuff on your head. . . . I don't give a damn. . . . You can't talk to me like that." Safiya responded, "But this is a democracy, ain't it? Don't we have freedom of speech—don't we? The teacher said: "Well your right and wrong, young lady, 'cause you see, I teach about democracy, but that doesn't mean I run my class that way. Tiffany chimed in, "But who is runnin' this class—cause you sure as hell aren't."

As the quiz continued, three students were caught cheating. . . . However, none was a member of the NOI. . . . The overt resistance by the NOI students was acknowledged by the teacher: "I respect those girls—everybody does—but what I don't like is they think they know everything. . . when really they're the ones who are always causing problems. . . . I mean, they think that 'cause they dress funny, they can accuse people of not being black enough. . . . Who do they think they are? They don't know what I've been through. . . . That's like the pot callin' the kettle black."

Many educational researchers have found that black students often protect their pride as black students by adopting antischool behaviors (see, e.g., Erickson 1987).

However, the NOI students did not respond in this manner. Their actions and statements of belief were not conformist, assimilationist, or regressive. Rather, to handle the complexities that they encountered, they adopted an instrumental view of education (as the means to an end), yet were highly critical of their school, teachers, and peers. In other words, unlike Willis's (1977) "lads," who were blind to the connection between schooling and mobility; MacLeod's (1987) "Hallway Hangers"; or Foley's (1990) "vatos," who withdrew from academic pursuits, acted up in class, ignored homework assignments, and cut classes, and unlike Ogbu and Simon's (1998) involuntary minorities, who tended to equate schooling with assimilation into the dominant group and thus did not try to achieve academically, members of the NOI resisted the cultural and linguistic patterns of the majority culture, yet embraced educational achievement.[17]

As a result, the NOI young women's response to schooling may be considered transformative, rather than merely reproductive, because the agency the students displayed came from a unique form of religious socialization that produces a social consciousness whereby students are encouraged to politicize their cultural resistance and develop counterideologies, while they assess the costs and benefits of not playing the game. By using a black achievement ideology, the NOI students avoided what Ogbu (1991) referred to as the victims contributing to their own victimization by transforming, rather than reproducing, educational outcomes that are commonly associated with oppositional identity and resistance for blacks.

Another cultural incongruity between the NOI young women and the school was the lack of opportunity to practice their faith in accordance with Islamic principles. Generally, Black Muslims are required to pray five times a day, an obligation that does not cease on school days. Prayer times vary in accordance with sunrise and sunset, and early and late prayers usually do not conflict with the school day. However, the midday and midafternoon prayers did present problems for the seven students who were interviewed, as did rituals of absolution that are required before each

prayer. The following interviews with Safiya and Kesha highlight the ways in which these NOI young women resisted schooling practices that they viewed as being at odds with their religious tenets yet maintained a strong orientation to academic achievement.

AA: Is it difficult to find prayer time at school?

> Safiya: Yes, whenever I have to pray, I either ask to go to the bathroom or just skip out of class all together.

> AA: So does that mean that you skip school everyday?

> Safiya: Yeah, but I make up for it in the study group that we have at the temple every week.

Kesha added:

> This school don't respect our beliefs. . . . So sometimes we have no choice but to break the rules, . . . but I ain't gonna let that stop me from getting to college . . . or from doin' what I'm supposed to be doin' in school. . . . I'll do whatever it takes to keep up. . . . I don't mind workin' hard, . . . but I'm a Black Muslim first—before I'm anything else.

Members of the NOI withdrew from classes not only to pray, but to avoid unacceptable or offensive curricula. Tiffany stated this point succinctly:

> All I know is [that] in history class, all they teach about is white people. . . . We don't learn nothin' about black history or black achievements, . . . and even when we do, it is like a little tiny bit of class time. . . . But when we learn about white people, it goes on and on and on—for weeks. . . . That's why other kids listen to me. . . 'cause they know that I know about black history.

Tiffany added:

> People don't respect our religion around here. . . . They don't care if we pray or where we pray, they don't care what we eat, and they don't honor how we dress or our need to fast. . . . But I guarantee you if it's a white holiday, their gonna celebrate it. . . . Why do you think that is? It's 'cause we don't believe in a white God, that's why. . . . That's why they treat us bad even though we're good honest people.

These interviews and field notes illustrate that at Eastern High, a simple dichotomy between resistance and conformity overlooks

the complexity of students' behaviors and responses. More specifically, the young women in the NOI demonstrated that accommodation is not the only path to success in school and that opposition does not necessarily lead to failure. Rather, they resisted what they perceived as acts of oppression within the school and, at the same time, pursued strategies that enabled them to be academically successful. By combining strategies that have been attributed to recent immigrants to the United States with a black achievement ideology, these young women displayed a unique mobility strategy that is, according to the social science literature, usually not expressed by low-income black American youths or other involuntary minority groups, although historical records suggest otherwise (Gibson 1998; Perry, Steele, and Hilliard 2003). Adding these complexities to notions of resistance suggests that we need to reexamine the link between resistance and failure and accommodation and success (S. Lee 1996) because the young women in the NOI both qualities were exhibited.

FROM ANALYSIS TO RECONSTRUCTION OF THEORY

This article has charted a theory of black educational achievement. It did so by challenging the work of Ogbu and Simon (1998) and others by examining which claims have held up, need to be complicated, or need to be reconstructed. I began by illustrating how a group's original terms of incorporation, although significant, are one of a number of different variables that shape the school-adaptation patterns for an involuntary minority group. Academic engagement depends not only on the historical, political, and economic realities that students face, but on the students' day-to-day experiences in school, in the community, and in what Jackson (2001) referred to as the "performative dimension" of race—that is, how specific cultural practices are used to constitute racial identity. In the case of the NOI, its black achievement ideology is intentionally organized in opposition to the ideology of white supremacy and,

as such, counters folk theories of black intellectual inferiority and hence contributes to a culture of academic achievement.

The NOI's ability to create a black achievement ideology suggests that we need to reconstruct Ogbu's typology that categorizes separate and distinct ideologies for voluntary and involuntary immigrant groups (see Figure 1). The young women in the NOI did not fit this typology. Although they described a system that is not sympathetic toward blacks, in general, or Islamic women, in particular, they maintained that it is possible to better themselves, their subcultural community, and the society at large by being disciplined, avoiding drugs and other vices, practicing ethical integrity, and working hard.

The NOI's black achievement ideology, which is simultaneously culturally and academically affirming, further complicates the traditional relationship among academic achievement, socioeconomic status, and educational success. The young women in the NOI understood the importance of developing culturally appropriate social behavior and academic skills and achieving academically. At the same time, because they practiced Islam in a non-Islamic setting, they also represented a challenge to commonsense notions of what are (or are not) culturally appropriate norms, attitudes, and behaviors.

The NOI's black achievement ideology also challenges the burden-of-acting-white thesis because the NOI young women transformed the burden of acting white into the honor of being black. In this manner, they demonstrated the heterogeneity of the black American experience.

Previous research assumed a binary or dichotomous pattern of cultural orientation for low-income students, such as those in the NOI—one in which individuals are either accommodating or resisting, succeeding or failing, involuntary or voluntary. However, my research documented how innovation occurs precisely because these NOI young women simultaneously engaged in structural assimilation (promoting traditional values, such as hard work), separation (affirming their own racial and cultural identities), and resistance (challenging key tenets of the achievement ideology by not conforming or assimilating to
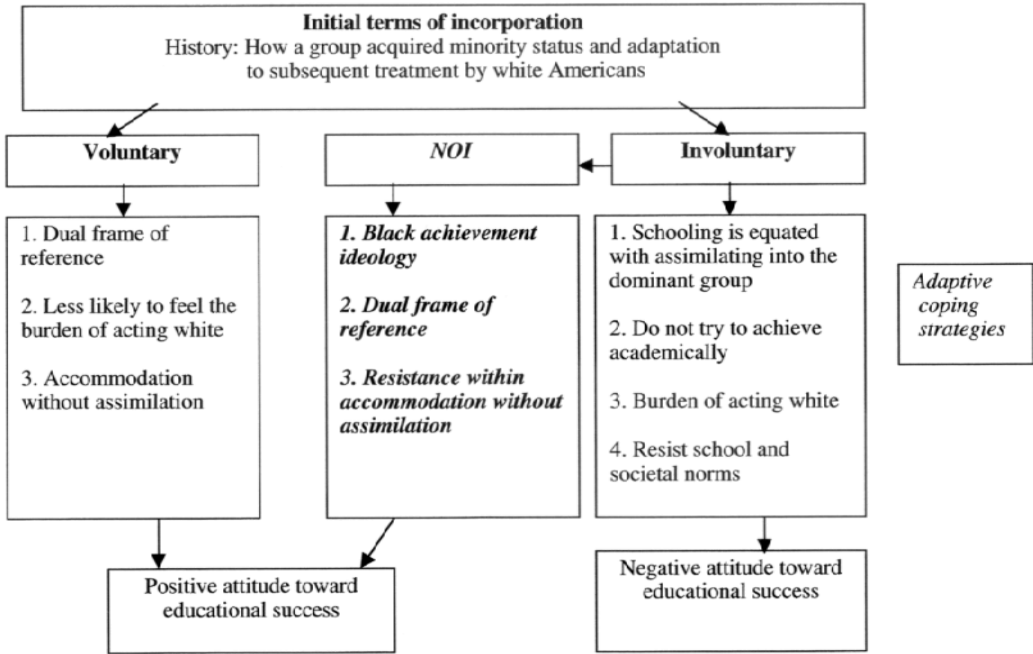
Figure 1. Akom's Extension of Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Model of Racial-Ethnic School Performance

school rules or social etiquette) and, at the same time, understood the importance of academic achievement.

As a result, NOI young women provide fertile ground for reinterpreting popular notions of resistance that suggest that working-class students get working-class jobs because they refuse to develop skills, attitudes, manners, and speech that are necessary for achievement in a capitalist society. My research contradicted key aspects of resistance theory by documenting how resistance for young women in the NOI is transformative, rather than merely reproductive of existing patterns of social relations. The NOI students' response to schooling may be considered transformative because these young women used a black achievement ideology and a dual frame of reference to produce positive educational and social outcomes and to achieve working-class mobility. Willis (1977), in particular, and resistance theory, in general, have tended to understate the role of race, immigrant status, community forces, and power relations in the production of educational achievement and, as a result, have not ade-

quately accounted for nuances in variations of achievement among involuntary minority groups.

However, focusing on the NOI does not mean that I place the onus of educational success squarely within the minority communities themselves and exempt the educational system from responsibility. Rather, by extending Bourdieu's (1986) theoretical framework, I have attempted to reveal how individual actors' lives are influenced by an organizational habitus that is rooted in racial and religious distinctions and how the concept of oppositionality often originates in and is nurtured by schools themselves.

In sum, this research has suggested that *guided* cultural and social resources within an ethnic community, regardless of voluntary or involuntary status, increase the chance for educational success and increase the likelihood that youths will not deviate from paths of mobility. In other words, the best course for many youths is to remain securely anchored in their ethnic communities while they pursue a strategy of selective acculturation or segmented assimilation. However, my findings differ from

those of previous research on selective accommodation or segmented assimilation in that they document the ways in which *involuntary* minority students can be academically successful without being conformists and without rejecting their race-ethnicity.

Consequently, if I extend the case of the NOI, I can make the following predictions about the kind of environments that are likely to promote academic achievement among black youths:

> 1. Black American students will achieve in school environments that create cultures of achievement that extend to all members with a strong sense of group ownership in which high expectations are explicitly and regularly communicated in public and group settings.

> 2. Black American students can achieve in these environments, regardless of their class backgrounds and prior levels of preparation.

> 3. Regular and rigorous academic support services must be available to ensure that all students are able to achieve.

> 4. Deliberate socialization is important so that all students develop practices, beliefs, behaviors, and values that support cultures of achievement (Perry et al. 2003).

Obviously, further research is needed to uncover the extent to which the case of the NOI is generalizable, as well as to determine the extent to which school racial composition, gender, grade level, and other socioeconomic factors affect school-related behavior and attitudes among black students, in general, and NOI students, in particular. I hope that this work will stimulate other researchers to address similar questions. I expect that, with time, some of what is presented here will be superseded by knowledge generated by better research. I theorize that there are other achievement ideologies that exist and that society, social science, and the media will benefit from the illumination of their complexity.

NOTES

1. The oppositional-culture explanation has three main components. The first component is the the way in which minorities are treated or mistreated in education in terms of educational policies, pedagogy, and returns for their investment or school credentials. Ogbu and Simons (1998) referred to this as the *system*. The second component is the way in which minorities perceive or respond to schooling as a consequence of their mistreatment. The third component is how and why a group became a minority in the United States in the first place. All these factors, including explaining minority disadvantage in education as a result of a culture that discourages academic effort by branding it as acting white, constitute the oppositional cultural explanation.

2. Authors, ranging from Ogbu (1987) to Portes and Stepick (1993), have written about the ways in which voluntary immigrants who want to be identified as "American," not foreign, acculturate into an oppositional subculture developed by involuntary youths (i.e., black Americans). Portes and Stepick cited the example of Haitian children in Miami who feel pressured to choose between remaining "Haitian" and being looked down on by their black American peers or adopting a black American identity, which generally carries with it counterschool attitudes and behaviors. Although these studies have added much to our understanding of the relationship between "community forces" and immigrants' positive school performance, few have taken sufficient account of the role of involuntary-minority cultures of mobility in shaping students' identity, school experience, and academic performance.

3. According to Hemmings (1996), black high achievers in different school contexts have different definitions of "blackness." In comparing black high achievers in two high schools, Hemmings found that they differed in the way in which they reconciled being model students and being black. Black high achievers in a predominantly middle-class high school experienced pressure to act middle class and made no distinction between white and black middle-class behavior, whereas those in a working-class high school experienced pressure to conform to peers' images of blackness, which involved a rejection of whiteness. Hemmings's findings point to the significance of school context and

social class in shaping involuntary perceptions of model student, resistant student, and approaches to academic success.

4. For this study, I found the concept of organizational habitus to be more useful than the similar concept of organizational culture because of the former's emphasis on structure (Horvat and Antonio 1999). While organizational culture concentrates on the meaning conferred by the set of practices, beliefs, and rules of an organization, organizational habitus is concerned more with how the same set of (in this case) religious-based practices, beliefs, and rules not only provide meaning but structure social interaction.

5. According to the *New World Dictionary*, second edition, *ideology* refers to (1) the body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, a group, a class, or a culture or (2) a set of doctrines or beliefs that form the basis of a political, economic, or other systems.

6. In the United States, Islam is also a mosaic of many different ethnic, racial, and national groups. The majority are first- or second-generation immigrants or black American converts (Haddad and Esposito 2000).

7. None of the studies mentioned in the text dealt with the relationship between the NOI's religious socialization and enhanced educational aspirations and performance. Previous research that did address religious socialization and its impact on educational outcomes suggested that many of the socialization experiences that emanate from religion are conducive to a number of positive outcomes, including educational achievement (Hopson & Hopson, 1990). However most of these studies focused on Protestantism, the black church, or Catholicism and failed to illustrate the ways in which processes of religious socialization influence educational achievement for non-conventional faiths (such as Black Muslims).

8. Within the research literature, *aspirations* is often defined as the life outcomes that are preferred or desired by individuals (MacLeod 1987).

9. Data on improvements in grades were taken mainly from three sources: self-reports, school records provided by the students, and teachers' records regarding course examinations. At Eastern High, students are divided into what are known as small learning communities (SLCs), which range from 165 to 330 students. Seven teachers generally provide basic instruction in various subjects—mathematics, English, science, and social studies (the two largest SLCs, out of nine, have 28 teachers between them). Many of the young women I interviewed were in different SLCs, but all spoke of a noticeable increase in educational and occupational aspirations, study habits, and skills since they had joined the NOI. Five out of seven indicated that their GPAs had increased .3 percent to .9 percent per year since they had joined the NOI. And the other two indicated one-year increases of 1.1 percent to 1.3 percent. All had joined the NOI in the 9th or 10th grade.

10. In the population of 1,700 students, it was impossible to measure the exact number of Black Muslim students because this information was not included in the school records. However, the Black Muslim population "appeared" to be significant.

11. Information on the fathers' occupations was omitted because none of the participants had significant economic or social ties with their fathers. All the participants were the first in their immediate families to join the NOI.

12. Ogbu (1987) and Ogbu and Simons (1998) hypothesized "that the study of community forces would shed light on why immigrant minorities do well in school while nonimmigrants do less well" (Ogbu and Simons 1998:157). However, to my knowledge neither of these studies analyzed or provided empirical data on the role of community forces in the academic achievement of involuntary minorities.

13. I also disagree with the notion that unless individuals have shared a specific experience or background, they will be unable to understand and appreciate one another. Indeed, as Collins (1990:225) noted, black feminist thought challenges the notion of additive oppression and replaces it with a conceptual framework in which "all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system"; one need not win the oppression sweepstakes to

understand and appreciate the pain of exclusion and domination (Horvat and Antonio 1999).

14. This point is important because it rules out the possibility that the associations between NOI membership and strong academic habits and aspirations are due to selection into the NOI, rather than to the effects of NOI membership.

15. Similar to Advancement via Individual Determination (Mehan, Hubbard, and Villanueva 1994) the NOI's formal study groups emphasized writing, inquiry, and collaboration, as well as role modeling-mentoring and exploring careers. For the NOI, writing is seen as a learning tool. The students are encouraged to take notes and develop questions that are based on their notes. In addition, they are encouraged to work through curricular readers on topics of import to the organization. Inquiry for the NOI is viewed as a rhetorical strategy that is used to help combat discrimination and prejudice, as well as a tool to facilitate self-empowerment. To develop inquiry as a rhetorical strategy, NOI ministers often use a Socratic method of questioning in their "speeches" that inevitably guides members to a logical conclusion foreseen by the ministers (see the earlier dialogue between a minister and his congregation). The Socratic method is also practiced in study groups by encouraging the students to clarify their thoughts through provocative questioning, not giving them answers. Collaboration is another formal instructional strategy used by the NOI to encourage members to work together for educational or entrepreneurial goals. Specifically, collaborative groups allow members to work together as sources of information and to establish boundaries to differentiate between who belongs to the NOI and who does not.

16. In 2002, the dysfunctional nature of the schools—low expectations and the loss of "state social capital"—came to fruition when Philadelphia became the first city in the country to turn over 42 of its public schools to private and nonprofit organizations.

17. Mac an Ghaill (1988) termed this strategy "resistance within accommodation." However, the young women in the NOI complicated this terminology on two counts.

First, a central tenet of their religious indoctrination advocates for accommodation leading to separation, and second, unlike Mac an Ghaill's "black sisters" or Gibson's (1988) voluntary minorities, these young women felt that they had to (and did) speak out when the school was operating in discriminatory ways. Consequently, the accommodation that they displayed is not consistent with the accommodation hypothesis offered by Gibson or Mac an Ghaill.

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