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## Multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence : a study through in-depth participatory action research.

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR DISARMING VIOLENCE:  
A STUDY THROUGH IN-DEPTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

A Dissertation Presented

by

CHRISTINE ELISE CLARK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1993

School of Education

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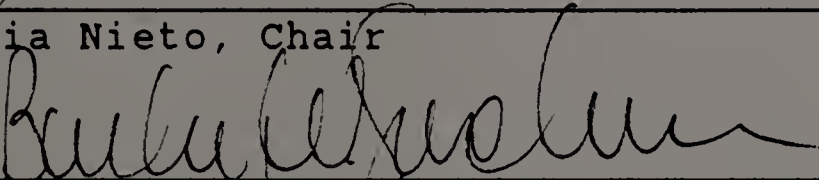
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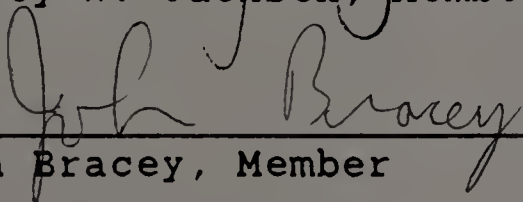
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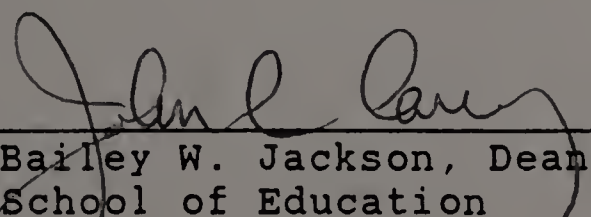
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For

TYRONE MARCELLUS,

who has taught me infinitely more than all of the other  
participants in my education put together, in a fraction of  
the time and with enduring patience.

And for my parents,

JOHN BURTON and JERINE BYRD WANN

and my sisters,

CAROLYN LEE, CYNTHIA ANN, and CONSTANCE JEAN,

who, each in their own unique way, have contributed to all of  
the positive things that I am today.

And in loving memory of

CORNELIUS SCHEID and INGE ERSKINE,

and CICERO, CALICHE, CHALKAH, BLUE, HIP HOP, RAP, THUNDER,

JAMAILA and KISHARA.

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Eight years ago Bailey Jackson, perhaps deliberately, perhaps inadvertently, planted a seed in my mind about the impact of various forms of violence on the identity development of individuals and groups of individuals. He, of course, nurtured the development of that seed as a professor and my advisor throughout my master's program and as a committee member in my doctoral program such that embodied in this dissertation is the manifestation of that seed at maturity.

If you comment to John Bracey about his unique office organization or anything else that comes into your mind, prepare yourself for the most intellectually interesting, historically documented, philosophically challenging, and humorously presented discussion on whatever the subject happens to be. As a committee member he knew exactly when I was just a little too full of myself and my research and needed to be shown the shortcomings of my arguments, which he

could reveal in a heartbeat. And gracefully too, he knew just when I needed a little flattery to keep going in the process.

I swore when I was a master's student listening to doctoral students complaining about the process that I wasn't going to be like that; and yet, I became just like that. And so, I also want to thank George Smith, Susan Laprade, and Diane Kinnecome who, in working with me over the last year and a half, have had to listen to my on-going dissertation saga and have done so graciously. George Smith, beyond tolerating my doctoral diatribe, has given me tremendous support in this process and, in hiring me to work for him, provided me with the professional stimulation and the most thoughtful supervision and guidance which ultimately provided the impetus that led me to complete this degree.

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Lastly, I want to acknowledge the many people who, because of the negative and often very physically, emotionally, intellectually and/or spiritually violent experiences I had with them, provided me with the personal history from which the focus for this study grew. Out of the negative comes something positive.



## ABSTRACT

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR DISARMING VIOLENCE:

A STUDY THROUGH IN-DEPTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

SEPTEMBER 1993

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The purpose of this study was to document the academic and interpersonal experiences of nine young people who left school before completing high school, to analyze the impact of violence on their leaving school, and to broaden the information base of multicultural education so that it may become a more effective tool for disarming this violence. This study focused on the participants' experiences with school structure, teachers, peers, and family.

The participatory action research data collection methodology was employed to facilitate obtaining the desired information from participants by encouraging dialogue between them and the researcher. The goal of this research was to empower them to become investigators of injustice, in this case with respect to their education, so that they may become subjects (as opposed to objects) in the determination of their own destiny with respect to school and/or education. Engaging in similar dialogue with nine participants from

vastly different, broadly interpreted cultural backgrounds helped to establish validity.

The findings of this study indicate that young people generally like school and their teachers and love their parents despite often grave dysfunction (i.e., violence) in their experiences with each. These experiences characterize, in a variety of ways, how society in general is largely out-of-touch with the reality of young lives.

All of the participants in this study appreciated the opportunity to engage in dialogue about their educational experiences in the context of "what did you need that you did not get," yet none of them blamed others for their leaving school. And while all of the participants were visibly emotionally affected by recounting their histories, it is likely that only some of them will transform that emotion into the action necessary to become successful participants in our increasingly diverse and hopefully increasingly democratic society.

The implications of this study have relevance for all schools, educators, and parents. It is important for all the participants in young people's lives to become aware of, knowledgeable about, and understanding of the real conditions of existence of young people, which today necessarily include some form of violence, and to reflect this in the organizational structure, curricula, and interpersonal interactions of which young people are a part.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: DECONSTRUCTING VIOLENCE MULTICULTURALLY IN DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL BASE

#### Problem Statement

Multicultural education and violence are not often conceived of in tandem. In fact, it is likely that one might presume violence to be an antithesis of multicultural education and, hence, imagine that to conceive of multicultural education implies the absence of violence and visa versa. But this is only half of the picture.

I would argue that multicultural education has itself come into being precisely because of the pre-existence of various forms of violence and its manifestations [Nieto, 1992], while simultaneously arguing that if these had not pre-existed, multicultural education would have existed in their place. This is to say, both in the absence of violence and because of the existence of it, embodied in which are all forms of oppression and discrimination, multicultural education exists. Multicultural education is at once both an antithesis of violence and a tool for disarming it.

Given this, we have no choice but to speak of multicultural education and violence in tandem. Before we do so however, it is necessary to explore each individually in greater depth.



## Multicultural Education

In the broadest sense of the word, "culture" can be defined as "a system of meaning making" [Jackson, 1987]. Using this definition as a springboard, multicultural education can be understood as an inclusive educational paradigm which affirms the existence of a multiplicity of systems for meaning making in the course of instruction. But multicultural education, as opposed to "education," is not a "frills added" approach to learning. Multicultural education is **basic** and it distinguishes itself from "education" in a variety of ways. It confronts the monocultural nature of "education" by revealing that such is designed by and for White, European American (usually Anglo Saxon), at least middle-class, native, so-called "standard" English speaking, developmentally, physically and theoretically emotionally abled, heterosexual, Christian (usually Protestant), reasonably thin, reasonably attractive, non-environmentally concerned, male learners raised on a western value system, and presupposes that such design is appropriate and adequate for all learners. Having confronted this, multicultural education then sets out to broaden the base of the designers and the design to, in fact, **educate** all learners. But, multicultural education does not merely exist in relationship or reaction to "education," rather in place of it. It is the "to be" or, rather, the "already arrived" educational paradigm, having revealed the incumbent, monocultural

education, as being insufficient to accommodate additional information.

It is unfortunate that when many people hear the phrase multicultural education they surmise it refers only to race and/or ethnicity. While multicultural education has evolved from the struggles for school desegregation and gender fair education [Nieto, 1992], it continues to evolve; for in order for multicultural education to be truly "multicultural" it must speak to everyone and exist regardless of the faces in the classroom, in the faculty or administration, in the community, or in the home. That is, we do not just "get multicultural" about things when we see color, we live it as it is now and has always been a part of each and every individual's experience in the United States in some way, shape, or form [Bracey, 1992].

But if multicultural education is for everyone, then why do we have to name the differences among us in the course of providing it, as if naming is somehow synonymous with discrimination. At first glance, "culture-blindness," acting as if one does not notice differences, would seem an appropriate strategy in multicultural education, that is, treating everyone "equally." The problem with this reasoning is that by not noticing and, yes, naming the differences among us we do not respond to those differences, which often creates more inequality than equality [Nieto, 1992]. The reality is that we are all different and, as such, we have different needs. If we are all going to, in fact, be equal,

then all of those different needs are going to have to be met. If we fail to recognize the differences, then how are we going to develop strategies to meet the different needs?

In recognizing these differences, developing those strategies, and attempting to meet those different needs, multicultural education focuses on the "what", the "how," and the "who" of representation. That is, it looks at adding to the content of monocultural education, across disciplines and grade levels, by including the histories of oppression of the underrepresented from multiple perspectives, by including comprehensive information about the countries of origins, cultures, and everyday lives of the underrepresented, and by including the contributions the underrepresented have made to what has **always been part of** monocultural education (the Canon), especially in the fields of mathematics and physical science [Frankenstein & Powell, 1991], and beyond. It also focuses on adding to the methods of implementation of monocultural education, across disciplines and grade levels, by encouraging the broadening of repertoires for teaching to an array of multidimensional learning styles. And, lastly, it focuses on adding to the pool of curricula designers and implementers by struggling to establish a multiculturally representative work force.

And yet, multicultural education does not guarantee student success, nor is it the only prerequisite of student achievement. If this were the case, then we would not only have to understand lack of student achievement in a



state-of-the-art multicultural educational setting as our failure, but we would also be implying "that there is something peculiar about [women and People of Color] that allows them to learn only when their culture is being affirmed" [Wilson, 1991, p. 12]. Of course, we learn better when our cultures are being affirmed, as do White men whose culture is "normally" being affirmed. But we must also remember that many, although clearly not nearly enough, women and People of Color have done quite well within the monocultural educational paradigm at the same time it has failed some White men.

It is hard to say exactly what, if anything, would guarantee student success. Certainly, the elimination of all forms of oppression and discrimination in the world would have enormous impact in the direction of guaranteeing greater student success. This, coupled with a state-of-the-art multicultural education, might, in fact, be the guarantee of student success. Towards that end, multicultural education, in continuing to evolve, has become "a process of comprehensive school reform" that "challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society" and which "permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning" using "critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy" and focusing "on knowledge, reflection, and

action (praxis) as the basis for social change," furthering "the democratic principles of social justice" [Nieto, 1992, p. 208].

And yet, multicultural education, in being and doing all of these things, still cannot eliminate all forms of oppression and discrimination in the world in attempting to provide the guarantee of student success. But, in continuing to evolve in challenging and rejecting the various forms of discrimination in schools and society, multicultural education can engage its proponents in struggle towards the end of guaranteeing student success. In being so engaged as a proponent of multicultural education, I have come to recognize violence and its manifestations as forms of oppression and discrimination. Unfortunately, attempts by proponents of all of the various educational paradigms, including those by proponents of multicultural education, to challenge and reject these particular forms of oppression and discrimination have failed.

### Violence

The complex and multifaceted entity of violence invades, violates, and destroys especially multicultural communities in increasing proportions in the 1990's. While educators, among others, armed with even the most insightful and progressive multicultural strategies, try to contend with the reality of violence in the classroom and in the community at large, these strategies converge around our collectively

distancing ourselves and our work from violence and its manifestations, in essence suppressing it.

In fact, Jenkins [1993] found that one out of two people in the United States not only condone, even applaud, the use of suppression tactics for dealing with violence reduction, but favor the use of these tactics over prevention ones. Even when violence prevention tactics have a lower fiscal bottom line and effect a substantially greater reduction in violence than suppression ones, suppression tactics are still championed by the general population, and policy makers are listening to them.

Given this, it might seem logical to take refuge in the knowledge that the fifth and fourteenth amendments of the constitution, in particular, guide public policy and its makers in this area, that of substantive criminal law (the body of law which defines crimes and, hence, directly addresses violence) and criminal procedure (the methods by which the criminal justice system functions, in this case relative to violence). But while these amendments are supposedly race (among other things) neutral in guaranteeing all individuals the right to due process and equal protection under the law, in reality these amendments themselves (as well as the policy they guide), apart from or in addition to how they are applied and by whom, are somewhat more selective, race conscious, and ultimately racist in providing this guarantee [Jenkins, 1993].



For example, the new "anti-gang" law was enacted to effect a reduction in gang related violence (2% of all violent crimes committed annually [Jenkins, 1993]) by, for example, imposing stiffer sentences on individuals who have known gang affiliations and commit a crime, than on individuals with no known gang affiliation and commit the same crime; the idea being to discourage gang membership. It is particularly interesting to note that what defines a gang under this statute not only varies from state to state but is at best intentionally vague; there is no consistent definition. Generally speaking, however, this law defines a gang as "two or more individuals with identifying signs and symbols engaged in some sort of criminal activity" [Jenkins, 1993]. By this definition, "gang" is synonymous with "criminal activity." In Chicago, Illinois the sublime in this definition becomes the ridiculous in their definition of what constitutes a violation of the anti-gang law: being in a gang (determined again by the identifying signs and symbols) and being on the street. Reportedly, this is grounds for being charged with loitering [Jenkins, 1993].

Based on this definition of a gang in the anti-gang law, not the application or interpretation of it, 85% of all gangs are comprised of Black or Latino male youth. This is primarily because of the terminology "identifying signs and symbols" which is said to mean bright colored baggy clothing, large pieces of gold jewelry, street hand signals and so on, and not dark colored business suits, small pieces of gold

jewelry, and stock market hand signals [California State Police, 1992]. (If this was not the case, whole corporations could be found to be in violation of the anti-gang law everyday. Of course, then the issue would become who to arrest as it is rather hard to arrest a corporation.) And so, we come to understand that it is precisely because of this terminology that the anti-gang law can come to define the being of a Black or Latino male youth and being on the street attired in a particular way as a crime. (It is important to note here that nearly all of the young Black and Latino males that law enforcement officials identify as gang members maintain that there are really no such things as "gangs," constructed as mass media has taught the public to imagine them. Rather, these young Black and Latino males refer to "groups;" peer groups, just like all other young people do [Jenkins, 1993]. And yet, their self-perception does not really matter because of the restraints imposed by societal definition; that is, their power to name themselves is absent in the context of hegemonic forces [Bracey, 1993].)

This and other like additions to substantive criminal law facilitate corresponding changes in criminal procedure. For example, the implementation of "search on sight" lines of action where police officers can stop any individual on sight without probable cause (that is, without any suspicion that they have done something illegal, for any or no reason at all) and search them for possession of illegal substances

or weapons as well as run a warrant check on them, and then, if indicated, arrest them.

Given this and other public policy it is no surprise then that 44% of all programs which directly or indirectly address violence reduction employ suppression tactics [Spergel, 1990]. And, increasingly, such tactics are being implemented in public schools. For example, the use of metal detectors or the imposition of clothing restrictions [Jenkins, 1993].

It is unfortunate that even in the multiculturally oriented "mainstream" or so-called "regular" public school educational setting, the primary tactic employed in dealing with violence or violent behavior is to move the violent or behavior problem student out of the mainstream classroom into some facsimile of so-called "special education;" suppression again. And even multiculturally oriented special education usually begins with a behavior problem student being moved into a special education classroom, still within the mainstream school building, with other behavior problem students, for some or all of the school day [Massachusetts State Department of Education, 1991]. At this stage, this kind of special education, which focuses on student behavior and not on learning issues (such as a remedial or advanced placement reading or math class would), generally involves little diagnostic intervention in determining the appropriateness of lumping all the behavioral problem students together. That is, diagnosis and placement are



determined by the behavior itself, not the range of possible etiologies of that behavior such as learning, nutritional, or interpersonal issues.

Occasionally, a behavioral problem student is able to turn her or himself around in the special education classroom, which focuses on teaching the student to control, not understand and resolve, behavior problems and return to the mainstream classroom. More often, however, the movement of a behavioral problem student into a special education classroom becomes but the first step in a long and twisted staircase of subsequent steps that this student will take en route to developing a disdain for schools, alternative special educational settings, and education in general, and a propensity, if not a predilection, for a long rap sheet. These subsequent steps begin when the behavioral problem student is not able to turn her or himself around in the special education classroom in the mainstream school and so is required or chooses to move into an alternative special educational setting [Massachusetts State Department of Education, 1991].

In the alternative special education setting the tactics employed in dealing with violence or violent behavior fall roughly into four different categories: therapeutic, grassroots, spiritual, and sociopolitical. Examples of some of the most effective and, not coincidentally, most multiculturally oriented alternative educational settings which implement such tactics in a manner consistent with



these categories are the NEARI (New England Adolescent Research Institute) School in Holyoke, MA, the EWT (Experiment With Travel) School in Springfield, MA, the Mel Blunt School in Pittsburgh, PA, and the Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School in Chicago, IL, respectively.

In the therapeutic model, a psychoanalytical approach is emphasized. Behavioral modification is attempted through the use of highly individualized educational programming, rigorous limit setting, non-violent physical restraint, individual and family counseling, and psychotropic medication.

In the grassroots model, a work ethic approach is emphasized. Behavioral modification is attempted through the use of highly experiential educational programming in which students may grow their own food, recycle their own garbage, and visit the places and/or perform the experiments that they learn about in texts, and through extracurricular work assignments and/or initiative-building exercises in forestry, trail-constructing, mountaineering, caving and/or rafting.

In the spiritual model, a humanistic approach is emphasized. Behavioral modification is attempted through non-denominational (though generally ecumenical) educational programming focusing on the development of puritanical values, exposure to an austere lifestyle, the development of a personal relationship with a higher power, and clerical counsel.

In the sociopolitical model, an empowerment approach is emphasized. Behavioral modification is attempted through the use of highly culturally specialized or "centric" educational programming, street smart and street level intervention, recruitment, and retention initiatives, exposure to extracurricular, usually left-wing cause activities, and participation in one-on-one and/or group rap sessions with auxiliary educational personnel (i.e., an ex-con and/or ex-gang member).

None of these models exists in a pure form. But of the millions of monoculturally and multiculturally oriented alternative educational settings functioning in the United States today, all employ one of these models' approaches as their dominant approach in attempting behavioral modification, while drawing, to a lesser extent, on the others [Coles, 1987]. And all of these models have their successes, but not nearly enough in proportion to their attempts. This is because none attempts to comprehensively explore with each and every student the impact of various forms of violence and its manifestations on the student's identity development and, subsequently, behavioral problems in attempting to modify those behaviors so that the student may enjoy greater success in school. Each puts the agenda of the behavioral modifiers first, in both developing and implementing the programming. And, to date, as was mentioned previously, these agenda have not even sought minimally, much less comprehensively, to explore the impact of violence and

its manifestations on any aspect of student life. As a result, we are treating violence as an abstraction in trying to get on with the "busi-ness" of instruction. As educators we cannot expect to be effective in multicultural communities even with multicultural strategies if we see one of the most influential forces in these communities as an abstraction; in essence, if we do not really see it all.

To begin such a comprehensive exploration then, when we speak of violence, we must be clear about whether we are, in fact, speaking about violence--that initiated by the overrepresented, or whether we are speaking about the reactive violence of the underrepresented [Freire, 1970]. We must also be clear about what form of violence or reactive violence we speak: the physical, the economic, the political, or the psychological. Violence can take all of these forms. For example, we have institutionalized militarism, like the Rodney King beating (the physical); institutionalized classism, like that which would have denied Rodney King access to equal representation under the law because of an inability to pay had his beating not been videotaped and viewed nationally (the economic); institutionalized racism, like the jury verdict on the cops who beat Rodney King (the political); and an institutionalized standard of what constitutes "normal" behavior which leads to the pathologicalization of the underrepresented, like the notion that a stumbling drunk Rodney King, in his bigness, Blackness, and maleness, somehow posed a threat to several



not so small, White, male cops armed with billy clubs and guns, hence leading an almost all White jury to rationalize their actions (the psychological). Reactive violence can only take the form of the physical and, of course, only in a non-institutionalized fashion because the underrepresented, by definition, lack access to the structural means, the power, to institutionalize their prejudices into a legislative, executive, and judicial system of government or, in this historical moment, of control.

When the overrepresented initiate non-physical violence (economic, political, and/or psychological) towards the underrepresented it is constructed as "symbolic" violence. Monocultural education is a good example of this so-called "symbolic" violence [Bourdieu, 1986], only there is nothing "symbolic" about it, not in its initiation or impact. On the contrary, real, live, thinking, feeling, and acting human beings who existed, exist, and will continue to exist, do so not merely as objects in relationship to unowned events that have mysteriously impacted on them, but as subjects, authors of and impacting on their own events, while simultaneously engaging in a cold war about representation being waged at a very violent level of physiological, economic, psychological, and spiritual survival.

So, the overrepresented or oppressors initiate violence and the underrepresented or oppressed respond with violence. The oppressors then initiate more violence and the vicious cycle is begun. But, there is another dimension to flesh out

here, perhaps what can be called a "sub-cycle." When the oppressed prey on each other with violence, is that initiating or responding with violence? It is a response to the violence initiated by the oppressors but it is a displaced response. "Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the 'order' which serves the interest of the oppressors...Chafing under the restrictions of this order, they often manifest a type of horizontal violence..." [Freire, 1970, p. 48]. The media represents this kind of violence as "racial" because sometimes it occurs between different racial and ethnic groups. But the majority of the time, this violence occurs within a racial or ethnic group [Bing, 1991]. This then would not be "racial" violence (unless perhaps the conflict arose around color gradations within a group as was portrayed in Spike Lee's movie, "School Daze" [1988]), yet it is represented as such because the predominantly White media, while it does not see itself as racial or ethnic sees all People of Color this way. Hence, violence between Whites is just violence, but violence between Blacks or Latinas/os or Asians or Native Peoples is constructed as "racial violence."

Given all this, consider the following dichotomous explanations for understanding the state of education today:

Education is failing miserably in the face of the rising violence in the streets which surround our schools in especially multicultural communities. Increasingly, the violence in the streets is spilling over into the classroom, manifest as physical violence, apathy, and/or waning attendance on the part of students.



The rising violence in the streets which surround our schools in especially multicultural communities, and that in the classroom being manifest as physical violence, apathy, and/or waning attendance on the part of students, are reactions to the various and pervasive expressions of so-called "symbolic" violence in the schools on the part of faculty, staff, and administrators. Increasingly, the violence in the schools is spilling over into the streets.

We can understand the violence of the schools as part and parcel of the initiated violence in the larger society of the oppressor, schools being but one piece of the institutional mechanism through which this violence is inflicted upon the oppressed. And we can understand the violence in the streets as reactive violence, the response of the oppressed to this prior violence which established their subjugation [Freire, 1970].

Of urban teenagers, not that unlike non-urban teenagers, some are actively involved in their education, others are relatively disinterested, and still others have dropped out of school completely. But somewhat more unlike non-urban teenagers, any or all may be influenced by gang activity. It is interesting then that these same urban teenagers, who are probably the closest to or already in the streets (in addition to their parents and teachers, the lawyers who defend and prosecute them for alleged wrongdoing, the judges who sentence them if and when they are convicted, and the probation officers and therapists to whom they are assigned, among others [Jenkins, 1993]) are identifying the need for some form of multicultural education to address these issues of violence both as they are manifest in the classroom and in

the streets and the connection between the two. For example, in conducting interviews with a group of urban high school students, Wiley [1991] found that, "Most of the students contended that fights between students of different racial groups erupt outside of school because of a lack of knowledge about each other's culture. Hostilities are exacerbated by the lack of a school environment and curriculum that fosters understanding among students of various racial groups and academic classifications" [p. A3]. Elaborating on this theme one student stated his belief that, "'If you clean the school system to where it is more of a multicultural diversity in areas of learning, then the streets will start to clean up,'" [Wiley, 1991, p. A3]. And, in an effort to respond to these issues of violence "...the students agreed to work together toward increasing communication and sensitivity between school staff and students and toward changing the school curriculum to reflect more religious and cultural diversity" [Wiley, 1991, p. A3].

While multicultural education has been more successful than monocultural education in attempting to comprehensively explore with each and every student the impact of the various forms of violence and its manifestations on their identity development and, subsequently, their ability to be successful in school [Walsh, 1991], as long as we continue to lose even one student to the streets it has not been successful enough. Towards that end, this study was directed.



### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of urban young people who had left school before completing high school or receiving a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) concerning the general factors leading up to their leaving school, and what, if anything, could have been done to prevent them from leaving or could get them to go back. In particular, the study focused on finding out what role the various forms of violence and its manifestations, as defined by the researcher and by the participants, played in the participants' leaving school or might play in their returning. Given this information, the study then investigates how multicultural education might better retain young people in academic settings as well as recruit them back from the streets.

### Approach to the Study

This part of this chapter briefly details the research methodology employed in this study, the general research questions the study seeks to answer, and the researcher's motivation in formulating the study, and provides an introduction to the study participants. These areas will be expanded upon in Chapter 3.

### Research Methodology

I decided to employ a participatory action research methodology in conducting this research for two reasons. First, it is used because it is the only research method that

does not presuppose that researchers or research can be, nor should be, even theoretically neutral. Participatory action research knows that a by-product of any research is impact, inadvertent or intended, on the subject of the research.

Second, participatory action research engages the research subject as a participant in conducting the research. A participant must invite the participatory action researcher to do the research, must determine the direction the research will take, and must be empowered by the research to positively transform their conditions of existence. Participatory action research accomplishes this by directing the researcher in engaging in a process of "dialogue" with participants about the research problem as it relates to their experiences. Through this process, participants identify various means to address and, ultimately, solve the problem.

#### General Research Questions

I began this study with three general research questions. They were:

- \* Why do young people leave school?
- \* What role does violence play in young people leaving school?
- \* What can multicultural education do to prevent young people from leaving school, especially given the role violence plays in their so doing?

Given the highly individualized results participatory action research produces through dialogue, it made more sense to



begin this study with these questions rather than expected outcomes.

### Personal Interest in the Study

My involvement in this study began with my first conscious personal experience with violence, around age four. How that experience and subsequent experiences impacted on my identity development and, in turn, on my ability or lack thereof to be successful in school has largely shaped the direction of this study. That at every critical stage in my life that I can remember some aspect of multicultural curricula moved me physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually away from crisis has been likewise significant in providing the focus for this study.

In considering the research by Jackson [1976] and Hardiman [1979] on identity development, more specifically the impact of race on both individual and group identity development, I began to surmise that my experiences of violence as an individual (as Christine) and as a member of a group (as a woman, etc.) and their impact on my identity development and subsequent success or lack thereof in school might be shared by others with like experiences. I surmised further that multicultural curricula, in moving me away from crisis and, hence, in enhancing my ability to be successful in school (in making my ability to be successful in school predictable, not inadvertent, haphazard, or in spite of thus and so) might also do the same for others, especially those with experiences of violence in their lives.

In wanting to test these hypotheses qualitatively, I thought initially about interviewing gang members, knowing they are very likely to leave school and their experiences to be among the most plagued with violence and reactive violence even though, as previously mentioned, gang related violence accounts for only 2% of all violent crime committed annually [Bing, 1991; Jenkins, 1993]. But after reflecting on my years of experience in mental health, I realized that usually those in the most extreme circumstances of any kind are the ones least likely to call attention to themselves. Given this, I decided to broaden the criteria upon which I would identify interviewees for this study to include any urban young person who had left school under any circumstances before finishing high school and who had not yet completed high school or a GED.

### Participants

The participants in this study were identified via various personnel, known mutually to myself and the participants, employed at five different community based organizations in three different large urban areas in the northeastern United States. Five of them are involved in private non-profit educational programs, three by choice and two via adjudication, which could lead to their completing their GED's. Of the other four, three are considering enrolling in such a program. They are all bright and some exceptionally so.



They range in age from fifteen to thirty-seven. There are six males, two Black, two Latino, one biracial (Native American and White), and one White, and three females, two Black and one biracial (Asian and White). And, all of them have had a range of experiences with violence which have clearly impacted on their identity development and, hence, their ability to be successful and retained in school.

In the course of dialogue with each participant the following question areas were explored:

- \* What is the participant's perception of why and how they left school?
- \* What have been the interpersonal influences (i.e., family, friends, teachers, etc.) in the participant's life which have impacted on her/his leaving school?
- \* Was the participant kicked out or pushed out, or did s/he drop out or opt out (see CHAPTER 2) of school? Why?
- \* What is the academic record of the participant and how does it compare to her/his demonstrated aptitudes?
- \* In general, how does the participant define violence and what have been her/his experiences with it?
- \* How does the participant perceive these experiences as having impacted on her/his academic life?
- \* What other forms of violence have been a part of the participant's experience and how have they impacted on the participant's academic life?
- \* What is the participant's perception about the role of formal education in her/his life?

\* To what extent and in what ways has the participant been exposed to multicultural education, and what is her/his perception of it?

\* What has the participant been doing with her/his life since leaving school and how and/or what does the participant feel, think, or believe about what s/he has been doing with her/his life since leaving school?

\* What does the participant believe could be done to make education more meaningful, desirable, and useful to young people?

\* What does the participant believe educators need to understand about young people in general and especially about the impact of the various forms of violence and its manifestations in their lives, in attempting to develop and implement meaningful, desirable, and useful curricula for them?

\* What would it take for the participant to consider returning to school (or an alternative academic setting) and what role does violence play in her/his consideration of this?

There was some variation in how these questions were explored with each participant, to obtain the desired information, which was to be expected. Ultimately, these questions were explored in the context of determining the role that multicultural education must play in seeking to graduate each and every student and, furthermore, to see them use their multicultural education to become meaningful participants in

the increasingly diverse and hopefully increasingly democratic society in which we all live.

### Limitations of the Study

It became evident even before beginning this study that it would be limited in a variety of ways. Four areas of limitation of this study will be discussed. These areas are the research scope, impact, and ideological framework, as well as researcher bias.

#### Scope

This study is limited by its scope. I interviewed only nine participants, and those only from three urban areas in the northeastern United States. The data I collected and the conclusions I have reached based on these data cannot be thought of as representative of all young people who have left school.

#### Impact

While the potential positive impact of this study on the field of multicultural education in particular and education in general with respect to student retention is great, the impact it will actually realize will be much less. While this is not yet known for sure, I am confident in stating it as if it were. This is because in order for this study to realize the greatest possible impact, members of overrepresented groups in society would all have to reach a stage in their identity development relative to their overrepresentation such that they would be willing to give up



their absolute representation in favor of shared representation with the underrepresented. Given the political reality that this will never happen, this study is limited by the degree to which it can actualize its potential impact on student retention. This dynamic will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

### Ideological Framework

This study was also limited by the ideological framework in which it was located. That is, this study attempted to demonstrate that there is a critical link between multicultural education and in creating/evolving a more democratic society in which each and every person can become both a meaningful and successful participant in that society, i.e., a society in which all forms of oppression and discrimination have been eliminated and everyone has above and beyond their basic needs met and are, therefore, engaged in struggle at a level above that of survival for human, civil, and/or social rights, perhaps at a level of ideas. If multicultural education can be further developed and implemented to better meet the needs and wants especially of the kinds of young people I interviewed for this research, perhaps these young people will return to school and incumbent students will not leave.

But clearly, as we progress as a society, before all these wonderful things happen (if they happen), if all young people do not pursue academically tracked initiatives aggressively, they will be completely locked out of the



ability to participate in the facsimile of the democracy that currently exists in any kind of a meaningful and successful way. This is not to suggest that non-academically tracked initiatives are not meaningful or do not allow for success in our society as it has stood, as it stands today, and as it will probably stand for some time to come. But it is to suggest that all young people need to actively pursue academically tracked initiatives first and then later based on choice, not necessity, pursue other initiatives. This has to be the case if young people are to be provided with a greater repertoire of options and experiences early on in their lives from which they may subsequently draw. This should be the case whether a particular young person is bent on being or becoming a mechanic, an "original gangsta" (a gang member), or a leader in the revolution to overthrow the United States government. That is, regardless of their future intended endeavors, all young people should first or simultaneously pursue at least a Bachelor's level degree in a college or university to, as previously stated, provide themselves with the greatest possible range of options for maintaining their future livelihood.

Obviously, these statements are ridden with bias and contradiction. In making them, I am at once glorifying and admonishing the educational system in what could be seen as, and probably to some extent is, an attempt to validate my personal position in that system while simultaneously engaging in critique of it. Perhaps this can be best

understood from a gambler's or business person's ideological lens as an attempt to encourage all young people to hedge their bets or investments by playing or banking on both sides of an odds or adventure. I am not intending to suggest, however, that young people who have not in the past led, and do not now or will not ever in the future lead their lives in this fashion are in any way deficient as human beings or as contributors to society. Nor am I intending to suggest that at this historical moment any young person should particularly want to contribute to society or become a meaningful and successful participant in this society or in creating/evolving a better one.

Obviously, the 70,000 various gang members [Bing, 1991] in the East Los Angeles area do not feel deficient as human beings nor any moral compunction to contribute to society or to become meaningful and successful participants in this society (though by, at least, United States capitalistic standards they already are to some degree) or in creating/evolving a better one. Altruism is definitely not a prerequisite for entering their profession, which is largely about "dolla'z" and "play" (street words used primarily by Black and Latina/o youths, which is why I refer to them affectionately as part of the "Spangjive" language or dialect, roughly equivalent in meaning to money and power or clout, respectively) and, to a lesser degree, comradery, familiarity. But neither is it in becoming the President of the United States or the Chief Executive Officer of a Fortune

500 company (which is all about wealth and power and protecting the status quo), though, as a society, we tend to view these latter two professions as though it were, and that of being a gang member as though it should be. We refuse to see that those who appear the most benign are, in fact, the most violent [Williams, 1980].

Ultimately, we must come to recognize that no matter how critically conscious formal education becomes, even multicultural education developed as a tool for disarming violence, there still exists a contradiction between the goal of it and various social roles. That is, because formal education facilitates one in the development of their ability to negotiate the "system," as one acquires increased sophistication in their ability to so negotiate it, the danger in their being co-opted by it is also increased. When this occurs, one no longer seeks to negotiate the system in an effort to effect change in it for the good of all, but rather to manipulate it towards one's own ends, ultimately maintaining the status quo. In developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming this violence as well, the task then becomes how to get young people to get an education without, at best, becoming "pseudo-multicultural-white-folks," having lost their sociopolitically-grounded organic social roles in the process [Bracey, 1993].

#### Researcher Bias

Lastly, this study was limited by the biases of its researcher. While research on the validity of qualitative



interviews suggests that subject truthfulness increases when they are interviewed by people who are most like themselves, especially with respect to race, gender, and age [Goodenough, 1957; Loveday, 1982], I was limited to being only White, female, and thirty, while none of the participants in this study were all of these and only a few were any of them. Who I am also limited the study in terms of how I may have inadvertently and did deliberately filter what I saw, heard, felt, thought, and believed with respect to collecting and analyzing the data. In an effort to counter these biases I strongly encouraged study participants to be honest in their remarks regardless of how they believed I might receive it, and then I consulted extensively with colleagues of different races, gender, and ages in analyzing those remarks.

### Significance of the Study

This study was most significant in three ways. First it was significant in its approach. While other research may have used a case study approach to look individually at the various forms of violence and its manifestations in schools [Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1992; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Gray, 1970; Hegel, 1967; Kozol, 1967, 1991; Meier et al, 1989; Meier & Stewart, 1991; Oakes, 1985; Taylor, 1991] and in society [Bing, 1991; Camus, 1956; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1970; Handlin, 1979; James, 1963; Jeffrey-Jones, 1978; Kotlowitz, 1991; Marx, 1964; Sartre, 1976; Walters, 1969; Williams, 1980],



student resistance to school [Fine, 1991; Freire 1990; Giroux, 1983; Walsh, 1991], and multicultural education in a sociopolitical context [Banks, 1987, 1988; Banks & McGee, 1989; Bennett, 1986; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux & Aronowitz, 1985; Grant & Sleeter, 1986, 1989; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter, 1991, Suzuki, 1984; Wurzel, 1988], this research used a case study approach to look at these issues collectively, how they are interconnected. That is, previous studies have looked at one or more of the component parts embodied in this study, but no previous study has framed all of these component parts in the way delineated herein in developing its particular research focus.

Second, this study was significant in that it presupposed two things. First, that there was something about the way our society and institutions in it, especially schools, define, participate in, and respond to the various forms of violence and its manifestations which surround us, that is inherently defeatist in attempting to positively impact on student retention and academic success. And second, that by comprehensively exploring the aforementioned via urban young people who had left school, it could obtain data that would enable multicultural education to arm itself with a particular understanding of violence that will inform it in decreasing student resistance, thereby increasing student retention and academic success.

Third, this study was significant in its timeliness. It was perhaps by sheer coincidence that this study, with its

foci on violence and multicultural education, was undertaken at a point in time when elementary schools were just beginning to develop and implement weapons' policies in the wake of a resurgence in urban unrest, and when the debate at schools, colleges, and universities about the efficacy of developing and implementing culturally inclusive curricula was just beginning to heat up. It was, however, no coincidence that these two sociopolitical trends arose concurrently. That is, it was precisely because of the resistance, at the institutional levels of our society, to culturally inclusive agenda that the weapons' policies and resurging, especially urban violence became an issue [Bing, 1991; Wiley, 1991].

It is only too interesting to note that in the 1960's, when educational resources were plentiful and program and administrative space abundant, Women's Studies, Afro-American (now African American) Studies, Puerto Rican Studies, Asian Studies and Native or Indian Studies programs were springing up everywhere [Bracey, 1992]. Many fewer were concerned about the "fragmentation" of so-called "American" society [Will, 1992], the "watering down" of the curriculum [Bloom, 1987], the dissolution of the Canon [Will, 1992], or the "politicization" of education [D'Souza, 1991], precisely because educational resources were plentiful, and program and administrative space abundant. But beginning with the Reagan and continuing with the Bush administration, we greeted the

1990's with an ever-dwindling educational resource budget and a scarcity of program and administrative space.

Coincidentally, the aforementioned concerns began to surface [Bracey, 1992].

Given the fiscal contrast between these two decades, one has to ask oneself, are these concerns genuine or an intentional smokescreen blown out to mask what lies behind it? That is, are people authentically concerned about the "fragmentation" of so-called "American" society [Will, 1992], etc., or are they instead acutely aware of economic necessity resurrecting "either/or" as an organizational strategy?; effecting the reality of, in fact, having to chose between teaching either Shakespeare or Alice Walker, and, likewise, between retaining or hiring either a classics professor or a minority literature professor [Bracey, 1992]. I have ventured to weight the latter arm of this dichotomy more heavily herein.

Certainly, in the 1960's, still in the early childhood of special studies programming, such programming was also more well received because it was, by definition, "special" and therefore marginalized. And certainly, in the 1990's, in what I am sure we will come to refer to in the future as the adolescence of special studies programming, amidst what we now refer to as multicultural education, such programming is also meeting with much greater resistance precisely because it is demanding to be demarginalized, to be subsumed in each and every discipline. But clearly, even with this analysis,



we can understand the weapons' policies and resurging especially urban violence issues as but a symptom of the larger institutional illness, characterized by backlash against the demands by the marginalized to be proportionally represented at every level of society, in every aspect of it. The competing forces remain the same.

More forcefully stated, students are resisting school at least in part because of schools' resistance to dealing with issues of diversity and, especially, to developing and implementing multicultural curricula, i.e., multicultural education [Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Stanage, 1975]. This is but a microcosm of the myriad of other struggles in which individuals and institutions are engaged in society at large [Center for Research on Criminal Justice, 1975; Churchill, 1983; Marx, 1964]. These issues will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Clearly then, there has been no research which links violence and multicultural education in these ways. As a result, this research has contributed to broadening the base of knowledge about violence and multicultural education, and the strategies we have to employ in decreasing student resistance and improving student retention and academic success.

### Chapter Summary

This study evolved out of the desire to broaden the effectiveness of multicultural education in dealing with



issues of violence, both in the classroom and beyond. To be effective in this respect, the comprehensive exploration of the impact of violence on identity development undertaken in this study was critical of other strategies for addressing issues of violence which have omitted this exploration. This is because in both traditional and alternative educational settings, including multicultural educational settings, these strategies have been largely ineffective.

A participatory action research approach to undertake this exploration was devised. Consistent with this approach, nine young people, from three urban areas in the northeastern United States who had left school before finishing high school and who had not yet completed high school or a General Equivalency Diploma, were engaged in dialogue with respect to their academic and interpersonal experiences.

A number of limitations in relation to the study were discussed. These included the scope of the study, the degree to which the study will be able to have impact given political realities, the ideological framework in which the study was located, and researcher bias and its potential impact on participant truthfulness.

Lastly, the significance of the study for all schools, educators, young people, and parents as well as for the participants in it was discussed with respect to the uniqueness of its approach and presuppositions and the timeliness of its subject matter. With violence of all kinds

on the rise, anyone interested in developing effective responses to it will find this study useful.

In Chapter 2, the literature reviews on violence, student resistance to school, and multicultural education are presented. These reviews help me to develop a framework into which the new information this research produced could be appropriately placed.

The participatory action research methodology employed in this study is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. Specifically, the methods for gaining access and background information, engaging in dialogue, analyzing data and determining validity are delineated.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the in-depth interviews with the nine study participants. The results of these interviews are organized in one of two ways, either as a narrative by the researcher or in the participant's own words.

In Chapter 5, the findings of this study are presented. This presentation highlights the key issues the participants in the study discuss relative to the impact of violence on their identity development and its subsequent impact on their ability to be retained and, therefore, more successful in school.

Finally, in Chapter 6, the implications of this research for multicultural education are discussed. Recommendations for future studies on related issues are also presented.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEWS OF THE LITERATURE: ANALYZING STUDENT RESISTANCE TO SCHOOL FROM A MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Introduction

In order to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for this study, it was necessary to review the literature in three major areas: violence, student resistance to school, and multicultural education. The goals of these reviews were fourfold: to develop a comprehensive understanding of violence; to document what is already known about why young people leave school; to develop a specific picture of multicultural education; and to articulate the relationship between these.

The literature on violence largely addresses only reactive violence [Freire, 1970], and generally frames it as pathological [Laing & Cooper, 1971]. Therefore, in the context of reviewing this literature, it was necessary to deconstruct it in the process [Derrida, 1967]. A limited number of sources were available to facilitate this [Camus, 1956; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1970; James, 1963; Laing, 1967; Laing & Cooper, 1971; Marx, 1964; Sartre, 1976] in determining the origins of violence and the subsequent impact of it on both individual and group identity development and academic success. That is, how the identities of individuals and groups of individuals develop in response to experiences



with violence, and the resulting impact on their ability to be successful in school were investigated.

The literature on student resistance to school was briefly summarized in order to determine not only what is already known about why young people leave school, but also how we think about what is already known about it [Fine, 1991]. The results of this summary were organized into three categories which define resistance and detail why and which young people leave school.

The literature on multicultural education was likewise briefly summarized. Multicultural education has not only grown out of but has also grown up with the histories of struggle embodied in the movements for bilingual education, desegregation, gender-fair education (among others), and against various forms of so-called ability tracking [Nieto, 1992]. That is, it has had to mature with the relevant sociopolitical inequities of every historical moment it has endured [Nieto, 1992]. Hence, the literature review on multicultural education was located relative to yet another such inequity: the impact of violence on student retention and academic success.

### The Literature on Violence

In order to determine the relationship between violence, identity development, and academic success, we must first come to understand where violence comes from, and how and why it is sustained. This involves exploring the causes of

violence and the corresponding implications for human survival.

### The Etiology of Violence

In seeking to determine the causes of violence, we must return to the concept of representation which was introduced in conjunction with the concepts of overrepresentation and underrepresentation in Chapter 1. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary [Merriam & Merriam, 1979] defines representation as "the correspondence to in essence of" or "the structure, composition, physical make up or nature of" [p. 974] and "the manner in which sovereign power is distributed" [p. 241]. Applying these to human beings, representation then details not only their appearance and manner, but also their "possession of control over others" [p. 895].

In the United States, the manner in which sovereign power is at least theoretically distributed is via democracy [Zinn, 1980]. Unfortunately, this is not fully enough the case in practice [Zinn, 1980]. While the writers of the constitution of the United States had the vision to organize these states into a viable democracy, because of the historical moment in which they were writing, they did not have the vision to fully include all the members of this democracy as full participants in it [Perry, 1992]. They did, however, have the vision to include mechanisms through which subsequent generations could; first through resistance, legal or otherwise, ultimately through voting, and all the mechanisms in between [Nieto, 1992].

But, while history forgotten is destined to be repeated, history remembered often guarantees the status quo [Marable, 1980]. Hence, the appearance and manner of those included as full participants in our democracy in 1776 (and who were correspondingly afforded authority) is largely identical to that of those who enjoy full participation in it today (as well as the associated privileges): White, European American (usually Anglo Saxon), at least middle-class, native so-called "standard" English speaking, developmentally, physically and theoretically (see ensuing discussion) emotionally able, heterosexual, Christian (usually Protestant), reasonably thin, reasonably attractive, non-environmentally concerned, men [Zinn, 1980]. And because this representation allows them to enjoy this participation to the exclusion of others, they are said to be overrepresented [Clark, 1992].

Practically speaking then, one's representation essentially determines one's access or lack thereof to democracy. And, access to democracy is synonymous with survival because it affords the ability to reproduce oneself and one's own [Marx, 1964]. Furthermore, the extent to which one's representation, in short one's culture or system of meaning making, as delineated in Chapter 1, mirrors that of those currently enjoying full participation in democracy, determines the extent to which one will likewise enjoy varying degrees of that participation.



These are all too easily substantiated conclusions. If equal access exists in practice, it must be measurable in outcome [Jackson, 1987]. For example, if women comprise 52% of the United States population [Jackson, 1987], do they hold 52% of the jobs at every level and in every aspect of it, that is, are they proportionally represented [Jackson, 1987]? The answer is no [Zinn, 1980]. Correspondingly, they do not mirror the representation of the overrepresented at all with respect to gender (hence they are said to be underrepresented), and do so only to varying degrees with respect to race, ethnicity, socio-economic class background, native so-called "standard" English fluency, physical, developmental, and theoretical emotional ability, sexual preference, acquisition, or orientation, religious or spiritual affiliation, size, appearance, and environmental concern [Jackson, 1987].

As we discussed in Chapter 1, with the establishment of this dichotomy in representation, comes violence [Freire, 1970]. It becomes incumbent to ask if this dichotomy, violence, is necessary because the resources to maintain the privileges associated with overrepresentation are so scarce such that equal or shared representation is not viable? Again, the answer is no [Harrington, 1962]. Hence, there is no rational explanation for it. It is both theoretically and practically possible to cooperatively redistribute the wealth and power in the United States and in the world so that the per capita standard of living could be maintained at roughly

\$200,000 per annum [Harrington, 1962]. But, the typical response to the suggestion to do so always prompts a debate as to the nature of humans.

Opponents of such a redistributive effort generally maintain that human nature is innately competitive and oriented to the survival-of-the-fittest [Smith, 1895]. Proponents of such an effort generally ascribe to a notion of human nature as a world-mediated process in which humans are aware of their propensity for inhumanity (violence) and engage in struggles to become more fully human [Freire, 1970], or to a notion that a human nature may or may not exist but that even if it does, humans have evolved with or have been given by a creator the ability to think critically about and conceivably act independent of that nature [Marx, 1964].

Drawing from the latter arm of this debate, how can we come to understand not only the establishment but the maintenance of violence in our society? In asking this same question with respect to the violence embodied in racism, Welsing [1970] states, "Considering that in today's very small world, at least three-quarters of the people are 'non-white' and that the totality of the 'non-white' majority population is subjected to domination by a tiny minority of the world's people who classify themselves as white, racism (white supremacy) is revealed as one of, if not indeed, the most important observable phenomenon in the world today for

which social, behavioral, and all other scientists should still be seeking an explanation" [p. 3].

The establishment and maintenance of all forms of violence and its manifestations in our society can only be understood as a sickness of mind and spirit compounded by sociopolitical and intellectual privilege [Welsing, 1970]. Dennis [1981] states, again with respect to the violence embodied in racism, that "In order to understand the dynamics of racism, we must view it as a faith--and, for the American society, a permanent belief system rather than a transient apparition. Its longevity has been tried and tested. It now occupies a place in the American value pantheon alongside such concepts as democracy and liberty, though one would ordinarily view this combination as contradictory" [p. 72]. That is, racism and all other forms of violence and its manifestations are seen as "normal," or not seen at all.

But, the establishment and maintenance of violence is not just a sickness like a head cold which with a little medical attention can be cured, rather it is a full blown major affective disorder or mental illness that goes in and out of remission with the tides of the political climate [Laing, 1967]. Accordingly, Dennis [1981] goes on to state that, "It is this desire to close the mind and seek the shelter of the narrowest of spheres that debilitates and allows racism [violence] to feed upon its already closed intellectual world. Thus, the mental poverty that results



from [it] must inevitably create minds that are non-reflective, minds that, indeed, fear reflection" [p. 82].

Clearly, this sickness, this mental illness comes from the experiences of the overrepresented [Welsing, 1970]. Whether it created these experiences or these experiences created it is overdetermined [Freud, 1900]. But, we can see that it developed in relation to a sense, albeit imagined and hence pathological, of absence in representation [Welsing, 1970]. And, the pathological response to imagining an absence in one's representation is to overcompensate in trying to create a sense of one's presence, a sense of being represented. Welsing [1970] states, "any neurotic drive for superiority and supremacy is usually founded upon a deep and pervading sense of inadequacy and inferiority... This can be seen then as a compensatory adjustment to permit psychological comfort through dominance and control" [pp. 5, 11].

The struggle to include the representation of the underrepresented who have been historically absent from representation is not pathological because it is based on real and not imagined circumstances and is about broadening the base of or sharing representation equally with all [Dennis, 1981]. Those struggling against this base their struggle on an imagined absence of representation and a pathological drive to be the solely represented in everything [Welsing, 1970]. Any movement towards sharing representation with the "other" is perceived as an absence of "self" rather

than a presence of all [Dennis, 1981]. "The oppressors cannot perceive that if **having** is a condition of **being**, it is a necessary condition for all..." [Freire, 1970, p. 44].

### The Impact of Violence on Identity Development and Academic Success

In order to come to an understanding of the impact of the various forms of violence on identity development, it is necessary to more fully articulate the difference between individual and collective identity development as they relate to the issue of representation. In cutting to the core of this difference, Jackson [1976] and Hardiman [1979] explain that members of overrepresented groups experience privilege (access to full participation in democracy) by virtue of their group affiliation, but experience oppression only as individuals, while members of underrepresented groups experience oppression by virtue of their group affiliation, but experience privilege (access to partial or full participation in democracy) only as individuals.

Accordingly, albeit somewhat counterintuitively, members of overrepresented groups develop a sense of their identity relative to their overrepresentation as an individual and later, to varying degrees although sometimes never, as a member of that overrepresented group, while members of underrepresented groups develop a sense of their identity relative to their underrepresentation as a group member and later, again to varying degrees, as an individual [Jackson, 1992].

This difference parallels the way society evaluates members of these groups, respectively. For example, despite the fact that heterosexual White men are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the violent crimes committed in the United States annually [Jenkins, 1993], society views each such heterosexual White male offender as the exception--as an individual--rather than as the rule--as a member of a group [Jenkins, 1993]. Likewise, as mentioned in Chapter 1, despite the fact that street gangs, which by legal definition are comprised largely of young Black and Latino men (85%), are responsible for less than 2% of all violent crimes committed in the United States annually, society views every such young Black and Latino male gang member offender as the rule--as a member of a group--not the exception--as an individual [Jenkins, 1993]. And while we as a society do not attempt to make policies into laws which define the individual and/or group behavior of all heterosexual White men as at least suspect if not also illegal, we do attempt to do so with respect to the individual and/or group behavior of all young Black and Latino men, again as mentioned in Chapter 1 [Jenkins, 1993].

Bracey [1992] states that mainstream society, the overrepresented, can only be afraid of gangs in the abstract, in their imagination, because their actual experiences with gang violence, necessary to substantiate this fear, do not exist. Such fear is only concrete for the underrepresented



who live in the marginalized neighborhoods where gang influence is real.

But it is because this and parallel abstract fears are allowed to persist, largely unchallenged, and permeate both the conscious and unconscious mind of every individual (to varying degrees) in our society, that the underrepresented remain so [Laing, 1967]. For example, if we can paint a picture of young Black and Latino men as savages, then we have effectively given ourselves permission to at best ignore and at worst destroy them [Higgins, 1991]. If however, we acknowledge them as the adolescents and in some cases the children that they are, then we have a responsibility to at least guide, if not nurture them [Higgins, 1991].

If we accept this responsibility, we must ask ourselves what it is about these young people's involvement in gang activity that makes sense to them [Bacigalupe, 1991]. According to Jenkins [1993], it makes sense to them because it affords them privileges based on group membership, paralleling those afforded the overrepresented: "dolla'z" and "play" or money and power, respectively as mentioned in Chapter 1, and a picture of themselves as "successful."

In having explored the etiology of violence and the impact of the reactive violence of the underrepresented on the identity development of the overrepresented, we are now faced with the impact of the violence initiated by the overrepresented on the identity development of the underrepresented: namely that they seek out ways in which to

experience the privileges associated with being overrepresented "by any means necessary" [Haley, 1986]. When members of the underrepresented do this seeking as individuals, it is largely acceptable to the overrepresented (tokenism), but when they do it as a group it is generally not [Jackson, 1992].

When acting in their individual self-interest, the underrepresented are acting in accordance with the premise upon which national and international capitalism is based and perpetuated and which helped to establish and maintains the overrepresented as such [Marx, 1964]. Making demands on the system in this way, while often an important part of the struggle toward shared representation, is generally non-threatening as it will not greatly alter the conditions of existence of the overrepresented as the solely represented [Marx, 1964].

However, when acting as a group, cooperatively, the underrepresented are acting in direct opposition to the premise upon which the power structure and the overrepresented reproduce [Marx, 1964]. Making demands on the system in this way is terribly threatening because it holds the potential of greatly altering the conditions of existence of the overrepresented as the solely represented.

We must now turn this discussion of the impact of violence on identity development to address its subsequent impact on academic success. If we see the mainstream school system as but a microcosm of mainstream society, then we can



understand that academic success is largely determined by the degree to which any particular student's representation mirrors that of the traditionally overrepresented, as previously delineated. That certain aspects of most students' representation will never mirror that of the overrepresented (i.e., physical, developmental, and emotional ability, gender, and usually race) and that other aspects are often compensatorily adjusted in order for success to ensue (i.e., ethnicity, language, religious or spiritual affiliation, sexual preference, acquisition, or orientation, size, appearance, and environmental concern) is violence [Freire, 1970]. This dynamic will be discussed in greater detail with respect to student resistance to school.

### The Literature on Student Resistance to School

In order to better retain young people in school, we must first come to understand why and how they resist school. This involves determining what constitutes both retention and resistance, and the consequences of each.

#### Defining Resistance

While the literature on student resistance to school focuses on "drop-outs" [Barro, 1984; Catterall, 1985; Clark & Irizarry, 1986], student resistance to school can take other forms. Among "stay-ins" [Fine, 1991], we can understand passivity, hyperconformity, and indifference, as well as various forms of negative attention getting behavior ranging



from humorous acting out to destruction of property or injury to person as examples of these other forms [Fine, 1991].

And, while the majority of the literature on student resistance to school focusing on drop-outs portrays them as the poor and disenfranchised losers [Breslin & Stie, 1987; Fagan & Pabon, 1988; Herbert, 1988; Kluegal & Smith, 1986], drop-outs per se can be deconstructed quite differently. To begin with, even among drop-outs, as with stay-ins, their resistance to school is pluralistic, not monolithic, in nature. (This is why the phrase "young people who have left school" is employed in this study as opposed to the term "drop-outs.") Of young people who have left school, the literature identifies opted-outs, dropped-outs, pushed-outs, and kicked-outs [Elliot et al, 1966; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983]. Opted-outs describe themselves as having made a conscious decision to leave school at a specific point in time; dropped-outs describe themselves as having left school little by little not often realizing they were doing it; pushed-outs describe themselves as having wanted to stay in school but unable to because of any of the various pressures inside school becoming insurmountable or those outside school taking precedence; and kicked-outs describe themselves as having been expelled from school usually because of behavioral issues [Fine & Rosenberg, 1983].

#### On Why Young People Leave School

In a study of one urban high school, the researcher wrote, "Uncovering layers of systematic, widespread school

failure, the question was no longer why a student would drop out. It was more compelling to consider why so many would stay in a school committed to majority failure" [Fine, 1991, p. 7]. In a comparison of the portraits of stay-ins and drop-outs, drop-outs were found to be less depressed, more likely to view their academic success or lack thereof as a combination of their own personality and structural injustices, more likely to challenge authority when they felt, believed or knew they were cheated by it, and generally less conformist than stay-ins [Fine, 1991]. In short, drop-outs were found to be psychologically healthier than stay-ins. "When students drop out...in majority proportions, their exit must be read as a structural, if not self-conscious, critique" [Fine, 1991, p. 14].

But young people also leave school because of something much more mundane: no one tries to stop them [Dryfoos, n.d.]. As one researcher put it, "I can't believe so many kids come in here [the school attendance office] and say, 'I want to drop out' and nobody says, 'Where do you think you're going? Do you know what this will do to your future?' Instead the standard response is, 'How old are you?' followed by, 'You have to fill out these papers and get your parent to sign'" [Fine, 1991, p. 6].

Student resistance to school can also be understood as a reaction to the schools' resistance to dealing with issues of diversity and especially to developing and implementing multicultural curricula [Wiley, 1991]. Afrocentric,



Africancentric, African American malecentric [Kunjufu, 1984], and Latina/ocentric, primarily Puerto Ricancentric [Giroux, & McLaren, 1989; Lucas, 1984; Walsh, 1991], educational models and schools, among others, some of which are branches of and others precursors to multicultural education, have developed in response to this resistance [Giroux, 1992]. In these essentially racially, though sometimes also ethnically and gender separatist educational environments, students from historically underrepresented groups complete general education requirements in an academically rigorous and highly culturally sensitive learning environment [Giroux, 1992]. They are positively reinforced and provided with role models from their own cultural groups in their classroom instructors and in the curricula in the way generally only European American students are in mainstream, "traditional," White, or eurocentric schools [Giroux, 1992].

The results of such initiatives have been known to be very positive at the collegiate level for some time. While one out of twenty Black students will graduate from a predominantly White institution, one out of two will from a predominantly Black one [Fordham & Ogbu, 1986]. The even bigger problem to which these Of Colorcentric independent private schools have responded has been and, as this study illuminates, continues to be, getting Students of Color through high school and into college [Kunjufu, 1984].

The practices of educational withholding which supposedly only characterized schools decades ago but which



still characterize them today, have begged the proliferation of centric schools [Nieto, 1992]. Some examples of these practices are class, race, and gender biased so-called "standardized" testing, everything but maintenance or developmental and two-way bilingual educational programs, remediation, academic and vocational tracking programs, and multiply discriminatory disciplinary procedures, personnel policies, and teaching practices [Nieto, 1992].

It is important to note that while "White" schools, colleges, and universities were, in fact, historically all White, barring access to Blacks, Black schools, colleges, and universities have never been all Black as they have always permitted and had White enrollment [Clark, 1991]. Only recently has the latter changed with the proliferation of these Of Colorcentric independent private schools. It is likewise important to note that this separatism is only something that people in underrepresented groups can choose to participate in themselves, not impose on others, as a necessary part of the process of liberation of all people. When overrepresented groups impose separation between themselves and underrepresented groups which seeks to promote rather than to overthrow the oppressive conditions of existence of the underrepresented, this is called segregation and is anti-liberatory for all [Jackson, 1987].

Regardless of how the young people who have left school left, their leaving represents the absenting of their critical voices [Hooks, 1990; Walsh, 1991]. In so doing it

ensures the maintenance of the educational status quo: "the ironies of social injustice," what and how teachers teach, "and what and how they won't" [Fine, 1991, p. 26].

### On Who Leaves School

The statistical picture of who the young people are who are leaving school paints a rather dramatic and complex picture. They comprise disproportionately specific yet simultaneously interconnected underrepresented groups, rather than being more proportionately and independently from all overrepresented and underrepresented groups. For example, in a study that only looked at White males, it was determined that among White males, socio-economic class background was the greatest determinant of who leaves school [Bowles & Gintis, 1976]. But, in considering socio-economic class background relative to race, another study found, for example, that among low income young people Whites are most likely to leave school, while among upper income young people they are the least likely to leave school [Giroux, 1993]. Hence, socio-economic class background is a greater determinant of young White people leaving school than of young People of Color doing so.

Fine [1991] determined that this phenomenon has to do with the fact that "A high school degree is economically more valuable to those who are already privileged..." [p. 23]. For example, "Women's return on each year of education are estimated to be 40% of men's and African Americans' are approximately 63% of whites'" [p. 23]. But again,



considering these results relative to race and ethnicity or gender, we find two things. First, in a comparison of African American women who had left school and those who had graduated the diploma was a significant buffer against poverty. Second, in an identical comparison of White women the diploma was a significant determinant of level of employment attained. Fine [1991] aptly concludes "Having a diploma yields much difference within groups, but it doesn't turn an African American woman into a white man" [p. 23].

Gender is also a factor in determining who leaves school as, generally speaking, males leave in slightly greater proportions than females [Earle & Fraser, 1987; Earle & Kysilko, 1987; Kates, 1988]. But again, in considering gender relative to race, ethnicity and geography, we find that in urban environments, Latinas leave school in the greatest proportion [Walsh, 1991], and that all females leave school more often than all males due to "family concerns" [Connell et al, 1982]. And, as could be expected based on our previous discussion, the degree to which females mirror the representation of males, especially with respect to manner or "attitudes and expectations," largely determines the degree to which they will stay in school [Fine, 1991].

We can conclude then, that "Youths who begin their lives at the greatest risks of class, racial or ethnic, and gender exploitation attend the most traumatized schools and receive the most impoverished educations. They are most likely to exit prior to graduation, and they are they least likely to



reenter within two years. To worsen their stories, their **relative** economic disadvantage as dropouts is today substantially greater than it was in the past" [Fine, 1991, pp. 23-24]. This makes multicultural education's efforts to respond to these realities even more dire.

### The Literature on Multicultural Education

Among the strategies employed to decrease student resistance and enhance student retention and academic success, multicultural education, broadly interpreted, has been the most effective [Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991]. This is perhaps, at least in part, due to the fact that in deconstructing student resistance to school, proponents of multicultural education, unlike others attempting to address this issue, focus on changing the attributes of schools rather than the characteristics of individual students who resist, i.e., blaming the victim [Ryan, 1981].

Since its inception, proponents of multicultural education and/or ethnic studies have attacked the structural features of schools which not only encourage but insure, ever so selectively, the leaving of some students, the silencing of the protests of some others who remain [Walsh, 1991], and the success of some others who likewise remain, in accordance with the degree to which these students' representations mirror those of the overrepresented. Unfortunately, the structural features of schools attacked by early multiculturalists remain largely the same as those attacked

today: inadequate and/or inappropriate strategies for not only teaching but affirming--educating--students who are second language speakers of English, Students of Color, and female students, and, more recently, differently abled students and Gay, Lesbian and bisexual students, among others [Dennis & Harlow, 1986; Jones, 1986]. As our previous discussion would suggest, the very absence of such strategies is violence, with obvious economic, political, psychological, and hence, physical impact [Laing & Cooper, 1971].

While opponents of multicultural education imagine the educational reforms championed by multiculturalists to be radical [Bloom, 1987; D'Souza, 1991; Paglia, 1990; Will, 1992], they are often much more subtle, even mundane. Two examples will help to illustrate this point.

First, while ironic it is important to note that African American students rarely left or protested in school during the Jim Crow segregation era and were generally more academically successful then than today [Bracey, 1992]. While in 1993 schools remain highly segregated, two fundamental changes in their organization, which have occurred since so-called "integration" was initiated, explain the subsequent changes in the attitude and performance of African American students in them. Whereas during Jim Crow segregation there were African American teachers teaching African American students in African American run schools in African American neighborhoods, today, African American students are taught by largely European American teachers in

European American run schools in African American neighborhoods [Kozol, 1991].

Second, in considering the plethora of research on second language acquisition, it is interesting to note the primary factors contributing to successful second language acquisition: the importance attributed to success in school by one's parents (or guardians), literacy development in one's first language first, maintenance of one's first language while acquiring one's second, and acquisition of one's second language in an environment in which first language speakers of your target language likewise learn to speak your first language [Willet, 1987]. Absenting all of these factors, second language acquisition is still very successful if, in the process of acquiring one's second language, one's first language is not disaffirmed; that is, not implied, overtly or covertly, to be inferior nor sanctioned against using [Nieto, 1992].

In a study on the attributes for second language acquisition of English by Latina/o students, Cuban students were found to acquire English most quickly and comprehensively and yet most likely to speak only Spanish in the home [Valdiviese & Davis, 1988]. In controlling for other factors, socio-economic class background, circumstances surrounding immigration to the United States, geographic area, among others, the single most important factor in determining their second language acquisition prowess was



found to be the high priority placed on academic success by their parents.

What these two examples illustrate rather insidiously is that the affirmation of one's representation is often more important than other pedagogical concerns [Nieto, 1992]. This is to say that who teaches, what they teach, how they teach it, where they teach it, and why they teach it has much greater impact on student retention and academic success than the actual act of simply teaching does. That is, any teacher cannot just pick any subject to teach from any perspective in any school for any reason and expect all students to uniformly and positively respond. The act of actually **educating** must be more thoughtful and deliberate, taking into account who the students are and what their experiences are outside the classroom in determining what they need to learn and how they need to learn it so that they may become both meaningful and successful as well as full participants in our democratic society. It must also take into account the motivation that each and every teacher has for being in the particular classroom that they are in. And, if that motivation is inconsistent with any of the students' needs, then compensatory adjustments, ranging from teacher education to termination, must be made until the appropriate consistency is achieved [Kunjufu, 1984].

## Conclusion

Clearly, multicultural education has effectively developed just such thoughtful and deliberate reforms [Nieto, 1992]. Barriers to implementing these reforms, namely schools' resistance to dealing with issues of diversity [Wiley, 1991], can be understood as part and parcel of the pathological drive by the overrepresented to remain so. But, as we shall see in Chapter 4, reforms developed and implemented still do not go far enough. Certainly, given that "drop-outs" are often more psychologically healthy than "stay-ins" [Fine, 1991], we need to continue to focus on making the hearts and minds of students flourish in school and not on merely retaining them there.

In seeking to especially meet the needs of students whose identity development has been impacted by the various forms of violence and its manifestations so that they can become meaningful and successful participants in our democratic society, we must first seek to afford them this privilege (ideally thought of as a right) as a group [Jackson, 1992; Jenkins, 1993]. Typically, multicultural education has sought to meet the needs of the various subgroups embodied in this group by developing and trying to implement reforms that address the specific forms of violence and its manifestations that each experiences; for example, lack of equal access to education based on race or gender or language, among others, or various combinations of these [Nieto, 1992]. In this way, multicultural education has

sought to afford the aforementioned privilege to all but only as members of these subgroups. This is a pseudo-individualization of the means by which this privilege is achieved [Jackson, 1992].

In seeking to develop educational strategies to equalize the representation--the equality of access to and outcome in democracy--of all groups (and hence, all individuals) multicultural education must take into account how the representation of these groups ~~becomes~~ unequal--because of violence [Freire, 1970]. By focusing on the collective experience of those whose identity development has been impacted by violence and its manifestations and by employing educational strategies which seek to afford them full participation in democracy as a group, multicultural education will become the single most effective tool for disarming, effectively eliminating, this violence.

### Chapter Summary

The review of the literature in this chapter provided the framework in which to locate this study. The literature review on violence focused on its etiology and its impact on both individual and group identity development and, subsequently, on academic success.

The literature review on student resistance to school further confirmed that violence impacts significantly on various aspects of student retention. In this review, student resistance to school was defined and what is already



known about why and which young people leave school was discussed.

Finally, the specific literature review on multicultural education provided valuable insight into how to develop the field further with respect to the role of violence in student resistance to school. The literature review in all three areas were critical in helping to evolve multicultural education into a tool for disarming violence.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY: TAPPING ALTERNATIVE MULTICULTURAL CURRICULA RESOURCES

#### Introduction

This chapter reiterates the purpose of the study, expands its general research questions, and comprehensively sets forth the participatory action research methodology as well as the process involved in employing it herein. This information is organized into sections under corresponding headings.

#### Reiteration of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of urban young people who had left school before completing high school or receiving a GED concerning the general factors leading up to their leaving school, and what, if anything, could have been done to prevent them from leaving or could get them to go back. In particular, the study focused on finding out what role the various forms of violence and its manifestations, as defined by the researcher and by the participants, played in the participants' leaving school or might play in their returning. Given this information, the study then investigates how multicultural education might better retain young people in academic settings as well as recruit them back from the streets.

### Expansion of the General Research Questions

I began this study with three general questions in mind. I wanted to know why young people leave school, what role violence plays in their leaving school, and what multicultural education could do to prevent both in seeking, ultimately, to develop it as a tool for disarming violence.

As the review of the literature on resistance to school detailed in Chapter 2, a great deal of research has been done to determine the various reasons young people leave school. However, while most of this research is highly relevant to this study, none of the reasons for young people leaving school that it highlights are articulated as violence. Once articulated as violence, the multifaceted reasons that young people leave school could be explored and more viable strategies for multicultural educators to employ could be determined. This then, became the point of departure for this study.

### Participatory Action Research

"Participatory [action] research begins with a problem" [Park, 1989, p. 9]. Consistent with our previous discussion,

...the sense of the problem arises from the people who are affected by it and whose interest demands that it be solved. And the problem addressed is social in nature and calls for collective solution, otherwise there is no participatory exigency. This sense of the problem may not always be externalized as a consensually derived and objectified target of attack in the community, although there may be suffering, a sense of malaise and frustration, and anger. ...The researcher



should, of course, share the sense of the problem with the people that s/he works with and should be committed to its solution; s/he should be a partner in the endeavor in this sense. The researcher participates in the struggle of the people [Park, 1989, p. 9].

I chose to employ a participatory action research methodology in conducting this study for a variety of reasons. First, I chose it as my research methodology because it was most suited to this study. Participatory action research is a very unique research methodology because it at once differs significantly from both the various forms of quantitative and qualitative research generally used in doctoral studies, while employing aspects of both in carrying out its research objectives.

Quantitative research, which has its roots in the physical sciences, is presumed to be neutral because it employs numbers and therefore produces results which may be generalized beyond the immediate scope of any particular research [Park, 1989]. Qualitative research, which has its roots in the social sciences, is presumed to be engaged because it employs words and therefore produces results which are limited to the immediate scope of any particular research. But, qualitative researchers often employ a phenomenological [Schutz, 1967] or an ethnographic [Goodenough, 1957] research approach in engaging in qualitative research in an effort to appear more neutral. However, "A question of epistemology is also a question of ideology. The acquisition of knowledge cannot be separated from the experiences and context of the knowers, human beings

who live in historical and cultural contexts. Knowledge is not value free, as those who are in favor of the 'scientific method' seem to claim" [Martinez, 1991, p. 20]. Clearly, "the method mirrors the ideology" [Schuman, 1982, p. 188].

Participatory action research methodology, while it is ideologically more akin to qualitative rather than quantitative research, departs radically from them both primarily because it never presumes nor attempts to be neutral; rather it openly acknowledges an engaged point of entry. Participatory action research is "a self conscious way of empowering people so that they can take effective actions toward betterment of their life conditions" [Park, 1989, p. 1]. While the idea of self-determination is far from new, the idea of calling the process of engaging in the struggle for it "research" is. "Cast in the mold of research, the knowledge link between what is needed for a better life and what can be done to attain it is made clearer; knowledge becomes a crucial element in enabling people once more to have a say in how they would like to see the world put together and run. In participatory [action] research people themselves investigate the reality in order that they may transform it as active participants" [Park, 1989, p. 1]. In particular, it is the specificity of social change objectives that it pursues, both the employment as is and the modification of quantitative and qualitative research methods that it demonstrates, the kinds of knowledge it produces, and the way it relates knowledge to social action

that distinguishes participatory action research from both the conventional research methodologies and epistemologies.

The discussion of research as neutral or engaged is somewhat reminiscent of the debate between Dilthey [1913] and Weber [1958] begun at the turn of this century and which is tangentially continued today by Gadamer [1960] and Habermas [1971], respectively, regarding the concept of hermeneutics, the methodological relationship between experience, expression, and understanding. Dilthey's position, defined by the term "verhesten," is that the interpretation of a human research subject, as opposed to a non-human one, is generated by the researcher who necessarily enters into this type of research with an a priori assumption about the order of results that will be found. Because of this, states Dilthey, human science problems cannot be understood by counting or numbers in the way that non-human science problems can because while there is a measurable order to the latter, there is no such order to the former. The study of human subjects and their relationships then must be seen as all interpretation. On the other hand, Weber's position is that both human and non-human science problems can be understood in the same way, through counting or numbers, if the researcher relates to their subject in a neutral not engaged fashion, whether that subject is a person or a rock.

Both of these perspectives are problematic in their characterization of at least the non-human science researcher as capable of neutrality in relationship to their research



subject. Certainly one can tell a great deal of stories with numbers regardless of the subject. One can weigh a human as one can weigh a rock and imagine oneself as having gained some neutral result about either subject. But this result is in no way more "scientific," does not bring the researcher any closer to a "truth" about their subject, and reflects no less of an engaged relationship between the researcher and subject than some non-numerical result would. The very decision to enter into a relationship with any research subject by weighing it is itself a decision that is culturally, theoretically, and ideologically engaged. Hence, the study of all research subjects, human or non-human, is all interpretation. And, to acknowledge this adds validity to the research.

Park [1989] and others [Freire, 1972; Maguire, 1989; Participatory Research Network, 1982; Rahman, 1982] provide concise, comprehensive overviews of participatory action research methodology. These overviews have provided the framework for the discussion of the methodology employed in the execution of this study. However, there are several aspects of these overviews with which I take issue which bear mentioning.

First of all, I take issue with them to the extent that they suggest (as does Freire [1970]) that there is a human nature and that inherent in that nature is the struggle that human beings necessarily engage in to become more fully human or liberated from oppression. I am not wholly convinced that

there is such a thing as "human nature," nor that even if there was inherent in it would be the struggle for liberation from oppression. Given this, I call this aspect of these overviews into question, imagining that, like all other transformative processes in which human beings engage, the struggle for liberation from oppression occurs as a result of the interaction of the many contradictory and complementary forces operating in the world (one of which may be a human nature predisposing them to so engage themselves), impacting on the individuals and groups of individuals in it in a variety of ways which consciously and/or unconsciously move them to engage in this struggle. With reference to this study then, I do not want to suggest that it is in the "nature" of the participants in it to become liberated from oppression, nor that it is because of this "nature" that they would become so.

I also take issue with these overviews to the extent that they suggest the following:

- \* That the lives of the participatory action research participants are necessarily "full of injustice and suffering;"
- \* That if the lives of the participatory action research participants are full of injustice and suffering that the participants do not already know this and that their lives can be different, as well as how to achieve that end; and,
- \* That the participatory action research participant wants their life to be different if it is full of injustice and



suffering. (Among a plethora of other experiences, my work in mental health taught me that sometimes people do not really want to eliminate injustice or suffering from their lives, they just want to learn how to manage it better.)

In this case with reference to the present study, I do not want to suggest any of these things about the participants I have engaged.

Like any research methodology, participatory action research can be invoked in a variety of ways. While it seeks to enable the participants in it to come to an awareness of and, subsequently, to act to overthrow their oppression, it presupposes, to varying degrees, that, because of this oppression, the participants cannot come to this awareness and, subsequently, to these actions, without the support of the researcher. This is inherently contradictory. How can the researcher be genuinely interested in the participants coming to an organic awareness of and motivation to overthrow their oppression if they subscribe to the notion that their providing the impetus for this is essential in the process? It is, as was mentioned in a parallel instance in Chapter 1, as though the participatory action researcher is validating her or his position in society while simultaneously engaging in a critique of it.

This contradiction is addressed in much of the literature on participatory action research [Freire, 1972; Maguire, 1989; Park, 1989; Participatory Research Network, 1982; Rahman, 1982], but, by far, the two positions that best



capture the critical nature of this contradiction can be articulated as follows. On the one hand, the greatest enemy in the participatory action research process is the participatory action researcher her or himself, which demands their rigorous self reflection [Rahman, 1982]. On the other hand, once engaged in the research process with the participants, becoming too self reflective may prevent the participatory action researcher from taking an active enough role to provide the impetus for the organic movement to ensue [Tsongawa, 1990], which is equally damning, if not more so, in some situations. Maintaining the balance between these two extremes then, is a major task of the participatory action researcher.

### Research Process

This part of this chapter comprehensively details the process involved in employing the participatory action research methodology in conducting this study. The details of this process are organized under headings which explain how the researcher acclimated herself to best understand the participants' circumstances, how participants were selected, accessed, and engaged in dialogue, and how data were analyzed, validated and organized.

### Background Information

The researcher who undertakes participatory [action] research must know the community personally as well as scientifically before commencing the participatory [action] research work. This means that s/he must learn

everything that can be found out about the community and its members historically and sociologically through available records, interviews, and observation, and participation in the life of the community [Park, 1989, p. 10].

Having come from an urban environment, a life visited and revisited by various forms of violence (oppression), and the experience of multicultural education empowering me to become aware of and motivated to overthrow my oppression, I was organically prepared to serve as a participatory action researcher in conducting this study. Additionally, I currently live in one major urban area and work in another, both in close proximity to the areas where the actual research for this study was conducted. Hence, the issues this study addressed are part and parcel of my day-to-day personal existence and professional concern.

Beyond this, I was familiar with both the communities and the surrounding areas in which the organizations, who employed the personnel who helped me to identify participants, were located as well as with the organizations themselves. I was previously employed by two of these organizations, have lived in one of the three communities, and have worked in two of the three communities while having visited and attended several recreational events, professional meetings, and conferences in the third. I also subscribed to the major newspaper of all three of the areas for a year prior to conducting the research in an effort to keep myself apprised of relevant situations in each. At the same time, I maintained intermittent contact with several

high profile, strategically employed, multiculturally diverse and oriented individuals in these areas who facilitated my "reading between the newspaper lines" in an effort to get a more organic understanding of community dynamics.

### Participant Selection

This research involved the in-depth interviewing of nine high school aged to early middle-aged young people who have left school. They were chosen because of their presumably more well developed analytical skills (Piaget, 1970).

Of the nine, there were two African American females, Vanessa aged 23 and Elaine aged 37, two Puerto Rican males, Carlos aged 16 and Armando aged 24, one biracial Vietnamese and European American (specific ethnicity unknown), so-called "Amerasian," female, Le-Thuy aged 21, one African American male, Waverly aged 23, one biethnic African American and Jamaican male, Stacy aged 16, one biracial Native American (Iconock) and European American (French) male, Thomas aged 19, and one European American (Polish and Russian) male, John aged 17.

At thirty-seven, Elaine is between thirteen and twenty-one years older than the other participants. While she fits the criteria by which all the participants for this study were chosen, including her in this study may still seem inappropriate. It is important to point out here that the notion of a "young person" as employed in this study is somewhat relative. Given the fact that Elaine became a drug addict one month after leaving school (three months



before she would have graduated from high school) and led that life until just over a year ago in some very significant ways makes her developmentally at about the same stage as all of the other participants. For example, she is just beginning to learn how to actually experience and work through disappointment and pain without using drugs to escape the discomfort associated with these feelings in much the same way an adolescent might without having a temper tantrum. Certainly, every individual goes through this stage at different times in their life, and some never get through it. Yet, it is still a stage normally associated with the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

In other ways, Elaine is developmentally much more sophisticated than the other participants. This is clear just in considering the range of skills she had to develop in order to support her drug habit for twenty years, especially that she was able to mask her addiction to social service agency personnel supposedly highly trained to detect it.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for including Elaine as a participant in this study has to do with the nature of her peer relationships as violence. In turn, they have quite negatively impacted her ability to be successful and retained in school.

All of the participants were from three different large urban areas in the northeastern United States. They were chosen for this study because mainstream society has gone out of its way to characterize them (and of the "them," primarily

those engaged in gang activity) as removed from, disinterested in, or apathetic towards even the most multicultural of education (though most have never even been exposed to it [Bing, 1991]); in short, as beyond reprieve. In being so characterized, these people and their ideas become the most valuable resource for multicultural educators in our endeavors to develop and implement socially relevant curricula which will involve, interest, and engage these and all young people to the surprise and perhaps dismay of the mainstream.

These particular young people were also chosen for this research because mainstream society theoretically perceives them as the most violent and, as such, the most erroneous in even their marginalized existence in that society [Bracey, 1992]. This perception results primarily because as much as 95% of all media coverage on violent crime focuses on that perpetrated against White people's person (as opposed to their property) by teenaged Black and Latino males even though 90% of violent crime occurs intraracially and 82% of all crime is perpetrated against property [Jenkins, 1993]. If multicultural education can find a way to reach these young people, then perhaps it will gain credibility. At the same time, these young people are also those who some factions of the left wing [Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Marx, 1964] perceive as the most viable population to engage in the struggle for the liberation of all from oppression. In fact, some left wing intellectuals [Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991;

Freire, 1970] might argue that this population is already engaged in that struggle but, as was previously mentioned, because its members are submerged in reality and, as such, are unable to perceive clearly the 'order' which serves the interest of the oppressors, they manifest a type of horizontal violence [Freire, 1970], rather than engaging in disciplined revolutionary struggle.

Given this last perspective, in choosing to employ, to the degree that was possible, a participatory action research methodology in engaging in this research, I also chose these young people for this research because I believed that in engaging them in dialogue [Freire, 1970] about their conditions of existence relative to education and violence, that this would in turn engage them in the process of "conscientizacao" [Freire, 1970] or conscientization (critical consciousness) with respect to those conditions of existence. In turn, I hoped that this would spur them to act so as to come to own and, subsequently, change those conditions of existence, rather than to merely continue to exist in relationship to them. That is, they would come to one of two places. They would come for the first time to see education and violence in a critical light and learn to shine that light so that they may independently see their way toward developing and implementing a plan of action to concretely improve those conditions of existence. Or, they would come to demonstrate that this is how they have always



seen and acted on these things, despite how they have been characterized has led people to believe.

As a result of employing this research methodology then, I surmised that one young person I interviewed might return to school to get a degree in medicine and then go back into her or his community, presumably a low income one, to open up a public health care clinic. And/or that one of the young people I interviewed might return to school to get a degree in law and become better able to provide for her or his family economically. And/or that one of the young people I interviewed might return to school to get a degree in business and then go back into her or his community, again, presumably a low income one, to increase the sophistication of her or his crack business. And I surmised, it might mean something altogether different still.

It is important to note here that my expectations in employing the participatory action research methodology were not precariously situated atop a balloon of altruism. Certainly, I hoped that the young people I interviewed would develop not just the consciousness but also the commitment to pursue something along the lines of the first of these three scenarios, in which they become cooperatively and community oriented in their endeavors. But there was no guarantee that this would be the case. I had absolutely no control over how participating in this study might or might not influence these young people. Ultimately, it was both the fantastic range of potential that I saw existing in these young people

for engaging in any number of positive endeavors, and, likewise, the potentially fantastic range of information that I imagined they may provide me with to further inform multicultural education, that led me to choose them for this research.

### Gaining Access

In practice the participatory [action] research process of intervention is initiated by an external change agent, such as a community development agency, an extension service of a university, or a church group. A researcher or a team of researchers working with this intervener enters the community to stimulate the community's interest in participating in the research activity. The members of the community are of course aware of the problem that is being addressed in this manner, since they live these problems, such as landlessness, immigration troubles, poor health conditions, and so forth [Park, 1989, p. 10].

Participants for this research were identified via an organic source or "external change agent" [Park, 1989], in this case someone who was originally from their neighborhood who continues to work in their community but who also has ties to the greater community, considered mutually trustworthy to us both. To facilitate the organic sources in recruiting participants, in seven of the nine cases the participants were offered and subsequently accepted thirty dollars apiece in exchange for their time, effort, and disclosure. In the other two cases, the participants got to skip their least favorite activity, at the special educational facility they are required by law to attend, in exchange for their time, effort, and disclosure.

Pseudonyms were used for names, locations, events, and/or other potentially revealing data. Interestingly, two of the male participants, Carlos and Stacy, told me that while they understood the reason I had to use pseudonyms, they wished I could use their real names because they wanted people to know it was them saying what they said and having had the experiences that they had had. They wanted the credit for themselves.

Along the same lines, none of the participants was interested in choosing their own pseudonym. I could do it, they said. This I believe had most to do with the fact that all of these young people, while far from trouble free, were pretty comfortable with and proud of who they were and therefore really did not have the desire to choose a fantasy name for themselves. Put another way, they were not trying to escape who they were. This is consistent with the information presented previously in the review of the literature on student resistance to school which documented that school "drop-outs" are generally more psychologically healthy than "stay-ins" [Fine, 1991].

Armando and Waverly were identified through an outreach worker at a private non-profit youth organization dedicated to providing "at risk" young people of all ages with academic and/or career advice and placement, legal advocacy, and interpersonal counseling. Le-Thuy was identified through the director of a community civic association which provides various kinds of economic assistance, like housing and



welfare advocacy or food and clothing donations, academic and career advice and placement, as well as ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to members of their community. Stacy and John were identified via the director of a special education facility which provides behavioral modification, individual, group, and family counseling, and academic support to youth age 11 to 20, usually adjudicated for and/or with a history of a range of behavioral problems in public school and/or their communities. Vanessa, Elaine, and Carlos were identified via the educational coordinator of a community center's employment preparation program which provides people of all ages who left school for any reason before completing high school with pre-GED tutoring and/or career advice and placement. And Thomas was identified first through the Director and subsequently a member of a private non-profit ethnic association providing genealogical services to members as well as education regarding heritage to both members as well as the larger community.

It is important to acknowledge that while I identify the people who helped me to access the participants for this study as "organic sources," in essence most of them are (as am I) still bureaucrats. As such it is likely that they were biased in "identifying" potential participants more likely selecting them; young people who, at the very least, were articulate, if not also those who would presumably say "good things" about the bureaucrat's program.

This was most certainly the case with Stacy and John. The program personnel who connected me to them openly acknowledged selecting them first, because they would agree to do it, second, because they were articulate, and third, because they would have something to say about the topic. Program image was less of a concern here as any complaints these young people might express about it could be dismissed as part of the "emotional disturbance" which led to their placement there.

The program personnel who connected me to Waverly and Armando and to Le-Thuy acknowledged selecting them because of all the young people they serviced, they knew these young people to be the most in need of the thirty dollars I was offering in exchange for their participation. While Waverly and Armando were quite articulate, Le-Thuy was not. Program image was much less a concern here since involvement in it was voluntary.

The program personnel who connected me to Carlos, Elaine, and Vanessa did so much less directly. I was told that I could come to one of the pre-employment program classes they and others attended as it was convening, explain my study, and solicit participation. Carlos, Elaine, and Vanessa self-selected. Interestingly, they were all quite articulate. And, here again, program image was much less a concern since involvement in it was voluntary.

And finally, the program personnel who connected me to Thomas did so much less directly still. They referred me to



one of their program members who, in turn, referred me to one of his peers, whom I then contacted independently. In agreeing to participate then, in essence Thomas also self-selected. Interestingly, he was not terribly articulate. Program image was a non-factor here since he was not involved in one.

Beyond the role of bureaucrats here it is important to point out that none of these young people would have agreed to participate in this study if first, they did not believe they had something to say, and second, if they did not have at least a desire if not also some ability to articulate what they had to say. Hence even with participant self-selection, the pool of participants one ends up with is still somewhat less completely random and representative than one might initially imagine.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Originally, I intended to get the tape recorded oral consent of the participants and, if necessary, their legal guardians, to document this. I intended to do this during a preliminary meeting, organized by the organic source, between the participant (and legal guardian), the organic source and myself. In this meeting, the focus of the study, the research methodology, and the protection of the participants' rights (inclusive of the participants' right to, at any time, drop out of the study and/or to revoke their consent for me to use the information from any or all of their interview in the study), welfare, identity and/or confidentiality were all



to be explained (and were, in fact, so explained) to "inform" the participant (and their legal guardian) before the tape recorded voluntary consent was requested (see APPENDIX).

The rationale for documenting informed voluntary consent of the participants (and, when necessary, their legal guardians) in this study via audiotape was as follows. Because the study involved interviewing young people who had left junior or high school, it was possible that at least some of these young people and/or their legal guardians would not be literate enough to read through a written, detailed consent form to know what they were signing. This was not to suggest that these young people (nor their legal guardians) were not intelligent; as the literature review on school resistance told us, most often they are the young people who are the most intelligent [Fine, 1991]. But, as the young people who are leaving school become increasingly younger (despite the legal early termination age of sixteen), they are increasingly less educated, despite their often high aptitudes for learning.

Beyond the criterion that participants in this study had left school, was another that they come from circumstances where the various forms of violence and its manifestations previously discussed are commonplace. In considering the conditions of existence of such young people, the skepticism and/or paranoia with which one must go through life in such circumstances to survive, it was also likely that having to sign "something" (especially from a "school person") would

deter at least some of them from wanting to participate in this study. In further considering the common culture of these young people, the role that audiotapes and the associated technology play in that culture, oral tape recorded informed voluntary consent seemed a more effective strategy for meeting my needs for such while maintaining the trust of the participants, my welcome in their communities and lives, and the authenticity of the research.

While all of this conjecture was confirmed by all of my organic sources, most of it proved to be incorrect. That is, the participants (and, when necessary, their legal guardians) felt perfectly comfortable signing the consent forms after I or we read them aloud together and discussed various aspects for clarification.

Interviews were conducted in a location mutually agreed upon by each participant and myself, considered safe by us both. Seven of the nine interviews were conducted in the facilities of the organizations who employed the organic sources that helped me to identify participants. The other two, with Elaine and Thomas, were conducted in the participants' homes.

Interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed to ensure exact representation of participants' responses. Translators were not necessary to further ensure the exact representation of participants' responses.

In one case, with Le-Thuy, a translator might have facilitated our communication. However, the organic source

who brought us together believed that it would greatly enhance the Le-Thuy's self-esteem if she tried to speak to me directly in English, her second language. Much to her surprise, she was able to understand the questions I asked her in English and to provide answers to them in English as well. I credit both her and myself with this success. This interview was somewhat tedious as a lot of language negotiation took place; that is, we often searched for synonyms for words to enhance comprehension, and often I would interpret back to her what I believed she was saying for her to confirm or disconfirm. Le-Thuy was actually able to communicate in English fairly well. I can only imagine that her initial apprehension in so doing in this situation stemmed from experiences she undoubtedly had with the linguisticism (language discrimination) of the primarily larger English speaking community [Vidmanis, 1992]. As indicated earlier, the target language is most easily acquired when the host environment in which this acquisition is taking place is welcoming, as the term "host" would imply [Willet, 1987].

### Dialogue

If there is any one methodological feature that distinguishes participatory [action] research from other social research, it is dialogue, because it is through dialogue that people come together and participate in all crucial aspects of investigation and collective action. To dialogue means to talk as equal partners in an exchange of not only information but also of sentiment and values. Dialogue is a means of discovering the sharedness of a problem, the connectedness of the lives, and the common ground for action. This cannot be achieved through the exercise of merely answering questions in a conventional questionnaire



or a formalized interview which do not allow the respondent to speak in a full voice. ...Dialogue ...produces not just factual knowledge but also interpersonal and critical knowledge... ...[Therefore] the conventional research methods, such as, questionnaire and interview, take on different meaning and become modified to merge with dialogue [Park, 1989, p. 14].

Given these parameters for dialogue and our previous discussion, it becomes clear that I identified general research question **areas** rather than specific research questions in order to allow myself the room to modify the interviews so that they could "merge with dialogue" [Park, 1989]. Clearly, dialogue is the major aspect of participatory action research methodology that I employed in conducting this research. This is because, given the focus of this research, I did not engage the research participants in the actual organization or direction of this research, but, have rather, used the information that they provided me with to inform the organization of other research and curricula development and implementation in multicultural education.

#### Data Analysis and Validity

In participatory [action] research the data are analyzed with the intention of discovering the dimensions of the problem under investigation and to come up with a guide to collective action [Park, 1989, p. 15].

...the actual process of establishing the validity of participatory [action] research must also be participatory, which takes the form of participatory evaluation [Park, 1989, p. 19].

While the participants in this research were in no way obligated to help me analyze the data I collected, to draw

conclusions from the data, or to evaluate the validity and usefulness of the data, they were afforded the opportunity to do so. While all of the participants were interested in reading what I have written, none have responded with any feedback to include. In various ways they all stated that this had most to do with the timeframe within which they needed to respond with the feedback (two months) given other responsibilities they had and how they prioritized those responsibilities vis-a-vis providing me with the feedback. I believe that this also had to do with the fact that the first part of their providing me with the feedback required them to read at least their interview. With limited academic skills, especially with respect to language (see CHAPTER 5), reviewing even a small amount of text could prove challenging, but ten to thirty pages of text might well have been overwhelming. Time permitting, having them review their interviews in smaller sections might have been more successful. And, resources permitting, increasing the economic incentive for their participation in this aspect of the study might also have induced greater success here.

I would like to imagine that the validity of the data is intrinsic, that the data are inherently valid because they come directly from those whom, and whose circumstances and experiences, the research concerns, rather than only being the researcher's perceptions about those whom, and whose circumstances and experiences, the research concerns. But, unfortunately, this is never true because what the

participants are offering me is an interpretation of their experience, a picture of their lives in which they define themselves.

Beyond this, it is important to emphasize that data from cross-cultural interviews are extremely hard to assess. And while the data was not triangulated per se, that is, my interpretations of them and conclusions about them were not formally reviewed by an outsider for biases, I did consult extensively, though informally, with colleagues of different races, gender, and ages in analyzing the data. I also strongly encouraged study participants to be honest in their remarks regardless of how they believed I might receive it, and compared and contrasted the views they expressed to give each further validity. Only occasionally during my interview with Stacy did I surmise that I was being told what he thought I wanted to hear. And only with Le-Thuy did I believe that her experiences with the various forms of violence and their manifestations were likely much worse than she indicated. I believe she was honest with me but reluctant to be more negative as though this would be disrespectful to me. I discussed this point with a Vietnamese colleague who confirmed that in Vietnamese culture to disclose this would indeed be considered disrespectful.

Given all this, the validity of the data may seem tenuous. Yet, the lack of self-consciousness, the straightforward nature, and the overall consistency in



participant responses as to how to improve schools and education (see CHAPTER 4) essentially prove data validity.

### Organization

Drawing on the format demonstrated by Nieto [1992], the data are presented as a series of case studies. Each case study begins with a brief introduction of the participant and is followed by the text of their interview.

The texts of five of the interviews were presented as first person narratives, in the participants' own words. To accomplish this, these interviews were transcribed and edited, only in so much as this was necessary to omit repetitive speech (like ums, ers, ands, ya knows, among others) and to organize the data in a topical fashion (for example, if a participant discussed interpersonal issues related to a single theme several times throughout the interview this information was presented in written form all in one location). (While the editing here was quite minimal it must be acknowledged that any editing alters the validity of the data involved.)

The texts of the other four interviews were presented as third person narratives, by the researcher. It was not possible to present these latter four interviews in the participants' own words for one of two reasons. In two of the cases this was because the participants were very non-vocal, answering "yes" or "no" to most of the questions, relying on me to draw out the information (either because of second language issues, as with Le-Thuy, or because of

disposition, as with Thomas), rather than readily offering it. Verbatim reproduction of these interviews would comprise mostly long passages of me talking and short responses from the participant. In the other two cases (with Armando and Waverly) this was because the participants were interviewed together. They often spoke at the same time confabulating meaning and/or engaged in non-verbal interaction while speaking that gave their language special meaning that verbatim reproduction of their interview would not illustrate.

A problematic exists in considering the effectiveness of individual versus group interviews. Certainly the data from group interviews are more difficult to present in first person narratives as indicated above. Yet, group interviews can also help to establish consistency of experience. For example, Waverly and Armando both describe a similar incident in their upbringing relative to their learning how, in the environment in which they grew up, everyone must be prepared to take care of themselves, defend against opposition, at least willing if not also well-abled to fight (see CHAPTER 4). The story duplication here can be seen as part of their "role-playing" for me as a bureaucrat, "Oh, she liked that story so let me tell one like it." But, it can also be seen as a legitimate shared experience, "Oh, you had that happen, me too," that is characteristic of child-rearing practices in hostile environments where all children must learn independent survival skills early on. In considering the

interview with Le-Thuy in particular, and that Vietnamese culture is an especially group-centered culture, it is possible that she would have been more verbal in a group context.

On the other hand, the lack of confidentiality afforded in a group setting can likewise censor disclosure regardless of culture depending on the nature of the information to be disclosed. For example, the intricate nature of party politics in Korea and the impact that known or assumed political allegiances play in the maintenance of integrity in interpersonal relationships might lead a Korean immigrant to the United States who is seeking mental health services to prefer a non-Korean individual therapist. Or, the expectation of "chisme" or gossip in some Latina/o cultures might encourage a Puerto Rican woman who is seeking employment against the wishes of her children to choose to go to a White rather than Latina/o run employment agency for assistance.

### Conclusion

In having engaged urban young people who have left school in participatory action research with respect to the impact of violence and its manifestations on their resistance to school, this study provides substantial insight into how multicultural curricula content and methods for implementing and evaluating it as well as student learning of it can be used to disarm violence and to effect increased student



retention and academic success. Ironically, our work in this respect can be likened to an armed struggle: our enemy, violence; our weapon, education; our ammunition, the information we have collected from those who would be casualties (young people who have left school). But, notwithstanding both our past and potential effectiveness here we must recognize how truly limited it is. For until all individuals, groups of individuals, and the humanly influenced institutional mechanisms by which we are governed in our society become engaged in the process of multiculturalism (the process of recognizing and respecting cultures other than their own--stressing an appreciation for the impact of difference [Smith, 1992] across race, ethnicity, socio-economic class background, language, gender, physical, developmental, and emotional ability, religious or spiritual affiliation, sexual preference, acquisition, or orientation, age, size, appearance, and environmental concern, among others) we will never reach a state of at least proportional representation nor achieve a pluralistic, truly democratic society which is relatively violence free. Towards that end this research is dedicated.

### Chapter Summary

These participatory action research case studies involved extensive background research on the conditions of existence of the participants, the development of a relationship with an organic source to identify participants,

and the engagement in dialogue with the participants in accordance with participatory action research methodology. They also drew upon two qualitative data collection methods, audiotaped interviews and, to a lesser extent, observation.

In the analysis and determination of the validity of the data, given the difficulty in assessing cross-cultural data in particular, aspects of it were informally triangulated with colleagues organically qualified to assist in the assessment in this respect. Beyond this, the various case studies were compared and contrasted to give each further validity. Ultimately, the convergence of participant responses around ways to improve schools and education came to determine data validity.

Finally, the organization of the data was discussed. In particular, the rationale for organizing the text of the case studies in one of two ways, either in the participants' own words or as a narrative of what the participants said, was explained.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CASE STUDIES: BROADENING THE BASE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE; THE LEARNER-TEACHER, PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHER

#### Introduction

This chapter details the seven, one to three hour individual interviews and the one, two hour two person interview conducted over the course of two and one half months, beginning in October of 1992 and concluding in mid December of 1992. These interviews, organized as case studies, are divided into seven sections which correlate to each of the eight interviews. Each case study begins with a brief introduction of the participant and is followed by the text of their interview.

The texts of five of the interviews were presented as first person narratives, in the participants' own words. To accomplish this, these interviews were transcribed and edited, only in so much as this was necessary to omit repetitive speech (like ums, ers, ands, ya knows, among others) and to organize the data in a topical fashion (for example, if a participant discussed interpersonal issues related to a single theme several times throughout the interview this information was presented in written form all in one location).

The texts of the other four interviews were presented as third person narratives, by the researcher. It was not possible to present these latter four interviews in



the participants' own words for one of two reasons. In two of the cases this was because the participants were very non-vocal, answering "yes" or "no" to most of the questions, relying on me to draw out the information (either because of second language issues, as with Le-Thuy, or because of disposition, as with Thomas), rather than readily offering it. Verbatim reproduction of these interviews would comprise mostly long passages of me talking and short responses from the participant. In the other two cases (with Armando and Waverly) this was because the participants were interviewed together. They often spoke at the same time confabulating meaning and/or engaged in non-verbal interaction while speaking that gave their language special meaning that verbatim reproduction of their interview would not illustrate.

The first section details the interview with Carlos the second with Thomas, the third with Elaine, the fourth with Stacy, the fifth with Le-Thuy, the sixth with Waverly and Armando, the seventh with John, and the eighth with Vanessa. The rationale for this organization reflects my desire to provide the greatest amount of contrast in going from one interview to the next, an order which obviously fits only my perception of what constitutes contrast.

The information presented in each section is subdivided into categories as it pertains to the various forms of violence manifest in each young person's life relative to their leaving school. These subdivisions are "Family,"

"Teachers," "Peers," and "School Structure." Again, it is important to acknowledge that at least to some extent I developed each narrative in this fashion to fit my own perceptions.

It is interesting to note that in every interview every participant internalized much of the language I used in posing questions to them so immediately and completely that they were able to reproduce it as part of their own vocabularies at various appropriate points later in their interviews. This accounts for what may seem like grammatical inconsistencies (various dialects of "street" English and vocabulary mixed with so-called "standard" English and vocabulary) in the text of the case studies presented in the participants' own words.

It is also interesting as well as important to note that only in the interview with Stacy did I believe that, at times, he might be telling me what he thought I wanted to hear. However, I do imagine that not only Stacy but many of the other participants as well did not tell me the whole story or "truth" about a lot of things. Part of this can be assessed as their "role-playing" for me again as the "bureaucrat." For example, it is unlikely that a participant would tell me that they ended up in special education because they spend all their time outside of school selling crack rather than studying. On the contrary, they would know that they are "supposed" to tell me that they ended up in special education because they come from a "broken home," and so on.

It is no secret that very, very smart powerless people know how to manipulate language as part and parcel of their awareness of the politics involved in their own powerlessness [Bracey, 1993]. For example, Zora Neale Hurston, a Black female anthropologist at the turn of this century, was once stopped by a White male police officer for jay-walking when she crossed a street when the streetlight facing her direction was red. When questioned by the police officer as to why she did this she replied that since she had seen Whites crossing on the green light she thought the red one was for her. The police officer, so impressed by her subordination and totally unaware of how constructed it was for his benefit, let her go without a citation [Clark, 1991].

But more important than the absoluteness of the truth in the personal histories the participants in this study recount, is why whatever they said might make sense to them as an understanding or characterization of their experiences. That is, even if something they said has no basis in fact whatsoever, something about acting as though it does has meaning for them and so is accepted herein as valid. This, of course, cuts to the core of the resistance to multicultural education from the Academe; namely that the problem with multicultural education is that beyond the affirmation of the underrepresented's experience should be the pursuit of absolute truth, as if there is one.



## Carlos

I came to know sixteen year old Carlos through the educational coordinator of a community center's employment preparation program in which he is currently enrolled and which provides pre-GED tutoring and/or career advice and placement to people of all ages who have not yet completed high school. My interview with Carlos was conducted in a private room at this community center.

The center's educational coordinator was introduced to me several years ago, via the center's executive director (who is a friend of mine), when I was providing mental health services for many individuals in the center's catchment area whom I was interested in getting enrolled in an employment preparation program. Since that time I have maintained intermittent contact which made accessing Carlos fairly simple.

Carlos became involved with the center after he essentially dropped out of school (or, rather, was pulled out by the lure of peers and the streets) and came to the realization that, without a high school diploma and no marketable job skills, he was largely unemployable and completely unable to support himself through legal means. Since enrolling in this program Carlos is making progress towards his GED and, subsequent to passing it, plans to pursue training to become an electrician.

## Family

"I was born in New York City, the Bronx. When I was a baby I'd speak Spanish and then after I started growing up, completely English. I can understand both languages now but I speak more English than Spanish. Eight months after I was born my father just left [pause] well, he went to jail so I just ended up living with my mother, my older sister and, about two years later, my step father. My mother and my step father never had any children of their own during the fourteen years they were together."

"My father went to jail for selling drugs. Although he used drugs, it wasn't actually him that was selling them, 'cause he had a brother that was born a year younger than him and it was that kid brother that sold the drugs. But, my father has the same face as his brother, they look exactly alike, so the cops came one day and seen my father and recognized him as his brother and picked him up even though he didn't do it. My father coulda said something about it but he didn't because he wouldn't. My father had been to jail before that, so he knew how it was and he didn't know if his brother could take it so he took the fall [accepted the blame for the crime] for seven years. Even still it ended up pretty bad 'cause his brother ended up hanging out in the street so now my father feels guilty because if he had let him go to jail he might be better off today."

"My step father basically grew me up. But the way he used to handle things when you doing something wrong, he

never used to talk, he used to yell, scream. When I was younger, I would listen because he is a man and I was just a child. But as I grew up I said, 'this can't happen like this' and I started standing up to him."

"We used to fight, physically. He used to hit me, I used to fight him back and that used to make him even madder. But, I was the type [to say], 'I'm not gonna take that 'cause you're not my father.' So I guess he was kind of feeling some kind of insult or something. But, since he did hit me and because he's not my father, I never used to like him; I used to look at him like he was nobody."

"Parents shouldn't do that anyway, 'cause if you have a child you really want them to do okay in school and to be able, you can't go up to them with anger and everything 'cause all they'll do is get scared. What's gonna be good if your son or your kid is fighting everything? But that's where he's coming from."

"At one point it came down to, I was on the school phone and the teacher was there. She said, 'your father wants to talk to you' and I was talking to him, and he was arguing with me about something, and he said that he was gonna hit me and this and that. And I told him, 'If you hit me you better kill me 'cause if you don't I'm coming for you.' That got him real pissed off. He came to school, I was real young, and he came with a blackjack [a miniature steel billy club or a billy club] to hit me. I carried a .22 [caliber gun], which he knew about, and I ran out the school. I caught him



in the woods. I wouldn't have the guts to shoot him because he'd do me up [beat me] and I don't know how my mother would feel, so I scared him and he left. Later we ended up talking and everything was fine for awhile. But then he was handling the same thing the same way, more with anger and fierce instead of sitting down [talking]."

"Even though I know myself I did a lot of bad things the way he would handle it wasn't doing anything for me. I feel he shoulda talked to me before he took any [disciplinary] action, to find out what happened from me before anywhere else."

"The only people I would really care about were my mother and my sister in our family. That's it. The only one I probably learned who was trying to give me a hand at that time was my mother but it was too much for her. I'm not the type of person who likes to listen to what anybody says. I like to do it myself. But the only person I was taking that from [would listen to] was my mother, but that's a woman."

"After my father got out of jail when I was doing bad she used to tell me, 'Well, do you want to go live with your father?' I used to tell her no 'cause that's my mother. No matter what I won't leave her. And I didn't want her to feel guilt or nothing."

"When I was younger my step father used to use drugs, cocaine crack, pot, but later he stopped. My mother never did, she was the straightest one of the whole family. They both worked. My step father used to do odd jobs and never

really liked to work much. My mother loved her job, she used to work all the time. She was a secretary in a company and they liked her so much that when we moved up her from New York they offered her to transfer a computer over here so that she could work from here [telecommute], they really wanted to keep her but now she works here for someone else. I don't think she finished high school (I know my step father didn't) but she got very close. But she still got some background and everything, some training [secretarial school]. My step father always had something with my mother because she was very intelligent, she always went for her goals. He was jealous."

"Because of this and everything else my mother and my step father split about two years ago. Now my mother's back with my father. They've been back together about a good year. That's the weird thing about love... I'm very happy they are back together. I always told my mother that I never expected it. She was willing to settle down with him again because she said he settled down a lot himself. He was a wild man but he's learned as he got older. He got clean [off drugs] in jail and has been clean since, at least four years. He also got his GED in jail and a background on plumbing and electrician but he can't work because he got into an accident [read: fight] while he was in there and shattered his kneecap so he gets a disability check."

"Everything's fine at home now, I'm very happy. Like this year my mother asked me what do I want for Christmas.

'Don't need anything because I'm here, my family, my house is nice compared to just moving from New York City, everything's already there, it's already fixed up, we got everything, I don't need nothing.'"

### Teachers

"In first and second grade there was like thirty-four kids in the class, only one teacher. When they would teach you it was like this step first and just keep going on to that step and you wouldn't be able to keep up sometimes. And if there would be one problem that you don't understand, the teacher wouldn't be able to have that much time to explain it to you 'cause she had so many other kids in her class."

"Third grade was different. I was in a special class, a P.A. [pupil adjustment] class because I used to see the word backwards. I still get my b's and d's backwards. There were only eight kids in the class and two teachers, a teacher and an aide. It was good and fun. The teacher was very good, she was very cooperative with the kids and everything. She used to spend a lot of time."

"After third grade they put me in a regular class again and from there it's just I met up with wrong people. Fourth grade is like I grew up. It's more of a playful thing than maybe work. Third grade was different because I was different. I was younger and I grew up. I got more active and wasn't really focusing on work and school and everything. In a way it wasn't a good idea for them to put me back into regular classes in fourth grade because they have counselors



but no real counselors. They weren't psychiatrists, I don't think. As people grow up, they have problems that some people call hard. They don't like to let other people know their problems; it's like none of their business. But, if they had more, two teachers instead of one and fewer kids they could get more a commitment done, more work from the kids and they wouldn't need the counselors in people's business."

"I would never disrespect an older person, but if I didn't like something I would let 'em know. Like if I was doing something and the teacher was to grab me, I'd stop right there and I'd tell 'em, 'Look, don't grab me, I really don't like that, you are not my parent, don't touch me.' At a certain age I was at that age when I really didn't like being touched, and if a teacher grabbed me I told them this [the aforementioned] nicely and in a polite way and they would say something about me or intimidating me I would burst out. But, if the teacher treats me with respect I'll do the same too."

"By about fifth grade it got to the point where if I didn't want to do something I would get up and walk out of the class and wouldn't tell 'em [teachers] nothing. Because if I used to tell 'em, 'Look, I don't feel like doing this, I'm outa here,' they used to go 'da, da,' argue with me, it wasn't worth it so I just started walking out. This used to get me in trouble with my P.O. (probation officer), my parents, everybody."

"All through school I had teachers of all ages like from twenty-six to older ones. Younger teachers I liked more 'cause they could relate better because they just finished coming from that stage, they can understand better. Older ones can relate too because they got more wisdom and understand more things but not things going on. But kids can associate more, be more open with a younger teacher 'cause they won't get embarrassed about asking certain things about what's going on with their lives. Younger teachers joke around more; they make school more fun. I remember one teacher said, 'Look at this nine you wrote Carlos, it looks upside down. Were you standing on the ceiling when you wrote this?' It was funny and interesting.

"In New York, they had teachers of all races but they were never there, a whole lot of substitutes most of the time. The substitutes were all different races too. Up here the teachers are mostly White. I had one male teacher up here. When they put me in a low class he was the one, seeing me how I do my math very quickly, getting A's on it, that would tell me 'You know, you don't need to be here.' But for some reason the principal didn't want to raise me up, probably because all my other grades were down low and only my math grade was high. I think the teachers wondered why this was, because I'm not interested, and if I'm not interested how am I gonna do it? But it didn't matter races, male or female, I got along with anybody, as long as they okay people I can get along with them."

"What really mattered was the way the teacher was teaching us. Like my social studies subject, at one point I really got into this subject because we were studying the different kinds of flowers, the flowers of each state. To do this we went out to a farming collective and did research. From there, this social studies teacher would get us into science. You know how she did that? She took the flowers we were studying and gave them to the science teacher for us to look at under the microscope, then we had to write a summary of how each one looked under it. She made it more interesting. You know, everyone wants to go to science to dissect the frog, right? I would go to school just for that date, just to dissect the frog. That's it, it's just the way they teach. If they make it interesting for the children, the kids will like it, they will get more into it, they will see much more progress. The best teacher is experience."

### Peers

"Maybe about fourth grade I missed about twenty-eight days [of school]. Next year I missed about thirty. Next year fifty. Then, after that, it was all gone; I started seventh grade, never finished it. When I started cutting school I would just go hang out, go smoke [marijuana] with the guys in the park. I started smokin' weed [marijuana] at a very young age, around the age of seven. But it didn't mean nothing to me so it wasn't like nothing [it didn't have an effect on me]. Little by little there were more drugs and a lot of peer pressure. I think basically I got into all



this because of the problems I had with my step-father. The school got involved 'cause they realized my behavior. Someone would say something to me and I would just hit 'em. I was real angry. They sent me to the school psychiatrist but it didn't work, I didn't like him, I couldn't talk to him, he couldn't understand the situation."

"Eventually, I developed a routine; first thing in the morning I'd get up, get dressed like I'm going to school. But, I'd never take my books, I'd leave them under my bed. Then, I'd walk out the door where my step father don't see me leaving without my books, 'cause if he did he'd start into me about it. I'd go over to school and punch my card 'cause in New York your attendance is marked by an identification card that you punch in a machine each day, like a time clock. Then, I'd slip out the side door, meet the guys at the basketball court, end up getting high. We'd go steal a couple of cars and play tag with them, all kinds of stupid things: selling drugs, stick ups in stores and people on the streets."

"When I did stick ups I never hurt anybody, I just scared. At one point I almost hurt someone but it wouldn't have been to hurt them out of getting pleasure out of it or even to get away with the crime 'cause I know I could pull away from him, a man or a woman without hurting them. I can't do that. If he trying to hurt me then it's a totally different thing. I'll do anything, try to hurt me or my family. But otherwise nothing, I won't hurt nobody. Even if

somebody don't got no money I would just go to someone else. But usually in New York it ain't like that. If you ain't got no money you dead. When I did stick ups I just wanted to get something from them and I did. And that was because I was going crazy with drugs because the stuff that happens adds up. And it ends up in school 'cause school is half of the place you're in."

"Eventually I started doing most of my crimes alone cause I realized that since most of the guys I hung with were much older than me, like I be twelve they eighteen, I couldn't trust them 'cause they might set me up to take the fall being that I was a juvenile and all. It came down to that I never trusted nobody. I was always on my own. I started doing more and more crimes because I don't like to ask my parents for money. I like to depend on myself, like to don't have to ask nobody for anything. So, before I would ask for money I would rob it. Even at the time I was doing drugs if I had money from my mother that would not go into drugs because I would feel guilty. I would hold that money and I would give it back to her at the end of the day. I'd rather go out in the street stick somebody up get the money."

"When I was twelve or thirteen we moved to Mt. Vernon, New York. You can leave New York [the City] but New York won't leave you. I like it a lot but it all depends on how you are over there. You mind your business, you're okay. I wanted to finish school down there [the Bronx] 'cause I knew everybody. I never had no problems. I wanted to go to the

same school my sister went to because my sister went to school with some popular people who sing now. I wanted to finish growing up there."

"When we moved it changed, everything got different. I lived in an all-Black neighborhood. I was the only Puerto Rican on the block. I was the only one with White skin color so I had to tell them all the time, 'I'm Puerto Rican, man!' We used to get into conflicts. They used to drop me [beat me up] like almost everyday. By this time I was carrying a gun all the time, mostly to protect myself, not to hurt other people. At one point someone threatened my life and I got mad and just went off, threatened them with the gun, then got a baseball bat and just started beating kids up. They were all on the corner and I just went over there and started swinging 'cause they had me furious. They locked me up in a juvenile center for three days and then released me on six months' probation. They thought I was crazy."

"Between this, my family stuff and drugs I just gave up on school. Eventually, the Black kids in my neighborhood adjusted to me and I became one of the guys. There were many gangs among them. I used to hang out with a lot of 'em but I was always, 'I'm not down with those gangs.' The way I used to see it I'm not down with no gang. I'm down with myself, with my family. But, I used to know a lot of gangs that I used to go hang out with, friends of mine. And, sometimes there would be conflict. If you run you're through. They'll go in your house they gonna beat you down. That's why I



stopped hanging out because I seen people get stabbed, shot right in front of my face just for stepping on somebody else's sneakers. And, I'm a get shot 'cause he stepped on his sneakers and I'm with him. Or 'cause I'm with somebody and something happens and the other guy runs on me, I'm the one who's getting beat up and he's supposed to be a friend of mine, he wanted to go out with me, how is that gonna happen? Man, I can't hack that. So, I learned for myself, for my safety not to be around."

"Right about the time I got settled in with the guys in my neighborhood in Mt. Vernon we moved up here. I had to start all over again with the new kids. I was trying to get back into school and I got into a conflict with this kid. He threatened me in the school bathroom with a gun to my head so right there I figured, 'I'm dead.' But he didn't shoot me, thank God, but that was the wrong move he did 'cause you ain't gonna do that to me. You shouldn't do that. I got furious again and I went to his house, knocked on his door and told him, 'cause he also threatened to jump me another time, 'I'm not having it, I'm not gonna take that from you. We could fight right here and it would be all right. Anything happens and that's the way it goes. I don't want to lose my head.' He said, 'no' this and 'no' that. Last day of school, I brought a gun to school and caught him in that same bathroom he had caught me before. I wasn't even waitin' for nothing or nobody in particular who was at the school. I was just so furious, so angry at everything that had and was

still happenin' with my step father and not having anyone to talk to. It boiled up and it can kill you. And I was just so angry I was about to kill him. I had the gun to his neck and I think I woulda shot him if they [school officials] hadn't caught me at that minute. But, I'm glad I got caught 'cause I had so much anger and everything didn't mean nothing to me."

"At that point, I got completely kicked out of school, couldn't go back. I was still on probation from Mt. Vernon and so I got locked up for a few hours and another six months added to my probation. A little while after this I got caught stealing a car and got another six months on my probation, but it didn't matter me none. I'd go home, got argued at for about fifteen minutes, then walk out the door again. I was never home. The only time I was home was to sleep. I was spending all my time messing around doing drugs. I was so angry, so nervous I couldn't even hold a pencil. You can't go to school and work like that. The problems with my step father and having no one to talk to just made me worse and worse."

"I settled down when my father and mother got back together. I finally got to talk to him and he let me know the scoop, let me know everything that happened. He told me what kind of drugs he used, what he used to do when he was using drugs, how he was. He told me everything. And he told me that if I was to come down like that he wouldn't come out like a dog, he would pull me and try and talk to me nicely,

not that he's mad at me, that he cares for me, that he's worried, that he wants to know what's going on. That's why I can tell him anything. It's like the relationship between me and him, if I go and do something wrong, like I go stick up a store, I'll go tell him that I did it and he'll tell me why this and that but he won't come out, like some pops, like my step father used to, mad and swinging."

"Because I can talk to my father now, I don't need a friend or a cousin. When I hang out now, I hang out with my father. My father's my best friend, me and him is always together, if you gonna catch me somewhere it's gonna be with him. We go fishing, go ride a canoe in the river, go to New York every Friday and visit family."

"When you grow up you come to realize stupid things like I know I wouldn't like anyone stealing my car. It's just a phase and if you had someone there to tell you and teach you about it you would know more about it and you wouldn't have to go through, but if you don't learn from no way else but the streets. I learned by myself, all by myself what it's like, the right way to do it and what the consequences of doing this and learning 'look, you can't do this the rest of your life, you've got to try something else.' But see, I don't have to worry about that anymore because I'm not the same way, it came to a stop. That was all a certain part of time in life that happened. You grow out of it. I'm more relaxed and everything. I'm not as wild as I used to. But if it comes down to that I will be. But



otherwise I'm relaxed. I'm just being careful with what I do and what judgements I make. When my father came back I just decided to relax and get calm."

### School Structure

"That's the thing about New York, man. It's really hard to go to school and stay. 'Cause I used to have to go to school with a gun and worry about getting busted by the teachers and having threats coming to you from the other kids, trying to concentrate on your work... If a person threatens my life I know he's willing to do it and I know that he could catch me when my back is turned or when I'm sleeping. I'm not gonna wait for him to come to me. I'll go to him. That's why I don't hang out no more. I don't want to bump into nobody and some foolish thing happening, like trying to take my life over some stupid reason. I can't have that. That's why I just stay home. But in New York it's really hard to stay in school, very hard, very hard because you have all this going on."

"The identification cards that we had to punch in school were supposed to be part of a security system. After you punched in you go to class and you give the card to the teacher and they would hold it until the end of class so you couldn't cut class and go get into something. But basically the teachers got so many kids they don't know where everyone is or what's going on so its very unsafe. Even when I stopped going to school, they would send a truant officer after me but he was easy to avoid and he had so many kids to

check up on too that he didn't stay with trying to catch up to me for very long."

"I think mainly why kids just drop out is just problems they have that they don't have to talk with somebody, and just ain't into the work. Just don't make it interesting. Everyday they opening a book, the same book, onto the same pages. That isn't interesting. Like if you want to teach a kid about history I would go about it this way. I want to teach a kid the history of this city, sightseeing and everything. I would take a car and I would take 'em to the history museum, the library or something. And I would teach 'em and give 'em a pad and a book and tell 'em to take notes. Because they sightseeing they getting active, they getting into it. They not just sitting in a class doing the same thing with the same book."

"And if you want to teach a person math and counting I would get real money, get real items with tags on them and candy and other things they like. And spread out the money and they go up to you and want the candy bar and you say, 'How much is the candy bar?' And they say, 'forty cents' and give you fifty cents and then you ask how much change they are going to get back."

"Make it active, make it active, make it active and interesting. Move around more and talk more. Make it easier for them to understand it. If you can get them to get into it a certain way then keep using that method. That'll work. That way worked for me so a little while after I learned. I

also learned in the program I'm in now that if I talk more to the teachers and let 'em know I got problems with this and that, if they would listen then things got easier."

"I think that we should also learn about all different people's cultures in school and it should be blended in all year round in one whole book not just once a month. Because you know as you can see Black people from where they came from are making a whole lot of progress. 'Cause a lot of people say it's the minorities that do all the crime, which is wrong, completely wrong. 'Cause it's not only minorities. 'Cause look at Black people. Before they weren't even on television. Now they on television. We had a Black person running for president. They have culture and history themselves, a human is a human. I would like to learn about everyone's history including my own. I've never really learned anything about my own, only how to cook Puerto Rican food and what the first Puerto Ricans ate and how they lived but not no main history like the first Puerto Rican to do this or that. Nothing like that. That would be real interesting."

"I got into the program I'm in now because I realized I was staying home, doing nothing and ain't getting nowhere. I'm basically looking to get my GED and then for a school that's gonna give me everything I need to know about electrician and get a license electrician, so it's gonna take a few years. It's a good job, you get paid I heard up to \$54 an hour. And it's very simple too, an easy job. I don't



have to break my back and I'm not sitting in a chair all day, I'm just retaping and wiring."

"I have a part-time job now at McDonald's. It wasn't too hard to get because they realized I was in the program, I'm home and that I got decent parents and that I can express myself in a way a manner of talking to other people. It's good for part-time."

"This is all very important to me now because I realized that the street life ain't gettin' me. 'Cause one way or another you always have to be worrying about the police; always on the run. Always the people you have done things to coming back for you."

"My life is safer now, my parents like it 'cause it's quiet, it's a little relaxed. But I still got it [the street] in me. It's like I know I like to be out in it. I like to hang out and everything, but I know my limit. I don't have a gun anymore because they scare me because I know what I can do with one. I can stick somebody up right away and get money, real quick an amount of money in twenty, thirty seconds. I don't even have a girlfriend right now because I decided to chill from that too for a while. I know when it's time to stop and when it's not. I know if it's getting too far. But, I won't be out every day. I'll be home. I'll go to school, I'll get a job and I'll work and hang out on weekends. But it won't be the same 'cause I learned already, I learned the hard way."

## Thomas

I came to know nineteen year old Thomas through the acquaintance of a friend who turned out to be a former student of mine. I first contacted my friend, then the director of a private non-profit ethnic association which provides genealogical services to its members and education regarding heritage to members and the larger community. My friend referred me to a member of the association who turned out to be my former student and who, in turn, referred me to Thomas, a former classmate and friend of his.

My interview with Thomas was conducted at the kitchen table in his parents' home, located in a predominantly White, middle-class neighborhood, where he and his fifteen year old sister reside with both parents. At the time of the interview, Thomas and I were alone in the kitchen, his sister was on the telephone in the adjacent livingroom, his mother was in the bedroom upstairs, and his father was out of the house at work.

Thomas has no desire nor plans to return to school since being partially pushed, partially dropping, and ultimately opting out of school. He talks vaguely about the possibility of pursuing his GED. More intently he talks about looking for a job, saving some money, and moving out on his own.

## Family

Thomas is the fifth child of six born to his parents. He has three older brothers and one older sister as well as his younger sister. His oldest brother is the only sibling

to have completed high school, his younger sister may also do so. All of his older siblings hold steady jobs and live in their own homes, some with spouses and children.

Thomas's father did not complete high school and works as a truck driver. His mother works full-time as well, but Thomas is not exactly sure what she does. Both of his parents have worked full-time for his entire life. His father does not attach much importance to school and encouraged Thomas to drop out of school and get a job to help support the family. His mother went to college, but Thomas does not know if she graduated. She encouraged him to stay in school and helped him with homework but when he decided to leave school she was not terribly concerned about it and did not resist him signing himself out. Despite this seeming indifference to Thomas's school achievement, both of his parents punished him at home, usually via loss of privileges, when he got into trouble in school.

Thomas considers himself "Indian" though he knows very little about this part of his heritage. In fairness to both parents, however, he tries to identify with each of their cultures.

### Teachers

Thomas believes that his teachers were generally supportive of him and does not recall having any "major" trouble with them until tenth grade. He does report, however, that his mother got into a verbal argument with his kindergarten teacher when this teacher wanted to put Thomas



into a "resource" or remedial class. His mother was vehemently opposed to this and tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent it.

In tenth grade Thomas became uncontrollably bored with school having come to the realization that teachers were passing him on to the next grade when they had not taught him anything. This he says is evidenced by the fact that he still has trouble reading and writing at even a basic level. Prior to the aforementioned realization, Thomas had been under the impression that he was learning the same skills as those in mainstream classes, only that he was learning those skills differently.

Thomas believes that part of the impetus for his teachers' passing him was to "get rid of" him because, he admits, beginning around seventh grade, he would verbally intimidate (but never hit) them when they got him mad. Teachers got Thomas mad by giving him the same worksheets to do over and over again, by looking over his shoulder while he did them instead of giving him the space to try and do the work on his own, and by chastising him publicly for having casual conversations with other students in the course of doing his work; in general, by being too strict, too formal, too controlled. These practices alone made Thomas believe that his teachers were discriminating against him, but when they began calling him a "juvenile delinquent" to his face he was pretty certain they were.

All of Thomas's teachers were White, mostly female, but he does not believe that more racial or gender diversity among them would have made much of a difference. As he said, "It's not **who** they are, it's **how** they are."

### Peers

Thomas had lots of friends of all races, only one other part Native American friend, through the ninth grade. By the time he reached tenth grade, most of these friends had graduated as, in addition to being in a resource classroom, Thomas was held back a grade three times. This contributed to his boredom in the tenth grade. It was also the source of most of his interpersonal frustrations as it was in tenth grade when Thomas, who absolutely hates fighting, began to get into a lot of fights with other students for reasons clearly related to differences in maturity, and for which he had "no patience." For example, Thomas would be near someone else's locker or say "Hi" to someone else's girlfriend and this would provoke them to fight with him. "Stupid stuff," he says, "I hated it." Given these dynamics, by tenth grade Thomas kept to himself as much as possible.

### School Structure

Once placed into a resource classroom, Thomas was bounced around between ten schools from Kindergarten through ninth grade by teachers and other school personnel in search of the "right" environment to foster his learning. Thomas was diagnosed with a "comprehension deficit" and also had difficulty learning mathematics, which is rather ironic since

his favorite subjects were automotive technology and cooking, both of which require quite a bit of mathematical computation. It is also interesting to note that Thomas was in a mainstream classroom only for automotive technology, cooking and art. Despite all this, up until tenth grade Thomas loved school, wanted to graduate and tried his best to do so but, "It didn't work."

Towards the end of trying to graduate, after ninth grade Thomas tried to transfer to a boy's trade school where each week students learn a different trade. Despite the fact that Thomas's grades were A's, B's and C's, he was not accepted to this school.

Thomas says that his "bad attitude" developed slowly in tenth grade in conjunction with his realization about his skills and his lacking a peer group. He began to skip a day, then go a day, then skip a day, and so on. When he went to school he went to classes and stayed at school all day. This pattern continued through tenth grade and into eleventh when, at age nineteen, he finally got his mother's "permission" to sign himself out, because it hit him that while he was told that the object of his being in the resource classroom was to prepare him to return to mainstream classes this was never going to happen if it was ever intended in the first place.

After leaving school, Thomas got a "good job" unloading trucks at a supermarket, third shift, but was fired for not working fast enough. He tried to return to school, now twenty, but the principal did not want him back. His father



contacted a family friend in the school department who got Thomas readmitted, but Thomas was suspended shortly thereafter for smoking cigarettes and arriving at school late.

Thomas was exposed to a little bit of multicultural curricula content in his high school history class. It was in this class that he learned something about the history of African Americans and Native Americans. But, Thomas maintains, what little he did learn about these two groups was from the European American perspective. More multicultural education of this nature would have made curriculum content "a little bit" more interesting, Thomas states. He would have been particularly motivated to learn more about his own Native American cultural heritage.

Thomas believes that varying the type of work done from class period to class period would have greatly helped him maintain interest in school. He would also have liked more freedom. Ideally, he suggested being given work more related to "real life" to do with one other male student and then being given the time and space to work on it uninterrupted and unsupervised by teachers. He said he would prefer teachers waiting for him to ask for help rather than their offering it to him before he asked. He also prefers experiential education, where one learns the subject by hands-on experience. For example, geography by exploration cooking by doing, mathematics by application to a real task not in the abstract at a desk.

Thomas believes that education is very important and believes he "should" finish high school so he can "get on with" his life. His girlfriend just got her GED and is trying to motivate him to do the same, saying it was "easy." Ultimately, Thomas does want to get his GED so that, in addition to saving some money and moving out on his own, he can get into the air force. For the time being however, Thomas would be happy to find a job.

### Elaine

I came to know thirty-seven year old Elaine, like Carlos, through the educational coordinator of a community center's employment preparation program in which she is currently enrolled. My interview with Elaine was conducted in her apartment, located in a predominantly Black, working-class neighborhood, where she resides with her two teenage children. At the time of our interview, Elaine and I were alone in her living room. Her two children were out at their own activities.

Elaine became involved with the center when, after essentially opting out of school (or, rather, being pulled out by the lure of peers) and spending the next twenty years of her life as a drug addict, she got "clean" and made pursuing her education her first priority. Since enrolling in this program, Elaine is making progress towards her GED and, subsequent to passing it, plans to pursue higher

education and/or training to prepare her to work in the field of substance abuse counseling and general rehabilitation.

### Family

"I came from a very dysfunctional family. My father and mother had my older sister, she's three years older than me, my brother, he's two years older, and me. My father was an alcoholic. He left my mother when I was two. He used to come and visit every now and then but not too much. My mother had to raise us but she couldn't 'cause she had to work. So we lived with my [maternal] grandmother and her boyfriend who was also an alcoholic but didn't really chastise us or try to teach us, he was just there. We'd see my mother on weekends, but not all the time. When she could she would see us."

"I fought all the time at home with my brother and sister. It was way more extreme than normal sibling rivalry. Sometimes maybe I'd start crying, my grandmother would hear this and do us up, beat us. I remember my grandmother telling us do our lessons. And, if we didn't know how to do it we'd be punished for it. I believe that's because she didn't know how to do it either. I think she went to the third grade if that far. So, because of this she called us stupid and all kinds of things like that and it effected our life a lot. My grandmother was a very wicked woman. She was mean and I think that caused a lot of fear in my life."

"My sister and brother used to call me the black sheep of the family because they was dark and I was light. I was



the milkman's baby, he left me outside on the step. And I believe I built up a complex behind that. And, in school they could do their work real easy. They could speak out, they could do anything. But for me it was harder to learn, I don't know why. I guess I look at it as I was a lonely child. I was the baby of the family. I didn't get the A's and B's that my sister and brother got, but I got passing grades. Even still they used to call me stupid. I believe that I had some kind of problem because I was a loner and had a lot of fear. I remember being real quiet from third grade and the teacher keeping me back because I wouldn't talk, wouldn't participate in class. I was very shy and emotional and I cried a lot. I believe this comes from my background."

"I remember the happiest day in my life was when I turned twelve. My mother came and took us from my grandmother. And my grades started to pick up because I had more freedom and I started becoming more open and talking and participating in class. My mother always told me, 'You should get your education, you're gonna realize how important it is and how much you need it.'"

"My mother died in 1975 from cancer. My father died in 1976 from alcohol. My brother, who was also an addict, died in 1979 in a car accident. The report said that he was driving with somebody else and they hit him in the head with a two by four and put him in the back seat. They realized he was dead and put his car on cruise control, jumped out and let the car go. We found out later who did it and the person

got life in jail. But, he didn't get life behind my brother's accident. He went out and did something else. He raped a nun and he got life in jail for her. He was also an addict. Then, my grandmother died in 1981."

### Teachers

"While I was living with my grandmother I wouldn't relate to teachers, I wouldn't let 'em in. If they would talk to me I was so shy I would cry all the time, just cry. Break out and cry. If I knew I could answer a question, I wouldn't raise my hand to do that because I felt like somebody's gonna laugh at me if I had the wrong answer. So I would just cry. If they called on me I cried. After I moved back with my mother I never had any problems with my teachers. Basically I was the teacher's pet. I always try to get close to people. I liked all my teachers."

"I do feel that when I was in there [school] like during my high school years that I wasn't getting what I needed because if I didn't understand something you have a classroom of students, they couldn't take the time to point things out to you. So basically you just had to read it. If you didn't know what you was doing anyway you just had to write down something because they don't have individual time for you. I have even been told by a teacher, 'We have a class of forty students, I don't have time to give you my full attention.' And that set me back too, it threw me back 'cause if you don't understand what you're doing, how you getting anything out of it? You lose interest in it."

"I had both men and women teachers, one Black, all the rest White. For me if there had been more Black, when I started getting into problems with peers I would have used my manipulation tactics to get over on them more because they are from the same culture."

"I feel when the teachers see the student's behavior is not up to standards they need to do more investigation behind it. Because a lot of times they're [students] crying out for help, and they [teachers] need to be aware of that. They should get more involved with the students. When I was in school, like today, kids have attitude behavior and the teachers don't know what's going on. And when the kids are acting out like that the first reaction that the teacher would do is send 'em to the office or threaten them with some type of thing, telling them they're going to be suspended or something like that. I feel that they need to sit down and talk to the students. See what's actually going on with the student, what's making the child act this way, more counseling. By putting more pressure on the student they [teachers] aren't helping, it's just destroying them, pushing them away out the door to this destructive path out here. Out here is now where these kids be. 'Cause most of the kids that leave school, they're on the dope corner just selling drugs or they're in jail. When I stopped going to school nobody came looking for me. I guess that's because they figured I was of age. They had a truant officer but once I passed sixteen they didn't bother with me. Nobody done stop



me. They didn't even try to come and persuade me to come back. Maybe if they had I probably would of gone back."

### Peers

"I was doing good in junior high until I got with a crowd of friends. Because we lived in a project and when you live in a project and being on welfare everybody tries to be like everybody else. You want to fit in. So you act like everybody else around. My grades were good in school until my friends were around, then I had to be like the class clown. I had to do things to get attention, I always wanted attention. Because of this I stayed back in seventh grade. Then the next semester I got on trial and they put me to the ninth grade because they said I could do the work. I just had to stay away from the people, the crowd that I was hanging with, then I did good in junior high."

"When I got to high school I got back into that not speaking again like when I was little. I don't know what went wrong. Then, in eleventh grade, I remember picking up with that crowd again. And this time marijuana was the thing to do, drinking was the thing to do. The word was if you wasn't doing what the others were doing you were a square. I didn't want to be in the square group so I chose to smoke marijuana and drink booze, and plus I was a people pleaser. Whatever I had I would give to whomever. I got a whooping one time because my mother brought me a brand new coat and my girlfriend's mother was an alcoholic. I took my coat off my back and gave it to my girlfriend and got a beating because

my mom said, 'You don't give 'em your best, but you coulda came home and give her another one.' But I didn't know better. I just wanted her friendship. I always like to buy people and today I still do the same thing."

"I still passed eleventh grade to the twelfth grade. Then I met my kids' father. He wasn't in school, he had just come from Florida. When school get out a lot of older guys that are popular in the neighborhood will come up there to see the girls who's coming out. That was the thing back then. They come up there to see what they can see. I happened to be coming down the stairs one day and he seen me and I seen him and it was love at first sight, we just connected. He was a handsome guy and quite popular and a lot of women would have been glad to be with him and I just felt so important because I was the chosen one."

"When I met him the thing was hanging out. They had a bar up here on the square. That was the place that all the younger teenagers go to drink, smoke marijuana. You're welcome in there, they serve you, they didn't care. And I wanted to be a part of that and hang with my boyfriend and that was his scene and so I thought that's what fun was about. I lost my focus on school when I started hanging with this crowd and the drugs and drinking. I was no longer doing homework or anything and if it was something I didn't understand I'd just say, 'Well I don't understand it anyway so why do it? I don't have to do it. Teacher ain't gonna take time to show me. Forget it, just go ahead and medicate

[use drugs and drink].' All my peers, they wasn't doing anything in school. Half of 'em had already dropped out. But they'd sneak into the school and I'd meet 'em in the bathroom or I'd see 'em in the hallway, they'd get my attention so I'd get out of the classroom. Or they'd just come up when school would get out and we'd hang out. I had like four months left of school before graduation but I hooked up with this crowd and I dropped out, I quit. My mother warned me not to but at that time I wasn't listening to her and I'm sorry now that I didn't."

"After this, my boyfriend and me got together and we moved in our own apartment. And then I got pregnant with my daughter. And when she was about nine months she ended up in the hospital with infectious hepatitis and yellow jaundice because she was born with a liver disorder. The doctor said she came into contact with somebody that had hepatitis and it made her liver react, it wasn't sending off what it was supposed to be producing. And that's when I realized that my boyfriend was an addict, that he was using heroin intravenously. I tried to talk to him, he stopped for a while, at least he stopped around me. And then, two years later I got pregnant again with my son. And the house became very unmanageable with both of the children and him using heroin intravenously and me smoking reefer [marijuana], drinking, and sniffing cocaine. We used to fight all the time and I got bruised up all the time. Finally, I left him after twelve years."



"But, by me having the same pattern, the next person I attracted was the same type of guy on the same type of drug. And I was still using my stuff. And the relationship got into abuse, violent. I always got beat up or try to hurt him. Finally, I went in a shelter for abused women because I was scared to leave this guy 'cause he was really violent, I was really scared of him. They got some of that fear out of me and I didn't date for a while. But while I was on my own I felt like nobody didn't care about me, nobody didn't love me. Most of my family had already died and my sister was pulling away from me because, my being active using mind and mood altering chemicals, I wasn't giving her no respect. She said my attitude was totally outrageous and I didn't see it like that at the time and so I just stayed to myself and tried to do the best for my kids."

"And then my kids, now twelve and eight, turned on me, they didn't want to be with me no longer. I told them that I'm their mother and so they got to stay with me. So my daughter called DSS [Department of Social Services] on me. When she did I said to her, 'What kind of child are you gonna call the Department of Social Services on your mother?' I couldn't see she was crying out for help because by this point I had started smoking crack, freebase. I can remember telling my kids to go get my paraphernalia and they said, 'No, go get it yourself!' And I'd make 'em go get it. I remember getting high in front of my kids, a house full of people and my kids standing on the stairs looking over the

bannister at me. And I'd tell 'em, 'You're too grown [you're not supposed to be watching], go to your room, kids supposed to stay in the kids' place.' All the time they was crying out for help."

"Because I couldn't get my addiction under control, the drug was controlling me at this point, DSS took my son away. They put him with his godmother in a nearby city for a couple of years. My daughter stayed with my sister. And so then I was by myself so I figured well hey, I'm by myself who do I have to answer to now? I can do what I want to do. I started having people over just hanging and constantly getting high. Not feeling nothing, only thing I wanted was the drug. I did anything to get my drug. I prostitute, I manipulate, I cheated, I robbed. I did all of that for the drug. I didn't have to use a weapon because I was good. I knew how to manipulate good enough to get what I needed. I seen myself starting to look bad 'cause I couldn't stand to look in the mirror. When I'd see my kids they used to tell me how much they hate me 'cause I was never there for them. My daughter would always bring up how she raised her brother 'cause I was too high; how at eight she had to wash the dishes and cook plus take care of her brother 'cause I was in no condition to do it."

"My kids were only gone about a year and a half 'cause when DSS came I was okay. I made sure everything was straight. I manipulated DSS. I made like everything is fine. They got food in the refrigerator, the house is clean,

I was dressed. I didn't get high until after they left so I knew how to manipulate the system. They kept getting calls on me but every time they came they didn't see anything wrong, they couldn't see inside of me, they could only see the outside, the mask that I was wearing. So they let my kids come home."

"By this time I had started shooting heroin. I tried to hide it from my kids but they knew because they said I used to nod out all the time. I didn't see myself doing that. I had another boyfriend and he was shooting heroin and crack and drinking, whatever drug we could get at the time. I just wanted to fit in with him so I went along and did it too. I was working at the bus station at this time and I took like \$25,000 out of the safe because I had a \$300 a day heroin habit. That wasn't including the crack. I think the job knew something was wrong because my attitude changed a lot. I think they knew it was drugs but they just never said anything until they seen me taking from the company and fired me. Then my boyfriend went to jail. And that was the only thing that got me off of the heroin because I didn't know how to hit myself, shoot myself intravenous, somebody else had to do it. And by my disease progressing so much I had got to the point where I was greedy and I didn't want to share my stuff with nobody for hitting me. I had a choice, either go ask somebody for some help (but I couldn't do that 'cause my pride and my ego wouldn't allow me to do that), or lock myself in the house for three days and kick it by myself.



And so I locked myself up and kicked it. I sweat, got cramps, all that, but I kicked the heroin. Then, I had to have a substitution so I was off and running with the crack."

"I had a lot of respiratory problems at this time but I wasn't concerned about that. I just kept smoking and smoking the crack. My daughter had gotten pregnant, she was fifteen. I remember her telling me one night that she was going into labor and to, 'come here,' and I wouldn't stop smoking. I remember telling her to just go lay down and put her feet up and it'll stop. The person I was being high with at the time, he went upstairs and started giving her these towels and stuff and said her water broke. But I was so into getting high I didn't want to stop to see about my child and so I just kept getting high. My daughter called my sister and she came over, cussed me out and took my daughter to the hospital. After they left I packed up all my paraphernalia and took it to the hospital with me. My daughter was in the labor room having contractions and I was in the hospital bathroom getting high. I remember when I came out they said that the baby's heart had stopped and they had rushed her [my daughter] down to the delivery room 'cause they thought they had to do a C section. That's when I guess something came over me and I said, 'No, I can't go through with this, I got to stop, I got to get some help.'"

"When my daughter and her baby came home from the hospital I remember telling my daughter that, 'After my birthday I'm not going to get high no more, I'm going to get

some help.' My birthday was June first and I got high five days after that. Shortly after this, I woke my kids up at like 6:00 in the morning and told 'em, I said, 'Your mother is going, I'm going to get some help.' I signed myself into detox. My sister agreed to watch them. I told my kids that I had to do it because my daughter had become pregnant and I never was the mother to make sure she was doing the right thing in her pregnancy, taking her vitamins, eating correctly, gaining weight. Her baby was born at thirty-three weeks premature and weighed only four pounds and this was my fault."

"I went to detox for four days. After four days they was gonna discharge me. I was taking counseling and I told them that I didn't want to come out here because I knew I would just pick up again. I wasn't strong enough to say four days was enough for me after years and years of getting high. So, I asked them could they put me in some kind of treatment center for a longer period of time. They sent me to a rehab hospital in another city. I stayed there for another four days to make sure that all the drugs was out of my system. When I was in detox they was giving me libriums and at this hospital they got me off the librium so that they could transfer me to a rehabilitation house in another city for twenty-eight days. I stayed at this house for twenty-eight days and I was being counseled there too. I talked to my counselor about furthering my treatment because I knew those twenty-eight days wasn't enough for me either. I knew

exactly what I left here [at home] and I knew it would be here when I came back. And so they sent me to interviews for longer term stays."

"I got accepted at one of the places I interviewed at for a nine to eleven month program. I stayed there for seven and a half months and they discharged me. They said I had a dirty urine and they discharged me. I was really hurt, devastated. I know I didn't pick up anything [use drugs]. But by my being there I started working on myself and working on my feelings and how what makes me tick, what sends me off the deep end, and how I can control it. By then I had worked on myself enough to have the tools to come home with. But I was still scared to come back at first. Plus I was hurting that they discharged me for the urine but I was also grateful because when I came home it showed me how to be responsible. I didn't have to depend on nobody else, it showed me how to take care of myself, be a responsible adult. I knew now that the choice was mine. If I don't pick up no drugs I can't get high. I just take the tools that I have and do the footwork to get where I want to go."

"I knew where I wanted to go 'cause in the program I had short and long term goals. And one of my goals was to go to school, to get my education. I had a lot of fear behind that because when I went into the program I couldn't even read. I believe the drugs take that away from you. I couldn't read or comprehend very well. If I don't hear somebody else run [explain] it to me, talk it to me, I don't get it. I was so,



so ashamed because we had different assignments to do and I couldn't do them because I couldn't read the newspaper. I felt bad, I couldn't even spell and I said, 'Look at me, I wasted twenty something years of my life. I deserve something better than this and the only way I'm gonna get it is to go after it.' So the people in the program started working with me. They helped me to try to read. They said it was just something that I had lost along the way but that with practice it will get better, it will come back. And so one of my goals was to go to school and I was doing the footwork to get in school when I got discharged."

"Despite all this when I came back here in January of 1992 I was scared and I just didn't know what to do. And so I came home on Friday and locked myself in the house until Monday. I told myself, 'I can't stay in the house forever like a clone, I got to go out this house.' I remember somebody telling me that at the Urban League building they work with people with addictive behaviors, anything that has an addiction in it. So I just went out, walked straight up to the Urban League. I got up there and I just broke out crying to the first person I seen, who I came to find out was a counselor. I didn't care who was listening. I just told them that I needed help, 'I don't know what to do, I just got discharged out of a treatment program. I don't want to use, I don't want to get with them old friends I know, I need some help.' And that's when they told me about the meetings and to go and get a sponsor. And the main thing, not to pick up.

They held onto me and carried me. They held onto me real tight until I was strong enough to walk by myself."

"They told me to do ninety meetings in ninety days, gave me a list of different meetings. I did like three hundred and something meetings in ninety days, three and four meetings a day because that's how scared I was. Then I got a sponsor and a counselor. I still go to meetings, I'm the treasurer of one of the biggest meetings in the city. And I still go to counseling and talk to my sponsor. I got a good support network."

### School Structure

"When I was younger I liked going to school because I liked what was happening at school. As I got older I got bored because they did the same thing the same way every day. We never learned anything about ourselves, about Black people or about what we went through everyday being teenagers and how to handle all that. I know it would have made a difference if we had because it wouldn't have been so boring. Only thing I remember is you read it out the book and whatever out the book, that's what you learn."

"They say they have counselors at school but the counselors are not dealing with what's going on with the kid any more than the teachers. Like the kid might have a problem at home and don't know how to express what's going on so they act out. They're behavior is just outrageous, they cuss, they swear. And the counselors don't look at the kid, they look at the behavior and say he has a behavior problem."

Okay, you know the problem, now work on the solution. What can you and the student do to get to a solution? They feel that by kicking the child out of school and telling the parent, 'Your child has a behavior problem either you take care of it or he's not welcome in our school' that's a solution."

"They need to get more involved with the student because most of the students, especially today, come from single parents. They're on welfare and they just feel that they have to be important and the only way they can get this attention is by acting out. Kids need to be in school getting an education. If they feel nobody care at home then school is more important. If they feel nobody care at school they end up in the streets."

"The way I'm being taught now is a smaller class and they teach you at your level, at your speed. They don't push nothing on you, if you feel that you don't have it yet they won't push more on you. And, they stick with it until you feel comfortable that you can move on. They take a lot of time with you plus they ask for our ideas. It's nothing stipulated. Whatever you feel can make the class more interesting."

"Each student in the class is a different age and grade level. I like it this way. At first I thought maybe I would feel out of place because I am a lot older than the other students but I don't, I fit right in. If there's something I need help with and one of 'em can give it to me I ask for



help. And they come to me and ask for help, it works out just fine."

"I started this program eight months after I got out of treatment. At first I wasn't sure if I wanted to go to school or to work but I knew I didn't want all this leisure time on my hands. I realized I wasn't really qualified to do what I wanted to do, be a substance abuse counselor, so I should go back to school and so that's what I did."

"Since I got clean and into school my relationship with my kids and my sister has grown tremendously. I still don't have no idea of what a mother is supposed to be doing but today we're kind of working on friends. When I have an attitude problem and they see it kicking in they tell me, 'Well Mom, you know, you can start your day over whenever you choose.' I tell they're talking recovery to me now. They got this from me talking recovery to them when I first came home, now they're talking it to me. They have addictive behaviors too. We're recovering together and we know it's a process and it's gonna take a lot of work. It's not gonna happen over night. We just keep it in the day."

"My son has problems in school and I know that they have to do with all he's been through with me. I tell him that and I show him that after all these years I went back to school. I tell him to look at me, I get up in the morning and go to school too. I'm going to get my education, I ought to be a powerful example to him. I got my report card and showed it to him, 'cause he don't show me his and if he does

he changes all the E's [F's] to B's, and he said that I changed all my E's to B's and I said, 'I ain't changing no E's to B's 'cause I'm not getting no E's.'"

"When I sit at the table and do my homework I try to include my kids. Before, me and my kids couldn't even sit in the same room and talk. Sometimes now my son just comes and sits by me and gives me a hug and says, 'Let's talk. What do you want to talk about? Anything come to your head?' And we talk about anything. But, my son still won't do his homework so I tell him to come and help me with mine. And they both help me with mine. Now lately, my son's been kinda doing his. When he was suspended for ten days he called the school hisself and asked for homework. And he went and picked it up and he did it. That's a change. It's gonna take a lot of work but we're starting."

"They have Alateen but they won't go. They choose not to go. That's okay. I can't make them go to the meeting. But they know I go to a support group and a lot of my support networks come over here. We have meetings here and they be listening."

"My son was getting counseling from a Black male counselor but he fired him. He said he doesn't want nobody to know his business. I'm trying to work with him on that, that he has no 'business.' Then he had a guy from DYS [Department of Youth Services] but he didn't like him either because the guy would always be bullying on him, too harsh. So he fired him too. He wants to take things at his own pace

and I told him that's okay. If he needs to do what he needs to do as long as he's not adding on, creating more problems and adding on more stress, trying to work through to solutions that's okay. Everybody has there own way doing things, that's his way. He got a girlfriend and I think maybe by him having that close bond with her he is getting closer to me and other people. Since he has had this girlfriend he has changed most dramatically. He knows how to talk a lot better. He's more affectionate but he still don't like me kissing on him but that's alright, we talk. Maybe he will eventually get back into counseling."

"My daughter is going to move into her own apartment. She's on welfare so she can take care of the baby. She was going to school but she dropped out. I guess she's not ready. She says she's gonna go back next month. I just hope she gets back on the right track too."

"To grow I know they need their own space just like I do. All days are not good for me and they can tell when I'm not having such a good one and I'll tell 'em, 'If I'm lashing out it's just because I need my space right now. Just let me go through what I have to go through.' And then when I go through it I come back and apologize to them. And they do the same with me. That's life."

"My kids' father just died last week. He died of AIDS. Because we had been separated for quite some time I'm not too concerned about getting it but I do choose to get tested every six months because of the simple fact of the behavior I



carried when I was active, it was high risk for me. His death was the first very painful experience I have had to deal with since I got clean. It's very painful, just being able to feel is very painful. But today I like to feel that pain because once I go through what I have to go through and get through it, relief sets in. And so I know I don't have to use no matter what, I have the tools. I can call people and go to meetings. And, I'm getting stronger all the time."

### Stacy

I came to know sixteen year old Stacy through the director of a special education facility which provides psychiatric and academic support to usually adjudicated youth. My interview with Stacy was conducted in a private room at this facility. The director of this facility is a long time friend of mine with whom I used to work at this facility.

Stacy became involved with this facility after demonstrating to various educational and psychiatric personnel that he was unable to function successfully behaviorally and, subsequently, academically in a mainstream educational environment. This ultimately led to his being kicked out. Since becoming involved with this facility, both Stacy's behavior and his academic performance improved, coincidental to his placement with a highly motivated and dedicated Black (African American) foster mother and siblings

and limits being placed on his contact with biological family members.

Stacy talks about returning to public school to finish high school or completing a GED at this facility and then pursuing higher education. He is interested in medicine, specifically surgery, and talks about becoming a doctor, the impetus for which is provided by his foster mother. He is also quite artistically, athletically and musically inclined and discusses pursuing options utilizing these prowesses as well.

### Family

"I lived with my biological mother until I was twelve. My older brother (one year older) and my younger brother (two years younger) all lived together with her until I turned twelve. We all her kids but we all got different fathers. My oldest brother's father has been deported for something, selling drugs or something like that I can't remember. He's in Puerto Rico now, he can't come back to the States. I know my father's name but he denies me. So it's like any day I can just be standing right next to him anywhere and he won't know me and I won't know him. I know he's Jamaican but I don't know what he looks like or anything, so I don't think about it. And my baby brother's father, he's living somewheres. We seen him. He comes over and we do a lot of things, went out fishing and stuff. He's a pretty good guy when he want to be. Not consistent. He can tell you he'll

buy you this but you don't get your heart set on it because some way, somehow you won't get it. That's the way it is."

"It's okay with my mother. Shaky but good. My mother drinks but on special occasions. She ain't no alcoholic. I've always been hyper, then I started getting into trouble with selling drugs and stealing cars and doing arson and eventually my mother couldn't take it anymore so my older brother and I got sent to foster homes."

"For the last three years I've been in more than fifteen foster homes. At first they were supposed to be temporary so they could move me back home. After a while, when going home wasn't getting any better, I started getting into trouble in foster homes so they put me in group homes. The moving me around was a little game of hokey pokey. Finally, I made a deal with the court to get back into school and stay out of trouble and they put me in a special group home program to get me back to my mother. I was doing fine there for so and so long. And then I went to a certain level in the program where you get to go home overnight. I went home and me and my moms got into a big argument and she said she didn't want me no more. She just didn't want nothing to do with me. So the group home came to get me and they said that if she didn't want me then why should they keep me in the program. 'If you don't want him like you said, we don't have no need for him to stay in the program to try and get him back home when the program is based on trying to get you, the mother, and the child back together.'"



"So they asked me what do I want to do. Do I want to go to a friend's house. I said, 'Nah, I don't got no friend's house 'cause friends ain't gonna let me sleep at their house every day. And relatives, I don't want nothing to do with 'em.' And so they put me back in a group home and they begin to go on a quest to find a permanent foster home for me. And so they found me a permanent foster home on March 11, 1991. I moved my stuff over there and I begin to stay there all the way up to today which is December 18, 1992. I been living there for a year, year and a half, going on two years."

"I'm the only foster child. My foster mother has three of her biological own. One's nineteen, a girl (she go to Clark University and plays on the basketball team), one's fifteen, a boy, and one's twelve, a girl. There's no father. It's a good family. My foster mother works at this place and she got her son and me jobs as custodians there. I been working there no problems. I been getting raises and people respect me. And it felt good to work because I wasn't on a corner selling drugs to somebody, helping to kill our society. And I worked and got what I call clean money because when I used to sell drugs that was dirty money. When I worked I felt good but it was hard, hard work. I got tired of it. A couple of times I used to say I didn't want to deal with it. I got into arguments with my foster mother and I told her I didn't want to live there. But she stuck with me. She wouldn't let me go. I begin to grow more attached to her. And we go to church. I play the drums. I play for a

gospel group and I like it. We laugh and do a lot of things. I got foster relatives which I call my biological family now. And we do like group games, basketball games."

"My foster mother is more demanding, more strong with her rules than my mother was. My mother, she had rules and stuff but I was myself so I'd just come in from school, drop my books and leave. And if I didn't come in that night I'd come in the next day and that was it. My mother didn't actually yell but she would say some things that would go in one ear and out the other. But when my foster mother say things it go in and stay in. I don't feel like arguing with her. I'm not gonna say I'm an angel. I argue with her of course, we got differences. But she comes to understand and she tells me, she puts 'em in words that I understand everything you say because she comes down to a teenager's seeing of things. She tells you, 'I know you want to do like this but it's best to do like that. That's the way.' And when she say it she mean it. And when she calls us, like in church when we're sitting in back and we're laughing on a Friday night, and everybody comes dressed up the way they go to school, and she calls us up to the front you go up to the front 'cause if not she'll get up and she'll come get you and pull you up to the front."

"Sometimes I get that feeling and that idea that she ain't my real mother so she better not be bothering or touching me or something like that. Like she'll come to get me in my room and I'll be like, 'Go away, you're in my room

mother now go away and leave me alone.' And it hurts her feelings and I see it so I stop, obey and listen."

"With my foster family we do more things as a family much more than we did with my biological mother. We have family reunions and we go visit relatives in Florida and that stuff. We do lots of things together as a family and I like that."

### Teachers

"From second grade I used to talk back to teachers and hit them too. All the way up to sixth grade I used to hit teachers 'cause they got on my nerves. I used to do things, fool around and I'd get yelled at. I hated to get yelled at 'cause I felt it was nothing big. And then teachers would come up to me and yell. I only hit the male teachers, I never hit a woman teacher. When I hit them they hit me back and we go at it, that was it. I got suspended all the time. Every time I got suspended I always used to think, 'Well here come about time for report card. I wonder what I get.' I used to get A's and B's. I just wonder why I got myself suspended, to get out of school?"

"When I worked I got my work right and I loved school. But when I was done with my work I'd get bored, I'd fidget around, move around, try to get out of class, run around. I like to stay on top of things instead of with things or below things. I'd like to be ahead, weeks ahead. I love it and it's funny. When they say, 'Class time,' I'm doing work. When it's time to play it's time to play. But when it's time



to work I breeze through it. And it's right. It's not like I sit down, get into class and two minutes I'm up and that's it. I sit down, take time and do it. If it's right, it's right. If it's not right, I have problems I ask for help or I just correct it. But the teachers didn't give me enough work. I'd say, 'Just watch and see how much I can do, and just keep giving me as much as I ask for, give it to me.' And I used to ask but they didn't give it to me 'cause they told me I had to stay with the group."

"I got suspended for acting out all the way up to seventh grade and that's when I got kicked out of the public system. Before that I had teachers that was Black, White, Spanish, purple, whatever. I had 'em all. And they all were never racist or whatnot."

"After public school I got placed in this program. The teachers I got now are all White, so are most of the other students. When I hear we are getting a new intern to work here, or a new kid in the program I ask, 'Is he African American?' I always ask that. And sometimes they'll say yes and sometimes they'll say no. I don't get depressed. It don't bother me but if they say yes I get happy. That's cool, that's good, more mixture here. Because right now it's like to me the mixture here is like a box of Capt'n Crunch cereal, the milk and me. But if we get some more African Americans I think it'll be a mixture of Cocoa Puffs and it'll be better for me. In public school there were more Black kids and teachers and it seemed like we acted more rowdier."

"I'm learning a lot in this program and I'm trying to let 'em know that my attitude is changing. When I first came here I would fight, and one of the teachers here was gonna restrain me and I didn't know him so I pulled a razor blade on him. I regret it now. I've grown attached to a lot of people here. But I feel like I'm gonna make it back to public school no matter what they tell me. I'm a make it and become a doctor. And some of the teachers here tell me, 'Well don't you think that's a kind of big goal for you?' And I say, 'No, that's a little one.' The teacher's here hear you say this and tell you it's an unrealistic goal and ask, 'Do you think you can make it?' I say, 'I don't think, I know.' I really feel it. But, the teachers in public school told me, 'You ain't gonna make it. Look at you now, you being bad, you ain't gonna make it. You ain't gonna make what you want. You'll become somebody that's living off of track [gambling] and drinking Night Train [a cheap, strong wine] or whatever.' That hurt but I told 'em, 'I'm a prove you wrong. When you come into my hospital asking me to make some surgery on you or do an autopsy on your body or whatever, I'm a prove you wrong.' That's it."

"Sometimes I get lost, I don't understand. I'm still trying to find out how come it hurts [it's wrong] when I say something about 'my' girl and it don't hurt when you mean it with 'my' boys. I just don't know, they ask me to change the way I talk here and the way I sit down low. I used to say, 'Well these niggers [talking about the White kids] here man,

they don't need to say nothing to me.' I used to say all that. And the teachers they feel it ain't the right words. The emotions and the way like I used to say 'my' girl like I owned her. And they say I don't own nobody, even when I'm married I don't own you. Now I say 'the girl I have a relationship with' or I say her name. Sometimes I laugh about it like it ain't nothing, sometimes it feel good. Outside of here I call her 'my baby girl' and when I say it I don't mean it like I got any control or own any part of her body or anything. It just means you're my baby girl and I love you and all that to say."

"When I came here I thought, 'This is the way I act, this is my culture, let me be.' And sometimes I find myself saying this still. But I understand that it's just the way. I have certain ways of talking in front of people. There's times in church that I can't say things. It wouldn't look right. When I go to church I got a different walk, a different attitude and different talk. I put it as I got a book, a dictionary, a library and it's like when I go to church I got to pull this book out and I'm just reading this book in my mind of how to act a different way. But when I go to school or out in society it's a different routine, not a fake out just a different routine. The teachers here they worked with me to change this a lot."

"Still, a lot of kids, especially young Black males, they act up and it seems to me we all act alike until we hit that age of probably seventeen and then we begin to act



different. But from the age I say twelve and up we act alike, little stick up kids. There's something about the culture that people act a lot, and feel it's alike. How can I put it? I think all Black males have the same walk, we all have the same attitude, the same hip hop [clothing style]. All the White males walk with the same walk I feel, and all Spanish [Latino] males walk with the same walk. It's part of the teen game. You gotta do a lot to fit in. You got to act a certain way. And the teachers here need to understand this."

### Peers

"Starting in second grade I got into a lot of trouble in school with friends. So they put me into a P.A. [pupil adjustment] class for my behavior. As I got older I used to get into fights in school with teachers and other kids. Then this carried over to after school."

"I used to fight after school, steal stuff like sneakers and cars, sell drugs like cocaine and heroin, and do burglary and arson. I never found the need for using drugs. I tried weed [marijuana] once 'cause there comes a time in every teenager's life when you gotta try something but I didn't like it, it didn't fit me and so I don't do it, none of it. I just sold it to get a reputation and get the money. Got a lot of girls noticed me 'cause I had money, and a lot of friends, my boys. So every time I walked down the street or anything it was macho. Every time I walked down the street

somebody always say, 'What's up, Stacy,' or call me by my nickname which they still call me and I answer by it."

"The kids I hung with were Jamaican and Spanish. They still are the same mix just different kids. We were a part of a gang called the Untouchables that's part of a larger gang. It's like you get on the phone and can call ahead in New York [City] and people down there come up here all in the same gang. They multiply, come together. This gang still going on, they still know me, speak to me. I stop give my respects and they give me their respect but I don't stay there and get going with them, I just say 'Hi' and 'Bye' and that's okay with them. They still call me their boy and if I needed any help with any problem or any other kids, if I really needed them I can always call them no matter what. That's the way it is for me. They would never try to hurt me for leaving 'cause it's good. They tell me that's good. One night, my [foster] mother left town I was hanging out with one of the kids from the gang and he said, 'What you be doing? You don't come 'round no more. We miss you and stuff.' I like [say], 'Boy, I be busy. I been thinking about going to church.' He say, 'That's good. Anybody ever ask you what you be doing, don't be scared to tell 'em, 'Yeah, I go to church, that's right.' They support me. They give me a lot of support. It makes me feel good because it's like normally a gang just be like stick with us or else, but they don't. They stick with me and they there when I need 'em. And I always try to encourage them to go to school

or to come to church or get a job and work. Some of 'em listen and some of 'em don't. But that's just the way they grow up. They'll learn. Right now I'm glad that I'm on my two feet."

"Since I don't have the same friends I used to I don't do the same things as I did about two years ago because I found after I got out of court so much they were gonna put me away for a long time. My mother, before she got fed up with me, was fighting to keep me out and I went before a juvenile judge and he told me if he let me go he didn't want to see me back. From then on I began to start on the path of going back to school and going home because I was scared they would lock me up and leave me there for a long time. And I told my mother that day that I was going to make something of my life, become a doctor like I want and 'Make you proud and stuff, 'cause I ain't the son that's just gonna be in trouble and make you always have grief on your shoulders, I love you and I'll make something for it.'"

"I didn't have too much luck going home but I got my foster family and all and I began to get into this project called Teen Step. And we do things like we go on outreaches. We pass out condoms, it's almost like preaching. We tell the kids, teenagers about how to not get AIDS and how to prevent it, having safe sex and using condoms for protection, the basics. It feels good because now I tell other kids when I'm out in the community, I tell them one thing, 'Don't get into trouble in school because I have, I lived there. I lived the



life so take some advice from me. I been there for drugs, everything, doing lot of fighting.' And we have people come and talk to us like people with AIDS, people that in the education of wars like in the army [Reserve Officer Training Corps], and we learn a lot. And we go on vacations together like camping in New York. And we're trying to get more teens to come and join us. You don't have to pay, it's free. And it's an easy place to meet people. And if you can't make it to the place we can always come get you [transport is provided]. The news station come down and interview us, too, we're supposed to be on cable."

"My [foster] mother tells me I can be in a room with a thieves, killers, murderers, anything and I can make friends. I'm very good at that. My biological mother she tells me it too. She tells me I'm very lovable. I open it up when I want to get close and close it when I don't. And my feelings get hurt when people say things that I don't like, I don't show emotion but it hurts. And I don't like to hurt people back but if I have to, not physical, I will. But otherwise people love me and adore me. My mother, my foster mother, she tells me when I ride in the car I see people and she tells me, 'If you don't know everybody in the city I don't know what.' And she says it's good. I know people. Street knowledge all the way up to school, people know me."

"But, sometimes I feel that I'm different from the other kids here in this program. I feel that the other kids and staff are frightened of me. I talk with my hands and my

gestures, it's like they come up [are understood] to be aggressive. I have the intention to not hit anybody but maybe my gestures gives them a different idea. And when I do get aggressive here I get more aggressive than other kids here. I get more anger, it takes a lot of people to restrain me. I get angry when the kids crack on [make fun of] my mother. I'm not the type, even though they don't know my mother and that I got problems with her, just leave her out of it. The reality of the environment I grew up in is that sort of effects a big blow on me. I feel it's very important to defend both my mothers, my foster and my biological mother. I don't say it [these things] 'cause it hurts me and then I feel it would hurt them, especially somebody my culture, whatever, I think it will hurt them. And there's all these different sayings that say, 'Your mutha' or 'Ya momma' and all that stuff; when you begin to crack on mothers I'm not gonna join in. I get mad."

"Another way the kids here get to me because of the way I was growing up and seeing things, when you walk and you nudge up against me and you don't say excuse me. I turn around and I say, 'You can't say 'excuse me'?' And if they say 'No' sometimes I be like okay forget it and sometimes I be like 'Don't do it again or else I'll hit you or something.' People all around this city will tell you gotta do something for me to hit you. You either got to hit me or make me really angry for me to hit you, 'cause I don't go off hauling off hitting nobody."

"The kids here can say things like, 'You Black this...' whatever and it goes in one and out the other. But I had incidents when they call me 'Nigger.' It hurted but it didn't make me angered. 'Cause like it ain't no thing in today's society when brother be calling brothers 'Niggah' or something like that. They don't mean that like saying 'You nigger!' It's 'My niggah.' But it hurts if a White person or a person of a different color call you a nigger. I don't understand why it won't hurt if you own color calls you. I answer to it if my friends call me. I got White friends, they call me, well, 'nigger,' we laugh, fool around but it hurts when somebody means it in an aggressive way. I'm still trying to figure out how come it hurts when other people say it but it don't when you mean it with your boys or your color."

### School Structure

"In kindygarten when I first started I loved school. I always loved school. I never wanted to leave school. I basically, if it was time to go home, would give a little sigh but I go home. I didn't like leaving. I missed school when I left just because I felt a little freer there with my friends that I couldn't see over the weekend."

"And then as I go on to second grade and all up the grades it began to get harder on me 'cause I wasn't paying as much attention. I was hyper and so my mother got me put into a P.A. class. I was in P.A. from second on. At the beginning of seventh grade she told me that if I kept getting



good report cards that she'd take me out of P.A. classes and put me back in public classes. I was supposed to be there by the beginning of junior high but I wasn't. I gave a couple of months to see if she was going to follow through on what she was saying, but she said she wasn't going to so then I thought to try and get myself kicked out of P.A. classes 'cause I thought if I did I would go back to regular ones. But it didn't happen the way I thought it would happen. I kept getting suspended. I begin to fight and hit principals and things like that and I was in trouble with the law like I said. They found there wasn't a place for me there so they sent me to another school. I came here to this program after my mother didn't want me back being that school was working on the mother child relationship and we didn't have one."

"For me it's like I'm a very organized person. When I come home I got my closet in a way where's my clothes for church here, other clothes here. And I got jeans, everything I wear, tee shirts, all that got a crease in it except for my socks and underwear. It's like I'm that type of person, my room stays clean and I want school to be organized like that too."

"Here at this program it's very different. You got the basic, six periods a day like in public school. And you got math, English, science, phys. ed. and wood shop. And then Thursdays it's like you go out for an academic with community. And you do white river rafting, rock climbing, caving, cross country skiing, everything you can do and I

like it all, every last thing. In the same year you're learning academics of how to read and add and how to swim and everything. And then on top of that you're learning how to rappel, kayak, know what kind of rocks in the cave and what you need to take with you to go in there. You learn knots, certain knots you have to learn so you'll be safe and you won't hurt yourself."

"I think it'd be good for a public school. In public school you're always working, doing work, you're always in gym, it's the same thing. And the kids like of my age and kids of other ages get bored sometimes. You come to school and every day, you got twelve months in a year and every day of the month is like math, English, science, social studies. Maybe a field trip over here or a field trip over there. But when it becomes winter you don't do as much. So I think it would be good maybe like four times a month or even a whole month to get some kind of out in the community academics thing."

"But you got to tell people what to wear 'cause in caves you really need to wear some stuff you really don't mind to mess. 'Cause if you say, 'Let's go on a field trip' and they wear their brand new jeans when they get out there they will be very mad 'cause you didn't tell them. That's happened to me. I like to be neat and I like to match. I come out and sometimes with good stuff and I forget we go on an out day and I forget we're going over here to this field trip and I'm like I'm not doing this in this, give me something else."

"I feel that in public school systems they should get a lot more of African American history and others. 'Cause when you talk about race I get mixed up. Back then what was the Spanish. They were a different color from Black and a different color from White. They had a race somewhere. Were they recognized as Blacks or Whites? I ask this question and people can't answer it. But this is a question I always got on my mind and whenever I hear about race I'm always gonna ask it. And if you can't answer it then that means either you need to get some more teaching or you need to have some other people come help teach. Sometimes I get bored here 'cause I don't got nobody else my color or no learning about it."

"One thing I don't like about this program I'm in now is the school absences. They aren't the same as the public schools and so that sometimes messes up my [foster] family's vacation plans. But two weeks ago we had a meeting to talk about public school and they gonna try me soon in a class at a regular public high school. By next fall I should be starting public school in tenth grade so the absences won't matter anymore. But I do feel that if my mother were to gave me more opportunities and chances then I wouldn't be in this program here right now. I wouldn't be here, I would be in public school. It's a fight to get back in public school."

"I finished seventh grade in public school and passed to eighth and came here and was doing eighth grade work and I been doing ninth grade work. I'm doing a lot of work in



ninth grade to get my ability to read 'cause I have problems reading up there [ninth grade level reading]. And it has changed a lot, increased. My mother told me when she was young she couldn't read as good. And they would just pass her up grade up grade up grade. And I feel that's happening right now today as we talk. People are getting passed up grade and need help in more major physical things. For me I need help in reading, and I'm working on it by myself. And my mother, my foster mother tells me if I can read the Bible then I should be able to read anything 'cause the Bible is a hard thing to read. I sit there day by day and I read it. It's hard but I understand it. I'm a person that ain't stupid. I understand when you say something, you can use the biggest word. I can break it down to something I understand 'cause I love to talk."

"When I finish high school I want to become a doctor, college and become a doctor. Here we got a class, first aid. I'm whizzing right through it. I'll soon be certified in first aid, rescue breathing, shock injuries, burns and all that. We're studying all that and I passed. I want to become a surgeon so I'll work in a hospital. And for me this is my dream. If I become a doctor I will get and build my own company. My foster brother wants to become an engineer. My foster sister wants to become a lawyer. My other foster sister wants to become a teacher or a Nurse's aide. My mother, my foster mother, wants to become, not an artist but a craft person. My [biological] brother wants to become an

animal doctor and my baby [biological] brother wants to become a football player. One day I sat down and drew out my life and the way I want it to be. I drew a building that I'll build. And if I needed any computer work I'll give it to my brother [engineer]. My files as in insurance and that I'll give to my sister [lawyer]. I'll hire my sister to become a teacher and teach my classes and hers or I'll hire her to become a nurse's aide to work by my side. And I'll put a department in there for art and craft for my mother. And I'll put a part in for my brother for animals and my other [biological] mother for teaching. And my baby brother, I'll put a gym in there for him to teach his little league team or whatever. And then my whole family will be in there. And I'll love 'em all."

"And I want to get married. And when I say married I don't mean like men nowadays beating their wives, telling their wives they got to stay here and they want to fool around. It's got to be equal for me. If you can't be equal and help me and I can't help you then we can't have it. I want my wife to be able to work. If she don't want to work she don't have to, but if she do I want her to. And I don't want her coming home every day rushing for me, trying to get me food on the table, 'cause I know how to cook. So if she come home from a hard day and she tired, 'Sit in the chair, the easy cliner, Lazy Boy, whatever. I'll get you some food, I'll cook, just relax.' It's an equal responsibility for a marriage and that's what I want. The girl I'm relating to

now and having a physical relationship with now is an equal.  
I like it."

"It's the same with schools. It's got to be an equal relationship with kids and schools and teachers, whatever. And the schools got to not only teach but feel, honestly feel. Teach kids to feel their opportunities and to listen to their feelings. Pass on the feelings."

"Schools got to teach for real, not be lying and be more active, more involved. For me it's like I got to have something to do to keep my interest. I can do that for myself when I'm out of school but in school they got to do it for me. Like when I'm not in school everyday of the week I'm busy. If it's not church it's work, if it's not work it's Teen Step, if it's not Teen Step then I got the basketball team. I cannot stand being not busy. I want something to do. To keep the kids interest in school you got to do this."

### Le-Thuy

I came to know twenty-one year old Le-Thuy through the director of a community civic association of which she is a part and which provides various kinds of economic assistance as well as ESL classes to members of their community. The director of this association was introduced to me via a mutual friend. My interview with Le-Thuy was conducted in a private room at the association's facility.

Le-Thuy became involved with this association when, upon her nineteenth birthday, the state benefits she was receiving



while trying to finish high school were cut, her financial situation became grave, and she was effectively pushed out of school. Unable to speak English well enough to gain employment in a mainstream setting on her own, Le-Thuy found herself in dire straights. Since turning to the association, Le-Thuy has found temporary employment in various Vietnamese owned and operated businesses and in factories where not knowing English is not an issue.

It is important to note that the benefits Le-Thuy was receiving while trying to finish high school were part of a special program available to United States citizens over the age of eighteen who had not yet completed high school. The program offered financial and housing subsidies to these individuals until they completed high school (not a GED or an adult education program). The number of individuals who actually utilized the program, that is who stayed in a regular high school setting beyond eighteen, was minute and, interestingly, the overwhelming majority were Southeast Asian [Chu, 1992]. Since this program was cut it has been reinstated. However, reenrollment in the program is so cumbersome (given bureaucratic regulations) that individuals like Le-Thuy are likely permanent casualties of the interruption in its service.

Because so many of Le-Thuy's experiences focus on her biraciality, it is also important to note that during the French "occupation" of Vietnam, biracial children were exalted by the Vietnamese people as "beautiful," specifically

because of their varied White features [Vidmanis, 1993]. Some years later, the Viet Cong put and end to this self-deprecating practice by reversing the terms of the contradiction. Under siege from the United States, biraciality began to be seen as part and parcel of that siege, a biological attack on the race and its beauty, not to mention Vietnamese women, regardless of the degree of their "consent" [Giap, 1971]. Unfortunately, the most innocent involved in this dynamic, the biracial children born by no "fault" of their own, become the greatest casualties, followed by their Vietnamese mothers and families, their United States servicemen fathers, and then, perhaps, the United States itself, if at all.

### Family

Le-Thuy was born in an urban area of Saigon, Vietnam, the third child of her mother's four. Her two older siblings, both girls, were, like herself, fathered by United States servicemen during the Vietnam war. All three of them have different fathers. Her younger brother, who she says speaks English flawlessly as he was younger than she upon arrival to the United States and so learned it more easily, has a Vietnamese father with whom he and Le-Thuy's mother currently live. Almost immediately following her birth, Le-Thuy was sent to live with her maternal grandmother and grandfather in a rural area of Vietnam where she remembers having chickens and pigs and growing much of the food they ate. Le-Thuy states that despite this they were poor.

While living with her grandparents, Le-Thuy had very little contact with her mother and siblings, only when they came to visit. Hence, Le-Thuy was unable to initiate contact with her nuclear family, she could only wait for them to initiate it with her.

Le-Thuy's grandfather died two years ago. Her grandmother still lives in Vietnam and she and Le-Thuy communicate regularly by phone or mail. Le-Thuy would like to visit her but fears facing the prejudice she endured as a child because of her biraciality.

Le-Thuy came to the United States at age fifteen, six years ago. She came via a sponsor family that one of her maternal aunts set up for her through the church that this aunt attended in her community here in the United States. Le-Thuy's sisters, who both finished eighth grade in Vietnam and did not continue in school after coming to the United States, instead marrying Vietnamese men and beginning families, had preceded Le-Thuy in coming to the United States and were living with this aunt when Le-Thuy arrived.

Le-Thuy's sponsor family was White, not Vietnamese or Asian. She stayed with this family for nine months, the prescribed length of the sponsorship, before moving in with her sisters and their families at her aunt's place. Le-Thuy maintains intermittent contact with what she calls her "American family" to the present, especially at Christmastime.



While living with her sponsor family, Le-Thuy learned about Christianity, which she likes though still maintaining her Buddhist beliefs, and about United States food, which she prefers to Vietnamese cuisine but both of which she can prepare. Le-Thuy often referred to the mother/wife in her sponsor family as her "mother" which confused me at first. Then she began calling her her "American mother" to clarify things for my benefit. It was this mother who began teaching Le-Thuy English and who communicated to her the importance of education and that she was smart, a compliment that Le-Thuy cherishes and reiterates often. This "adopted" mother graduated from college (as did her husband). Le-Thuy does not know how much education her biological mother has nor that of her grandparents or aunt.

Le-Thuy states that in coming to the United States and in living with her "American family" she felt welcome for the first time in her life. Because she looks White she had always wanted to come to the States and being here has lived up to her expectations in this respect. Given this, it is rather ironic that Le-Thuy was not driven to learn English and to associate with only White people, spending most of her time with Vietnamese people speaking only Vietnamese.

Le-Thuy states that language is and has been the only tough part about making the transition from Vietnam to the United States. Everything else has been easy by comparison, she states emphatically.

Le-Thuy lived with her aunt until recently when she and a female friend got an apartment together. Their ability to maintain this apartment financially seems tentative, and Le-Thuy often returns to her aunt's house for a night when concerns of this nature arise.

Le-Thuy has intermittent contact with her mother who was the last in the nuclear family to come to the United States. The major problem with their contact is her mother's husband (her brother's father) who expresses great disdain for Le-Thuy.

### Teachers

Le-Thuy had very little to say about her teachers in Vietnam or in the United States. She reports that in Vietnam teachers were "mean" to her because of her biraciality. Despite this, she generally liked school and did well academically. During her two years in school in the United States, as in Vietnam, Le-Thuy had only Vietnamese teachers. In contrast, however, they were much nicer to her here which made liking school and getting generally good marks somewhat easier.

### Peers

Le-Thuy had somewhat more to say about peer interaction. In Vietnam she reports being picked on by Vietnamese children a great deal because of her White appearance. This provided the impetus, early on, for her wanting to come to the United States. "Since I look White they will accept me there," she used to tell herself.

In the United States, Le-Thuy got along well with her Vietnamese classmates, many of whom were also biracial. In fact, Le-Thuy and her current apartmentmate met while in high school and immediately became friends given their common dual heritage.

While in high school Le-Thuy reports that fights between the Black and Vietnamese male students broke out everyday in between classes, sometimes involving knives. This was somewhat frightening to her but did not impact on her performance or attendance. No such tensions existed between the female students of different races.

Le-Thuy has never had a boyfriend and is not interested in having one until, maybe, at some point in the future when she has finished high school and has a job. She sees a boyfriend as a deterrent to her academic and professional goals.

### School Structure

While in Vietnam, Le-Thuy was exposed to a traditional curriculum, very much like the traditional European American curriculum in the United States. She developed literacy in Vietnamese, a skill which she still maintains.

Upon arriving to the United States, Le-Thuy was put into a mainstream classroom with a tutor for a very short period of time. She liked this. But, as more Vietnamese students came to her school she and they were placed in an ESL class with a Vietnamese teacher in which, she reports to her dismay, that although she was expected to produce work in



English she was taught almost exclusively in Vietnamese, which negatively impacted on her oral English acquisition as well as her becoming really literate in English as well.

During her time in ESL classes, Le-Thuy concentrated on mathematics, which became her favorite subject because it did not force upon her the frustrations of second language acquisition involved in the demonstration of learning in other subject areas. Part of the problem here for Le-Thuy was class size, she believed she needed individualized attention but that, given the number of students (up to thirty) in the classroom with one teacher and sometimes an aide, this was not possible.

It was these frustrations, coupled with the loss of benefits, that led Le-Thuy to begin to cut classes to work and eventually to leave school at nineteen, having completed tenth grade, in order to find more work to help support herself. She worked in a factory on an assembly line for six months before leaving on a vacation to California, returning two weeks later to find, to her surprise, that she had no job waiting for her. She did not, at the time, understand the culture governing the parameters of continuing employment in such an industry. Since this time she has had several other odd, low skill jobs but seems without the discipline to maintain them over the long run given the obstacles she must face in them on a daily basis.

It is because of her language skills that, although Le-Thuy believes she is smart, she does not anticipate going

to college. She is somewhat motivated to get her GED but believes she must get a job and earn money first, before she can return to any type of educational program. She is not interested in trying to reenroll in the program she was in previously, which would offer her an economic and housing subsidy until she finished high school, because she does not want to return to the high school setting to complete this education given her age which is the only way she would be eligible for these benefits.

Le-Thuy would like to have her GED because she believes it will enable her to get a better job. She believes that education is important and would like to learn about cultures other than Vietnamese in school but maintains that unless her English skills improve greatly, which she does not seem to think she has control over making happen, it is unlikely that she will acquire this or other "higher" education knowledge. If she did go to college she would consider studying accounting, again because of her predilection for mathematics. Currently, Le-Thuy continues to look for work and would consider working days and taking classes at night, but is confined to public transportation which limits her ability to get around as aptly as might be necessary to make such a schedule work.

#### Waverly and Armando

Twenty-three year old Waverly and twenty-four year old Armando asked to be interviewed together. The two of them

have grown up together, although they did not attend the same schools nor really hang out together, and were each a bit apprehensive about the interview and so agreed to participate as a team.

I came to know them both through an outreach worker at a private non-profit youth organization dedicated to providing "at risk" young people with academic, professional, interpersonal and/or legal support. This outreach worker was introduced to me via a mutual friend and former legal advocate (a community lawyer) for several of the youth involved in the organization. Our interview was conducted in a private room in this organization's facility.

#### Waverly

Waverly became involved with this organization when he needed some legal assistance on a small claims issue. Word of mouth among peers connected him to the legal services provided by the organization for free. Since that time he has continued his involvement with the organization primarily to get news on temporary employment opportunities (until his music business takes off), as he has no desire or intention to return to school since being partially pushed and partially opting out of school, and for the social interaction, presumably with the plethora of beautiful young women hovering about him.

Family. Waverly describes himself as quiet but explains that other people interpret his quietness as arrogance. He says that while he wouldn't necessarily deny being somewhat



arrogant or stuck up, in addition to being quiet, these airs are really part of the way he protects himself from those who might be looking to take advantage.

Waverly takes self protection very seriously. Having grown up essentially without a father (as his father has been incarcerated for murder since he was four years old in what may have been a case of mistaken identity) or any other man in the home, and being the oldest of his parents three children, Waverly had to learn to take care of himself early on. His mother, whom he is not certain graduated from high school and who has worked full-time since shortly after his youngest sibling was born, helped him in this regard. As Waverly tells the story, he was chased home by a group of kids when he was very young, six or seven years old. The kids wanted to beat him up. In an effort to avoid the beating, Waverly ran into his house whereupon his mother was waiting for him. She told him either he could get his beating from her or from the kids waiting for him outside. He chose the kids, and, after "lots" of such street fights to "establish" himself, he consequently and finally learned how to defend himself. Ironically, of course, by the time he knew what to do he no longer had to as his "reputation" did it for him.

Waverly has two children by a girlfriend. The children live with his girlfriend and her mother but he sees them regularly. He intends to "be there for them" (his children) emotionally, physically and financially, but is making no

promises to his girlfriend as he is not interested in being a family nor even in a monogamous relationship. He claims she understands and accepts this.

Teachers. Waverly only remembers one teacher that he didn't like and that was in second grade. He describes this teacher as treating him like "an object" by publicly chastising him in front of his classmates for being unable to grasp the concepts in particular assignments.

Waverly had both Black and White, male and female teachers. He reported getting along with all equally well and did not perceive prejudice or racism as an issue in his education.

Peers. Waverly describes himself as having been a good student and liking school but having few, if any, close friends and no peer group to speak of. After a day of school Waverly walked home alone and into an empty house (his siblings had after school activities and his mother was at work).

School Structure. Waverly's favorite subjects in school were mathematics, which he says he liked because it is "objective," and history, especially when he learned about World War II, the Tuskegee Airforcemen, and the 54th Regiment. This was, incidentally, his only exposure to Black history or multicultural education throughout his schooling.

In junior high school Waverly was placed in a special education classroom for what were diagnosed as "comprehension and attention deficits," but what Waverly states was a

function of his being "bored." In these classes, as in the mainstream ones, Waverly was given the same assignments to do over and over again, day after day, year after year. Waverly estimates that between seventh and twelfth grade he was not introduced to any new information in school.

By the time Waverly reached tenth grade, his "recreational" part-time job became a full-time necessity to help his mother support their family. So, from school Waverly went home to bed, got up at eleven p.m. and went to work as a security guard until seven a.m. (during which time he tried to fit in studying). From there he went straight to school and then repeated the cycle. His grades and attendance began to slip and by the spring of his senior year he decided to leave school altogether and accordingly, now eighteen, signed himself out. Ironically, he also decided to quit his security job at this point and put all his time and energy into making money and a career out of his first and only true love, music.

Several years later Waverly continues a very disciplined pursuit of fame and fortune as a musician, practicing daily, long hours in a neighborhood studio. And, he is making enough money to continue to help his mother out, with whom he still lives with one sibling (the other lives nearby in an apartment and holds a steady job).

This no nonsense attitude about his music permeates Waverly's whole outlook on life. He is not interested in returning to school as he doesn't see that it holds anything



for him. "Even people with formal education are unemployed," he states. He might consider music school but is not actively looking into any. And, he remains confident that his music will be broadcast on BET (Black Entertainment Television) before too long.

When asked what could be done to make school more useful and interesting to young people, Waverly believed that more multicultural education is an imperative. In particular he would have wanted to learn more about Black history because, he states, "To know others, one needs to know self; multicultural education teaches the history of self and others." Waverly also believed schools should teach more life skills: how to get a bank account, write a check or money order, pay bills, budget spending, rent an apartment, get phone, electric, and/or gas service, buy groceries, use public transportation, interview for a job, make a resume, write a cover letter, dress for particular types of employment, care for a child, access daycare, apply to college or vocational training programs, and so on.

When asked about retaining young people in school Waverly focused in on on-site daycare facilities and paid study hall so that young people who have to work to support their families could study for money rather than work for it, detracting from their study. In general, Waverly believed that education should be about more current issues, more pertinent to the everyday life experiences of young people, so that it would be of interest to them.

## Armando

Armando became involved with the previously mentioned non-profit organization primarily for assistance gaining permanent employment since essentially dropping out of school (or, rather, being pulled out by the lure of peers). More recently (following the interview), he expressed interest in enrolling in a GED program. I subsequently mailed him information about such a program offered at a community college in the area. Armando also enjoys the social interaction with young women that involvement with this organization affords.

Family. Armando describes himself as the "clown" of his family. He likes to joke around, have fun. Armando is the middle child in his family, with an older sister and a younger brother. Both of his parents, neither of whom finished high school, were in the home until he turned eighteen, at which point they divorced and his father moved away. Armando speaks politely, if not somewhat remorsefully, of his father, saying that his father "put in his time with the family," "fulfilled his obligation to see us raised," and then went his own way. Armando has rarely seen his father since this time.

While growing up, both of Armando's parents worked full-time. He spent a lot of time with his younger brother whom he defended in street fights when they were young. Like Waverly, Armando tells a story about how his younger brother used to be chased home by kids who wanted to beat him

himself face to face with their father holding a belt and saying "It's me or them, you choose." Of course, his brother also chose the kids and, like Waverly, consequently learned to defend himself.

Armando also speaks politely of his mother. Her only downfall has been and is that "she criticizes too much," "nothing is ever good enough" by her standards. Unable to live up to her expectations, Armando currently resides with a cousin and only pays short visits to his mother to see that she is "o.k."

While Armando grew up speaking Spanish first, through his contact with mainstream society he soon learned to favor English over Spanish and eventually developed out and out disdain for Spanish. Resulting, he never developed literacy in Spanish which is most likely he says why today his reading and writing ability in English is still very limited. Lately Armando has begun to see a benefit in bilingualism and so works hard at improving at least his own oral ability in both languages, neither of which is he able to speak in its so-called "standard" form.

Teachers. Armando describes adoring school as a young child and being a good student. He had Black and White, male and female teachers but no Latina or Latino ones. He believes that had he had a teacher or teachers from his cultural background some of his language issues in particular would have been better understood and addressed by them.



Around the third grade, Armando reports an incident in which he didn't understand something and the teacher chastised him publicly in front of the class for not understanding. After this experience Armando began to notice that most of his subsequent teachers were likewise impatient with him.

Peers. In junior high school Armando was put into a "P.A." or a pupil adjustment class for "learning problems." He does not remember if he was tested or diagnosed with any particular problem, but he does remember that coincidental to this placement he started hanging around with a somewhat rebellious peer group. His associations with this peer group continued through junior high school and into high school. Together they used to skip school, or "hook" as he calls it, and hang out. They used some drugs (mostly "weed") and alcohol (mostly beer), but Armando states it was nothing "serious." Eventually, Armando found himself hooking more often than he was attending school, so he stopped going altogether. In a school of five thousand students he was hardly missed and no one came looking for him (like a truant officer) nor called his parents (like a guidance counselor).

School Structure. Despite the size of the schools Armando attended (three to five thousand students in junior and senior high school), he does not report being afraid of peer violence. Certainly, there were fights and he was in more than one but these were "normal," "no big deal." Size was a problem, however, with respect to individual classes.

Armando reports one teacher having thirty to forty students to manage in a classroom. This made getting special, individual attention on a problem area virtually impossible.

In Armando's pupil adjustment class, he was given essentially the same assignments day after day, year after year. This caused Armando to question what, if any, new information he learned from seventh to tenth grade when he finally left school.

Armando believes that multicultural education would have made school more interesting, especially because, while he believes that school is a means to employment, he also believes there is an intrinsic value in just being educated that goes beyond what it "gets you" monetarily. Armando would have especially liked multicultural and just plain more instruction in art and music, two areas of education he would like to pursue in the future as he is apparently quite a talented artist and, at least, enjoys music.

Armando's favorite subject is mathematics. Because of this, he wishes schools would provide more practical applications of abstract mathematical concepts so that students like himself could envision careers utilizing mathematical skills.

Armando says that he would like to go back to school to at least get his GED. Currently he works at whatever temporary position the local employment agency finds him. He had one temporary position with a data entry firm where he fed information into a computer. He liked this job very much

and would like to do it more permanently. His only concern about this and other like positions is that he has to dress up for them, as does everyone else who works in them. Because of the formal attire Armando says "I'm not sure I belong there."

### John

I came to know seventeen year old John, like Stacy, through the director of a special education facility where he is currently involved. My interview with John was conducted in a private room at this facility.

John became involved with this facility following his demonstration of growing apathy for regular public school, manifest as waning attendance which ultimately led to his being kicked out. John is intensely angry at his placement at the special education facility, as he believes he doesn't belong there, that he is not like the other kids there.

John talks determinedly about going to college and pursuing a career where he will make fifty to sixty thousand dollars annually. The monkey wrench in his doing so is that he realizes that returning to public school to graduate with his class or the one behind it is increasingly unlikely, he is academically too far behind. Returning any farther behind his graduating class is unacceptable to him, but so too is getting his GED as he believes that with a GED he will be academically underprepared for college and doesn't feel



confident about his ability to catch himself up with developmental coursework.

### Family

"My father is a car appraiser and I don't even know if my mother works. She hurt her back working, gave her all these problems so I don't know if she's in work or out of it. My parents separated when I was three. After they separated he moved to Hawaii. I have a relationship with him now but its not close. I go out there every once in a while. I lived with my mother and my older sister from that time until last year. My mother had one or two boyfriends in that time frame. They were all right; one of 'em was a real loser."

"My ma drinks so when I was home I could do whatever I want. That's why I started to do whatever I wanted in school. I guess she didn't give me enough boundaries. She punched me. It's been happening since I was three years old to me and my sister. But never gettin' black eyes or anything. It wasn't to where there was bruises or anything like that. The first time with bruises was seventh grade. I went to school that day and then I walked home and I didn't want to go home so I walked to my aunt's house, which is on my father's side. So she took me down to the office [at school]. I thought it was a good idea and she told 'em my mother hit me and then they [school personnel] got DSS involved. Then that just stirred up a whole lot of trouble with the family and with the school."

"I stayed at my house with my mother, I just had to go to court for a CHINS [Child in Need of Services Petition] and go to school every day after that. There was a period of time where I started to go to school every day. And then my mom asked them to keep going and going with the CHINS. Then there was two days in a row that I skipped and that was it. They transferred me to 766 [a special education program]. If my mom didn't ask them to keep the CHINS going they were going to drop it and she just wanted to keep it. I'll never forgive her for that. I'd be in public school."

"The bruises that happened with my mom were a once in a lifetime thing. If I had known what was gonna happen I would've never went to my aunt and I would've lied about my bruises, said I got into a fight. I would have put up with the situation with my mom to stay in public school. I think the whole thing is all messed up. I think my aunt was talking too much, giving them ideas when it wasn't even happening inside. They were thinkin' beyond that then everything got messed up. I think DSS sucks. I think it does more worse than good."

"Last February I went to live with my [maternal] grandma and grandpa. They're retired. I guess it's better, more stable, less fighting. When I had problems with my mom if they had sent me to live with my grandparents and kept me in public school that would have been fine."

## Teachers

"I got along with teachers except one, an English teacher. In his class, maybe ten students and most of them would be all my friends, we'd just mess around, talking, and then he'd kick me out of the class. He threw a couple of other people out too. And at the end of the class he ended up having no kids in his class. And then there was one time when I asked to get out of class, 'cause he told me to do my work and I forgot my book, and I had my fingers on the desk and he slammed another book down on my desk and hit my fingers. He definitely did it on purpose 'cause he had a fist fight with a student once that came to this school. They fought right in the hallways. So he has kind of a bad reputation with students. I just walked out of his class after this incident and everything just went down hill after that, I started skipping school. And, nothing ever happened to the teacher for doing that to me."

"There were other teachers who were more interesting, I guess it was the way they talked. Most of the teachers were White, men and women, like forty to forty-five. I don't think different race or younger teachers would have made any difference."

"I don't think teachers should jump to conclusions because they don't know what is actually going on at home. They just hear hearsay and that other stuff and 'Oh, we gotta get him out, we gotta get him out. And I also remember that at one point I used to get picked on a lot. A teacher saw



what was happening and went and told the principal and that just made my life worse. As long as I was puttin' up with it I was okay. But as soon as they told the principal everyone thought I told and that just made my life much worse. Sometimes teachers getting involved makes it worse than better. I didn't ask for help."

### Peers

"In seventh grade I started skipping school a lot to hang out with friends. I don't think anybody was really encouraging anybody to do it, it was just the thing to do at the time. Boys and girls together. We'd just go right in back of school, nobody would see us. We'd come to school, sign our name in homeroom and then walk out the back door and come back at lunch. It wasn't an everyday thing, just once in a while. But they started adding up. I liked school a lot, I didn't want to skip it, I just wanted to hang out and not do school, but I liked it."

"This program I'm in now has brought out the worst in me, I swear. 'Cause when I first started coming here I seen people kicking the walls in. And I was like, it's just the thing to do, just like skipping school was just the thing to do. And then in here it's just the thing to do, blow off classes. And I did a little bit of drugs when I first started coming here, because everyone was doin' 'em in the school. So, I definitely learned this other stuff from the students here. I never even swore in public school, now every other word is a swear. When I'm here I see people

being restrained and I see people sleeping on the floor. I hate the people who are being restrained. They're all on these medications and everything and I'm not. I realize they have problems but I don't see why I have to be here. It makes me feel like I'm a retard or something. All I did was skip school, that's all I did."

"Most of my friends from public school are already out, already graduated. My girlfriend goes to public school. The only friends I have are the ones that are in her school. They're the ones watching if she does anything, meets someone new. Here you don't get to meet anybody new. It's the same shit everyday. In public school you would at least bump into a new nerd or something. Here it's the same thing. It sucks. And then they get on your nerves, these twelve and eleven year old kids who walk up to you and they think you're the best thing on earth. And they start doing something like bring you coffee and then you get pissed off and they say there's something wrong with you for gettin' pissed off. Like this kid's been doing this for about six months now. I'm really gonna go off. And I used to never even get into fights. Here I'm always in fights. I always want to hit someone here, I can't stand it."

"I stopped using drugs a little after I started using them here. I never really used 'em. It wasn't the thing to do. It was just like the school made me out to something I wasn't because I was hanging around with certain people. But it's such a small community you don't have too much of a

choice who you hang out with. So they thought that I was doing more drugs than I was and I wasn't and that started a whole big thing. I do go to parties on the weekends. And I go to this club. I drink once in a while, mostly beer. I don't like get drunk but like the next step down from happy."

"Once in a while in public school there were group or like gang fights. One time I got into some kind of mess about thirty-five dollars that someone said I stole. It was actually someone in the school with the same last name as me that did it. But they thought it was me and they were waiting for me and I had nothing to do with it. I skipped school a couple of times to avoid them before it all got cleared up. They finally figured it out, I think someone else in the school explained it to them but they just kept it quiet. But they knew it wasn't me and that it was the other guy."

#### School Structure

"Since kindergarten to about sixth grade I did pretty good in school, got good grades. Then I passed that and then went to junior high. And then, I don't know, everything just got messed up. After that incident with the English teacher that's when the school started investigating me at school and at home. The principal would see me at the beginning of the day and then he would ask the teachers, 'Has he been here to class?' And they'd look at their records and they'd say, 'No.' But my name was on the attendance sheet



for homeroom so it counted in the records office but not with the classes."

"Then after the thing with my mom and my aunt it was just like a thing [an effort] to go to school. First they moved me into 766 class. It was like you were in one room all day. You would go straight there and you couldn't go out. I didn't like that so eventually I wouldn't even bother going to school. And then it ended up someone at school started getting involved [the truant officer] and taking me to court. He recommended that I go to another school and that's how I got in this program."

"The way I feel is that I got cheated out of something. I felt that in school I didn't get told that if I keep skipping school I'm gonna end up in a place like this. If I knew that then I'd have never done it. The day after they told me I was coming here I said I wish I never did it, before I even looked at this school. But nobody told me. My mother didn't tell me 'cause she didn't even care."

"I can't stand this school. It's too small, everybody knows what you're doing. I don't like the way they teach. It's like everybody does something else and the teacher just explains. Everybody's doing whatever they're doing. If someone gets up and starts screaming and throwing a hissy fit and getting restrained you just have to sit there and do your work which I can't. And they expect you to."

"I don't have enough credit to go back to a public school at my right grade and I wouldn't want to go back

more than a year behind it. I just want to get my GED and get out. I know I can take it other places but why pay for it? And they don't explain as well. I'm almost ready to take it again. When I took it before I guess I did fair considering how far I went into it [the preparation booklet]. But I'm so far behind in my education now and I'm not learning the things here that I want to be learning. I want the public school but can't get it through the GED. I want the extra reading about people. I don't like learning but I would like to know about it. Not just math and English. And science, they don't teach you science and history here because it's all comprehension, so you don't really learn anything, just math and English."

"When I do get out I want to work, save some money and go to college. I'd start at community college. When I go to college I want to study something in the medical field, like nuclear medicine or something like that, working with diseases, diseases in the bones or something. Not like AIDs. If I had the money, that is."

"I don't wanta work physically. I'd rather work with my mind. 'Cause I work now and it's physical work. It sucks. I hate it. I'm a cook at a restaurant. I've been there about a year and a half. I've been working since I was twelve. Before this job I worked at a donut shop. I was like the janitor cleaning up on the weekends and then I got moved up to cooking donuts. Then I got fired there 'cause I didn't show up one day. Then I got the job back and I didn't

want it and that's when I went and got the job I have now. But I don't always want to sweat when I work and I don't always want to have to keep doing the same thing. That's why I want something in the medical field."

"Everyone in my family works at a hospital. My aunt and uncle are doctors, my sister is a registered nurse and my cousin does something else medical. I want something more than like a nursing degree. I have to have the best. I want to be the best. I don't want a like a thirty or forty thousand dollar job. I want like a fifty, sixty thousand dollar job and I want to work for it. But I got to get the hell out of here first."

"I guess experiential kinds of stuff in school would be cool like dissecting a pig, something more complicated than a worm or a frog. But, I think the outdoor program here is dumb, which is why I'm on an agreement to only be here for math and English and the other stuff I take home. I'm also on this agreement because of my job, I work from eleven a.m. to eight p.m., and because I don't fit in here. I don't think any school would be more interesting no matter what the curriculum is, I would just like it if I was in public school. The only thing that might have made a difference for me with school is I guess if I had a goal. If I knew what I wanted to do but I didn't so that's why I was just like 'Screw it.' I don't think most people in eighth grade know what they want to do, and they don't come up and ask you."



"I definitely think a formal education is important to get a good job. I always have. The biggest problem I had in school was that they didn't explain to me what the consequences of my behavior would be."

### Vanessa

I came to know twenty-three year old Vanessa, like Carlos and Elaine, through the educational coordinator of a community center's employment preparation program in which she is currently enrolled. My interview with Vanessa was conducted in a private room at this community center.

Vanessa became involved with the center after opting out of school and finding her life characterized increasingly by a sense of purposelessness. Since enrolling in this program, Vanessa is making progress towards taking her GED and, subsequent to passing it, plans to pursue community college certification as a home health aide and, perhaps, in the future, a nursing degree.

### Family

"I got two siblings that's younger than me and then the rest, six, are older, all from the same mom and dad. My mother been have her GED when I was little. She's working at Milton Bradley making toys. She worked hard but it was never enough to support us though. My father never even learned how to read. He couldn't read period. My mother had to read the mail to him. He worked for a while too but then he got

fired for drinking on the job so that didn't help much. He was an alcoholic."

"It's not that my mother didn't care, she didn't have enough time. It was really only her. My father took care of us 'cause my mother was always gone, but he lied a lot. So my older sister, she helped out a lot. I think my problems at home and in school was because my mother and father had these too many problems when I was growing up."

"When I was little I didn't think that my parents really loved me or I thought that they loved me the last most of all of us kids. Because it was like my mother, she would buy clothes for all the rest of the kids but not for me. I used to have to wear the old clothes that they had while they were getting new clothes. And when I went to school they was like, 'Why your sister and brother dress so nice and you dress like that?' And my sister and brother, they was ashamed to go to school with me."

"And my parents, they never encouraged you to go to school and nobody helped us with homework or read with us. We was just supposed to do our homework ourselves. My mother just wasn't around and since it seemed like she never took the time I thought she didn't care and so I didn't care either. Now that I'm grown up I see they really, really did love me."

"My parents separated when I was fifteen. That was very, very hard for me. My father stayed in this area for a little while then he moved down south, back to his mother."

But he and my mother was still good friends and they would've got back together eventually if he wouldn't have died. He died when he was in the bar he owned down south and this guy wanted a free drink and he said no. And when he was little he had got hit by a Mack truck and it messed up his brain and so when the guy who wanted the drink hit him in the head with brass knuckles he died instantly. That happened last year."

### Teachers

"I wasn't really happy in school when I was little. The teachers, they didn't care back then. They didn't teach me too much either. They didn't help me at all. They put me in the slow class because they told me I wasn't smart enough for the regular one, they told me I was stupid. So I started talking back to them, swearing. I was a bully. They'd tell me to do my work and I wouldn't do it. I threw it on the floor and I say, 'You can't make me do my work, you can't beat me.' And that's how I'd make teachers cry. And I hit my gym teacher. She told me not to wear my coat to the gym and when I did she took it from me. When I got it back it had a cut in it and it wasn't a cut when I gave it to her. My mother had told me I couldn't wear it to school and I wore it so for me to see that cut in it, I got to go home and get into trouble. I got mad so I just beat her up."

"The teachers told me that they just passed me to get rid of me. They were afraid of me. I wasn't doing no work and they were just passing me along. I would get suspended



for thirty days and still pass. I got suspended twice for thirty days in ninth grade and still passed."

"All the teachers I had in school was in their thirties, White and they was all female but one. But they wasn't prejudiced or nothing. But I do think it would have made a difference to have other colors around, especially Black men teachers as like role models. One of my guidance counselors was Spanish [Latina] and she really helped me a lot. She used to make like family meetings to help with family problems and stuff like that. I liked this but my mother didn't."

"The teachers in the public school have changed since I was there. They really care now, there's a big difference. 'Cause like when I been watching T.V. on the news, how they really into the kids, workin' and learnin' now. A lot of teachers are getting awards for being good teachers. Before it wasn't like that."

"In the program I'm in now, the teachers, they sit there and they take their time with you. No matter how mad you are, it is like they make you feel happy. When you walk in, I be so mad in the morning. When I see their faces it just makes me smile because they teach you. They sit here, they teach you. They make sure you know. If you got a problem wrong they make sure you got it all right before you stop doing that paper so it clicks in your brain. They spend a lot of time with you."

"That's what teachers got to do, care like how the ones I got now do. Sit down and talk to a kid, ask them what's their problem. 'Cause most parents, they don't talk to their kids at home. Some kids got a lot of problems but they just don't know how to talk 'em out. So if the teachers did talk to them they can really help 'em. 'Cause it really helps when somebody just talks to somebody instead of keeping it all inside. That's why kids don't learn today."

"And they need more teachers than one teacher to two hundred and fifty people to a class. Nobody can learn. A teacher can't teach that many people. I was in a class that size before they put me in the slow class and nobody learned anything. In a way I kind of feel sorry for the teachers too, 'cause they got to deal with the kids, and that's a lot to deal with. Some of the kids in there were so bad they teachers had to listen to them. If I was a teacher I wouldn't be dealing with some half of what teachers deal with."

#### Peers

"I did pretty good in school up until junior high. I really didn't learn much in there [junior high] 'cause I really didn't want to learn much 'cause I was around the wrong crowd of people, actually the same people I grew up with but we changed I guess. As soon as I got here I didn't do no work, didn't listen to the teachers or nothing. You know how it is when you have some friends and some of them do bad things and you follow behind them? That's how it was,

falling behind my friends. They would drink, smoke weed. I would go behind. Never did my homework. Right after I got out of school I was supposed to do my homework but I never did. I would just go outside, just hang out and never learn anything."

"I really don't even know what changed from sixth to seventh grade. I was always bad in school but I did good gradewise up until sixth grade because I did my homework. When I got in seventh grade it just got out of hand. I was bad in everything. I was bad in not listening to teachers, I was bad in getting suspended from school, I was bad in not doing my homework, I was bad in not listening to my mother."

"I was in the slow class but my friends didn't really care, and there wasn't no attitude towards the kids in the slow class from the other kids. People didn't act like that. But people did make fun of me because of the way I dressed and that was definitely a reason I didn't want to go to school, I was ashamed."

"What was going on at home had a lot to do with how I was in school too. I really don't know about what was happening at home with the friends that I used to hang out with. I just know one of my friends, my best friend, her mother didn't like me because she thought I was telling her daughter to do the things we did. But she didn't know I was following behind all this time. Her daughter was the influence and she thought I was, but it wasn't like that."



And her daughter got so bad that her mother had put her in a foster home. They got that bad."

"In junior high there was a lot of fighting, both boys and girls, in classes and between classes, everywhere, it didn't really matter. There was the Wops and the Lady Wops and the Demonstrators, it was so many gangs I don't even know, a lot of 'em. And they would wear colors like the Wops was black and white and another group was red and white. Girls fought girls, boys fought boys. Some of 'em were kids in the school and some of 'em were from other schools or kids out of school who used to come to our school. They'd all fight. Sometimes a gang would meet up with other members of their gang from another area. But the gang in that area would have different colors so they would have to agree not to shoot each other because of the colors because they was in the same gang."

"I was never in a gang and none of them was my friends, the people in the gangs. All the people in these gangs were Spanish [Latino/a]. And they fought each other. They really didn't bother other people but I was always scared I might get caught in the crossfire which is why I used to run to the bus everyday. But actually it wasn't much shootings, it was mostly stabbings. But it did make school more uncomfortable. The teachers was frightened too."

### School Structure

"I remember we sat in rows of desks, three desks behind you and seven people to a class. And in the slow class, you

know learning disability, the teachers stand by you but they don't really help. I had problems reading and I couldn't really spell words or nothing. Like on the paper I could see it, I could write it down, but I couldn't write it down the way I saw it."

"From first through sixth I used to do good, got A's and S's [satisfactories or passes]. But it was like every time I do something they give me the same. Every time I went to a different grade I do the same work over and over. It was like I had the same class for three years, I did the same work over and over. That's a lot of why I didn't do my work, I knew it and I was getting bored. And then in seventh grade it all started to go down from there, like I said. It just seemed like they didn't care in school so I didn't care either. They knew what was going on at home but, you know, they didn't care. At one point the school did call DSS and a social worker came to the house and was gonna take us kids away. But my mother talked to them and we got to stay. That was the wrong thing for them to do, that made things worse 'cause I never wanted to tell anybody anything that was wrong after that 'cause I was scared they was gonna take us away."

"After ninth grade I just asked my mother, 'Could I quit school?' She said she don't want me to but it's up to me, it's my decision, I'm going to regret it the rest of my life if I do. And so I decided to do it and she signed me out. I didn't have to talk to a guidance counselor or nothing we just went up there and she signed me out and that was it."

"I never learned anything about Black people until I started coming to this program. We have it here and so I'm learning it now. We learning about this Black lady called Shirley Chisholm, I think her name is. We learning about her. I like learning about this kind of stuff."

"I think a formal education is important because when you go look for a job you can write now that you understand. Before I came to this program I couldn't get a job or nothing. I'd buy the newspaper and try but I could only do like dishwashing or babysitting. But then I thought nobody wouldn't want me to babysit their kids 'cause I don't got no reference and the same thing with dishwashing. Plus I didn't want to be a dishwasher 'cause I know I can do better than that. So, I would just sit in the house and watch T.V. For six years every day watching soap operas."

"I been living with my boyfriend, he's been supporting me, he works. If it wasn't for him and my older sister I don't know where I'd be right now. I probably wouldn't be in this program 'cause they the ones that encouraged me to come. My sister, she went to college and my boyfriend he finished high school. My sister's been encouraging me and my younger brother and sister to go on in school. My younger sister, she's going to college now."

"I decided to go into this program two months ago 'cause I be like watching these programs about how they be having kids like me. And I'll be like, 'If they can learn I can learn.' And so then I was just trying to find the right



program. I went to lots of other programs in the city before I came here. I really tried at all of them but at some of them my test scores was too low to move on and at others I had to pay. Then one day I was listening to the radio and I heard about this program and it sounded interesting and so I went and signed up. I like it a lot, they help me a lot. And now I can come to school. I'm so proud of myself 'cause when I get up in the morning I know I'm coming to school and I feel good. After I get my GED I'm going to college, community college, to become a home health aide. That involves going to people's homes, helping them. Maybe eventually I'll become a nurse."

### Conclusion

The case studies presented in this chapter, in addition to being emotionally and intellectually compelling, almost incite action towards change. Perhaps most surprising among the comments the participants made was how subtle some of the change they indicate for schools is and how simple to accomplish. For example, Elaine's insistence that, more than anything, teachers sit down and talk with their students to find out where each one is "coming from."

But, the impact of some of the major structural features of the educational system has been widespread and destructive. Given this structural nature, perhaps most discouraging among the comments the participants made was how radical some of the change they indicate for schools is and,

thus, how difficult to accomplish. For example, the alienation from learning Carlos, Elaine, Le-Thuy, Armando, and Vanessa experienced in classrooms with anywhere from twenty to two hundred and fifty students, one teacher and, sometimes, a teacher's aide.

Clearly, all the participants in this study have experienced some manifestation of some form of initiated violence (physical, economic, political, and/or psychological) and this experience has likewise clearly impacted on their respective identity development and, hence, their ability to be successful and retained in school. For example, the physical abuse Carlos sustained from his step father, the economic poverty that characterized Le-Thuy's and Vanessa's upbringings in particular, the utter brutality of the politics of "special education" in the lives Thomas, Le-Thuy, Waverly, Armando, and Vanessa, and the psychological tragedy embodied in the "burden of acting White" [Fordham & Ogbu, 1986] for Armando and Elaine relative to their having to "clown" around and feign disinterest in academics to illustrate their allegiance to their "culture" and retain the respect of their peers.

Also, some of the participants in this study have reacted to their experience of violence with violence themselves; but none directing these or other reactions so as to influence positive change, rather at those around them or inward at themselves effecting only more devastation. For example, Carlos's near murder of another student with a gun

in a school bathroom or Elaine's twenty year addiction to a multitude of drugs and alcohol.

In Chapter 5, the findings of this study will be discussed relative to the case studies presented in this chapter. Themes that emerge akin to these findings will be analyzed with respect to the operative form(s) of violence involved in each and the impact of this violence on student retention.

### Chapter Summary

The case studies in this chapter provide the raw information multicultural educators need to become more effective in dealing with the impact of violence on various educational endeavors, especially student retention. Towards that end, these case studies illustrated the various forms of initial violence and reactions to it. They also illustrated the overall impact of violence on each participant's identity development and how this subsequently impacted their respective abilities to be successful in school, leading ultimately to their each leaving school.



## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS: UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIFACETED REASONS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVE SCHOOL AS VIOLENCE

#### Introduction

In this chapter the fifteen major findings of this study are discussed relative to the case studies presented in Chapter 4. This discussion is organized to focus on the two general themes around which the findings as a whole converge. Because the convergence around these two themes is so strong, I refer to them as crises, of representation and communication. In the context of the discussion of each crisis, the operative form(s) of violence involved and its impact on student retention will be analyzed relative to the participants' self image and confidence, their interpersonal relationships, and their expressed need for multicultural education.

#### The Crisis of Representation

The crisis of representation describes the conscious, subconscious, or unconscious awareness of almost every individual of that in their representation which is weak, only negatively represented or misrepresented, underrepresented or completely unrepresented, due to memberships in the various oppressed groups. That is, the crisis in our sense of self worth that results when aspects of our person are impacted upon by any degree of violence,

whether physical, economic, political, or psychological, and that makes us react with varying degrees of physical violence.

For most people, there is an experience of self with representation enough that the propensity to react can be controlled. The perpetrator of the violence does not have to be literally eliminated for the recipient to experience even an infinitesimal sense of being represented. This is not the case for those, for example, in the streets who often experience themselves with so little representation that under certain circumstances even conflict from their own mother is seen as necessary to completely eliminate. This occurs when their lack of self worth is so profound that they must literally kill anyone who questions their authority in any way, so that they may have even a fleeting experience of themselves as "acting," having agency or representation, and not merely being acted upon. And how far one is willing to go to get representation, or what urban young people call "juice" or "play" [Dickerson, 1992], in this context will soon have no limit.

Ironically, when this reactive, horizontally manifest violence is taken past a certain point in the struggle for representation, it becomes blind. That is, previously held allegiances to any particular oppressed group no longer matter; rather, the drive for representation becomes so intense that anyone who intentionally or incidentally gets in the way is "taken out." This ultimately parallels the

behavior of the overrepresented in their drive to maintain absolute representation [Clark, 1992].

The participants in this study are engaged in this crisis with varying degrees of intensity, corresponding to their varying experiences of self with representation. The ten findings discussed in this section of the chapter detail the participants' simultaneous crises of and struggles for representation as they pertain to their self image and confidence, their interpersonal relationships, and multicultural education.

#### Self Image and Confidence

Perhaps most significant among the four findings discussed under this heading is the fact that none of the participants left school at a point when they were successful. In fact, they all left at a point when they were not only unsuccessful, but had been so for some time.

Not coincidentally, this usually occurred shortly before they were to make the transition from one setting to the next or shortly after they did so, either from sixth to seventh grade or ninth to tenth, or from mainstream to special education classes or visa versa. It becomes more than readily apparent that for all the structuring and restructuring of schools to put age appropriate groups of students together, the obvious concern with making smooth the transition from one school and group of peer associations to another has been overlooked [Conard, 1988; Lipsitz, 1984; Wilcox, 1982]. That is, because so much anxiety exists



around the developmental appropriateness of certain groupings (for example, going from elementary schools housing first through sixth grades to housing only first through fourth and putting fifth and sixth together elsewhere and so on [Coleman et al, 1982; Gay, 1988; Glen, 1988; McNeill, 1986; Sirotnik & Oakes, 1986]), the turmoil that exists whenever transition is made from one setting to the next regardless of developmental stages is completely ignored [Conard, 1988; Lipsitz, 1984; Wilcox, 1982].

The psychological violence embodied in these dynamics is intense. As Vanessa put it, "I really don't even know what changed from sixth to seventh grade. ...I was around the wrong crowd of people, actually the same people I grew up with but we changed I guess. When I got in seventh grade it just got out of hand."

The second interesting finding here is that while all of the participants are bright and some exceptionally so, everyone one of them expressed some kind of anxiety related to intelligence and/or ability. Clearly related to this it is imperative to note that all but one of the participants in this study had been in some form of special education at some point in their school life for either behavioral and/or learning or language issues.

Ironically, again given all the fuss over developmentally appropriate age groupings, it is rather interesting to hear the concerns that several of the participants who were placed into special education settings

expressed about being educated with students younger than themselves. If developmental appropriateness is so important for mainstream students why is it not also important for special education students? It is as if two different prescriptions exist for educating. The prescription for the mainstream or traditional student suggests that this student's academic needs and challenges be met with nourishment; in essence, that this student must be taught to excel, develop mastery, and like school. The prescription for the special education or non-traditional student suggests that this student's academic needs and challenges be met with medicine; this student's education must be remedial. If nourishment works for the traditional student who has historically been the most successful, why change the prescription for the non-traditional student?

Again we see violence, this time a combination of the economic, the political, and the psychological. Low income students are ten times more likely to be placed in special education than their middle and upper income counterparts are [Anyon, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976]. And, even though Thomas's mother tried to fight his special education placement, she lost, primarily because she did not know about the Massachusetts Chapter 766 laws which state that the public school system is obligated to educate every student to the fullest degree possible in the least restrictive setting [Massachusetts State Department of Education, 1991]. It is well documented that school personnel do not inform parents

of these laws because it is much more costly for them to pay for, for example, an individual tutor to help a child in the mainstream classroom than it is for that child to be placed into an already up and running "resource" classroom [Becker, 1992].

Ultimately, the toll it takes on the student's psyche is evident in John's description of his special educational experience, "This program has brought out the worst in me, I swear. 'Cause when I first started coming here I seen people kicking the walls in. And I was like, it's just the thing to do. And then in here it's just the thing to do, blow off classes. And I did a little bit of drugs when I first started coming here, because everyone was doin' 'em in the school. So, I definitely learned this other stuff from the students here. I never even swore in public school, now every other word is a swear. When I'm here I see people being restrained and I see people sleeping on the floor. I hate the people who are being restrained. They're all on these medications and everything and I'm not. I realize they have problems but I don't see why I have to be here. It makes me feel like I'm a retard or something."

Despite the violence, evidence of positive self images and confidence emerge in the third finding here. For the majority of the participants mathematics was their favorite subject. And while one participant indicated having problems with mathematics, his predilections were for cooking and automotive technology, two subjects that require the



application of many mathematical calculations and, interestingly, two of the only three mainstream classes he attended. Additionally, all but one of the participants indicated an interest in pursuing careers utilizing either mathematical prowess (as an automotive technician, electrician, accountant, or computer data entry specialist) or in various medical professions ranging from substance abuse counselor to surgeon to medical researcher to nurse.

The forth and last important finding here has to do with student acting out and was made by Elaine. In Elaine's discussion of student behavioral problems she points out that schools do not actually deal with these problems, rather they just identify them and then, most often, kick the behavioral problem students out. (Ironically, John points out that when a male teacher acted out physically against him and he walked out of the class that there was disciplinary action taken against him, not the teacher.) She explains that the behavioral acting out is a cry for attention and help that suggests the student is not getting what they need in the home or in school. In short, she suggests that these students so lack a sense of self, a sense of their representation, that they act out, as if to say, "You're going to notice me, if not because I'm so great then, at least, because I'm so bad. I'm here!"

In a 1980 study, Jeremiah explored what she calls "the fight narrative," the role of acting out behavior in the identity development of young urban African American girls.

Jeremiah discovered that as urban African American female children reach early adolescence, they grow into a social structure that necessitates their becoming aggressive to survive. Upon entering this social structure they must fight other girls in their neighborhood to establish their rank in the structure. But the requirement to engage in actual hand to hand combat quickly subsides. What takes precedence is the narrative of the fight, how well a girl can narrate the story of a fight she had so that other girls will be impressed by her fighting as well as linguistic capability, defer to her, and eventually tell the narrative of her fight for her to others. The narrative of any particular fight, if well developed, will be told and retold for years and has the effect of maintaining each girl's ranking and hence survival within the social structure.

What is most important to note about Jeremiah's [1980] research is that neither does the actual fighting or the narrating of the fight stop, nor does the social structure cease to exist just because the girls enter a school building or a classroom. Ironically, Jeremiah found that even urban African American female teachers who themselves were part of a like social structure in their adolescence do not recognize the role and importance of these dynamics (because their own teacher training was monocultural in nature, not multicultural) in the identity development of their students and so censor rather than nurture their proliferation. This inhibits culturally relative and imperative growth and

development and leads to increased acting out in the classroom being directed at the teacher.

And so, as Elaine suggested, the acting out, the reactive violence, cannot merely be identified as problematic and mandated to change. That is, students cannot just be told to act differently if the way they are acting is in response to the conditions of their existence, critical to their survival.

### Interpersonal Relationships

First among the two findings discussed under this heading, it interesting to note that all but one of the participants expressed and/or demonstrated a desire to be a part of something; a family, a group, a culture. It is no coincidence that Thomas, who did not, comes from the most emotionally and economically stable home of them all. Given this, it is not surprising that all but one of the participants were negatively influenced by peer culture in some way, four involving gangs, and leading six of them to become drug or alcohol involved to varying degrees.

This finding points to the psychological violence of isolation, and the physical violence imposed by substance use and abuse. And because, to varying degrees and in various ways, all of the participants expressed financial anxieties, economic violence clearly played a part here as well. As Elaine describes it, "I was doing good in junior high until I got in with a crowd of friends. Because we lived in a project and when you live in a project and being on welfare



everybody tries to be like everyone else. You want to fit in. So you act like everyone else. ...marijuana was the thing to do, drinking was the thing to do. The word was if you wasn't doing what the others were doing you were a square. I didn't want to be...square...so I chose to smoke marijuana and drink booze, and plus I was a people pleaser. Whatever I had I would give to whomever. I just wanted...friendship.

Vanessa related the other important finding here when she described feeling physically unsafe in school because of the large number of students who acted out in the junior high school she attended. Vanessa points out that these students' acting out when they were organized as gangs was so severe that they often controlled the teachers' behavior rather than the other way around.

It is pertinent here that Carlos mentions that his mother tried to respectfully stop him from just such acting out but that he could not really respond to her because she was a woman. The other five male participants expressed great disdain at being chastised publicly (in front of peers) by teachers (mostly female and mostly White) for inappropriate behavior and/or an inability to complete a given task. Related to this, Carlos expressed his desire to be treated with "respect." With all six then, public chastisement and/or being treated disrespectfully, especially by female authority figures, had the potential to make them hostile, prone to act out. Additionally, Thomas and John

reported feeling hostile when these same, mostly White female teachers supervised them too closely and/or offered them help before they asked for it.

Quite obvious here is the political violence: young male students have learned from many sources (family, church, media) to largely disrespect female authority and older female teachers who are largely under or unprepared to positively affirm them [Necessities/Necesidades, 1985].

### Multicultural Education

First among the four findings discussed under this heading, it is interesting to note that several of the participants expressed being bored in school primarily because of the excessive repetition of the same or similar tasks they were given. Related to this, all of the male participants expressed, repeatedly in some cases, the need for education to be more active, interactive, and/or experiential. Others expressed the need for education to be more related to current events in the lives of young people and more focused on life skills curricula.

The second finding here is that all but one of the participants expressed an interest in learning more about their own racial and/or ethnic cultures as well as that of others. It is important to note that John, who did not, is the only White, European American among the participants.

Third, participants also wanted students to be included in deciding what they would learn and to have that learning include critical thinking skills so that they could come to

make sense out of their own experiences. Ultimately, the participants indicated that students need teachers who have high expectations of them and repeatedly affirm their ability to learn.

Here we see political and psychological violence. Students of Color in particular are not learning about themselves, their history, or the contributions of their people to civilization, but have no choice but to learn about that of Whites. As Waverly said, "To know others, one needs to know self; multicultural education teaches the history of self and others." It's no wonder he liked mathematics the most because it was "objective," and history when he learned about the Tuskegee Airforcemen and the 54th Regiment.

It is also clear that students are not being challenged and, hence, must work hard at managing the idle energy that often leads to their special education placements. As Stacy describes it, "When I worked I got my work right and I loved school. But when I was done with my work I'd get bored, I'd fidget around, move around, try to get out of class, run around. I like to stay on top of things instead of with things or behind things. I'd like to be ahead, weeks ahead. But the teachers didn't give me enough work. I'd say, 'Just watch and see how much I can do, and just keep giving me as much as I ask for, give it to me.' And I used to ask but they didn't give it to me 'cause they told me I had to stay with the group."



The forth and last important finding here is that while none of the participants felt that their teachers, in general, were prejudiced and/or racist, several still expressed the desire for more Role Models of Color. Vanessa mentioned in particular the need for Black male teachers and/or counselors in schools. Stacy speaks about the aggressiveness of Black males, his own aggressiveness in particular, in the context of discussing many of what he feels might be cultural conflicts between the all White management and student population of the program he attends and himself. This suggests that he sees the acting out of Black males and his acting out as a function of a lack of cultural affirmation, representation, and, in essence, a presence of racism.

Here again we see the political and psychological manifestations of violence. As Armando related, while he had both Black and White teachers he had no Latina or Latino ones. He believes that if he had had an experience with even one teacher from his own race that they would have better understood and been better prepared to help him with his language learning issues in particular.

It is quite likely that all of the Participants of Color in this study had their ability to express their true feelings about their White teachers censored by my Whiteness. In fact, it is interesting to note the politeness with which they all bracket racism in the direct discussion of it with me by essentially saying it was not a factor or a problem in

their education, and yet then go on to discuss very serious experiences they have had with it without naming it. This can be understood several ways. It can be understood as mere courteous deference to me. It can also be understood as an absence of critical consciousness as to the insidious nature of how racism is manifest and perpetuated. That is, a kind of, "If someone is generally nice to me how can they be racist?," catch twenty-two. It can also be understood as deliberate assimilationist behavior, "I want to fit in so let me not call attention to the issue of racism, let me just ignore it." And, it can also be understood as an unconscious internalization of the acceptance of racism.

This last characterization may well best explain the comments that several of the Participants of Color made in reference to the violent impact of the politics of skin color in their communities on their identity development. For example, Carlos talked about being a Puerto Rican with "White skin color," Elaine talked about being "light" and chastised by siblings as "the milkman's baby," Stacy talked about how he uses the phrase "My niggah" as a term of endearment with peers, and Le-Thuy talked about being rejected by nearly everyone in Vietnam because of her "White" features and how she so looked forward to coming to the United States where because of these features she anticipated being "welcome." While references to gradations of color are often used in Communities of Color for descriptive purposes, the use of such in these contexts is much more clearly a manifestation

of the internalized self hatred People of Color often develop as a function of living in a racist society [Bracey, 1993].

### The Crisis of Communication

The crisis of communication is integrally related to the crisis of representation. Part of having representation is being able to communicate and being listened to and understood, as well as being communicated to and comprehending that communication. More specifically, the crisis of communication has to do with the articulation of expectations, rules, parameters and the like. There was a consistent need expressed by all of the participants in this study for teachers and other school personnel to clearly articulate these kinds of things to them as students. Certainly, some such expectations, rules, parameters, etc., seem self evident to educators; the issue is that they are not so to students and/or their parents.

For example, with respect to special education, in essence ability tracking, before students even get placed into it, they must have the possibility that they will be placed there articulated to them, as well as why that possibility exists, and what measures they can take to prevent it. Their success or lack thereof in implementing these preventive measures must likewise be articulated to them at various points until they have either accomplished what was necessary to eliminate the possibility of the



placement or demonstrated that the placement is necessary for various reasons.

Once placed, school personnel must explain to students why they were placed, what exactly their "problem" is, what it means, and how it can be "fixed" or resolved, if at all. If the eventual goal of the placement is to catch students up and/or "straighten" them out and then return them to the mainstream classroom, then this needs to be articulated to them and a specific plan of action needs to be drawn up and given to them so that what they need to do to get back to the mainstream setting is clear. And it must be made clear to them the progress, or lack thereof, that they are making towards this end; students need to be able to see their progress and that they are learning something. They must also be made to understand how what they are doing in the special education setting compares to what they are missing in the mainstream setting and how it is related the preparation they require to get back to the mainstream environment better equipped. If the eventual goal of the placement is not to return them to the mainstream classroom then this must also be articulated to the students along with an explanation of what, in fact, the goal of the placement is as well as all of the relative aforementioned.

So, here too we find the participants in this study engaged in this crisis with varying degrees of intensity, corresponding to their varying experiences of self with representation. The five findings discussed in this

section of the chapter detail the participants' simultaneous crises of communication and struggles for voice as they pertain to their self image and confidence, their interpersonal relationships, and multicultural education.

### Self Image and Confidence

The finding discussed under this heading is a sad one. More than half of the participants reported being either physically abused in the home or neglected, subsequently, almost without exception, leading them to become perpetrators of physical violence against others. Thomas and Vanessa reported that their verbal intimidation of teachers alone led these teachers to pass them into the next grade to avoid having to deal with this level of intimidation. Interestingly, these same participants expressed the need for more counseling and/or guidance in schools.

It is no coincidence that all of the participants reported having problems of some nature involving language, either in speaking, writing, reading, and/or comprehending. If the student is not being communicated to and/or learning to communicate appropriately in the home, they cannot be expected to do so in school without some difficulty.

The physical and psychological violence embodied here is rather self-evident. Perhaps Elaine's experience illustrates these dynamics most poignantly, "My grandmother was a very wicked woman. She was mean and I think that caused a lot of fear in my life. I believe that I had some problem because I was a loner and had a lot of fear. I remember being real

quiet from third grade and the teacher keeping me back because I wouldn't talk, wouldn't participate in class. I was very shy and emotional and I cried a lot. I believe this comes from my background."

### Interpersonal Relationships

The finding discussed under this heading tells us that, despite the aforementioned abuse and neglect, all of the participants generally loved their families and liked their teachers and school and did well in it, at least early on. However, as their tenure in school progressed and deteriorated, it is interesting to note, and consistent with Fine's [1991] research on "drop-outs," that no one really tried, with any significant effort, to stop any of the participants from leaving school, no one from their families or from their schools.

The violence here is psychological and economic. As Armando told it, in a school of five thousand students he was not missed and no one came looking for him. And Le-Thuy in particular expressed her realization that without at least a GED her employment options were limited and, hence, so too was her ability to take care of herself independent from her family.

### Multicultural Education

First among the three findings discussed under this heading, it is interesting to note that most of the participants indicated that large class sizes were problematic for them in endeavoring to learn, indicating that



smaller classes of seven to fewer than twenty students would provide the ideal balance between peer interaction and the ability to access individual attention from the teacher when required. However, it is particularly interesting to note that although most special education classes are smaller, none of those placed in special education had overwhelmingly positive experiences and most had overwhelmingly negative ones. This suggests that while reduced class size is important, the educational context in which the class size is reduced is also important.

This points primarily to psychological and political violence. While the participants struggle to establish an individual identity, sheer numbers prevent them from being recognized and related to as individuals. Certainly in more affluent, usually non-urban public school districts and private schools this is not an issue [Bowles & Gintis, 1976]. Le-Thuy details her endeavors to learn English and about her new homeland with a tutor in the mainstream classroom into which she was initially placed upon arrival from Vietnam. Shortly thereafter, however, she was moved into an ESL classroom (but not a maintenance or two-way bilingual education classroom) where her opportunities to interact with non-Vietnamese students and teachers were eliminated. This not only slowed down her second language acquisition but caused the non-Vietnamese students and teachers to identify her as "one of the Vietnamese students" and not as "Le-Thuy."

The second pertinent finding here has to do with the disdain expressed by many of the participants for having their learning "tracked" by academic discipline. Carlos talked about integrating geography and science and Stacy talked about wanting to understand the connection between anthropology, (asking what the race of Latinas/os is) and the politics of geography (asking how they ended up where they are). In this respect they are asking to have connections between different bodies of knowledge articulated to them. Interestingly, the compartmentalization of knowledge is decidedly Western, monocultural. A holistic, unified view of the world is much more the norm in education in most of the rest of the world [Bracey, 1993].

The violence here is again political and psychological. In a study done by Van Sertima [1992] of Egyptian civilization, he determined that, for example, astronomy, astrology, art, mathematics, science, and technology were considered one body of knowledge. There was no suggestion that astronomy or art, for example, were less reliable measures or explanations of phenomenon than mathematics was. What he discovered however was that as, for example, art was separated out from science, so too were Egyptians separated from owning their scientific discoveries. Once art was relegated to a less important level, it was easier for subsequent civilizations to criticize it as an inaccurate representation of a particular previously existing civilization. Hence, the Egyptian images of themselves with

very African features quickly turned more Mediterranean and eventually European as non-Egyptians/non-Africans began to create those images. Once removed from controlling images of themselves, Egyptians also lost the credit for their discoveries as clearly the images of people now reconnected with those scientific discoveries didn't look at all African.

Today, African Americans struggle to regain for their ancestors and hence themselves the recognition for a lot of what the Greeks are credited [Van Sertima, 1992]. Carlos and Stacy's inquiry parallels this struggle.

The third and last important finding here is related to the crisis of representation. Various participants talked about wanting younger teachers to teach curricula that focuses on the skills necessary for them to relate to the "real world" legally (without having to break laws). Here they are asking to be told how it is, to be oriented to the future and to what they have to do to succeed, to be able to take care of themselves.

We see the violence here as psychological. As with the desire for more male role models and Role Models of Color, so too do students want younger ones, in whose faces they can more easily see their own. As Carlos discussed it, "Younger teachers I liked more 'cause they could relate better because they had just finished coming from that stage, they can understand better. Older ones can relate too because they got more wisdom and understand more things but not things going on. But kids can associate more, be more open with a



younger teacher 'cause they won't get embarrassed about asking certain things about what's going on with their lives. Younger teachers joke around more; they make school more fun."

### Conclusion

These findings as a whole suggest three things. First, they suggest that indeed the understanding of multicultural education must be broadened in order for it to become a more effective tool in disarming the violence that negatively impacts student academic success. One way to broaden it would be to integrate individual and family counseling into the curriculum.

They also suggest, as implied in the phrase "a more effective tool" used above, that a great deal of the considerations that multicultural education has championed all along already make it a highly effective tool in this disarmament. The reason educators, parents, and students do not see and/or experience the corresponding results is because these considerations have either not been implemented at all, or not extensively enough to effect these results. For example, while integrating the contributions of women scientists into physics curriculum has been pushed by multicultural education for a long time, it is rarely done [Earle & Kysilko, 1987; Hooks, 1990; Martinez, 1991].

And lastly, these findings suggest that all educational philosophies, including multicultural education, have

limitations. No educational paradigm, educator, parent, and/or student can effect substantial enough impact on some of the manifestations of the various forms of violence to engender aspects of the intended disarmament. For example, it is likely that every school would like to be able to provide financial assistance to the families of their students who are in need. But, their ability to actually do this is, at best, limited. The implications of these findings will be explored in Chapter 6.

#### Chapter Summary

The discussion of the major findings of this study in this chapter relative to the case studies presented in Chapter 4 helped to further illustrate the various forms of violence and its manifestations and their impact on student academic success. This discussion focused on two themes: crisis of representation and crisis of communication. Three sub-themes further focused the discussion on participant self image and confidence, their interpersonal relationships, and their expressed need for multicultural education.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS:

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH;  
DETERMINING MORE VIABLE STRATEGIES FOR MULTICULTURAL  
EDUCATORS TO EMPLOY IN DISARMING VIOLENCE

#### Restatement of the Problem

This dissertation focuses on developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming the violence that impacts on student identity development and, hence, on their ability to be successful and retained in schools. Given the increasing violence in schools and our society and, coincidentally, the recent and simultaneous interest in and resistance to multicultural education, this study took as its point of departure the examination of these dichotomous dynamics in an effort to effect some resolution among them. Towards that end, the study investigates the experiences of young people who left school before completing high school relative to their experiences with violence.

A comprehensive exploration of violence, student resistance to school, and multicultural education was undertaken to establish a thorough understanding of each and how an integrated understanding of the three could help to develop multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence, furthering its ability to positively effect student retention in schools. Nine young people who left school prior to completing high school were engaged in dialogue via in-depth participatory action oriented interviews. The dialogue explored the impact of the various forms of violence



and its manifestations on each young person's identity development and their subsequent ability to be successful in school.

Participants for the study were identified through various personnel, known mutually to myself and the participants, at five different community based organizations located in three large urban areas in the northeastern United States. Seven of the participants were interviewed in a room in the facility of the organization through which they were identified. The other two arranged to be interviewed in their homes. Parental or guardian permission was obtained for the three participants for whom it was necessary.

The seven, one to three hour, individual interviews and one, two hour, two person interview, conducted over the course of two and one half months, beginning in October of 1992 and concluding in mid December of 1992, were audiotaped and later transcribed to ensure exact representation of participants' responses. These interviews were then organized as case studies. Each case study began with a brief introduction of the participant and was followed by the text of their interview.

The texts of five of the interviews were presented as first person narratives, in the participants' own words. To accomplish this, these interviews were transcribed and edited, only in so much as this was necessary to omit repetitive speech (like ums, ers, ands, ya knows, among others) and to organize the data in a topical fashion (for

example, if a participant discussed interpersonal issues related to a single theme several times throughout the interview this information was presented in written form all in one location).

The texts of the other four interviews were presented as third person narratives, by the researcher. It was not possible to present these latter four interviews in the participants' own words for one of two reasons. In two of the cases this was because the participants were very non-vocal, answering "yes" or "no" to most of the questions, relying on me to draw out the information (either because of second language issues or disposition), rather than readily offering it. Verbatim reproduction of these interviews would comprise mostly long passages of me talking and short responses from the participant. In the other two cases this was because the participants were interviewed together, primarily because they were too nervous about being interviewed to participate alone. They often spoke at the same time confabulating meaning and/or engaged in non-verbal interaction while speaking that gave their language special meaning that verbatim reproduction of their interview would not illustrate.

The text of each case study was subdivided to focus on the participant's experiences with violence as it related to family, teachers, peers and school structure. These case studies were presented in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, the major findings of this study were discussed relative to the case studies. These findings were analyzed with respect to the impact of violence on student retention.

This study reveals many important issues in developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence. The implications of this study have relevance for all schools, educators, and parents who wish to enhance the academic success of all young people, as well as those young people themselves, and also point to the limitations of this pursuit.

### Implications

While the discussion on determining the validity of the data, on which the findings and their implications are based, identified as a problem the degree to which these data were framed by participant self-interpretation and definition, the picture of education that all the participants presented emerged as much less self-conscious, more straightforward, and uniformly consistent than the rest of the data. It becomes clear that, for all the gaming participants may have been doing in the discussion of other issues, they really understand what education is and what it means to be educated. They know exactly how a school should work, how a good education is distinguished from a bad one, and what is needed to get a good education. It should not surprise us, although it probably does, that these participants, not



trained as educators, have come up with many of the same ideas for improving schools and education that high priced intellectuals, professionally trained to determine ways to improve schools and education, have. Herein then lies the validity of the data and, hence, the findings and their implications.

There are several implications inherent in the findings of this study. The discussion of these implications is organized into four general areas: professional development, social interaction, organizational development, and limitations. Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is that the participants left school not only at a point when they were unsuccessful but had been so for some time. Based on this finding, we can correspondingly locate what is perhaps its most significant implication: to retain young people in school strategies to better engender their academic success need to be built into the educational process. Towards that end, the discussion under the following headings is directed.

#### Professional Development

In developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence, the findings relative to both the crisis of representation and communication indicate that a number of multiculturally oriented professional development initiatives are needed. The goal of these initiatives would be to better equip all school personnel in their endeavors to positively affirm all students and, hence, retain them in school. These

initiatives will be discussed under the headings of interpersonal skills, curricula content, and methods of implementation.

Interpersonal Skills. Of critical importance to the discussion in this area is Kunjufu's [1983] research on how mainstream (eurocentric) schools are destroying Black male students. In particular, Kunjufu identifies that Black male students are the most likely to be placed in special education programs while White female students are the least likely to be. Not coincidentally he reveals, White female teachers, who comprise the overwhelming majority of both public and private elementary and secondary school teachers, are the ones most likely to place Black males and, correspondingly, the ones least likely to place White females.

Kunjufu [1983] aptly concludes that the negative side of this dynamic is a function of cultural misunderstanding. The White female teachers are most different from their Black male students with respect to both race and gender culture and, to a lesser extent, socio-economic class background culture as well. They therefore experience the greatest difficulty in engaging them in learning because not only do they share different academic and behavioral expectations, but their expectations for how academic and behavioral guidelines will be communicated are also different. To complicate things further, teachers are often not consciously aware that they have these differences in expectations. On

the other hand, the positive side of this dynamic is a function of cultural understanding. The White female teachers who are most similar to their White female students with respect to race, gender, and socio-economic class background culture, experience the greatest ease in engaging them in learning. Not only do they share similar academic and behavioral expectations, but their expectations for how academic and behavioral guidelines will be communicated are also similar. Usually neither are conscious that they have similar expectations. Kunjufu goes on to suggest that, while Black female students, other Students of Color both male and female, and White male students are also negatively impacted by this dynamic to varying degrees, Black male students bear the brunt of the dynamic because of the combination of gender difference and racism. That is, not only are they male where the teachers are female, they are also furthest in color from that of the teachers.

Quite clearly then, White female teachers need professional development initiatives to better prepare them to affirm male students and Students of Color, especially Black male students. More generally however, all school personnel need professional development initiatives to help them acquire basic, intermediate, and advanced multicultural awareness, then knowledge, and finally profound understanding.

Such initiatives must necessarily include opportunities for personnel to develop cross-cultural interaction



competencies. For example, there must be the opportunity for a White male teacher to come to understand that when a Latina student looks down at the ground when he is chastising her behavior, she might actually be showing him respect, not disrespect, from her cultural perspective.

Such initiatives must also include opportunities for personnel to develop cross-culturally appropriate intervention strategies. For example, if I am a Black male counselor working with an Asian female student, I must come to understand many things about her race and gender cultures before determining the best strategy with which to approach her (which ultimately may not directly involve me) about why she has not yet, in the first semester of her senior year, signed up for the mandatory sex education class.

Such initiatives must also include opportunities for personnel to more consciously learn about their own cultures. In this way they may come to recognize aspects of their cultures that they disaffirm for survival (by force), inadvertently (unconsciously), or by choice (to "pass"), as well as aspects of their cultures that they take for "normal" or "just the way things are" rather than understanding them as culturally entrenched. For example, a woman may come to realize that having worn dark colored, conservatively styled business suits to conform to the White male administrative culture in the school in which she has worked for ten years has been negatively impacting her ability to feel positive about expressing aspects of the culture of her gender and/or

race both in and outside of work. Or perhaps the school administration might come to recognize that their culture is in fact White and male and not "just the way things are."

Curricula Content. Other professional development initiatives speak more directly to all faculty. In particular, faculty need opportunities to learn how to develop multiculturally oriented curricula content in all grade levels and all disciplines.

Education in the development of multicultural curricula content must focus on revising monocultural curricula content to include the representation of those traditionally under or unrepresented in it as well as on innovating altogether new curricula that, from its inception, is already multiculturally inclusive. There are four parameters which guide both the revision and innovation processes [Clark, 1993]. The first parameter focuses on oppression, the second on lives, cultures, and countries of origin, the third on contributions and works, and the fourth on designers and implementers. With respect to all four of these parameters, it is important to note that changes made in curricula content must be comprehensive. To get students to understand a mathematical concept we do not give them one example and expect them to have grasped it; on the contrary we give them several examples. This is because just as with tokenism in employment, tokenism in curricula does not work. For students to truly grasp the concept of multiculturalism they must be presented with a multiplicity of examples of it that

are well integrated into all the curricula they are exposed to throughout their educational career.

Within the first parameter, the experiences of oppression of the traditionally underrepresented are emphasized, like the enslavement of Africans by Europeans. But, while it is very important to detail histories of oppression, it is equally important to detail information about the lives, cultures, and countries of origin of those oppressed. This second parameter is particularly critical because to detail only a peoples' oppression leaves them at the level of victim or object, lacking authorship, agency, or subjectivity in their own lives. Understanding the everyday life, cultural traditions, and economic, social, political, and geographic conditions of existence, among others, of a people gives them this authorship, agency, and subjectivity. But, this understanding must not be superficial. That is, it must not illustrate other peoples as exotic, fantastic or peculiar; rather it must illustrate them as "regular people." Their day-to-day existence, practices, and environment must be presented as as normal to them as ours are to us.

Within the third parameter, the contributions that underrepresented peoples have made to our everyday lives, to our academic disciplines, and to our professional world (as well as those they have made to that of others), that we take for granted and that we know nothing of, must be articulated. This includes their theories, inventions, equations and the like. And too, we must teach their works; their textbooks,



novels, poetry, films, music, art and so on. But, in accordance with the fourth parameter, it should not be only "us" or members of overrepresented peoples who teach about the underrepresented with respect to any or all of the first three parameters. Underrepresented peoples should likewise be designing and implementing curricula about themselves as well as everything else.

In some ways, this last parameter supports Freire's [1970] contention that, "It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education" [p. 39]. This is because, "The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their own power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves" [p. 28]. "Conditioned by the experience of oppressing others...any restriction on this way of life...appears to [them] as a profound violation of their individual rights..." [p. 43]. "...the greatest humanistic and historical task of the oppressed" then, is "to liberate themselves and their oppressors..." as only their power "will be sufficiently strong to free both" [p. 28].

However, precisely because of the existence of the condition of overrepresentation, often there are only members of overrepresented groups present to design and implement such curricula. In addition, it should not be assumed that a member of an underrepresented group will necessarily design and implement such curricula for any number of reasons ranging from them not possessing the knowledge to do so (just

because they are a member of an underrepresented group does not automatically make them a multicultural curriculum development expert), to their not wanting to call attention to themselves, to them not being supportive of such, and so on. What is most important is that the designing and implementing of multicultural curricula is being done by someone genuinely supportive of and knowledgeable about multicultural education. In some circumstances it is necessary for this to be done only and always by a person from an underrepresented group. It can be inappropriate and largely impossible for a member of an overrepresented group to attempt to educate members of an underrepresented group about aspects of their history that, because of her or his experience as a member of an overrepresented group, s/he cannot fully understand. But, in other circumstances it is necessary for this to be done, at least initially, only by a member of an overrepresented group. It would be wholly unlikely to even find a Person of Color in an exceptionally racist school district. Ideally, this should be being done by members of under and overrepresented groups together.

In the final analysis, to be the most successful in revolutionizing curricula content in this and other manners, we especially need genuinely multiculturally supportive White male role models. Because of their power and conditioned by it, many will follow their lead in this endeavor who will not follow the same lead championed by the underrepresented. This is a function of the fact that White men are perceived

to support any initiative for the "objective" good it will do all people, whereas the underrepresented are seen as supporting only those initiatives that will promote their own "agenda" [Marx, 1964].

Even more specific to the study at hand here, this curricula content must additionally include life skills preparation, discussion of current events, particularly those directly effecting the lives of the students, more extensive drug and alcohol education, conflict resolution and mediation training, and instruction on the psychology of self. It must also include the same kinds of initiatives previously suggested for all school personnel but geared for students. That is, initiatives designed for students to acquire basic, intermediate, and advanced multicultural awareness, then knowledge, and finally profound understanding. This they could accomplish through the development of cross-cultural interaction competency, a repertoire of cross-culturally appropriate intervention strategies, and increased consciousness of their own cultural memberships and the impact of these memberships on, in particular, interpersonal interaction and task and goal orientation.

Much of the tension delineated between teachers and students seems to be race and gender based. So, if White female teachers are being required to learn how to positively affirm all Students of Color and White male students, but especially Black male students, then multiculturally oriented curricula content for all students, but especially male



students must likewise require that they learn to respect their female teachers including their authority. Since violence against women is so condoned in our society, merely replacing female teachers with male teachers would only perpetuate the notion that male authority is the only valid authority and further confirm to both male and female students that violence against women is acceptable [Necessities/Necesidades, 1985]. Instead, students must be taught to condemn violence against women, respect them, and accept their authority as valid. But women cannot teach this by themselves, and so the presence of men and their assistance in this endeavor is also required.

An apparent contradiction to this point is the statement made by Stacy that he would never hit a female teacher. But again, we must remember that not all violence, including violence against women, is manifest physically. That is, even if we take Stacy at his word, while he might not hit his female teachers, by virtue of his being a male in a sexist society he necessarily undermines their authority in other ways which can be seen as part and parcel of male violence against them [Clark, 1992].

All students must learn, from nursery school to the completion of doctoral degrees, the value of the participation of all peoples in the creation/evolution of our world. They must also learn that they are as important as anyone else but no more important than anyone else. With this information foremost in their minds, the way they come

to view and interact with others will be positively transformed.

Methods of Implementation. Once faculty have developed multicultural curricula content they will need to implement it. Having gone the distance to develop this state-of-the-art curricula content they cannot revert to monocultural strategies to implement it and expect to achieve its full effectiveness. Here they need professional development opportunities aimed at helping them acquire a repertoire of strategies to implement their multiculturally oriented curricula content.

Education in this area must focus on ways to provide students with a vast array of alternatives to the traditional didactic pedagogy to address differences in their learning styles. There are ten parameters which guide this acquisition process [Clark, 1993]. The first four parameters focus on teaching philosophy, the organization of the learning environment, the assessment of student needs, and the use of organizational tools. The other six parameters focus on varying the instructional materials and their use, the instructional model, the instructional strategies, the learning activities, and the methods by which student learning and teaching effectiveness are assessed.

First and in accordance with Freire's [1970] research, teachers must give up the notion of teaching as mastery. While teacher education often trains one to think of oneself as a master of one's discipline, this education is in large

measure monocultural. Given this, at best a teacher could only be a monocultural master of their discipline, highly skilled at imparting knowledge about their academic specialty from a largely eurocentric perspective. Even someone who was highly multiculturally competent in their discipline could not really be considered a multicultural master of it because so much multicultural information in every discipline has historically been obscured that what we have begun to uncover today is likely but a fraction of what there is to know. As our classrooms become increasingly diverse, we must confront the reality that our students will undoubtedly have more knowledge about particular subjects than we do simply because of their different life experiences, although we should not assume that they do just because of these life experiences.

Given all this, it makes more sense to think of ourselves as facilitators of the process of learning and actively involve students in this process. To do this we must begin by asking students what they already know about a particular subject to make sure that the information they are exposed to is new and at a level that challenges them, as well as to demonstrate to them that they already have knowledge about many things of which they may be unaware. We must also ask them what they want to learn about the subject [Freire, 1970].

With this mindset and information in hand, we can engage students in a dialogue by posing questions to them that cause them to think critically, relative to knowledge that they



already possess, in order to arrive at answers to the questions about this new body of information. In this way we no longer look upon students and they no longer see themselves as empty receptacles into which we make deposits of information, but rather as critical agents in their own education [Freire, 1970].

Second, teachers must be attentive to the impact of the physical and aesthetic organization of the immediate learning environment on learning. For example, is the classroom clean and neat? Should the chairs be set up in rows or in a circle to best facilitate the learning of the day's lesson? Do the pictures on the wall and the resources in the classroom affirm the representation of all the students in the class as well as those they may meet in the world beyond it?

Third, teachers must vary the methods by which they assess student needs. For example, they can alternate the use of written assessment tests, computerized assessment tests, student oral or written self assessment with peers, teachers, or parents, and teacher observation.

Fourth, teachers must use organizational tools. For example, they can use a "weekly format" that is consistent: every Monday review reading assignments, every Wednesday have a class discussion, and so on. They can use a "daily format," by beginning each class collecting homework, then introducing new information, and so on. They can use "motivators" to get the immediate attention of students at the beginning of a class, such as wearing a top hat to class

the day they discuss the fashion of a particular historical period. Similarly, they can use "closers" to signal the end of class, like a review of important lecture points. In addition to the syllabus, they can provide students with an agenda for each class so that students will know what is going to happen that day. They can also use handouts to help students structure lecture notes or which define key concepts or technical vocabulary with which students may be unfamiliar.

Fifth, teachers must use an array of instructional materials. These can include traditional texts, books, newspapers, journals, audiotapes, workbooks, games, magazines, plays, and videotapes.

Sixth, teachers must vary the use of instructional materials. For example, they can use texts that have multiculturally representative pictures, names, situations and language, or traditional (monocultural) texts and encourage students to think critically about, dissect, question what is being presented, or not use texts at all and use a variety of other resources instead, or use all of these in combination.

Seventh, teachers must vary the instructional model. For example, they can use a thematic approach in which students are encouraged to look for recurrent trends in United States history. They can also use an interdisciplinary approach to teach philosophy in which students are encouraged to understand how the economic

situation, political climate, geographic location, and cultural traditions of a people or an era influenced the development of a particular branch of philosophic discourse. Or, they can use an immersion approach to teach humanities in which students are encouraged to eat the food of a particular civilization, attire themselves in their fashion, listen to their music, copy their art, and so on.

Eighth, teachers must vary their instructional strategies. For example, they can have students engage in whole class discussions, small group work, partner work, individual work, one-on-one work with the teacher, peer teaching and learning, student teaching of the whole class, and debate.

Ninth, teachers must vary the learning activities. For example, they can have students engage in assignments that require them to develop and employ in varied measure affective, cognitive, and motor skills through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and problem solving initiatives.

Tenth, teachers must vary the methods by which they evaluate student learning and, hence, teaching effectiveness. For example, they can vary the use of multiple choice tests, essay tests, short answer tests, take home tests, oral tests, term papers, and creative projects.

Another part of this last parameter, students should be engaged in self evaluation of their academic performance and effort. When involved in this way, students are amazingly



honest about what they think their grade should be and are less inclined to express animosity to a teacher for giving them a grade they do not like because they had a hand in determining it and therefore know what it is before it comes in the mail.

Students should also be involved in the evaluation of the course content, the instructional materials, and the teaching of it, as well as in making recommendations for improving it the next time it is taught. In this way they become more invested in learning because they have helped to determine what and how they learned while simultaneously becoming better at learning as they become more aware of their learning style and of how to prepare differently for evaluation in different subject areas and by different methods. This also has the effect of improving the quality of instruction because student feedback lets the teacher know directly what did and did not work. In so doing it encourages teachers to continually revise and refine the teaching of a subject they teach, making it and them ever-fresh in the process and perpetuating the dialectical and reciprocal nature of teaching and learning.

Even more particular to the study at hand here, learning must be made more active, interactive, and experiential. This is confirmed by Kunjufu's [1983] research in which he found that most male students regardless of race, but especially most Black male students, learn best when learning activities are shifted every twenty minutes. So, for

example, the first twenty minutes of a class might be a short film, followed by twenty minutes of discussion, and then perhaps a twenty minute writing assignment summarizing the film and pertinent discussion points.

Certainly, Kunjufu [1983] points out, while this organization may most favor the learning style of most Black male students, all students will benefit from exposure to it in some ways. There are two fundamental reasons why multicultural education focuses, in particular, on varying methods of implementing curricula content rather than trying to teach a particular way to particular groups of students. The first is because not all students in a particular group learn the way their group is said to learn. The second is because all students benefit from exposure to multifaceted approaches as such challenge them to broaden their repertoire for learning in some ways while affirming their preferred learning style in others.

Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley [Asera, 1988] also point to the importance of creating a learning interest "culture" to facilitate students in broadening their repertoire for learning at the same time effecting positive cross-cultural interaction between students. In a series of studies these researchers found that White students normally associate with other White students who are performing at the same academic level regardless of learning interest. Here peer associations were founded on similarities in race and academic performance. A

low achieving White student in biology would tend to associate with a low achieving White student in English, while a high achieving White student in physics would tend to recreate with a high achieving White student in history. On the other hand, they found that Students of Color normally associate with other Students of Color (and most often those from their own racial group) regardless of academic level or learning interest. Here, peer associations were founded essentially on similarities in race only. A low achieving Black student in philosophy would tend to associate with a moderate achieving Black student in chemistry and a high achieving Black student in art.

In creating a learning interest "culture," through the development and implementation of "workshops" where an individual student's evaluation is based on the collective performance of their workshop group members, students come to associate with other students with the same learning interests as themselves regardless of race or academic performance. This has had the overall effect of enhancing the academic performance of all the students across the learning interest, encouraging the development of cross-cultural relationships and peer teaching, and ultimately broadening the repertoire for learning of all involved. Not surprisingly, this initiative has also had the effect of reducing racial tensions on the school, college, and university campuses where it is employed.



It is important to note that Kunjufu [1983], while supportive of multicultural education, is more supportive of African American malecentric education and afrocentric or Africancentric education, not for all students like eurocentric education has been applied, but for Black male students and all Black students, respectively. And here Kunjufu is not alone as Latina/ocentric, specifically Puerto Rican and Mexican American or Chicana/o, educational models and schools have as well been championed as discussed in Chapter 2.

These initiatives, some of which are branches of and others precursors to multicultural education, have developed in direct response to not only schools' resistance to dealing with issues of diversity, especially to developing and implementing multicultural curricula, but also to the crisis of representation.

Although it may be wonderful to talk about the pluralistic process of building multicultural schools and to participate in it, the stark reality to which this study points is that these schools are needed now. This is because there have already been too many casualties, students lost because they were "educated" by the "methods employed by the oppressor [which] deny pedagogical action in the liberation process" [Freire, 1970, p. 55]. There are more of these casualties waiting to happen. And yet, I must still champion multicultural education over all forms of centrism because reminiscent of the Booker T. Washington/W.E.B Du Bois debate

we know that separate, whether by imposition or choice, never means equal [Bracey, 1992].

Ultimately, we must come to understand that all learning must be structured to provide each student the opportunity to experience multiple, short-term successes in endeavoring to master the overall larger bodies of material. This piece of information must be kept in the very front of the minds of all educators in developing methods by which to implement curricula content.

### Social Interaction

Again, in developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence, the findings relative to both the crisis of representation and communication indicate that social interaction in schools, particularly that between teachers and students, must be further developed to facilitate the positive affirmation of all students and, hence, to retain them in school. Strategies to so develop this interaction will be discussed under the headings of articulation, counseling, and outreach.

Articulation. Students need teachers to articulate and rearticulate expectations, rules, parameters, requirements, and the like for academic performance and interpersonal interaction in the various learning environments within the school setting. Consistent with this previous discussion, it is particularly important to do this so that the things that may seem self-evident from one person's cultural perspective but are not so from another's

are clarified for the benefit of all involved in the learning interaction. This articulation must be communicated in dialogue not didactic fashion so that students can openly question the efficacy of any particular guideline from any one of their cultural perspectives in endeavoring to better understand the rationale for it and simultaneously to help school personnel determine the multicultural effectiveness and, hence, application of it.

It is also particularly important here to articulate that different learning environments, all within the same school setting as well as those outside of it, may have quite different guidelines. Students should come to understand their ability to "code switch" [Klein, 1986] relative to the relevant environmental expectations (i.e., academic, recreational, survival) as a skill over which they have control, agency, and choice in deciding whether or not to implement, rather than as an imposed propriety that forces them to compromise their cultural integrities.

In fact, what constitutes multicultural education may vary immensely from one setting to another depending on these and other kinds of environmental dynamics. The example of a schoolwide curriculum designed and implemented by the Black male principal of an almost all Black elementary school located in an extremely impoverished, rural, southern Texas bordertown will serve to illustrate this point [Jennings, 1992].



This principal's curriculum takes as its point of departure the imposition of extremely strict behavioral guidelines. Students are filed into school in a single line each morning so that the principal can personally check that each one is neatly and cleanly attired. If and when this is not the case a student is pulled (inconspicuously) from the line and taken to shower while their clothes are washed or new clothes, from a supply of used clothing the school stocks, are secured [Jennings, 1992].

In classes students sit obediently in rows facing the teachers' desks and are drilled on homework assignments in rigorous fashion. Part of the time students are expected to raise their hands and wait to be called on if they want to answer questions, and part of the time all the students are expected to answer questions in rhythmic unison on queue. Beginning in kindergarten students are given daily journal writing assignments and are expected to be masters of geography, able to locate on a map in a matter of seconds almost any place in the world, no matter how obscure [Jennings, 1992].

The principal's rationale for this militaristically oriented curriculum stems from the fact that his students come to him each day from utter and dire chaos; homes ridden with rats and roaches, little food, dirty water, drug addicted parents and the like, where most of them have taken on parenting roles before the age of five. To make it minimally possible for them to learn, he reasons, he must

absolutely eliminate this chaos; see that they are clean, well fed, in a drug free environment, parented better than they can parent themselves, and free from having to parent siblings for the duration of the school day. He reasons further that since he has no chance at all of controlling what happens to his students outside the school, he must have total control over what happens to them on the inside; if he can arm them on the inside to manage the outside until they are old enough to attend college, at the same time over preparing them for college so that they can receive scholarships to attend it, they may have a chance of getting out [Jennings, 1992].

This principal's curriculum worked so well that when his students first started outscoring middle and upper-class White students from suburban neighborhoods and highly affluent school districts, they were accused of cheating and he was chastised for using too much paper for the student journals and for using maps for classroom instruction before it was developmentally appropriate (the school system had a blue "law" on their books that maps could not be used with students before the third grade). However, the enduring success of this curriculum forced the school system's hand to accept its legitimacy and, following a change in superintendents, it has become the model curriculum for schools in similar environments all over the state [Jennings, 1992].

While many aspects of this principal's curriculum seem utterly antithetical to various tenets of multicultural education, they may be less so in considering and developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence. Particularly relevant to the discussion at hand, the articulation of guidelines for learning and conduct in this curriculum is crystal clear; students know what is expected of them at every moment of the school day and they rise to the level of those expectations just as a plethora of research suggests they would [Bennett, 1986; Compton, n.d.; Gay, 1974; Gronlund, 1974; Slavin, 1983]. Hence, the militaristic orientation of this curriculum is directed at facilitating education not imposing discipline.

(Overwhelmingly, White school administrators and teachers approach student acting out behavior from the perspective that disciplinary strategies must be improved, while Black school administrators and teachers approach it from the perspective that educational strategies must be improved [Moody, n.d.] .)

Despite the success of this principal's curriculum it is still important to think very critically about it. It can be argued that in order to gain the respect and, hence, cooperation of children coming from war-zone-like environments, at least initially one must employ the tactics of those who already have these children's respect and cooperation (however engineered it may be through intimidation): street punks and all they represent.



However, once respect and cooperation are in tact, it can be argued further that in the context of the relationship established one has the ability if not also the responsibility to break down the destructive barriers which necessitated the establishment of this relationship in this fashion in the first place (perhaps by providing students with a repertoire of alternatives for how to understand and relate to people who use intimidation through the introduction of critical thinking skills). With this in mind, one might question why a militaristically oriented curriculum would be sustained over the long run.

In direct opposition to the big stick school administration approach, personnel at another elementary school, this one located in East Harlem, New York, who face all the challenges their colleagues in Texas do in trying to educate their students, have been equally successful in so doing without employing a militaristically oriented curriculum even from the outset [Nieto, 1993]. With this in mind, one might question not only why such a curriculum would be sustained over the long run but why it would be employed at all if it is not necessary.

While the problematic revealed here may continue to be debated, certainly even well-intentioned militarism should never completely replace sensitivity. Hence, multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence should come to mean that all students learn by all means available; but absenting access to those, then by any means necessary.

Much more simply, teachers must just sit down with their students and get to know them as human beings and allow students to come to know them in this way as well. Once a teacher has an idea of where a student is coming from and sees the reality of their life circumstances, a "reality talk" would be helpful. In this talk the teacher might discuss with the student how they view the student's situation, specifically which aspects of it the student has the ability to control and which they do not. The teacher might then help the student to focus their attention on those aspects over which they do have control and help them to build for their future from there. The teacher might also suggest to the student that they may not be able to get all the support they want or need to be successful in realizing their life goals from their biological family members or legal guardians. Having suggested this the teacher should be quick to point out that this does not make these people bad, but rather just like everyone they have limitations. The teacher might then add that simply because the student's family cannot provide them with complete support does not mean that someone else who cares about the student could not fill in the gaps. Here the teacher might focus the student on identifying what kinds of support they can expect from which people in their life and then encourage the student to keep their requests for support realistic based on what they have identified each of these people as being able to provide. Ultimately these talks should be succinct in

orienting students toward identifying goals and developing plans for realizing them.

Counseling. All schools need more and more highly trained and culturally diverse counseling staff. The three aging, White male guidance counselors per three thousand students which the average school employ are not enough. In addition to trying to just keep track of the students on their unmanageable caseloads, they are also expected to perform individual (and sometimes family) counseling and disciplinary intervention on an as needed basis with the students on their caseloads. Even in conjunction with the part-time school psychologist and the weekly visit by or to an individual and/or family therapist contracted out by a local mental health agency, it is not enough.

All school personnel should be minimally qualified to at least engage students in the aforementioned "reality talks" relative to trying to stop them from leaving school, to help them anticipate and manage transitions, as well as in dealing with family dysfunction. But beyond this, schools need to comprehensively integrate individual, group, and, wherever possible, family counseling into the school program so that when "reality talks" are not enough, more intense work can be done on-site by professionally competent, regular, full-time staff that students already know and trust.

This must also have the effect of minimizing contact with local social service agencies which, overwhelmingly, students find complicate and worsen their circumstances.



State intervention and control over this aspect of individual life, as with capital punishment and abortion, seems always to have nothing but detrimental consequences.

Outreach. Another important aspect of student retention here is a two-tiered rigorous outreach program. One tier would be aimed at students and the other at the student's out-of-school support system.

The first tier would address the student. This tier would involve going after or reaching out to the student when they start, even minimally, to show signs of apathy to the learning process; reaching out to them in school, at home, and in the community.

The second tier would address the student's family or extended family, in essence their out-of-school support system whether formal (those traditionally recognized as providing support like a parent or sibling) or informal (those traditionally minimally recognized or unrecognized as providing support like cousins, corner store owners, ministers). This tier would involve going after or reaching out to the student through this out-of-school support system, drawing these individuals into the student's school experience, helping them to help the student to become and maintain academic involvement and accountability.

#### Organizational Development

Lastly, in developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence, the findings relative to both the crisis of representation and communication indicate that both

more minor and more major structural changes in schools' organization are also indicated in seeking to positively affirm all students and, hence, retain them in school. In the previous discussions under the headings of professional development and social interaction, many structural changes were implied though not expressly delineated. These include organizing into the school day or week regular time for professional development initiatives to be executed, or integrating a therapeutic element across the curriculum. Most particular to the research at hand, five other structural changes would certainly facilitate the coming to fruition of most, if not all, of the heretofore discussed endeavors.

First, in addition to developing a more racially, ethnically, generationally, and gender diverse counseling staff, the same must be developed among support, teaching, and administrative staff. This requires not only a vigorous affirmative action plan to get folks to the door, but an equally vigorous multicultural organizational development plan to meet them at the door when they arrive, welcome them as they come through the door, and affirm them on an on-going basis once they are on the inside.

Second, the reduction of class size to between eight and nineteen students is imperative. Perhaps class sizes could vary between eight and nineteen depending on the learning activity.

Third, the development and preservation of two-way and maintenance bidialectic and bilingual education programs must likewise be vigorous. Students need to develop literacy in their first language first and to have that language affirmed by being given the opportunity to maintain it. Learning English or so-called "standard" English is important for all students to learn. In fact, the necessity of learning it should be a part of the "reality talks" teachers have with their students. But the student's learning of English should not involve the disaffirmation of their first language or cultural and/or peer dialect in the process. Ideally, second language acquisition should be required of all students, and third language acquisition actively encouraged to facilitate each student in becoming ever more multiculturally competent and, hence, a more multicultural person. In some cases among students whose first language is not English, though certainly to a degree with all students, mathematics and science education should be prioritized to help these students experience more immediate academic success in subjects where language is not as essential, and then carry the confidence of this success over into their English acquisition. While language and mathematics and science learning are said to be same side brain functions which suggests that students who have trouble with one will have trouble with the other as well [Loveday, 1982], this is not always the case. Furthermore, just because students do not speak English does not mean that they have language learning



issues; perhaps they have only been exposed to English for a short time or perhaps they do not want to learn English. In such cases in particular, especially if the students are adept in mathematics and science, prioritizing learning in these areas could facilitate the development of a positive attitude and, hence, success with English acquisition.

Fourth, all tracking initiatives must ultimately be eliminated. While academically gifted students need extra stimulation from their teachers and like peers, this stimulation should be afforded to them in extracurricular programming just as it is for athletically and musically gifted students. Special education or ability tracking as well as age and discipline tracking hurt students both academically and interpersonally more than they help them [Braddock, 1990; Kozol, 1991; Persell, 1977; Powell et al, 1985; Slavin, 1986; Wheelock, 1992]. Holistic approaches which integrate, in one classroom, students of different ages and abilities and comprehensively employ peer teaching techniques in imparting interdisciplinary curricula not only have a certain logical appeal, but they actually develop academically more capable and interpersonally more well-rounded human beings [Hainstock, 1976; Montessori, 1965].

Fifth, in seeking the bottom line of retaining students in school, it seems self evident that, in addition to making academic achievement more rewarding and simultaneously more attainable, the process of leaving school via opting, dropping, being pushed or kicked out should be made more

difficult. In fact, it should be made so difficult that students would rather stay in school, and their parents would rather they stay in school, than leave. This might involve the implementation of stricter, that is more well staffed, truancy follow-up programs. It might also involve something like three months of mandatory weekly individual counseling sessions before a parent is allowed to sign a student out of school and, if the student is older, before they are allowed to sign themselves out of school. In this way, the student is forced to confront the implications of this decision and, at least theoretically, more adequately plan for it. At the same time, the school is forced to confront the fact that attrition is not a natural, uncontrollable phenomenon, but rather something they have an obligation to battle and the ability to substantially reduce if not altogether eliminate.

Ultimately, we must go beyond the school as the organization and begin to conceptualize society as the organization in considering the magnitude of the structural changes indicated here. In doing this the question, which appears rhetorical, becomes, "Where do young people learn?" "The public schools of course, right?" According to Bracey [1993], the validity of this answer depends on which young people you are talking about because for young Black and Latino men the major educational mechanism or institution is not the public schools, but rather the jail. For this population going to jail is the context in which most receive their high school education via a GED. In fact, in some

states an inmate cannot even be released until he or she has completed their GED regardless of time served. Yet, in no state are public school students legally obligated to finish high school or a GED. It is interesting to note that a year of incarceration costs taxpayers approximately \$40,000 per inmate [Jenkins, 1993]. Instead of incarcerating these young people we could send them all to Yale University at a savings of \$10,000 per inmate per year. Here we find ourselves revisiting the debate on violence reduction strategies set forth in Chapter 1: suppression versus prevention. Either we continue to fund jails ~~as~~ schools as a violence suppression strategy, or we fund schools ~~instead~~ of jails as a violence prevention one.

### Limitations

While the implications of the findings of this study have helped in great measure to develop multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence in endeavoring to enhance the academic success of all young people, they also point to the limitations of this pursuit. The discussion of these limitations is focused in two areas.

The most obvious limitation here is that since not all violence is manifest in schools or relative to them, the multicultural educational paradigm, no matter how comprehensively invoked, is limited in its ability to disarm the violence that many students experience apart from school. Hence, it is also limited in its ability to engender the student success that this violence negatively impacts.



A somewhat less obvious but equally important limitation here is that this study focused only on student perceptions of the impact of the various forms of violence and its manifestations on their identity development and, hence, academic success and ability to be retained in school. This focus was quite deliberate as all too often adults ignore, distrust, or even silence the voices of the young even concerning their own experiences, as if to suggest that they know the experiences of the young better than the young know them themselves. In this way, young people learn not to trust themselves or their own ideas about reality and are systematically prevented from developing their agency.

While this focus liberated this study in ways many other studies are limited, it limited it in that it did not also explore the perceptions of the participants' parents and educators in this regard. A more comprehensive study of this nature or perhaps a more in-depth study of students, parents, and educators all at one school, either of which might have provided greater opportunities for triangulating data, might also have yielded different findings leading to different implications. Stating this limitation does not undermine the validity of the data and the significance of this research, it merely locates their impact more specifically.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

There are several potential areas for further inquiry suggested by this exploratory case study. The discussion of

these areas is organized into two sections. The first section focuses on how the current study could be extended while the second focuses on ancillary studies that might be undertaken.

### Extending the Current Study

There are two primary areas in which the current study could be extended. These areas will be discussed under the headings study participants and study focus.

Study Participants. The current study might best be extended by broadening both the base and numbers of the participants in it. For example, it would be interesting to compare and contrast the results of interviews with large numbers of students from different racial groups to try and determine the impact of violence on different races of students as it pertains to their academic success. This could likewise be done with respect to ethnicities (those within one racial group such as Vietnamese, Chinese, and East Indian, or across the different ones such as Irish, Jamaican, Dominican, Laotian, and Naragansett), socio-economic class backgrounds, genders, ages, and geographic locations among others.

It might also be interesting to, in varying combinations, change one of these parameters (race, ethnicity, and so on) while holding all of the others constant to try and determine both the relative and absolute impact of violence on each parameter as it pertains to student academic success. In this way we might find, for

example, that the kinds of violence that young African American women from the southern United States most experience are quite different from those that afflict older Puerto Rican men from New York City; and, we might find corresponding differences in the impact of these violences on each group's academic success.

Study Focus. The current study might also be extended by broadening the focus of it. For example, it might be interesting to interview two students from each of a variety of different educational settings. One of the two students from each setting would be very successful in that setting and the other very unsuccessful, on the verge of leaving or having already left the setting via opting, dropping, being pushed or kicked out. A study with this focus might compare and contrast the factors within each or across all the settings that the researcher, educators, students, and/or parents believed contributed to student academic success or failure. These factors could then be explored relative to the operative form of violence involved in each. In this way, it might be possible to better determine how one student can be so successful in a setting in which another is so unsuccessful and the role of violence in this dichotomy.

#### Ancillary Studies

There are three primary areas indicated by the current study for ancillary ones to pursue. These areas will be discussed under the headings partnerships, multicultural education, and violence.



Partnerships. As human existence becomes even more complicated as we approach the twenty-first century, schools find themselves with ever increasing responsibilities. To begin with, as the current study indicates, schools are being asked to educate all students multiculturally; this when there are ever greater numbers of students with ever more diverse academic and interpersonal needs coupled with fewer non-multiculturally competent educators. Schools also have to cope with the extracurricular demands placed upon them by the increased number of students coming from single-female-headed-households with increased economic destitution as well as ever-increasing drug and alcohol use, abuse, addiction and distribution and the increased threat of death that this behavior poses along with that posed by sexually transmitted diseases and street violence.

Every day, schools are being asked to do more and more with less and less. To become even minimally effective in these endeavors, schools have no choice but to begin developing partnerships with business, human service agencies, and parents to help them in this struggle.

In attempting to implement many of the needed changes indicated in developing multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence, increased economic resources are required. To reduce class size more teachers are needed which requires more economic resources, to go on field trips requires more economic resources, and so on. One way to address this situation would be to equalize the distribution

of respective school districts' funding bases so that all schools, regardless of their location and population, are funded equally from the pool of money available districtwide, statewide, or nationwide. Another way to address this situation given that federal, state, and local government are either overly taxed and unable to respond to the requirement here or have prioritized their monies elsewhere (like the prison system), and perhaps the most important area for ancillary study would be in how to encourage the formation of school/business partnerships. Study in this area might focus on how to make business investment in public education as lucrative for business as it is for schools. Yet, however the issue of securing economic resources is addressed, it must be noted that while funding is critical to improving education for all students, money alone will not solve all the problems associated with student academic success; you cannot buy the attitudinal changes in school personnel necessary for student affirmation.

Along the same lines, another important area for ancillary study would be in how to encourage the formation of school/human service agency partnerships. Study in this area might focus on ways to comprehensively integrate effective short and long term individual and family counseling in particular into the school structure. Various group counseling initiatives might also be explored. The implications of eliminating state controlled social service intervention and realigning those resources into cooperative

therapeutic ventures with schools might also be investigated here.

And as all parents face more and more burdens in trying to raise children today and because Parents of Color have become increasingly alienated from the increasingly White administrative and teaching culture in schools since their brief tenure in trying to gain community control over schools in the 1960's [Teal, 1991], parent/teacher association and parent involvement in school (although not necessarily in their children's education) have been on the decline [Epstein & Dauber, 1989; Henderson, 1987; Jones, 1991; Kiang, 1990; Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Prewitt-Diaz, 1980; Steinberg et al, 1988; Stevenson & Baker, 1987]. This being the case, another important area for ancillary study would be in how to reinvigorate parent/teacher association and the desire for Parents of Color to be involved in schools. Strategies to effect the regaining of community control over schools in especially low income, Neighborhoods of Color might also be explored here.

Multicultural Education. Many of the implications of the findings of the current study pointed toward making changes in education that multicultural education and its proponents have championed for a long time. The problem is not primarily that these multicultural educational initiatives were not known, but that they were not implemented, either at all or comprehensively enough to effect the targeted changes. An important area for ancillary



study here would be in exploring what exactly the barriers are to the comprehensive implementation of known multicultural educational initiatives.

Violence. Drawing on the research of Jeremiah [1980] on the role of the "fight narrative" among young urban African American girls, an extremely important area for ancillary study here would be in evolving strategies to explore various specific violent behaviors. This would help us all but especially educators to come to recognize and understand the meaning and importance of these behaviors and, subsequently, to develop, implement, and integrate into the everyday educational process a repertoire of multiculturally appropriate approaches for bringing these behaviors to resolution.

Going a step further, it would be particularly interesting to develop a model multicultural educational program which incorporates all the needed additions discussed herein, including corporate sponsorship, an integrated mental health component, and community and parent involvement, and implement this program with a group of extremely violent adolescent and/or adult offenders and measure its effectiveness in disarming their propensity for violence. In this way, one could test if the virtual absence of initiated violence in the lives of these people would likewise diminish their violent reactivity.

Equally interesting would be implementing such a program over the long run with very young children, environmentally

at high risk for becoming future offenders. In this way one could test if such a program, used in a preventative rather than corrective fashion, could substantially reduce and/or eliminate this risk.

### Conclusions

These are just a few of the plethora of possible areas of study which could extend and/or follow this research to, in particular, further the struggle of multicultural education to disarm violence and its impact on student identity development, and, hence, increase student academic success and the likelihood of not only retaining them in school but making sure that their hearts and minds flourish there as well. Obviously, the present study has only just begun this struggle.

Because all forms of violence are on the rise, not only in schools but in our society as a whole, especially students, parents, and educators but also the general population and government must actively pursue extremely broad based educational strategies to disarm this violence. Given that the negative impact of violence on the psyche is so profound, these educational strategies must penetrate the psyche as profoundly to have real impact. Towards this end the possibilities for future study to increase our knowledge and capabilities in this important field are limitless.

## Chapter Summary

In this, the final chapter of this study, the implications and recommendations for further research were presented. The major findings of this study were presented in Chapter 5 based on the case studies presented in Chapter 4. The implications presented in this chapter were founded on these findings.

The discussion of the implications focused on professional development, social interaction, and organizational development initiatives that would facilitate the explication of multicultural education as a tool for disarming violence, enhancing student academic success and retention in school. Limitations to the development of multicultural education in this respect were also discussed.

The recommendations for further research were focused in two areas. The first area focused on extending the current study by broadening both the base and numbers of study participants and by broadening the study focus. The second area focused on three directions that ancillary studies to the current one might pursue. The first direction focused on school and business, human service agency, and/or parent partnerships. The second direction focused on barriers to the comprehensive implementation of multicultural education in schools. And the third direction focused on strategies to bring specific violent behaviors to resolution, as well as exploring the effectiveness of a state-of-the-art multicultural educational experience in reducing the



propensity for violent acting out among violent adolescent offenders (as a corrective measure) and among "at risk" young children (as a preventative measure).

### In Closing

This study was driven by my desire to illustrate the real impact of the violence initiated by the overrepresented on the underrepresented. In particular I was passionate to articulate to those who resist the multicultural paradigm from an overrepresentedcentric perspective that their resistance is an act of initial, as well as utter, violence to which they can expect a reaction and for which they are completely responsible. To obscure the impact of their resistance as a search for "truth," as if there is only one and absolute truth, reveals that this search is actually a counterrevolution being waged not so much for absolute truth as to maintain absolute representation, domination and control. Optimistically, I refer to this resistance as the "last gasp of White supremacy;" pessimistically, I acknowledge just how long a gasp it is [Nieto, 1993]. This resistance thus revealed, the multicultural struggle for shared representation can only be seen as revolutionary and liberatory. This study is directed towards the realization of that liberation.

## APPENDIX

### PARTICIPANT VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM (To Be Read Aloud with/to Participants/Legal Guardians and Tape Recorded)

#### Multicultural Education as a Tool for Disarming Violence

To the Participants in this Study:

My name is Christine Clark, I am a student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. I am writing a paper about why young people leave school. I am interviewing young people who have left school to try and find out why they left and what, if anything could get them to return.

If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be one of approximately nine young people, from various parts of a large urban area in the northeastern United States, involved in total. As a participant, I will conduct an in-depth interview with you which will focus on two areas. In the first part of the interview as I just mentioned, I will ask you questions about what you believe were the factors that lead up to and/or contributed to your leaving school, and what, if anything, could get you to go back. In the second part of the interview, I will ask you questions about what role, if any, you believe violence played in your leaving school and/or that it plays when you consider the idea of returning.

I have two goals in mind in conducting these interviews. First, I want to try and find out what you believe can be done, if anything, to make education more meaningful, desirable, and useful to young people. And second, I want to find out what you believe, if anything, educators need to understand about the impact of violence on young people if they want to be more successful in keeping young people in school.

Our interview will be tape recorded (to ensure the exact representation of your responses) and later put into print by myself or a typist (who will not be connected to you or your community in any way and who will be committed, like I am, to protecting your identity and the confidentiality of your responses). In this paper and in all other written materials (like journal or magazine articles or books) and/or oral presentations (like conferences, trainings, class lectures, or speeches) in which I might use information from your interview, I will not use your name, the names of your family members and/or friends, nor the

names of schools in your area, the town or city in which you live, or those of any other potentially revealing places or events. The printed version of your interview will identify you by a pseudonym, or a name that I make up for you, in order to be able to talk about you in my paper without revealing who you are to the reader.

Your participation in this study must be voluntary. You have the right to drop out of the study at any point and you can take back your consent for me to use any or all of the information from your interview in my paper if you notify me within thirty days of the date of our interview. I will interview you at a place in which both you and I (and your legal guardian) feel safe and like. If you or I feel that a translator is necessary to further ensure the exact representation of your responses, either you or I can choose someone to translate for us. If you choose a translator then you are responsible for how they protect your rights, welfare, identity and/or the confidentiality of your interview with respect to how your responses are represented. If I choose a translator then I will ensure the protection of your rights, welfare, identity, and/or the confidentiality of your interview with respect to how your responses are represented.

In agreeing to participate in this study, you are also agreeing not to make any financial claims against me or the University of Massachusetts for medical treatment (in the event that you are injured while participating in this study) or the use of the information from your interview in the ways I have just described. If I want to use the information from your interview in any additional way I will call you before doing so to get your permission.

Do you, (state participant's and legal guardian's name), understand all of what I have just explained to you?

And do you, (state participant's name) agree to participate in this study?

And do you, (state legal guardian's name), agree to allow, (state participant's name), to participate in this study?

Please repeat after me:

I, (state participant's name), agree to participate in this study.

I, (state legal guardian's name), agree to allow, (state participant's name), to participate in this study.



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