

THE NEW AMERICAN DILEMMA: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND SCHOOL DESEGREGATION. By Jennifer L. Hochschild.¹ New Haven: Yale University Press. 1984. Pp. xvi, 263. Paper, \$8.95.

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But some see racism as anomalous: the dilemma of Americans is our continued weakness in . . . weeding out our shame so that our true creed may flourish. Once we bring ourselves to pull the weeds, American idealism will bloom all the better. Others see racism as symbiotic: the American garden is rooted in and nurtured by blacks' second-class status. To eradicate it, we must be willing and able to change the whole shape and ecology of the American landscape. Only then can the American creed blossom.

. . . .
Anomaly theorists argue . . . that a garden can be rejuvenated by pulling one weed at a time. Symbiosis theorists argue that it cannot—if the soil and layout of a garden are unsuited to their intended crops, pulling a few weeds does no good and actually does harm by deluding us into false perceptions of progress.

. . . .
Anomaly theorists argue . . . that all Americans . . . would prefer a garden blooming with racial equity to one choking in the weeds of discrimination. Symbiosis theorists argue that we do not—that whites (and perhaps some blacks) benefit from a landscape that includes racial discrimination and will resist the bulldozing needed to reshape it.³

* * *

We have no right to look upon future citizens as if we were master gardeners who can tell the difference between a pernicious weed and a beautiful flower.⁴

In her tough-minded, trenchant marshalling of evidence, Jennifer Hochschild argues that since racial desegregation and political democracy are at odds, representativeness should give way to results, equal rights to equal outcomes. Though Americans claim they oppose racial segregation in schools, she contends, in fact we are unwilling to adopt the necessary remedies. She claims further, that incremental change actually makes things worse for white and black alike. Hochschild recommends “bulldozing”—a quick, comprehensive, and coercive policy drawing in all children in entire

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3. J. HOCHSCHILD, *supra*, at 8-10.
4. B. ACKERMAN, SOCIAL JUSTICE IN A LIBERAL STATE 139 (1980).

metropolitan areas. Her analysis and her proposal are procrustean: the policy fits all circumstances and all sizes of student populations. This is a bravura performance, relentless and compelling. But is it wise?

Just as pollution is defined as misplaced dirt, so the practical definition of a weed is a flower in the wrong place. If everything has to be changed (“the whole shape and ecology of the American landscape”) to change anything (“one weed at a time”), it is no wonder that Hochschild fears for progress. Where she spies foul weeds parading as fragrant flowers (are we now and have we ever been believers in the liberal creed?), I detect a confusion of classification. Where she suggests a Rousseauian vision within which the American creed might blossom, I see Robespierre weeding out undesirables.

Portraying herself as “a child of the 1960s” who shares “its mistrust of and distaste for cautious middle-class-oriented change in the face of serious, even desperate, problems,”⁵ Hochschild begins by contrasting racism and liberalism. Under liberalism, she writes, “All citizens have an equal right to express their political wishes and equal opportunity to act politically.” By racism, however, she does “not mean personal dislike or denigration of another race or ethnic group” but rather “institutional racism,” whether or not intended.⁶

Although, generally, Hochschild is commendably candid, her definition of equal opportunity turns out to be one of equal results. For her, racism is any pattern of actions that result in different racial outcomes—“actions,” as she says, “that usually elevate whites and subordinate blacks.”⁷ If the measure of equal outcomes is used, of course, then the game is over before it starts, because we all know, without inquiring about equality of opportunity, that outcomes in America are far from equal. Indeed, by the time she is finished, Hochschild has adopted Alan Freeman’s view that racism can be ended only by reverse discrimination, i.e., as she puts it, “that blacks be given disproportionate resources, power, and status until race would no longer affect people’s life chances.” In her view, “[t]he great risk is that such a massive disruption of normal patterns of reward and mobility would reveal the underlying class structure, and destroy the belief in equal opportunity that is the lynchpin of American society.”⁸ That is why she concludes, inexo-

5. J. HOCHSCHILD, *supra*, at xi.

6. *Id.* at 2.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.* at 202.

rably, according to her logic, that “[i]f whites cannot bring themselves to give up the advantages that America’s racial and class practices give them, they must permit elites to make that choice for them.”⁹ So much for democracy.

Having altered the conventional definition of liberalism from equal opportunity to equal results, Hochschild not surprisingly concludes that liberalism is incompatible with racism. She earlier defined racism as contrary to liberalism because “[i]t uses ascriptive characteristics, not achieved character, to determine people’s fate, and it proclaims that some groups should not partake of liberalism’s promises.”¹⁰ Thus “racism” is now to be remedied by treating the majority of the population by their ascriptive characteristics, i.e., by denying them equal opportunity.

This summary treatment of Hochschild’s position does not do justice to the flair and distinction with which she buttresses her position. She makes use of a wide variety of data on black-white differences. She is aware that the overall position of blacks is improving but that by some measures things are getting worse. She is dismayed by the evidence that whites think things are getting better for blacks and blacks think they are getting worse. Her discussion of the evidence on busing is broad, fair, and persuasive. Even when concluding that more drastic busing produces better public acceptance and, insofar as may be determined, academic performance, she provides counterinterpretations of the evidence.

The strongest part of this book, a book with which all later writers will have to contend, is its discussion of the evidence on desegregation. Instead of the view that all is peaches and cream or that all is rotten, Hochschild makes a good case for the marginally positive effects of desegregation. She is also ingenious in trying to show that incremental change does not lead to outcomes as good as radical change.

Nevertheless, I find her position, despite its force and verve, wanting. It is not so much what Hochschild puts in her admirable book but what she leaves out that is troublesome. As a citizen and a political scientist, I never (literally, never) think of any matter of political importance without asking myself about its consequences for race relations. For the future of American democracy may well depend on whether and to what extent racial reconciliation takes place. Would Hochschild’s recommendations, I ask, take us closer to or further from that goal? In analyzing that question, I will be-

9. *Id.* at 203.

10. *Id.* at 2.

gin with a closer look at her attack on incrementalism, and will then consider some broader issues relating to busing.

I. INCREMENTALISM AND RESISTANCE

Hochschild uses the doctrine of incrementalism as a metaphor for conservative (small, slow, partial) as opposed to radical (large, speedy, fundamental) change. Let us consider this doctrine in historical perspective. A famous version of incrementalism, Sir Karl Popper's "piecemeal social engineering," was deliberately designed as a counterweight to dictatorial political systems whose leaders thought they had the knowledge ("scientific socialism") or the intuition ("Meinkampf") to achieve grand objectives without taking into account popular preferences. In response, Popper sought to outline a far less ambitious approach that would conserve consent and understanding. The now-classical formalization of incrementalism is due to Charles E. Lindblom's seminal work.¹¹ In his hands, disjointed incrementalism, with its serial, remedial, small-scale attacks on problems, became a formal rival to synoptic or comprehensive decision making. The emphasis was on the use of the plural character of interests in society as aids to calculation. Instead of being viewed as a defect of democracy, as the unfortunate irrationality of the citizenry, Lindblom converted the desirability of consent into a positive asset.¹²

At this point it is important to observe what incrementalism was *not*. As Simon put it, decision makers "satisficed" because they had not the wit to maximize. When you thought you knew better, you tried to do better. In Lindblom's socially oriented approach, incrementalism was always a doctrine of the second best. When ends were substantially agreed and knowledge of means was strong, that was first best. Where those conditions did not obtain, amidst the usual doubts about causality and disagreement about objectives, incremental methods were appropriate substitutes.

Although this facet has been insufficiently appreciated, incrementalism was also part of the doctrine of the positive state. Were incrementalism designed to justify inaction, the doctrine would have stressed the unacceptability, not the desirability, of trying out small moves. Given the increasing size and scope of government, one possible response to those who argued that intervention was interference, because no one knew enough to assure desirable conse-

11. Lindblom, *The Science of "Muddling Through,"* 19 PUB. ADMIN. REV., Spring 1959, at 79; and D. BRAYBROOKE & C. LINDBLOM, *A STRATEGY OF DECISION: POLICY EVALUATION AS A SOCIAL PROCESS* (1963).

12. C. LINDBLOM, *THE INTELLIGENCE OF DEMOCRACY* (1965).

quences, was to say that there was an evolutionary sequence of small steps that would enable government to learn (perhaps quite rapidly) how to do better.

As incrementalism changed from a challenge to comprehensive means-ends analysis into something like the received wisdom, it became the object of numerous critiques. On the side of calculation, it became clear that decision makers might be more dependent on theory—if only to distinguish the effects of one marginal move from many others taking place at the same time—than was once thought.¹³ In regard to agreement, the pluralist underpinnings of incrementalism—all interests would receive adequate representation in the political process—came under attack.¹⁴ My impression is that as various authors began to doubt the rightness of American political life, especially as they felt its institutions were too inequalitarian, the acceptability of incrementalism declined.¹⁵

If we think of conservatism not as an innate psychological disposition but as a judgment about how far a system's outcomes are from one's own preferences, the charge that incrementalism is conservative makes sense. Willingness to accept small departures from the status quo does depend on how acceptable the point of departure is in the first place. For example, today antinuclear and other similar groups composed largely of leftists¹⁶ oppose incremental technological change.¹⁷ Thus the same sort of people, with similar political views, who regard incrementalism in social policies such as busing as unconscionably conservative, regard a similar approach to technology as murderously radical.

Incrementalism also has implications regarding public consent. In this regard, the difference between voting and busing as civil rights measures is illuminating. The legislative provisions in regard to voting took a long time amidst repeated struggles to enact. Once

13. See comments to this effect in A. WILDAVSKY, *THE POLITICS OF THE BUDGETARY PROCESS* xii-xiv (2d ed. 1974).

14. See the preface to the second edition of R. DAHL & C. LINDBLOM, *POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND WELFARE* (1976).

15. In addition to note 11 and to J. HOCHSCHILD, see Lindblom, *Still Muddling, Not Yet Through*, 39 *PUB. ADMIN. REV.*, Nov.-Dec. 1979, at 517. That the debate over pluralism is also essentially a difference over equality may also be seen in the second edition of N. POLSBY, *COMMUNITY POWER AND POLITICAL THEORY* (1980).

16. M. DOUGLAS & A. WILDAVSKY, *RISK AND CULTURE* (1982).

17. Huber, *Exorcists vs. Gatekeepers in Risk Regulation*, 7 *REG.*, Nov.-Dec. 1983, at 23; and Huber, *The Old-New Division in Risk Regulation*, 69 *VA. L. REV.* 1025 (1983). See Pearce, *The Preconditions for Achieving Consensus in the Context of Technological Risk*, in *TECHNOLOGICAL RISK: ITS PERCEPTION AND HANDLING IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY* 57 (M. Dierkes, S. Edwards & R. Coppock ed. 1980); Wildavsky, *Trial Without Error: Anticipation Versus Resilience as Strategies for Risk Reduction*, in *REGULATORY REFORM: NEW VISION OR OLD CURSE?* 200-21 (M. Maxey & R. Kuhn ed. 1985); Goodin, *No Moral Nukes*, 90 *ETHICS* 417 (1980).

passed into law, however, the voting provisions were quickly implemented. There may be a tradeoff, therefore, between the slowness of legislation, in which disagreements are either resolved or accepted with resignation, reasonable opportunity to decide otherwise having been exhausted, and the speed of implementation. Conversely, judge-made laws, quickly enacted, may leave so many questions unresolved, and so many voices unheard, that they spawn endless resistance in the process of implementation.¹⁸

Hochschild's view is quite the contrary. Her view, briefly, is this: What is decisive in school desegregation—what determines whether it succeeds or not—is decisiveness itself. Limit the scope of desegregation, or leave some aspects of it open to discussion, and you buy trouble. For you give opponents a reason to fight, to resist. Decide the issue, therefore, unambiguously, authoritatively, once and for all—making sure to leave no loopholes. Then people will accept desegregation and busing and do the best they can to make it work, either because they are (or will shortly become) persuaded that busing is desirable, or because they have been persuaded that it is inevitable.

How convincing is this *blitzkrieg* view of social change? It is not implausible at first blush, especially if courts can compel consent. But coordinating a unified national attack on the segregated schools would present grave difficulties. It is one thing for one judge to pick on a city, like Boston, and take over the local school system. It would be quite another to do this on a regional, even a national, scale, running across city and suburban (and state?) jurisdictions as Hochschild wants.

More generally, whether the courts are up to accomplishing desegregation depends in part upon what doing so entails. Desegregation could mean seeing to it that blacks and whites go to school together, or at any rate making sure that blacks are not prevented from going to school with whites by public officials. But that is not really what Hochschild has in mind—certainly, not all that she has in mind. School desegregation in her view is a quite open-ended objective—to eliminate any practice, or habit of thought, within the school disadvantageous to blacks. As Hochschild tells her readers,

18. A plausible inference from the cases in N. POLSBY, *POLITICAL INNOVATION IN AMERICA* (1984), is that over the medium run slow-moving innovations appear to become more legitimate. A partial parallel is provided by the contrast between the lengthy processes in which environmental legislation is spawned in Sweden and other European countries compared to the spate of legislation in the United States, and the reversal so far as implementation is concerned. See the citations in A. Wildavsky, *Doing More and Using Less: Utilization of Research as a Result of Regime* (paper delivered to the Joint Science Center Berlin/Stanford University research project and conference on "Cross-National Policy Research," to be published in a conference volume).

Full and complete desegregation would call into question parents' rights to send their children to private schools, teachers' seniority rights, the sanctity of city/suburb school district lines, and local financing and control of schools, to mention only a few sacred cows. Not only poor but also rich whites would have to give up precious components of their class position for desegregation to be complete.

Desegregation's indirect attack on the class structure—its revelation of the hollowness of the equal opportunity ideal—is most dangerous to all. A demand for full and complete desegregation, and the responses to such a demand, unmask the role of schools in perpetuating rather than mitigating the class structure and the structure itself. Desegregation demands expose unwarranted tracking within schools, disparities in resources, expectations, and curriculum between schools, and the strong connections among family background, academic achievement, race, and occupational success. The more blacks focus on results rather than opportunities and on institutional biases rather than individual acts, the more the liberal values of opportunity and individualism appear fraudulent or at best weak. Once these values are questioned, the whole social structure is called into question; once that occurs, the class structure becomes visible and therefore a subject of contention.¹⁹

Guaranteeing equal results from schooling is something, so far as I know, that no nation has done.

And if I am right in this—not right in supposing that things must miscarry, only that they may—then the key limitation of Hochschild's analysis stands out: She spends scarcely any time worrying about what happens if things go wrong. Is it all that obvious that we could not be worse off, following the policy she advances? Is it reasonable to suppose, for example, that white attitudes toward blacks must continue to improve? Hochschild argues that racism is built into American society; yet her recommendation makes sense only on the supposition that America has goodwill toward blacks, perhaps more so than other societies. So much so, in her own view, that Americans are willing to undertake in their behalf what no other society has. I see no reason to suppose that racial prejudice has had its day, that bigotry cannot make a comeback; it has before; it could again. Nor would I have supposed that the place of the courts—or more generally, the role of the law—was so secure as to require no concern whatever. It may be that American institutions seem so stable that instability and its consequences for the worst off, who often suffer most, need not be taken into account. Or it could be that existing inequalities are considered so unconscionable that nothing could be worse. Either way, political consent is evidently not considered a scarce resource.

The problem of implementation seems to me severe because I think Hochschild, otherwise so acute, has in one critical respect quite misunderstood the view of those she calls "anomaly" theorists—above all Myrdal. The anomaly thesis, as I understand it, comes to this: Americans have (or had) one set of ideas and convic-

19. J. HOCHSCHILD, *supra*, at 155-56.

tions about liberty and equality and fairness for whites, another for blacks. Their views regarding blacks are (or were), literally, anomalous: different from, and at odds with, their views generally; which is, of course, the reason for Myrdal's (relative) optimism. But the dilemma that interests Hochschild is quite different. The great obstacle from Hochschild's point of view is precisely the source of optimism from Myrdal's. For Myrdal supposes that it is only necessary for Americans to change their opinions about blacks, whereas Hochschild supposes that they must change their basic values. Where Myrdal's dilemma is one of classification, i.e., whites placing blacks in the category where enlightened rules apply, Hochschild wants to change the rules. From Hochschild's point of view, the real obstacles are not a set of attitudes brought into play only or chiefly on racial issues. Many citizens object to a range of policies to assist blacks; but—and this seems an important point—they object to such policies whoever they are intended to help. They take the same position on policies designed to help women (e.g., comparable worth) or Mexican Americans (e.g., affirmative action). Myrdal's dilemma could be resolved in favor of racial equality (as he conceived it) because the weight of American values favored resolution; it is much less obvious that Hochschild's dilemma can be resolved in favor of racial equality (as she conceives it) because the weight of American values opposes it. Simply put, it asks whites to give a kind of assistance to blacks they would oppose even for whites. Movement toward equality of condition, as Hochschild prefers, is not at all the same as equality of opportunity or equality before the law, which most Americans now support. Starting with the older dilemma, when black people were denied equal rights, Hochschild has slipped in a dilemma that is real for her and for those who share her views but not for most Americans.

II. WHAT BOX ARE WE IN?

Incrementalism is intended to deal with situations in which we either lack consensus about goals or knowledge about means. Recourse to a version of the justly renowned Thompson-Tuden matrix, relating knowledge to agreement, will tell us that in regard to busing we not only disagree about what to do but about even which box we are in.²⁰

20. Thompson & Tuden, *Strategies, Structures, and Processes of Organizational Decision*, in *COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN ADMINISTRATION* 195-216 (J. Thompson ed. 1959).

| | | <u>Agreement</u> | |
|------------------|--------|------------------|---------------|
| | | Much | Little |
| <u>Knowledge</u> | Much | 1) Computation | 3) Bargaining |
| | Little | 2) Search | 4) ? |

Everyone agrees that we are not in box one, where there is nearly total agreement on objectives and nearly complete understanding of means. There are those, against whom Hochschild directs her argument, who say that there is much agreement on the objective of improving education through integrated schools but little understanding of whether busing is a good way of securing integration and whether integration will improve education. They view themselves as being in box two, searching for better solutions. Hochschild, however, places them in box three: these whites know how to achieve integration and make it serve education but they do not want to give up their privileges. Hence they bargain for less onerous forms, such as voluntary busing, limitations to older students, busing into white schools, in sum, the very provisions that Hochschild contends weaken its positive educational effects. Recent work by Arthur L. Stinchcombe and D. Garth Taylor suggests another explanation for resistance to busing.²¹ They find that:

busing attitudes are only weakly related to the traditional, psychological measure of racism or prejudice [N]ational data and our own analyses show the same for Boston during the time of the court order. Busing attitudes *are*, however related to people's perceptions that the new costs of integration by busing are inequitably allocated, illegitimately arrived at (illegitimately decided by the courts and the establishment), and pose personal threats to the personal well-being and academic achievement of one's children. For instance, people's attitudes about what will happen to test scores predicts very strongly how much opposition they will show to the court order.²²

According to Hochschild, "Americans must choose between standard, apparently desirable modes of policy choice and enactment, and the goal of eradicating racism. If whites cannot bring themselves to give up the advantages that America's racial and class practices give them, they must permit elites to make that choice for them."²³ That last phrase—elites to make choices for Americans—is a dagger aimed at democracy.²⁴ Before adopting the thesis that

21. Stinchcombe & Taylor, *On Democracy and School Integration*, in *SCHOOL DESEGREGATION: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE* 157-86 (W. Stephan & J. Feagin ed. 1980).

22. *Id.* at 177.

23. J. HOCHSCHILD, *supra*, at 203.

24. See Wildavsky, *The "Reverse Sequence" in Civil Liberties*, 78 *PUB. INT.* 32 (1985).

majorities have to be deprived of the right to effective representation in order to facilitate a gain in achievement by minorities, we ought, at a minimum, to be pretty well convinced that the remedy, desegregation by busing, will work. Otherwise, public policy will leave whites and blacks angry at institutions that do not live up either to their procedural or substantive promises. The possible explanation I am about to suggest, building on the work of others, is at once comforting—differences in ability are not at issue—and despairing—the factor at fault may be much more difficult to change.

The usual factors in discussion of differences in racial achievement—racism, social and economic class, educational resources, family background, school expectations, language difficulties, prior ceilings on jobs, culturally biased organizations—all have a place, but they are readily subject to discount in the context of the experience of different racial and ethnic groups. A recent example that will have to stand for many others, because the literature is far too extensive to be summarized here, concerns the effects of poor health. On average, black children are less healthy than their white counterparts. But one of the unhealthiest groups in the country, carrying a legacy of disease from Southeast Asia, are the Vietnamese. Yet their educational motivation and achievement, despite this evident handicap and despite language and cultural differences, are considerable, soon placing them above many whites, all without evident abandonment of their home culture.

Let us consider, instead, another variable—time spent in school and doing homework. If blacks spend considerably less time in school and do less homework, then no one need be surprised that they do less well in the measurable attitudes of educational achievement. And that apparently is exactly the situation. Even blacks with higher educational aspirations study a lot less.²⁵ Yet a positive

25. J. OGBU, *THE NEXT GENERATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF EDUCATION IN AN URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD* (1974); *Racial Stratification and Education: The Case of Stockton, California*, 12 *ICRD BULL.* 1 (1977); and *Schooling in the Inner City*, 21 *SOC.* 75-79 (1983). See also J. HANNA, *UNDERSTANDING AND COPING WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN AMERICA: LIKE ME, MEDDLE ME IN A DESEGREGATED SCHOOL* (forthcoming); D. HOLLAND & M. EISENHART, *WOMEN'S PEER GROUPS AND CHOICE OF CAREERS* (1982); J. OGBU, *INVESTMENT IN HUMAN CAPITAL: EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA, AND GWEMBE, ZAMBIA*, (Kroeber Anthropological Papers, No. 63 & 64, 1984); L. WEIS, *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS* (1985). There is a crying need for ethnographic investigations of contemporary American life. Saying one studies, as part of a self-report, is not nearly as reliable as being observed to study by a trained observer who has come to know you and your family. (Much the same is true, of course, of faculty time studies.) The excuses for absences, for instance, are likely to change radically from the approved reasons in the student handbook to more personally relevant reasons when speaking to a knowledgeable and unthreatening observer. It may well be that the much-discussed decline in test scores among whites would yield to a more refined "time and concentration" study.

attitude toward education, manifested by spending more time getting educated, would seem entirely compatible with ethnic and racial identity and with individual integrity. If schools, parents, and peers all reinforced respect for education, one would expect a gradual reduction of black-white differences in achievement within the context of improvement for all. Simple, isn't it? Then why doesn't it happen?

When blacks were ready and willing to accept educational integration, not only in the sense of sitting next to white skins, but of accepting similar educational standards, they were denied that opportunity. When many whites were willing to sit in the same classrooms, provided that educational standards were shared, many blacks were no longer willing. The legacy of racism somehow turned in on itself. Educational standards, once used to put blacks down, had themselves become tainted just as these self-same standards were about to bring them up. Any white club willing to have them, as the great Groucho put it, was not worth joining. If it is not any innate individual difference but this acquired cultural difference that distinguishes the black experience from that of other ethnic and racial groups who share many of the same initial handicaps, the American dilemma is bigger than we thought.

A recent paper by Harry Eckstein raises the right issue. Do the groups under consideration want to be treated like others or are they deliberately rejecting the mainstream culture, including its modes of learning for educational achievement?²⁶ Building on Mary Metz's seminal study of schools as moral orders,²⁷ Eckstein probes the deep implications of self-exclusion. Here, for the purpose of this review essay, it is sufficient to consider the implications of self-exclusion for Hochschild's thesis.

It is hard to see how the promise of American life, that combination of cultural diversity and material abundance, can be even partially fulfilled without both racial integration and educational achievement. Certainly, Hochschild's version of our common dilemma is that it is not to be solved by giving up one for the other, achievement for integration, but by maintaining that these goals are (or can be made to be) mutually supportive. In this optimism, she reveals her quintessentially American character. But how?

It is possible that the small positive effects observed from racial integration in classrooms occur because of the moral influence in favor of achievement. Coercion can bring these students into closer

26. H. Eckstein, *Civil Inclusion and Its Discontents* (typescript).

27. M. METZ, *CLASSROOMS AND CORRIDORS: THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY IN DESEGREGATED SECONDARY SCHOOLS* (1978).

proximity; but it can also breed hostility if the value of education is in dispute. When it is recognized that the criteria of achievement in the larger, white society, criteria that Hochschild accepts, have yet to be accepted by many blacks, the limits on coercion become apparent.

Another alternative is suggested by anthropologist John Ogbu:

[T]he academic performance of Black children can be increased (a) by having Black children adopt more serious attitudes toward their schoolwork and (b) by increasing their efforts and perseverance at their schoolwork

One prerequisite for finding a "solution" to the "community" dimension of the problem of persistent disproportionate academic lag of Black students is to recognize that this aspect of the problem exists. Blacks and similar minorities have generally expressed a kind of institutional discrimination perspective or "blaming the system" perspective This needs to be balanced with a recognition that some of their own responses to the "institutionalized discrimination" or to the dominant Whites' exploitation also contribute to the academic difficulties of Black children. From this point of view, my analysis is addressed largely to people in the Black community. I believe that given the oppositional theme underlying the problem, Black children are more likely to change their attitudes and behaviors if encouraged to do so from within the Black community. . . .

Current awareness programs for Black students and similar minorities tend to emphasize discovering racial and ethnic identities and pride. This is fine but not enough. It is not enough to discover who they are or that they have their own racial or ethnic culture, especially if that reinforces equating school learning with acculturation into White middle-class culture. . . .

Blacks and similar castelike minorities tend to have what is essentially an acculturation or assimilation view of schooling. That is, they view schooling as learning White culture and identity or changing into White culturally and cognitively. Given that Blacks maintain oppositional identity . . . there is . . . ambivalence toward learning in school or "acting White." The dilemma is that the individual Black student has to choose between academic success or school success and being Black.²⁸

Around the nation a variety of schools and school districts²⁹ are implicitly following his advice in setting, monitoring, and enforcing high academic standards for all pupils. Tests are taken seriously, not as examples of cultural imperialism. Pupils are held back when they don't measure up. Excellence is color blind. It ought to work. If not, America faces the prospect of declining performance together with ever more bitter struggles over the political allocation of material goods. Only a single outcome is certain: The America

28. J. Ogbu, *Understanding Community Forces Affecting Minority Students' Academic Effort* (prepared for The Achievement Council of California, May 1984, and adapted from chapter 1 of *CROSSING CULTURE BOUNDARIES: RESOLVING THE PARADOX OF HIGH EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND LOW SCHOOL PERFORMANCE* (in preparation)). Richard Rodriguez writes beautifully of this dilemma for Mexican Americans in his *Hunger for Memory* (1981).

29. Oakland Tribune, Apr. 7, 1985, and succeeding days, ran a series on such schools.

the victors inherit won't be worth having. And that is the most un-American dilemma I can think of.

My own sense of the fitness of things (I grew up in Brooklyn where, despite calumnies, far more than a single tree grows) is based on a city boy's marvel at nature the trickster. Especially at her sweetest. On my fence in Oakland I have growing a lush vine, *clematis armandii*, which, besides producing a bevy of white flowers, is suffused with a sweet fragrance. It perfumes the air and is otherwise a delight. It is also easy to handle. One can snip off segments easily with little damage to appearance or odor. Should our vine entwine itself around another flower, however, it will keep tightening itself in such a loving embrace that soon friendly, welcoming, luscious *clematis* chokes the life out of its host. The wise, the adage goes, should protect against the damage done by the merely good.