Introduction

For those familiar with California politics, it was not surprising that the state with the largest non-white population in the nation became the first to impose a legal ban on the policy and practice known as affirmative action. Proposition 209, which was passed by California voters in the Fall of 1997, and which officially brought an end to the use of race and gender as a factor in contracting, hiring, and college admissions in publicly supported institutions, was not an enigma. 209 was but one of several “wedge issues” used to divide traditional democratic constituencies and to mobilize voters in support of conservative causes and politicians. Like Proposition 187 before it, which cut off public assistance to undocumented immigrants, and Proposition 227 which followed it, which banned the practice of bi-lingual education in the state's public schools, the call to eliminate affirmative action resonated among voters by appealing to their fears of the growing ethnic and cultural diversity in the state.

More than merely a racist backlash, the passage of each of these propositions, and especially 209, represented something greater than a panicked reaction to the changing demographics. Each electoral victory was also attributable to the clever propaganda and marketing employed, as well as the large sums of money invested in the campaigns. Proposition 209 was named the California Civil Rights Initiative, and its minimalist program called for fairness and equality under the law without the use of race and gender preferences. With Ward Connerly, a prominent African American member of the University of California Board of Regents, as its lead spokesman, proposition 209 passed easily and California became the first state in the nation to eliminate affirmative action.

Among public institutions of higher education the impact of 209 was not felt until the Fall of 1998. At UC Berkeley and UCLA, the top public universities in the state, African American and Latino enrollment plummeted. Whereas in 1997 the entering freshman class at UC Berkeley was 7.3% African American and 13.4% Chicano/Latino, by the following year African American enrollment was down to 3.5%, and Chicano/Latino enrollment had declined to 7.4% of the entering Freshman class (Office of Student Research UC Berkeley). The impact was even more dramatic at the major law schools and medical schools. Of the 13 African Americans admitted to Boalt Law School in the Fall of 1997, only one chose to enroll in the Fall. Minority enrollment in these professional schools was affected a year earlier as a result of action taken by the UC Regents, again led by Ward Connerly, which banned the use of affirmative action in admissions.

Defenders of 209 have argued that the precipitous decline witnessed at Berkeley and UCLA will not be permanent. They point out that Berkeley admitted 30% more
minority students into the freshmen class entering in the Fall of 1999 than it had in 1998. They also argue that 209 has had the effect of redistributing minority students to the other six, somewhat less competitive campuses within the UC system. Some of these campuses, such as UC Riverside, formed partnerships with local public schools and have aggressively recruited African American and Latino students (Traub, 1999).

Though there is some truth to these claims, even an optimist would agree that they in no way offset the devastating impact that the end of affirmative action will have on African American, and to a lesser extent, Latino enrollment at the University of California over the next several years. Moreover, if some way is not found to reverse the impact of 209, the long term status and well being of African Americans and Latinos in the state of California may be irreparably damaged. Despite all of the money and effort that is presently being invested by the University of California into outreach programs targeted at low income minority students, there is no indication that minority enrollment at the University of California will reach the levels recorded in the late 1980s when it was at its height (Hurtado and Garcia 1994).

Given the rapidly changing demographics of California where people of color now make up 52% of the population (Munoz 1999), and where rising birth rates and the constant influx of new immigrants is expected to continue to propel the state further in this direction (Olsen 1997), the implications of the ban on affirmative action could produce devastating consequences. Looking at medicine alone, where African American and Chicano/Latino enrollment in California medical schools has decline by 25% since the mid 1990s, the implications are already becoming evident. This trend represents more than just a loss of opportunity for the handful of select individuals who may have had access to these schools had affirmative action still been in place. The long term shortage of doctors that will result from these trends is now being described as a potential health emergency (Bazar 1999). Past research has shown that doctors from these groups have traditionally been more likely to serve low income Black and Latino communities (Jaco 1979). Consequently, the shortage of African American and Latino doctors in these communities is likely to mean a lack of health services from qualified professionals.

Derek Bok and William Bowen (1998) have effectively pointed out that affirmative action is much more than a benefit provided to a particular individual. They argue that it must rather be seen as a mechanism designed to achieve a small but significant degree of social justice that has implications for race relations and social stratification in the entire society. At the end of their recent book which analyzes the long term consequences of affirmative action at elite universities, the authors offer the following argument: "...academically selective colleges and universities have been highly successful in using race-sensitive admissions policies to advance educational goals important to them and societal goals important to everyone. Indeed, we regard these admissions policies as an impressive example of how venerable institutions with established ways of operating can adapt to serve newly perceived needs." (1998, 290) Despite arguments such as these, affirmative action in California is now history, and to begin to ascertain the consequences of this change in law we must have an understanding
of conditions in California's K-12 educational system which prepares students for higher education.

California's "Savage" Inequalities

The impact of proposition 209 on minority college enrollment has cast attention on the state of K-12 public education in California. Though less unequal than some states, California's school finance system allows for wide disparities in per pupil spending among school districts across the state. Following a pattern that mirrors national trends, throughout California considerably more dollars per student are spent in affluent communities than in poor communities. This is true even when supplemental funding from state and federal programs is included in the calculation (EdSource 1999). The inequities go beyond funding and include huge disparities in the quality of facilities, teacher salaries, the number of credentialed teachers, and the ratio of counselors to students(Olsen 1997). The content of education provided is also affected because schools in poorer communities tend to have less access to computers and other forms of technology, inferior laboratory equipment and text books, fewer advanced placement courses, and more limited access to SAT/ACT preparation courses. Compounding these existing inequities is the fact that since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, which set a limit on increases in property taxes, California's contribution to public education has declined significantly in comparison to other states. In per pupil spending California now ranks 42nd among the 50 states in the nation (EdSource 1999).

For those concerned about the need to maintain some degree of diversity in public institutions of higher education in California, improving the quality of K-12 education is now seen as an imperative. Rather than accepting a future in which the number of minority professionals - doctors, lawyers, educators, etc., - is reduced to a bare minimum at the moment in history when the non-white population has become the majority, a number of activists and educators have turned their energies to the range of issues surrounding inequality in education.

More than merely a technical issue of school reform, the effort to transform public education is taking on a degree of urgency more characteristic of a fledgling social movement because of growing recognition that education will be the most important civil rights issue of the next century. In part, this is because education is widely perceived as a contested resource and a precious commodity over which groups compete. Historically, the struggle for access and control of educational institutions has been central to the struggle for civil rights and racial justice in the United States (Carnoy and Levin 1986). In the post-209 period, the struggle for equity in education has taken on a new sense of seriousness as the implications of the consequences of the elimination of affirmative action become clear. Inaction is likely to mean that California will soon become an apartheid-like state in which the divisions between economic classes are manifest primarily along racial lines.

Perhaps more so than any other social institution, education has historically been susceptible to demands for greater equity and reform. This is not because educators have
necessarily been more liberal or more open to change, or because policy makers and politicians have uniformly welcomed the idea of promoting racial equality through education. History shows that the struggle for civil rights in education has been painfully slow and resistance to change has frequently been extreme, and occasionally violent (Wolters 1984; Skrentney 1996). Nonetheless, in the field of education, progress, as defined by civil rights advocates and measured through the realization of certain reforms (i.e. school desegregation, access to bilingual education, gender equity, affirmative action, etc.), has been achieved, even if the broader, more far reaching goal of achieving social equality through education has not.

Forty five years after the Brown decision to end segregation in the nation's schools, it is clear that despite numerous subsequent court orders, the dispatching of federal troops, and several bitter racially polarized battles in communities across the country, the goal of achieving racial integration in the public schools remains largely unfulfilled (Orfield 1996). Not only are schools more racially segregated today than they were twenty years ago, but increasingly this isolation is compounded by apartheid-like separation that occurs on the basis of social class. Throughout the country, and especially in state's like California, the poorest children are sent to the poorest schools, and since residence continues to serve as one of the key determinants of where a child will be enrolled in school, the children of the innercity or at the isolated farm labor camp, are consistently relegated to schools with the most meager resources, and of questionable quality (Kozol 1994; Anyon 1996).

The passage of proposition 209 shows quite clearly that gains once achieved in civil rights should in fact have been viewed as concessions extracted from those with power while under duress during the heat of struggle. Affirmative action, like welfare rights and social security, are social benefits which can be modified or even eliminated by politicians. This is more likely to occur when there is no movement present to defend or expand these reforms. Though the merits of affirmative action as a strategy for achieving greater social equality continues to be the subject of debate, particularly given that middle class members of various minority groups and White women often accrued the lion's share of its benefits (Wilson 1994), its demise is the clearest and most recent sign that the march toward social progress is by no means irreversible. As one of the only civil rights policy initiatives to contain a redistributive element in both its conception and its enactment (Tierney 1997), the erosion of affirmative action may also signify something even more profound: the prospect that education can serve as a means to promote social mobility and equality for the impoverished and marginalized, even if only for a few, may soon be completely foreclosed.

**The Diversity Project: Challenging Racial Inequality at Berkeley High School**

It is with this prospect in mind that a group of researchers, educators, parents and students, came together in Berkeley, California an attempt to find ways to address the ever-present issue of racial inequality as it is manifest within schools. Living in California and sensing the urgency created by the passage of proposition 209, we felt compelled to take concrete steps toward addressing the widening gap in opportunity that
separated the privileged from the disadvantaged. As a university professor, it seemed logical to me that we should attempt to use research as the basis for some form of intervention within a particular school so that we could demonstrate how a change in academic outcomes could be brought about. Yet, we also knew that research committed to this kind of goal would have to be fundamentally different from more traditional forms of research, especially from that which is typically carried out in public schools. From the start, we understood that we would have to do more than merely document what was already well established. Given what we knew about the relationship between race, class and school performance, we recognized that in order for our research to bring about a change in student outcomes, we would have to find ways to alter the structure and the culture of the school we focused our energy upon.

The school we selected, Berkeley High School (BHS), presented a unique challenge because it is one of the few high schools in the United States that is genuinely integrated, both in terms of race and class. Drawing its students from low income neighborhoods in Oakland, Richmond and the flatlands of Berkeley, and from the upper middle class families residing in the Berkeley hills, BHS contains a diversity that is unique among urban high schools. It is also a school where disparities in academic achievement between students who come from wealthy families and students from poor families are dramatic and extreme.

We undertook this project with the hope that challenging racial inequality in this context would open the possibility that our work might have value that would extend beyond this particular school. We hoped that if we could find ways to reduce the effects of racial and class differences on academic outcomes among students at BHS, that we might also find a way to revive the idea that the social experiment known as integration might mean something more than merely forcing students of different racial backgrounds to attend school together.

This chapter analyzes the way in which research has been used to create conditions for challenging racial inequality as it is manifest at Berkeley High School. At a practical level, this paper is about the strategies that have been taken to reform a large, urban public high school through a partnership known as the Diversity Project; an organization comprised of over thirty teachers, students and parents and university researchers who have worked together for over three years in a collaborative research/reform endeavor. At a more abstract level this chapter describes how both the research process and the findings generated provide a means through which assumptions about the link between racial identity and student performance have been problematized and re-examined for the purpose of creating conditions for change within this school.

It will be argued that re-thinking assumptions about race must be central to any effort aimed at undermining racial inequality, and that without such a process, changes in organizational practices and individual behavior can not be realized. Unfortunately, because we are still in the midst of this work, this paper is not about what concretely has been accomplished as a result of our efforts. Given our time-line for implementing changes at the school, we do not expect to see a change in student outcomes until the
Following a brief description of the school and the community in which it is located, I will describe and analyze how research has been used to accomplish the following:

1) Making the familiar seem strange and problematic - By using research to enable teachers, students and parents to question their assumptions about why students do or do not succeed academically and understand how these beliefs are linked to conceptions of their racial identities.

2) Critically examine the organization and structure of privilege - By making the various constituencies within the school aware of the ways in which organizational practices enhance opportunities for those with social capital and class privilege while limiting opportunities for the disadvantaged.

3) Empower the disadvantaged and marginalized - By utilizing the inquiry process to make the needs and interests of those who have historically been most peripheral to the school central to its operation and mission. I will also show how such individuals have used this process to become active participants within the school change effort.

Good Intentions Are Not Enough: The Failure of Integration at Berkeley High School

Few communities in the United States have demonstrated as much commitment to achieving racial integration in public schools as Berkeley. In 1968 it became one of the first cities in the country to voluntarily de-segregate its schools (Noguera 1994). What made this achievement most significant was the fact that its plan for integration was based on two-way bussing for elementary school students, a system which assured that the burden of bussing would be born by both Black and White communities. As the only high school in the city, Berkeley High School (BHS) had been formally integrated for many years. However, a closer examination of racial patterns within the school revealed that the school was segregated from within, and what looked like one big, urban high school, was actually two separate schools within a single facility.

BHS is a relatively large school with approximately three thousand students and over one hundred and fifty teachers, counselors and administrators. According to the school district's data, approximately 40% of the students are White, 40% are African American, 10% are Latino and 10% are Asian American. These numbers may be inaccurate because approximately 10% of the students who responded to our survey of the class of 2000 identified themselves as mixed race. Racial differences generally correspond to class differences since the vast majority of White students are from middle class and affluent backgrounds, while the majority of African American and Latino students come from low income families. From the outside, the school seems amazingly
diverse, but from within, racial fragmentation is apparent in almost every aspect of the school.

The fact that these patterns of racial separation could remain intact for years in a city renown for its liberalism provides some indication of the paralysis that has beset this community on matters related to race and schooling. Though considerable moral conviction was demonstrated in implementing the two-way bussing plan in 1968 by those who argued that "it was the right thing to do", addressing racial disparities in the post-integration period became far more problematic. With the advent of Black nationalist movements in the 1970s, "the right thing to do" became far more ambiguous. In 1969 Black students demanded and were granted the first African American Studies department to be established at a high school in the United States. The logic of this concession contributed to the notion that separate and distinct approaches to educating Black and White students were necessary and desired. This notion led to the creation of several smaller separate high schools in the mid 1970s, including the Umoja House for Black students seeking a culturally defined educational experience, and the Raza House for Chicano students seeking something analogous for themselves. Ultimately, these experiments in racial separation were brought to an end by their funder, the US Department of Education, which determined that maintaining racially separate schools was a violation of several civil rights statutes, and was therefore illegal.

Despite this setback, the underlying philosophical premise that produced the racially defined schools retained its influence. Over time, BHS simply became two schools within the same facility: an elite college preparatory school serving mostly White students from the affluent hill neighborhoods of Berkeley, and an innercity school serving economically disadvantaged Black and Latino students from the flatland neighborhoods. Officially, there was only one school, with one principal, one faculty, one football team, etc. But for students and anyone else who spent their days at the school, the fragmented nature of the place, where divisions were plainly evident along racial and class lines, was consistent and ever present.

In 1999, it remains the case that White students are largely concentrated in the honors and college track courses which include a broad array of electives, as well as advanced math, science and foreign language courses. In contrast, African American and Latino students are disproportionately placed in the less demanding remedial courses, though they also take advantage of the Swahili and Afro-Haitian dance electives offered in the African American Studies Department, as well as courses in Chicano History and Literature in the fledging Chicano Studies program. As might be expected these patterns of separation extend beyond the classroom and effect those areas of the school where membership is based on voluntary association as well. Nearly every club, sports team and extracurricular activity has a racially exclusive make-up, and even physical space on school grounds is associated with a particular racial group: the slopes in front of the school is reserved for Black students, the theater steps are for Whites, and the southwest corner of the school where a mural depicting the United Farm Workers symbol appears on the building wall, has been claimed by Chicanos and Latinos.
Because they have been in place for so long, such patterns of separation have been rationalized as the product of choices freely made by the students. Some adults at the school consciously condone these practices as a way of accommodating the diverse cultures and interests present within the school, and argue that these patterns of separation provide a form of cultural affirmation. However, what some regard as a benign and voluntary form of racial separation actually masks the ways in which these patterns reinforce the racialized nature of academic failure and success at the school. Though many students and teachers have come to accept this form of racial separation as "natural" and unavoidable given the significant racial and class differences that exist among the students, there has been relatively little willingness to take responsibility for the academic outcomes that accompany these patterns as well as the effect they have on future opportunities available to students once they leave BHS.

On the basis of almost every significant indicator, BHS is a school that does not serve its Black and Latino students well. Nearly fifty percent of Black and Latino students who enter BHS in the ninth grade fail to graduate from the school, and among those who do graduate few complete the course requirements necessary for admission at the University of California, or the state college system (WASC Report 1996). These students also comprise the overwhelming majority of students who are suspended or expelled for disciplinary reasons. Moreover, the adjunct continuation high school, which was established to serve students with poor attendance and behavioral problems, is almost entirely comprised of African American and Latino students.

For White and some Asian students, Berkeley High School is a highly successful school in many important respects. The vast majority of White students graduate and matriculate to two and four year colleges and universities. A significant number are admitted to the Ivy League colleges and the highly competitive campuses of the University of California (BHS Report on College Admissions, 1996). BHS consistently produces several national merit scholars, most of whom are White, and the Jazz band, crew team and debating club (all of which are almost exclusively White) have received wide acclaim. It is for these reasons that BHS is one of few public schools that actually draws White students away from private schools. Their parents, many of whom are professionals with advanced university degrees, know a good thing when they see it, and as a result many have refused to abandon this urban public school like so many Whites elsewhere in the country(Nocera 1991). In fact, the liberal sentiments of many of these parents encourages them to perceive the fact that the school is integrated and "diverse" as an added benefit, and enables some to regard sending their children to the school as a progressive political act in itself.

In 1994 the school was jolted out of its passive acceptance of the status quo when a documentary on the school aired nationally on public television. Based on interviews and profiles with students and teachers over the course of a school year, School Colors, vividly presented the racial dynamics within the school using several powerful examples of racial separation and polarization similar to those that I have described here. More than just a film on a particular high school, School Colors was used as evidence of the failure of racial integration in public schools forty years after the Brown decision.
Reaction to the film within BHS was strikingly uniform. Teachers, students and parents of all kinds angrily condemned the film as a distorted depiction of their reality. They argued that the film lacked balance because it failed to show the ways in which individuals within the school come together in friendships across racial lines, and they complained vociferously that they had been set up because the producers, who had been welcomed to the school, edited the film to support a message and perspective they believed had been held even before they entered BHS.

At the time of the film's airing I was serving as an elected member of the Berkeley School Board, and I felt particularly betrayed by the filmmakers because I had been instrumental in helping them to gain access to the school. However, unlike most of the others who quickly dismissed the film and its message, I watched the film over and over again, and even showed it in some of my classes to students at UC Berkeley. The more I saw the film the more I recognized the extent to which it had accurately captured what was going on at BHS, and the more I appreciated its value as an educational tool for learning about race and racial inequality within a school setting. Through their intensive examination of racial dynamics within the school the producers created a medium through which the performance of racial identities could be observed clashing and interacting with the institution and the social conventions operative there. Though I also had criticisms about some of the ways in which racial issues were portrayed and some issues which I felt were distorted, the film did reveal some of the complex ways in which racial inequality is reproduced and the peculiar role of individual choice and agency in that process.

It was largely as a result of the film that I and others who had worked at and with the school for many years came together to create the Diversity Project as an organizational vehicle for addressing issues of racial inequality within BHS. Following a year of planning and discussions regarding its purpose, goals and objectives, the Diversity Project was established in the summer of 1996 to address two questions/issues:

1) What are the factors that contribute to the disparity in academic achievement between students of different racial and class backgrounds at the school? And, what can be done to reduce these disparities?

2) What are the factors that are responsible for the racial separation of students within the school, both voluntary forms as well as the sorting that is carried out by the school. And do these patterns of separation contribute to a calcification of the perceived link between racial identity and academic performance?

Comprised of over thirty teachers, students, parents, school board members and university researchers, the Diversity Project focused its initial year of work on research aimed at finding answers to these two questions. Our plan was to use the findings generated from our research to guide efforts to transform the school. We relied on research not because we believed that there was any magic in using data to analyze and reform the school. Rather, we focused upon research because we believed that the inquiry process could provide a new and different way to approach issues that had come to be
seen as "natural" and unchangeable. As I will show in the pages ahead, the presentation of the research and the discussion it generated was even more important to the process of social and institutional change that we sought to undertake.

Making the Familiar Seem Strange and Problematic

As the Diversity Project attempted to find a way to respond to racial disparities in academic achievement at BHS we understood that the biggest obstacle to overcome involved the explanations and rationalizations of this phenomenon that already existed in the minds of most people. The attention that we placed on the academic achievement of Black and Latino students was by no means new or unfamiliar. Data on the attrition of minority students and on their performance in academic classes had been publicized and made available to the entire school and community for many years. Leaders in the African American and Latino community had been highly critical of the school in the past and several community organizations had become increasingly outspoken in their condemnation of these persistent patterns of failure. Since 1993 reports on the number of the "D's" and "F's" received by students in major courses and broken down by race were produced and released to the public at the end of each semester, and on each occasion the reports elicited a new round of controversy and finger pointing. It was, therefore, common knowledge that the majority of Black and Latino students were doing poorly at the school, but there was little evidence that anything was being done to effectively address the problem.

Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that there was little agreement over the causes of the academic disparities. Without a clear diagnosis of the problem, the school and community remained mired in an acrimonious and fruitless debate over who was to blame. Finger pointing by those who would attribute the problem to indifferent teachers, negligent parents, lazy and unmotivated students, and even society as a whole, only contributed to further paralysis and inaction. More significantly, the lack of change in student outcomes also contributed to a perception that the racialized patterns of student achievement were normal or even "natural", and their consistency gave them a fixed and unchangeable quality.

This final point requires further elaboration and some departure from the specific issues raised at BHS, for the comparatively low academic performance and Latino and African American students is by no means an isolated phenomenon in the United States (Jencks 1972; Ogbu 1988). Rather, throughout the country disparities in student achievement mirror other racialized patterns of behavior. As a consequence, their existence and persistence are easily reinforced by the prevailing racial hegemony, not of a particular school, but of society as a whole. In a society where Black and Brown people are over represented in the prisons and slums, and frequently portrayed as drug dealers, gangsters and whores in the mass media, the failure of Black and Brown children in school would hardly appear abnormal. Low test scores, poor grades, and high drop-out and expulsion rates, easily blend into the litany of negative attributes associated with African Americans and Latinos in America. Such trends exist in alignment with images and indicators of poverty and criminality, drug abuse and teen pregnancy, violence and
welfare dependency, to create a portrait of America's underclass that is profoundly associated with Latino, and most especially African American people.

As is true with the public discourse over many social problems that affect the poor, the cause of academic failure is most often located first in the individual student, then with the family, and finally with the schools. The society in which the school is located is absolved from responsibility or culpability because educational issues tend to be seen in isolation and are generally responded to without consideration of the social context. To the extent that any connection is made between the micro (i.e. the particular manifestation of an educational problem) and the macro (i.e. its relation to broader social and economic forces), it is generally limited to a vague and general moral appeal for something to be done to address the plight of the less fortunate. In recent times such appeals have emphasized volunteer activities such as mentoring and self help, rather than concrete proposals for improving material conditions, expanding economic opportunity, or satisfying basic unmet needs.

Moral appeals can be successful in generating sympathy and even charity, however they generally do not lead to critiques of the social structure, much less action aimed at addressing the political and economic roots of social problems. The fact that there is a lack of urgency associated with addressing the needs of urban public schools even though it is commonly understood that such schools have the most acute problems (Maeroff 1988), is a reflection of the extent to which the poor performance of African American and Latino students in school is embedded into the American conscience as a naturally occurring phenomenon. For this reason, the problems facing Black and Brown students at BHS are not perceived as an aberration or deviation from the norm. Instead, they are generally understood as part of a broader pattern of failure and low performance that is manifest in schools across the country. In some ways it seems surprising that even during a period of unparalleled attention toward education, a period in which the funding available for educational innovation is greater than at any time since 1960, that the plight of urban schools where the problems are most acute would remain largely ignored. At the state or federal levels of government, there are no master plans or bold new initiatives designed to save or revive America's urban public schools. Likewise, there is no master plan for revitalizing the economically depressed ghettos and barrios that exist in nearly every city, large or small, throughout the United States. The absence of action and attention says more about how these issues are perceived and understood than the rhetoric on individual responsibility and equal opportunity occasionally uttered by politicians in reference to the urban poor.

Within such a societal context then, challenging racialized patterns of failure takes on a profound cultural dimension. That is, far beyond a question of method and technique, efforts to address the academic achievement of African American and Latino students must begin by shocking, re-orienting, dislodging and undermining the assumptions and beliefs which make failure appear normal and natural. Moreover, lest we be lulled into thinking that all that is needed is a frontal assault against racist teachers and administrators who hold students back and deny them access to quality education, or marches and protests directed at unresponsive politicians who ignore the needs of urban
schools and communities, we must also recognize that the assumptions and beliefs about the abilities of Black and Latino students have also infiltrated the consciousness of the students themselves, and often their parents as well. The German poet and philosopher Bertolt Brecht points admonishes that, "education is a double-edged sword; it can be used to liberate or to oppress". Brecht, like others (Apple 1988), draw our attention to the fact that the socialization that all students experience as an integral part of the educational process, has the power to profoundly influence and shape their individual consciousness. Research has shown that those who are categorized early in their academic careers as intellectually slow, bad, recalcitrant, and deficient, have a tendency to internalize the labels and embrace the expectations that accompany them (Brookover and Erickson 1972). They also come to understand the implications of these labels fairly early, and may readily choose low paid work over school, or an adolescence spent on the streets rather than in college (Fine 1988; MacLeod 1996).

I've gone to some length explaining how I understand the process through which academic failure among African American and Latino students is normalized because I want to emphasize the degree to which this is not a phenomenon that is particular to BHS. Such recognition can provide an indication of how to go about tackling the problem because it compels would be reformers to address the ideological as well as the organizational manifestations of the issue. For the Diversity Project, this meant finding ways to problematize the assumptions that were made within the school and community about why certain students did poorly in school. To begin to do this the Project chose two research strategies: a survey of the class of 2000 (approximately 700 ninth graders who entered BHS in the Fall of 1996), and an analysis of grades and course selections made by the same ninth graders utilizing student records as the data base.

The purpose of choosing these two data collection strategies was to find ways to show the school and community what was happening to students shortly after they entered BHS. Our assumption was that most people accept the notion that schools should provide students with an equal opportunity to succeed academically. To the extent that it could be shown that this was not happening, we believed we could begin to lay the basis for discussions about change.

For our purposes, the data collection process was an important part of the work that we hoped would eventually lead to change. Carried out by committees comprised of students, teachers, parents and university researchers, the process of framing questions, distributing the work entailed in conducting a large survey of students, and analyzing and making sense of the data together, significantly increased the knowledge and understanding of those directly involved, and laid a basis for them to provide leadership on these issues within the school. Equally important was figuring out creative ways to present what we had learned back to the school and community. Our goal was to find ways to educate and create an opportunity for frank and open discussion without placing people immediately on the defensive since we believed that this would have the effect of shutting down the conversation and reinforcing the polarization that already existed. We wanted to creatively present information that most people were already vaguely familiar
with, and do so in a way that could lead to a concrete discussion about what should be done.

The data collection work commenced in the Fall and continued into the Spring. A date in early May that had previously been designated for staff development, was chosen as the occasion on which we would present our findings to the faculty. Given the size of the faculty (approximately 150) we decided to present our work by splitting the large group into four smaller groups, and having them rotate every forty minutes between four classrooms where the research would be presented concurrently. The four research committees, (I have described only one so far), designed short presentations on the research which included large graphic displays of our findings. The presentations were followed by a loosely structured question and answer period and an opportunity for teachers to informally examine the work and raise questions individually.

The committee which conducted the survey and analyzed student records for the class of 2000, created a series of large graphics which we used to illustrate the findings from their investigation. The first charts illustrated how the math courses students were assigned to influenced their trajectory into other academic courses within the school. It showed that students who were placed in honors geometry or algebra, the vast majority of whom were White and who disproportionately had come to BHS from private schools, were shown to be on track to complete the advanced math and science courses needed for admission to the University of California. These students were also shown to be enrolled in a foreign language course, (e.g. French, German or Spanish) which also fulfilled the course requirements for college. In contrast, 9th grade students who had been placed in pre-algebra, who were disproportionately African American and Latino, were not on track to complete the university's science and math requirements especially since nearly 80% of the students enrolled in this course during the Fall semester had received either a "D" or an "F". Most of these students were not enrolled in a foreign language, and the few that were had taken beginning Swahili in the African American Studies department.

These charts were followed by a map of the city of Berkeley which was broken down by zip code. Within each zip code of the city, the average grade point average (gpa) for students residing within the zip code area was indicated. As might be expected, the map revealed a clear and distinct pattern: students from homes in south and west Berkeley, the poorest sections of the city with the highest African American and Latino populations, had the lowest gpa's, while students in north Berkeley and the affluent Berkeley hills, had the highest gpa's. Interestingly, though the map revealed patterns that anyone associated with the school would expect, reaction to the map was striking. The map turned out to be such a powerful illustration of the relationship between social class and academic achievement, that the local newspaper, the San Francisco Chronicle, featured a copy of the map on the front page of their paper with an article describing the research that was done by the Diversity Project (SF Chronicle June 16, 1997). Teachers viewing the map were amazed by the consistency of the pattern and wondered aloud about why such a distinct trend existed. The comment of one veteran teacher captured the sentiment of many of the teachers: "I expected kids from the poorer sections of the city to do less well but I'm amazed that its this blatant. Something must be going on." (5/5/97)
Similar views were expressed by other teachers and staff who attended the session. Interestingly, no one argued about the accuracy of the data, nor did the conversation about the data break down into a debate over who was to blame for these patterns. Instead, those present wanted to know more about the data, and they asked questions to further probe the information that had been collected: How did the grades in math compare to those in English and History? How did a students' grades correlate with their attendance in school? There were similar reactions to the data derived from the surveys which presented student views on their experience at BHS. The survey data provided information on what students liked and disliked about BHS, as well as information about how often they studied, where they went when they needed academic support, and information about their participation in extracurricular activities.

The open and non-judgmental responses of the teachers were similar to the reactions the Project received when it made presentations on the research to the Berkeley School Board, the Parent, Student, Teachers, Association (PTSA), and to segments of the student body. Although few reacted with what could be described as genuine surprise to the information presented, most were interested in probing for the meaning of the patterns presented. And, rather than "nit picking" over the details and quibbling over accuracy, many were ready to move the discussion to the next stage: a deeper discussion over what should be done given what we know.

**Exposing the Organization and Structure of Privilege**

As is true in society, the other side of racial inequality at BHS is racial privilege. Just as certain institutional practices contribute to the concentration of African American and Latino students at the bottom rungs of educational performance, the same policies also reward and privilege upper middleclass White students. Of course a key point to be made here is that racial discrimination within the institution and the differential impact of certain policies generally are not based upon overtly racist behaviors and intentions on the part of certain individuals. Rather, these policies and practices appear on the surface to be race neutral, even though close analysis of their impact reveals clear and distinct costs and benefits that break down along racial lines.

Surprisingly, it has been as difficult to address clear examples of racial privilege within BHS as it has been to address blatant indications of racial inequality. This is surprising because Berkeley is a community where there is very little tolerance for overt expressions and manifestations of individual racism, unless of course these are exhibited by individuals from minority groups. Anti-White diatribes such as those expressed in a clandestine school newspaper written by Black students in 1993, or as occurred when a speaker was brought to campus in 1995 for an assembly aimed at celebrating the rights of indigenous peoples, have been rationalized as legitimate responses to White racism in America. Like the African American Studies and Chicano Studies Departments, which cater almost exclusively to African American and Latino students, racially separate practices, such as a Black graduation ceremony or a special field trip for Latino students, are permitted as a form of appeasement since it is widely recognized that the school does not serve these students well. Special enrichment activities and holiday celebrations (i.e.
Kwanza, Malcolm X Day, Indigenous Peoples Day, etc.) have been supported and encouraged, even when such activities exclude White students, because this is a school and a school district that has gone to great lengths to promote cultural pluralism and to "celebrate the diversity of its students" (Superintendent's Newsletter, May 1993).

The fact that there are no racially identified enrichment activities aimed at White students at BHS creates the appearance of a school that operates on a double standard on racial issues, one which favors minorities. There has never been a White graduation ceremony, a White Students Association, or a White Studies Department, and there is little to suggest that anything like this would ever be tolerated because these would be perceived as inherently racist practices. However, the absence of symmetry on these kinds of matters related to race has the effect of disguising other more blatant forms of racial privilege within the school. Throughout the school White students participate in advanced courses and elite clubs and sporting activities (i.e. golf, fencing and lacrosse) that cater almost exclusively to them. The fact that these opportunities are formally non-racial in character, and theoretically open to anyone who is able to meet the criteria for participation, reinforces the appearance that they provide no special opportunity or benefit to White students. For this reason, while Raza Day (A day designated for introducing large numbers of Latino elementary and secondary school students to college opportunities) is generally perceived as a racially exclusive event organized by and for Latino students, Toga Day (A day on which graduating seniors dress in Greek-styled togas to school) is not because it is ostensibly open to all students even though in reality participation tends to be limited to Whites.

The unwillingness to use racial designations to describe an activity that caters exclusively to Whites is only one of the ways in which racial privilege at BHS is carried out and simultaneously masked. The other way is through the maintenance of institutional practices which directly reward academically motivated students, or students whose parents are particularly eager to insure that their kids receive the best opportunities available at the school. Examples of these kinds of practices abound at the school. They include the practice known as self scheduling in which students are permitted to designate a preference for a particular teacher when setting up their schedule for classes for the coming semester. The practice favors students who are prepared to make their selections early and who know which teachers are regarded as the best. As it turns out, most White students take advantage of self scheduling while most Black and Latino students do not, which means that they will be placed in any class that still has space after self scheduling is over. It also means that they are more likely to be placed in classes with teachers who for some reason are not held in high regard.

Another example is the practice of formally waiving the requirement that students take a required course in Social Living in the tenth grade. Designed to teach "life skills" (i.e. sex education, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, etc.), White parents systematically avoid the Social Living class because they regard it as a waste of time, and in its place their students can enroll in a more rigorous academic elective course that will give them credit toward college. It is not clear how word among White parents and students spreads
but the results are quite remarkable: less than a handful of the students in this mandatory course are White.

Finally, the minimal graduation requirements at BHS provide a subtle though blatant example of a practice that favors White students while effectively limiting opportunities for Black and Latino students. Because BHS only requires two years of science and two years of math from its graduates (this is also the state's graduation requirement), most Black and Latino students meet only the minimum requirement. However, satisfaction of the BHS requirement is insufficient for a student who seeks to be admitted to most colleges and universities which generally require at least three or four years of courses in both subjects. Most White students at BHS graduate with four years of math and science because they or their parents tend to have a greater understanding of the competitive college admissions process. The fact that fewer Black and Latino students are taking math and science courses allows those departments to offer a greater number of advanced courses to those students deemed qualified to enroll.

The relatively low graduation requirements of BHS also results in White students graduating with more units of credit than Black and Latino students, largely because students who are already turned off to school are less likely to take courses that are not required of them. Again, less courses for some means more courses are available for others, and the broad array of elective courses available to students at BHS, disproportionately cater to the most affluent and privileged students. I personally came to understand the implications of this pattern when I learned from an African American female senior that she was the only Black student in an advanced placement English course on African American Female Authors.

The most common form of racial preference is also perhaps the most pernicious manifestation of racially privileged treatment for White middle class students at BHS. This involves the innumerable subtle ways in which differential treatment is accorded to White, and to lesser extent Asian students, in everyday interactions between adults and students within the school. It is present in the assumptions teachers make when they teach students who have been categorized as gifted and talented, versus those considered ordinary or remedial. It is also reflected in the differential sanctions applied to students for infractions of the school's discipline policies. Black and Latino students frequently receive stiffer penalties than Whites for similar offenses due in part to the greater ease with which White parents, who readily call upon attorneys, are able to serve as advocates for their children. Finally, the privileged status of White students is consistently evident in the ways in which students are policed by adults when moving throughout the school. Black and Latino students seen roaming the halls are more likely to evoke suspicion and even fear from the adults they encounter. In contrast, White students are generally assumed to be moving about within schools rules or under some adult authority.

Given the multiple expressions of racial privilege within the organizational structure and culture of BHS, it has been imperative for the Diversity Project to be strategic in the approach it has taken to address the issue. It is often true that when social privileges are challenged those who have benefited most from their special status mount
fierce resistance to any effort aimed at reducing the benefits they have enjoyed. To avoid being overwhelmed by such a reaction at BHS, the Diversity Project has had to be extremely careful about the language that is used when describing potential solutions to disparities in academic achievement. For example, the need to enroll more African American and Latino students into advanced courses is framed as a call for higher academic standards for all students. It has also involved using our research to vividly portray the form and manner in which privilege operates at BHS.

One of the ways we have tried to do this is by conducting a survey of all of the extracurricular activities offered within the school. For each of the eighty-five student groups that were selected, interviews were conducted with an adult advisor to find out about the racial and gender composition of the group and to learn how students were recruited for participation. In some cases, student members of the club or activity group were also interviewed to obtain their perspectives on the same issues.

The findings from this study were also shared at the May 1997 staff development meeting with the faculty. Large charts were created which broke the extra curricular activities down by race, gender and the nature of activity (i.e. academic, sports, cultural). The charts showed that every academically oriented club, with exception of those offering tutorial assistance, were predominantly White in membership. Among the sports teams, football and basketball were predominantly Black, while all of the other sports, were predominantly White. The only exceptions to this pattern were the boys baseball and girls basketball teams which had an integrated membership, and the badminton club which was entirely Asian. Finally, the only cultural groups that Black and Latino students participated in were the Ballet Folklorico and the Afro-Haitian dance groups, while all of the other groups (e.g. chorus, jazz band, performing arts, etc..) were largely made up of White students.

Once again, reaction to the information presented was fairly dramatic. Though no one questioned the accuracy of the information they did wonder aloud why the pattern was so consistent. Some of the advisors to the groups became defensive such as one coach who asserted that "anyone is welcome to try out for the team". However, most of those present expressed dismay over the implications of the patterns. Extracurricular activities are widely seen as one of the ways in which students establish a sense of connection to the school, which given its size, is often important to academic and social success. Moreover, admissions officers at most colleges and universities consider it an asset for students to be active in sports and other activities while they are in high school. The fact that Black and Latino students were involved in such limited and predictable ways was widely seen by the teachers as a problem. Such a recognition opened the door for a broader discussion about race and class privilege within the school and a critical examination of school culture.

Empowering the Disadvantaged and Marginalized

As might be expected, not only are African American students disadvantaged and marginal within the school community but so are their parents. At most school activities
that call for parental involvement and participation African American and Latino parents are vastly underrepresented. This is also true on decision making bodies where parents have a say in how resources are allocated, and it is most dramatically true on the back-to-school nights where parents are invited to meet their children's teachers. Historically, the auditorium where several hundred parents gather prior to visiting the classrooms of their kids' teachers is nearly entirely White with little more than and handful of Black and Latino parents sprinkled throughout the crowd.

The members of the Diversity Project decided that if we were going to be successful in our efforts to promote change within the school we would have to take on this issue because we believed that any effort to address racial inequality must also find ways to empower those who were disenfranchised. We recognized that those who benefited under the present circumstances might perceive themselves as having a vested interest in preserving the status quo and less likely to support change that produces greater equity. Moreover, as we carried out our work we positioned ourselves as facilitators of discussion rather than as advocates for a particular agenda because we sought to prevent ourselves from becoming trapped in a polarized conflict over change at the school. Hence, organizing African American and Latino parents would provide us with a means to insure that the change effort was not dependent upon our advocacy and also serve to counterbalance the influence that would be exerted by the opponents of change.

Once again, research served as our entree into organizing. The parent outreach committee of the Project decided to organize a series of focus group discussions for Latino and African American parents designed to elicit their views on the school. Specifically, we wanted to know what concerns they had about the education their children were receiving, what kinds of obstacles parents encountered when interacting with school officials on behalf of their children, and what kinds of changes they felt would help make BHS more receptive to their concerns.

Over the course of six months more than seventy focus groups were conducted with over four hundred parents. To insure that maximum opportunity was provided for open communication, all of the sessions with Spanish speaking parents were conducted in Spanish and held at a Catholic church in the community. Food and childcare were also provided as an added incentive to attract high levels of participation. Finally, the focus groups were tape recorded, the sessions were transcribed, and a report summarizing the issues raised was presented to a newly formed Strategic Planning committee for inclusion in their report to the school.

The parent outreach committee of the Diversity Project also recruited parents to join them in conducting the focus groups and carrying out the research. This was important because the active core group of the committee is now taking leadership in devising strategies aimed at institutionalizing parental involvement at the school. The group has already received support from the BHS administration to designate a surplus office for use as a parent center, and they have written grants to foundations for the purpose of hiring two part-time parent organizers.
Aside from these accomplishments, there is other evidence that the organization of Black and Latino parents is already beginning to have an impact upon the school. At a community forum in May of 1998 that was held for the purpose of soliciting responses to the plan as it was being drafted, nearly half of the parents present were African American and Latino. Most of these were parents who had become active in the leadership of the parent outreach group. During the meeting several spoke out openly about their criticisms of the plan and freely offered suggestions on what they would like to see included in it. After the meeting several teachers commented that it was the first meeting that they had attended in which the composition of the parents present matched that of the student body. Our hope is to build on this accomplishment in the future so that the effort to undermine racial inequality within the school is led and actively supported by the parents of the children who have the most to gain.

Conclusion: The Limits and Possibilities of Using Research to Counter the Effects of the Elimination of Affirmative Action

The Diversity Project is now beginning the fourth and final year of its work at BHS, but it is still too early to tell if we will be successful in our efforts to reduce racial inequality at the school. Though the Project has been very successful in raising money, developing credibility within the school and community, and creating the conditions for serious discussion about change at the school, it is still too early to tell if we will succeed in accomplishing our goal: raising the achievement of Black and Latino students. A Strategic Plan has been adopted which addresses some of the issues identified by the Diversity Project's research. It will be implemented in the Fall of 1999, and from that point forward we will begin monitoring its impact on student achievement.

The change process that we have been guiding at BHS has been slow but the greatest asset of the Project has been our persistence. The fact that we have committed ourselves to working for a minimum of four years has been extremely important in establishing credibility and in forming relationships that make change possible. Like many schools, BHS has seen more than its share of research projects and fly-by-night reform initiatives which start with great fanfare only to fade as the power of tradition and prevailing norms reclaims the advantage. To counter this tendency the Project has begun to transfer leadership of the work over to teachers, parents and administrators, who have a longer term investment in the school, in order to insure that the work will continue after the university researchers move on.

Despite all of these efforts, succeeding in our goal to reduce academic disparities, and making up for the end of affirmative action, will still be difficult for a variety of reasons. First, the larger social and economic forces which reproduce and maintain racial inequality in society continue to have influence over what happens within BHS and other schools. As a Project we can not control whether or not parents are employed, adequately housed, or if families have access to health care. In economic terms, America continues to be a racially stratified society in which certain minority groups are disproportionately confined to low wage jobs which lack health benefits, long term security and opportunities for mobility (Bonacich 1980). These kinds of inequalities, and the social
conditions that accompany them certainly have an impact on learning and are largely beyond the control of the Diversity Project and public schools generally.

Second, there are many other factors influencing student achievement that the Project can not control. Primary among these is student motivation and the influence of peer groups. As the research of Steinberg (1996) and others has shown, peer groups exert powerful influences over student attitudes toward school, and particularly among lower class African American and Latino students, the tendency to undervalue the importance of education has been well documented and can not easily be countered (Fordham 1996; Stanton-Salazar, 1996). We can increase access to rigorous courses, but we can not insure that more students will take them. We can establish tutorial and support service programs, but we can not force students to utilize them. And even if BHS is transformed into a more welcoming and supportive environment for students, there is no guarantee that its appeal will exceed that of a low paying job to a student who must support his or her family, or prove more attractive than the excitement and dangers of the streets.

Part of the difficulty is that we have no way of knowing whether we will succeed undermining the ways in which racial identity has become linked to school performance in the minds of students of color. This year we started working with students to implement strategies that we hope will have an influence on student culture within the school. We have held discussions led by students on topics such as marijuana use, cutting class and the factors influencing grades. As insightful as these conversations have been, we recognize that change in this area will be difficult given the array of social forces that reinforce anti-intellectual self images among Latino and African American students.

Finally, achieving change at BHS and other urban schools is difficult because there are so few models to emulate. This is not because there aren't well functioning public schools that serve African American and Latino students, but few of these are located in low income urban areas, and even fewer of those that might be deemed successful are high schools. Throughout the country, integration as an ideal and practice is under attack, and the plight of urban schools generally tends to be ignored by policy makers. There simply aren't many examples in the real world of urban schools that we can learn from. This makes our work a bit like taking a trip to an unknown place without a road map. We think and hope that we know where we are going, but we really are not sure that we will get there despite the best of our efforts.

This aspect of our work adds a considerable degree of risk to what we have been trying to accomplish because in the end we may be accused of having raised expectations only to fail. Our failure means that large numbers of Black and Latino students from BHS will continue to drop out of school, and that many of them will get into trouble, and perhaps, end up unemployed, in prison, or worse. It means that only small numbers will go to college to earn degrees, and that if the retrenchment of affirmative action is not reversed, even fewer will have access to professional careers as they older. Finally, our failure will mean that there still will be no model of success at an integrated urban public high school, and that until one is created, racial inequality in American public schools may deepen and become more pronounced.
Fortunately, I and the many others working on the Diversity Project, base our actions and work on the assumption that change is possible. We have been energized by our work within the school and remain convinced that it is through efforts such as the one described here that change will be made. Rather than seeing change as a measurable and definable event, we have come to see change as an ongoing process that is furthered through our research, our organizing and the education that occurs as a result of both. This is not to say that we will not look for measurable signs of progress in the form of more students taking more difficult courses, receiving better grades, graduating, and going on to college. However, we also believe that through our concerted actions we have begun to challenge the assumptions which make racial inequality seem natural and unchangeable. By raising difficult issues, encouraging teachers to re-think their beliefs about students, challenging hidden forms of privilege and empowering the disadvantaged, we believe that we have taken concrete steps toward bringing about significant change within the school.

Our goals remain ambitious because our aspirations for change extend well beyond the school. Even if proposition 209 were reversed it is important to recognize that affirmative action did not benefit the vast majority of Black and Latino students. Prior to the approval of 209, University of California eligibility rates among African American and Latino students had been extremely low. Hence, it could be argued that affirmative action created the appearance of diversity in higher education without ever addressing the bigger issue of inequality in education. I believe these are different though related issues. Affirmative action is needed to insure access to higher education in the short term, but it can not and should not be viewed as the answer to the problem of inequality in education or society generally.

Endeavors such as the Diversity Project which actively take on the subtle and overt ways in which racial inequality is produced, are needed in schools and communities throughout the country. As this paper has shown, that work must be sustained over a long period of time in order for tangible signs of change to be achieved, for the issues are complex and not likely to be solved through simplistic initiatives or programs.

Despite the difficulty of our work we remain resolved and committed to achieving our goals. We are generally confident and even optimistic about the possibility of achieving some degree of success because we have found ways to have a concrete impact on the production of inequality within this particular school. At several times along the way we have become frustrated by the slow pace of change and the urgent need for programs which provide young people in need with academic and social support and a chance to obtain a descent life. We have persevered because we believe that by transforming schools we can have an impact on one of the primary factors which place children at risk and sustains racial inequality in American society. In this respect, if we can achieve even a marginal degree of success, we believe that we will have done something worthwhile.
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