

This article was downloaded by: [University of California, San Diego]

On: 31 October 2013, At: 08:19

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Mind, Culture, and Activity

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hmca20>

Postindustrial Capitalism, Social Class Language Games, and Black Underachievement in the United States and United Kingdom

Carol Tomlin^a, Paul C. Mocombe^b & Cecile Wright^c

^a University of Wolverhampton

^b West Virginia State University

^c Nottingham Trent University

Accepted author version posted online: 29 Nov 2012. Published online: 05 Sep 2013.

To cite this article: Carol Tomlin, Paul C. Mocombe & Cecile Wright (2013) Postindustrial Capitalism, Social Class Language Games, and Black Underachievement in the United States and United Kingdom, *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 20:4, 358-371, DOI: [10.1080/10749039.2012.752011](https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2012.752011)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2012.752011>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

ARTICLES

Postindustrial Capitalism, Social Class Language Games, and Black Underachievement in the United States and United Kingdom

Carol Tomlin

University of Wolverhampton

Paul C. Mocombe

West Virginia State University

Cecile Wright

Nottingham Trent University

Against Ogbu's oppositional culture hypothesis, this article offers a class or structural/relational framework to contextualizing and understanding why it is that Blacks have more limited skills in processing information from articles, books, tables, charts, and graphs compared with their White counterparts in the United States and United Kingdom. We synthesize Marxian conceptions of identity construction within capitalist relations of production with the Wittgensteinian notion of "language games" to offer a more appropriate relational framework within which scholars ought to understand this Black–White academic achievement gap in America and the United Kingdom.

Contemporarily, the public policy choices of standardization of curriculum, mentoring, and after-school programs of school boards throughout the nation have been implemented in light of the predominance of John Ogbu's cultural, socialization, or behavior explanation, "burden of acting White" as to the origins of the Black–White achievement gap (Mocombe & Tomlin, 2010). According to Ogbu's hypothesis, Black Americans intentionally underachieve vis-à-vis their White and Asian counterparts for fear of being labeled "acting White" by their Black peers. More than 40 years have passed since Fordham and Ogbu (1986) initially gave credence

to the “burden of acting White” and the oppositional peer culture hypothesis in their essay “Black Students’ School Success: Coping with the ‘Burden of Acting White.’” Although social scientists have produced very little empirical evidence to substantiate the validity for either an “oppositional peer culture” or a “burden of acting White,” there is still strong public support and belief in their assertions for explaining the academic underachievement of Black students and the Black–White achievement gap.

As Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) observed in their assessment of eight North Carolina secondary public schools, “the acting White theory significantly influences how schools address problems related to Black underachievement, which, in turn, helps to determine whether these solutions ultimately can be effective” (p. 582). Schools and school boards have introduced Head Start, mentoring, and counseling programs, and Black achievement in education has been stressed above all things else in the school curriculum in order to combat the effects of the burden of acting White. The idea is that pairing students with Blacks who achieve academically while stressing the overall importance of education in school curricula will offset the influence of those who view education negatively.

Yet in spite of these efforts, Blacks everywhere on average score disproportionately poorly on standardized tests compared to their White counterparts. In the United States, for example, just 12% of African American fourth graders have reached proficient or advanced reading levels, whereas 61% have yet to reach the basic level. In a national assessment of student reading ability, Black children scored 16% below White children. Forty-six percent of Black adults, compared with 14% of White adults, scored in the lowest category of the National Adult Literacy survey. The results indicate that Blacks have more limited skills in processing information from articles, books, tables, charts, and graphs compared with their White counterparts (Gordon, 2006, p. 32). More perplexing, the students who lose the most ground are the higher achieving Black children. “As Black students move through elementary and middle school . . . the test-score gaps that separate them from their better-performing White counterparts grow fastest among the most able students and the most slowly for those who start out with below-average academic skills” (Viadero, 2008, p. 1). The numbers among British Caribbean Blacks are far worse in places like the United Kingdom (Mocombe & Tomlin, 2010). In the British context, the exclusion rate for Black boys in particular is nearly three times that of the average for all other pupils nationally (Department for Education and Skills, 2006). In fact the 2007 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results, based on pupils gaining 5+A*-C GCSEs, the criteria for high school achievement, show that Black Caribbean in particular and African children in general remain behind other ethnic groups. Pupils of Chinese and Indian origin respectively gained 83.3% and 74.4%, Whites 59.5%, Bangladeshi 58.4%, Black African 55.6%, Pakistani 53.0% and Black Caribbean 41.7% (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007). Although they remain academically at the bottom as a group, Black Africans in 2007 for the first time scored slightly higher than children of Pakistani origins.

Given this continual reliance on either an oppositional peer culture or a burden of acting White hypothesis to explain the academic underachievement of Black students and the Black–White achievement gap in the face of persistent Black underachievement on standardized tests, further assessment of this hypothesis is critical to understanding and addressing the problem. Against Ogbu’s oppositional culture hypothesis, this essay offers a class or structural/relational framework to contextualizing and understanding why it is that Blacks have more limited skills in processing information from articles, books, tables, charts, and graphs compared with their White counterparts in the United States and United Kingdom. We synthesize Marxian conceptions of

identity construction within capitalist relations of production with the Wittgensteinian notion of “language games” to offer a more appropriate relational framework within which scholars ought to understand this Black–White academic achievement gap in America and the United Kingdom.

CAPITALISM AND EDUCATION

The Black–White achievement gap in America and the United Kingdom is an epiphenomenon of the dialectic of the global capitalist social structure of class inequality as reinforced by education as an ideological state apparatus of such a system. This conception of education as an ideological state apparatus for reproducing social identities is key to understanding the contemporary phenomenon of Black identity and underachievement. Furthermore, it diametrically opposes the position of most contemporary critical theorists of education, who argue for and attempt to demonstrate cultural heterogeneity (i.e., cultural heterogeneous groups engaged, through pedagogical practices that allow for dialogue) in struggles over the production, legitimation, and circulation of particular forms of meaning and experience, within education as a reproductive apparatus for economic conditions (Erevelles, 2000).

(Post) Modern Pedagogy

Essentially, our argument is that it is only under the auspices of contemporary economic conditions (postindustrial consumerist globality) under U.S. hegemony that “contemporary” critical theorists of education are able to speak of cultural heterogeneity within the existing configuration of capital/labor power relations and schools. In other words, globalism, globalization/world-system, is a condition of present-day U.S. neoliberal capitalist organization. The processes of outsourcing, deagriculturalization, deindustrialization, and postindustrialization are simply the mechanisms for the continual (global) “expansion” of capitalist discursive practices (mostly American dominated), which as Immanuel Wallerstein (1982) pointed out has always been global in character, across time and space, following the financialization and deindustrialization of the American economy beginning in the 1970s.

As many globalization theorists of the postmodernist variety have demonstrated (Arrighi, 1994; Bell, 1976; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991; Kellner, 2002; Sklair, 2001), this contemporary, American-dominated outsourcing of industrial work to other countries from the 1970s to the present revamped the social relations of production in the United States and other developed places like the United Kingdom. Social relations of production in the United States and United Kingdom are no longer characterized or driven by the industrial means for accumulating capital, which dominated the social relations of production of the last 100 years. Instead, the present globalization condition in the United States and the United Kingdom is driven by postindustrialism (consumerism)—the new means for accumulating capital—and in such “developed” societies like the United States and the United Kingdom is characterized not by the industrial organization of labor, which has been outsourced to semiperiphery nations, but rather by capitalist service occupations (60–70% gross domestic product in both nations) catering to the consumerist demands of a dwindling multiethnic (transnational) middle class. The rate of profit has fallen in industrial production due to labor laws and the ecological cost in developed countries. Hence, the focus now among investors operating out of the United States and United Kingdom is on

financial expansion “in which ‘over-accumulated’ capital switches from investments in production and trade, to investments in finance, property titles, and other claims on future income” (Trichur, 2005, p. 165).

Globally, the economic bifurcation defining this current conjuncture, which began in the 1970s, is characterized, on one hand, by an expansion of industrial production into developing or periphery and semiperiphery countries (China, Brazil, Mexico, India, and South Africa), where industrialization and the rate of labor exploitation has risen because of their lack of labor laws. On the other hand, consumption of cheaply produced goods and high-end financial service occupations have come to dominate developed societies (United States, Western Europe, Japan, and Australia).

Hence, socioeconomically, the major emphasis among governing elites in this U.S.-dominated global economy or social relations of production has been participation or integration of “others” (specifically “hybrids”) into the existing configuration of power relations. This is done to accumulate profits by servicing the diverse financial wants and cultural and luxurious needs of commodified cultural groups throughout the globe that constitute a multiethnic transnational capitalist class. This multiethnic transnational capitalist class lives a “bourgeois” middle-class and upper middle-class lifestyle at the expense of their ethnic masses working in low-wage agricultural, manufacturing, and production jobs or not at all because of the transfer of these jobs overseas to developing countries. Amidst their exploitation as inexpensive labor, the underclass cultures of the ethnic masses become commodified cultural markets for the entertainment industry of postindustrial economies. These commodified cultural markets are in turn marketed by the upper class of owners and high-level executives in developed (postindustrial) countries like the United States and United Kingdom to the multiethnic transnational bourgeois class for entertainment and conspicuous consumption.

The contemporary debates in educational theory in this postindustrial age of the United States and United Kingdom have centered on the degree to which education serves as a reproductive apparatus for economic conditions, which stands against the view of education as a democratically constructed “discursive space that involves asymmetrical relations of power where both dominant and subordinate groups are engaged in struggles over the production, legitimation, and circulation of particular forms of meaning and experience” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 30).

Peter McLaren (1988) and Henry Giroux (1992), most conspicuously, given the push for educational reform in consumerist globality, “have begun to examine the discursive practices by which student subjectivity (as constructed by race, class, gender, and sexuality) is produced, regulated, and even resisted within the social context of schooling in postindustrial times” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 25). Thus, challenging the claims of Bowles and Gintis (1976), for example, who in *Schooling in Capitalist America* argued

that the history of public education in capitalist America was a reflection of the history of the successes, failures, and contradictions of capitalism itself. In other words, they conceptualized schools as “ideological state apparatuses,” that, rather than attempting to meet the needs of citizens, instead devised administrative, curricular, and pedagogical practices that reproduced subject positions that sustained [the] exploitative class hierarch[y] of capitalism. (Erevelles, 2000, p. 28)

McLaren and Giroux, on the contrary, argued that Bowles and Gintis, along with other reproduction theorists such as Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Immanuel Wallerstein, are too deterministic. Hence, influenced by the impact of poststructural theory on cultural studies,

McLaren and Giroux, among others, instead explore how the everyday actions and cultural practices of students that constitute several subcultures within schools serve as cultural sites that exist in opposition to the hegemonic dictates of capitalist education (Erevelles, 2000, p. 30).

Our argument here, in keeping with the structural logic of Gintis, Bowles, Bourdieu, and Wallerstein, is that the Freirean dialogical practices, which McLaren and Giroux have emphasized as evidential of democratic struggle in postindustrial education, are in fact the result of the social relations of production in postindustrial capitalist societies. As such, these dialogical practices, paradoxically, come to serve capitalist education in core postindustrial nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Mocombe, 2007).

In other words, the consumerist globality of postindustrial capital fosters the participation of the cultural sites that exist in opposition to the dictates of capitalist education. These cultural sites, that is, the meaning and new identities allowed to be constructed within the capitalist social space in core postindustrial nations such as the United States and United Kingdom, are used to extract surplus value from their consumer representatives. That is, cultural sites under U.S. and U.K. economic global hegemony become markets to be served by their predestined (capitalist class) “hybrid” representatives, transnational multiethnic capitalist class. As commodified cultural markets, this transnational multiethnic capitalist class works for the upper class of owners and high-level executives in two ways. First, they service their respective “other” community as petit-bourgeois middle-class “hybrid” agents of the Protestant ethic who generate surplus value, for global capital, through the consumption of cheaply produced products coming out of periphery or developing nations. Second, they serve as cultural markets with capital and labor power to be serviced by high-finance capital operating out of the United States and United Kingdom. Thus, in postindustrial societies like the United States and United Kingdom, no longer is the “other” alienated and marginalized by capital; instead they (i.e., those who exercise their “otherness” as hybrids) are embraced and commodified. The more socialized and integrated of their agents can (i.e., through hard work, calculating rationality, etc.) obtain economic gain, status, and prestige in the global marketplace while oppressing the underclass of their communities, as commodified cultural markets with comparative cultural and labor advantages the upper class of owners and high-level executives can commodify, cater to, and service.

These hybrids, characterized by their ethnic middle class-ness or embourgeoisement, are pawns for capital. They are an administrative bourgeoisie that increase the rate of profit for capital through conspicuous consumption and by servicing the desires, wants, and needs of the oppressed masses of their ethnic communities. Conversely, the masses, within the dialectic of this postindustrial mode of production in core nations like the United States and United Kingdom, become workers, consumers, and cultural producers for the upper class of owners and high-level executives who commodify and market their cultural products to the transnational multiethnic bourgeois capitalist class for entertainment and conspicuous consumption. This is why current pedagogical practices, which reflect Paulo Freire’s emphasis on dialogue, that is, multicultural education, cooperative group work, communications, literacy, and so on, in the United States and United Kingdom, lack the potential, contrarily to Freire’s inference, for liberation. Instead, these dialogical practices are utilized to reproduce the social relations of production under postindustrial global capitalism among previously discriminated against “others,” the majority of whom remain oppressed given their lack of social and economic capital due to the “expansion” of industrial production (i.e., loss of jobs to developing countries) and the rise of labor exploitation in developing countries.

(Post) Industrial Pedagogy in the United States and United Kingdom

Therefore, the argument here is that critical theorists of education such as McLaren and Giroux underanalyze the role of subcultures within education as an ideological apparatus for postindustrial U.S.-dominated capital. In other words, they fail to explain how the role of subcultures as cultural commodities for capital in postindustrial economies are embourgeoised to serve such a purpose within education as a continuous ideological space for capital in core nations like the United States and United Kingdom. Had they done so, it would be clear that the social relations of production of the two—industrialism and postindustrialism—most recent conditions of capitalism in the United States and United Kingdom are diametrical opposites to say the least, and therefore treat and teach subcultures differently.

Under industrial capitalism, for example,

the scientific management movement initiated by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the last decades of the nineteenth century was brought into being . . . in an attempt to apply the methods of science to the increasingly complex problems of the control of labor [(in order to maximize profits)] in rapidly growing capitalist enterprises. (Braverman, 1974/1998, p. 59)

The end result of this movement was the separation of the roles of worker and management. In the case of postindustrialism (globalization), there was a renewed emphasis on cooperation between worker and management. In both cases, interestingly enough, the techniques and functions of the workplace were replicated in U.S. classrooms to serve as the means of socialization or enculturation to the labor process and its subsequent way of life.

This direct correlation, most conspicuously, was between the implementation of pedagogical practices in American classrooms that paralleled the organization of work under each mode of production (Mocombe, 2001, 2007). For instance, under the scientific movement of the industrial stage, mental work was separated from manual work, and

a necessary consequence of this separation [was] that the labor process [became] divided between separate sites and separate bodies of workers. In one location, the physical processes of production [were] executed. In another [were] concentrated the design, planning, calculation, and record-keeping. The preconception of the process before it is set in motion, the visualization of each worker's activities before they have actually begun, the definition of each function along with the manner of its performance and the time it will consume, the control and checking of the ongoing process once it is under way, and the assessment of results upon completion of each stage of the process—all of these aspects of production [were] removed from the shop floor to the management office. (Braverman, 1974/1998, p. 86)

To parallel the concepts of control adopted by management at that time, school curricula in the United States stressed marching, drill, orderliness, assigned seats in rows, individualized seat-work, and tracking and leveling; seemingly all were preparation for the coordination and orderliness required in the modern factory. Lining up for class as well as marching in and out of the cloakroom and to the blackboard were activities justified in terms of training for factory assembly lines, whereas tracking and leveling sorted out future workers and managers (Spring, 1994, p. 18).

In short, all of the aforementioned vestiges of the school curriculum/pedagogy complemented an aspect of the factory under scientific management. This is why, the service-oriented (postindustrialism) restructuring of American capitalist society, beginning in the 1960s, witnessed massive reform initiatives in school pedagogies—a result of the reconceptualization of the role of

the worker in the labor process under consumerist globality. Skills that were peculiar to the industrial worker become futile to the service worker in the postindustrial process. That is, whereas the old work process was founded on passive submission to schedules or routines, individualism, isolationism, and privatism, the postindustrial or globalization stage of the labor process focuses on teamwork. “It celebrates sensitivity to others; it requires such ‘soft skills’ as being a good listener and being cooperative” (Sennett, 1998, p. 99).

This reorganization of work has revamped the role of the laborer in the work process, and

throughout the U.S. economy, employers and managers are promoting a new ethos of participation for their workers. In fact, the spread of a paradigm of participation—comprised of extensive discussion about the merits of worker involvement as well as actual transformation of production methods and staffing practices—may indeed be one of the most significant trends sweeping across postindustrial, late twentieth-century workplaces. (Smith, 1998, p. 460)

To ensure socialization to this new aspect of *Being* in (postindustrial) capitalism, this trend of employee involvement is adumbrated in the pedagogical curriculum reform movements of many U.S. school systems, which place a major emphasis on “process approaches”; “active learning strategies,” such as multicultural education, cooperative learning, group work; and many other “soft skills”—good listener, speaker, and writer—which characterize the dialogical elements of the new labor process.

This paradigm of participation, accordingly, is not an attempt on behalf of management to reassociate the conception of work with its execution. In other words, this is neither a reconstruction of Taylorism’s principles nor a means of trying to liberate the workers, as a result of the subsequent dialogue brought on by this ethos of participation. Instead,

sociologists, industrial relations researchers, organizational scientists, and policymakers who have studied this trend agree that leaders and managers of U.S. companies are climbing aboard the bandwagon of worker participation in their urgent attempts to maintain competitiveness under changing economic circumstances. Employers believe that when workers participate in making decisions, when they gain opportunities to apply their tacit knowledge to problem solving, and when they acquire responsibility for designing and directing production processes, they feed into an infrastructure enabling firms to respond to shifting market and product demands [(consumer demands)] in a rapid and timely way. (Smith, 1998, p. 460)

This is the fundamental reason why the existing configurations of economic hegemonic power, located in the United States and United Kingdom, contemporarily, allow for the fashioning and participation of new identities (through pedagogical practices that engender participation, i.e., cooperative group work, field trips, classroom presentations, etc.) in the order of things. Under industrial capitalism the aim of the upper class of owners and high-level executives was accumulation of capital through the industrial production of cheaply produced goods for the dominating masses and those in militarily controlled overseas markets (hence the rise of surplus value at the expense of labor exploitation in industrial jobs). Under postindustrialism, however, the emphasis is financially servicing and entertaining a larger segment of these markets, not just the initial colonial “hybrid” petit-bourgeois class, who are also interested in obtaining a larger portion of these markets as members of a dwindling (transnational) middle class interpellated by, and “embourgeoisied” with the wants and needs of, capital (hence the fall of the rate of profit). This multiethnic middle class constitute the capitalist social space as pawns or service workers. They service the

desires, wants, and needs of the oppressed of their respective communities—who either are unemployed or work in labor intensive production jobs—while legitimating the “hybrid” middle-class identity. Moreover, the oppressed, working in low-wage earning occupations or not at all, must aspire to this middle-class identity while producing surplus value (increasing the rate of profit) for capital through the exploitation of their labor power, cultural production, and consumption.

Thus, in the socialization of “identities-in-differential” within education as an ideological apparatus for postindustrial capitalist social structures what is (re-) produced is ideological sameness. Ideological sameness among diverse “bodies/subjects” vying for control of their commodified oppressed markets as firms, which employ the more integrated or socialized among them (“hybrids”), learn by using the knowledge that dialogue between subjective positions foster how to maximize their profits by catering to the financial, entertainment, and consumptive needs of these “new” consumers represented by “hybrids” (i.e., “other” agents of the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism) of their communities.

Thus, the introduction of management-initiated employee involvement programs, as well as paralleling pedagogical practices (dialogue, cooperative group work, multiculturalism, “soft skills,” i.e., good listener, etc.) in schools, have been introduced in places like the United States and United Kingdom under the auspices and practical consciousness of the “hybrid” class of once-discriminated-against identities. They have sided with capital to obtain profit through auxiliary service occupations—consumerism, the current means of capital accumulation, currently dominating the globalization process or, as Wallerstein three decades ago framed it, the “world-economy”—controlled by capital. Capital continues to oppress and marginalize the poor it creates in developing countries through the outsourcing of low-wage production jobs to keep down the cost of labor and extract surplus value.

In this sense, education in postindustrial economies like that of the United States and the United Kingdom is no longer a discursive space where student subjectivity, as constructed by race, class, gender, and sexuality, is given free rein to develop. On the contrary, their subjectivity, as constructed by race, class, gender, and sexuality, is dialectically (re-) produced and regulated by hybrid bourgeois constructions determined by their historical relation to the means of production. In other words, the discourse and discursive practices of racial, class, gender, and sexual identities in postindustrial economies like the United States and United Kingdom are commodified and reified around their social relations to the mode of production. Constituting a *social-class language game* so that finance capital can cater to and service their consumption needs while commodifying their discourse and discursive practices for consumption by global others who are similarly situated. Hence, inequalities and identities within racial, class, gender, and sexual groups in postindustrial economies are institutionalized around their inequalities and identities and they (their inequalities and identities) become the means by which their respective members must attempt to seek economic gain, status, and prestige in the societies. The case of the identities and academic underachievement of American and British Caribbean Blacks in the United States and United Kingdom, respectively, will highlight the aforementioned theoretical points.

SOCIAL CLASS LANGUAGE GAMES

Within this Marxian conception of the constitution and reproduction of contemporary societies just outlined, the suggestion is that the class identities and practices (re-) produced via

education and the media as ideological apparatuses for the economic conditions of global capital under American corporate hegemony, contemporarily, are twofold. On one hand are the upper class of owners and high-level executives who own and control the means of production via their work in and through corporations. On the other hand are the workers, social actors of nation-states, who own nothing but their labor power and material and cultural resources required by corporate capital. The latter are interpellated as cultural producers, consumers, and workers, and come to work for corporate capital. They are also embourgeoisied, via education, the media, and other ideological apparatuses, with the wants, desires, and needs of the upper class of owners and high-level executives in order so that they can achieve economic gain, upward mobility, and status in the society. That is, in keeping with Karl Marx's class duality in the capitalist constitution of society, what is contemporarily reproduced under the auspices of corporate capitalist relations of production is a twofold class structure in which the upper class of owners and high-level executives of corporations are the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination. Their ideas and language are reified and reproduced via education, the media, and other institutions or ideological apparatuses under their control in order to name (interpellate) and teach (embourgeois) the workers or social actors of nation-states the ideas and language skills required to achieve economic gain, upward mobility, and status in society.

This class dualism, reproduced via ideological apparatuses such as the media and education under the control of corporations, of capitalist society differs from Marx's earlier conception of the capitalist/labor relationship. Whereas Marx in his constitution of the capitalist class was speaking about personal nature of power or owner-entrepreneurs (capitalists) who owned the means of production juxtaposed against the individual nonowner (proletariat) who possessed only their labor power in the marketplace. In the contemporary postindustrial corporate world, the upper-class owners and high-level executives of corporations, which separates owners and managers, become the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination over the individual capitalist, workers, and society by serving as a collective intelligence and power that institutionalizes and directs the ideas, needs, and practices of individuals and their societies in order to be aligned with the ideas, practices, and profit needs of corporations (Arrighi, 1994; Bell, 1976; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991; Kellner, 2002; Sklair, 2001).

The notion of *social-class language games* utilized here is an adoption of the "language-games" later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) conceptualized within a Marxian understanding of the constitution of identities in contemporary societies. For the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* language is a tool and must be thought of as a rule-governed, self-contained practice, like a game of activities associated with some particular family of linguistic expressions, which have no point outside themselves, but is simply associated with the satisfactions they give to the participants. We are suggesting here that in postindustrial economies like the United States and United Kingdom, the identities of racial, class, gender, and sexual groups are commodified by the upper class of owners and high-level executives around their social-class identities determined by their historical relations to the mode of production. That is, they are commodified around their class positions and practices within the capitalist social structure, and come to constitute, in essence, two social-class language games: one determined by their degree of socialization and assimilation in the dominant linguistic community or language game of the upper class of owners and high-level executives, and the other determined by their poverty and lack of socialization. The latter group, because of its material conditions,

poverty, and lack of socialization, is segregated from the former. They constitute their own rule-governed, self-contained practice of underclass activities associated with achieving success, like their middle-class and better educated counterparts, within the capitalist social structure, without, however, abandoning their language game. This social-class language game, although marginalized by their more educated compatriots, is not marginalized by the upper class of owners and high-level executives who commodify it for profit in the entertainment/service industries of postindustrial economies like that of the United States and United Kingdom. As a result, in postindustrial economies both the underclass and middle-class identities of racial, class, gender, and sexual groups become viable identity markers for achieving economic gain, status, and upward social mobility to the chagrin of middle-class hybrid others who do not view the underclass language game of their community as legitimate. Just the same, members of the underclass hybrid community also do not view the middle-class hybrid identity of their compatriots as legitimate. However, whereas under industrialism the middle-class identity was the bearer of ideological and linguistic domination, in postindustrialism, the billion-dollar entertainment and service economy financed by the upper class of owners and high-level executives has privileged the underclass identity of racial, class, gender, and sexual groups as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination. Hence, the language game of the middle-class hybrid other, with its emphasis on speaking Standard English; educating as the viable means to economic gain, upward mobility, and status; and emulating the lifestyles of the upper class of owners and high-level executives is no longer the basis for success. It has been supplanted by the language game of the underclass identity of racial, class, gender, and sexual groups. It is this social-class linguistic factor, mismatch of linguistic structure and social-class function, that must be seen as perpetuating the Black–White achievement gap in postindustrial economies like that of the United States and the United Kingdom, and not Ogbu’s burden of acting White hypothesis.

BLACK AMERICAN SOCIAL-CLASS LANGUAGE GAMES

The origins of the Black/White achievement gap among Black American and Black British Caribbean youths is grounded in what Paul C. Mocombe (2001, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, 2008; Mocombe & Tomlin, 2010) refers to as “a mismatch of linguistic structure and social (class) functions” in postindustrial economies like the United States and United Kingdom. Black American and Black British Caribbean youths, contemporarily, academically underachieve vis-à-vis their White and Asian counterparts because early on in their academic careers the poor Black social class language game, “Black American underclass,” who have become the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for Black youth the world over, created by the social relations of capitalism in the United States, produces and perpetuates a sociolinguistic status group that reinforces a linguistic structure (Black English Vernacular/African American English Vernacular [BEV/AAEV]), which linguistically and functionally renders its young social actors impotent in classrooms where the structure of Standard English (SE) is taught. Thus early on (K–5th grade) in their academic careers, many Black American inner city youth struggle in the classroom and on standardized tests because individually they are linguistically and grammatically having a problem with comprehension, i.e., “a mismatch of linguistic structure,” grounded in their (BEV/AAEV) speech patterns (Mocombe, 2007, 2008; Mocombe & Tomlin, 2010).

In other words, there is a phonological, morphosyntactical, and semantical mismatch between BEV/AAEV and the SE utilized in schools. Given the segregation and poverty of Blacks growing up in the inner-cities of America, they acquire the systemicity of Black English and early on in their academic careers lack the linguistic flexibility to switch between BEV/AAEV and SE when they take standardized tests. As a result, many Black youth have a problem decoding and understanding phrases and sentences on standardized tests (Kamhi et al., 1996; Johnson, 2005a; Mocombe & Tomlin, 2010).

Later on in their academic careers as these youth become adolescents and acquire the linguistic flexibility to code switch between BEV/AAEV and SE, they are further disadvantaged by the social-class functions (a mismatch of function of the language) that this status group, Black American underclass, reinforces against those of middle-class Black and White America. That is, success or economic gain and upward mobility among this "Black underclass," who speak BEV/AAEV, is not measured by status obtained through education as in the case of Black and White American bourgeois middle-class standards. On the contrary, athletics, music, and other activities not "associated" with educational attainment serve as the means to success, economic gain, and upward economic mobility in the United States' postindustrial society. Thus, effort in school in general suffers, and as a result, test scores and grades progressively get lower. Grades and test scores are not only low for those who grow up in poor inner cities; it appears to have also increased as academic achievement and/or social-economic status rises. "In other words, higher academic achievement and higher social-class status are not associated with smaller but rather greater differences in academic achievement" (Gordon, 2006, p. 25).

America's transition to a postindustrial, financialized service economy beginning in the 1970s positioned Black American underclass ideology and language, hip-hop culture, as a viable means for Black American youth to achieve economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility in the society over education. That is, finance capital in the United States beginning in the 1970s began investing in entertainment and other service industries where the segregated inner-city language, entertainment, and athletic culture of Black America became both a commodity and the means to economic gain for the Black poor in America's postindustrial economy, which subsequently outsourced its industrial work to semiperiphery nations, thereby blighting the inner-city communities.

Hence, contemporarily, in America's postindustrial service economy where multiculturalism, language, and communication skills, pedagogically taught through process approaches to learning, multicultural education, and cooperative group works in school, are keys to succeeding in the labor market, Blacks paradoxically have an advantage and disadvantage. On one hand, their linguistic structure growing up in inner cities is influenced by the Black underclass who in conjunction with the upper class of owners and high-level executives have positioned athletics and the entertainment industries as the social functions best served by their linguistic structure in the service economy of the United States. This subsequently leads to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility for Blacks in the society. This is advantageous because it becomes an authentic Black identity by which Black American youth can participate in the fabric or division of labor of the postindustrial social structure. On the other hand, their linguistic structure inhibits them from succeeding academically, given the mismatch between their linguistic structure and the function it serves in the postindustrial labor market of the United States, and that of Standard English and the function of school as a medium to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility for Blacks in the society.

GLOBAL BLACK UNDERACHIEVEMENT: THE CASE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Like the Black Americans in the United States, the underachievement of Black British Caribbean youths is tied to this mismatch of linguistic structure and social-class function, which is an epiphenomenon of the capitalist social structure of class inequality. In the Caribbean, most ex-slaves participated in local affairs only marginally more than East Indians. In the French and British Caribbean, for instance, Whites controlled the local legislature with a handful of men of color who were ideologically and linguistically interpellated and embourgeoised as middle-class administrators of the colonial system. The 20th and 21st centuries witnessed a shift in the power in the Caribbean, however. Black and other people of color increased their influence in government and other institutions under the middle-class or European influences (embourgeoisement) of the handful of men of color who once ruled with Whites. Although, the relationship between Blacks and Whites changed, the continued separation of the Black majority from the White and Brown minorities meant the poor, who were mainly Blacks, developed their own underclass patterns of behavior and beliefs, ideologies, and linguistic structures, which became juxtaposed against the middle-class and European identities of those in power. Education in the Caribbean, for the most part, continued to be an elite privilege. The poor constituted a poorly educated underclass living either in the overcrowded Caribbean capital cities or in small farm towns, looking to immigrate to the homeland of their former colonial masters for work and better economic opportunities. The well-to-do, for the most part, paid for private, parochial education; upon completion, they subsequently sent their children abroad for secondary schooling. In many instances, they returned to the islands where they assumed administrative and bureaucratic roles in government or the private sector. Hence Caribbean society, as well as its immigration pattern overseas, would become juxtaposed between, or against, the poorly educated underclass speakers of Creole or Caribbean patois and an embourgeoised middle class of non-White administrators who, contemporarily, served the same purpose as the handful of colored persons who administered the islands with Whites during the colonial period. Be that as it may, upon immigration to places like the United Kingdom, racism in the labor, housing, and educational markets, which paralleled what happened to the Black American in the United States, segregated the majority of the Black Caribbean immigrants seeking to achieve the embourgeoisement of their former colonial masters. What developed then was a caste, color, and class system in places like the United Kingdom. The Black immigrants sought the embourgeoisement of their former colonial masters through education in segregated poor Black communities where work was beginning to disappear to the suburbs or overseas. Simultaneously they reproduced a class system in which those who did not attain the middle-class ideology and language of the former colonial masters constituted an underclass of poorly educated, unemployed, and patois-speaking Blacks looking to hustling, the entertainment industry, and sports as viable means to status and upward economic mobility in the United Kingdom's emerging postindustrial economy.

Globally, more Blacks, of any nationality, have achieved status and upward economic mobility speaking their patois, hustling, playing sports, and entertaining than achieving academically and speaking the lingua franca of the power elites. As a result, Blacks are less likely to place much effort into education as a viable means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility in a global marketplace under U.S. hegemony dominated by images of successful Blacks as hustlers, athletes, and entertainers. Future research must continue to explore this relationship between the

global capitalist social structure of class inequality and Black racial-class identity as the continual basis for the Black–White achievement gap.

REFERENCES

- Arrighi, G. (1994). *The long twentieth century*. London: Verso.
- Bell, D. (1976). *The coming of post-industrial society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Braverman, H. (1998). *Labor and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*. New York: Monthly Review Press. (Original work published 1974)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). (2007). Statistical First Release National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England. Retrieved July 18, 2008, from <http://dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR>
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2006). Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils Aged 15–16. Research Topic Papers. London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Erevelles, N. (2000). Educating unruly bodies: Critical pedagogy, disability studies, and the politics of schooling. *Educational Theory*, 50, 25–47.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black student school success: Coping with the burden of acting white. *The Urban Review*, 18, 176–206.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *Consequences of modernity*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Giroux, H. (1992). *Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education*. New York: Routledge.
- Gordon, E. W. (2006). Establishing a system of public education in which all children achieve at high levels and reach their full potential. In *The covenant with Black America* (pp. 23–46). Chicago: Third World Press.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Johnson, V. E. (2005a). Comprehension of third-person singular /s/ in African American speaking children. *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 36, 116–124.
- Johnson, C. E. (2005b). *The A+ Plan and student achievement in Florida* (Policy Brief No. 3). Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.
- Kamhi, A. G., Pollock, K. E., & Harris, J. L. (1996). *Communication development and disorders in African American children: Research, assessment and intervention*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Kellner, D. (2002). Theorizing globalization. *Sociological Theory*, 20, 285–305.
- McLaren, P. (1988). Schooling the postmodern body: Critical pedagogy and the politics of enmeshment. *Journal of Education*, 170, 53–83.
- Mocombe, P. (2001). *A labor approach to the development of the self or “modern personality”: The case of public education*. Thesis. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI.
- Mocombe, P. (2005a). *The Mocombeian strategy: The reason for, and answer to Black failure in capitalist education*. Philadelphia: Xlibris.
- Mocombe, P. (2005b). Where did Freire go wrong? Pedagogy in globalization: The Grenadian example. *Race, Gender & Class*, 12, 178–199.
- Mocombe, P. (2006). The sociolinguistic nature of Black academic failure in capitalist education: A reevaluation of ‘Language in the Inner City’ and its social function, acting White. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 9, 395–407.
- Mocombe, P. C. (2007). *Education in globalization*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Mocombe, P. C. (2008). *The soulless souls of Black folk: A sociological reconsideration of Black consciousness as Du Boisian double consciousness*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Mocombe, P. C., & Tomlin, C. (2010). *The oppositional culture theory*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Sennett, R. (1998). *The corrosion of character*. New York: Norton.
- Sklair, L. (2001). *The transnational capitalist class*. Cambridge, England: Blackwell.
- Smith, V. (1998). Employee involvement, involved employees: Participative work arrangements in a white-collar service occupation. In A. S. Wharton (Eds.), *Working in America: Continuity, conflict, and change* (pp. 460–473). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

- Spring, J. (1994). *American education* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Trichur, G. (2005). The new imperial conjuncture and alternative futures for twenty-first century global political economy. *Globalizations*, 2, 164–181.
- Tyson, K., Darity, W., & Castellino, D. R. (2005). It's not 'a Black thing': Understanding the burden of acting White and other dilemmas of high achievement. *American Sociological Review*, 70, 582–605.
- Viadero, D. (2008). Black-white gap widens faster for high achievers. *Education Week*, 27, 1–13.
- Wallerstein, I. (1982). The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: Concepts for comparative analysis. In H. Alavi & T. Shanin (Eds.), *Introduction to the sociology of "developing societies"* (pp. 29–53). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Philosophical investigations* (G.E.M. Anscombe Trans.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. (Original work published 1953)