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## Toward Conflict and Resolution: Relationships between Families and Schools

In the next decade, American society will be facing profound and challenging dilemmas that express a great irony. Never before in history has a child had a better chance of being born healthy and staying well. Yet, never before has a child been so vulnerable to the psychosocial illnesses of life. As incidences of diphtheria, tuberculosis, typhoid, rheumatic fever, smallpox, etc., have all but disappeared, we see the emergence of much more complex and subtle problems that have no technical or magical cures. Children growing up in the next several years will face the severe social problems of drug addiction, alcoholism, juvenile suicide, adolescent pregnancy, educational failure, and abusive parenting—difficult illnesses with no curative vaccines.

As the nature of child and adolescent illnesses grows more complex and sociological in origin; as the problems not only touch minority and poor children but also the progeny of affluent families; there appears to be increased concern focused on childhood and children. As we experience greater ambivalence about our adult authority and wisdom, our voices seem to grow louder in defense of children. My perception is that much of the fanfare is not at all about children but is designed to camouflage the collective guilt we feel about not really attending to the basic needs of children.

It is difficult for me to separate out “the good” for children without also considering the primary environments in which they grow up—families.

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Families continue to offer the greatest potential for cultural cohesion and continue to perform the most complex, subtle, and difficult social task. All families do the job of socialization, despite the ways they may be perceived and judged by researchers, policy makers, and social service givers. I suspect one of the most difficult agendas for the next decade will be describing, understanding, and analyzing the emerging forms of family life, as well as its enduring characteristics, without the judgment and bias that has plagued much social science inquiry. Sociologist Mary Jo Bane looks at the demographic data on family structure and assures us the patterns have remained relatively stable.

The data show that many of the arguments made by advocates of the new family policies are based on incomplete or inaccurate information. The extended family is not, in fact, declining; it never existed. Family disruption has not increased but has only changed in character. The proportion of children living with at least one parent has gone up, not down. The increased proportion living in single parent families results to a great extent from mothers keeping their children instead of farming them out. Mothers have changed the location and character of their work, but there is not evidence that this harms children. Nor is there any evidence that contemporary families have fewer neighbors and friends to call on for help and companionship now than in the past. In short, American families are “here to stay.”<sup>1</sup>

But others disagree with Bane’s optimism—at least

her lack of pessimism. Christopher Lasch argues that families are besieged not only by major structural and economic changes in society, but also by the intrusions of social care givers. Teachers, psychiatrists, welfare workers, and priests all rob the family of its privacy and autonomy and make it overly dependent on "expert" wisdom.<sup>2</sup> Keniston, et al., claim that even upper-middle class families find it difficult to cope with life in our complex society. Parents lose control and authority over their children's lives and are forced to assume the role of highly skilled entrepreneurs, negotiating among the several institutions that provide needed services and resources.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the general feeling among most Americans is that family life has changed dramatically and that children are finding it harder and harder to thrive and be happy.

Despite the contrasting views of the state of the family, everyone agrees that families still provide the primary shaping role in early socialization. At the same time, one cannot get an authentic view of child learning and development without examining the relationships among the several social settings in which the child participates. Bronfenbrenner's notion of the ecological environments surrounding the developing person has provided an important theoretical framework for thinking about the dynamic interactions among the social and cultural spheres that shape and are shaped by the child.<sup>4</sup> This article will explore one of those primary ecological intersections---the relationship between families and schools.

### **Contrasts in Structure and Purpose**

Some of the discontinuities between family and school emerge from differences in their structural properties and cultural purposes. In other words, differences are endemic to the very nature of families and schools as institutions, and they are experienced by all children as they traverse the path from home to school. In describing the structural contrast between families and schools, for instance, sociologists have pointed to differences in the scope of relationships among the participants in these two spheres of the child's life. In families, the interactions are *functionally diffuse* in the sense that the participants are intimately and deeply connected and their rights and duties are all-encompassing and taken for granted. In schools, the interactions are *functionally specific* because the relationships are more circumscribed and defined by the technical competence and individual status of the participants. The relationships are not only differentiated in terms of scope, but also in terms of

affectivity, the quality and depth of the personal interactions. There are contrasts between the primary relationships of parents and children and the secondary relationships of teachers and children. Parents have emotionally charged relationships with their children that rarely reflect interpersonal status or functional considerations. Children in the family are treated as special persons, but pupils in school are necessarily treated as members of categories.<sup>5</sup>

Although sociologists have created clear conceptual distinctions between the structures and processes of life in families and learning in schools, children, parents, and teachers who are daily engaged in negotiations between these two spheres do not usually feel that the definitional boundaries are so clearly delineated. Home and school more often appear as overlapping worlds with fuzzy boundaries, and much of the anxiety between parents and teachers seems to grow out of the ambiguities. The struggles for clarity and boundary setting are waged daily as parents and teachers argue (silently and resentfully) about who should be in control of the child's life in school. Although parents and teachers often disagree about who has the right to govern a certain area of the child's life, usually teachers are forced to accept the parents' definition. The only sphere of influence in which the teacher feels her authority is ultimate and uncompromising seems to be inside the classroom. Behind the classroom door, teachers experience some measure of autonomy and relief from parental scrutiny, and parents often feel, with shocking recognition, the exclusion and separation from their child's world. If teachers welcome the parents within their classrooms, they usually ask them to observe rather than participate, and they view their presence as temporary and peripheral to the classroom experiences of children.

The need for boundary setting and territoriality expressed by teachers does not always symbolize threatened feelings toward parents. In a study done by Lightfoot and Carew in an independent, progressive school, teachers were given several in-depth interviews that included questions about how they perceived the legitimate role of parents in and around the school setting. The children were ages three through six, and one might have anticipated more collaboration and interaction between teachers and parents in these early stages of development than in the later elementary school years. The teachers were unusually reflective, thoughtful, and conscious of their evolving relationships with children and parents. The school encouraged, in fact depended on, parental participation in fund-

raising, class trips, and other extra-classroom affairs. The teachers' responses to this potential involvement of parents, however, showed they were not merely concerned with establishing ultimate and uncompromising control over the classroom environment; their primary reasons for parental exclusion were embedded in their ideas about establishing an enduring and nurturant relationship with the children that would not be modified or entangled with the burdens and problems of home life. In some sense, they saw themselves as child advocates, protectors of the child's new domain, and they stressed the developmental and emotional needs for a clear and early separation between familial patterns and the demands made upon children in school.<sup>6</sup>

The origins and motivations for territorial protection by parents and teachers are often entangled with negative and rigid stereotypes of one another. We also find, however, that the reasoned voices of some teachers offer educational justifications for creating separate school and family environments. The clear delineation of home and school supports the positive socialization of young children. Territoriality, therefore, seems to be motivated by both positive and negative reasoning. Ironically, the need for fence building seems to grow out of the ambiguity of roles and relationships. The ambiguous, gray areas of authority and responsibility between parents and teachers exacerbate the distrust between them. The distrust is further complicated by the fact that it is rarely articulated, but usually remains smoldering and silent. One way of easing the tension would obviously be by clarifying areas of responsibility and competence between parents and teachers and providing effective modes for communicating distrust and relieving anxiety.

One of the reasons why the struggles over territoriality are rarely articulated, clarified, and resolved is because there are very few opportunities for parents and teachers to come together for meaningful, substantive discussion. In fact, schools organize public, ritualistic occasions that rarely allow for real contact, negotiation, or criticism between parents and teachers. Rather, they tend to be institutionalized ways of establishing boundaries between insiders (teachers) and interlopers (parents) under the guise of polite conversation and mature cooperation. Parent-teacher association meetings and open-house rituals at the beginning of the school year are contrived occasions that symbolically reaffirm the idealized parent-school relationship but rarely provide the chance for authentic interaction.<sup>7</sup> Parents and teachers who are frustrated and dissatisfied with their daily transactions do not

dare risk public exposure in these large school meetings by raising their private problems. Teachers fear the scrutiny of their colleagues and principal, who expect them to conform to the collective image of smooth control and decorum they want to project to parents. Parents worry that their outspoken, challenging style might have a negative impact on their child's acceptance by the teacher, or even that other parents will view a public confrontation as a sign of inadequacy and weakness.

Individualized interactions between parents and teachers are rare and specially requested—usually arising out of dissatisfaction, frustration, or anger on the part of parents and/or teachers.<sup>8</sup> When interactions between parents and teachers become threatening and unresolvable through interpersonal negotiation, teachers often look to their colleagues and the institution for support and protection against parental intrusions.<sup>9</sup>

### **Contrasts in Power**

These "natural," structural conflicts, intensified by territorial wars, are further exaggerated when they reflect differences in resources, power, and status between schools and the families and communities they serve. Revisionist historians have emphasized this arena of conflict by telling the story of schools as major mechanisms of oppression and social control—institutions derived out of the dominant group's efforts to control and limit the choices of the dangerous and threatening strangers of society. The Revisionist perspective claims that schools have served as a place to inculcate the lower classes with the motivational schemes of factory work—discipline, passivity, submissiveness—while at the same time maintaining the benevolent illusion that schools provided universal opportunities for mobility and equality.<sup>10</sup> Anthropologists and sociologists who study the contemporary scene empirically echo the Revisionists' interpretation. They document the systematic patterns of exclusion and demise experienced by children from poor and minority groups.<sup>11</sup> The conflicts that grow out of this asymmetric power between families and schools is, in my opinion, negative and destructive in form and purpose—derived and sustained as a way to assure the asymmetry and maintain the pervasive inequalities in this society. Although these conflicts are often staged and expressed in the public, political events of community control, school-neighborhood redistricting, and parent participation, I believe they are more profoundly felt in the everyday rituals and repetitive experiences of school life. They are communicated through value transactions, rewards and

punishments, low expectations, and patronizing gestures of school people. They accumulate as deadening micro-aggressions even as the procedures and ceremony of school may seem to flow fairly and smoothly.

Ironically, the school wars that erupt between powerless and excluded parents and middle-class educators often seem to obscure profound agreements between them. Antagonisms between black parents and teachers, for example, usually center around the conflicting values attached to education. Interestingly, most studies that examine and document the educational values of these two groups reveal that there are no significant differences in their perspectives. Lower-class black parents and middle-class white teachers, for example, both show a high regard for educational attainment and value schooling as the most critical arena of the child's intellectual life. In fact, black parents seem to voice a more passionate concern for the value of education in their child's life chances.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the literature shows overwhelmingly that blacks (regardless of social status) universally view education as the most promising means for attaining higher socioeconomic status.<sup>13</sup> The dissonance between black parents and teachers, therefore, does not lie in the conflicting values attached to education but in the conflicting misperceptions they have of one another.

Despite the passionate and often unrealistic dreams of black parents, teachers continue to view them as uncaring, unsympathetic, and ignorant of the value of education for their children. They often perceive the parents' lack of involvement in ritualistic school events and parent conferences as apathy and disinterest. Rarely do they interpret it as the inability to negotiate the bureaucratic maze of schools or as a response to a long history of exclusion and rejection at the school door. Their lack of success in effectively participating in the relatively superficial and peripheral roles allowed ghetto parents is perceived by teachers as a lack of interest and concern in their children's education. The irony, of course, is that they care too much—a kind of caring that limits their view of alternative strategies for moving forward; a blinding preoccupation that makes black parents and children more vulnerable to the modes of subtle and explicit exclusion they face in relation to schools.

On the other hand, what black parents view as the uncaring regard teachers have for their children is related to the teachers' projected feelings about the "realistic" chances black children have for educational and occupational success in this society.<sup>14</sup>

Parents see teachers as not valuing schooling for black children while claiming to be at the center of that critical educational process. In the eyes of parents, most teachers believe their energies will be wasted on the inevitable failure of the vast majority of black children, and they assure that bleak conclusion by engaging in custodial (rather than teaching) functions and by demeaning and degrading the black intellect and spirit.

Parents' and teachers' perceptions of each other as uncaring about children and as devaluing the educational process lead to distance and distrust and the need to blame one another. Misperceptions, rarely articulated and confronted, always nurtured by hostile stereotypes, lead to increasing disregard for each other's place in the lives of black children. Rather than search for the origins of conflict and find effective strategies for real (rather than contrived) participation of parents and teachers in a collaborative task, schools develop more sophisticated methods of exclusion; parents draw farther and farther away from parental responsibilities in the schooling process; and children fail, often experiencing the failure as their own individual inadequacy, incompetence, and lack of motivation.

The sad irony is that education for the majority of children will only be successful when there is trust, accountability, and responsibility shared between families, communities, and schools. Being aware of the power and significance of families does not mean that schools should not be held accountable for teaching children. Rather the opposite—once school personnel begin to value the significant place of families in the educational process, they will feel more responsible to the communities they serve and to the children they teach. Once teachers become more cognizant of the forms and styles of learning within families, education may be seen more holistically and the medium and message of school can be designed to be adaptive to the values and idiom of community life.

I am certainly not arguing for the superficial interpretations of cultural inclusion represented in Negro History Week, now generously expanded and ritualistically renamed Black History Month. Pictures of Paul Robeson, Willy Mays, Martin Luther King, and Frederick Douglass are tacked on classroom bulletin boards. Their stories are bigger than life. They are distant unreachable heroes for whom children can feel deeply proud. But rarely are their lives honestly and meaningfully incorporated into the educational experience of children. Their pictures come down at the end of the month—only to

appear next year, the same unchanging faces, a bit more tattered and worn.

Nor am I claiming that in recognizing families as educators, we should degrade or compromise educational excellence. This was one of the great mistakes of the sixties when large numbers of humanistic teachers, mouthing the rhetoric of nontraditional education, invaded black communities. They sought to establish loving, caring, familial relationships with their young black charges. Their goals were often laudable and worthy. Their hearts were more or less pure. But their hippy clothes, missionary zeal, progressive pedagogy, and playful style offended black parents who wanted a more rigorous traditional education that focused on the basic skills of reading and writing.<sup>15</sup> If ghetto schools are going to begin to be responsive to parental values, it may be that the authority structures, pedagogical modes, and educational goals of schools will need to become more traditionally defined with visible and explicit criteria established for child competencies. In the King School in New Haven, when parents became increasingly involved in the schooling process, they negotiated with teachers for more structured and orderly classrooms, and emphasized the rigors of academic work. As a matter of fact, some parents had become involved in the school specifically in response to what they perceived as a disorderly, chaotic environment that condoned deviant, disruptive behavior in their children and threatened the values they taught at home.<sup>16</sup>

Mere rearrangements in curriculum, teaching style, or staffing patterns, however, will not produce significant changes in family-school relationships and community-school accountability. As long as power relationships between minority communities and white middle-class schools remain asymmetric, teachers and principals will not feel accountable to parents and children, and parents will feel helpless and threatened by the overwhelming dominance of the school. For a long time, we have understood that the magic of suburban schools is not merely the relative affluence and abundant resources of the citizens (nor their whiteness), but also the balance of power between families and schools, the sense of responsibility and accountability teachers feel for the educational success of children, and the parent's sense of entitlement in demanding results from schools.

There is recent, convincing evidence that redistribution of power and shared responsibility between families and schools in poor, minority communities has a powerful effect on teachers, parents, and children. Herbert Walberg found increases in

the reading scores and intellectual skills of young black children in a large urban school where parents, teachers, and children drew up written contracts of participation and responsibility in the educational and schooling process.<sup>17</sup> *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines have reported stories of progress and transformation in all-black schools in Chicago's ghettos where principals and teachers began to demand the active and critical participation of parents in their child's learning and in school policy. With the support of parents, teachers were encouraged to adapt their styles of interaction and behaviors to the cultural idiom of the community.<sup>18</sup> In the King School in New Haven, referred to above, parents and teachers tell a long, tortuous, and inspiring story of getting to know one another, growing to trust one another, learning to fight productively, and finally building collaborative partnerships. Not only did the reading scores of children soar to new heights, but the essence of education was transformed by the presence of families within the schools.<sup>19</sup>

### **Perspectives on Conflict**

Increased communication and shared responsibility between families and schools does not mean that boundaries should be completely erased and conflict minimized. Family-school dissonance should not be perceived as necessarily dysfunctional to healthy child development, detrimental to pedagogy and curriculum development, or destructive to the social fabric of society. Certainly, extreme distrust and hostility between families and schools cause great anxiety in children and threaten a smooth and constructive transition between these two environments. But some measure of difference and dissonance is not only historically determined, but also functional to child growth and social change. In *The Temporary Society*, Philip Slater argues that Americans have endured a historical pattern of chronic change which has created an "experiential chasm" between parents and children. This generational distance has, to some extent, invalidated parental authority and wisdom because parents have not experienced what is of central importance to the child, nor do they possess the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are adaptive to the conditions of contemporary society. This child-adult discontinuity is viewed by Slater as a natural lever for social change in society. Schools (and any other non-family-based collectivities) have served the important function of regulating and modifying parent-child relationships. Slater asserts:

One segregates children from adult life because

one wishes to do something special with them—to effect some kind of social change or to adapt to one. Such segregation insulates the child from social patterns of the present and makes him more receptive to some envisioned future.<sup>20</sup>

Dissonance between family and school, therefore, is not only inevitable in a changing society, but also helps to make children more malleable and responsive to a changing world. By the same token, one could say that absolute homogeneity between family and school would reflect a static, authoritarian society and discourage creative, adaptive development in children.

It would appear that parents and teachers are most comfortable with one another when they recognize the validity and necessity of both parenting and teaching for the effective socialization of young children in this society. Teachers, for instance, are most at ease with parents who seem to respect the importance and value of the teacher role, who feel the teacher is performing a critical task, and respond to her needs for autonomy and control. Teachers have the most difficulty with parents who do not seem to value their special competence and skills, and who do not differentiate between the demands of the primary relationships within families and the requirements of the secondary relationships within schools.

Themes of possessiveness underlie much of the friction between parents and teachers. Parents often view their relationship to the child as one of ownership and they attempt to extend the years of parental protectiveness and control. When parents defend their children and argue for continuous and ultimate authority over their lives, they are also concerned with protecting their own status in the economic structure of society and assuming some measure of control over their child's projected future.

Parental feelings of ownership and control are complicated by the fact that middle-class and status-seeking parents in this society also recognize the need for the child's successful and complete separation from them as a prelude to his/her future achievement in the corporate world beyond family and school. Parents, therefore, experience ambivalence in their possessive and protective relationship toward their children and their equally strong recognition that their children's success depends on their autonomy, mobility, and separation from family. These conflicting needs and expectations on the part of parents and children create confusion and anxiety within nuclear families and inevitably lead to

difficulties in the family's relationship to schools.

The tensions arising between parents and teachers are part of the very fabric of competition and materialism in this society. The school is seen as the major mechanism of standardized competition of human resources. Children are viewed as property to be developed, protected, and controlled by parents; and parents are their ambivalent sponsors who must find effective strategies for securing their child's status in some future and unknown society.

It is critical, therefore, that we distinguish between creative conflict and negative dissonance between family and school. The former is inevitable in a changing society and adaptive to the development and socialization of children. The latter is dysfunctional to child growth and acculturation and degrading to their families, communities, and culture. Educators, who are daily engaged in trying to shape and clarify their relationship with parents, must especially learn to discern the positive and negative faces of conflict. In an insightful book written in 1932 (but enduringly relevant), Willard Waller noted that the child will experience more freedom of expression and autonomy when different demands are being made by teachers and parents.

Parent-teacher work has usually been directed at securing for the school the support of the parents, that is, at getting parents to see children more or less as teachers see them. But it would be a sad day for childhood if parent-teacher work ever really succeeded in its object. The conflict between parents and teachers is natural and inevitable, and it may be more or less useful. It may be that the child develops better if he is treated impersonally in the schools, provided the parents are there to supply the needed personal attitudes . . . But it would assuredly be unfortunate if teachers ever succeeded in bringing parents over completely to their point of view, that is, in obtaining for schools the complete and undivided support of every parent of every child.<sup>21</sup>

Both teachers and parents, therefore, should be socialized to anticipate and tolerate a level of creative tension, difference in perspective, and opposing value systems.

Of course, this is more easily said than done. How can teachers and parents recognize creative conflict when they are feeling the pain and vulnerability of the daily struggles waged at family-school boundaries? Is creativity defined by the ultimate resolution of conflict or the process and medium of negotiation? Should parents and teachers seek to

reinforce the differences in their relationships with children in order to support the autonomy and development of children, and how might one characterize these differences in psycho-social as well as structural terms? When do striking differences in family-school patterns become dysfunctional to child learning? What kinds of structures and mechanisms might be designed to encourage productive communication between parents and teachers? These remain largely unanswered questions. We still know very little about how to characterize and build optimal relationships between families and schools and about the perspectives and perceptions of children who negotiate these realms. These are important research agendas that will require systematic, interdisciplinary study, unencumbered by ideological and political debate.

For those educators who are presently engaged in developing relationships with parents and children—for those who can't wait for tomorrow's research returns—a good beginning might be to listen for the child's voice. Conversations between families and schools should not take place above children's heads, behind their backs, or in a language they don't understand. The family-school relationship should be a triangular one, including the experiences and perspectives of parents, teachers, and children. When adult figures begin to focus on their reason for coming together in the first place, and begin to act in the best interest of the child, some of their defensiveness will fade away and the territorial lines will erode. A new perception of "the other" is free to emerge—a vision that is likely to be shared by the child—one that pictures both parents and teachers as central figures with complex roles and encompassing relationships that embrace the child.

#### Notes

1. Bane, Mary Jo. *Here to stay*. New York: Basic Books, 1976, 69-70.
2. Lasch, Christopher. *Haven in a heartless world*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
3. Keniston, Kenneth, et al. *All our children*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1977.
4. See Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.
5. For discussion of this structuralist perspective on families and schools see Parsons, Talcott. The school class as a social system, *Harvard Educational Review*, 29, Fall, 1959, 297-318; Dreeben, Robert. *On what is learned in school*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968.
6. Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence and Carew, Jean V. Individuation and discrimination in the classroom. Washington, D.C.: Office of Child Development, 1974. Research supported by funds from Child Development Associates, Inc.

7. For an insightful discussion of the vacuous symbolism that sustains these public, ritualistic events for parents and teachers, see Warren, Richard. The classroom as a sanctuary for teachers: Discontinuities in social control, *American Anthropologist*, 75, February-June, 1973, 280-291.
8. See Lightfoot and Carew, Individuation and discrimination in the classroom; McPherson, Gertrude, *Smalltown teacher*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972.
9. See Becker, Howard. Social class variations in teacher-pupil relationships, *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 25, 1952, 451-465; Carew, Jean, and Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. *Beyond bias: Perspectives on classrooms*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, chapters 7 and 8.
10. See Katz, Michael. *Class, bureaucracy, and schools: The illusions of educational change in America*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971; Bowles, Samuel and Gintis, Herbert. *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
11. For an interesting description of how the social relations of the educational process mirror the social relations of work roles into which students are likely to move, see Leacock, Eleanor Burke. *Teaching and learning in city schools*. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
12. For an in-depth discussion of the deep concern and ultimate value lowerclass blacks attach to schooling, see Scazoni, John, *The black family in modern society*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971; and Lewis, Hylan. The changing Negro family, in *School children in the urban slum*, Roberts, Joan, (Ed.) New York: The Free Press, 1967, 397-405.
13. Cloward, Richard, and Jones, James. Social class, educational attitudes and participation, in *Education in depressed areas*, Passow, A. Harry, (Ed.) New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963, 190-216; Billingsley, Andrew. *Black families in white America*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968, 79-83, 181-185.
14. In *The next generation: An ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), John Ogbu makes a related point when he demonstrates that even when parents, teachers, students, and taxpayers care deeply about education, the inequalities of opportunity reinforce school failure for black children.
15. There are ideological echoes of these times in contemporary arguments over whether black English should be allowed and encouraged in school pedagogy and curricula. Some of the controversies have become formalized in court battles where the lines are publicly drawn and where one side must inevitably lose. See *Martin Luther King Elementary School Children vs. the Ann Arbor School District Board* (July 12, 1979). A district court construed the 1974 Equal Educational Opportunity Act as forbidding state denial of equal educational opportunity on account of race by failing to utilize known methods of overcoming language barriers faced by students coming from homes and communities where black English is spoken. The schools need not teach black English, but teachers must understand its existence, the learning barriers it poses, and teach black children the code switching skills in connection with reading standard English that are appropriate in the light of existing knowledge on the subject.

16. Comer, James. *School power*, New York: The Free Press, 1980.
  17. Walberg, Herbert, et al. School-based family socialization and reading achievement in the inner city. Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1977.
  18. A new kind of PTA, *Newsweek*, November 15, 1976, 105.
  19. Comer, James. Improving the quality and continuity of relationships in two inner-city schools, *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 15, Summer 1973, 535-545.
  20. Slater, Philip. Social change and the democratic family, in *The temporary society*, Bennis, Warren, and Slater, Philip, (Eds.) New York: Harper and Row, 1968, 40. Also, for an insightful discussion of intergenerational distance and disassociation, see Ryder, N.B. The cohort as a concept in the study of social change, *American Sociological Review*, 30, December 1965, 843-861.
  21. Waller, Willard. *Sociology of teaching*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1932, 69.
- Note:* Many of the themes explored in this article are incorporated in and expanded upon in Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. *Worlds apart: Relationships between families and schools*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.

## tip