Race, Class, and Imagining the Urban

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In the social sciences, there is no paucity of studies about the urban as a "real" place. To take a few examples, in Massey and Denton's (1993) *American Apartheid*, the ghetto receives plenty of attention, as a historical process whereby blacks suffer from whites' deliberate construction of housing segregation at the turn of the twentieth century. In Anyon's (1997) own analysis of the ghetto, she traces its origins in the political economy and the school systems it produces. Massey and Denton, and Anyon's sociological accounts have helped scholars and educators understand the "urban" (particularly the ghetto[1]) as a concrete place, whose racial and economic formation is material. In this chapter, we discuss how "urban reality" is as much an *imagined*, in addition to a real, place (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). That is, the urban is socially and discursively constructed as a place, which is part of the dialectical creation of the urban as both a real and imagined space. The urban is real insofar as it is demarcated by zones, neighborhoods, and policies. However, it is imagined to the extent that it is replete with meaning, much of which contains contradictions as to exactly what the urban signifies. For instance, there are urban communities that are "positively" urban like the "Upper East Side" side of Manhattan, New York, but not Harlem or the South Bronx; Santa Monica and West Hollywood, California but not Compton or Echo Park. In other words, in light of power relations, urban may signify the hallmark of civilization and the advances it offers, or a burden and problem of progress.

Introduction to the Dialectics of the Urban

The urban setting is a dialectical example of the process of modernization. For some people, it represents an outlet for entertainment and a venue for a sophisticated life, whereas for others the urban seems like an inescapable cul-de-sac of poverty and daily degradation. By examining the mediatized and dominant ways of representing the urban, we arrive at the "social imagineers" (Giroux, 1999) of the urban as both a blessing and a burden. However, this chapter is not an urban planning paper, but a sociological analysis of daily life as it concerns

the urban as an imagined and educative place. Thus, it hinges less on formal processes, like housing policies, and more on the informal process of meaning-making, of signifying the urban through a chain of images and discourses, which are themselves constitutive of the education one finds in urban settings. It is not a study of ideology as divorced from the material process (Leonardo, 2003b). Rather, it is a search for a *proper relation* between ideology and material life, two processes that are dialectically linked instead of opposed. Last, it does not propose a spatial theory of the urban context, but a theory of the *urban imagination*.

The discussion shares some affinities with Robin Kelley's (1998) treatment of the social science wars over representing the ghetto through structural or cultural theories, both of which are tethered by the construction of the ghetto as home to a monolithic and debased underclass culture. Kelley favors a political engagement of the aesthetics of the ghetto, arguing that its music and daily lifestyles are a source of pleasure for its participants. To Kelley, the cultural wars have taken "playing dozens," or hurling insults as a form of entertainment, to a whole new level that forgets its playfulness and only deploys insults at the urban and the people who live in it. We go a long way with Kelley but part from him in our emphasis on the structural, rather than aesthetical, aspects of the urban as these find their expression through contradictory meanings. This method has several advantages, including a nuanced look at racialized, commodified, and gendered meanings attached to the urban in popular and youth culture, and the social relations that both create and are created from such meanings.

As an imagined space, the urban is constructed through multiple and often contradicting meanings. These meanings are sites of contestation as to what the urban signifies in people's imagination. Consequently, the imagined aspect of the urban setting affects urban education because it socially and culturally constructs the people who live in it as well as their needs. Urban dwellers and their "nature" are not a given and must be mediated through systems of meaning, competing discourses, and ideologies. We find that the urban has been constructed in three powerful ways: as a sophisticated space, an authentic place of identity, and a disorganized "jungle." In order to avoid presenting the urban through a binary as essentially either a "positive" or "negative" place, we take a critical, dialectical position on the social meanings that constitute the urban for their traces of power relations, specifically with respect to race and class structures. In short, the four following sections problematize and critically examine the everyday meanings of the urban. In the first section, "The Sophisticated Urban Space," we analyze the representation of the urban as a sophisticated space where modernism expresses its advances in civil society through art and culture. In this case, being urban is a sign of being modern, of civilization itself. It is a reminder of what Matthew Arnold once called the best that Culture in all its grandeur has to offer. In the second section, "Urban Space and the Politics of Authenticity," we argue that urban (often ghetto) spaces are constructed as authentic places of identity for people of color. Both whites *and* people of color construct the "essential" or "real" person of color as urban, usually born from the concrete activities and histories of the urban but also a form of style or the self-(re)presentation of minority youth one often finds in inner city schools.

In the third section, simply titled "The Urban Jungle," we analyze the popular cultural perception of the ghetto as a pathological place marked by a profound disorganization, criminal character, and moral malaise. In this most popular and durable representation of the ghetto, images of the underclass shine through the lens of the culture of poverty argument first launched by Oscar Lewis (1968), reincarnated by William Julius Wilson (1987), and appropriated by the educational system to address the "urban problem," which goes by the common label of the "achievement gap." This pejorative sounding section regarding the urban differs from the previous two sections that cast the urban as "positive." Last, in "Social and Policy Implications for Education: Re-imagining the Urban," we make initial connections between the urban imagination and educational policies targeting urban settings. We argue that daily constructions of the urban (particularly the poor or pejorative version) are consequential to the way educators imagine the kind of schooling appropriate for urban students. We end the chapter by re-imagining the urban as a place of struggle over the very meaning of race and class in the context of the United States.

The Sophisticated Urban Space

As part of modernization, the urban represents the advances achieved through technology (e.g., computer engineering and media), the complexity of metropolitan living (e.g., contrapuntal lifestyles and cultural hybridization), and confrontation with difference (e.g., immigration and ethno-racial mixing). In fact, to be "urbane" is literally defined as a positive thing, as in "to be sophisticated" or "refined." Since the Industrial Revolution, the urban setting has been constructed as a place where the future meets the city, an idea that Voltaire was fond of and Rousseau despised. The urban represents the forward progress of civilization both in terms of material production for Karl Marx and cultural manners for Matthew Arnold. It was the way out of the constrictions of medieval social systems towards the opening up of the social universe as well as cultural universals. In short, *homo urbano* was the next development away from provincialism, which is a stone's throw from primitivism. On this level, the urban defines the new social subject who is part of global development guided by the new civil society and the state institutions that Hegel once valorized. In short, being urban is a positive thing to be.

However, when we consider that urbanization occurs in the context of power relations, contradictions begin to surface. For example with respect to diversity, being urban usually connotes supporting the "right amount" of

ethnic and racial difference, but not too much. Often tokenism stands in for real integration in order to preserve a certain image of the urban as a *controlled place of difference*. Thus, during the Great Migration in the USA the exodus of blacks from the South to Northern urban centers prompted whites to contain them in ghettos, making integration all but a fantasy rather than a reality. In this instance, urban carried a double-edged meaning for blacks who searched for better job opportunities only to find white labor resistance to their integration (Roediger, 1991; Ignatiev, 1995). Urban America became an opportunity structure for ethnic whites, like the Irish, escaping religious and cultural persecution on their own land. By choosing to be members of the white racial imaginary, oppressed ethnic Europeans found their social promotion in the urban setting, edging out blacks. In the latter's perspective, civil society was everything but civil.

In schools today, controlling for difference is sometimes exemplified in American colleges and universities' desire to portray themselves as "diverse," even if they aren't, of using the term "urban" without the burden. In fact, this deception was exposed when the University of Wisconsin digitally inserted a black male into one of its marketing photos so that the university could project a particular image of itself for the public; more important, it enabled the university to create the image it wanted for its own self-understanding. In short, some universities and teacher education programs use the signifier "urban" to describe themselves in a way that seems diverse (and therefore sophisticated), without having to bear the burden of difference. In this case, appropriating diversity or urbanism is a way of marketing a school or program as "cutting edge," as dealing with *pluribus* while only having to live with *unum*.

Of course, the point is less about policing these universities and creating alibis out of particular campuses, and more about analyzing how the concept of "urban" is being constructed in order to deploy a particular image—better yet, deploying power for particular ends. In other words, the analysis hinges less on casting aspersions about a school's desire for diversity and more on the contradictory meanings that result when it is invoked. Our point is that the increasing value of the signifier "urban" in education suggests that as *the* representation of diversity, urban people (read: students of color) are being recast in a "positive" light. Directly related to the meaning of urban, racial diversity is conscripted into a logic that co-opts it as a marker of cosmopolitanism, but with neither the reality nor the burden. Educators who deal with the urban are constructed as sophisticated, but the urban students and families themselves are not.

Currently, American K-12 urban schooling promotes the importance of diversity, which is said to be good for education in general. In its authentic sense, diverse classrooms provide a setting where people from different backgrounds can debate an issue from various perspectives and in the process learn about their own uniqueness (Banks, 2002). This seemed to be the logic behind

the University of Michigan Affirmative Action Supreme Court decision that supported racial considerations in admission processes as well as the rationale behind maintaining affirmative action in education in general. Rather than using the now problematic image of the melting pot, urban settings have become the *meeting point* of civilization. It holds the promise of unity *and* diversity. This does not come without challenges but it promotes the promise of intergenerational, interracial, and international relations that the new global citizenship offers in the urban setting.

Because of the popular misconception that multiculturalism is a positive tool *for* students of color (see Glazer, 1997) or worse, as dividing the nation (Schlesinger, 1998), in urban settings the signifier "diverse" becomes a synonym for "students of color." It happens frequently enough that teachers describe their school with a mostly black or Latino student population as "diverse." Often, they sincerely value such "diversity." Of course, a predominantly black or brown school is not diverse, but its precise opposite, the hallmark of *de facto* segregated education. In this case, the meaning of urban becomes grafted onto bodies of color, making diversity, urban, and people of color coterminous with each other. Urban and multicultural schooling transform into an education *for* students of color; rarely do teachers describe an equally white suburban school as "diverse" or that multiculturalism or race-based pedagogies may enrich white students' educational and social experience. Whites seldom regard multicultural education as good *for* them, as a way to broaden their sense of civil society and expand their notion of humanity, that is, unless being "multicultural" makes them appear open, tolerant, and sophisticated. In contrast, many multiculturalists have argued that valuing diversity entails basic education for all students, including whites (Banks, 2005; Nieto, 2003a; Sleeter, 1995b). When critical, it is a form of transformative education that allows both whites and students of color to know more deeply their own histories as inflected by other groups' struggles. This is urban sophistication in the inclusive sense, rather than the property of some and a problem for others.

As part of being sophisticated, urban dwellers are often imagined as cosmopolitan, open-minded and perhaps most important, progressive. This was evidenced precisely in the 2004 U.S. presidential election when many New Yorkers and Los Angelenos (both from coastal Democratic-controlled states) blamed Bush's victory on the Republican-controlled states in the middle of the country. This is reminiscent of the national problems of racism typically blamed on Midwesterners or Southerners, who pose as alibis for the country's general and pervasive level of racism. In fact, coastal (including urban) California has been at the forefront of the recent onslaught of racist policies enacted against immigrants of color, such as Proposition 187 and 227, the former decreasing undocumented families' medical and educational services and the latter attacking the legitimacy of bilingualism in schools and public places (which in California means Spanish). Despite this onslaught to discredit public schools,

they are among the last institutions to leave the urban setting, watching the steady exodus of businesses and hospitals flee towards capital and more profitable spaces (Noguera, 1996). In other words, U.S. urban schools bear the burden of progress, of educating people's children in the face of increased pressures for privatization.

On the same note, the high-profile police brutality cases against people of color have also been documented in urban Los Angeles and New York. We are not refuting the difference between Democratic and Republican strongholds. California and New York have two of the largest urban cities in the country and are obviously Democratic, especially when compared to other states. Although major urban settings may be racially problematic, people of color have felt a sense of protection by virtue of living in them because they recognize that difference is a fact of everyday life in these settings. In other words, people of color see their faces reflected in everyday life, even when these images are problematic. They are present and rarely silent. That said, the discourse during the 2004 presidential election forsakes a more accurate understanding of white supremacy that goes beyond the rural-imagined Klan and Neo-Nazis, and implicates even liberal urban whites. That is, white supremacy is more about the centrality of white advantage from which urban whites do not escape and often actively deploy. Each form of racism expresses its specific logic, traditional racism in rural settings and a more "sophisticated" color-blind racism or tokenism in urban centers.

The urban has become a place for the white enjoyment of arts, music, and dining. In many cities, middle class whites may drive their Chevy Suburbans into poor urban areas to valet park and attend the opera, symphony, or concerts but never have an "experience of color" despite being in a poor or black/brown area. For example, they may dislike Mexicans, resent them for "browning" California, and vote for Proposition 187, but they are avid lovers of their local Mexican restaurant and speak the occasional Spanish food phrase. Angelenos may feel comfortable with Mexicans who provide the bulk of cheap labor in the Southland, but curtail Mexican families' access to social services and basic education. These dynamics are exacerbated in multiracial urban cities limiting access to high-status knowledge and advanced courses in subjects like math and science (Oakes, Joseph, and Muir, 2004).

In this sense, the meaning of urban becomes a site of consumption. Being urban is consumed for a given amount of time, enjoyed, and then forgotten until the next excursion. The urban resembles the colonies frequented by the colonists who never feel out of place, never not in charge (Memmi, 1965). Like the colonist who is numerically outnumbered in occupied areas, white and middle class people in the urban playground do not feel conspicuous for long. Using the colonial framework, the urban becomes an internal colony (Blauner, 1972; see also, Ladson-Billings, 1998), a cultural and material condition that links cities as diverse as Soweto and the South Bronx. These spaces are complete with a colonial-like educational system that treats the urban "natives" as something to be assimilated, civilized, and converted. Real urban dwellers (not to be confused with the stylized version of *homo urbano*) may not be constructed as sophisticated, but through proper education, it is believed they can become modernized.

The urban is a heart of darkness for the internal colonist who enjoys it like Walter Benjamin's flaneur, or dandy-about-town. In the popular show, "Sex and the City," the white and well-to-do main cast lives the glamorous urban life that is Manhattan. As petite sophisticates, these four flaneuses treat the audience to adventure after adventure in their endless pit of a high-brow, but seductive lifestyle. Dressed to the hilt and as cosmopolitan as their drink, the protagonists are a perfect display of the urban sexual splendor at which even Freud may have blushed. Somehow, the show would not have been as powerful were it named "Sex and the Rural Town," taking place in small town USA and premised on the sexual adventures of two farmers' daughters, although this did not prevent Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie from trying. "Sex and the City" works precisely because of its urban allure, where exploits are part of the new feminism after the sexual revolution. It does a marvelous job at showcasing the urban crunch of time and space where meaningful relationships are equally as fleeting yet fulfilling. It shows the level of emotional sophistication necessary when one-night stands are reduced to 30 minutes. In the show, the sociology of sex hinges on the characters' ability to emerge from the urban landscape emotionally vulnerable but rarely disheveled in their appearance. This is the urban-as-playground at its best and it takes an emotionally savvy, sophisticated viewer to appreciate its excesses.

Arguably, New Orleans once posed as the southern urban playground. That is, until Hurricane Katrina hit. Previously, it was the site of a carnivalesque celebration of difference during Mardi Gras, where an intersubjective *heteroglossia* would have made someone like Bakhtin feel right at home. After Katrina, the urban carnival was abandoned and what was once a city by the sea became a city under it. In the dialectics of the urban, New Orleans could not have experienced a more stark reversal. Amidst fields of black evacuees, the city was not only deemed a national disaster area, but abandoned by what many consider a neglectful president whose reaction was faster during the Asian tsunami that struck halfway across the globe in Thailand. The disasters in New Orleans revealed the urban once again as a problem for the poor and black. The event holds pedagogical lessons for students as they understand the burdens of being urban.

First, with the help of the Associated Press students learn that white victims "find" food and drinks, whereas blacks "loot" stores.[2] Second, when the survivors trekked from New Orleans to Houston, Texas for shelter and aid, former first lady Barbara Bush commented that the relief efforts may create another problem insofar as the victims would want to remain in Houston due to the

city's hospitality. Inadvertently, students learn that displaced poor people cannot tell the difference between the comforts of their own home and the utter lack of decent conditions in the Texan holding centers, notwithstanding the diligent assistance from relief volunteers. Instead of seizing the opportunity to examine the social institutions that turned a natural disaster into a social one, Barbara Bush expressed her fears that the evacuees in Houston would overstay their time in Texas due to the city's overwhelming hospitality. In short, she fears that the evacuees would turn the city of Houston into the wrong kind of urban, filled with poor blacks who need help. Mrs. Bush unwittingly became a symbol for what Joyce King (2004a) calls "an uncritical habit of mind," a certain "dysconsciousness" that prevents people from seeing the social order of things. Third, despite the ostensibly racial nature of the slow response, black folks are again being told that, harking back to the Rodney King videos, they are not seeing what they think they see with their own eyes: that is, the response apparently was not racial here. In this instance, urban means black and poor, and in the context of post-Civil Rights race discourse both are part of the life choices one makes. The whole saga prompted Reverend Jesse Jackson to proclaim that Americans have a high threshold for black people's suffering. It prodded the hip-hop artist Kanye West to declare that President Bush does not care about black people. Luckily with this last point, and appropriating from Spivak (1988), students also learn that the urban subaltern can speak, that they are able to "decipher knowledge" in King's (2004b) sense (following Foucault) of the ability to critique regimes of knowledge and alter consciousness in search of an alternative explanation for social events.

Urban Space and the Politics of Authenticity

Although whites tend to imagine urban spaces as either sophisticated playgrounds or dirty, violent ghettos, some people of color offer another way of imagining the ghetto, as a home of authentic cultural practices. For many people of color, particularly Latinos, African Americans, and some Asians, urban spaces are home; that is where they grew up or live, where they return to visit family if they moved away, where they go for ethnic-specific groceries or for their own ethnic restaurants, where they get their hair done, or anything else. Because urban areas are home to so many people of color, both literally and figuratively, there is an abundance of images of urban areas as romantic, nurturing, accepting havens from a cold outside (read: suburban) world.

Many black movies and television shows portray poor urban neighborhoods as homey, familiar, nurturing environments, despite some of their dysfunctions or idiosyncrasies. These counter-narratives suggest that despite the poverty and occasional violence or street crime, urban neighborhoods provide a home to those who live there. These images are created in contrast to mainstream, white views of poor urban neighborhoods as dangerous, violent, mean, and uncaring (Guerrero, 1993). Whites also essentialize the ghetto as the place

of "real" blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans largely because the mainstay of their interaction with racial minorities comes in the form of media consumption, of watching television shows and music videos about them, and listening to rap or hip-hop songs. As the "reality" television show, "Black. White." points out very well, an archetype of the white urban imagination is that *blacks are a rap video*, complete with the accompanying expectations that they should behave in such a manner. Without concrete, therefore varied, interactions with people of color, whites project their ideal image of blacks, Latinos, and Asians as essentially and one-dimensionally urban and espouse few counter, non-stereotypical images of them. In schools, this means that a largely white, female teacher population is ill-equipped to deal with urban students and their realities.

In addition to being portrayed as a loving environment, poor urban neighborhoods are also imagined by some as the site of authentic cultural practices. The series of movies that include "Barbershop" and "Beauty Shop," for instance, centers on the black hair salon or black barbershop. Both of these locations are uniquely black and house not only cultural interactions about hair, but ways of talking, interacting, and relating to one another and the surrounding community in uniquely black cultural ways. This series of movies and other contemporary black movies answer the existential question, "What does it mean to be black?" in problematic, yet predictable ways. For many African Americans and other ethnic groups, authentic identity originates in poor, segregated neighborhoods. Real blacks reside there and they act, talk, and behave in legitimately black ways. When they do not follow these prescriptions, their authenticity is questioned. This is ultimately what Fordham (1988, 1996) finds in her studies on "racelessness," where blacks who achieve in schools are perceived as "acting white" (read: not urban, not authentic).

Authentic cultural practices are thought to abound in urban neighborhoods. For many Latinos, the ability to speak Spanish is crucial in urban areas where more recent immigrants are likely to be living (Lopez, 1997). Many people imagine that the food served in Mexican restaurants in East Los Angeles is more authentic than that sold in whiter parts of the city or the suburbs. Likewise, many Asians must travel to their own urban ethnic enclaves—sometimes also poor—to buy the grocery items that they need to cook the meals specific to their culture. This reality reinforces the notion that authentic language practices and food reside in urban spaces. Like blacks, Latino students also face the challenges of essentialism when they do not speak Spanish and are branded as inauthentic, marginalized from the community, yet are not accepted because of a more general xenophobia in mainstream white culture (see Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Doucet, 2004). It creates a condition that Valenzuela (1999) calls "subtractive schooling," which is another way of saying that education for Latino youth does not only fail to add to their school experience but actually takes away from their cultural way of being. Of course,

it is possible that the brand of inauthenticity leveled against students of color involved with their own communities, is a coping mechanism cultivated by people of color who feel disempowered or are shut out from the culture of power. In order to assuage their own sense of marginalization, it is a power play they can hold over the heads of minority students who ascend to middle class status. For successful students, their claims to authenticity may reflect their internal struggles about achievement and maintaining a close tie with their communities. As part of Du Bois' (1984) "talented tenth" and Steele's (2004) "domain identified," this ascending group of students face challenges within and without the group, not authentic enough for their own social group, not white enough for the mainstream.

Both people of color and whites tend to imagine urban spaces as more authentically "ethnic" or "racial" than suburban or rural spaces. Because we view urban spaces as more authentic (e.g., more truly black, more Latino), being "from the 'hood" takes on a particular status and meaning for many students of color. Being from the 'hood is seen as a positive and "real" experience of blackness or brownness. In other words, it requires both race and class authenticity. For example, to be truly black, the common perception is that one must be or have been from a poor, black neighborhood (Johnson, 2003). Many whites and people of color believe that exposure to the hardships of black or Latino life is a prerequisite for an authentic ethno-racial identity. In mass culture, this dynamic can be seen in the figures of Kobe Bryant and Alan Iverson. Bryant, a basketball player who comes from an upper middle class upbringing, is said to lack "street cred(ibility)" (Rovell, 2005). He lacks a certain authenticity with both his black and white fan base, many of whom are interpellated by an essentialist discourse on urbanness and blackness. It is not hard to imagine that the criticism constructs Bryant as not of the 'hood, something also leveled at another player, Grant Hill, who did not grow up in the 'hood. However, the same cannot be said for Iverson, whose "bad boy" image and tough childhood earn him the brand of authenticity and credibility without much effort. Iverson's black Horatio Alger storyline is not only urban but thoroughly American. His case shows that it is also not enough simply to be from the 'hood. One must be in regular contact with the 'hood in order to avoid being seen by both people of color and whites as a sell-out or as not really black (or brown or yellow in some cases). The question seems as much about "Who is urban?" as it is about "Who is black?"

The problem with imagining authenticity this way is that it locates "real blackness" or "real Chicanismo" in a particular set of experiences and social locations that are not part of U.S. public school culture. Schools are then defined as white places and "real" people of color become interlopers in their own neighborhood schools (Ogbu, 1995; Fordham, 1988). This is true to some extent. U.S. public schools value and inculcate white cultural practices, and consequently communicate to their students that "white is right." Some schools, particularly charter schools, have made attempts to create culturally responsive curricula that value and engage the cultures of the student body (Gay, 2000). Notwithstanding the criticisms of charter schools as private schools in public sheep's clothing, this has been one strategy to bridge the cultural divide between schools and the students of color from segregated urban neighborhoods and the educational system that alienates them from their home cultures.

Urban neighborhoods typically represent authentic ethno-racial identities in part because much grassroots and community based organizing happens in them. Aside from the problems of urban areas, like drugs and violence, many community organizations exist there, in part to help alleviate some of those problems. For example, police brutality is a significant problem for young men of color in poor neighborhoods. Urban communities have reacted to this problem by creating grassroots organizations to raise awareness and pressure police departments to change their policies and investigate cases of police misconduct. The criminalization of youths of color happens in a euphemized form in schools where black students are punished more harshly than their white counterparts for similar offenses (Parker and Stovall, 2005). This prompts a movement that links community based organizing to schools, making them sites for education and a more comprehensive urban reform beyond, but including, the school grounds (Warren, 2005).

For many suburbanites, the community organizations that do much of the work in sustaining and improving urban communities are outside of their purview. Because so many whites and suburban residents have little or no contact with people of color or the poor (aside from their nannies and housekeepers) their knowledge of life in poor urban areas is obtained from local news and popular culture. The important role of local organizations for neighborhood peace, mentoring, affordable and fair housing, anti-gang efforts, and improved public education are largely unknown to people outside urban settings, but very familiar to those who reside there. For example, criticized for his anti-Semitism in the media, Minister Farrakhan's role in urban community building rarely makes it on the news. Turned into a media spectacle, Reverend Al Sharpton's community advocacy is eclipsed by his eccentricities. These two examples suggest that attempts at urban renewal often happen with little recognition or fanfare from people who essentialize it as authentically ethnic or racial but not as a place of community agency.

The consequences of suburban and white ignorance of these community organizations are significant. Much of the public imagines people of color in urban areas as drains on the school system, lazy, helpless, and hopeless. Even when they are viewed sympathetically, which is not often, they are seen rather as passive victims of larger social inequalities, not agents or experts in their own lives. This image of urban residents portrays them utterly without power, creativity, perseverance, or intelligence to fight back against an unfair system.

As a result, public policies that regulate the urban poor typically treat them as passive and childlike. This image in part comes from the public's general ignorance about the substantial community organizing that happens in urban neighborhoods. People of color create organizations, creatively use meager resources, routinely lobby their elected representatives, and improve their communities. Even in the poorest neighborhoods, grassroots organizations exist to help alleviate the social and economic problems facing urban residents. These authentic community organizations are a key piece in the puzzle to improving life in urban neighborhoods and their schools.

The Urban "Jungle"

Aside from the many ways we have discussed it thus far, representations of urban schooling most commonly evoke images of the urban as "jungle." In this section, we discuss and problematize this representation in its larger context, including its racist overtones. In the "urban jungle" people imagine their city centers as teeming with black, brown, and yellow bodies, which are poor and dirty, criminal and dangerous. Gangs, violence, and drugs are closely tied to any image of the urban for most people. Some of this is real. Certainly most urban areas deal with disproportionate amounts of violence, particularly among young men, and a drug economy that makes victims out of buyers, sellers, and everyone in between. Our task here is not to assess the veracity of this image, but to define the implications of this particular social imagination on the schooling experiences of young people in urban areas.

Because so many people subscribe to the racist notion that urban areas are "jungles," many Americans believe that spending money on urban schooling is a "waste." Many people perceive children in urban areas as hopeless, going nowhere, unworthy, and without value or potential. In a word, they are "uneducable." Consequently, allocating money to urban schools is routinely a fierce political battle. In *White Racism*, Feagin and Vera's (1995) theory of racism as societal waste sheds light on this issue. They suggest that instead of thinking of resources spent on people of color as a "waste" we ought to realize that allowing all the potential and talent of people of color to go unused is true societal waste. Feagin and Vera argue that racism is a form of societal waste that the USA cannot afford. "What kind of things might we already have accomplished or invented had we developed all of our talent?" they ask. The problem is that many school board members, superintendents, state congressional representatives, and governors do not view racism as societal waste. Instead, in our color-blind era they are more inclined to see the victims of racism as a waste themselves, without talent, creativity, or intelligence to offer society. Perhaps even worse, many of our policymakers view children in urban areas as unworthy of the right to an education, and ultimately only useful for low wage labor or fueling the prison industrial complex (Piven and Cloward, 1993; Davis, 2003).

Central to how many policymakers view students in urban areas is how they think the kids and their families got there to begin with. Are the poor deserving or undeserving of social aid? This question is the basis for these concerns. The long-standing culture of poverty debate in social science and public policy circles highlights the way that different constructions of the problem produce starkly different policy solutions. Social science researchers have arguably done as much harm as good to poor people by studying their communities. Several analysts (D'Souza, 1996; Sowell, 1995; Murray, 1995) construct behavior in ghettos and *barrios* as out of control, and that the people living there are pathological and culturally deviant from the mainstream. Even scholars who acknowledge the effect of institutional discrimination often fall prey to cultural explanations for ghetto persistence (Wilson, 1987; Anderson, 1990; Massey and Denton, 1993). Some of these researchers have argued that there is an "underclass culture" that encourages laziness, joblessness (read: welfare dependence), victimhood, lack of personal responsibility (thus the 1996 Welfare Reform Act), instant gratification (read: illegal activities), irresponsible sexual behavior, and a lack of family values (Murray, 1995). Some pundits, like D'Souza (1996), even go as far as arguing that it is the deviant culture of urban people that is the root of the structural problems social scientists have measured (unemployment, income gap, education gap, family structure, incarceration rates, etc.). Sometimes, this charge occurs from inside communities of color, as in the case of Bill Cosby's speech in front of the NAACP's celebration of *Brown* v. *Board*'s 50th Anniversary, where he criticizes the parenting practices of poor and working class black families. We will have more to say about this event in the last section below.

The scholars and policy analysts who believe that the problem is largely cultural are likely to suggest "assimilation" efforts aimed at re-socializing the urban poor into the so-called mainstream. This means tying welfare benefits to "good behavior," like getting married, as was done in 1994 in Wisconsin where the welfare reform program was often referred to as "Bridefare" (Neubeck and Cazenave, 2001). Another strategy from the culture side of the debate is aimed at re-socializing mothers into workers. Mothers are rewarded for their "good behavior" of working outside the home by receiving welfare benefits, now denied to those who do not leave their children in order to enter the workforce. This national policy, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, drastically reduced welfare benefits and required all people to work (even mothers of small children) in order to create a "culture of work." This strategy has been punitive and paternalistic: change your ways or lose out on the resources of the country. It is also important to note how the family value of mothering is inverted for poor women and women of color. There is a strong cultural imperative, especially from conservative policymakers, for mothers to stay at home with their children. When poor women do this, however, they are seen as lazy, pathological, undermining a culture of work, and therefore ultimately harming their own children (Reese, 2005).

Others disagree with the cultural analysis and favor a focus on structural explanations of ghetto and *barrio* conditions. Instead, to explain the educational and social disparity this set of scholars uses the language of institutional discrimination, inadequate educational opportunities, economic restructuring, a reduction of real wages for the poorest workers, inadequate medical care, and racial segregation (Katz, 1990; Gans, 1996; Feagin, 2001; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2003). The culture vs. structure debate is still important because the two different understandings of the problem lead to two starkly different assessments of whether the poor are deserving or undeserving, and what types of policies should be enacted to solve the problem. In this analysis, student readiness and home culture are not so much the determining factors as much as how the breakdown of neighborhood works against stable lives for young people, economic poverty means that basic material comforts are missing, and structural racism becomes a daily assault that students of color (particularly poor) must navigate and avoid despair while doing so. There are still a significant number of scholars and analysts who believe the problem of persistent poverty is largely institutional. They suggest structural solutions, such as improving public schools in poor neighborhoods, strengthening unions, requiring businesses to pay a living wage, reducing police brutality and abuse, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and developing businesses and jobs in inner-city areas (Kozol, 1991; Wilson, 1997; Nelson, 2001; Katz, 2002).

The culture of poverty debate has always centered primarily on people of color who are already U.S. citizens. The debates are typically about African American communities and sometimes about large Latino communities like Puerto Ricans in New York or Mexican Americans in Los Angeles. However, there is another very important and dominant image of urban neighborhoods—as foreign. Many people imagine urban areas as dirty, smelly, crowded immigrant enclaves where few people speak English and residents are hostile to whites or outsiders. In this scenario, many view urban neighborhoods as dominated by an informal or black market economy, third-world-like in their conditions of poverty, and a haven for those who "refuse to assimilate" to American ways. This image is particularly true in cities that host large numbers of migrants in the United States such as Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, and New York. Immigrant neighborhoods, often labeled in the diminutive of their residents' place of origin, such as Little Saigon, Little Havana, and Koreatown, represent for many people the heart of the problem with today's immigration: cultural pluralism. Catering to these "foreigners" by multiculturalizing the school curriculum, providing strong versions of bilingualism, or diversifying the teaching staff become part of the larger problem. The solution put forth is to create an educational version of the Patriot Act in order to reclaim the U.S. nationalism lost in the wake of "minority rights" that led to the softening of American global domination.

Aside from the most common complaints about today's immigrants ("They take our jobs" and "They come for the welfare money") many people complain that today's immigrants refuse to assimilate to American (read: Anglo) ways and are therefore hostile to American culture. Urban immigrant neighborhoods highlight this alarmist concern over national language, food, religion, and increased separatism because they are typically spaces where business is done in languages other than English, the products and foods available are unfamiliar to most people outside of that ethnic group, and the signs and storefronts often reflect the languages, values, and concerns of the particular ethnic group. Many whites (and some African Americans as well) find it disconcerting to have their own language and cultural norms decentered from their dominant Western and American position. Although the diversity and number of ethnic restaurants make urban areas attractive to many people, those traits also offend many Americans who are uncomfortable when Anglo dominance is challenged.

Nativist attitudes have implications for school policy. Because many policymakers and even some teachers view urban neighborhoods as foreign and therefore problematic, schools often project negative attitudes toward their students from immigrant families. Some teachers resent immigrant parents for not being more "involved" with the school even when the school environment is hostile to non-English speakers (Valdes, 2001). Attitudes about bilingualism are also wrought with contradiction. Many people in the USA glamorize bilingualism when it is attained through study at elite European universities, but denigrate it when immigrant languages (e.g., Spanish, Chinese, or Farsi) are maintained at home (Fishman, 1966). That is, when American whites speak a language besides English, this skill is perceived as "liberal" or "sophisticated" (i.e., the right kind of urban). When Mexicans learn to speak English (a process whose difficulty should not be downplayed), but insist on maintaining their Spanish, they are imagined as resistant to American culture (i.e., the wrong kind of urban). Despite the wave of public hysteria to the contrary, noted sociologist Alejandro Portes (2002) assures the U.S. public that "immigrant children today are rapidly embracing English over their native languages. The threat is less of a Babel-like society than of a society without cultural memory—at a cost to both immigrant children and the nation" (p. 10). Ultimately, U.S. xenophobia will erode the nation's effectiveness in global interactions and undermine the success of immigrant students in U.S. schools.

Urban neighborhoods are clearly racialized spaces, but they are also gendered spaces and the experiences and images of men and women in them differ significantly. The racist cliché of the "urban jungle" is also a highly gendered one. The urban jungle is decidedly feminine when the pundits talk about teenage parenthood, welfare dependence, and the out of control sexuality of women of color (see Luttrell, 2003). However, the urban jungle can also be masculine when the topics are gangs, violence, and the drug economy. Although women and men are of course involved in all of these activities, the

different issues evoke specific images of problem women or problem men, all of which affect how younger people are perceived in schools. When women from urban areas are discussed it is most typically in relation to their sexuality and bodies. Popular culture reflects this characterization of young women of color, particularly through music videos. Even a cursory examination of hip-hop videos reveals an unending parade of young women of color, hyper-sexualized and routinely degraded. Similarly and interconnected, real women in ghetto or *barrio* neighborhoods are seen as sexually out of control (they have several male partners), overly fertile (they have too many kids), irresponsible (they refuse to use birth control), and unfit mothers (they are addicted to drugs while pregnant) (Collins, 2004). All of these assaulting and controlling images of women of color in urban areas suggest that they are "bad women" and just as significant, they are unlike the "good women" who are married, white, suburban, and middle class.

When girls are pregnant in urban high schools they are often humiliated by school nursing staff and school counselors. They are often told that their futures are over and they are on the road to welfare dependence and a lifetime of hopelessness and poverty just like their mothers, aunts, or neighbors. In her book, *Pregnant Bodies Fertile Minds*, Wendy Luttrell (2002) describes the dominant discourse on teenage mothers in schools as "wrong girls." In her ethnography she chronicles the humiliating treatment the girls receive from adult school staff as well as the alternate view of themselves that many of the girls offer. Luttrell's evidence suggests that despite the pathologization of young pregnant students of color, this group of girls is able to project a counter-image of themselves as having some "good sense," of recognizing the myths that impinge on their subjectivity, not unlike Willis' (1977) lads in *Learning to Labor*, who were able to penetrate the discourses about their own working class limitations (see also MacLeod, 1987). Luttrell's book is one of a handful of works that discusses how girls respond to negative discourses and policies toward them as young mothers (see also, McDade, 1992).

Urban spaces are often seen as hyper-masculine spaces dominated with acts of machismo and one-upmanship (Anderson, 2000). This is especially true with respect to urban gangs and drug markets. Although girls and women are increasingly involved in gangs and drug sales, the public still largely views these activities as male. In the nightly news in most American cities, gang culture and life are reduced to the description of a shooting frequently followed by the disclaimer, "Authorities believe the shooting may have been gang related." This sentence can be found at the end of almost any homicide description in an urban area, usually attached to the picture of a young male of color. Certainly, many shootings in urban areas are "gang-related" in the broadest sense, but they are also related to many other more mundane things: hurt pride, self-defense, economic disputes, etc.

The American public is at once enthralled with urban gang life and appalled

by it. Hollywood has produced dozens of movies about young African American, Latino, and occasionally Asian men involved in illegal activities and violent gang life (Benshoff and Griffin, 2003). Some of these movies have been more thought provoking than others. Nonetheless, despite the national love affair with urban crime drama, there is also a substantial punitive streak among much of the American public. The majority of voters support harsher and harsher prison sentences for drug activity and violent crime (Johnson, 2001). Laws such as three strikes, mandatory minimums, and longer penalties for crack cocaine and other "urban drugs" all provide evidence for the punishing tendency of suburban America on urban kids. Nowhere is this development more poignantly captured than in the 2004 documentary film, "Juvies." The film takes the viewer through the lives of troubled adolescents whose mistakes earned them jail sentences made excessive by the "enhancement" laws that some states, like California, have adopted to punish criminals who appear to have ties with gangs or were carrying guns when the crime occurred. These gang and gun enhancements basically seal an adolescent's life when they add many years on top of normal sentences. As a commentator on the film remarked, a youth population that displays violent behavior shows us the extent to which their society is plagued by a violent condition not of their own making.

Our views of young men in urban neighborhoods have already had a significant impact on our public policies. The policies of local police forces have also changed in response to the perceived threat of young urban men: more surveillance, broader ability to disperse crowds and control what public space people occupy, and the ongoing problem of racial profiling. For example, in Los Angeles, it is now illegal for people to "cruise" in their cars with music blaring from them. Our level of tolerance for loud music aside, this development is clearly racial for it is a response to the booming, bass-heavy music to which many young students of color listen in the urban setting. In contrast, the white image of a motorcycle rider atop a loud Harley-Davidson is not criminalized. In fact, one can order a Harley with a specific muffler sound in pursuit of a certain aesthetics. The immediate irony here is that the music form of hip-hop (black noise) is eclipsed by bellowing mufflers as a form of art (white noise). This analysis is not meant to caste aspersions on Harley riders, but to point out the racial politics of urban life, the first criminalized, the second aestheticized.

It is also worth mentioning that all the concern about violence committed by young men of color is coupled with a near complete disinterest in the hundreds and sometimes thousands of young men of color who are killed in urban neighborhoods each year (usually by other young men of color). Most suburban residents fear for their own safety when they think of urban violence and are ignorant of the large number of lives of men of color lost in their own cities each year. This ignorance is assisted in part by the local news outlets that rarely

cover homicides of poor, young men of color—that is, until it involves a white victim. By themselves the lives of young men of color are often viewed as too unimportant to be covered in the news.

The attitude of many white, suburban Americans toward urban life is full of contradictions. In a sort of modern-day minstrel show, many middle class white students perform their image of urban blackness and brownness by imitating their view of urban life through clothing, music, language, and behavior. This aping of urban culture, however, is a big money business. Rappers, clothing companies, the music industry, Hollywood, and other social imagineers have worked together to sell the ghetto in a way that is unprecedented in U.S. history. It is fashionable, in its own outsider, low-status way, to don urban clothing lines (Fubu, Enyce, Baby Phat, Apple Bottom), listen to rap or hip-hop music, and speak with the current colloquialisms of urban youth. In this sense, the urban is simultaneously performed and ridiculed. It is contemporary chic and denigrated—"don't act so ghetto"—all at once.

Urban life has been commodified and is for sale often for prices only middle class suburbanites can afford. Urban identity can be performed or "tried on" by white students or middle class people. They can dabble in the "urban" without ever losing their access to suburban space and white privilege. In short, they have the luxury of being urban without the burden. They can partake in the "jungle" without communing with its people—that is, unless we invoke the image of Tarzan, played by white actors who seem to be the only white person in the real jungles of Africa. This is not a new development, previously witnessed in the days when white entertainers from Pat Boone to Elvis appropriated and legitimated black music. What seems novel about the new fetishism is its economic intensification and its urban character. In the case of music, there was much about the previous racial appropriation that took from rural black sounds of blues. Today's appropriation is decidedly urban.

Social and Policy Implications for Education: Re-imagining the Urban

Imagining the urban is intimately connected with policies that impact urban people's lives, particularly students of color. From medication to education, the pathological depictions of the urban contribute to policy creation that predominantly endorses behavioral and cultural responses to urban conditions instead of an institutional intervention to address its deep structure. This tone is summarized in the recent furor over Bill Cosby's public comments about the crisis in poor black communities. Previously in "Fat Albert," Cosby was able to connect with the black urban community in a way that did not alienate its youth. In his NAACP speech, Cosby's criticism of the "wrong kind of blacks" (read: poor) imagines the urban as a criminal, pathological, and largely self-perpetuated poor black condition. Delivered at the NAACP's event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Cosby's "Ghettosburg Address" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghettosburg_Address)

has sparked not only controversy but is likely to influence public policy regarding urban education for students of color. The speech does not only represent Cosby's clarion call for poor blacks to change their "misguided ways;" it is interpreted through the public's urban imagination, one that now finds its legitimacy in a high profile black figure. Cosby's message reminds us of the class warfare within the black community itself, one half that relegates the signifier "Nigger" to racist whites, while the other appropriates "Nigga" for new urban politics.

Cosby's speech is heuristic insofar as it provides an exemplar for our general point about the social construction of urban spaces. It is not important so much for its truth-value (that is, whether or not poor blacks are responsible for their plight), but for its social consequences and implications for education policy. Although Dyson (2005) correctly points out that Cosby does not have a social researcher's training, Cosby's sheer stature is enough to capture the imagination of the American public, its "collective racial unconscious." Cosby's commentary also affects the black political landscape and community. Spike Lee showed mild support for the comedian whereas "Boondocks" comic artist, Arron McGruder, criticized Cosby for "vilifying the black youth." All three entertainers were interviewed separately by talk show host Tavis Smiley. One may level the same criticisms at Chris Rock, whose stand-up show in Washington, D.C. expressed sentiments similar to Cosby when Rock publicized his disdain for "Niggas" and love for "black people." The main difference is that whereas Cosby's speech seems to cut himself off from poor blacks (the wrong kind of urban), Rock's performances still seem to maintain a strong connection through his comic material, including his love for hip hop and rap. In other words, Cosby leads us to perceive little or no redeeming aspects to the black urban culture and experience. In his own defense, Cosby considers his speech a form of challenge to poor blacks to change their parenting ways. That said, Cosby's shaming tactics may subvert his desire to "uplift" poor blacks.

In schools, we do not have to look too far for connections. For example, when Cosby suggests that black youth should dress more appropriately, this implicates black students who may be perceived as not ready to learn based on their appearance. When Cosby shows concern for the way that black youth speak in public (whether or not we want to call this black English), he joins the discussion over language politics in schools. Not only does this pressure black students to adopt a more middle class vernacular, but what is perceived as a standard, unmarked, white way of speech. This is reminiscent of a problem with even insurgent books on integration, such as Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities*, where it is assumed that black students would do well to study next to white students, that is, blacks *need* whites in order to do well in school (Foster, 1993). We do not debate the importance of necessary skills for the advancement of one's career and social legitimacy. But to suggest that blacks lack access to decent education and jobs because they speak non-standard dialect and dress

with low-rise pants belies the structural origins of their oppression. In fact, so-called black wear and language are hardly black-specific anymore, as white, Asian, and Latino youth have appropriated such styles. They have become "merely urban" as hip hop becomes popular with whites, many of whom live in the suburbs. In the case of whites and Asians, compared to black youth their life chances do not seem damaged to the same extent when whites and Asians dress or talk "black." They are not imagined as criminals in the same way for wearing the same thing.

To the extent that urban youth of color promote their style as a form of resistance to whiteness (Dyson, 2005; see also Rose, 1994), they represent what Gramsci (1971) calls "good sense." These acts, while not necessarily counter-hegemonic, recognize the urban space as a place of struggle. To the extent that they dress against whiteness, black youth are cognizant of the racial strife that they did not create but live with on a daily basis. If educators listen, they discover that youth of color, while ensnared in their own contradictions, penetrate the racial and class formation, and are able to exert their own will on these processes rather than merely being reproduced by them. Instead, the common school reactions to these urban dynamics include: metal detectors, more police on campus, emptying of backpacks, random searches of lockers and bags, no hats (to avoid gang affiliation). Since most, if not all, educators believe that creating a learning culture is part of raising achievement, we must conclude that these incarcerating policies re-create prison conditions where little learning is likely to take place. Student resistance in the urban setting is often difficult to decipher. It is complicated by the effects of media, fast capitalism, and a heightened sense of identity politics. Often, urban youth grow up more quickly than their suburban counterparts because the former are faced with harsh conditions and an even harsher future prospect. The innocence that adults treasure in young people is lost more quickly in urban youth.

Urban Latino students have dealt with the transformation of the *barrio* from a literal term connoting community to a term of burden. Through English-Only movements and anti-immigrant legislation, Latino students have been imagined as the culprits of the Third-Worldization of urban places, like Los Angeles. With their national attrition rates higher than those for blacks, Latino students may become the new urban underclass. When we imagine them as "illegal immigrants" rather than displaced people in search of a decent life, and whose labor is fully welcomed by both policymakers and business owners, educators ensure that Latino children's education becomes expendable. At best, their education remains irrelevant to their worldview and cultural understanding, ignoring much of the cultural resources that urban families have to offer, otherwise known as "funds of knowledge" to Moll and Gonzalez (2004) and "ecologies of engagement" to Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, and George (2004). Or, we run the risk of dumbing down their curriculum by depriving them of access to classic European texts with high status and replete

with cultural capital, in exchange for a "relatable education" with examples about drugs, gangs, and other problematic constructions that are rarely put in their proper structural contexts.

As mentioned, the urban imagination also comes in gendered forms of racialization. Cosby's comments contribute to this dynamic when he criticizes black women for failing to control their children, their own sexuality, and their men. Controlling images of women in urban areas have direct implications on policies in urban schools. For instance, many girls of color in urban areas are encouraged to use birth control from an early age. Often the types of birth control that are suggested are invasive and hard to reverse such as Depo Provera and Norplant. Young urban women's sexuality is seen as problematic and needing to be controlled in contrast to suburban female sexuality, which is often viewed as something to be protected and saved. The sexuality of girls of color is a problem; the sexuality of middle class white girls is a virtue.

In light of the high stakes testing that No Child Left Behind has put in place in U.S. schools, urban schools again take center stage in the elusive search to bridge the "achievement gap." Under this legislation, teachers and administrators are in a mad dash to show Adequate Yearly Progress or face sanctions, including the reconstitution of its teaching and administrative staff or takeover by a private educational company. Commendable for its public decree that failing schools shall not be tolerated any longer, NCLB won the support of both Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill. In addition, it targets precisely the student subgroups that need the most assistance: students with disabilities, English language learners, poor students, and racial minorities. In particular, urban schools show that several of the subgroups, like English language learners, children of color, and poor students, meet to paint a complex picture of *who* is being left behind, but equally as important, *where* they are. In addition, since it is a well-known fact that students of color are classified with disabilities at higher rates than their white counterparts, NCLB's impact in urban settings is all-encompassing. Already suffering from lack of resources, faster teacher burnouts, and higher levels of violence, urban schools are imagined as the testing ground for a school reform that offers little extra funding. In fact, NCLB falls short of providing more funds to struggling urban schools in light of the unequal needs they face because its creators declare that getting students to proficient levels in reading and math is already the school's job.

High on threats and low on assistance, NCLB dooms public urban schools to fail targets that are virtually impossible to meet (Darling-Hammond, 2004). The Act lays down the gauntlet for schools to improve in as little time as two years or lose control of their funding, face student exodus, or eventual reconstitution of their staff. NCLB receives criticism not so much for its noble dream of leaving no child behind, but for its ability to leave behind the social origins and conditions that plague American urban schools, such as racism, economic inequality, and institutional discrimination (see Cochran-Smith, 2005). Urban

schools suffer a lion's share of NCLB's burden and blame if all students do not reach 100 percent competency by 2014, an unreasonable expectation in light of the fact that no state or country currently boasts those achievements (Linn, 2003).

NCLB's measure of Adequate Yearly Progress will confirm the popular image of inner-city schools as a problem, or the negative pole in the dialectics of the urban. It comes with a "diversity penalty" for urban schools that serve multiple social groups and are required to report satisfactory progress on more indicators than homogeneous schools (Novak and Fuller, 2003). Urban immigration, media spectacles, threats of terrorism, violence, and higher costs of living converge to create a learning condition that NCLB's focus on higher test scores is woefully unable to crack, a move which "mistakes measuring schools for fixing them" (Darling-Hammond, 2004, p. 9). Higher test scores, while showing one kind of improvement, fail to account for the relevance of the learning taking place in urban classrooms, favoring a language of outputs (e.g., test scores) over inputs (e.g., instructional support).

Re-imagining urban schooling takes a concerted effort to recast its conditions neither as a gift of progress nor its underbelly for some unfortunate people. It requires a radical shift in urban planning, economic base, and schooling infrastructure. But consistent with this chapter's thesis, it also necessitates an equally radical questioning of the way educators and concerned people currently imagine the urban from a place of decline to a place of possibilities. Part of this recasting of the urban means that businesses may work more closely with communities in addressing the waste of both human potential and talent, which would add to the viability of the nation, let alone the creation of a democracy (Henig et al., 1999). Although it would be difficult to re-imagine businesses separate from their profit motives in the context of late capitalism, there is a difference between for-profit educational ventures like the Edison Project and the kinds of neighborhood compacts that Henig et al. found in places like Washington D.C. and other urban cities around the USA. Likewise, Henig et al. suggest that urban leadership would not only help urban communities and schools through increased funding, but also through increased civic capacity to speak politically about issues that affect their lives. It no doubt requires a critical amount of coordination between students, teachers, administrators, parents, scholars, businesses, politicians, and NGOs, but we should expect nothing less in re-imagining the urban, if by that we do not mean the idle notion of mind activity. Rather, if by re-imagining we mean a dynamic and engaged cultural process, then it is more a material act at its base and less a tinkering with ideas about the urban absent of institutional change.

In this chapter, we have argued that imagining the urban is an intimate part of making urban schools. It is an imagined reality that Americans construct even as we make daily sense of it. Re-imagining the urban in this context means that school reform must account for the complexity of teaching in an urban setting where the specific forces of civilization meet, such as the political economy, racialization, and gendered meanings. This re-imagining has taken some root in the "new urbanism" movement of housing and lifestyle that is dense but planned, with a mixed use of housing and commercial space, mixed income, and smaller utility spaces. This is the urban as anti-suburbia. This is also a response to the urban as "unlivable." The dialectics of the urban may still be resolved into a higher logic that makes its promises and burdens a shared venture between whites and people of color, between the rich and poor. Re-imagining the urban does not only take a certain courage to change, but a commitment to education in the concrete, rather than sentimental, sense.