

Ain't No Makin' It

Aspirations & Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood



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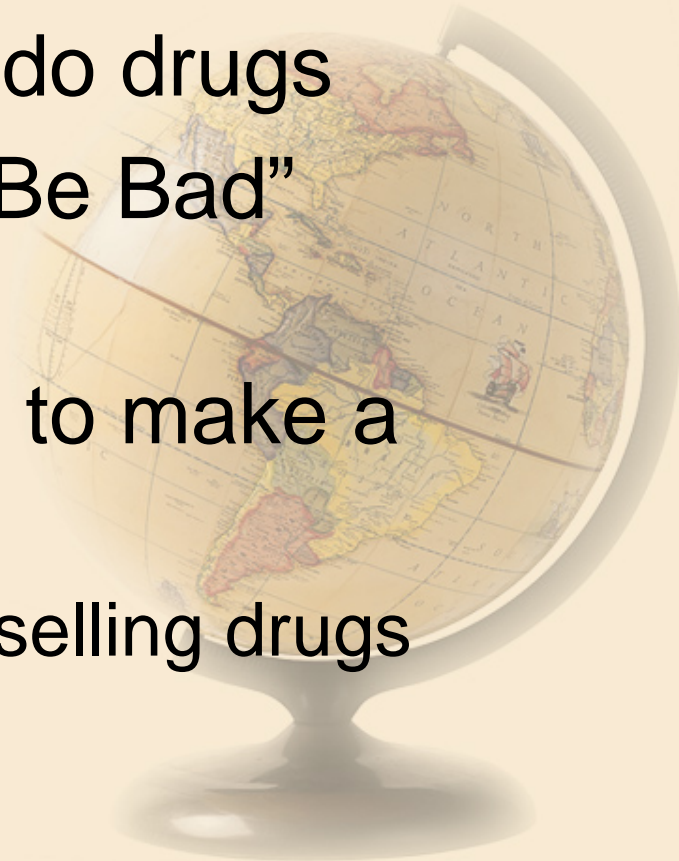
About the Book

- Written by Jay MacLeod
 - Served as a youth counselor in the neighborhood of Clarendon Heights.
 - While there, decided to do a sociological study
- Since he had already befriended the boys in the study, it was easy to get them to open up about their future



The Hallway Hangers

- A mostly white group of teenagers
 - Two black members
- Constantly get drunk and do drugs
- Personify the “You Gotta Be Bad” Attitude
- Main goal as teenagers is to make a quick buck
 - Many members do this by selling drugs



The Hallway Hangers

- Strong group solidarity
 - They are the only ones who look out for each other.
- Racism exists, even towards their black members
- Have no hope for education helping them



The Brothers

- Mostly Black group of teenagers
 - One white member
- They believe in the American Dream
- Instead of drugs, they prefer the company of girls and participating in athletics
- Very little racism in group
 - When confronted with racism, they prefer to just walk away



Family and the Hangers

- The Hallway Hangers have very few male authority figures
 - Most of their dads are gone, and brothers are dead or in jail
- Most parents are high school drop-outs



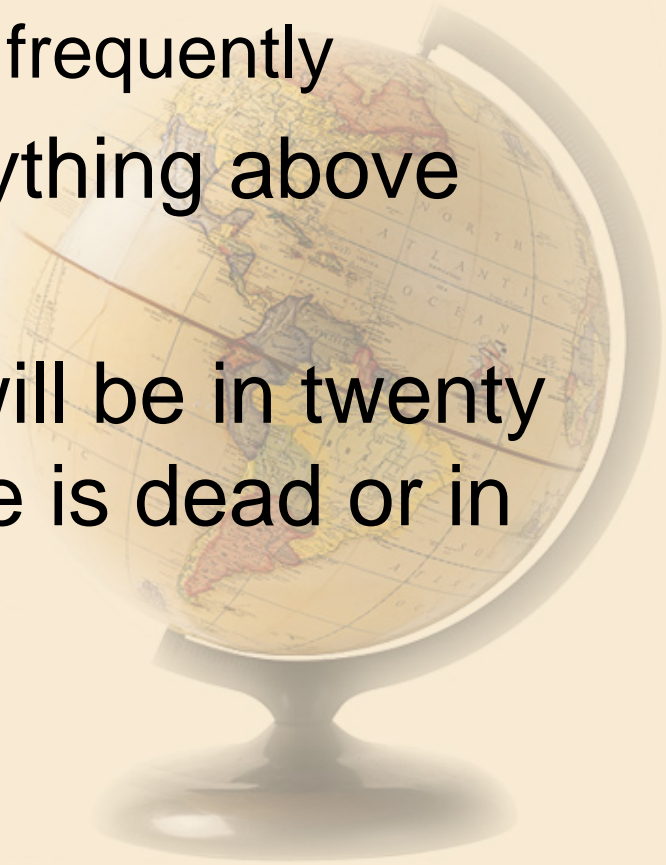
Family and the Brothers

- Have more male authority figures than Hangers
- Give more respect to family members than Hangers
- More optimistic about getting their family out of the projects by graduating and getting white-collar work



Hangers and Work

- The Hangers don't hold down steady jobs
 - They switch from job to job frequently
- Have no aspirations of anything above blue-collar work
- When asked where they will be in twenty years, the typical response is dead or in jail



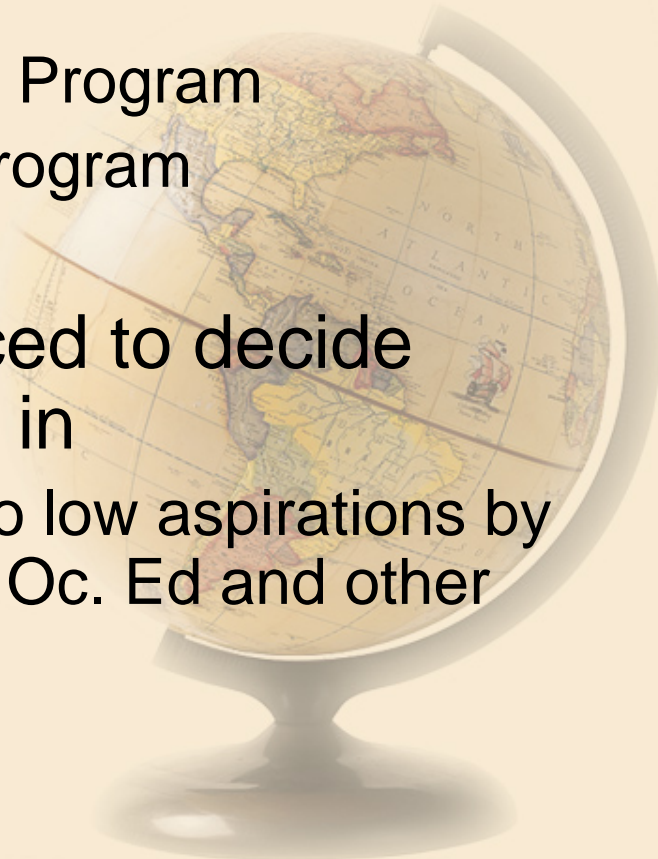
The Brothers and Work

- The Brothers have high aspirations
 - See themselves in white-collar jobs
 - Jobs in management and computer fields
- When asked where they will be in twenty years, they say they will have a good job, family, and a nice house



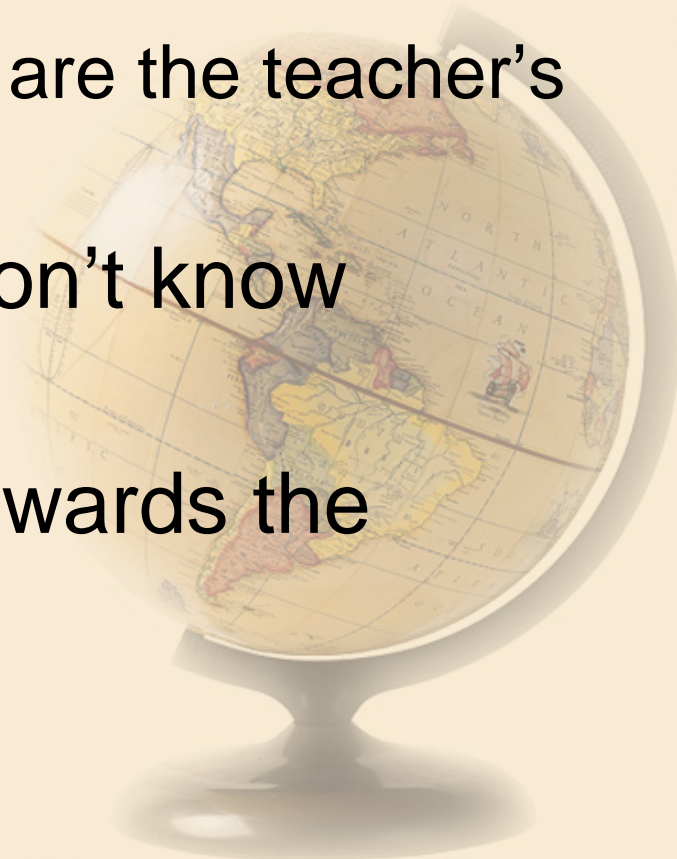
School Structure

- Lincoln High School has many programs
 - 4 regular houses
 - 4 alternative programs
 - Separate Occupation Education Program
 - Building Trades and Services Program
 - Adjustment Class
- In 8th Grade, students are forced to decide what program they want to be in
 - Counselors actually contribute to low aspirations by recommending students go into Oc. Ed and other alternative programs.



Hangers and School

- “I fuckin’ hate school”
- Hangers hardly ever attend school
 - When they do attend, they are the teacher’s nightmare
- They think the teachers don’t know anything
- Think the school caters towards the black students



The Brothers and School

- They believe that they only need to try hard to succeed
- The devaluation of white-collar work by the Brothers contributes to their high aspirations



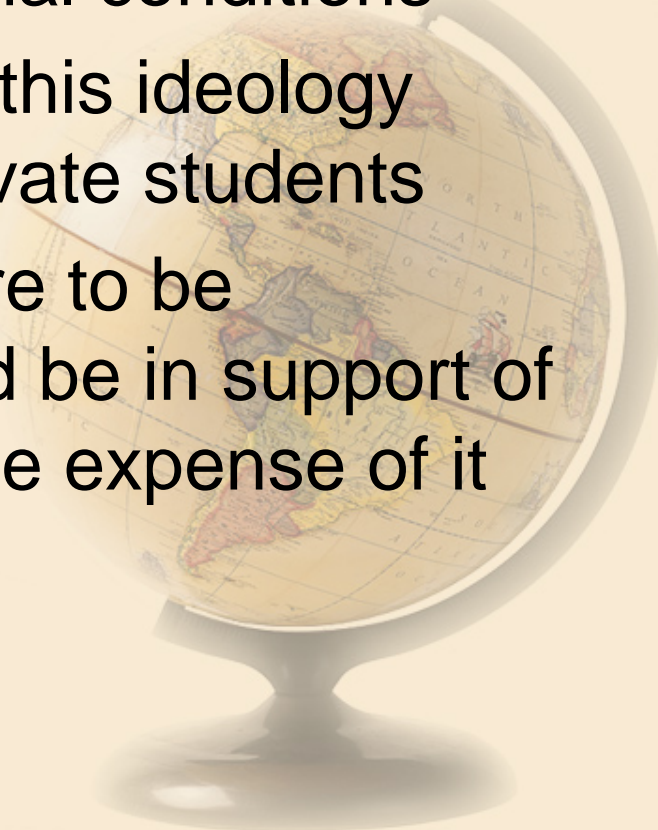
Conclusions

- How do you create higher aspirations for the students?
- How do you make them succeed?
- What is the school's role in answering these two questions?



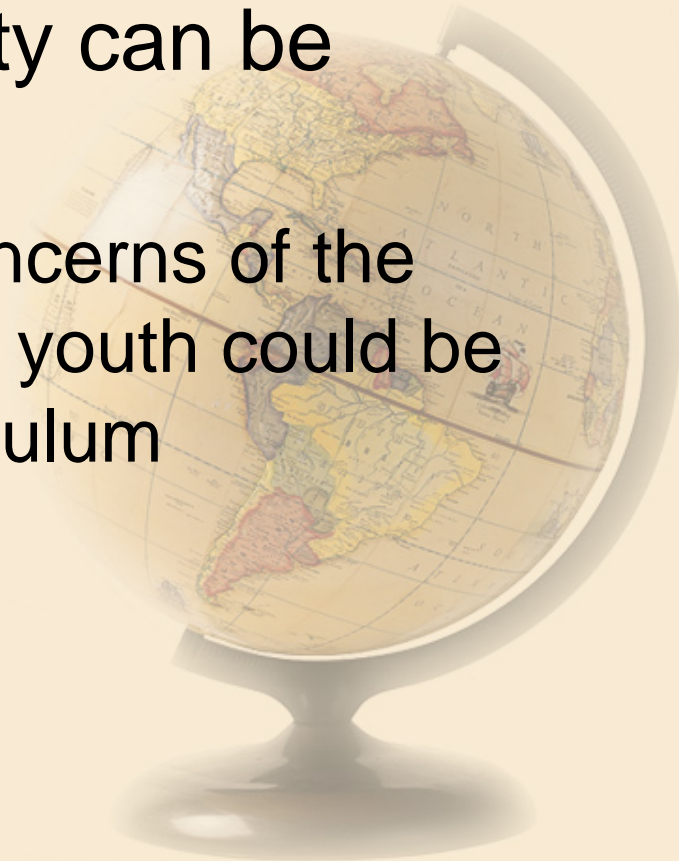
Role of School

- MacLeod's first recommendation is to get rid of the Achievement Ideology that denies the acknowledgement of their social conditions
- Teachers believe and preach this ideology because they think it will motivate students
- If students like the Hangers are to be motivated to achieve, it should be in support of their self-esteem and not at the expense of it



Curriculum Change

- If the curriculum is made responsive to the student needs, the gap between academic skill and maturity can be bridged
 - Novels dealing with the concerns of the working-class and minority youth could be incorporated into the curriculum



Materials

- Students also need current materials
 - Inner-city schools lack necessary books, classrooms, desks, science labs, and properly trained teachers
 - Inner-city schools have been allowed to deteriorate to the point that they are dangerous



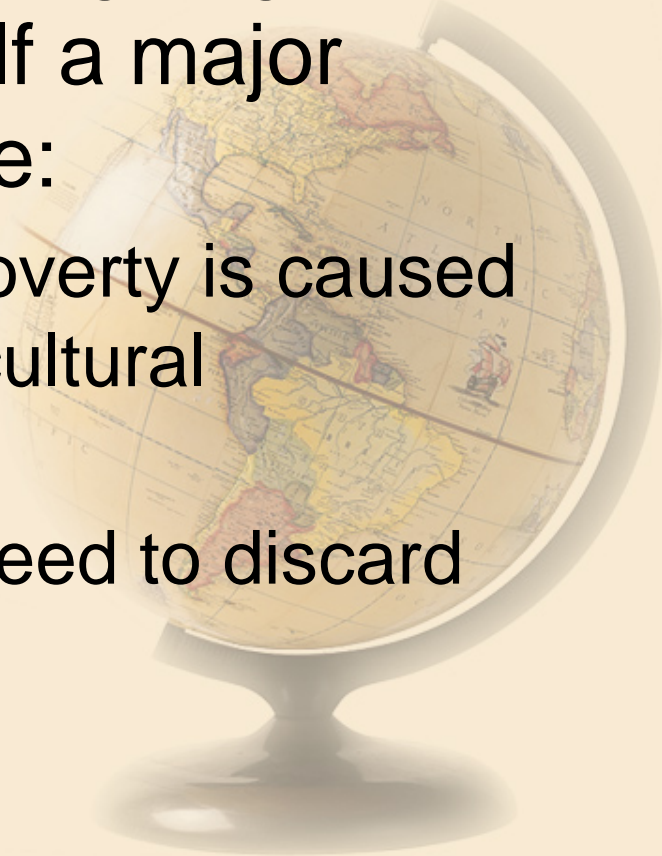
Social Change

- Changing the system overnight is impossible, but making people aware of social problems will lead to progressive change
- Through education, you can gain critical understanding of social problems



Class Dismissed

- Structural inequality causes poverty
- This study points an accusing finger at one dominant dogma, itself a major obstacle to political change:
 - The persistent belief that poverty is caused by the personal vices and cultural pathologies of the poor
 - To make any change, we need to discard this long held dogma



Afterward

- Despite high aspirations, the Brothers are in the same place economically as the Hangers
 - Only Brother that did remotely well was Chris, the white member
- Hangers still unable to hold down jobs
 - Of the members, the two black members became the most disheveled

