

## CHAPTER 1

# The Politics of Identity

### *Historical and Theoretical Contexts*

As a text concerned with the politics of ethnic and racial self-expression in the 1990s, the data and conclusions that emerge in this work must be read as artifacts of both a theoretical legacy and a specific history. During the past decade, Americans have witnessed the greatest rise in immigration since the turn of the century. With immigrants—the majority from Asia, Latin America, and Mexico—arriving at the rate of more than one million per year, today's America has been described as “a truly multicultural society marked by unparalleled diversity” (“America's Immigrant Challenge,” p. 3). Nowhere is this more apparent than California, the site for this study. Paralleling this has been an upsurge of discussion about diversity among domestic Americans, with Americans of color pushing for broader representation within the political and public spheres. This is reflected particularly in discourse concerning public education, with debates raging around the content of the curriculum, the nature of culturally sensitive pedagogy, and the provision of education to immigrant children.

Expanding on issues raised in the introduction to this text, this chapter presents a critical overview of developments in theory, concerning ethnic and racial identities and the politics of engaging diverse school youth. My purpose is to situate this text, providing a framework for the chapters that follow. Though several studies are referenced and discussed, I do not attempt to summarize all relevant research but rather to illuminate and discuss three central themes, each of which has implications for the forthcoming analysis. First, reflecting the discourse in broader American society, scholars have increasingly come to recognize previously unpredicted mani-

festations of race and ethnicity in American society. With this have come new conceptualizations of the factors and processes that affect their salience and practice, both for groups and for the individual. These ideas, emphasizing the political and relational nature of social categories, have important implications for educational theorists and practitioners. Most notably, they point to the potential for flexibility, with regard to the ways in which individuals practice the racial and ethnic aspects of their social identities, with this practice contingent on a variety of factors, both situational and national. This points to the importance of considering an array of contextual factors when seeking to interpret and explain student behavior.

Second, reflecting a continued desire to explain and ameliorate the reproduction of social inequality along ethnic and racial lines, educational anthropologists have increasingly moved beyond explanations that emphasize differences in cultural behaviors. Previous explanations have been complemented by theories that incorporate consideration of societal factors. By demonstrating critical connections between social structure, group ideology, and educational engagement, this approach has led to important advances with regard to understanding differences in the engagement of diverse students. At the same time, the global nature of such theories limits their explanatory power on the local and individual level.

To support the latter part of the argument advanced above, in the third section of this chapter I present empirical evidence which suggests that school- and classroom-level factors may also influence the behavior and ideology of diverse students. These findings indicate the importance of moving beyond the primary emphasis on historical and structural factors emphasized in contemporary anthropological theory to incorporate the more fluid, situational conceptions of social categories emphasized by contemporary theorists.

#### SHIFTING CONCEPTIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

Debates concerning manifestations of ethnic and racial identities in America have been framed largely around understanding factors relevant to their salience, emergence, and disappearance. Throughout the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, ethnicity in America has been popularly conceptualized as something temporary. Often viewed as a working- and lower-class style that will erode with social and geographical mobility (Alba, 1990), ethnicity and its manifestations (e.g., group solidarity, a sense

of ethnic identity) are typically linked to shared culture, experience, and interests, as well as membership in homogenous informal social structures. As immigrants acculturate, this traditional model assumes that manifestations of ethnicity will gradually be replaced by Anglo American traits and a "mainstream" sense of identity. Though race has traditionally been seen as a biological category, similar assumptions have structured policy debates concerning its cultural manifestations. Again, such differences are expected to disappear with time as people of color assimilate to mainstream society.

A variety of factors, however, call this model into question. For one, older scholars assumed that the social and geographic mobility necessary for the dispersal of cultural and social differences associated with race and ethnicity would occur. Yet, while there is evidence that European American immigrants have approached this mobility, even in the third and later generations, educational, occupational, and income differences continue to separate African Americans and Latinos from their European American counterparts (Alba, 1990).

Moreover, there is data to indicate that social mobility changes but does not necessarily eradicate the salience of race and ethnicity. Among Mexican Americans who have attained middle-class status, for example, language use clearly declines. Yet the cultural emphasis on extended familism, reflected in ties to family and community, appears to strengthen over time in the United States (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Similarly, middle-class African Americans report feeling a stronger bond with African Americans than with their social class; consistent with this, many continue to live in neighborhoods that are primarily African American (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 1991). Finally, even among European American groups who have experienced the economic and social mobility presumed necessary for total assimilation, some aspects of ethnicity remain salient (Alba, 1990). For example, large numbers of White ethnics continue to describe themselves in terms of ethnic labels, attach some importance to these, and can point to some ethnically relevant experience in their lives. Among members of this group, manifestations of ethnic identity, reflected in a heightened awareness of ethnic background, knowledge of mother tongue, and social sensitivity to ethnicity, appear to increase with education.

These and other factors have led to increasing recognition that manifestations of race and ethnicity may not follow a linear pattern, with acculturation leading to assimilation, but rather reemerge in new shapes and forms. Consistent with theorists that see race and ethnicity as partially political phenomena (see also Bell, 1975; Glazer & Moynihan, 1975; Nielsen,

1985), anthropologists and other social theorists have increasingly argued that ethnic and racial identities are socially constructed, with such construction tied to political, economic, and personal circumstances. Over time and across settings, groups and individuals may employ cultural symbols in novel ways to construct boundaries and gain material resources (Anzaldúa, 1987; Clifford, 1988; Hall, 1987; hooks, 1989; Kondo, 1990). Clifford (1988), for example, describes the public emergence of tribal identity among Mashpee Native Americans in a small town near Boston. Majority residents until the 1960s, the Mashpee were gradually outnumbered by European Americans. As local government passed from Mashpee control and large tracts of undeveloped land were claimed by European Americans, Mashpee residents became increasingly concerned. The more obvious markers anthropologists and others traditionally associate with culture and ethnicity were also nonexistent; surviving language had not been seen since 1800, and distinct religious and political structure had also disappeared. Yet, in 1976, this seemingly acculturated group organized to sue the federal government for possession of 16,000 acres of land, basing their claim on the argument that they, as a tribe, had been collectively despoiled of lands in the mid-nineteenth century. Referring to this reemergence of identity among Mashpee citizens, Clifford contends:

Groups negotiating their identity in contexts of domination and exchange persist, patch themselves together in ways different from a living organism. A community, unlike a body, can lose a central "organ" and not die. All the critical elements of identity are in specific conditions replaceable: language, blood, land, leadership, religion. Recognizable, viable tribes exist in which any one or even most of these elements are missing, replaced or largely transformed. (1988:338)

Consistent with Clifford's argument, others have described how groups may develop new and shifting manifestations of race and ethnicity distinctive in cultural form (Anzaldúa, 1987; hooks, 1992; Ogbu, 1994; Rosaldo, 1989). Such patterns emerge in response both to the group's political and economic situation and the desire to maintain identity. Commenting on Chicano Spanish, for example, Gloria Anzaldúa writes: "Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally. . . . For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo . . . what recourse is left to them but to create their own

language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither español ni inglés, but both” (p. 55).

For individuals, the complex political, economic, and historical relations that give rise to shifting manifestations of race and ethnicity are also manifested on the personal level, shaping projections of identity (Anzaldúa, 1987; Kondo, 1990). Speaking of her position as a Japanese American carrying out fieldwork in Japan, for example, Kondo describes how she was moved toward a more Japanese female role:

At its most extreme point, I became “the Other” in my own mind, where the identity I had known in another context simply collapsed. The success of our conspiracy to recreate me as Japanese reached its climax one August afternoon. . . . Promptly at four P.M., the hour when most Japanese housewives do their shopping for the evening meal, I lifted the baby into her stroller and pushed her along ahead of me as I inspected the fish, selected the freshest looking vegetables, and mentally planned the meal for the evening. As I glanced into the shiny metal surface of the butcher’s display case, I noticed someone who looked terribly familiar: a typical young housewife, clad in slip-on sandals and the loose cotton shirt called “home wear,” a woman walking with a characteristically Japanese bend to the knees and sliding feet. Suddenly I clutched the handle of the stroller to steady myself as a wave of dizziness washed over me, for I realized I had caught a glimpse of nothing less than my own reflection. (Kondo, 1990:16–17)

Kondo was able to marshal the psychological and material resources to distance herself from consuming pressures to assimilate: “I resolved to move into a new apartment, to distance myself from my Japanese home and Japanese existence” (p. 17). However, others lack access to the power necessary to maintain this delicate balance. In his controversial autobiography, for example, Richard Rodriguez (1982) speaks frankly of the choice he perceived between educational success and maintenance of his home language, arguing that it was necessary to leave his working-class Latino self behind in order to succeed in a Catholic school. Having lost his facility with Spanish, his link to the past, Rodriguez was further driven to compensate for his loss through working to assimilate to academic life: “I never forgot that schooling had irretrievably changed my family’s life. That knowledge,

however, did not weaken ambition. Instead, it strengthened resolve. Those times I remembered the loss of my past with regret, I quickly reminded myself of all the things my teachers could give me" (p. 50).

Thus, the voices of individual authors and data from whole group studies combine to suggest that manifestations of racial and ethnic identity do not follow a predictable path, but ebb, flow, and reshape in response to the politics and relations that characterize changing national, regional, and local social situations. With individuals and groups ever able to develop new cultural forms conducive to the expression of identity, it becomes relevant to consider contextual conditions that give shape to varied forms of group and self-expression.

#### CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND SCHOOLING: ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS

One of the more enduring cornerstones of American thought is the conviction that education offers a route to social mobility for peoples of all backgrounds. Education is popularly conceptualized as one factor integral to achieving the economic parity and geographic dispersal presumed basic to integrating diverse citizens into American society. Yet, while it is clear that education improves individual chances for social mobility, it is equally apparent that schools work less well for impoverished African American and Latino school children. Overall, African American and Latino youth, as well as children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, drop out at rates higher than their peers (Rumberger, 1987; National Center for Education Statistics, 1994: Table 103).<sup>1</sup> There are also significant achievement gaps among students of European American, African American, and Latino descent, with European Americans outperforming their peers on tests of reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency (National Center for Education Statistics, 1994: Tables 106, 112, 116). For the many students of color (and women) who do graduate from high school, educational credentialing also falls short of its promise of equal opportunity. Among high school graduates age twenty-two to thirty-four, for example, 8 percent of European American males live in poverty. This compares to 11 percent of European American females, 16 percent of African American males, and 31 percent of African American females (Fine, 1991).<sup>2</sup>

In the context of patterns that suggest education is often more reproductive than transformative, anthropologists have worked since the 1960s to

understand and interpret the relationship between diverse youth and schooling. Their efforts have generated a long-running debate concerning the relative influence of cultural and structural factors on student engagement and achievement. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, in response to theories implying that impoverished African American children are culturally deprived of stimulating learning environments (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Deutsch, 1967), a series of ethnographic and sociolinguistic studies were employed to demonstrate that students of color encounter stimulating, but culturally different, learning environments. In 1969, for example, sociolinguist William Labov provided detailed descriptions of the conversations of urban African American youth to support his argument that "in fact, Negro children in the urban ghettos receive a great deal of verbal stimulation, hear more well-formed sentences than middle-class children, and participate fully in a highly verbal culture; they have the same basic vocabulary, possess the same capacity for conceptual learning, and use the same logic as anyone else who learns to speak and understand English" (p. 179). Studies of African American (Heath, 1982), Native Hawaiian (Gallimore, Boggs & Jordan, 1974), and various Native American communities (Cazden & John, 1968; John, 1972; Philips, 1972, 1982) provided further evidence of the rich learning environments that can characterize culturally different homes and communities.

Building on this ethnographic data, initial anthropological explanations of the academic difficulties experienced by children of color emphasized cultural differences in interaction and learning styles.<sup>3</sup> Arguing that verbal and nonverbal communication patterns are culturally learned patterns that generate different and often conflicting expectations between persons of different cultures, anthropologists theorized that cultural differences produce systematic and recurrent miscommunication in the classroom that over time escalates into academic trouble and failure. Because cultural explanations for academic failure do not occur to teachers, educators turn to labels, attributing inherent negative traits to their students, such as laziness. Thus, while failure is in reality co-produced by teachers and students, the explanation of such failure is institutionalized as deficiency.

Missing from such culture-focused arguments, however, were considerations of 1) the structural factors that may contribute to social reproduction, 2) the relationship between inequality and group belief systems, and 3) examination of the fact that many groups with cultural styles different from that of the mainstream succeed in the U.S. educational system (Ogbu, 1978; 1982). In recognition of these difficulties, anthropologists have increasingly

considered groups' historical experiences with economic and political inequalities in seeking explanations of social reproduction. Linking historical experiences to the evolution of group ideology, Ogbu (1987, 1994) has developed the notions of oppositional social identity and oppositional cultural frame of reference. Terming peoples who were originally brought to the United States through slavery, conquest, or colonization "involuntary minorities" (African Americans, Native Americans, some Mexican Americans, and Native Hawaiians are examples), Ogbu argues that a long history with oppression and racism has created a skeptical attitude among involuntary minorities toward opportunities for gainful employment and social mobility. Doing well in school, therefore, seems pointless. Cultural differences become markers of identity to be maintained in opposition to the dominant culture; further, groups may develop secondary cultural differences, claiming and exaggerating certain forms of behavior, symbols, events, and meanings as appropriate because they are not characteristic of members of another population (Ogbu, 1987). Providing an oppositional frame of reference that has arisen in response to stigmatization, these factors enter negatively into the process of schooling, affecting engagement and motivation. In this sense, involuntary minority youth manifest an oppositional identity similar to that of the disaffected White working-class British students depicted in Willis' (1977) classic ethnography of social reproduction.

Ogbu applies a similar analysis to consideration of "immigrant" or "voluntary minorities"; peoples who moved more or less voluntarily to the United States because they believed it would bring them greater economic well-being, better overall opportunities, and greater political freedom. Immigrant minorities are said to perceive America as a land of opportunity and believe therefore that the effort they devote to schoolwork will pay off. Academic success, therefore, is seen as additive learning and cultural differences are seen as barriers to be overcome. Further, when economic and political conditions in the United States are better than in their home countries, immigrants may manifest a "dual frame of reference," in which opportunities in the United States are constantly compared and assessed in light of the situation in the country of origin.

Educational ethnographers considering involuntary and immigrant minority students have documented differences in both perceptions and expressions of identity. Fordham and Ogbu (1986), focusing on the ideology and behaviors of thirty-three African Americans at a low-income urban high school, describe how a majority of the youths interviewed perceived several behaviors associated with academics—working hard to get good



grades, spending time in the library studying, being on time, and reading and writing poetry—as “acting White.” Academic striving brought social (peer group) pressure, including accusations of disloyalty to the group and its cause, which in turn created anxiety about fear of losing one’s friends and community.<sup>4</sup> Maria Matute-Bianchi (1986) documented a similar oppositional ideology among second- and third-generation Mexican-descent students.

Ethnographic research on immigrant students also provides evidence of links among group ideology, national experience, and academic engagement (Gibson, 1987; Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993).<sup>5</sup> Suarez-Orozco describes the ideology of fifty Central American high school students, who, on average, have a lower dropout rate than their Mexican American and Puerto Rican peers.<sup>6</sup> The youths face a number of institutional barriers: “A school atmosphere of drugs, violence, low expectations, the calculated tracking of minority students to nonacademic subjects, bitter teachers, the seductive offers by more acculturated peers to join the street culture, and the need to work to help the family” (Suarez-Orozco, 1987:290). Nevertheless, students describe schooling as the most important means of status mobility, manifesting a “dual frame of reference” in which they compare present opportunities in the United States to the past realities of their war-torn environments. Linking school success to familial obligation, the immigrants, like the individual quoted below, voice a sense of duty to families whom they perceive as having made tremendous sacrifices to send them to the United States:

She wants to study to become somebody. She wants a career. Her parents are very poor. She wants a career to help her poor parents, so they do not have to suffer so much. She studies hard and becomes somebody. Her parents are so proud of her. (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993:130)

Gibson (1987), in her study of Punjabi Indian youth in the San Joaquin Valley, found a similar drive to achieve, associated with the group’s immigrant status, a factor she believes helps to account for this group’s superior performance on standardized achievement tests relative to their European American counterparts.

Ogbu’s macrosociological theory is attractive both in its breadth and broad explanatory power, and it illustrates the critical role that identity and ideology may play in the schooling process. Nevertheless, studies raise questions about the validity of concentrating purely on immigrant status when considering and predicting manifestations of identity and its meaning among

groups. First, it is not clear that opposition necessarily implies academic failure. Contemporary studies of Iranian (Hoffman, 1988), Canadian Jewish (Shamai, 1987), French Algerian (Raissiguier, 1994), and Mexican American (Foley, 1991) students have demonstrated that both immigrant and involuntary youth may express oppositional cultures, while at the same time achieve academically. For example, Hoffman found that her Iranian informants did not view America as a land of opportunity but rather as an inferior alternative to life in Iran. Furthermore, although these students are extremely successful academically, teachers see them as “problem students” because of their perceived lack of respect for the school and its rules. Hoffman argues that Iranian students selectively reject and resist the values and methods of the school, while at the same time accepting its instrumental value—that academic success leads to later economic reward.

Second, consistent with contemporary theories of race and ethnicity, the manifestation and meaning of resistance appears to be shaped not only by immigrant status but also by social class status and the particulars of the local economic and political context (Foley, 1991; Jibou, 1988; MacLeod, 1987; Weis, 1990).<sup>7</sup> In a study of Mexican American teens in a southwestern Texas town, for example, Foley (1991) describes a group of academically successful middle-class Mexican Americans. While these students are “involuntary minorities” and manifest secondary cultural discontinuities in the form of invented Chicano cultural forms of expression, they also express traditional Mexican behaviors and engage in actions and behaviors conducive to winning favor with school authorities. Foley links this behavior to outcomes associated with the civil rights movement in small South Texas communities. The upwardly mobile Chicano parents of these youths and their peers are increasingly represented in government, professional, and small business positions. In this context, education does not appear superfluous, a factor that may help to account for why an additional 10 percent of students of Mexican descent in the area are finishing college than are their parents.

Finally, there is ample evidence to indicate that schools and the teachers within them can shape the behavior of oppositional youth. Yet, with regard to school-based contextual factors, teachers and schools appear almost incidental in Ogbu’s theoretical framework, providing the settings that ensure outcomes but doing little or nothing to shape them. The final section of this chapter thus describes research relevant to the argument that manifestations of identity and academic engagement are shaped not just by broad sociohistorical factors, but also by practices and relationships at the school level.

## IDENTITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND SCHOOL-LEVEL PROCESSES

Literature concerning the relationship between diverse youth and schooling indicates that academic engagement for children of color is complicated and dependent on their situations. Engagement appears to depend not only on historical, economic, and political realities, but also on day-to-day factors and practices at the school and classroom levels. These findings suggest potential relationships between the meaning and practice of identity and the politics and relations that characterize educational contexts.

It is apparent, for example, that school context may shape positive academic outcomes for students whose background characteristics qualify them as "oppositional" (involuntary minorities). There is increasing evidence, for one, that Catholic schools produce higher achievement rates for Latino and African American youth. In tests of student achievement (as measured by performance on HS&B survey tests), Catholic school African Americans and Latinos outperform their comparable African American and Latino public school peers. After controlling for both student ability and socioeconomic indicators (parental education, occupational status, and certain possessions in the home), Catholic schooling in and of itself exerts a moderate but meaningful influence on measured achievement (Keith & Page, 1985). Statistical analyses suggest that the "Catholic school effect" may be due largely to the strong relationship between enrollment in Catholic schools and enrollment in advanced courses. Even after controlling for course enrollment, however, a small Catholic school effect continues to exert itself directly on achievement.<sup>8</sup> There is also evidence that within the public sector, schools differ in terms of the outcomes they produce for both voluntary and involuntary youth of color (Fordham, 1991; Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Tomlinson, 1991). In a study of twenty British urban comprehensive schools, for example, Tomlinson (1991) found striking cross-school differences in attainment for pupils with the same social and ethnic background characteristics.

When explaining such outcomes, scholars look not only to differences in features indicative of disciplinary technologies (e.g., course enrollment), but also to normative practices conducive to the development of alternative discursive systems (Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; Fordham, 1991; Metz, 1986). Describing the striking educational turnaround at a primarily African American junior high school in New York City, for example, Fordham (1991) emphasizes practices which foster student solidarity, while simultaneously encouraging competition conducive to academic effort. Cohorts at

Jordan Mott Junior High School are divided into four "teams," each balanced for ability. Classes within teams accrue points based on individuals' academic performance and attendance; these enable all team members to attend basketball games, go on class trips, and be present at class parties. Arguing that a desire to seek self-realization through service to the group is a culturally learned and prized value among African Americans, Fordham hypothesizes that Mott is successful partially because it works to link group cohesion to academic effort, thereby tying identity to school achievement. In contrast, the traditional school's emphasis on division by ability and on one-on-one competition run counter to the African American emphasis on collectivity and joint action. Fordham hypothesizes that these traditional divisionary practices create a dynamic in which academically successful youth feel forced to choose between academic success and racial identity. Similarly, in a study of three desegregated magnet schools, Metz (1986) analyzes the meanings generated by contrasting achievement ideologies, arguing that the extent to which teachers were able to stimulate academic progress in students of color (primarily African American) varied with the pedagogical mission the school adopted. Within a school for the gifted and talented, for example, Metz identifies a dominating ideology of competition and achievement. Here, students of color not only did not work hard, but also engaged in diverting antics that helped them avoid public academic performance. In two other magnet schools, the first dedicated to individually guided education and the second to open education, there were rewards for competence and progress, relative to one's former accomplishments, and a curriculum structured to encourage intense teacher-student interaction. Here, Metz found an increase in the academic engagement of students of color and a noticeable decrease in teacher-student conflict and interracial tensions.

A second pattern of findings also suggests relationships between classroom practice and manifestations of identity. Numerous studies describe changed behaviors in involuntary minority children after the adoption of "culturally appropriate" pedagogical practices and social arrangements (Au, 1980; Au & Jordan, 1981; Heath, 1982; Moll & Diaz, 1987; Tharp & Galimore, 1991; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1987). Originally manifesting behaviors that might be characterized as "oppositional," these students are described as engaged in changed social arrangements. As part of a research and development effort targeted toward increasing literacy among Native Hawaiian children, for example, the Kamehameha Early Education Project (KEEP) adapted reading instruction that incorporates participation structures characteristic of the "talk-story," a favored form of communication among

Native Hawaiian adults. Microanalyses of classroom discourse indicate that lessons incorporating these culturally congruent participation structures were associated with higher rates of pro-academic student behavior (Au & Mason, 1981). Similarly, Shirley Brice Heath (1982) worked with teachers to incorporate types of questions typically used in the African American community into classroom lessons. Heath found that European American teachers who socialized their own children to language depended heavily on questions conducive to teaching basic analytical skills typical of elementary school discourse. Examples include learning to label, identifying parts of a picture, naming parts of a whole, and talking about parts out of context. (e.g., What color is that coat? What is that?) In contrast, African American parents asked relatively few analytical questions. Rather, children were expected to learn how to respond to questions similar to those used in adult conversation. For example, children were frequently asked to relate to the whole of incidents and the composite characteristics of persons, objects, and events. (e.g., What's happening here? What's that like?) With incorporation of these latter question forms into social studies lessons, previously disengaged African American children "talked, actively and aggressively became involved in the lesson, and offered useful information about their past experiences" (1982:124). Moreover, teachers were able to convince their African American students to learn traditional classroom discourse skills. Heath argues that, as a result of this strategy: "Students caught onto the idea that this [asking analytical questions] was a somewhat strange custom, but one which, if learned, led to success in school activities and, *perhaps most important, did not threaten their ways of talking about things at home*" (1982:125, emphasis mine).

More recently, and consistent with the goals of this study, anthropologists and sociologists have focused directly on identifying links among student ideology, manifestations of academic identity, and features of instructional and programmatic settings. Mehan, Hubbard, and Villanueva (1994), for example, describe the student ideology that arises in a program that is highly successful in preparing low-income "involuntary minorities" for college. The program, functioning as a daily class elective, also places mid- and lower-achieving youth in college-prep courses and supports their academic development through tutoring and college counseling. Students in the program develop an ideology in which discrimination and prejudice are recognized, cultural identity is affirmed, and achievement is valued as a route to occupational success. Mehan and colleagues link this ideology—more like that of immigrants than involuntary minorities—to cultural practices particular to the

program. These include those that work to foster group identification (marking group identity in a public manner and isolating group members for one period of the day) and the provision of opportunity to develop friendships with other academically oriented youth of color. Similarly, Weis (1990) demonstrates how school processes work to further the formation of ideology among White working-class high school males in a town where the mill economy has virtually disappeared. In contrast to previous studies of working-class male students, youth here express value for education and adhere to the behavioral norms of the school. However, at the same time, they do little to prepare themselves for college, earn average grades, focus primarily on passing, and evidence little engagement in the content of the curriculum, thereby revealing a “contradictory code” or respect toward schooling. Weis links this ideology to class status, the specifics of the local economy, and school processes. Like students, teachers articulate the instrumental importance of schooling but emphasize form rather than substance in learning. Students encounter a curriculum where routine, order, and following directions are emphasized—following teacher directions and memorizing prepackaged notes rather than engaging in discussions or activities conducive to constructing and challenging knowledge.

Findings from these studies indicate that it is critical for scholars to look at schools as more than stages for cultural and social reproduction. As institutions characterized by disciplinary technologies and discursive systems, schools may themselves play a role in furthering or restructuring the formation of identity among youth. Thus it is critical for those concerned with social change to begin to consider reproduction from multiple contextual perspectives.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

With a shifting demographic landscape and indications that manifestations of social categories are more complex and multifaceted than previously conceptualized, there have been dramatic developments in the ways in which race and ethnicity are discussed. Once associated with global sets of behaviors and orientations connected to shared culture, today race and ethnicity are increasingly viewed as political and relational social constructions. At the group level, studies have indicated that manifestations of race and ethnicity do not steadily decline but appear to flow in response to shifting economic, political, and local conditions. For individuals, identity manifests itself in complex ways, its salience and meaning shifting also with contextual meanings.

These theoretical developments provide a context for the critique of current dominant anthropological approaches to the relationship between identity and engagement in schooling. Reflecting developments in the field of sociology and statistics that indicate different patterns of academic achievement between minority groups, educational anthropologists have increasingly emphasized the relationship between the meanings youths attribute to their ethnic/racial identity and their group's historical position within the national economic and political structure. These meanings enter into the process of schooling, shaping responses to the education offered. I have suggested that such theory, focused exclusively on larger societal factors, overlooks the role that both local and school contextual factors may play in shaping students' ideology and subsequent engagement. Literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as the successes of individual schools and programs, indicates that teachers and schools can negotiate with students whose sociohistorically produced peer group norms run counter to schooling. Further, there is evidence to suggest that ideology and identity reflect not only broader societal factors, but also features present in the institutional settings where youth act.

The next chapter moves forward with this point. I present data collected from fifty-five diverse students in four urban high schools. My emphasis is school and classroom factors which teens name as relevant to the construction of opposition, particularly among youth of color.