6

IDENTITY, AGENCY, AND CULTURE

Black Achievement and Educational Attainment

PETER C. MURRELL JR.

The issue of Black achievement in public schooling has received much attention in the educational research literature on urban education policy and instructional practice in recent times. It continues to be a confounding issue in urban education particularly since the scholarly literature on the topic has tended to frame African American *underachievement* in terms of a deficits perspective, rather than an assets perspective that considers Black *achievement excellence* (Hilliard, 2003). The framing of Black underachievement has most commonly been configured as a problem of an *achievement gap*, by which is meant the performance disparity between groups such as European American students in comparison with African American and Hispanic students, and between economically advantaged versus low-income students. As a result of this framing, a significant portion of research literature in educational policy, sociology of education, and learning theory has attempted to explain why the differential performance exists and what can be done to "close the gap."

Since the early popularization of the term, a number of scholars have decried this simplistic framing by offering more sophisticated critical interpretations of "the gap" showing how it is constituted by a whole host of inequities in resources and opportunity (e.g., Hilliard, 1992; Williams, 1996). These interpretations challenge the tacit assumption that achievement gap phenomenon is solely a matter of differences in the individual intellectual capacity of the compared groups (e.g., Anyon, 2005; Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Murrell, 2002; Noguera, 2003). Given the other significant but little-discussed gaps—including the inequality of per-pupil funding, disparities in the quality of teachers, inequity of scholastic resources, and unequal access to educational capital—it can be argued that the popular characterization of America's educational challenge as one of "closing a gap" may actually serve to perpetuate, rather than eliminate, the achievement gap by further camouflaging the historically rooted inequality embedded in the practices, policies, and politics of American education (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2006; Murrell, 2002).

Given the points raised above, the focus of this chapter is not the on achievement gap but rather on a deeper interpretation of achievement for African American learners—namely, the psychosocial development of African American learners in the context of schooling and the aspects of identity development that are crucial to their school success. We know that race is a significant factor in the schooling success of African American children and youth (Boykin, 1986; Carter, 2003; Fordham,

1996; Howard, 2003; Murrell, 2007; Spencer, 1999; Spencer, Cunningham, & Swanson, 1985; Steele, 1997; Weiler, 2000)—but how? Race influences the development of scholastic potential of African American children even when inequality factors such as teacher quality, equal access to educational resources, and equity of funding are taken out of the equation (Ogbu, 2003; Steele, 1997). Racism in America compromises the developmental integrity of the social and cultural contexts of school life necessary to ensure children's personal and scholastic development. African American learners are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of the ways in which race affects schooling practices and their academic socialization. Given the structural inequality of the wider society as well as the way that structural inequality gets reflected in the daily social and cultural contexts children experience in school, urban educators and theorists need to understand the psychosocial dynamics in the development of academic identities of African American learners.

The framework offered here explains academic achievement as the dynamic interplay between the *racial identity* and *academic identity* development of Black students. In doing so, the framework contradicts the commonly held assumption that the underperformance of African American students, as revealed in achievement gap data, is a consequence of their *disidentification* with education and with schooling. A close read of the research literature on race, ethnicity, culture, and academic performance (see Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Stinson, 2007, for reviews) reveals little direct evidence for this assumption. The simplistic "disidentification hypothesis" persists because too little is known about the actual development of academic identity among African American youth in relation to their achievement, their racial identity, and Black culture. Too much of the relevant work on the psychosocial development of African American learners produced by scholars of color has been overlooked (Spencer, 1987; Stevenson, Best, Cassidy, & McCabe, 2003). Only recently has there been research on academic-oriented identity as both a *product* and a *process* of socialization and schooling practices (e.g., O'Connor, 1997, 2001).

The remainder of this chapter will examine and apply what is known about social identification among African American learners to address the question: What does it mean to

be *both* African American and an academic achiever in different school contexts? The discussion uses the situated-mediated identity theory to explain the contribution of identity processes (of both learners and teachers) *and* the contribution of the social-cultural context to the academic performance of African American learners in school settings. The situated-mediated identity theory explains the dual contribution of psychocultural processes (i.e., cultural practices and discourses) and the sociocultural conditions in the social life of schools so that we might better understand the situativity of academic identity for African American students.

IDENTITY AND BLACK ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The Psychosocial Dimensions of Disidentification

As noted above, a stock explanation of Black academic underachievement is some version of the notion that African American students *disidentify* with schooling. Operating with this assumption, some authors seem to lay blame for lower academic performance with the individual students and the choices they make that lead to their diminished academic attainment (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Lewin, 2000; McWhorter, 2001). Others seem to locate the blame in the bleak prospects for opportunity in the broader social, historical, and political context and the subsequent nihilism felt by young African Americans that diminishes their effort in school (Noguera, 2003; West, 1993). Each account involves a form of *disidentification* to account for underachievement and implies some measure of rejecting values and dispositions vital to academic success. The claim here is that a complete explanation for both academic excellence and underachievement of African American learners cannot solely be based on any one of these three arenas of social identity formation but must comprehensively integrate social identification in the three areas: (1) the individual, (2) the individual's local cultural context of social networks, and (3) the broader societal, political, and cultural context. An explanatory framework must draw on all three. This integration was the attempt of the *cultural ecological theory*, to which this discussion will turn presently.

While the idea of disidentification is important to the explanation of African American achievement, let me explain why it cannot be *the* explanation of underachievement. First, it is not clear what the term *identification* means in the discussion of Black achievement. There are a variety of meanings of the term identification in scholarly literature addressing achievement of African American students. For example, it appears as a *sociological construct* referring to volitional choices young people make about their academic behavior; it appears as a *sociocultural construct* referring to forms they choose to represent themselves; it appears as the *psychological construct* referring to role-identity and the way race, class, and ethnicity have shaped one's personality vis-à-vis schooling. It even appears as a *cultural construct* in reference to the orientations of groups. Hence, since there are a variety of interpretations of what it means to *identify*, disidentification cannot serve as a single unified explanation of identity-mediated achievement—at least until there is a consistent meaning of the term.

A second problem with disidentification as an explanation of school achievement is that it does not make sense to say that a young person *disidentifies* with *education* or *schooling.* Regardless of whether you adopt a cultural, sociocultural, or psychological perspective on identification, an individual can neither *identify* nor *disidentify* with school or with education in general. Social identification is a matter of affiliating with *people*—usually a particular grouping of individuals. "The school" does not qualify as such a grouping. Identification is a process that works with reference to a particular grouping of people and not with abstractions or institutions. In other words, social identity is made with respect to social groups and relationships (Jenkins, 2004; Tilly, 2006). A favorite teacher can serve as a role model for a young person but a school cannot. In a complex social system or institution such as a school, representations are varied, complex, and contradictory in such a way that it simply does not make sense to speak of someone identifying or disidentifying with school.

The third reason why disidentification is not an explanation for underachievement is the most important: There is really no evidence to suggest that African American learners, whether successful or unsuccessful, actually devalue or disown education (Carter, 2005; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Carter (2005) made the case that social and cultural capital does not operate in the simplistic ways put forth by Fordham and Ogbu (1986). She argued that although African American and Latino youth may in fact characterize certain cultural (social-situational) practices as "acting White" that might correspond to "academic behavior," this is by no means based on their academic aspirations, but rather on their social connections and in-group identity. Similarly, Perry (2003), drawing on the work of Boykin and Toms (1985), argued that African American learners have a distinctive social group identity that is at least partly defined by powerful cultural values regarding literacy, learning, and education in African history and culture.

So while social identity is important in achievement, disidentification is not an acceptable explanation for African American underachievement. Social identity is not generic but determined by the individual's social sphere. Social identification occurs in the "local culture"—the crew, posse, the "homies," and so on—that define social identity in the acts of interrelating on an ongoing basis. People, young and old alike, construct their symbolic worlds using the meaning systems immediately and substantially available around them in local cultures, groups, enclaves, etc. they affiliate with (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Murrell, 2007). There are, of course, many local cultures within a school. So to understand social identification of African American learners (or any learners for that matter), it is necessary to understand individuals in relationship to the local cultures they participate in. That is the purpose of the framework presented below.

Beginnings of a Psychosocial Cultural Notion of Identity

One proposition on which there has been consensus over the past 50 years is that schooling experiences of Black learners are comparatively more difficult than for White learners in American society. There is less agreement regarding the explanation of what the psychological and educational impact is on African American learners. Inquiry into African American children's psychosocial development in school settings, and how forms of racism might influence it, was ushered into social science research by the pioneering work of Kenneth B. Clark. The now famous "doll studies" conducted by Kenneth B. Clark and Mamie Phipps Clark were

the scientific evidence used to demonstrate the deleterious effects of segregation on Black children in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954 (Clark & Clark, 1939, 1940). They found that Black children, when given choices, consistently preferred white dolls to brown ones. The Clarks concluded that these doll preferences were due to racial segregation and wrote,

> It is clear that the Negro child, by the age of five, is aware of the fact that to be colored in contemporary American society is a mark of inferior status. . . . The negation of the color, brown, exists in the same complexity of attitudes in which there also exists knowledge of the fact that the child himself must be identified with that which he rejects. *This apparently introduces a fundamental conflict at the very foundations of the ego structure* [italics added]. (p. 350)

The Clarks' work was important because it was the first social science research to seriously examine the relationship between the psychosocial development of Black children and stressors embedded within White social and political contexts that might affect their ability to perform in school. Developmental theorists of the time assumed that the solution to African American children's achievement problems was desegregation and the removal of racial isolation and inequitable educational resources.

While some aspects of the validity of the doll studies methodology have been criticized (Burnett & Sisson, 1995; Vaughan, 1986), this early work nonetheless demonstrated the possibility that self-deprecating racial identification among African American children diminished, and was perhaps diminished by, the quality of their learning experience in school. Although instrumental in the winning of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling, the notoriety of the findings may have had an unfortunate side effect. By foregrounding the intrapersonal psychological impacts of racial isolation and racial stigma on African American children, these findings may have lent more credence to an individual deficit model view of Black children in subsequent social science research.

The *deficit model* originally referred to lines of social research that viewed African American children and adults as impaired by the degraded social and economic conditions, in which they were forced to live and hence always inferior in comparison with middle-class European American

norms (Brofennbrenner, 1979). In the case of individual social identity, African American learners were "damaged goods," and this view set a precedent of seeing effects as a matter of psychological damage, as opposed to a matter of the conditions in children's social and cultural environments necessary for healthy psychological development. Subsequent explanations of Black underachievement in the decades to follow were similarly based on this *deficiency perspective*—a "damaged goods" optic that was embodied in the assumption that Black learners developed a diminished self-concept as the result of racial stigma. This optic ushered in a precedent of research that looked at family and sociocultural contexts in deficiency terms (e.g., Coleman et al., 1966; Moynihan, 1965). Hence, rather than focusing on what Black learners were not receiving developmentally and intellectually, the focus was on the imagined ill effects of discrimination on the psyche of African American learners.

Although this later research did begin to pay some regard to the social environment, the "damaged goods" optic with respect to African American learners persisted throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, characterized by a deficiency paradigm termed *cultural deprivation* and *cultural disadvantage.* The working assumption in this paradigm is that decrements in Black learners' school attainment were due to the degraded home and social environment. The common argument in this body of work was that African American youth in low-income city communities were *culturally disadvantaged* and therefore placed at a relative disadvantage in comparison with their White, culturally mainstream peers (Deutsch, 1963; Deutsch, Katz, & Jensen, 1968). According to this perspective, "culturally disadvantaged" students fail because they are not prepared for the high expectations and standards of their middle-class teachers.

This optic in conjunction with the ongoing ideology of Black inferiority in American popular culture occasionally gave traction to the idea that the deprived and degraded status of African Americans results in decrements in intellectual ability that may be passed from one generation to the next. For example, Arthur Jensen (1969) linked the "innate inferiority" deficiency perspective to the "culturally deprived" deficiency perspective in a paper purporting to demonstrate the genetic heritability of intelligence related to racial classification. The impact of his claim that African Americans as a group are genetically less

intelligent than White Americans was only some-what diminished with the discovery that the data from work done by Cyril Burt some decades before had been falsified (The Cyril Burt Affair, 2007). Despite this, the proposition of the heri-tability of intellectual potential continues to resurface periodically and has most recently *resurfaced* in the publication of the controversial book *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

Oppositional Identity and Oppositional Culture

Let us turn again to cultural ecological theory, an important theoretical account aimed at incor-porating the historical, social, and cultural con-textual factors in school achievement. Two key constructs relevant to social identification here are *oppositional culture* and *oppositional identity* (e.g., Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1978, 1985, 2003). The central argument is that ethnic minority students' school perfor-mance can be explained as a function of their per-ceptions of opportunity payoff in educational attainment based on their historical status. According to this theory, émigrés from ethnic-minority groups such as the Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, and West Indians would have a higher expectation that schooling offers opportunity than those of African American, Native American, and Chicano groups. Ogbu's (1978) terms for these groups are voluntary and involuntary minorities, respectively. Voluntary minorities are groups who have, historically, entered American public life under terms of their own choice and volition, whereas African Americans, Native Americans, and Chicanos constitute populations who have been involuntarily incorporated into American society through enslavement, con-quest, and colonization. Thus, according to the theory, the latter group's caste-like status is what produces the higher levels of pessimism toward schooling and greater reaction to schools as a mechanism of assimilation and subordination. According to the argument, despite the fact that voluntary minorities have been subjected to exploitation and subordination, as have involun-tary minorities, they still tend to perceive school-ing more favorably and are more likely to exhibit an effort-optimism than members of involuntary minority groups.

By far, the most controversial element of the Ogbu/Fordham cultural-ecological framework is the ascription of social identity characteristics to entire racial-ethnic groups based on their group status. According to cultural-ecological theory, the explanation for underachievement has to do with a sort of global identification of African American learners. African American under-achievement is explained as a consequence of students viewing school success as "acting White" and therefore rejecting behaviors that are neces-sary for school achievement. On this account, those African American students who are suc-ceeding in school and "acting White" do so at the cost of the derision and sanctions of their peers who position them as "sell outs." The phenome-non supporting this assertion is "camouflaging" where high-achieving African American students keep their successful academic record under wraps. With respect to their identity as Black people, according to this theory, successful African American students become *raceless*—sacrificing racial identity for school success. Those African American students who are less academ-ically successful simply reject those behaviors and markers of the persona of studiousness as "acting White." These African American students are said to adopt an *oppositional identity*—a social iden-tity defined in contradiction to a White persona so as to avoid "acting White" (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Let us look at this account more carefully. I begin by noting that in the educational litera-ture the notion of "opposition" is most often applied to the instance in which lower-achieving Black students are presumed to reject academic culture as "White culture" to the detriment of their academic success (e.g., McWhorter, 2001; Steele, 2000). This overlooks the critical point that within the Ogbu/Fordham paradigm even successful African American students are defined "oppositionally" by virtue of the fact that they are embracing an academic identity of "Whiteness" (academic behavior presumed to be "White behavior") and rejecting behaviors they purportedly attribute to less successful African American student. The point is this: If you are Black in America, you can never fully avoid being positioned in negative ways. The natural and healthy adjustment Black youth make is to resist, contest, and "counter" the negative posi-tionalities (e.g., as less academically talented, lazy, unmotivated) that others impose upon them by improvising their *own* more positive social identities. Thus, the social identities of academically successful African American learn-ers are also defined as a counterpositionality.

This point is important because of the absence of any account of young people's *agency* and capacity to *improvise* their modes of self-expression in a variety of ways and settings. I return to this notion of individual agency in a moment. For now, it is important to note the availability of finer-grained analyses of the contexts in which African American students interact with their peers that have challenged this explanation. The *oppositionality* that Ogbu and Fordham found at Capitol high was likely more a reflection of the stigma of Black inferiority in that particular school context than any feature of a Black academic identity (Perry et al., 2003).

There are in fact a variety of different ways in which African American high achievers interact with different sets of peers (Carter, 2005; Horvat & Lewis, 2003, 2006; O'Connor, 1997, 2001; Stinson, 2007). Hence, *oppositionality* cannot be *the* explanation for Black achievement because it is not a universal, or necessarily common, condition of African American school goers. Moreover, it does not explain achievement excellence. Fortunately, the cultural ecological perspective does not hinge on the idea of oppositionality, freeing us to explore what the limitations are to fashion a better explanatory account. Let us turn to several realizations to consider building on the cultural ecological theory and the notion of oppositionality. The first has to do with the operating conception of *race*.

To begin with, though race is an important factor in American society, it does not operate simply as a categorical designation of behaviors or characteristics. The idea that a racial category connotes ascribable characteristics of individuals in the category is logically and empirically unsupportable. Ascribing racial categorizations of "Black identity" or "Hispanic identity" are therefore not only likely to be gross overgeneralizations, but also lack meaning outside of the context in which they are applied. The cultural variation both between and within these racial categories is too great to be able to ascribe any meaningful characteristics based on race or ethnicity to these groups (Carter, 2005; Conchas, 2006; Gibson, 1997; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994).

A second point has to do with conceptualization of ethnicity. While racial categorizations of "Black identity" or "Hispanic identity" may serve as descriptions referring to orientations of persons-in-settings, they are unacceptably broad-brush as a meaningful description of the way young people *reference themselves.* These categories have little meaning as indices of self-reference, especially among young people of color who are less and less likely to categorize themselves into a single racial group. For example, according to the 2000 census, nearly 7 million Americans identified themselves as members of more than one race. The 2000 census was the first time that respondents were able to check more than one racial category. Moreover, more than 14 million Hispanic respondents, constituting more than 42% of the respondents, ignored the boxes for Black and White and checked "some other race," indicating perhaps the mixed-race heritage of respondents from the Caribbean, South America, and Central America (La Ferla, 2003). The ethnic-racial-social constructions young people adopt are more complex and nuanced than a simple ethnic categorization. Racial classification in the 21st century is more complex and is not simply a matter of all-or-none, mutually exclusive set of categories.

Hence, we are forced to consider that the social-cultural constructions of self, including racial identification, may be made more through personal experiences and by agency of individuals themselves than by the ascription of ethnic or racial category made by others (Carter, 2005). The situativity of both scholastic performance (Steele, 1997) and social identification (O'Connor, 2001) will vary according to the nature of the discursive setting (including participants and interactants). The social construction of academic identity not only involves individual choice and agency but is also a result of discursive processes over time (Wortham, 2006). For example, Wortham (2006) has shown how the identity development of two African American high school students was shaped by both their evolving positionality in the class and the way they positioned themselves relative to the curricular themes in the class.

For African American youth, *agency* is critical because they have a generally greater need to contest the stigmatizing discourses and images directed at them. Stinson (2007) in his study of successful African American male mathematics students defined agency as the ability to "accommodate, reconfigure, or resist the available sociocultural discourses that surround African American males" (p. 478). African American learners in school contexts are always, to a greater or lesser degree, negatively positioned with regard to the "conventional wisdom"

regarding their achievement. That is, because of the popularized notion of an achievement gap, the prevailing stereotype is that if you are Black, you are somehow less academically able. But African American learners also have, to a greater or lesser degree, the capacity to act proactively on the collective meanings and social relationships in a setting (Holland et al., 1998) to maintain the integrity of their social identity.

Finally, identity is not an all-or-none proposition, and neither are Black students' situation-by-situation evaluations of self worth in the day-to-day interactions in school. Both positive and negative self-evaluations may be present in an individual maintaining self-integrity (Stevens, 1997). In other words, the way in which the individual views himself or herself is not solely determined by how that person sees his or her racial membership as a reference group, regardless of whether the group is considered an out-group in the dominant culture (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). Therefore, approaches that seek to globally link low self-esteem with low academic achievement are flawed (Spencer, 1985; Spencer, Brookins, & Allen, 1985). This is not to say, however, that negative messages and stereotypes about Black people are unimportant in social identity processes of African American learners. Threatening stereotypes—like Black learners are less able—are the content that African American achievers tend to "oppose" as they fashion a social identity. The challenge for educational theory and practice is to get a handle on the dynamics of situational contexts in ways that will help young people do this in school. The challenge for theory is the situativity of social identification. The challenge is to account for the special situativity for African American students and other students of color whose social identity is discursively constructed in school settings that are beset by racially stigmatizing practices and discourses.

Despite a stigmatized status of Blackness in school and society, African American youth may still maintain a strong integrated sense of self-worth, efficacy, and agency. Recent theory has begun to elucidate the relationship between identity and achievement and has attempted to contextualize academic identity in the actual social, cultural, and political fields that young people experience in and out of school (e.g., Flores-Gonzáles, 2002; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Perry, 2002; Stevens, 2002; Weiler, 2000; Yon, 2000) as well as in the active discursive interactions in cultural settings (e.g., Carbaugh, 1996; Murrell, 2007; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Wortham, 2001, 2003, 2006). The more specific social-cultural context to examine is the social structure of the school and the structure of social environments. The social structure of the school is co-created by at least two major sets of factors. One set of factors emanates from the institutional policies, procedures, and restrictions (such as tracking, ability grouping, school codes, etc.). The other set of factors is the dynamic social organization of students and teachers—how people sort themselves out in affiliation groups as acts of individual and collective identity. This set of factors often manifests as a set of social categories—jocks, nerds, dopers, preppies, etc. (every generation and setting has their own unique set of terms, but many of the positionalities of the categories can be found in virtually every school setting)—that are differentially positioned to both school authority and to achievement-oriented behaviors.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As was seen in the previous section, the research literature on identity and Black achievement clearly does suggest that the developmental task of forming an integrated ego-identity is more complicated and therefore more difficult for African American youth. Undoubtedly, there is a greater array of social stressors to the developmental tasks of finding meaning and identity formation for African American youth. One of the more carefully articulated adaptations of this idea is Boykin's triple quandary theory (Boykin, 1986). According to this theory, African Americans have three social identities to negotiate: (1) an African American social identity organized by cultural values shared among the African American community, (2) a "minority" social identity by virtue of being part of the larger group of historically oppressed and marginalized groups in America, and (3) an American social identity organized by shared culturally mainstream core values of middle-class White America, including individualism and competitiveness. In Boykin's theory, comparative decrements in school performance can be explained by the additional stress of having to negotiate three social identities. This experience contrasts with European American peers who

do not have to make cultural identity changes to be successful socially and academically (Irvine, 1990). In any event, the likelihood that negative racial self-perceptions and collective perceptions influence school success is greater for African American children and youth (Baker, 1999; Howard, 2003; Murrell, 1999; Phinney et al., 1997; Stevens, 1997). Let us turn now to the issue of how the concept of oppositionality can be further developed to account for achievement of African American learners.

How does *oppositionality* fit? We know that there is *some* aspect of *oppositionality* that must figure into the academic identity development for African American learners. We also know that ethnically and racially situated forms of self-expression are in part the basis for establishing *positionality*—that racial identity is, unavoidably, a component of academic identity formation in African American learners. What we need to account for is *positionality* as a process of social identification and which particular images, meanings, and negative ascriptions young African Americans "oppose" in their schooling experience. To explore what that means, let us further clarify what is meant by positionality.

Put simply, one's *positionality* is a situationally projected social identity. It is the projected social self we strive to project and maintain. It is how we anchor our social identity in the specifics of a given situation or frame. The unique positionalities of African Americans with respect to their school behavior are generally misread and misinterpreted by the adults who teach them and study them. They are misread by researchers who investigate Black achievement and have an inherent assumption that the cultural expressions and dispositions of African American youth toward aspects of school actually represent their dispositions toward academic success. These youth actually modify their self-ascriptions as academically oriented according to peer group situation (Carter, 2003; O'Connor, 1997).

Now, the practices or behaviors young people tag as "acting Black" or "acting White" are situational commentary on practices having to do with how young people position themselves with their affinity groups, adults, and wider society, and not on their core sensibilities about academics. They are not necessarily expressions of academic identity but are more likely situational positionalities according to context (Murrell,

2007). Similarly, Carter (2005) argued that young people of color employ expressions such as "acting White," "acting Black," or "acting Spanish" for *cultural reasons,* not *academic ones.* She stated, "They [young people of color] use their racial and ethnic identities to facilitate in-group solidarity and to assert various cultural symbols of pride and self worth, not as signs of opposition to conventional formulas for success" (p. vi). So the refinement of the theory requires recognition of the difference between *social affiliation* and *academic commitment* as distinct motivations. Failure to see this distinction may result in misreading the motives of young people in school contexts. Among researchers, this misreading takes the form of conflating the cultural expressions and dispositions that African American youth may express toward schooling with what they actually do. The analogous misread by educators often occurs at the point that African American students exhibit low academic performance and their ethnic and racially situated expressions of identity are immediately interpreted as a rejection of academic excellence (Carter, 2005; Murrell, 2007). In any event, it is clear that a more sophisticated rendering of the construct of oppositionality is required to fully account for Black achievement and identity.

The notion of oppositional stance or identity, although not a universal phenomenon among Black students with respect to White school behaviors, still figures importantly in the situational expression of social identity (i.e., positionality) as well as the developmental task of identity formation in the classical Eriksonian sense. Oppositional stance is actually a developmental feature of adolescence. The natural process of youthful opposition to adult meaning systems is called *individuation* and is a normal part of adolescent development. Hence, some degree of acting in opposition to adult authority is to be expected among all young people. Opposition is a situational construct, not a permanent, personality-defining category. But without further refinement, oppositionality as an ascribed feature can only explain failure and underachievement of African American learners—not their success and academic excellence. While oppositionality may, under some circumstances, account for disinvestment and disengagement in school, it does not account for enabling behaviors of scholastic investment and engagement. In other words, oppositionality cannot

explain success, because absence of student opposition is not the same as success.

To account for achievement effort, I look to the agency young people exert in the expression of their cultural selves. Projecting a deliberate social self, a *positionality* is an *act of identity.* These acts of identity, especially as exhibited by African American students, do not necessarily indicate or reveal students core values about academics or education. In conjunction with agency, I look to the social-cultural contexts of schooling as canvasses for the projection of social identity. Of particular interest are the ways in which African American students are positioned and repositioned in terms of racially stigmatizing images, discourses, and practices present in the cultural scene. In short, the need is to theorize and understand the formation of *academic identity* among African American youth. An *academic identity* is a form of social identity in which the learner projects, maintains, and improvises an image of self as a learner— usually as an academically able individual because it is rare that a person wants to be known as "not smart." *Academic identities* are socially situated and are mediated by what happens in the social practices of schooling.

Mapping the formation of academic identity among African American learners can be accomplished with the notion of situated identity and its three levels of social identity development: (1) the *intrapersonal* identity development process (i.e., the formation of ego-identity) as theorized by Erikson (1963, 1968), (2) the *interpersonal* identity development process of social identification (i.e., the adoption of a positionality) as theorized by Goffman (1959), and (3) the *transpersonal* identity process of individuals *gaining the agency to improvise* their own expressions of self in dynamic interaction with others who may attempt to ascribe unwanted and ego-degrading projections to the individual (Murrell, 2007).

It is the third level of transpersonal identity processes that is of greatest interest here in unpacking African American achievement. This level of social identification concerns what goes on in the cultural and discourse practices of schools concerning race and the worthiness of African American learners. This is the sphere in which stereotypes make African American learners vulnerable. This vulnerability may be in the formal frames, such as in the instance of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) as well as in informal

racialized talk that often goes unrecognized through the ongoing discursive practices of schooling (Lewis, 2003). Recent work of several sociologists and educational scholars has demonstrated that cultural racism in the form *discourse practices*—the social practices of communication and everyday human interaction in which culture is most frequently and deeply expressed—is prevalent in school contexts (e.g., Alton-Lee, Nuthall, & Patrick, 1993; Bush, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Pollock, 2004; Tatum, 1997; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001; Wortham, 2001, 2003, 2006). The implication is that despite the best efforts of teachers to create a socially and culturally nurturing environment in their classroom, there nonetheless, may be, discursive practices in the school communicating visages of Black inferiority and White privilege that negatively affect African American students and other ethnic minority students.

The Value-Added of the Framework

There are at least two critical factors left out of the complete accounting for academic success for African American learners—both of which involve the development of *agency* and a cultural and social intelligence on how to position oneself in settings complicated by racism and forms of ethnic and cultural stigmatizing in school practices, policy, and pedagogy. One of these critical pieces of the picture is the *agency* young people develop in asserting the integrity of their identity and modes of self-expression, despite the attempts of others to negatively reposition them. The other is the identity work of the adults who work with African American learners.

School success among African American students depends on this agency and the subsequent ability to maintain identity integrity despite a variety of racially and culturally disaffirming discursive practices they experience in school. *Agency* is a critical capacity in the development of academically successful African American youth. The situated-mediated identity theory explanation is that educational attainment is much less a matter of an individual disidentification with school and more a matter of the school context's disidentification with the student.

According to the situated-mediated identity framework, the manner in which school culture misreads or negatively regards the positionalities taken up by young African American students is

only part of the story of academic success for some and academic failure for others. The already difficult developmental task of identity formation that all young people must face (Erikson, 1963, 1968) is more complicated and nuanced for African American youth. For African American learners and other learners of African descent in American society, the process of identity formation is further complicated by having to negotiate conditions of racism (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).

The situated-mediated identity framework integrates two dimensions of identity development: (1) the critical developmental task of all young people—*identity formation* posited by the bio-psycho-social theory of Erik Erikson and (2) *social identification* as a learner or student. The core proposition of the conceptual framework here is that Black achievement is mediated by the specific forms of social identification experienced by Black youth in the complex intersections of racial, economic, gender, and class privilege in American society. Concurrent with resolving conflicts with ego-identity implications are those conflicts of social identity—struggling with one's sense of place in the immediate daily social settings of school. In other words, identity formation is a more complicated pattern for African American youth and is represented by the *positionalities* (i.e., situated social identities) they take up to make sense of themselves in these complex intersections of race, class, gender, and privilege in a variety of contexts (Boykin, 1986; Murrell, 2007). Their *acts of identity*—that is, their situationally specific forms of social identification in particular contexts—result in positionalities that mediate their school performance as well as their social-emotional development. The concluding section of this chapter examines this process further using the situated-mediated theory.

This brings us to the second factor missing from the academic success/failure equation—the agency and awareness demonstrated by adults in promoting the development and well-being of students. This second factor constitutes the "deep cultural competence" (Murrell, 2005) required of teachers, counselors, parents, and other adults to create a supportive cultural, social, and intellectual environment for learners of color grappling with the formation of their academic identities. Both factors—*agency of adults* and *agency of young people*—must be accounted for simultaneously in our efforts to explain the academic success and failure of African American students in public schooling. To avoid being a degrading force on the development of achievement identities, the adults who work with African American learners must examine their own racialized positionality.

Situated-Mediated Identity Theory

The purpose of the situated-mediated identity framework is to orient both research and practice to the processes of identity that mediate sustained academic engagement, effort, and success optimism. The major components are summarized in Table 6.1.

Situated identity, in simple terms, means that our sense of self, or identity, is not a static, unitary entity but is better thought of as being fluid and situationally expressed. In contrast to the psychological formulation of racial identity as a stable, staged-developed entity (Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1993), this framework posits racial identity formation as a process reflective of, and situated in, social and political-historical struggles. In contemporary developmental theory, identity is a state that is achieved in adolescence and successful identity development is presumed to conclude in adolescence with the achievement of a relatively stable set of values,

TABLE **6.1**   Framework for Situated-Mediated Identity Theory

Type of Identity Growth	Type of Social Context	Type of Cultural Practices
Situated identity	Social-cultural community	Primary socialization
Positionality	Social-symbolic community (figured world)	Secondary socialization
Agency	Community of practice activity setting	Improvisational self-determination

SOURCE: From *Race, Culture, and Schooling: Identities of Achievement in Multicultural Urban Schools* by P. Murrell, 2007. Copyright 2007 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Reprinted with permisson.

roles, and self-images that the adolescent arrived at through volitional choices (Erikson, 1963, 1968, 1980). Identity is constructed by the individual as the result of successfully resolving a series of psychodynamic dilemmas (Erikson, 1963, 1968). Situated-mediated identity theory enlarges on the psychobiosocial notion of Erikson's theory by focusing on identity as it is socially mediated and determined by our intentional action—identity is mediated by culture as well as one's own agency (cf. Côté & Levine, 2002). In the situated-mediated framework, identity is our agency in activity—who we are is constituted by what we choose to do and how we choose to invest in that doing.

In this framework, identity is dynamically situated in, and mediated by, the fabric of human networks and social situations individuals participate in (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Situated identity is represented in the first column of the first row of Table 6.1. The cultural material available to individuals constructing their identity is a product of historical time, cultural setting, and geographic location. Identity incorporates the historical and cultural development of symbols in the individual but also the legacy of lived social practices and discourses. Social identities are improvised by individuals both at the local culture level (designated as the social symbolic world in Table 6.1) and at the level of activity settings within school (designed as the community of practice in Table 6.1). These are represented by the middle and third rows of Table 6.1, respectively. The degree and success of their self-improvisation depends on their degree of agency.

The developmental levels of social identification are as important to understand as the contexts of local peer culture and school culture, because these contexts "work" together on the individual. The first involves *affiliation,* where a young person expresses or acts with reference to an affinity group. *Affiliation* with a group is the first level of social identification. Young people affiliate with other young people and not with institutions. The second level of social identification is *positionality*, defined earlier. Affiliation often involves the young person appropriating the "cultural material" of the reference group—including forms of talk, behavior, interests, etc., to take on a particular positionality. Taking on cultural forms of the group to represent oneself—exhibiting *positionality*—is the second act of social identification. In this way, identity is anchored to a reference group and the local culture created by the groups' activity. The third level involves *agency,* where the individual uses and *improvises* cultural forms to exhibit the positionality he or she chooses.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Situativity of Racial Identity in Academic Identity

Why is this situated identity framework an advance over the contemporary perspectives on racial identity (e.g., Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1993; Tatum, 1997)? It is a way of understanding the dynamic situativity of racial identity in the social contexts that give it reality. The important main idea here is that most African Americans do not walk around with "being Black" in their heads, but rather the sense of racial identity of "being a Black person" is evoked by experience in a situational event. Let me explain this with a couple of personal examples.

As a Black male growing up during the modern Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, I noted (and still notice) whenever I enter an unfamiliar social setting, whether or not there is another Black person in the scene. This is an example of the type of instance (here, an unfamiliar social setting) that will invoke the sensibility of being African American—that "activates," if you will, my racial identity. It is the particular social frame work together with my personal history of being Black that work together to evoke an awareness of being Black. Not only does the situativity of a setting evoke the awareness, but it also evokes particular strategies of coping and self-representation (called positioning) regarding how I want to construe myself as a Black man in this milieu. The situativity of social identity, and awareness of racial identity, are underscored by the fact that, most of the time, in the absence of a race-relevant situational context, I do not walk around with "being Black" in my head. Yet any particular moment and situation can evoke a historically shaped, experientially unique racial identity. And this is not to say that positioning requires an explicit awareness of the race dynamics in a cultural scene.

Let us look at another example more germane to racial identity development that directly involves the methodology of the doll

studies. A graphic illustration of the situativity of identity expression is available in an interesting excerpt from an award-winning film by an African American young woman. Kiri Davis's (2006) mini-documentary features an exploration of race and an excerpt in which she replicated a portion of the doll studies methodology with young children. African American children are positioned, one at a time, at a table containing two dolls—one clearly Black and the other White—and asked to express their preference. She asked several questions: (1) "Can you show me the doll you would like best or would like to play with?" (2) "Can you show me the doll that is the nice doll?" (3) "Now, can you show me the doll that looks like you?" In the video, you see a seemly heart-wrenching moment when one of the children indicating that the Black doll was bad and the White doll was nice now indicates that it is the Black doll that looks most like her. The intended effect, indeed the predominant first reaction of my graduate students in human development, is a lament about how awful it is that children see themselves so negatively and how 50 years later we still have not advanced. But if we examine the exchanges closely, we would not automatically infer that the children who responded this way have negative racial identities. Viewed through the lens of the theoretical perspective I am presenting here, we might see instead the importance of situativity in interpreting what these responses really mean developmentally. A closer clinical read of the exchanges between the interviewer and the children suggests an interpretation alternative to one of "negative racial identity."

Consider a developmental analysis using the situated identity framework that would first ask what children's responses about the "niceness" or "badness" of the dolls actually mean in this context. When a child is asked "which is the nice doll" and "which is the bad doll" in a setting that feels like some kind of assessment, what cultural material do you imagine is available to a 5- or 6-year-old child regarding "niceness" and "badness"? Even if the only cultural exposure had were Disney films, this would have been more than enough cultural knowledge needed to accurately infer that light is good and dark is bad. Obviously, there are many more messages in popular media (including children's books) that confirm this relation, which children as young as 1 or 2 years old are exposed to. The responses given by the children might reflect an intelligence of recognizing relations and meanings in the wider social world, especially if the interpretative frame is one of assessment.

A closer analysis might next ask what interpretive frame the children were using to respond to the interviewer's questions. When a child is seated at a desk in front of an adult they do not know well, or at least as well as a parent or family member (e.g., a day care teacher), what does it mean to be asked questions about props (i.e., two dolls) placed in front of them? How responders construe questions depends on what they take to be the framing (Goffman, 1974). There are at least two possible framings for the interaction with children: (1) Is this a test? and (2) Is this a conversation about my preferences? If the assumed frame in the doll studies is the "test" frame, then the children's selections of the White doll in response to the questions would be consistent with what is conventionally interpreted as intelligence, as the children are drawing on the informational material that popular media has made an accurate correlational assessment—namely, the White is good, and Black is bad interpretation frame.

Whether or not one agrees with this interpretation, it is clear that cultural and social situativity are important in interpreting human behavior, especially behavior representing self in a complex social scene. Before one can interpret what is expressed, one needs to know the frame. The implication for understanding the identity development of young people in school settings is then that we are not looking for a *state of being* as much as we are seeking to understand a *process of development.* More concretely, we are looking at development of young people's *agency in doing*—their developing capacity for engaging and negotiating the demands of their lives, particularly schooling. Processes of self-representation are important in identity formation, and identity formation is critical to children's motive structures. A person's identity, in this framework, is never "completed"—but rather is in a process of "becoming," continuously shaped and expressed by how an individual situates himself or herself in the interactional dynamics of social settings. An identity is a work in process, but can be mediated in predictable and positive ways if the social context is constructed in ways supportive of development.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, let us return to the orienting question: What does it mean to be *both* African American and an academic achiever in different school contexts? To be both African American and a school achiever means that developing a healthy (i.e., ego integrated) racial identity is not an option but a necessity. Unfortunately, this is the developmental task for which African American young people experience the greatest vulnerability from the forms of racism in American public life and public school (Johnson, 2002; Johnston & Nicholls, 1995; Kao, 2000; Murrell, 1999; Neville & Lilly, 2000; Spencer, 2001; Spencer, Brookins, et al., 1985). This in turn means that it is the responsibility of adults to identify and remove these vulnerabilities.

Psychological and emotional well-being is significantly challenged for African American learners in American public schools. Research indicates that the presence of nascent racism is a health concern for African Americans. Racism as social toxin does have health implications for African American learners as well as adults (e.g., Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Nyborg & Curry, 2003). Attenuating the forms of racism that diminish school success is a mental health concern, not just an educational or pedagogical one. So what it means to be an African American achiever is to be one who has developed a means countering the mental health threat posed by both nascent racism and uninspiring school contexts.

Learning attainment and school success is really a whole-being enterprise requiring attention to how the social and cultural climate supports or negates development of African American learners (e.g., Grantham & Ford, 2003; Mercado, 2001; Nir, 2001; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry; 2003; Rodriguez, Bustamente-Jones, Pang, & Park, 2004; Roth, 2004; Rowley & Moore, 2002).

In closing, what we are called upon to do involves a three-pronged focus on development. One of these prongs involves attention to the social, cultural, and symbolic environment in school settings so that the social toxins of racism and exclusionism do not pose a barrier to the development of young people. The second prong involves an inquiry and interrogation of how young people manage and negotiate the developmental demands of the social, cultural, and symbolic worlds they inhabit, both in school and out. The third prong involves the identity work that adults must in engage in as part of their instructional and professional work with youth of diverse backgrounds. Knowing that social identity of any given young person the result of both individually projected and collective imposed images, teachers (and other adults) need to know more than just the cultural practices and positionings of their students. We need to also be aware of the positionality we project in those interactions with young people and realize that their particular patterns of self-expression, self-representation, and even opposition towards us, may all be anchored to the positionality we chose.

REFERENCES

Alton-Lee, A., Nuthall, G., & Patrick, J. (1993). Reframing classroom research: A lesson from the private world of children. *Harvard Educational Review, 63*(1), 50–84.

Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education and a new social movement.* New York: Routledge.

Baker, J. (1999). Teacher-student interaction in urban at-risk classroom: Differential behavior, relationship quality and student satisfaction with school. *Elementary School Journal, 100*(1), 58–70.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (M. E. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Eds., Vern W. McGee, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Boykin, A. W. (1986). The triple quandary and the schooling of Afro-American children. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *The school achievement of minority children* (pp. 57–92). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Boykin, A. W., & Toms, F. D. (1985). Black child socialization. In H. P. McAdoo & J. L. McAdoo (Eds.), *Black children: Social, educational and parental environments* (pp. 159–17). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Brofennbrenner, U. (1979). Contexts of child rearing: Problems and prospects. *American Psychologist, 34*(10), 844–850.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Burnett, M. N., & Sisson, K. (1995). Doll studies revisited: A question of validity. *Journal of Black Psychology, 12,* 19–29.

Bush, M. E. L. (2004). *Breaking the code of good intentions: Everyday forms of whiteness.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Carbaugh, D. (1996). *Situating selves; the communication of social identities in American scenes.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Carter, P. L. (2003). "Black" cultural capital, status positioning, and schooling conflicts for low-income African American youth. *Social Problems, 50*(1), 136–155.

Carter, P. L. (2005). *Keepin' it real: School success beyond black and white.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Clark, K. B., & Clark, M. K. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identity in Negro children. *Journal of Social Psychology, 10,* 591–599.

Clark, K. B., & Clark, M. K. (1940). Skin color as a factor in racial identification of Negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology, 11,* 159–169.

Coleman, J., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfeld, F. D., et al. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity.* Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Conchas, G. Q. (2006). *The color of success: Race and high achieving urban youth.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Côté, J. E., & Levine, C. G. (2002). *Identity formation, agency and culture.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cross, W. (1971). Negro-to-Black conversion experiences: Toward a psychology of Black liberation. *Black World, 20*(9), 13–27.

Cross, W. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African American identity.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

The Cyril Burt Affair. (2007). Retrieved September 1, 2007, from www.indiana.edu/~intell/burtaffair .shtml

Davis, K. (2006). *A girl like me* [video documentary]. Retrieved September 1, 2006, from http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1091 431409617440489

Deutsch, M. (1963). The disadvantaged child and the learning process. In A. H. Passow (Ed.), *Education in depressed areas.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Deustch, M., Katz, I., & Jensen, A. R. (Eds.). (1968). *Social class, race, and psychological development.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: W. W. Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle* (2nd ed.). New York: W. W. Norton.

Flores-Gonzáles, N. (2002). *School kids/street kids: Identity development in Latino students.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fordham, S. (1996). *Blacked out! Dilemmas of race identity and success at Capital High.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of acting white. *The Urban Review, 18,* 176–206.

Gibson, M. A. (1997). Conclusion: Complicating the immigrant/involuntary minority typology. *Anthropology in Education Quarterly, 28*(3), 431–454.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* New York: Anchor.

Goffman, E. (1978). *Frame analysis.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grantham, T., & Ford, D. (2003). Beyond self-concept and self esteem: Racial identity and gifted African American students. *High School Journal, 87*(1), 18–29.

Helms, J. E. (Ed.). (1993). *Black and white racial identity.* New York: Praeger.

Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *Bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life.* New York: Free Press.

Hilliard, A. (2003). No mystery: Closing the achievement gap between Africans and Excellence. In T. Perry, C. Steele, & A. G. Hilliard III (Eds.), *Young, gifted, and Black: Promoting high achievement among African American students* (pp. 131–167). Boston: Beacon Press.

Hilliard, A. G., III. (1992). Behavioral style, culture, and teaching and learning. *Journal of Negro Education, 61*(3), 370–377.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Jr., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Horvat, E., & Lewis, K. S. (2003). Reassessing the "Burden of 'Acting White'": The importance of peer groups in managing academic success. *Sociology of Education, 76*(4), 265–280.

Horvat, E., & O'Conner, C. (2006). *Beyond acting white: Reframing the debate on Black student achievement.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Howard, T. (2003). "A tug of war for our minds": African American high school students' perceptions of their academic identities and college aspirations. *High School Journal, 87*(1), 4–17.

Irvine, J. (1990). *Black students and school failure.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Jenkins, R. (2004). *Social identity* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Jensen, A. R. (1969). How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement? *Harvard Educational Review, 39,* 1–123.

Johnson, R. (2002). Racial identity from an African American perspective. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 9*(3), 73–78.

Johnston, P., & Nicholls, J. (1995). Voices we want to hear and voices we don't. *Theory Into Practice, 34*(2), 94–100.

Kao, G. (2000). Group images and possible selves among adolescence: Linking stereotypes to expectations by race and ethnicity. *Sociological Forum, 15*(3), 407–430.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America.* New York: Three Rivers Press.

Krieger, N., & Sidney, S. (1996). Racial discrimination and blood pressure: The CARDIA study of young black and white adults. *American Journal of Public Health, 86,* 1370–1378.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher, 35*(7), 3–12.

La Ferla, R. (2003, December 28). Generation E.A.: Ethnically ambiguous. *New York Times.*

Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (1996). The schedule of racist events: A measure of racial discrimination and a study of its negative physical and mental health consequences. *Journal of Black Psychology, 22*, 144–168.

Lewin, T. (2000, June 25). Growing up, growing apart. *New York Times*, sec. 1, p. 1.

Lewis, A. E. (2003). *Race in the schoolyard: Negotiating the color line in classrooms and communities.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

McWhorter, J. (2001). *Losing the race: Self-sabotage in Black America.* New York: Perennial.

Mehan, H., Hubbard, L., & Villaneuva, I. (1994). Forming academic identities: Accommodation without assimilation among involuntary minorities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 25*(2), 91–117.

Mercado, C. (2001). The learner: "Race," "ethnicity" and linguistic difference. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed., pp. 298–330). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Moynihan, D. P. (1965). *The Negro family: The case for national action.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Planning and Research.

Murrell, P. C., Jr. (1999). Class and race in negotiating identity. In A. Garrod, J. Ward, T. L. Robinson, & R. Kilkenny (Eds.), *Souls looking back: Life stories of growing up Black* (pp. 3–14). New York: Routledge.

Murrell, P. C., Jr. (2002). *African-centered pedagogy: Developing schools of achievement for African American children.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Murrell, P. C., Jr. (2005). *Building professional learning communities of urban educators.* World Conference on Urban Education, Manchester, UK.

Murrell, P. C., Jr. (2007). *Race, culture and schooling: Identities of achievement in multicultural urban schools.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Nasir, N. S., & Saxe, G. B. (2003). Ethnic and academic identities: A cultural practice perspective on emerging tensions and their management in the lives of minority students. *Educational Researcher, 32,* 14–18.

Neville, H., & Lilly, R. (2000). The relationship between racial identity cluster profiles and psychological distress among African American college students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 28,* 194–207.

Nir, A. (2001). Planning for tracking: Some implications for students' academic self-efficacy. *Educational Planning, 13*(3), 41–54.

Noguera, P. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Nyborg, V., & Curry, J. (2003). The impact of perceived racism: Psychological symptoms among African American boys. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 32,* 258–266.

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case study of six African American high school students. *American Educational Research Journal, 34*(4), 593–629.

O'Connor, C. (2001). Making sense of the complexity of social identity in relation to achievement: A sociological challenge in the new millennium. *Sociology of Education, 74*(extra issue), Current of thought: Sociology of education at the dawn of the 21st century, 159–168.

Ogbu, J. (1978). *Minority education and caste: The American system in cross-cultural perspective.* New York: Academic Press.

Ogbu, J. (1985). A cultural ecology of competence among inner-city Blacks. In M. B. Spencer, G. K. Brookins, & W. R. Allen (Eds.), *Beginnings: The social and affective development of Black children* (pp. 45–66). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ogbu, J. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2003). Gendered racial identity and involvement with school. *Self and Identity, 2,* 307–324.

Perry, P. (2002). *Shades of white: White kids and racial identities in high school.* Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press.

Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. G., III. (Eds.). (2003). *Young, gifted and black: Promoting high academic achievement among African American students.* Boston: Routledge.

Phinney, J., Cantu, C. L., & Kurtz, D. A. (1997). Ethnic and American identity as predictors of self-esteem among African-American, Latino and White adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 26*(2), 165–186.

Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rodriguez, J., Bustamente-Jones, E., Pang, V., & Park, C. (2004). Promoting academic achievement and identity development among diverse high school students. *High School Journal, 87*(3), 44–53.

Roth, W.-M. (2004). Identity as dialectic: Re/making self in urban school. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 11*(1), 48–69.

Rowley, S. J., & Moore, J. (2002). Racial identity in context for the gifted African American student. *Roeper Review, 24*(2), 63–67.

Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher, 34*(4), 14–22.

Spencer, M. B. (1985). Cultural cognition and social cognition as identity correlates of Black children's personal-social development. In M. B. Spencer, G. K. Brookins, & W. R. Allen, (Eds.), *Beginnings: The social and affective development of Black children* (pp. 215–230). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Spencer, M. B. (1987). Black children's ethnic identity formation: Risk and resilience of castelike minorities. In J. S. Phinney & M. J. Rotheram (Eds.), *Children's ethnic socialization: Pluralism and development* (pp. 103–116). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Spencer, M. B. (1999). Social and cultural influences on school adjustment: The application of an identity-focused cultural ecological perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 34*(1), 43–57.

Spencer, M. B. (2001). Identity and school adjustment: Revisiting the "acting white" theory. *Educational Psychologist, 36*(1), 21–31.

Spencer, M. B., Brookins, G. K., & Allen, W. R. (Eds.). (1985). *Beginnings: The social and affective development of Black children.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Spencer, M. B., Cunningham, M., & Swanson, D. P. (1985). Identity as coping: Adolescent African American male's adaptive responses to high-risk environment. In H. W. Harris, H. C. Blue, & E. E. H. Griffith (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity: Psychological development and creative expression* (pp. 31–52). New York: Routledge.

Spencer, M. B., & Markstrom-Adams, C. (1990). Identity processes among racial and ethnic minority children in America. *Child Development, 61,* 290–310.

Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air. How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist, 52*(6), 613–629.

Steele, S. (2000). A dream deferred: Why the Black-White achievement gap won't close. *American Experimental Quarterly, Spring,* 31–40.

Stevens, J. W. (1997). African female adolescence identity development: A three-dimensional perspective. *Child Welfare, 76*(1), 145–173.

Stevens, J. W. (2002). *Smart and sassy: The strengths of inner-city black girls.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Stevenson, H. C., Jr., Best, G., Cassidy, E. F., & McCabe, D. (2003). Remembering culture: Roots of culturally relevant anger. In H. C. Stevenson (Ed.), *Playing with anger: Teaching coping skills to African American boys through athletics and culture* (pp. 21–87). Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Stinson, D. W. (2007). African American male adolescents, schooling (and mathematics): Deficiency, rejection, and achievement. *Review of Educational research, 76*(40), 477–506.

Tatum, B. (1997). *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" A psychologist explains the development of racial identity.* New York: Kirkus Associates.

Tilly, C. (2006). *Identities, boundaries, and social ties.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Van Ausdale, D., & Feagin, J. R. (2001). *The first R: How children learn race and racism.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Vaughan, G. (1986). Social change and racial identity: Issues in the use of pictures and doll measures. *Psychology, 38*(3), 359–370.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Thought and language.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weiler, J. D. (2000). *Codes and contradictions: Race, gender identity and schooling.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

West, C. (1993). *Race matters.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Williams, B. (1996). *Closing the achievement gap.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wortham, E. F. (2001). *Narratives in action.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Wortham, E. F. (2003). Interactionally situated cognition: A classroom example. *Cognitive Science, 25,* 37–66.

Wortham, E. F. (2006). *Learning identity: The joint emergence of social identification and academic learning.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Yon, D. (2000). *Elusive culture: Schooling, race, and identity in global times.* Albany: State University of New York Press.