Ogbu's anthropology and the critical ethnography of education: a reciprocal interrogation

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This paper reviews the work of educational anthropologist John Ogbu, comparing it with theoretical and methodological approaches in the critical ethnography of education. Ogbu's work is situated in relation to the "cultural difference" approach in the American anthropology of education. Basic concepts are introduced and important theoretical contributions are noted. Conceptual problems then are identified in Ogbu's approach, and his shortcomings from a radical perspective are highlighted. Finally, as a representative of a broader anthropological paradigm, Ogbu is brought into a critical dialogue with more radical educational ethnographers in an attempt to distinguish strengths and weaknesses in each body of research.

Introduction

For nearly 20 years, Berkeley anthropologist John Ogbu has consistently and almost singlehandedly challenged a theoretical orthodoxy in the American anthropology of education. Arguing for a holistic ethnography of schooling that analyzes educational relations in the wider ecological context of social and political structures, Ogbu successfully has broadened the framework of inquiry in many quarters. His insistence on viewing the schooling practices of minority groups as produced historically and collectively in varying contexts of perceived oppression or opportunity even has led some to label him a "critical ethnographer" in the radical tradition (see especially McLaren, 1989). Yet, this is a rather misinformed appellation, and one that Ogbu himself undoubtedly would reject.

Doubtless, the creative dialogue currently being generated between different scholarly traditions in the social sciences and humanities offers fresh perspectives for the development of educational research and theory. Yet, as educational scholars increasingly have sought to cross disciplinary boundaries, there have arisen problems of selective interpretation and appropriation. Such problems may be prevented by striving for a more thorough acquaintance with the full range of work in our respective disciplines. In the present case, radical interest in John Ogbu should be seen as a positive development. His theoretical and ethnographic work on minority students and communities constitutes an important resource for critical ethnographers with an emancipatory project. Nevertheless, there still exists a very real possibility of misappropriation.

Critical ethnographers need to understand the liberal anthropological premises of Ogbu's work in order to evaluate better his potential contribution to their own projects. On the other side, many of Ogbu's theoretical formulations could be enriched substantively by perspectives developed in a more critical tradition. As one who has been working the borderlands between anthropology and critical ethnography (a.k.a.
the "new sociology of education"), I continually have been struck by the need for sustained dialogue. This is what I want to initiate here. The review and critique that follows is animated by the conviction that these two traditions can learn profitably from one another.

In this paper I discuss Ogbu's work in relation to the "cultural difference" approach that has dominated much of American anthropology of education since the late 1960s. I outline his critique of this research corpus and his positive theoretical contributions, arguing that the development of his thought must be situated within the central debate. Next, I highlight some of the conceptual problems in his work and identify some of his shortcomings from a radical perspective. Finally, I briefly bring Ogbu, as a representative of a broader anthropological paradigm, into a critical dialogue with more radical educational research traditions in an attempt to clarify the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.

Cultural difference and school failure

First and foremost, it is important to locate Ogbu in relation to the dominant theoretical problematics constituting the American anthropology of education. Originally formed as an offshoot of the American culture-and-personality school of such figures as Spindler, and later Gearing, the anthropology of education began to participate actively in policy debates about minority academic achievement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Initially motivated by the need to critique subtly racist theories of "cultural deprivation," and with their roots firmly in the Boasian tradition of antiracist relativism, these anthropologists began to offer their own explanations for the disproportionate school failure of African-Americans, Chicanos, and other minorities. Most of these explanations attributed the problem to some form of cultural difference between minority students and (usually white, middle-class) school personnel. Such difference was said to obstruct effective communication and learning and, hence, led to negative academic outcomes for minority students.

Anthropologists began to make, with some success, an impact on both local school districts and federal policy debates. They did this through careful ethnographic documentation of interactive processes in classrooms. Throughout the 1970s, and continuing to this day, anthropologists have conducted microethnographic studies of classroom and community communication patterns, attempting to identify conflicts and discontinuities between their respective cultural, linguistic, and kinesic styles. According to the researchers engaged in cultural difference studies, ethnic minorities in bicultural or multicultural schools may fail insofar as they do not adapt themselves successfully to the school's dominant cultural codes or, conversely, if the school cannot provide appropriate "activity settings" (Trueba, 1988) to accommodate them. In other words, the linguistic styles and cultural premises that minority students bring into the school put them at some kind of disadvantage in contrast to those already adapted to the cultural mainstream.

Absent from these accounts of schooling and culture is any explicit conceptualization of history, power, or social structure. This perhaps is not surprising, given the field's roots in a culture-and-personality approach that lacks such theoretical development. Nor is it surprising, given broader ideological currents in American society which systematically elide these dimensions of social reality. Educational anthropologists have been slow to recognize the way these currents inform the direction
and character of their own work. Moreover, the microethnographic focus on ethnic cultural styles and communicative codes reflects anthropologists’ increased collaboration with educators in policy and intervention, rather than basic research (see, for instance, Trueba, 1989). Ogbu suggests that anthropologists have allowed the pragmatic interests of educators and administrators to determine their own research agendas. What is wrong with this rapprochement? Basic research, which might arrive at the conclusion that educational problems cannot be divorced from a wider social context (history, power, structure, and so on) in need of fundamental transformation, holds no truck with educators seeking viable short-term solutions to low test scores, high dropout rates, and violence. In Ogbu’s words,

*Microethnographic studies have a strong appeal to education people, who see their results as immediately applicable. The findings can be used for in-service training of teachers and other school personnel, for self-correction by classroom teachers, and for teacher training in general. The ethnographer likes the microethnography because he or she sees his or her work as being instrumental in improving some aspect of schooling; policymakers and practitioners like it because it points to something concrete that can be remedied without radically changing the system. (1981, p. 9)*

**Differences among minorities: an explanatory framework**

Ogbu’s critique of the cultural differences approach begins with a rather simple question, coupled with an observation: if significant cultural differences alone are the primary cause of minority school failure, then why is it that some minorities, especially those recently immigrated, on the whole perform so well? Surely the cultural differences between, say, a Vietnamese student and a white, middle-class teacher will be even greater than those between a Black or Chicano student and that same teacher. After all, the Vietnamese student will have arrived only recently in the United States and will be even less familiar with the language and the basic cultural codes of the schoolteacher. Yet statistical research, as well as the testimony of numerous schoolteachers, confirms that these recently immigrated students generally perform better than do other minorities.

In response to his own question, Ogbu has developed over the years a structural typology of minority status in pluralistic societies and has used it to help explain schooling dynamics (Ogbu, 1978, 1983, 1987a, 1987b). His model principally distinguishes between “immigrant minorities” and “involuntary castelike minorities” or “nonimmigrant minorities.” The former are those who have migrated in recent years, having chosen the host country to flee political persecution or to seek economic opportunity. These groups do not suffer the same entrenched legacy of racial discrimination or economic disenfranchisement as do other minorities. Many of them benefit from welfare agencies and cultural organizations specifically designed to ease their assimilation into the dominant society. Moreover, most of them in fact are willing to endure significant hardship because they see it as temporary and because they construct their present experience in relation to far more egregious circumstances in their home countries – what Ogbu (1989b) calls their “dual frame of reference” (p. 187). This construction encourages them to embrace meritocratic ideologies and develop a strong work ethic, fully exploiting what few opportunities are available to them. It forestalls the development of oppositional values.
Nonimmigrant minorities, on the other hand, are those who were incorporated into the dominant society through slavery, territorial expansion, or various forms of servitude. In the United States, African-Americans, Chicanos, and Native Americans are cited as the primary examples. These groups are not recently arrived; many generations have been reproduced within the dominant society. The harsh experience of racism and economic discrimination over these generations has encouraged the development of adaptive "survival strategies" and oppositional frames of reference. Such responses challenge the meritocratic mobility ideology embodied in most contemporary public school systems. Promises of success and advantage through schooling are contradicted by historically informed experiences of "job ceilings" and other discriminatory practices that prevent mainstream social mobility despite advanced levels of schooling. The "cultural" strategies and values of involuntary minorities do indeed clash with school culture, but more as a form of embedded critique and opposition than as a conflict of style or code.3

Ogbu has been criticized for the kind of structural determinism implied by his arguments. Several of his detractors argue that, despite general trends, many "involuntary" minorities do succeed in school, that they often do respond positively to programs designed with the goal of reducing communicative conflicts rooted in cultural difference (Trueba, 1988). Admittedly, Ogbu's rather broad account of minority dispositions toward schooling cannot adequately explain the exceptions - the cases of school success. Yet, Ogbu's theory is rooted in a conceptually sophisticated and original approach to ethnography that itself has occasioned a more elaborate and complex theoretical argument about minority status and schooling. Many of his critics fail to address these finer elements in Ogbu's work. Here I will sketch briefly what direction this theoretical elaboration has taken, and then move on to a consideration of Ogbu's approach to ethnography.

To begin, Ogbu does not reject the cultural difference perspective altogether. He acknowledges that classroom conflicts can develop that appear to have their source in discrepant cultural styles of interaction. In a 1982 article, Ogbu suggests that cultural discontinuities between the home and school setting are universal, but that the nature of these discontinuities and their impact on school success differ according to the relationship between the school's dominant sponsors and its clients. Where Ogbu differs from the cultural difference theorists is in his account of the source and quality of that cultural discrepancy and its degree of persistence. He suggests that the difference theorists have essentialized the cultural repertoires of ethnic groups, conceptualizing them as a static, binding set of cognitive-linguistic rules and practices that hinder intercultural communication. What this approach ignores, says Ogbu, is the evidence that people can overcome these discrepancies with relative ease if the wider social context - for instance, the immigrant minorities' "dual frame of reference" and lack of experienced or perceived discrimination - permits a positive valuation of the schooling experience. Thus, in order to understand the persistence of cultural conflict between minority students and school personnel, it is necessary to work from a more dynamic, historically informed conception of culture. It is necessary to examine the wider "community forces" that may, in the case of involuntary or nonimmigrant minorities, turn cultural repertoires into resources for maintaining an "oppositional" or "inverted" identity, or in the case of immigrant minorities, facilitate the surmounting of existing cultural differences through a strong desire for school success.7

For Ogbu, then, cultural differences may pose a significant obstacle to school success only in cases where (a) they have been invested with oppositional meaning
(involuntary minorities), or (b) they have not yet been surmounted in the pursuit of school success (recent immigrant minorities). The relevant factor in determining this outcome is the domain that Ogbu (1981, 1988b, 1989a) calls community forces. These community forces are composed of the "cultural models" and "educational strategies" that minority groups draw on in their relationships with schools. Such models and strategies derive historically from the groups' experiences with dominant political and economic structures, including the local school system itself. A group's "cultural models" include its "folk explanations of getting ahead and the role of schooling in getting ahead" (Ogbu, 1988b). They organize the group's understanding of its relationship with the schools and their personnel and may determine whether schooling is seen as "subtractive" (threatening to the group's identity) or "additive" (not threatening). "Educational strategies" refer to those "attitudes, plans, and actions which minorities use - or do not use - in their pursuit of formal education" (Ogbu, 1988b, p. 5). Such strategies may be used by students, parents, or other community members, and even may be enacted by community organizations. Some may encourage or enhance school success, while others may not.

Ogbu's (1988b) discussion of the likely differences between immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities' cultural models and educational strategies may serve to clarify these concepts. Much of this discussion is informed by his earlier ethnographic work on minority education in California, to which I shall return shortly. Immigrant minorities, says Ogbu, operate with a cultural model that leads them to accept uncritically mainstream folk theories and strategies of getting ahead - typically school-based achievement ideologies and their call for conformity. Schooling is seen as additive to their project of building a new transcultural identity. For nonimmigrant minorities (Ogbu devotes most of his attention to African-Americans), history has encouraged a more skeptical cultural model. Positive evaluation of the link between schooling and future success may sit contrariwise with a worldly-wise knowledge of the school's limitations.

Although they have high aspirations for their children [parents] also appear to teach them contradictory attitudes toward schooling. On the one hand, parents espouse the need to get more education than they had and to work hard and do well in school. On the other hand, they also teach their children verbally and through their own life experiences of unemployment, underemployment, and other discriminations, as well as through gossips about similar experiences among relatives, neighbors, and friends - through the actual texture of life - that even if they do well in school they may not do so as adults in the wider society (Ogbu, 1981, p. 21; cf. Ogbu, 1974, p. 100).

This cultural model is accompanied by a range of "alternative" or "survival" strategies (among Blacks, Ogbu identifies "collective struggle," clientship, hustling, developing athletic prowess) which may promote attitudes or skills incompatible with the pursuit of academic success (see especially Ogbu, 1986). Additionally, schooling among nonimmigrant minorities often is perceived as subtractive to an oppositional group identity that has developed historically in a context of oppression. Academically successful Black students, for instance, may have to develop "secondary strategies" such as acting like a clown or participating in athletics in order to offset the perception that they are "acting white" (Ogbu, 1988b, p. 13; see also Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). While recent immigrant minorities may perceive culture and language differences as "barriers to be overcome" in the process of adaptation, involuntary minorities may see
these same differences as "markers of group identity to be maintained" (Ogbu, 1988b).

There is a close link between Ogbu's theoretical critique of the cultural difference approach and his methodological critique of microethnography as a research technique. In fact, it was because of his earlier ethnographic work among several minority groups in Stockton, California that Ogbu (1974) was led later to develop his typology of minority responses to schooling. His latest research project is designed more specifically to test the comparative account I have sketched above. It is especially in his attention to community forces and the structuring power they have within the schools themselves that Ogbu differs from most American anthropologists of education. How does Ogbu conceive the doing of "school ethnography," and in what ways does it differ from the microethnographers? To answer that, I turn principally to his widely circulated 1981 article, "School Ethnography: A Multilevel Approach."

Moving away from microethnography

In its most general terms, Ogbu's approach calls for a broadening of theoretical and methodological tools to account for those community forces impinging on the schooling process. Fundamentally, this is an argument for returning to a more "traditional," holistic mode of ethnographic inquiry, in which the anthropologist seeks to identify and interpret the linkages between practices and beliefs occurring across a range of social domains, both within and between "communities" and "institutions" (Ogbu, 1981, pp.4-5). Ogbu claims that microethnographers have privileged a definition of schooling as cultural transmission, with their gaze correspondingly focused on the educational relation in the classroom. Most microethnographers, says Ogbu, pay scheduled visits to schools and classrooms, and then may follow certain students out into the community for further observation. They ask "transactional," not "structural," questions, and thus ignore "the forces of the wider ecological environment that actually generate the patterns of classroom processes studied" (p. 4). Often driven by the practical interests of local educators, microethnographers seek to document remediable discontinuities.

Ogbu wants a return to more basic research. Studies must situate schools in the context of broader social, economic, and political realities, that is to say, must "ask structural questions." This research agenda is "cultural ecological" in nature and contains four underlying assumptions:

1. Formal education is linked with other features of society (especially the corporate economy and opportunity structure) in important ways that affect people's behaviors in school.
2. The nature of this linkage has a history which to some extent influences present schooling processes.
3. The behaviors of school participants are influenced by their models of reality (which also are historically shaped).

Ogbu claims that this more comprehensive approach to educational research inevitably reveals that families and their children are "utilizing adaptive strategies" in their
relations with schools. The character of these strategies is captured by each of the four research assumptions outlined above.

Methodologically, this approach has several implications. Although Ogbu fails to delineate these precisely, they are apparent, and I will develop them here. First, the focus of educational ethnography moves away from the school itself and into the community where the school is situated. Specifically, Ogbu advocates residence and intensive participation in neighborhoods and minority communities comprising a school’s catchment. This enables the observation of activities and patterns of discourse that otherwise might evade the scheduled visitor. Second, and relatedly, ethnography should seek to create complex interpretive linkages between discourses — both naturally occurring and interview induced — and practices occurring in various locales of the school and community. Cultural models can be reconstructed from interview data and from observed sequences of verbal interaction. Similarly, educational strategies can be observed in the everyday life of the community. Observed classroom practices and relations then would be engaged analytically with this wider body of data. These interpretive linkages are intended to move beyond the insularity of most microethnographic classroom studies. They permit the conceptual articulation of classroom relations with wider processes and structures.

Third, and finally, school ethnography should try to account for the “structure, process, and function of the school system, which links it to other sociocultural institutions defining its context in the wider community” (Ogbu, 1981, p.5). This presumably would include a description of the history and current tenor of relations between the school’s administrators and its various constituents, as reconstructed through interviews, site documents, and observations of joint meetings. It would involve research into the school’s political-economic structure, its mode of governance, fiscal sources, decision-making procedures, and so on. It also would require an analysis of institutional linkages, between, say, local businesses, cultural organizations, or taxpayers’ associations and the school. All these dimensions of the school’s ecological environment would be relevant in the interpretation of both classroom relations and community forces.

It is in his prescriptions for a “multilevel” school ethnography that Ogbu most distinguishes himself from microethnographers and cultural difference theory. An ethnography conceived in such terms can begin to free itself from the prevailing reformist mentality that would ignore the wider political, economic, and ideological effects of schooling. Mostly outside anthropology, radical educational researchers have turned to ethnography as a way of documenting these effects and have harnessed it to a critical pedagogical agenda (see, for example, Giroux & Simon, 1989). Several have appropriated Ogbu’s work in elaborating their own approaches to critical ethnography (Fine, 1986; McLaren, 1986, 1989; Weis, 1984).

**Anthropology and critical ethnography: a reciprocal critique**

*From reproduction to production: re situating Ogbu*

For some time now, the theoretical pitfalls of social or cultural “reproduction theory” in education have been acknowledged widely, and several more complex approaches within a critical, materialist tradition have been emerging. The impetus for this theoretical rupture was provided by the dawning awareness that schools are
contradictory and contested spaces, constituted by "popular" as much as "dominant" impulses and imperatives. Ethnographic studies of schools played a particularly important role in effecting this rupture. What began as an appropriation of qualitative methodology for the purposes of documenting "reproduction" became an open-ended inquiry into the social construction of schools. The fine-grained observation and analysis of social relations in schools made it increasingly difficult to conceptualize them as merely "reproducing" attitudes and skills or "transmitting" dominant ideologies (Apple & Weis, 1983; Connell, 1983; Wexler, 1987).

The ethnographically informed critique of reproduction theory has been accompanied by increased attention to historical and geographical specificities. For instance, Rockwell's (Ezeleza & Rockwell, 1985; Rockwell & Mercado, 1986) work in Mexico and Reed-Danahay's (1987) work in France represent attempts to understand local school relations historically and in the context of both regional and national educational dynamics. Gone are the overwhelming generalizations about "capitalism" or the "State" that characterized reproduction theory. Instead we see the educational effects of particular kinds of economic and ideological formations, indeed of particular kinds of states and state modalities, filtered through the dense fabric of social relations at the local level.

What does all this have to do with Ogbu's work on minorities and school achievement? Much as the ethnographic moment in reproduction theory sought to document how oppressive race, class, and gender identities and positions were reproduced through schooling, despite State rhetoric to the contrary, Ogbu seeks to document how and why involuntary minorities continue to fail in disproportionate numbers despite programs and rhetoric designed to arrest the trend. Holland and Eisenhart (1988, 1990) specifically have called attention to the parallels between Ogbu and the work of Paul Willis (1981b), perhaps the founder of a critical ethnographic tradition within reproduction theory. Both use qualitative methods to examine the active role working-class (Willis) and minority (Ogbu) students take in responding to school practices. Both, furthermore, "conclude that students are likely to act in school from a collective sense of the 'opportunities' afforded to people like them by society" (Holland & Eisenhart, 1988, p. 267).

This convergence of radical educational research with a liberal critique in the anthropology of education is interesting in itself. Even more interesting, however, are their distinct patterns of development. Ethnography has been adopted by radical educational researchers as a necessary corrective to overly deterministic accounts of schooling. Structural theory was written first, then tempered (and in some cases fundamentally transformed) by the inevitable contradictions exposed by ethnography. From there, a radical ethnography branched into numerous approaches, exploring different means of representing relations of power in the schools and their connection with broader social forces, incorporating feminist critiques and gender concerns, borrowing from social theory (critical, poststructuralist) and varied disciplines (anthropology, philosophy, literary criticism, political science), creating links with an emerging "critical pedagogy," and developing more participatory modes of research and research publication. One no longer hears "reproduction theory" spoken with as much frequency as "critical ethnography," though the latter includes a bewildering variety of uses and meanings.

Ogbu, on the other hand, came to theory through ethnography. From the results of his initial study in Stockton (Ogbu, 1974), he was compelled to develop the structural description of minority types that first appeared in 1978. Over the course of the next 10
years, without producing any more original ethnography himself, he has elaborated this framework, incorporating such theoretical concepts as "cultural inversion," "adaptive strategies," "cultural models," and so on. During this time, his approach has changed little, and he rarely has incorporated the arguments of his critics. He is currently engaged in a major comparative project informed by these same concepts.

How have some scholars attempted to draw on Ogbo's work, and what kinds of criticisms can be directed at it? Several anthropologists of education have been influenced by Ogbo's work and have tried to develop its implications. Typically, however, they eschew the broad structural arguments and interpose a range of situational variables to account for school achievement and failure (see D'Amato, 1987a, 1987b; Erickson, 1987). Erickson's work is especially interesting since it tries to mediate the cultural difference/Ogbo debate by drawing on concepts from "resistance theory" and critical educational research. First and foremost, Erickson insists that the cultural difference, or "communication process," approach and what he calls Ogbo's "perceived labor market explanation" are not as incompatible as Ogbo sometimes makes them out to be. Both are determinist in a way that does not allow for the nuances of particular school relations, but both bring valid points to the discussion about minority school failure.

Here is how Erickson synthesizes the two approaches: to speak of school failure or success, he says, is to speak of "learning or not learning what is deliberately taught" in the school (Erickson, 1987, p. 343). Human beings are learning all the time, so when we say that students are "not learning," we mean they are not learning "what school authorities, teachers, and administrators intend for them to learn as the result of intentional instruction. Learning what is deliberately taught can be seen as a form of political assent. Not learning can be seen as a form of political resistance" (pp. 343-344). What, then, determines whether students give their assent or resist? Erickson argues that "trust," which "constitutes the existential foundation for school legitimacy" (p. 345), must be fostered in the administrative and pedagogical practices of the school if students are willingly to learn what teachers teach. If the school is not viewed as legitimate by students, if "perceived labor market discrimination" or "cultural conflict" is not offset by economic advocacy in the labor market or a "culturally responsive pedagogy," students are more likely to develop oppositional identities and resist the schooling enterprise. If they "trust" that their own interests will be advanced by complying with school authority, they are more likely to overcome whatever cultural differences may be impeding effective communication. In these cases, attempts to create culturally appropriate activity settings, for instance, probably would meet with some success. Without trust, on the other hand, ordinary cultural "boundaries" may be escalated into cultural "borders" and harnessed to the expression of oppositional identities (Erickson, 1987, pp. 345-348).

Just how does the school achieve this trust? Here Erickson (1987) draws on critical social theory to suggest that "the institutional legitimacy of the school is affirmed existentially as trust in face-to-face encounters between school staff and students and their parents" (p. 345). Legitimacy and trust are "emergent phenomena that continually are negotiated within the intimate circumstances and short time scale of everyday encounters" (p. 345). Thus, in both its pedagogy and its personal relations, the school can work against the grain of "hegemonic" discourses and demonstrate its responsiveness to the needs of nondominant cultural and socioeconomic groups. Such attempts at transforming the school, however, do not obviate the need for more
fundamental changes in the broader political economy— for eliminating labor market
discrimination altogether, to take an important example.

Rather than fundamentally challenging Ogbu’s approach, Erickson develops
certain lines of thought implicit in much of Ogbu’s writing. However, the historical
element present in Ogbu’s work drops from view in Erickson’s article. Thus, we might
surmise that immigrant minorities tend to “trust” the schools because their new status
courages them to see school success as additive to their identity, while nonimmigrant
minorities tend to “mistrust” schools and see school success as subtractive. Such
historically informed mistrust cannot be overcome overnight with “responsive”
programs or warm face-to-face encounters, Ogbu might say. Erickson also apparently
downsplas the structural factors that produce schools’ and school actors’ subjectivities,
making them sites where hegemonic discourses tend to proliferate in the first place.
However, Erickson does point out that, once we accept Ogbu’s model, the case in need
of explanation is the nonimmigrant minority student who does succeed on the school’s
terms. Such instances of success are numerous, though certainly not a majority. How
do these students succeed if presumably they bring such historical predispositions with
them into the school? Has Ogbu harnessed history to an inflexible theoretical
structure?

I want to suggest that one important element of the schooling process
undertheorized by both Ogbu and Erickson is the phenomenon of student “cultural
production” (Willis, 1981a) or “student cultures.” The phenomenon is important
precisely because it constitutes a social domain through which students live out the
schooling process. It comprises an arena that can generate meanings and actions
potentially cutting against the grain of historically “given” predispositions. Both Ogbu
and Erickson provide the contours of an argument within which attention to student
cultural production could prove very powerful. Erickson even draws on a critical
literature that in many respects grows out of theoretical and empirical work with
student cultures. His notion of cultural boundary work turning into cultural border
work in the absence of “trust” rests on a micropolitics of resistance effected on the
terrain of student cultures. However, these cultures do not figure as such in Erickson’s
scheme. One gets the impression that the relation of trust is always negotiated between
individual, atomized students, parents, and teachers, free of other influences. What the
literature on student cultures so powerfully suggests is that, within the constantly
changing social divisions of the school, students create meanings and identities that
mediate their relationships with teachers and parents. They develop an “informal
structure” within the formal institutional structure of the school. In other words,
regardless of their historical predispositions, which may or may not attach them to
student groups of common orientation, students develop commitments, modes of
relating, and frames of reference that can come to have a strong influence on their
academic performance and aspirations.

Ogbu’s coauthored article with his student Signithia Fordham (Fordham & Ogbu,
1986), which looks at the stigma of acting white placed on academically successful
students by the majority at a mostly black high school, moves in this direction without
developing all the implications (Erickson also discusses this article extensively). Indeed,
a theoretical approach to the mediating power of student cultures would want to know
the answers to such questions as: why and how do some students become academically
successful in this difficult context? What are the processes of student peer group
formation, and how does this affect academic motivation and the construction of
aspirations? What kinds of symbolic or practical resources have academically successful
students produced to "defend" themselves in the school? Ogbu recently has explored involuntary minorities' development of "individual strategies" for school success (1989b, pp. 197-200; 1990b, pp. 81-84). He identifies several "adaptive types" and their related strategies - "assimilators," "emissaries," "ambivalents," and so on. The emphasis on individual strategies nevertheless obscures what is likely to be a dynamic interactive process. Undoubtedly, the above types do not emerge from a social vacuum; they either find mutual support or define their own identities in a highly charged student cultural domain. The fact that they are perhaps truly individual strategies is a reflection of the strong social pressures to which these students are exposed. In another context, Holland and Eisenhart (1990) show how university women's models of and strategies for doing school work develop as they take up various positions in relation to the dominant student culture of romance on campus.

Such an approach to student cultures reinstates theoretically the creative agency of students as active participants in the determination of educational outcomes. In this view, students are neither passive recipients of cultural transmission nor the standard bearers of class, race, or gender ideologies. Rather, the social process of peer group formation and its attendant creation of structures of meaning mediates the pedagogical endeavor at a number of different levels and in a variety of ways. Importantly, these student cultures do not merely "reproduce" the class, race, or gender dynamics that initially may have informed their production. Several critiques of Willis's original work pointed out that he was far more attentive to the meanings generated by the rebellious "lads" than he was to the question of why and how groups like the "lads" and "ear'oles" (the conformist antagonists of the lads) formed in the first place. If both were from the same working-class background, what forces contributed to this differentiation in the school? Work by Lacey (1970, 1976), Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, and Dowsett (1982), Jenkins (1983), and Eckert (1989), among others, has shown that these student groups do not always correspond neatly to social or cultural divisions outside the school. Rather, the meanings and dispositions students bring with them into the school are reinforced, altered, or reconfigured through a complex interaction with school structures and teacher practices. A student from a middle-class background might, for example, join a predominantly working-class student culture as a way of working out conflicts in the home and school (see Eckert, 1989). In any case, the growing literature on student cultural production helps us to understand that educational relations and outcomes are never culturally or structurally predetermined, but grow out of the complex interaction between cultural or structural factors and the particular configuration of relationships and policies characterizing each school.

A conceptual critique of Ogbu

The renewed emphasis on cultural production calls into question a number of other aspects of Ogbu's work. Recent scholarship on the relation between structure and cultural production (for example, Bourdieu, 1984; Giddens, 1984; Johnson, 1983) points to serious conceptual problems in Ogbu's account of structural questions in schooling. These authors emphasize the dialectical, contingent relation between structure and culture. Structure, in other words, is constantly renewed and revised through the creative agency, the practice, of actors constrained but not obliged by structural conditions prevailing in certain historical time and place. The structure that in Ogbu's work provides the determining context for community forces and cultural
models remains untouched by ongoing struggles. It is the product of Ogbu's vision of a tainted liberal, pluralistic society — a society apparently given by historical circumstance (there have been and perhaps always will be immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities, for instance) and little subject to change or diversification. Perhaps this conceptual problem inspires Foley's (1990, 1991) recent critique of Ogbu's "caste" theory. Foley, drawing on critical theories of ethnic identity formation, urges a more phenomenological account of how structures can be both constraining and enabling in minority groups' relations with schools. The "expressive practices" Foley (1990) describes among Mexican-American and Anglo youth in a South Texas high school can be seen as one kind of cultural production that both draws on and concomitantly transforms gender, race, and class structures.

Several other criticisms can be directed toward Ogbu's work. First, Ogbu tends to beg the question of a group's cultural models of schooling by presupposing that "getting ahead" already in some fashion is its determining element. The phrase has a distinctively economic cast, as Ogbu himself would admit. Thus, according to Ogbu, the cultural models of both immigrant and nonimmigrant minorities regard the school as a crucial arena for economic advancement. Informed as it is by a contradictory "texture of everyday life," the cultural model of nonimmigrant minorities is considerably more skeptical or ambivalent about the school's actual prospects for such advancement. In either case, however, a strictly socioeconomic logic seems to be operating. On the one hand, this should not surprise us. Unquestionably, the expansion of public schooling in the last century has largely proceeded both by incorporating and, in turn, fomenting popular demand for an economically relevant curriculum that would increase people's livelihoods. This has been accompanied by State ideologies valorizing the school-economy relation — true, I believe, in both capitalist and socialist societies. Nevertheless, this development has not precluded the popular investment of alternative meanings in the school. Evidence from different parts of the world (Baker, 1988, 1989; Brenner, 1989; Ezpeleta & Rockwell, 1985) and different educational levels (see Holland & Eisehahrt, 1990, on women at the university) suggests that the school often comes to represent something more than a vehicle for socioeconomic mobility.13 Cultural models of schooling may ignore or downplay the economic link and valorize instead the acquisition of nontechnical cultural knowledge, the possibilities for romantic encounters, or the opportunities to demonstrate natural abilities, to name just a few examples. Analytically constructing a group's cultural models is a matter of empirical work. Has Ogbu determined economic outcomes to be the primary orientation of nonimmigrant minorities' cultural models? He would say yes (see Ogbu, 1981). Has he then gone on to assume that this will be the primary orientation of other social groups as well? Critical educational researchers can contribute to understanding the actual heterogeneity of these cultural models of schooling.

The lack of any significant theoretical development concerning the effect of "ideology" or the "State" in the educational domain remains a liability in Ogbu's work.14 I say this not only because these two concepts have become so important in recent critical writing, but because they lend themselves so nicely to enriching Ogbu's accounts of schooling. A theory of ideology, for instance, would help untangle the complex interplay between different levels of discourse and practice referenced as cultural models. Why, after all, are these models "contradictory" for nonimmigrant minorities? It is clear that dominant ideologies about the positive economic role of schooling are intersecting and conflicting with local discourses and understandings,
rooted in survival strategies. Ogbu notes that interview responses among these groups often valorize the school (expressing perhaps a dominant ideology), while their persistently lackadaisical academic behavior betrays an alternative awareness (cf. Weis, 1984). Recent perspectives on hegemony and resistance could account more adequately for this presently undertheorized contradiction. Likewise, much of what Ogbu has to say about immigrant and nonimmigrant minority experience could be enriched by greater attention to the role of the State in creating and perpetuating conditions for their respective successes and failures. An analysis of State policy and the different modalities through which the State constructs its educational subjects (Corrigan & Sayer, 1985) would shed much light on the processes Ogbu is trying to illuminate.

This brings us to another conceptual problem. Ogbu's use of the term community is associated with the "forces" comprising the wider school context, yet he begs the question of just what a community is. It is conceived as a collectivity pursuing certain common strategies and sharing certain cultural models. Yet Ogbu never really makes explicit the boundary or location of this collectivity. In his earlier ethnographic work, minority communities often were conflated with specific neighborhoods in the Stockton school district (Ogbu, 1974). At the same time, the term was used to refer to a broader, historically constituted, national ethnic category - the "black" community, "Mexican-American" community, and so on. There seems to be a conceptually underdeveloped relation between these two postulated senses of community. Ogbu suggests that certain adaptive strategies, for instance, are historically produced by the black community's experience of slavery and racism, but find particular expression in a black community of Stockton. Yet, he never distinguishes clearly between the two, leaving the reader to wonder just what kind of relation - of appropriation, variation, elaboration, rejection - exists. Further, Ogbu locates the community outside the school, without looking at how the school and its constituents in fact interpenetrate and socially construct each other. This point relates to my previous discussion of ideology and heterogeneity in local discourses and cultural models. It seems fruitless to construct a clear division between an entity called the school and a community outside it, when in fact, school practices and discourses constantly draw on popular culture from the community, while "popular" understandings often are appropriated from the school. Rockwell and Mercado (1986) have shown how this process works in Mexico. Finally, Ogbu tends to homogenize the community as a collective actor, without revealing its splits and divergences. He does not provide convincing ethnographic evidence that this analytic homogenization is justified. Given the centrality of this concept in his theoretical and methodological approach, it could benefit from further attention along these lines.

The radical view of schools and doing ethnography

From here we move to a more direct confrontation between the liberal premises of Ogbu's theoretical position and the radical basis of critical ethnography and educational theory. It should be clear by now that Ogbu presents no critique of capitalist relations per se. Rarely does he incorporate perspectives on class into his work (see Ogbu, 1988a for an exception). For Ogbu, class analysis reveals little about involuntary minorities' educational problems, since even middle-class minority students perform more poorly than their white counterparts. The determining factor is
race and immigrant status. Ogbu concerns the "structural" features of American society for their continual disenfranchisement of minorities, but he sees this as, in some ways, inherent to a racially stratified society. Perhaps one of the outcomes of this position is a tendency to accept the desirability of "school success" as it presently is constituted socially and culturally (this is true of most American anthropologists of education). In other words, Ogbu develops no critique of the school as such, or of the meaning of school success. His goal seems to be a two-pronged attack on (a) the sources of "school failure" and (b) the discriminatory job market. He is willing to accept that success must take place on the school's terms and that some sort of mainstream accommodation is the desirable goal. Thus, Ogbu's conception of "structural change" appears to be limited to pragmatic educational and economic reform. Radical authors, on the other hand, tend to work toward more fundamental transformations in both the economy and the school. They typically argue that school structures disempower students and prepare them for a life of economic and social subservience. However, most would suggest that the school, despite its complexities in sorting and alienating subordinate groups, can act as a transformative agent in the wider society (sec, for example, Apple & Weis, 1983). As part of a "contested terrain," schools conceivably can develop a progressive and critical role in creating more equitable social arrangements and an alternative conception of success.

How might critical ethnographers evaluate Ogbu's approach to doing ethnography? In an all-too-rare exposition of its theoretical premises, Simon and Dippo (1986) define critical ethnography as a kind of "knowledge production" and a form of "social practice" (cf. Brede & Feinberg, 1986, p. 272). They want to avoid a conception of ethnography as harnessed to a value-free social science. Rather, they see ethnography as implicated in ongoing relations of power, as inevitably serving a political project. Like most ethnographers, Simon and Dippo (1986) view their work as a process of producing knowledge about "the actual practices and points of view of people within an organized set of social relations" (p. 196). However, they say, this alone is inadequate as an account of ethnography if it does not specify how this knowledge is to be made "topical," how it can be brought to bear on questions of educational change. For these authors, knowledge is made topical in critical ethnography according to a critical political/pedagogical project,

... defined through our interest in how people are implicated in the regulation and alteration of the terms of how they live together and how they define what is possible and desirable for themselves and others. . . . [This is an] interest organized by a standpoint which implicates us in moral questions about desirable forms of social relations and ways of living. (p. 196)

Additionally, Simon and Dippo (1986) identify three "conditions" for critical ethnography:

1. it must employ an organizing problematic that defines one's data and analytical procedures in a way consistent with its project;
2. the work must be situated in a public sphere, as a "starting point" for the critique and transformation of oppressive and inequitable conditions;
3. the work must be reflexive, continually addressing the limits of its own claims as a form of social practice. (p. 197)

Not all authors who might identify themselves as critical ethnographers would accept this formulation, but it does set out basic assumptions of a "project" that all, in one form or another, share.
The contrast with Ogbu should be apparent. Never does he conceptualize his own activity as a form of social practice articulated with the local practices of the people he is studying. Moreover, Ogbu’s project does not include an explicit critique or analysis of “desirable forms of social relations and ways of living” (Simon & Dippo, 1986). Clearly, his work remains firmly within the mainstream liberal social science tradition, which at heart remains an objectivist mode of knowledge production. As such, it provides little critical leverage on developing alternative proposals for educational arrangements. Ogbu’s sole interest in “explaining a phenomenon” betrays a cool distance from the urgent voices, the democratic clamor, which undoubtedly characterize the groups he studies. His proposal to study the question of school failure objectively and leave the question of change to practitioners and policymakers ignores a fundamental postulate of critical theory: all research is political, whether or not it recognizes its commitments and effects.

An anthropological contribution to critical ethnography

Having said this, what does the anthropology of education, and more specifically Ogbu, have to offer a critical ethnography of education? Here I want to identify several deficiencies in current critical work that an anthropological perspective could address. First, anthropology’s traditional emphasis on holistic inquiry – an emphasis that Ogbu reinstates in his polemic against the microethnographers – could be put to good use by critical ethnographers. Many of the latter, in fact, make scheduled visits to schools and select certain narrow topics for investigation (Anyon, 1981; McLaren, 1986; Torruellas, 1989; Valli, 1986). Often, these ethnographers ignore the wider “ecological” context within which students and their families develop a social practice. Ethnography is used selectively to examine certain contexts, and the description of other contexts often is accomplished with secondary sources or even inferred from theory, rather than more empirical work. Anthropologists traditionally have insisted on at least a year’s residence in a location for being able to make valid knowledge claims about patterns of action and meaning occurring there. This specified period is perhaps an arbitrary one, but it does establish a minimum criterion. Given the intrusiveness of most ethnographic research, it would seem necessary to devote a significant portion of the fieldwork to building rapport and reducing the “visibility” of the ethnographer in the everyday processes he or she is studying. Moreover, the sustained period of residential fieldwork allows the ethnographer a familiarity with everyday processes – especially concerning the link between the school and its community – that might otherwise be inaccessible to the scheduled visitor. Critical ethnographers should take this into consideration.

The idea of holism in anthropology does not refer just to a type of comprehensive research, but also refers, and perhaps more centrally, to an analysis that attempts to incorporate a multidimensional understanding of the human animal in its varied contexts. In critical ethnographic writing, the lack of a holistically informed analysis is manifest in a number of ways. Here I want just to point out a few facets of a holistic anthropological approach that might enrich, or even transform, the interpretations typical of critical ethnography. One dimension of human reality often ignored by critical ethnographers is the existence of culturally defined life stages and life cycles that determine social roles and expectations. The schooling process is bound intimately to the definition of these stages. For instance, much of what students “resist” in the
school could be attributed to an authority structure antagonistic to students' sense of self as constructed culturally. This sense of self may acutely register relations of power corresponding to age-based divisions. Many anthropologists, for instance, have documented the conflict between those behaviors and attitudes accepted, or even required, of school-aged children within and outside the school. In impoverished regions, students outside the school may take on adult responsibilities with considerable authority, while being asked in the school to submit to the oftentimes arbitrary, condescending authority of the teacher. Critical researchers often privilege race, class, and gender as analytic categories, without considering how subjectivity and resistance equally may be rooted in age, kinship, occupation, and so on. Categories need not be kept separate. Willis's classic study of the lads (1981b) barely mentions the dynamics of adolescence as a distinct culturally-constructed life stage in working-class Hammertown, yet it is clear from his material that age-based subjectivities, while bound up with those of class in significant ways, exert a powerful influence on the formation of resistant modalities in the school. Willis privileges class over age as a theoretical category. Eckert's (1989) study of an American high school and Connell et al.'s (1982) study of several Australian high schools are more sensitive to the influence of age divisions in schools.

The recent turn to practice theory in anthropology has made us aware that analytic categories often are substituted for or conflated with social and cultural categories. The tendency now is toward "letting the data speak for themselves" rather than fitting them into preexisting analytic categories such as race, class, or gender. In other words, analytic categories should emerge from the social and cultural categories constructed in everyday practice, not exclusively from theory. What kinds of conceptions order people's experiences and determine their choices and dispositions? People do not act or view the world in a certain way because they are black, women, or lower class; they do so because they are raced, gendered, and classed, because their experiences are constructed culturally both by themselves and others within a set of social relations and in reference to these objective material conditions. Ogbu's notion that minorities' experience of the "actual texture of everyday life" determines their schooling behavior suggests a "raced" construction of experience that constantly is renewed in practice. Critical ethnographers often have relied on race, class, and gender as primordial analytic categories, but more recent critical work has been evolving to extend the emphasis on the construction and production of cultural categories. Here we would have to include the body of work that examines the forms of schooling emerging under postmodern social conditions.16

Anthropological work on cultural transmission (see, for example, Spindler, 1987) and learning (Hansen, 1979; Wolcott, 1982) must be considered if critical ethnographers are to reconstruct adequately the complexity of what goes on in classrooms and communities. Too often, radical researchers fail to explore the full range of learning processes occurring at the school. Armed with concepts such as the hidden curriculum or ideological hegemony, they may impute a logic to the whole schooling process that in fact exists only in certain selected domains, while being contradicted in others. Selectivity yields a narrow theoretical account of the school. What is needed is a more thorough grounding in anthropological perspectives on human learning across cultures and across various social domains and institutions. An almost total reliance on learning related to reaching maturity and building social relations is perhaps the single most characteristic feature of the human being. Learning takes place constantly. It is directed toward a myriad of processes and objects and is effected through a variety of
means. In schools, children may be learning to read, to meet deadlines, to be patriotic citizens; they also may be learning to be gendered or classed in certain ways, to negotiate work requirements with teachers, to understand communicative cues, or to labor collaboratively. None of these precludes the other. The relatively recent development of formal public schooling has usurped many of the learning functions previously carried out in the family or the larger community, but not all of them (Levine & White, 1985). Critical ethnographers tend to highlight those school processes and their associated knowledges that putatively correspond to State or capitalist or patriarchal imperatives. These, however, need to be distinguished analytically from more basic kinds of learned cultural knowledge not necessarily charged with the same kind of political or economic import.

This is not a call for a return to earlier studies of cultural transmission. As I noted earlier, Ogbo himself critiques the view of schooling as primarily a process of cultural transmission and says we should look more at "structural," not "transactional," questions. Indeed, critical authors have been among those most successful in challenging the passive, unilateral character of previous cultural transmission studies. Proper emphasis has been placed on students as active subjects appropriating and negotiating different types of knowledge presented to them. Nevertheless, when the gaze is focused exclusively on certain domains within the school, the more general process of cultural learning recedes into the background. Only by foregrounding this process can we hope to understand what is particular about those other domains in the school. Only in this way too can we hope to understand how the school attempts to accomplish both the socialization of general cultural competence and the construction of subjectivities, while being challenged by alternative competencies and subjectivities formed outside the school (Ogbo, 1979). Ogbo's call for a holistic ethnography points us in this direction. His suggestion does not preclude the study of cultural transmission; it locates this process within broader social parameters.

A brief final reckoning

This paper has been concerned principally with introducing the work of John Ogbo to an audience of critical educational researchers and writers. As I stated at the outset, Ogbo's work has become of increased interest to critical scholars in recent years. I hope to have shown why this interest is justified. Ogbo's efforts within the anthropology of education in many ways have paralleled the critical thrust emerging in educational studies since the early 1970s. Indeed, they are contemporaneous developments.

The first part of this essay sought to put Ogbo's corpus in proper context while reviewing and clarifying its major concepts. Here the aim was primarily expository. This alone might have been useful for critical scholars interested in Ogbo's work. In the second part, however, I attempted a critical conceptual analysis of Ogbo's overall project and of some of his specific formulations. I attempted to show how, from a radical perspective, Ogbo ultimately fails to engage some of the more pressing questions about school and societal change. For the most part, Ogbo's work is internally consistent and theoretically cogent. I have selected for critique several formulations out of an extensive catalogue spanning almost two decades. Questions about the prospects for a radical appropriation of his work have more to do with its implicit ideological premises - notions of how society and basic research operates, how fundamental change occurs, or what kinds of changes, if any, are desirable - than with its conceptual apparatus per se.
In the second part, I turned the lens around and developed a brief critique of critical ethnographic studies from an anthropological perspective. This was necessarily a more tentative, exploratory exercise, made all the more difficult by the heterogeneity of a critical ethnographic "tradition" in educational studies. I identified some common features of such studies and subjected them to anthropological criteria. Many will feel that this does little justice to the complexity of positions and types of studies found on either side, yet those familiar with the literature hopefully will recognize the kinds of theoretical and methodological problems I discuss here. My aim has not been to review critical research in education thoroughly. Rather, I have attempted to establish a contrast with Ogbu's work in anthropology by choosing a few key critical texts.

Above all, this paper has sought to initiate a more sustained dialogue between anthropology and other disciplines involved in the critical study of education. For critical ethnographers, especially those interested in questions of ethnicity and multiculturalism, Ogbu is perhaps the most interesting anthropologist of education currently practicing his craft. A greater familiarity with his work, his contributions and limitations, can only enrich our efforts to understand what happens in schools.

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Notes

1. Anthropologists also began to use their ethnographic skills to evaluate the social consequences of federally mandated desegregation programs (see Clement, 1979).

2. Needless to say, the whole problem was fueled by the contradiction between this disproportionate failure and the equalizing pretensions of American educational discourse.

3. The argument about "culture" that Ogbu develops has many similarities with recent critical treatments of culture (see Apple, 1982; Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 1980; Roseberry, 1989; Williams, 1977; Willis, 1981), which see it as forms of practice and knowledge developed in the context of ongoing relations of power with other groups, institutions, and ideologies. Culture is not essentialized, but rather is relational, contingent, and constantly reproduced. Ogbu makes no reference to this body of theory and, perhaps as a result, his conception of culture turns static. Ogbu paints a picture of minority oppositional values which, once formed historically in relation to oppressive dominant practices, have since congealed and ceased to evolve.

4. In more recent work, Ogbu (1989b, 1990) has addressed "the individual in collective adaptation," arguing that, in order to be successful in school, involuntary minority students must develop "secondary strategies" that distinguish them from their peers. As I will argue later, this notion of strategies gives short shrift to the power of peer group dynamics, or what I call student cultural production.

5. For instance, Foley's (1991) recent critique tends to overemphasize Ogbu's earlier use of the "caste concept" in anthropology, which actually disappears in Ogbu's more recent writings. Similarly, Erickson's (1987) label, "the perceived labor market explanation," selects only that part of Ogbu's theory concerned with the effect of the perception of limited opportunity and "job ceilings" on academic motivation and achievement. This label ignores the actual complexity of Ogbu's overall model.

6. On this point, Ogbu writes: "Depending on the background of the investigator, the specific cultural domain considered important in the study... may be cognitive style, communication style, motivational style, classroom social organization and social relations, interaction style, and, nowadays, 'literacy' and 'writing' styles" (1987b, p. 313).

7. See McDermott (1987) and McDermott and Gospodinoff (1979) for a similar perspective.

8. In an earlier formulation, Ogbu (1981) referred to these as "ethnecologies" of schooling.

9. This gaze often is extended to the "home" or "community" setting, but always with the goal of comparing communicative styles within the two settings.
10. Ogbu has not yet provided a methodological conceptualization adequate to engage in a simultaneously rich ethnography of classroom and neighborhood. Presumably, time spent in the community abounds from time spent in the school and classroom. Ogbu's (1974) own monograph, which is long on community perspectives and short on classroom description, seems to bear this out. In his latest research project, Ogbu has small teams investigating different aspects of the schooling process in schools and communities. One wonders whether single ethnographers possibly can effect an adequate descriptive and interpretive integration of these varying domains. If not, is this an explicit argument for team research?

11. Several students of Ogbu's were engaged during this period in major ethnographic projects proceeding from his theoretical premises (see Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gibson, 1987, 1988; Suarez-Orozco, 1989).


13. My own research in progress with the families of Mexican schoolchildren indicates that parents of female students value schooling as a means by which their daughters can "defend" themselves later in case of divorce or family tragedy. The defense consists of job skills for decent pay, but also of a general cultural knowledge important for navigating an increasingly impersonal, bureaucratized social fabric.

14. In his more macrostructural, comparative work, Ogbu (1978) does discuss certain effects of State policy on educational processes. However, he never mentions how the State or ideology might be introduced as analytic categories in order to enrich interpretive ethnographic descriptions of educational relations.

15. See Giroux (1983) for a review and MacLeod (1987) and Weis (1984) for ethnographic descriptions of this kind of "contradiction" between formulaic interview discourses and more tacit understandings acquired from lived experience. Bourdieu (1977) provides a sophisticated theoretical account of this distinction.

16. Wexler (1987) is a key reference here. Connell (1985) is one of those working in the critical tradition who has incorporated this practice-oriented, constructionist perspective into his work. Holland and Eisenhart (1990) provide a helpful discussion and demonstration of the approach as well.

References


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