



The Struggle for Identity in Today's Schools: Cultural Recognition in a Time of Increasing Diversity

Patrick M. Jenlink, Faye Hicks Townes

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The Struggle for Identity in Today's Schools examines cultural recognition and the struggle for identity in America's schools. In particular, the contributing authors focus on the recognition and misrecognition as antagonistic cultural forces that work to shape, and at times distort identity. What surfaces throughout the chapters are two lessons to be learned in relation to identity. The first lesson is that identities and the acts attributed to them are always forming and re-forming in relation to historically specific contexts, and these contexts are political in nature, i.e., defined by issues of diversity such as race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, and economics. The second lesson presented by the authors is that identity forms in and across intimate and social contexts, over long periods of time. The historical timing of identity formation cannot simply be dictated by discourse. The identities posited by any particular discourse become important and a part of everyday life based on the intersection of social histories and social actors. Importantly, the social-cultural use of identities leads to another way of conceptualizing histories, personhoods, cultures, and their distributions over social and political groups.

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