

STUDENT DIVERSITY

Common Schools, Uncommon Identities: National Unity and Cultural Difference
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LAWRENCE BLUM, *University of Massachusetts, Boston*

Walter Feinberg's *Common Schools, Uncommon Identities* is without question the best general examination of the character and value, and of the moral, political, and educational underpinnings, of multicultural education. Discussions of multicultural education—both pro and con—are typically politically driven; yet the political assumptions underlying differing positions are seldom brought to the surface, much less subjected to careful scrutiny. Feinberg, a distinguished philosopher of education, brings a magisterial standpoint to the vexing and emotionally charged issue of multicultural education. Needless to say, he has a political viewpoint of his own. However, this viewpoint is explicitly articulated and vigorously defended.

As far as I know, Feinberg is unique in bringing into a fruitful and essential relationship three distinct literatures and discourses—culture, education, and liberal democracy. Excellent and influential books relate two of these three. For example, Amy Gutmann's *Democratic Education* and Eamonn Callan's *Creating Citizens* relate education and liberal democracy. Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship* relates liberal democracy to culture. Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children* and James Banks's many writings relate culture to education. Through placing his discussion of multicultural education in the context of two related but distinct philosophic contexts—a political theory of liberal democracy, and a general theory of education appropriate for such a society—Feinberg brings culture, education, and liberal democracy together.

Feinberg frames his overarching argument as an investigation of the alleged tensions between recognizing the distinct cultural identities and groups comprising a nation, and the needs for forging national loyalty and cohesion from which the particularistic recognitions are often thought to detract. A second thread throughout Feinberg's book is the tension between the claims of liberal individualism and those of various groups, generally

referred to (somewhat misleadingly, as I will argue below) as “cultural,” that provide important identities for individuals. Feinberg is exquisitely sensitive to the moral, political, and educational claims of both sides of this divide; I believe it is the best discussion I have ever read of the never fully resolvable tension between group and individual. Feinberg encourages liberals to have a measure of tolerance toward nonliberal cultural communities in their midst, in light both of culture’s central role in providing meaning to individuals, and of the temptation to wield state power oppressively in the name of any values, including liberal ones. For example, Feinberg agrees with the nonliberal Supreme Court ruling in the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972) case that said the Amish could remove their children from public schools after the eighth grade because they regarded further schooling and their children’s attachment to it as disruptive to their way of life—even though (as the dissenting justice noted) this decision denied the children the opportunities for growth and access to mainstream opportunities afforded other children of public schooling through the twelfth grade.

Yet on balance, Feinberg privileges liberal individualism, with its emphasis on individual choice and growth, freedom of association, self-formation in the construction of individual identity, and the ability to subject any culture, identity or community values to individual critical scrutiny, over communitarian, “culturalist,” relativist, or other group-centered philosophies of society or education. For example, he recognizes that parents’ desire to preserve their culture is often bound up with their understandable desire that they be able to recognize themselves in their children; yet he sets himself strongly against the idea that children should be seen as destined to live out a familiarly or culturally prescribed mode of life, or that a child’s range of choices should be sacrificed to preserve a group.

Common Schools, Uncommon Identities’s major weakness is its failure to give the arguably liberal ideals of equality and social justice theoretical—and thus political, moral, or educational—status equivalent to that of individualism, cultural recognition, and national cohesion. Concerns of equality and social justice do permeate Feinberg’s argument, often providing the driving rationale of his argument. Yet seldom are they framed as such, but rather are couched in other terms—especially as claims for cultural recognition. Hence the force of equality and social justice as political and educational norms is frequently masked.

Related to this weakness is Feinberg’s failure to grant race and racism sufficiently distinct educational and political attention. By generally subsuming race under culture, Feinberg tends to mask the operations of historical and institutional racism as distinct forms of social, economic, and educational injustice requiring distinctly antiracist political and educational responses. In this regard, Feinberg, despite his exceptional theoretical sophistication, makes an error common among proponents (and some detractors)

of multicultural education. This error has prompted a move toward distinguishing antiracist, or sometimes the more general “social justice education,” from a multicultural education that is more narrowly conceived; or, in a similar but somewhat less clarifying move, by construing “multicultural education” to include antiracist, or social justice, education (Blum 1997).

The difference between Feinberg and at least some other multicultural proponents, however, is that he is not concerned only to recognize and celebrate distinct cultures and their achievements, but is fully aware of and deeply concerned about historical and current racially based injustices perpetrated against Native Americans, African Americans, and other groups. My criticism is that Feinberg’s defense of multicultural education fails to provide a framework adequate to expressing these injustices or to pointing to the way society can address them politically and educationally. In my discussion of *Common Schools, Uncommon Identities*, I will focus especially on the portions of the book relevant to these criticisms. In doing so, I will necessarily omit, or give only cursory attention to, many rich discussions and lines of thought in this exceptionally complex, subtle, and nuanced book.

In chapter 1, “Education: Cultural Difference and National Identity,” Feinberg sets out a general rationale—“principled reasons” grounded in historical understandings of the purposes of public schooling—for common, or public, schools. Besides socializing students into a given society and teaching a basic level of commitment to the safety and well-being of fellow members of society, that principled rationale rests on three basic liberal and democratic values: equal opportunity (understood as developing socially and economically useful skills), freedom of association (for example, to form cultural or political groupings), and individual growth (stated, in the language of current liberal theory, as the forming and pursuing of one’s own conception of “the good”).

Feinberg agrees with some critics of liberal education that such principles run contrary to the spirit of—though they are not overtly opposed to—some of the value systems of parents and communities whose children attend public schools. His response is that advocates of such liberal public schooling must be prepared to defend these principles as appropriate for a pluralistic and democratic society to those parents. In this spirit, Feinberg approves of a federal district court’s ruling in the important *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education* case (1987) that schools should not honor parents’ desires that their children not be exposed to literature depicting ways of life different from their own, when the parents (with some justification) regard such exposure as posing a challenge to their children’s attachment to their way of life. For Feinberg, the opportunity for growth, learning about different ways of living, and the possibilities for critical thinking outweigh the parents’ concerns.

Before proceeding to work out the appropriate relationship between the common school and the distinctive cultures and cultural groups that coexist within a liberal society, Feinberg takes up two challenges that would render that project impossible, pointless, or unworthy. In chapter 2, "Nature of National Identity and Citizenship Education," he considers, and rejects, the objection that nations, national borders, and national languages are totally arbitrary, and that the common school can only reinforce the ideology of the dominant group. Nations do have an inevitable element of arbitrariness, Feinberg argues, but arbitrariness is not always unfair (e.g., it is not unfair to compel U.S. school children to learn English, French school children to learn French, and so on), and nations have historically served important human interests by organizing life in advanced technological societies. Common schools do impose a particular identity, but one that can be liberating, enabling children to make use of the tools of such economically advanced societies, and providing an essential venue for struggles against racism and sexism and other forms of inequality.

In chapter 3, "Cultural Difference," Feinberg assesses "strong culturalism," the view that distinct cultures are essentially opaque to one another. With such a viewpoint, it is impossible to learn about a culture other than one's own. When schools in a liberal society purport to provide neutral venues in which to teach about distinct groups and cultures, they are, wittingly or not, imposing a distinct cultural identity on students from minority, marginalized, or powerless groups. Hence they are in a sense doing violence to those groups.

Feinberg's description of how culture as a system of meaning is deeply implicated in the formation of the individual self and in the processes of education is unparalleled. Moreover, he is well aware of the historical undermining of some minority cultures (especially Native Americans) in the name of a larger national good achieved through education. Yet he rejects strong culturalism. Some impositions of cultural competence—for example, providing children with the conceptual tools to make use of science and technology—may benefit young people in the culture. A failure of the dominant culture to instill certain competencies absent in a minority culture may even be a form of "cultural neglect" (p. 85).

Feinberg also argues that distinct cultures are not totally impenetrable to one another; understanding another culture might be a matter of degree, but people can learn to make some sense of other cultures. Some outsiders to a given culture (for example, parents) might be better positioned even than some cultural insiders to understand experiences (for example, of parenting) within that culture. Finally, Feinberg rejects the idea that the sentiments and commitments involved in national identity are necessarily more artificial and imposed than those involved in cultures. "A nation exists in part because a group of people have invested much in shaping and reshaping a certain identity" (p. 91).

A central thread in Feinberg's argument, providing a framework for chapters 5 through 7 (but introduced in chapter 1), is a contestation between "pluralism" and "multiculturalism" as philosophies of education. Pluralists, for Feinberg, reject the *assimilationist* idea that schools should discourage identification with particular ethnic cultures and foster acculturation to the dominant national culture. However, pluralists differ from multiculturalists in advocating as much neutrality as possible toward particular ethnic cultures, allowing but neither encouraging nor discouraging their expression. In chapter 5, "The Aims of Multicultural Education," Feinberg presents multiculturalism as rejecting this neutralist ideal in favor of encouraging pride in the student's own cultural heritage, while also informing students about, and encouraging respect for, the practices of other cultural groups.

As thus described, multicultural education seems problematic to Feinberg on several grounds. The alleged fostering of a primary identification with a cultural group is detrimental to national cohesion, which it accords only a secondary loyalty, as well as to individuality, in promoting a conferred group identity at the expense of individual reflection, choice, and growth. (It seems to me not entirely fair to equate promoting pride in a group identification that a student already possesses with an affirmative fostering of attachment to that group as a primary identification, as only the second scenario runs any substantial risk of constraining individual choice and growth.)

Feinberg is also worried that the pride-enhancing dimension of multicultural education will encourage inaccurate portrayals of cultural groups, omitting information that might cast the group in a negative light. He also makes the more general point that knowing more about a culture does not necessarily increase respect for it. (Both points are illustrated by the example of Ghanaian girls given to priests as unpaid servants.) This is surely a valid criticism of much that parades under the rubric of "multicultural education." However, as Feinberg recognizes elsewhere, some cultures have been portrayed systematically in a negative, degrading, or deficient light, often because of a bias against non-American or, more generally, non-European or non-Western modes of life. In these cases, making sure that this bias is explicitly countered, that Eurocentrism is named and exposed, not only accords with the moral impetus behind multicultural education, but constitutes a more accurate portrayal of these cultures as well. In such a context presenting what might be regarded as negative features of the cultures in question will be much less likely to be taken by Western and especially white students as casting the entire culture in question in a negative light.

Feinberg's valuable distinction between political and educational multiculturalism is vital to understanding his view of multicultural education in relation to pluralism. He appears to regard the social recognition of cul-

tural groups as, in general, a good thing (p. 129), but in educational settings, sees it as frequently in tension with more basic educational goals such as advancing reflective understanding and growth. Feinberg thereby implies that he might accept, for example, Charles Taylor's argument that, in the name of preserving French Canadian culture, it would be permissible to require commercial establishments to conduct business in French (Taylor, 1994), though he might resist comparable culture-reinforcing measures in schools. Indeed, Feinberg clearly states that no *general* injunction to affirm cultures can be supported in educational contexts. This seems to me correct. Do schools need positively to affirm (as opposed to merely refraining from derogating) Norwegian American culture or Polish American culture?

In chapter 5, Feinberg acknowledges only one distinct type of case in which, contrary to the strictures of pluralism, the encouragement of group pride is appropriate. That is when doing so is a prerequisite for the self-esteem of the child who is a member of the group in question, *and* where such self-esteem is itself a prerequisite for academic achievement. Feinberg suggests (he does not really discuss this issue in any detail) that the evidence linking ethnic pride to individual self-esteem, as well as that linking self-esteem to academic achievement, is spotty and contested (p. 128). Nevertheless, he is surely correct in thinking that if, for example, some black children are given the message that they are academically inferior and that little is expected of them, this may well be harmful to the self-esteem and academic performance of at least some of them. In general, a child, in order to achieve, must believe, or at least tacitly presume, that people with whom he identifies are able to achieve. But this generalization cannot be 100% true, since some children may, with regard to academic achievement, see themselves as exceptions in groups with whom they identify culturally, socially, and emotionally.

Yet Feinberg's framing this discussion as a choice between a neutralist pluralism and a difference-reinforcing multiculturalism conflates two quite distinct matters—educational equity, and appreciation of cultural distinctness. In effect, Feinberg's chapter 5 argument is that enhancement of cultural identity is appropriate when (by means of increased academic motivation) it serves the goal of equal education. One might have thought that Feinberg would subsume this argument for cultural enhancement under his basic educational principle of equality of opportunity; if a student has a motivational deficit caused by a social or school-based devaluing of his cultural group, it is appropriate for his teachers to make up for this deficit, as, according to Feinberg's original statement of the equality of opportunity principle, schools should do regarding economic and other resource deficits.

However, Feinberg does not place his self-esteem argument under his equality of opportunity principle, or any other equality-based principle. I

suggest that he is diverted from doing so by two factors. First, by viewing the correcting of social group devaluation under the rubric of “multicultural education,” Feinberg places it within a discourse privileging *difference* and *distinctness* over *sameness* and *equality*.

Secondarily, Feinberg seems somewhat ambivalent even about the affirmation of group identity required for the specialized case of enhancing academic performance. He still worries about individuality-suppressing, information-skewing, and cohesion-counteracting tendencies of group affirmation. Hence he may not wish to place this affirmation on the bedrock foundation of one of his three basic educational principles.

Another example of Feinberg’s slippage between concerns of cultural distinctness and difference, and those of equality, is his very interesting discussion of the plight of children whose home culture differs from that of the dominant school culture, leaving them at a cultural deficit in school. Feinberg eloquently recounts the many ways, often invisible even to teachers, that competence in the majority culture provides a range of advantages relevant to success in school and in society more generally. He argues plausibly that the school has a responsibility to teach the child cultural competence in the majority and school culture, in order to remedy this deficit.

However, Feinberg places this apparently equality-based argument (as compensating for a deficit) under the “cultural pride” rubric (p. 138). But whether a student takes pride in her group is quite a different matter from whether her upbringing renders her competent in certain cultures but incompetent in the majority culture. Feinberg himself notes that many immigrants do not imbibe a message that their culture is *inferior*, and hence that they need to learn to take pride in it. They simply see that they need to master the “codes” of the majority culture with which they are unfamiliar. This is quite different from the situation of two groups to whom Feinberg rightly sees having special claim to educational attention, Native Americans and African Americans. Both these groups have been given the distinct message throughout American history that their identities are unworthy, or at least that they are nothing like equals with European Americans. (Semi-immigrant, semicolonized groups such as Mexican Americans probably occupy a middle ground between culturally distinct but non-inferiorized, and fully inferiorized, groups in this regard.) These groups may or may not need instruction in the codes of the majority culture. Many African Americans, for example, grow up in contexts in which they are quite familiar with majority “white” culture. For these students, the corrective task of the school is countering the message that they themselves, as blacks, are *inferior* and *incapable*—not providing instruction in the codes of the majority culture.

Of course some students need and deserve *both* forms of corrective—an instilling of a sense of their own worth, *and* instruction in the codes of the

dominant society. In *Other People's Children*, Lisa Delpit argues that this is true for many African American children. With regard to black vernacular English (or Ebonics), for example, she advocates both validating that speech (and the cultural identity surrounding it) as a language of equal worth to mainstream English, and at the same time, teaching these children mainstream English and other cultural modes of middle-class white society so they will not be at the sort of cultural disadvantage Feinberg describes so well.¹

Still, correction of a sociocultural attack on the worth of an identity group is quite a different matter from the more material issue of being provided with the “tools” (Feinberg’s term) that allow for a more level playing field in the negotiation of school cultures. These distinct issues are, in a sense, *both* matters of equity—one an equity of worth, the other an equity of (cultural) resources. But by eliding cultural competence with cultural pride, Feinberg does his own argument a disservice by implying that both are to be understood within the multiculturalist discourse of difference and distinctness.

Feinberg also masks what it is plausible to interpret as his own equality concerns by his overexpansive use of the term *culture*, a use typical of much multicultural writing, especially among authors concerned about social justice issues. To oversimplify a bit, Feinberg includes two different types of groups under the culture rubric. One is *ethnic* cultures, groups concerned to preserve their own distinctive ways of life with their distinctive systems of meaning, set within a larger differently cultured society (pp. 4–5). The other is oppressed, devalued, or discriminated-against groups, such as women, gays/lesbians, the disabled, and racial groups (blacks, Native Americans—that is, groups seen as racially inferior).² I will call the latter inferiorized groups.³

Inferiorized groups may possess some features similar to ethnocultures (see discussion of “deaf culture” below). Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference between the claim of the former groups to equal treatment, recognition of equal worth, and equal opportunity and the claims of the latter to recognition and acknowledgment of their distinctive cultures, the right to express those cultures, the right to cultural integrity (not to be put under undue pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture), and the like. Calling women, gays/lesbians, blacks, and the disabled cultures (or cultural groups) makes it difficult to recognize their equality-based needs and claims and the ways that our society has and continues to treat such groups unequally.

As mentioned earlier, Feinberg differs from a range of multicultural writers and practitioners whose primary concern is really for ethnocultural recognition and for whom issues of social justice take a back seat. It is precisely because Feinberg is concerned *both* about cultural recognition *and*

social justice and equity that his failure to distinguish these concerns clearly, and his tilt toward the language of culture, masks his own concerns.

Feinberg continues his discussion of the recognition of group differences in chapter 6, "Uncommon Identities: Hard Cases." He distinguishes two forms of recognition, *minimal* and *robust*, implying (though without explicitly saying so), that chapter 5 was concerned with the robust form, since minimal recognition is owed to all while the legitimate reach of robust recognition is limited similarly to recognition in chapter 5. Minimal recognition is simply a form of the respect for individual persons due every student (and every individual), but in light of the collective identities that are important to that individual student. Feinberg argues that children should be allowed to express their cultures in school, as long as doing so does not impinge on the right of others to do the same. He also takes a slight step further to argue that teachers should sometimes adjust their pedagogical or interpersonal style, in order to show regard for the child's culture; and he approaches, but does not quite say, that the value of minimal recognition granted to other students should be part of every child's moral, or civic, education (p. 169). (Feinberg recognizes that forms of recognition related to enhancing academic performance rest on a foundation distinct from those related to freedom of expression.)

Feinberg's rejection of the claims of cultures to robust recognition on the grounds of preservation of their distinct existence is superbly defended in his nuanced discussion of Nathan Lane's advocacy of cultural status for deafness, of separate schools, of instruction in American Sign Language, and of a general rejection of mainstreaming education for deaf children. Feinberg rejects Lane's view (shared by many deaf advocates) as too constraining of individual choice. Lane, Feinberg alleges, wants to foist a distinct culture-like identity on a child, rather than giving the deaf child the choice of whether to affiliate primarily with the deaf culture or to attempt, through compensatory education (learning Signed English, lip reading, attending classes with hearing children, and the like), to make her way in the mainstream culture the best she can. Feinberg would give the child (he does not make clear what age child he has in mind here) a choice in the degree and type of affiliation she wishes to take up toward the deaf community, through mainstreaming in "the least restrictive [educational] environment." Feinberg recognizes, however, that without special measures to protect what Lane sees as nondefective deaf culture, that culture is likely to be seriously weakened by "social processes of modern society." He is willing to countenance this cultural loss in the name of individual choice. Moreover, Feinberg also grants a right to a Lane-like cultural community when there are no other communities of meaning available to a particular deaf child. Essentially, what Feinberg argues is that deaf group identity should be seen on a disadvantaged model rather than a subordinated model.

Feinberg's equally excellent discussion of robust recognition reveals an important ambiguity in that idea. He argues that educational programs based on economic class, such as Head Start, can be justified by appeal to pure individual equality of opportunity alone, independent of any identity-recognition concerns. The rationale is simply that a child should not be deprived of educational resources because of the economic standing of her parents. In the case of women, however, their opportunities are constrained by a cultural devaluing and constricting that affects them in light of their identity as members of the group "women." Hence robust recognition that allows women "to see themselves in a different light" (p. 185), i.e., in a nondevalued way, is justified in the service of equality of opportunity. Though robust recognition is required because of the shared identity feature (being female), it does not have the further characteristic that Feinberg finds problematic, of reinforcing the individual's attachment to the group in question. Giving women the message that they are equals to men does not require encouraging them to feel any more solidarity with other women than they already do, although it may make their identity as a member of that group more salient to them.

Feinberg's acknowledging a form of robust recognition that does not run afoul of his concern for individual choice—because it simply corrects for a devaluing of a group-based identity—is at odds with his earlier definition of robust recognition as reinforcing both the child's attachment to the group and her identity as a member of that group (p. 169). Feinberg's tendency to conflate concerns for equality with distinctness again causes him unnecessary problems. The corrective, equality-seeking form of recognition appropriate to the case of women that Feinberg describes is quite distinct from recognition of an ineluctable distinctness of women as a group; thus it need not (as Feinberg argues so convincingly) reinforce group attachments in ways that threaten individual choice. By contrast, the deafness-as-culture advocate rejects equality as a goal and seeks a form of recognition of distinctiveness that necessarily promotes group identity and attachment, thereby constricting individual choice in the name of group preservation.

Feinberg goes on to argue that Native Americans and African Americans deserve a form of robust recognition that involves the troubling reinforcement-of-identity feature. Feinberg argues that beyond the forms of injustice suffered by women and poor people, these two other groups have suffered an undermining of the cultural foundations of their construction of meaning. Hence they have special claims that their historical struggles, suffering, and achievements be recognized, for example, in the curriculum and in national holidays.

The conclusion of this argument seems correct to me, but Feinberg's route to it conflates race and culture. African Americans and Native Americans have been inferiorized, denied opportunities, and oppressed as *racial*

groups (Smedley 1999). It is true that the distinctive African cultures of the newly enslaved Africans were systematically attacked (not entirely successfully) in the early years of American slavery. But the injustices with which Feinberg is concerned were perpetrated on a new, culturally distinct people, namely African *Americans*, whose history continued for several centuries beyond, and who developed a distinctive and extremely rich culture, amidst and in response to the suffering and injustice they endured as a *racial* group. In fact, curricular recognition of those injustices, and of the triumphs and achievements in spite of them, is a fairly minimal response to those injustices; it follows merely from the imperative to tell the national story accurately, and in that sense applies to *any* group suffering significant historical injustices. The collapsing of culture into race here blinds Feinberg to the array of compensatory measures for historically imposed disadvantages, special protections against further discrimination, affirmative action programs, and possibly reparations for historical sufferings appropriate to a racial group burdened by the racist treatment African Americans have undergone—measures for which Feinberg argued so persuasively in his 1998 book *On Higher Ground*.⁴

Chapter 7, “On Robust Recognition and Storytelling,” addresses the issue of whose voices should tell the (hi)story of a given group. Again, this discussion is the best of which I am aware of this topic. Feinberg argues that insider voices, especially of marginalized groups, must always be included. “The world from the point of view of the homeless, the unemployed, the gay, the dwarf, the sick, and the dying are worlds that check the assumptions of the everyday world of most of us” (p. 201). Feinberg also emphasizes the plurality of insider voices, differentiated by gender, sexual orientation, age, social position, class, and the like, throwing into question the meaningfulness of the singular categories of insider and outsider.

Feinberg sharply criticizes the view that outsider status forecloses understanding of the group. (The general point of view here is the same as that argued for in chapter 3.) The outsider brings frames of reference that can enrich understanding. The outsider can work hard to understand the insiders’ perspective and is then well positioned to convey that understanding to other outsiders. Similarly, the insiders’ stories are not threatened by the presence of outsider perspectives. All work together to bring about a broader understanding.

Chapter 8, “Citizenship Education and the Multicultural Ideal,” continues the argument of chapter 4, “Moral Education in a Liberal Society.” In the latter, Feinberg agrees with communitarians that moral education must take place within particular traditions and communities, and he agrees that some of our important communities (e.g., our families of origin, our nation, our ethnic group) are not generally chosen; we are (for the most part) born into them. But he disagrees that moral agents are confined by those com-

munities, hence he rejects the relativism implied by full-scale communitarianism. The path is thus open to providing a somewhat culture-independent defense of liberalism.

In chapter 8, Feinberg argues that although it is central to liberalism to allow individuals their own vision of the good, a liberal society can only be created and sustained over time if its members share a set of morally substantive values, and are educated in a complex set of skills and competences. Liberal societies thus provide the moral wherewithal to reproduce themselves as communities and traditions, contrary to the claim of full communitarianism (exemplified by a major strand of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, insightfully discussed by Feinberg). For example, liberalism requires tolerance and a respect for visions of the good embedded in different ethnocultures. Such tolerance and respect are complex values. They involve an appreciation of how culture shapes identity, in one's own case as well as others; support for the conditions that allow others to pursue their own conceptions of the good; and an appreciation of the way that a society is strengthened by providing the opportunity for each individual to pursue her own path while tolerating others' pursuing paths she may have difficulty valuing.

In the final chapter, "Common Schools and the Public Formation," Feinberg emphasizes the public functions of the common school in teaching the values and competencies necessary to active and informed citizenship in a liberal, democratic nation. In a sense, then, Feinberg goes beyond the framework of basic educational values set out in the first chapter (equality of opportunity, freedom of association, and individual growth) to give equal pride of place to the teaching of "civic virtue." Feinberg sees liberal democracy as the best meaning for American national identity, and the common school as a central institution in its perpetuation. Liberal democracy, then, can provide the required framework for national unity and cohesion in a society composed of many different ethnocultural groups.

Feinberg's conclusion is optimistic; there are many quite antidemocratic aspects to "American" traditions (Smith 1997), and bringing school systems around to Feinberg's particular construal of "Americanism" would be a formidable task. It would be a worthy one, however, and Walter Feinberg has given us as ringing, yet subtle, a defense of liberal democratic schooling in the context of a culturally pluralistic society as we are likely to see for a long time to come.

Notes

1 Elsewhere (chapter 6) Feinberg himself discusses Ebonics briefly, and argues that a case can be made for using it in instructing some African American students, but also that "it is a critical component for encouraging group identification" (p. 170) and that groups other than

African Americans should be taught about it, presumably with a view to increasing their respect for it. Feinberg's argument is akin to Delpit's, but less grounded in an equality of opportunity principle, and connecting more with a multicultural injunction for others to recognize the culture in question.

2 Strictly speaking, there are no groups of persons who constitute an actual race, for there are no races in the sense in which this word is commonly used in vernacular English. The term is employed in certain specialized scientific discourses, but its meanings there are quite different from that of common parlance. (On this, see Smedley, 1999, and Marks, 1995.) What we call *races* are perhaps more accurately referred to as *racialized groups*, that is, groups that have been oppressed or discriminated against (or that have engaged in this discrimination) *because they have been regarded as races*. Races in this sense are distinct from the ethnic groups that fit Feinberg's proffered definition of cultures, although racial groups contain various ethnocultural groups (e.g., black encompasses African American, Afro Caribbean, Nigerian; Asian [understood as a racial designation] encompasses Chinese American, Japanese American, Vietnamese American, and so forth). So, in a sense, the same group can be viewed in regard to its race *or* its ethnoculture.

3 Chapter 5 contains an interesting discussion of different scripts, or general historical/social frameworks and narratives, within which different groups' experiences can be placed. Advantage/disadvantage (applying most fully to white immigrant ethnic groups) and dominant/subordinate (applying most fully to Native and African Americans) are the major competing scripts Feinberg discusses and sees as supplying alternative and not wholly incompatible historical conceptions for students to examine and explore in relation to different groups. My terminology of *inferiorized* comes very close to Feinberg's *subordinated* groups.

4 It is not a defense of Feinberg's discussion of what is due Native Americans and African Americans to say that in this book, in contrast to *On Higher Ground*, he is concerned only with what is due *educationally*. The book under review continually relates educational to larger social and political policies, goals, and values, and this is true as well of the current discussion, in which Feinberg discusses the way national holidays (such as Martin Luther King Day) are an appropriate form of the robust recognition he calls for. In addition, the other book is very much concerned with the *educational* side of affirmative action.

The truth of the matter is that recognition is simply an inadequate framework for coming to terms with severe historical injustices, and its absence as a dominant theme in Feinberg's affirmative action book has the effect of freeing him up to make a race- and equality-centered argument there.

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LAWRENCE A. BLUM is Professor of Philosophy and Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and Education at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. His scholarship is in the areas of race studies, multicultural education, moral philosophy, and moral education. He is the author of *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), *Moral Perception and Particularity* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and the forthcoming *"I'm Not a Racist, But": Race and Racism through a Moral Lens* (Cornell University Press).

Education and Justice: A View from the Back of the Bus

Edmund W. Gordon. New York: Teachers College Press, 1999. \$19.95. 224 pp.

KENNETH A. STRIKE, *University of Maryland*

This fine book by one of America's most eminent educational psychologists as well as one of its foremost African American educators consists in a collection of essays spanning twenty-five years of Edmund Gordon's work. It appears the essays have been occasionally reworked by a second author, so as to help them hang together as a single work.

The essays are grouped into three major sections. Part I, "A View from the Back of the Bus," is used to "pose the problems of diversity, equity, and excellence within their sociopolitical contexts." This section frames the material in the rest of the book. Its essays include a useful and critical discussion of the view of intelligence in Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) *The Bell Curve*, and an especially valuable discussion of cultural dissonance as a risk factor in the development of students. The essays seek to bring together discussions of equity for at-risk students, multiculturalism, and school reform.

Part II, entitled "Toward Equity in Educational Achievement," is used to develop a conception of education and to discuss the conditions for its realization. There is a discussion of the resources needed for equal achievement, the development of a contextual and ecological conception of learning, a discussion of the role of counseling, and a chapter on assessment.

Part III, "Cultural Diversity and Education," discusses the role of culture in the behavioral and social sciences and connects the discussion to themes

of diversity and cultural hegemony in schooling as well as to what Gordon calls communicative bias in knowledge production in the social sciences.

These essays might best be read as an intellectual autobiography. They give us insight into the life's work of one of our foremost educators. Nevertheless, all of the essays are of current interest. While current debates about school reform are only an occasional theme discussed in the book, the book's significance might best be judged by contrasting the depth of Gordon's vision of education with what seems by comparison the narrowness of many current visions of school reform. Two themes about education and learning stand out. The first is that Gordon sees education broadly as human development that includes, but is certainly not limited to, academic achievement. The second is that Gordon has an ecological view of learning. This view recognizes the significance both of context and of culture in learning. Gordon's approach to education carefully avoids the preoccupation with a narrow, test-defined conception of educational achievement; it substitutes a recognition of the importance for education of both cultural and individual differences for the "one size fits all" conception of the standards movement; and it provides a rich and contextualized vision of good learning environments as an alternative to the preoccupation with incentives that seems to characterize both systemic reform and choice. The breadth and richness of concern are a breath of fresh air.

One should not forget that this is a book about justice, especially for African Americans. Many of the details of the exposition focus on the education of African Americans, about which there is much to be learned. For example, Gordon includes an illuminating discussion of the claim that many low SES African American students are less able than their middle-class peers to defer gratification. He points out that this alleged deficiency is relative to the values being pursued and argues that African American children are generally quite able to defer gratification when pursuing something valued within their culture. Although the focus is on the education of African Americans, however, this is a book for everyone. Edmund Gordon's passion for the welfare of African Americans is imbued with kindness, decency, and humanity. These qualities are much in evidence in his book and make it easy for white males such as myself to enter into his concerns. Moreover, the considerations that help form his vision of education for African Americans include themes and ideas that can serve us well. There is much to be learned from this humane book that Gordon can teach us all.

Are there flaws? There are, of course, many things to argue about. By the end of the book, however, I had only one concern. Although the essays are ordered and edited so as to make a plausible story line, the fact that they are essays on related topics generates some inevitable redundancy in the discussion. This could have been a better book had it been thoroughly rewritten. The redundancy might have been less and some topics might

have been covered in more depth. Nevertheless, *Education and Justice* is a fine book that eloquently speaks to the issues of the day. It may be a view from the back of the bus, but Edmond Gordon belongs at the head of the class.

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KENNETH A. STRIKE is a professor at the University of Maryland. His field is philosophy of education and his areas of interest include professional ethics, school reform, leadership, and educational policy. Over the years he has written on such topics as desegregation, affirmative action, church-state issues, political socialization and citizenship, and school reform. He is currently working on a project entitled "Community, State and Market: An Alternative View of School Reform" funded by the Spencer Foundation.

Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education

Stephen May (Ed.). London: Falmer Press, 1999. \$85.00. 296 pp.

IRMA M. OLMEDO, *University of Illinois, Chicago*

Although multicultural educators and theorists support the recognition and affirmation of diversity, especially in the educational arena, frequently their arguments are presented within the context of particular societies. It is rare that multiculturalists in the United States incorporate or address the writings of theorists in other countries or examine how these issues are handled across the oceans. *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education* goes a long way to redress this problem. It is composed of 10 articles addressing a variety of debates over multiculturalism, diversity, and education from the perspective of scholars in North America (the US and Canada), Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. It provides a broader perspective than is generally the case in such writings.

The book is highly substantive in addressing issues such as the debates and battles between multiculturalists and antiracists, the impact of critical pedagogy on multicultural education theory, the implications of hybridity theory and postmodernism on conceptions of culture, and the effect of globalization and transnationalism on ethnicity and otherness. The authors engage the issues at a high intellectual level by examining the broader social and political contexts in which questions of culture and equity are raised. The audience for the book would include researchers and educa-

tional theorists seeking to broaden their thinking about these issues by examining multiculturalism and antiracism through transnational perspectives.

Chapters 1–3 (May; McLaren and Torres; Carrim and Soudien) present the broader theoretical issues in the book. Chapters 4–8 (Sleeter and Montecinos; Moodley; Carrim and Soudien; Short and Carrington; Nieto) discuss the possibilities and limitations of multiculturalism and antiracist theory and practice in different nations and in schools. Chapter 9 (Hodson) addresses specific educational implications in science and technology. And chapter 10 (Kalantzis and Cope) differentiates among three types of curricular models and how they address issues of culture, race, and ethnicity.

The book can be read as a kind of dialogue among scholars from various countries who share similarities in their perspectives on multiculturalism and antiracism, though certainly not uniformity. The authors are critical of facile explanations for addressing diversity. Such explanations can conceal in themselves various contradictions. May, in an excellent overview of the debates, argues for the need for a critical multiculturalism that does not essentialize culture and ethnic identities. Rattansi addresses the effect of the postmodern frame on the ways ethnicity is conceptualized, raising questions about how individuals and groups are or can be represented. He adopts the term “reflexive multiculturalism,” whose key element would be to “engage the monoculturalists and racists in dialogue” (p. 105). Moodley argues that “a cosmopolitan political literacy” may be key for combating racism, by “providing an historical understanding about the nature of prejudice, discrimination and racism” (p. 150). McLaren and Torres, on the other hand, are not as optimistic. They critique multicultural and antiracist discourse for ignoring or downplaying the impact of globalization of capital and of the “exploitative practices of the oligarchic industrialized powers” (p. 74). They are not optimistic that intellectual understanding alone can challenge racism and domination and they call for the “destruction of whiteness” as part of the solution (p. 66).

Sleeter and Montecinos, while not avoiding the sociopolitical debates, propose a pedagogical model for how teachers can engage with communities in partnerships for service learning, partnerships that are not viewed as charity endeavors and that can help the participants critique power relations. Hodson, also looking at the curricular arena, calls for the politicization of science and science education by critiquing “myths” about these areas, especially the supposed “value free” nature of science. Kalantzis and Cope provide an excellent overview of many of the debates on multiculturalism by examining three types of curricular models and how they would address those issues.

Nieto links critical pedagogy with multiculturalism by identifying the role of students, using two case studies of an African American and Latino student in the United States. She demonstrates the possibilities but also the

limitations of multicultural education to address the issues of school failure. Short and Carrington also look at children, drawing upon empirical research on children's construction of national identity in several United States, British, and Scottish primary schools. They call for a reconstructed multiculturalism that would combine critical pedagogy with antiracist education to address the policy implications of children's views.

Carrim and Soudien provide a fascinating discussion of school desegregation in two provinces of South Africa, describing the differing strategies used by school officials in this process. Through some powerful examples of implementation of an assimilationist multicultural education in the schools he argues for a critical antiracist education to combat the stereotypical and caricatured ways that different groups are represented.

The book is intellectually challenging and some of the arguments are difficult to follow, especially for the reader who is not already well-read in the field. The more successful reader would be one who is well acquainted with postmodernism, deconstruction, hybridity theories, and the writings of Giroux on border crossings, Bourdieu, and Foucault.

A major value of the book is that it demonstrates the complexity of understanding cultural differences and the ways in which nations respond to these. The transnational dialogue begun by this book should benefit theorists in each country as they try to address the sociopolitical, pedagogical, and intellectual dimensions of multiculturalism and antiracist education.

IRMA M. OLMEDO is associate professor of curriculum and instruction in the College of Education at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Research interests include bilingual education, urban teacher education, curriculum development, and cultural characteristics of Latino communities and their relationship to education.

Critical Multiculturalism: Uncommon Voices in a Common Struggle

Barry Kanpol and Peter McLaren (Eds.). Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1995. \$19.95. 267 pp.

CHERRY A. MCGEE BANKS, *University of Washington, Bothell*

Critical Multiculturalism: Uncommon Voices in a Common Struggle edited by Barry Kanpol and Peter McLaren is part of a growing genre of multicultural publications that are grounded in critical theory and practice. It is one of more than a dozen books published in the "Critical Studies in Education and Culture Series," edited by Henry Giroux. In this important text, fourteen educators who are committed to developing a vision of democracy in schools and in other public sites collaborate and share keen insights about

their common struggle. The authors use a variety of approaches, including critical ethnography, case studies, and narratives, to explore issues related to gender, language, class, race, power, and curriculum.

The text opens with an introduction by Kanpol and McLaren in which they lay out their vision for the book and explicate the intellectual foundation that locates the work within critical multiculturalism. They also give readers a succinct overview of each chapter. This foundational chapter is highly informative and is an important departure point for the remaining chapters in the text. Readers will find the chapters written by Gordon, Giroux, Grant and Sachs, and Gutierrez and McClaren particularly perceptive and instructive.

Giroux wrote the foreword for the book as well as a thought-provoking chapter on white supremacy and the need to deconstruct it. Gordon's skillfully crafted chapter reminds readers that voices from the margins such as those of African American women are frequently ignored or trivialized. She argues that those voices have much to add to the conversation on critical multiculturalism and must be included for that conversation to have authenticity. Grant and Sachs bring the voices of scholars who work in the field of multicultural education into their conversation with critical multiculturalists. Their chapter reminds readers that the issues raised by critical multiculturalists are not new and that scholars working in the field of multicultural education are also naming and critically examining institutions and other social structures that create, support, and sustain difference and inequality. Grant and Sachs argue that the barriers between various multicultural discourses should be broken down and replaced by an understanding and recognition of their academic solidarity. They conclude that academic solidarity can provide a foundation for a discourse that would be more inclusive, open, democratic, and fruitful than the ones currently in use. The dialogue between Kris Gutierrez and Peter McClaren provides a framework for readers to explore the ways in which classrooms, communities, and global capitalism are linked. As Gutierrez and McClaren exchange insights and experiences, readers are able to share a powerful conversation between two thoughtful, committed, and perceptive scholars engaging with the concept of multiculturalism.

Taken as a whole, *Critical Multiculturalism* is a well crafted and thought-provoking text. It provides readers with an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of critical multiculturalism and gives them glimpses into power struggles in K–12 classrooms and other sites. However, while there is much to recommend in this work, it will be hard going for readers who are not well-grounded in critical education theory and literature. The language, references, and assumptions of prior knowledge will be a barrier to some readers who might put the text aside after reading a few hard-to-decode pages.

I encourage readers to stick with *Critical Multiculturalism* because it has much to say to educators who are interested in implementing thoughtful

and reflective change in classrooms, schools, and communities. The myriad of voices that serve as a backdrop for the dialogue across differences is a key strength of the text. Kanpol and McLaren, through their selection of authors, model the importance of listening to and learning from others. However, while multiple voices were included in *Critical Multiculturalism*, none of the chapters ventured far from the writing style, precepts, and perspectives typically associated with critical theory. Consequently, *Critical Multiculturalism* is more like a conversation among insiders than one that reaches beyond borders to also involve the uninitiated. The dialogue begun in *Critical Multiculturalism* needs to be expanded to include the voices of educators who are not part of the critical theory community and whose work is not viewed as “critical,” even though they too are committed to developing a vision of democracy in schools and have worked long and hard to do so. Voices outside the critical theory community can help locate critical multiculturalism within the ongoing historic struggle mounted by people on the margins to critique social structures that limit and prevent social justice for many marginalized groups (Banks, 1996). The important conversation begun in *Critical Multiculturalism* is an important first step in an essential journey. The diversity of individuals included in the conversation needs to be expanded and the conversation needs to be ongoing.

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CHERRY A. MCGEE BANKS is an assistant professor in the Graduate School of the University of Washington. Her areas of specialization are educational leadership, multicultural education, social studies, and curriculum and instruction. Selected publications include: *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (edited with James A. Banks) (John Wiley & Sons, 2000) and *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies* (with James A. Banks) (Allyn & Bacon, 1996).

Race, Class and Power in School Restructuring

Pauline Lipman. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. \$20.95. 334 pp.

ALAN J. SINGER, *Hofstra University*

This book is thoughtful, provocative, and makes significant contributions to the literature about school restructuring and the dialogue about race in the United States. I have worked as a teacher in inner-city high schools and as

a consultant with school reorganization teams. I found that Pauline Lipman's research resonated with my own experiences. Her study effectively demonstrates why, despite claims by its advocates, school restructuring is limited in its ability to end racial and class stratification in United States public schools.

The focus of the book is the restructuring experience of teachers in a small southern city that the author calls Riverton. Lipman examines the way that the process of restructuring, power relationships in the community, and teachers' beliefs about African American students combine to undermine an explicit goal of the restructuring process, "reducing racial disparities in [student] achievement and discipline actions and addressing the needs of 'at-risk' students" (p. 62). Lipman concludes that the "top-down" nature of a supposedly "bottom-up" process, differing interpretations of student needs and school problems rooted in racial divisions, the absence of trust across racial lines, and unrealized possibilities for reflection on teaching and learning because of internal political conflicts contribute to frustration and demoralization among the most effective teachers and to the failure to produce significant change for students.

What makes the book so effective is the comparison of restructuring in two Riverton junior high schools. One school, Gates, is described as "the flagship junior high in Riverton, the traditional choice for those at the top of Riverton's social ladder" (p. 53). It is a racially and class-divided school. Although a majority of its students are black, its teaching staff, administrators, and politically influential parents are overwhelmingly white and middle class, and its special programs cater to the primarily white students in the advanced academic track. In this school, before and during restructuring, the needs of the African American children were largely ignored.

Franklin Junior High School, on the other hand, is described as an "African American school" (p. 95), with an energetic, caring Black principal, a core of dedicated African American teachers identified in the text as the *Othermothers*, and an overwhelmingly black student body. Based on this, Lipman and the reader initially expect restructuring to be significantly different at Franklin than at Gates; but it is not. Lipman found that teachers at Franklin lacked a multifaceted analysis of students' strengths. Hall and classroom decorations were traditional, curriculum reform never emerged as a significant issue, and tracking remained unchallenged.

The experience at Franklin allows Lipman to explore Jim Cummins' (1986) proposition that "the social organization of the school and its bureaucratic constraints 'reflect not only broad policy and societal factors but also the extent to which individual educators accept or challenge the social organization of the school in relation to minority students and their communities'" (p. 23). In this setting, teachers were not up to the task. But could any group of teachers meet this challenge? Lipman does not seem to

be sure. She believes that her research “illustrates the possibility of transforming schools” (p. 5), and throughout the book, it seemed as if Lipman was rooting for the *Othermothers* and other culturally relevant teachers at Franklin to make a difference.

But as a critical theorist who rejects the oppression of children of color in a society dominated by capitalist hegemony, Lipman questions whether any internally driven reforms will bring about systemic change. Lipman’s work challenges the basic assumptions of school restructuring, that decentralized decision making strengthens the role of teachers in reform, that collaboration promotes critical inquiry and dialogue about change, and that smaller settings will build trust among the staff and between students and teachers. However, Lipman seems hesitant to accept her own findings.

Based on my experience as a white man working in African American communities, I think race is also a greater problem for Lipman than she acknowledges. She appears perplexed that the *Othermothers* do not reject aspects of a “deficit model” (p. 174) or academic tracking. However, their position is consistent with the author’s own comments on cultural hegemony. The *Othermothers* are not outside the social and educational system, and they share many of its values. Significantly, their caring approach to students coupled with acknowledgment of student weaknesses is similar to the position taken by Cornell West in his book *Race Matters* (1993). I think it should be seen as a strength of their pedagogy rather than a weakness.

While Lipman’s research is excellent, it could have been made into a better book. Part of the problem is that she is fighting too many battles at the same time. She is trying to establish the validity of critical pedagogy, the value of culturally relevant teaching, and the importance of exploring the broadest social context for education, while critiquing a deficit-model, the attitudes of white teachers toward African American students, and public education in a capitalist and racist society. These distract from the main conclusion of the book, which is powerful enough to stand on its own; the failure of public school leaders and school restructuring advocates in Riverton to address the needs of students because of their unwillingness to deal with conflicts and stereotypes about race.

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ALAN J. SINGER is an associate professor in curriculum and teaching at Hofstra University. Publications include the book *Social Studies for Secondary*

Schools: Teaching to Learn, Learning to Teach (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

Against the Odds: How At-Risk Students Exceed Expectations

Janine Bempechat. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998. \$34.95. 224 pp.

NETTIE E. LEGTERS, *Johns Hopkins University*

Minority achievement is one area of education in the United States where the bad news continues to outweigh the good. In a recent report, the National Task Force on Minority High Achievement cites gains for minority students in high school graduation rates, but on nearly every other achievement and attainment indicator, African American, Latino, and Native American students continue to lag behind their Caucasian and Asian peers (The College Board, 1999). The most obvious explanations for these gaps are found in persistent inequalities in income and school resources. Variations in material circumstances are only part of a complex story, however, as Janine Bempechat demonstrates in her courageous book, *Against the Odds: How "At-Risk" Students Exceed Expectations*.

Bempechat explores cultural practices and psychological attributes that contribute to educational success among children of all ethnic groups and income levels. This is tricky terrain for any researcher, since the patronizing tones and veiled racism of cultural deficit theories can still haunt studies of such factors. Like others who have asserted a constructivist perspective over the past decade, however, Bempechat moves beyond cultural deficit thinking by calling our attention to the fact that children from all ethnic groups succeed in school, and by investigating the factors behind their success. She is particularly concerned with how parental support and students' own beliefs about the causes of their successes and failures relate to academic achievement, specifically in math. To this end, she surveyed over one thousand fifth- and sixth-grade African American, Latino, Indochinese, and Caucasian children in poor neighborhoods in and around the Boston area who attended public and Catholic schools across a five-year period. Bempechat's findings challenge previous research and offer educators and parents much to think about as they engage in the difficult work of motivating their children to learn. In her study of parental support, for example, she finds that across all ethnic groups, students who reported that their parents helped them with homework, emphasized the value of effort, and stressed the connection between education and their futures scored *lower* on math tests than their peers who reported less parental involvement. This finding is most obviously explained by the tendency for parents to get involved only if their child is doing poorly. But Bempechat invites us to consider an

alternative explanation—that overly involved parents may communicate a lack of faith in their children’s abilities and a belief that doing better than others is the most important aspect of schooling. These messages, and the help itself may, in turn, cause children to doubt their own abilities, generate feelings of academic insecurity, and prevent students from struggling with difficult assignments and learning from their mistakes.

This latter explanation is important to consider, especially in light of another of Bempechat’s findings. In her study, high achievers in math across all ethnic groups tend to attribute their success to ability more than effort, while low achievers tend to credit academic success to external factors such as luck. In other words, high achievers tend to believe that they are smart, low achievers do not, and neither group attributes success to personal effort. Like the parent involvement results, this finding challenges existing research, specifically Stevenson’s cross-national narrative that attributes the superior performance of Asian children to Chinese and Japanese cultural traditions that emphasize the power of effort.

Both findings are compelling for their counterintuitive character and call on parents, educators, and researchers to think in more nuanced ways about the cultural and psychological contexts that motivate children toward academic success. Bempechat’s study, however, leaves us with the unsatisfying problem of circular causality. Do high achievers believe they are smart because they have experienced academic success or have they scored higher because their belief in their abilities contributes to their achievement? Do parents react to poor achievement, or does their overinvolvement cause low achievement by diminishing their children’s opportunity to learn? With longitudinal data and a healthy sample size, it is a little troubling that Bempechat does not explore subsamples that might have helped tease out some of the causal chains, if only suggestively. Unfortunately, the book offers little by way of technical detail, making it virtually impossible to evaluate her data or methods. Another disappointing feature is her exploration of the effects of Catholic schooling, which adds little to existing literature and seems tacked on in this book.

To her credit, Bempechat is well aware of the limitations of her own study, as well as those of quantitative survey research in general and the either/or universe such methods typically assume and perpetuate. Indeed, she goes so far as to say that “experimental and questionnaire studies of children’s motivation to succeed in school have exhausted their usefulness” (p. 98). Her persuasive discussion of why qualitative observation and interview methods are more powerful tools in our quest to understand contexts that promote academic success is one of the most satisfying parts of the book. It is rare for a researcher to present a study and then deconstruct her own methods in the same book. Though she might have pushed her quantitative work a little further, Bempechat should be admired for her boldness

and for reminding social researchers that, at our best, we are toolmakers and not truthmakers.

NETTIE E. LEGTERS is an associate research scientist at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Her primary research areas include school restructuring, teachers' work, and equity in urban education. At Johns Hopkins, Dr. Legters works with the Talent Development High School program of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR). She is committed to translating research into policy and practice and has worked actively in urban high schools to support major restructuring efforts. A recipient of the American Educational Research Association Dissertation Grant, Dr. Legters has published articles and reports aimed at improving urban schools for teachers and students.

Geographies of Disability

Brendan Gleeson. London: Routledge, 1999. \$27.99. 253 pp.

ELIZABETH B. KEEFE and J. S. DE VALENZUELA, *University of New Mexico*

In *Geographies of Disability*, Gleeson provides an innovative approach to the discussion of disability. Writing primarily for an audience in the spatial disciplines (architecture, geography, and urban planning), history, and disability studies, this author has a compelling perspective to offer other disciplines, especially education. In the introduction, he posits that shifts in theoretical and practical research agendas are necessary to contribute to larger social movements that will "both resist the sources of spatial oppression and articulate new ways of creating inclusionary landscapes and places" (p. 3). In this effort, then, this book is key to expanding our framework for considering the relationship between social space (spatiality) and disability in education, at a time when inclusive educational practices are at the forefront of educational debates.

The purposes of the book are twofold. First, Gleeson provides a theoretical framework for "the broad historical-geographical relationships that have conditioned the social experience of disabled people in Western societies" (p. 3). Second, he provides case studies that examine and illustrate the impact of capitalistic modes of production on the marginalization of disabled people.* Although the scope of this text is limited to organically based physical and intellectual impairments, it has clear relevance to other disabling conditions. The book is organized into three parts, each of which is reviewed below.

In part 1, Gleeson elaborates a sociospatial model of disability that is based on embodied materialism, which in turn derives from a range of historical materialistic approaches. Gleeson rejects both the medical model and social models that do not take into account historical and materialistic perspectives. He argues that these perspectives are needed to complement social models of disability in the following: "Attitudes, discourses and symbolic representations are, of course, critical to the construction of this experience, but are themselves materialised through the social practices which society undertakes in order to meet its basic needs" (p. 25). At the end of part 1, Gleeson posits a need for "geographies of disability," which include both the "socio-spatial patterns and relations through which impairment is oppressed by dominant power relations" and the "socio-spatial experiences and practices of impaired people who must negotiate disabling power structures in their everyday lives" (p. 54). In later portions of the book, Gleeson explores the geographies of disability in feudal England, industrial Melbourne, and contemporary Western cities.

In part 2, Gleeson reconsiders the historical participation of the physically impaired in the social mainstream by critically examining the myth of disabled people as beggars on the margins of society as a historical constant. Using the *Annales* tradition that attempts to reconstruct the everyday lives of ordinary people from historical records, Gleeson presents studies of disabled people in two historical contexts, feudal England and industrial Melbourne. He argues that in feudal society the participation of all individuals, including those with disabilities, was required to sustain community and that home and work space were not strictly differentiated. He argues that capitalist modes of production increased the marginalization of disabled people by devaluing their participation when they were not able to produce the same labor as nonimpaired persons. Work and home environments became differentiated through the division of labor thereby reducing opportunities for the disabled to contribute productively in a socially valued way.

In part 3, Gleeson looks at the geographies of disability in contemporary Western capitalist societies through case studies of deinstitutionalization and physical accessibility. Gleeson looks at these two areas from the perspective of their ability to "enable justice," that is to achieve material satisfaction and sociocultural participation for disabled people. He argues that the ability of deinstitutionalization to free people with disabilities from "desocialization" is limited by sociopolitical forces such as resistance from property owners, misalignment of social policy and urban planning, and neo-liberal politics. He provides contemporary Western urban examples of each of these limiting factors. Gleeson proposes that similar limitations exist in the realm of improving physical access. Despite human rights legislation, lack of physical access remains a major issue for disabled people.

Gleeson notes that community care and accessibility have the potential to improve the sociospatial oppression of disabled people but that a radical transformation of the sociopolitical conditions that lead to oppression would be required.

In concluding, Gleeson offers a challenge to those in the social sciences and disability studies to expand geographies of disability to other social spaces. The model proposed in this book could provide a useful theoretical framework for the study of social spaces experienced by students with disabilities in educational environments.

*The lack of person first language in this review is consistent with the author's terminology.

ELIZABETH B. KEEFE is an assistant professor of special education at the University of New Mexico. She specializes in inclusive education, educational reform, teaching methods, and curriculum for students with and without disabilities, research into the impact of educational reform efforts, and issues of equity and diversity.

J. S. DE VALENZUELA is a visiting assistant professor of special education at the University of New Mexico.

Coming Into Her Own: Educational Success in Girls and Women

Sara N. Davis, Mary Crawford, and Jadwiga Sebrechts (Eds.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999. \$35.95. 416 pp.

ELISABETH L. WOODY, *University of California, Berkeley*

For the last several decades, feminist educators have engaged in teaching practices that seek to address the needs of women and girls in the classroom. While much has been written on the theoretical foundations of feminist pedagogy, sadly, there exist few publications on the challenges and realities of classroom practice. *Coming Into Her Own* helps to fill this void in the literature, providing an excellent resource of course descriptions and teaching strategies for what the editors call a "women-centered education." This book represents an important step in joining the efforts of theorists and practitioners, providing concrete examples of strategies to address gender bias in educational institutions.

The editors, two Women's Studies professors and the President of the Women's College Coalition, draw on the Nag's Heart conference, whose goal was to analyze "the characteristics of females who survived and thrived in the classroom" (p. 7). Many contributors to the volume were participants in this conference, and many are professors in various disciplines at wom-

en's colleges. The editors explain the focus on women's colleges as they are examining "the only higher educational environments that unabashedly and unapologetically make the education, advancement, and achievement of women their first and only priority" (p. 20). Further on, they suggest that the women's college provides the "optimal" model of education for women. This strong emphasis on women's colleges raises questions of the possibilities for woman-centered education in co-educational institutions. Such a focus may also lead readers to the false assumption that feminist pedagogy is only relevant within women's colleges or in the context of women's studies. *Coming Into Her Own* is divided into five sections, highlighting women-only educational institutions, feminist pedagogy, women in math and science, mentoring programs, and gender issues beyond the classroom. The strength of this book lies in each chapter's detailed outlines of specific strategies and practices. An early chapter gives checklists for the goals and practices of feminist pedagogy, putting concrete examples to theoretical constructs (Kimmel). Other chapters provide details of courses or programs, with clear explanations of assignments and discussion techniques. Descriptions include an interdisciplinary religious studies and psychology course (Davis and Ratigan), an introductory statistics course (Harris and Schau), and an innovative program to prevent dating violence on college campuses (Mahlstedt and Corcoran).

However, many chapters are weakened by a lack of attention to the challenges faced or to the feasibility of duplicating courses or programs in a variety of settings. The majority of courses described are unique; instructors had the freedom to design specialized syllabi and assignments, and taught in small, private or Catholic all-women's colleges. What then are the possibilities and limitations of similar courses for a larger, co-ed student body? And what might such pedagogies look like in courses with less flexibility in curriculum design or requirements? Interestingly, the one chapter on a course at an urban, public school does give attention to alternative situations, providing thoughtful suggestions to those who may be teaching in larger classes. The essays in the final two sections on mentoring and "creating healthy environments" may prove most relevant to a variety of settings, as the original programs are not constrained by an academic classroom structure. If the editors seek to encourage transformative practices among readers in an effort to improve the educational experiences of all women, then further consideration of different contexts is needed. While it is impossible to predict another instructor's experience in a different situation, more discussion of foreseeable challenges would be a welcome addition to the book.

On another note, most authors pay little attention to the perspectives of the students in their classes. While it is useful to hear the experiences of women-centered education from the instructor's perspective, we rarely hear

the voices of those women and girls whom the authors seek to influence. When students are discussed, they are treated as a monolithic entity, ignoring the complexities of student responses to and experiences of women-centered pedagogies. As one author acknowledges, “more systematically gathered reactions from students are sorely needed to begin to appreciate their realities” (p. 70).

Coming Into Her Own will be useful to current and future educators concerned with issues of gender throughout the academy, providing a rare look at the practices of transformative education. While the strategies outlined in this book were created with women and girls in mind, many suggestions will be relevant to instructors and students across a range of contexts. The editors succeed in their goal to document successful approaches to teaching girls and women, moving the discourse of gender bias beyond a theoretical discussion to highlight the experiences of practitioners.

ELISABETH L. WOODY is a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. She recently received the Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award for her work in two different classes: Gender Issues in Education, and Current Issues in Education.