



**Ethnic Diversity in Communities and Schools: Recognizing and Building on Strengths.** Kathryn M. Borman, with M. Yvette Baber et al. Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1998. 238 pp.

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*Ethnic Diversity in Communities and Schools* is called a "buddy book" (p. xiii). Not only are there multiple authors in the introductory chapters, but 11 vignettes within chapters 4 through 7 are authored by many others.

The following is the collective story when the various vignettes are strung together. The story centers around the importance of the partnership among the home, the school, and the community.

Delgado-Gaitán tells the story of how the Mexicano parents of Carpinteria, California, care about their children even though they are not involved in traditional school activities. Many parents needed assistance in developing skills for participating in school-like activities. After a few years of promoting and supporting parental involvement in critical ways, Delgado-Gaitán finds that when parents become involved and engage in critical reading with their children, the questions they ask their children are distinct from the questions developed by critical pedagogy scholars. The vignette by King, Barksdale-Ladd, and Alvarez raises another interesting explanation for the lack of school involvement of Latino and other culturally different groups with respect to school literacy—type of activities in the home. They suggest that the patterned lack of school literacy involvement is not based on socioeconomic status but, rather, mediated by parents' culturally based decision "to avoid interference with school practices" as a "response to sensing that one has been excluded from the mysteries of school practice" (p. 116). Lilly Cheng's vignette about the Hmong child, Mei, continues to document the belief parents hold "that the main responsibility [for educating children] lies with those who structure the school environment" (p. 132). Their uncertainty about their role as parents comes when they realize that some school practices do not favor the appropriate development of their children within this society and that family strategies for control over their children have eroded and are not what is expected of them in this society. The consequences of a lack of connection between the home and the school and communication around the competencies of the individual in both domains are illustrated in Willetto and LeCompte's vignette, and also illustrated is the need for greater linkages between them through community intervention (Borman's vignette about Appalachian youth), through parent intervention (Phillips's vignette about Kinie), and institutional intervention (Foster's vignette about Miss Morris).



The vignettes and the lessons associated with them are of great value for teaching. As a group, they are well chosen because they raise highly complex issues about the partnerships. This part of the "buddy book" constitutes its strength.

Nonetheless, the three introductory chapters are full of tensions that signal the difficulties of a collaboratively written book (p. xiii). The first chapter situates the individual learner within Brofenbrenner's sociological-ecological framework for development. The explanations of Brofenbrenner's *macrosystem* (society) and *exosystems* (community-based centers and services) are very short, however. The focus is primarily on the *microsystem*, and an extensive treatment of the literature on family and schools is provided. The chapter ends with the observation that an examination of racial and ethnic groups requires a "*sociocultural understanding of families*" (p. 26), the consideration of "structural barriers, cultural dissonance, and alienation" (p. 27) as important features in the educational outcomes of the groups under study, and an understanding of "patterns of local and lateral cultural ties" (p. 27) as a way of understanding group strengths. Instead of exploring these matters, the following chapter returns to the macrosystem, in which migration, internal migration, and immigration take center stage through a discussion of Ogbu's framework for minorities. Acknowledging the complementary nature of Brofenbrenner's and Ogbu's work with respect to the role of society is helpful. Adding to this the distinctions that Ogbu makes between primary and secondary cultural differences is also useful. The problem comes when the authors propose that Ogbu's controversial typology of *autonomous minorities*, *immigrant minorities*, and *castelike or involuntary minorities* be used to "set limits on which group's experiences should be considered in a volume such as this" (p. 33). The groups included are Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, Appalachians, and African Americans. In the section on immigration and internal migration, however, a lack of understanding of Ogbu's typology and the difficulties inherent in using it arise. Puerto Ricans, for example, are identified as the third largest immigrant group, yet Puerto Ricans are *not* immigrants, voluntary or involuntary, from a legal standpoint. They have not been so since the Jones Act in 1917 granted them citizenship. The authors try to mediate the discrepancy by later referring to Puerto Ricans as *migrants*, but the contradiction is not resolved. In the introductory paragraph to the section on Latinos in the third chapter, the authors state, "Throughout their history, all Latinos, with the arguable exception of Cuban-Americans, have been incorporated into U.S. politics following military conflict and have then subsequently voluntarily immigrated to the United States" (p. 52). This statement would not stand up to scrutiny. First, the authors include in this section the histories of only three out of 21 different Latino groups. Second, the first part of the statement may be true of the three major groups, but the second part of the statement is debatable for various reasons. Aside from the truth value of such a term, the



"voluntary" nature of immigration would not apply to some groups at all or to specific historical periods (the continued flight of Cuban refugees from the Castro regime, the Chilean refugees during the Pinochet era, the Mexican population before the Mexican–American War, and so forth). In addition to some misrepresentations, some of the histories rely on statistical information more than others, and the historical material is uneven.

In the last chapter, the authors attempt to tie some of the pieces together, explaining further local versus lateral cultures and suggesting schooling and home/community alternatives that could lead to success. Again, the literature is extensive, and it is characterized by a more hopeful tone, but I would have preferred more discussions of the findings, such as the tension between the values of desegregation and those of integration that emerge from the solutions proposed by the vignettes.

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