The Agony of School Reform: Race, Class, and the Elusive Search for Social Justice

Education and Democratic Theory: Finding a Place for Community Participation in Public School Reform. A. Belden Fields and Walter Feinberg. Albany: SUNY Press, 2001. 148 pp., $18.95 (paper). ISBN 0-7914-5000-7.

The Color of School Reform: Race, Politics, and the Challenge of Urban Education. J. Henig, R. Hula, M. Orr, and D. Pedescleaux. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. 301 pp., $21.95 (paper). ISBN 0-691-08897-7.

Reviewed by
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In today's climate of national standards, the debate over school reform writes a new chapter. Holding schools accountable to certain measures of educational improvement, the aim is to ensure that students from minorities to Whites, rich to poor, and boys to girls are provided with learning experiences leading to measurable improvements in learning outcomes. Educational scholars may be tempted to corroborate Kliebard's (1995) classic study of the struggle for the American curriculum, including the school of social efficiency. Central to the doctrine of efficiency is the breakdown and standardization of knowledge into discrete parts not only to control the learning process but also to make evaluation of learning outcomes more precise and positive. When decades of efficiency failed to level the playing field, school reform in the 1980s took on a structural character whereby change in school organization was perceived to ameliorate the persistent problem of uneven student development between social groups. Oakes' (1985) early work suggested that tracking studies offered empirical evidence on the deleterious effects of differential education on Black, Latino, and working class students; detracking efforts were soon considered. When restructuring failed, Gitlin and Margonis (1995) were able to cite the turn toward "reculturation" or the second wave of reform attentive to the problem of belief systems and meanings that undergird school practices and that remain long after structures have changed. Now that we have rounded the corner of the 21st century, one senses a third wave of school reform that turns its gaze toward the problem of ideology.

For these reasons, it is timely that Fields and Feinberg's *Education and Democratic Theory* and Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux's *The Color School Reform* enter the debate on school reform in a manner that makes the struggle over power central to research on educational change. The turn toward ideology, or more simply the problem of domination, signals a concern not only with restructuring school organization and addressing cultural systems but with relations of power that have material consequences (Leonardo, in press a). When struggles over ideology are sidestepped in favor of more technocratic and culture-based approaches, these authors suggest that broader, institutional arrangements around race and class remain unchallenged. The consequences of neglecting ideology include the predictable failure to explain why minority, especially Black and Latino, students do not seem to benefit from many, if not most, school reform programs. Fields and Feinberg, and Henig et al. encourage a deeper engagement with the ideological dimensions of schooling and any attempt to procure change. Without this critical element, reform becomes limited in its ability to explain stubborn disparities in student achievement, let alone systemic change. With it, reform sheds light on the political "embeddedness" of schooling and the political commitments of its change proponents. Some of these commitments provide the backdrop for the ideological interests that subvert social justice in education.

Education and Democratic Theory and *The Color School Reform* provide a good pair for undertaking a critical study of school reform. They share common characteristics. First, both books represent an interdisciplinary approach to school reform. Fields is an emeritus professor of political science working with a philosopher of education, Feinberg. Henig et al. are political science scholars concerned with urban school reform (see also Henig, 2001; Stone et al., 2001). These collaborations suggest that research on educational change that cuts across traditional boundaries strengthens scholars' ability to research persistent problems through intellectual partnerships. Second, both books represent empirical studies that are theoretically grounded. The first is an ethnographic analysis of a site-based reform in Ed City, with the authors engaging models of democracy from Rousseau to Sartre; the second is an ambitious study of the impact of reform on race relations in four Black-led cities—Washington, DC, Atlanta, Baltimore, and Detroit—mobilizing a framework they call "civic capacity." Contrary to what researchers may expect, the fact that Blacks have reached positions of city leadership is not by itself sufficient to raise the educational achievement of Black students. Third, as already mentioned, both books confront the political aspects of reform, what I have called its ideological dimensions. I will review the books thematically. This review integrates them under the themes they share with respect to the centrality of power and ideology in education.

Race and Class Relations as Foci of Reform

When scholars debate the social relations responsible for educational inequality, the

systems of race and class are often invoked. However, they have only lately become integrated into a framework that explains their mutual dependency (Anyon, 1997; Leonardo, in press b). Arguing for the centrality of either race or class is more common. In Marxist reform discourse, the critique of capitalism as providing the base for unequal material relations leads to certain commitments, two of which are the promotion of economic analysis and promulgation of socialist thinking (McLaren, 2000). In race discourse, it is suggested that the centuries old problem of racism—traceable to structures of slavery, Jim Crow, and, more recently, laissez-faire racism (Bobo & Smith, 1998)—explains the plight of Black students. At least with Jim Crow racism Blacks knew that White racism was responsible for their degradation; under laissez-faire racism, Blacks are blamed for their own oppressed status. Affirming the place of race in reform analysis, Henig et al. argue that

> race plays an important confounding factor in the development of civic capacity. It would be foolish and counterproductive to overlook it. . . . [W]e also believe that it is both possible and desirable to incorporate race as a central variable in a broader theoretical framework, rather than to give it primacy. Understanding race to explain the nature of local school-reform politics; it does not as an explanation on its own terms. (pp. 7, 15)

In effect, although Henig et al. consider race a helpful and crucial node in understanding the intractable problem of school reform (Sarason, 1990), they do not give it primal status. Although they give race a privileged place, even a dominant one, they remind educators that it must be understood in the context of other social and ideological systems.

Race is also important to Fields and Feinberg's study as they note, "key leaders of the PED [Project for Educational Democracy] argued that their project is all about race" (p. 48). PED's stated goals include a concerted attempt to increase minority participation and the sharing of decision making between all parties involved, which, as the authors note, resembles Sartre's notion of a "pledged group," or the pledging of group unity. In other instances, they found that working class parents' participation, many of whom were White, was low and they were marginalized in the reform process. Thus, both books establish the point that while not occupying a center in reform discourse, race and class represent the conceptual starting points for their study. Although they devote more text to the issue of race, they both address class disparities. They break from the concept of "center," a spatial metaphor well represented in reform discourse when it anoints certain social systems as determining of others. Instead, the authors contribute to a new geometric metaphor, the ellipse, which engenders two centers, or foci. The elliptical discourse focuses on two mutually dependent systems around which school reform revolves. It forsakes a centric approach from which everything else emanates. The foci of race and class represent a field of reinforcing ideological interests that research on school reform has been unable to reconcile. Fields and Feinberg put it best when they said that "most minority people belong to income and occupational categories that the union cannot afford to alienate" (p. 97). This statement establishes the close link between race and class analysis. When research on school reform discusses one, it should implicate the other.

When race critique fails to incorporate class analysis, it subverts its own claims to eradicate racism because capitalist structures provide the material organization of the races whereby people of color find themselves exploited for profits. Social relations of capital compromise their ability to break away from models of humanity that are not only White but also bourgeois. That said, when class analysis fails to incorporate a sincere engagement of race, it falls prey to a color-blind discourse that conveniently forgets the Whiteness of unionization and how Whites systematically marginalized Blacks from leadership positions within the working class movement (West, 1988). It forsakes an otherwise productive platform to explain what Henig et al. call the "racial cleavage" between Whites and Blacks. When conceptualized as separate from one another, race and class form a tag team that weakens research, blindsiding it when it is not looking. In all, positioning research against one but not the other is like being able to use your arms and having your legs cut out from under you. Because race and class oppression are reinforcing systems, educational research must explain their symbiotic relationship in order to provide radical alternatives.

In Henig et al.'s research on four urban cities under Black leadership, the cities' schools face formidable challenges. According to their findings, DC earned an "absolute *F*" from one evaluation of its schools. Its index of violent student behavior is 64%, twice that of the nation. In Detroit, less than 20% of high school students scored at the proficient level on standard tests. In Atlanta more than 64% scored "inadequate" or "minimal" on writing; 56% of its graduates who entered public colleges were required to take remedial courses. Less than 12% of Baltimore fourth graders tested "satisfactory," with fewer than 5% being satisfactory in science. In 1992, only 38 of Baltimore's 178 schools were judged as being in "good" condition, sparing the gruesome details catalogued in Kozol's (1991) urban nightmare studies in *Savage Inequalities.*

The concentration of paltry conditions and subpar school performance can be explained through the legacy of legal segregation and its social cognate, de facto segregation. Henig et al. remind us that in the United States, 40% of the Black population is concentrated in 11 major cities. Before 1950, no major city's population boasted more than a 50% Black population; in 1992, there were nine. With respect to the cities under study, all four were majority Black by 1980. Two-thirds of previously all–White DC schools became predominantly Black by 1960, with more than half becoming majority Black after only 2 years following the Brown decision. DC became known as America's "Chocolate City" with a population of 71% Black and its schools enrolling 95% Black children in 1970s.

Massey and Denton (1993) have called such a concentration of one racial group in "ghettoized" conditions as "American Apartheid." They make *ghetto* operational as a "set of neighborhoods that are exclusively inhabited by members of one group, within which virtually all members of that group live. By this definition, no ethnic or racial group in the history of the United States, except one, has ever experienced ghettoization, even briefly. For urban blacks, the ghetto has been the paradigmatic residential configuration for at least eighty years" (pp. 18–19). Spurred on by American in-

dustrialization and Black migration from farms to cities, Black ghettos are a 20th century creation. Through zoning, streaming, blockbusting, Housing and Urban Development policies, White flight, and a host of ideological manipulations, Black ghettoization in the United States became a science. This particular form of Apartheid gave birth to the schools that Black children in the four cities attend, even with the presence of Black leadership and despite their struggle for equal education (Holt, 1990).

Massey and Denton acknowledge that other ethnic groups, such as Italians, Poles, and Jews, also experienced ghettoization. However, they add that there are several crucial distinctions from Black experience with segregation. First, unlike Black ghettos, White ethnic enclaves were not as homogeneous, registering a host of immigrant ethnic groups. Second, most White ethnics across the United States did not live in ghettoized conditions in the same manner as Blacks. Third, ghettos have become an almost permanent feature of the Black landscape, whereas White ghettos were much more fleeting. The latter became a holding ground for new immigrants, but the former has become a stubborn imprint for Blacks who have been U.S. citizens for generations.

The structural segregation of Whites from Blacks provides the historical antecedent necessary for a proper understanding of Blacks' current objective conditions. It gives rise to a host of daily assaults (Ladson-Billings, 1998) that account for the psychology of oppression that Black families suffer, including the "look" that some Black parents report receiving from White parents in Ed City. The impact of this look is possible only within a racialized system that treats people of color as "other." It is not an insignificant act, as Fields and Feinberg note. For as Sartre explains in *Being and Nothingness,*

> The "we" in "we are looking at them" can not be on the same ontological plane as the "us" in "They are looking at us." There is no question here of subjectivities qua subjectivities. In the sentence, "They are looking at me," I want to indicate that I experience myself as an object for others, as an alienated Me, as a transcendence transcended. (as quoted in Fields & Feinberg, p. 88)

This point confirms Henig et al.'s contention that "[r]ace is potent, in this context, because race not only amplifies some structural problems faced by cities but also presents a powerful perceptual filter, rooted in personal and historical experiences, that affects the bonds of trust and loyalty upon which collaborative political endeavors depend" (p. 2). Analysis of objective structures of race must be complemented by an equally rigorous study of the way it produces racialized subjectivities. On one hand, research must be attentive to what Du Bois (1903/1990) referred to as "double consciousness," or the "twoness" of Black subjectivity, whereby it lives its own prerogatives as well as being prevented from accomplishing true consciousness through the distorting effects of White racism. On the other hand, racism in schools and society produces the parallel creation of the "souls of white folk," whereby Whites accomplish their sense of identity by evading thinking about race yet acting it out in observable ways (Leonardo, 2002).

The "look" is explained by Edith Jones, a Black woman and one of Fields and Feinberg's reform participants, as "looking blank" at someone. It alienates people when they are not "extended the requisite social recognition to be part of the 'We-community' constituted by the largely middle-class, highly educated whites who were in control of the schools" (p. 88). Foucault's (1975/1977) concept of the "gaze" is helpful here to the extent that the "look" is a way of surveilling Blacks and keeping them under the watchful eyes of Whites. Like the prisoners in Foucault's study, Blacks do not always know when Whites are looking at them but are conscious of the fact that they may be under surveillance at any moment. In Ed City, we learn that focusing on race issues (a topic) does not equate with Whites giving up control of a reform initiative. Its progressive platform for change notwithstanding, the PED struggled to mediate real issues faced by concrete people, who cannot be reduced to topics for discussion and abstractions. As subjects in their own right, they are able to return the gaze (hooks, 1997). Given this state of affair, the authors find this cleavage a productive tension that PED participants confront and attempt to negotiate.

Depending on how researchers conceptualize the relationship between race and class, they could be portrayed as ideological partners in creating substantial school reform or as competing interests that subvert the possibility of complete transformation. Both books under review document the focus on class interests as they impact racial solidarity. For example, Henig et al. acknowledge the history of unionism in motor city Detroit and seaboard Baltimore. By contrast, they note that Atlanta and DC have a record of participating with civil rights movements. In particular, DC was the first city among the four to go through racial change, as the school board adopted a desegregation policy only 8 days after the Brown decision. Likewise, in 1973 Alonzo Crim became Atlanta's first Black superintendent, a fact that suggests a heightened race consciousness in schools when compared with other public institutions. By comparison, Atlanta's fire department did not promote a Black chief until 1993 and the planning department did not select a Black leader until 1991. These city histories help explain the negotiation between a mainly White union movement and Black constituents of school reform. For example, by the 1950s Blacks in Detroit created the Trade Union Leadership Conference to become more independent of unionized White autoworkers. And despite its huge Black population, Baltimore was unable to select a Black mayor until it elected Kurt Schmoke in 1987 but developed a strong union movement. Compared with Baltimore, DC has a longer history of Black leadership under Mayor Barry, a politician who began his rise through the rank and files of education. As this portrait suggests, class and race dynamics have not always been harmonious in the four cities. Sometimes their evolution was at odds, especially in the case of Detroit. This point should not be interpreted as Black militancy against class struggle, but the complex nature of class solidarity that cuts across racial lines. Clearly, racial struggle is intimate with class struggle and research that attends to their contradictions is in a better position to produce a nuanced picture of the ideological context of school reform.

In Ed City, class struggle was clearly one of the conditions of the reform. Although it was the first school district in the state to desegregate, Pamela Stern, a White working class member involved with PED, explains,

> I don't always feel that our school board members are in touch with our community as a whole. I come from this area and . . . a lot of times our school board members don't have that much time invested in our community. . . . There's been instances in my dealing with the school board in the past where they had made decisions that the community, as a majority, were against. I'm not sure they are always in touch with what the community is interested in or feels is best for it. (p. 78)

Often, when school reform takes place, it limits the participation of working class parents, many of whom may have the least education but yet have much to gain with respect to change. A contradiction in class struggle from Lenin to lately, the place of working class people in reform has been ambiguous. Their participation in leadership is sparse and their voice often muted, even in well-meaning reforms like the PED.

Unions arguably represent the strongest institutional force on the side of workers' interests. In school reform, union support has been acknowledged as the litmus test for its success or failure. Henig et al.'s research agrees with this basic premise and in fact documents union resistance to systemic reform, showing up strongest in Detroit. They write, "There is little doubt that professional educators, especially their local union chapters, have been formidable obstacles to many school reform initiatives in [the four cities]. At best, professional educators are marginalized; at worst, they are direct obstacles" (p. 117). As the largest employer in three of the cities studied, public schools comprise a large chunk of the local political economy, employing more than Chrysler in Detroit, more than Baltimore Gas and Electric, and only the federal government in DC sees more workers than its schools. Only Atlanta survey respondents perceive the unions as marginal players in reform. Perhaps here the union has not been at it wits' end fighting for a greater share of the local pie. Average teacher wages in Atlanta hover around $38,500 with benefits totaling $9,500 a year; veteran teachers average $52,000 plus benefits. By contrast, other public workers in Atlanta, like police officers, earn $6,000 less than teachers. Teachers' pay scale is determined less by performance indicators and more by length of service and degrees held. Although this is a far cry from opulence, teachers in Atlanta fare better in salaries and benefits than their counterparts in the other three cities studied. Henig et al.'s point is not to criticize the unions but to attempt to understand their objective position because "[r]unning over teachers' unions with a steamroller might succeed in getting reform initiatives on the books, but implementing and institutionalizing those initiatives will be extremely problematic unless teachers become part of the reform regime" (pp. 117–118).

In an era marked by a deep distrust of teacher professionalism, of creating scapegoats out of teachers for educational discontent, and the increased role of business control over the enterprise, unions have had to reassert their place in reform politics. Sometimes they have been backed by other organizations, such as the church and ministry in cities like Baltimore. In both studies, the case of site-based decision making (SBDM) appears, attaining only minimal support in all of Henig et al.'s four cities and becoming the central manner of reform in Ed City. In the first, many union members in Detroit feared that SBDM would increase the principals' ability to replace underperforming teachers by violating contractual agreements and due process. In DC others were leery that decentralization represented a back door to bring in corporate consultants to manage reform, thereby decreasing teacher power and producing symbolic rather than real changes.

In Ed City, SBDM evolved into the main mode of reform that would control and put power back into the hands of people most involved with the PED: teachers and other community members. SBDM took three forms as (a) local control, (b) parent and community participation in governance, and (c) involvement of underrepresented minorities. Thus, whereas in the four cities SBDM was held under union suspicion, in Ed City it was appropriated as the answer to educational woes. This difference may be due in part to the fact that the PED's philosophy of school reform can be characterized as "democracy in small places," whereas the four cities sought to implement systemic reform. It should also be noted that whereas Ed City has a population of 35,000, the four cities are major urban centers with bureaucratic tentacles that would quickly make SBDM a challenge for a highly evolved union organization. In fact, Henig et al. assert that focusing reform efforts on improving individual schools subverts systemic reform because it is likely that White or middle class enclaves will reap the benefits at the expense of urban, mainly Black, or poor centers. They observe that

> [w]hen school-based efforts achieve results, the pay-off to the children at that school is immediate and clear. Systemwide reform efforts, in contrast, demand more of the participants, are less likely to succeed in the short-run, and, when they do succeed, may have dispersed benefits not readily perceivable at the school level. (p. 201)

Henig et al. respond to postmodern reforms like SBDM with a grain of salt. Although they do not argue against SBDM's intentions to empower reform participants, they refer to its limitations with respect to systemic reform, a goal they do not wish to relinquish.

Educational Democracy and Civic Capacity

School reform has never been an issue solely about raising standards and realizing better student outcomes. These are worthwhile goals and provide some proof that reform initiatives are either working or failing. However, improving student grades and test scores does not guarantee that the reform process is democratic in nature or that it addresses larger structural issues that ultimately impinge on educational quality. In this sense, Dewey's (1916) appeal to democratic education represents a tradition in school reform that values the ideals of equality. Henig et al. agree when they write, "Early black leaders embraced the notion that public education and democratic society were inextricable. The dual school systems reinforced the contradiction of American democracy" (p. 43). Since reconstruction and the progressive era, various schools of thought have not only fought over control of public education but also argued over the concept and meaning of democracy. Kliebard (1995) documents at least four of these perspectives: humanism, child developmentalism, social meliorism, and social efficiency. All four ideologies laid claims to their version of democracy, even when they diametrically opposed one another. So despite the ostensible value of democracy and to the extent that most school reformers would claim to be democratic, there is much debate as to the meaning of such an arrange-

ment and whom it would benefit. In this section, I will attend to the two books' theories separately because they are cohesive and can stand alone.

Obvious from the book title, *Education and Democratic Theory* devotes much text to the problematics of democratic reform. Ed City's PED members are very clear about their intentions, claiming they promote "participation," "commitment," "have no fixed agenda," "want it inclusive," "want to make sure the real folks are represented," and "a vision of the school as a community center." They even created an ethos called the "Ed City Way," which means that anyone can intervene in the system when necessary without the usual bureaucratic red tape. So from the outset, the PED disrupts the top-down model of reform that many educators have experienced when the reform du jour is added onto their plate. Attempting to create a horizontal model of reform where teachers and community members co-construct the agenda, the PED is reminiscent of Habermas' (1962/1989) ideal speech community in the sense that participants enter the discourse as relative equals who are able to deploy speech acts that are subject to the group's internal process of validation. Likewise, the group represents a quasi-Freirean (1970/1993) cultural circle whereby the generative themes of "time, comfort, commitment, and racism, along with inclusiveness and participation—provide a thematic structure" (Fields & Feinberg, p. 20).

To the authors, the PED works partly within Rousseau's concept of the "General Will" whereby the group assumes that a universal social good exists independent of individual desires and is apprehensible to the rational observer. However, the principle of the General Will contradicts the traditional method of jockeying for representation through special interest groups. In this perspective, the General Will reappears as the will of Whites or the ruling class (or its daily managers—the middle class). Thus, the PED's projection of a general community and its universal interests are in direct tension with the existence of marginalized voices, such as parents, racial minorities, and the working class of Ed City. This second theory of democracy is guided by a less abstract notion than the General Will, mainly in the form of "real folk" and real politik.

To begin, there is the issue of representation. Ed City is not unique in its political and power structure whereby Blacks and the working class find themselves marginalized. In fact, the "Ed City Way . . . is not how many African American parents experience the school" (p. 53). In addition, whereas the teachers in the PED were united as a pledged group, the same cannot be said for parents who were involved. That is, teachers were united under the banner of their professional identity, but parents entered the process with multiple identities and agendas, making it hard to realize the General Will. That said, the PED tries to ameliorate this condition. Because the PED prides itself on having an open forum and being careful to avoid imposing an agenda, negotiations were normal and expected.

The PED's "loud" version of democracy is diametrically opposed to the school board's "quiet" protocol, which listens to its constituency but rarely debates with them. Unlike the hushed game of tennis, the PED approaches the decibels of a football game. It does not exhibit the efficiency that the curriculum scholar Bobbitt would have liked to see but displays the deliberations of which Quakers would approve. A consensus-driven model like the PED led Fields and Feinberg to caution their readers that "this is not an implementation study," (p. 1) but an analysis of the democratic process. Although they do not cite instances of improved student outcomes, they argue that a critical study of the democratic process reveals the valuable "tone" setting that precedes any change in policies or bureaucratic reorganization. The preamble to actual reform is significant to the extent that substantial change requires a period of what Gramsci (1971) calls a "period of incubation," a time of getting ready, a moment of achieving clarity. The discourses that reformers choose to deploy with respect to change should be considered a constitutive part of the reform process insofar as critical action is never devoid of reflection (Freire, 1970/1993).

As such, democratic reform becomes a testing ground for Chantal Mouffe's notion of a "pluralist democracy . . . where no group can 'pretend to have *the* solution" (Nadesan & Elenes, 1998, p. 251). Because the PED considers equal representation crucial to its internal dynamics, it creates space for marginalized voices to participate in setting its agenda. It challenges traditional bureaucratic authority with its own version of dialogical authority because arguably the "hallmark of democracy is communication and the ability to keep lines of contact open in many different directions" (Fields & Feinberg, p. 72). Although it was observed that the PED has not eradicated racial or class tensions in its dealings with the community, its discursive structure allows space for the inclusion of previously all but absent voices. The nature of this inclusion determines the substance of its claims to democracy. Contradictions notwithstanding, the PED struggles with school reform as if democracy mattered.

In *The Color of School Reform,* Henig et al. build their theory of "civic capacity." Arguing that race is a focus that no democratic reform can afford to neglect, the authors challenge the notion that race is only an ideological concept. The idea of race may be imagined but this should not lead us to agree with Justice Scalia that any analysis associated with race automatically leads to its reification. Race is not just a figment of the imagination, it is a pigment of the imagination. Racism is a relation that invests skin color with meaning and erects institutions around it to justify previously meaningless differences. In fact, it creates these differences. Racial justice requires that we come to terms with the specious history of race and pledge to a commitment to dismantle its deleterious consequences in the form of a politics of pigmentation. It will take a coalition of previously unrelated groups to challenge centuries of White domination in the nation's schools. Henig et al. say it this way,

> There is no way *around* politics. To the contrary, the concept of "civic capacity," which lies at the core of our framework, suggests that the prospect for meaningful and sustainable reform depends upon lines of conflict and cooperation among a wide array of actors, both inside and outside the educational arena. Building civic capacity—the capacity collectively to set goals and effectively to pursue them—calls for exercising political leadership and mastering political skills. (p. 9)

Civic capacity is a form of counter-hegemonic struggle. It entails the political ability to bring together concerned groups in order to combine their voices into a crescendo. Rather than a loose set of con-

nections, civic capacity is comprised of formal arrangements: for example, the Detroit Compact, Atlanta Partnership for Business and Education, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, and Parents United in DC. As the authors make clear, "Our assumption is straightforward: as parents, communities, schools, businesses, government agencies, and so on learn to cooperate and trust one another, by acting together they can accomplish goals that could not be accomplished either separately or competitively" (p. 161). Corroborating Fields and Feinberg's findings, Henig et al. suggest that cross-ideological alliances are difficult but necessary, insufficient but crucial. In order to realize long lasting and substantial changes, reform must not be sporadic. Its proponents must not settle for spikes of improvement, or the Hawthorne Effect but sustainable shifts in the political structure by putting a school system on its head back onto its feet.

As part of building civic capacity, Henig et al. argue for appropriate partnerships between schools and businesses. The authors tread on ground that has witnessed the problematic involvement of business, whose interests revolve around profit, with schools. Images are invoked of the Edison Project and Whittle Corporation, where schools become conduits for television advertisements in exchange for computers and other technologies (Steinberg, 1992). By the mid 1990s, the Whittle Corporation reported having over 11,000 schools under contract across the nation (Apple, 2000; see also Kozol, 1993). Henig et al. propose that there are forms of partnership with business that produce favorable results. They base this position on the premise that schools and businesses are already co-dependent:

> First, corporate leaders . . . depend on the central-city school systems to provide them with entry-level workers who have the requisite skills, knowledge, and discipline. Second, business leaders are presumed to be concerned about the potential for poor schools to undermine the general reputation of the metropolitan area; a poor reputation might make it harder to attract or relocate upper-level employees, reflect badly on corporate image, and to make it less likely that the local economy will thrive. (p. 214)

Thus, Henig et al. emphasize the already existing dependency between schools and businesses. To the extent that a relationship is in place, the point is to harness its potential in order to broaden support for systemic reform, one of the key features of civic capacity. To the chagrin of Marxist educators and reformers, Henig et al. propose that rather than resist business altogether, reformers must find a way to bring the business community into the fold. They must also take seriously the community's fear of businesses that co-opt school reform, like the Detroit Compact, which was perceived by some as a form of "plantation politics." On the other side, reformers must be attuned to business executives who may be "wary of being tagged as white 'colonialists'" (p. 212) and resist participation. Recognizing that civic capacity does not occur in a vacuum, Henig et al. propose a reform discourse that values difference as much as it searches for consensus.

There are many contradictions that must be dealt with for civic capacity to avoid a feel-good celebration of collaboration. That is, the concept of civic capacity must remain politicized so that it maintains its edge and avoid becoming just another slogan. For example, it must confront, rather than evade struggles over power. It must not strengthen class divisions in search of racial progress by intensifying the hold of corporations on education. However, neither should it be radical in conception and empty in action. The upshot is that reform becomes a space where the agenda is inflected by difference and where this difference becomes an end in itself rather than something to reconcile en route to a higher, agreed upon, and shared vision (see Scott, 1990). Difference in this sense is not an irreconcilable difference but one that produces the possibility of community. This means that reform must avoid "essentializing" a community's interests because, as Anyon found in her research, shared race does not erase gaps in class (cited by Henig et al., p. 192). Reform must attend to the primary "racial cleavage" between Whites and Blacks without suggesting that secondary or tertiary conflicts within or between communities of color are resolved by holding the race variable constant. On this last point, although DC boasts nine Afrocentric schools, there is some disagreement within the Black community with respect to their constitutionality and usefulness. In one school, Malcolm X Academy, the charge was that the all-male school promoted sexism and separation of the genders, a fact that may reproduce "gender cleavages" within the Black community. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Organization for Women, American Civil Liberties Union, and Legal Defense Fund opposed the establishment of the Academy, and a court ruling eventually opened the school to girls. Some opponents also argued against its focus on culture over basic education.

In other instances, the class cleavage poses another conflict within the Black community. Recounting a conversation between the former mayor of DC Marion Barry and then-Superintendent Reed, two respondents recall, "'I understand that you want to give contracts to black companies,' Reed said, 'but when you tell me to take food out of a black kid's stomach so some black dude can get rich, I have to ask, what's your rationale?'" (p. 127). The essentialist identity politics that sometimes plague communities of color (Leonardo, 2000) is traceable to the distorting effects of White racism dating back to Du Bois' (1903/1990) concept of the "veil." Because Black identity is filtered through the controlling images of Whiteness, aspects of Black identity development evolve in contradictory ways, as evidenced in statements by Henig et al.'s respondents' fears about "Uncle Toms" and "sell outs," or phrases that posit the problematic White mind in a Black body. The authors also report the nepotistic phenomenon of guarding jobs in teaching and administration within the Black middle class in all four cities.

At the same time, some respondents hesitate to criticize other Black community members in order to avoid aspersions by the White community that Blacks are divided. However, acknowledging disagreements within a community does not somehow produce them. It recognizes that although projecting an essential Black community provides a platform for solidarity, this is sometimes accomplished at the expense of appreciating difference along the lines of class and gender. For although bell hooks asks where Blacks would be today without a touch of essentialism and Gayatri Spivak deems strategic essentialism a necessary moment, Stuart Hall (1996) reminds us that the desire to essentialize turns an undecidable historico-cultural process into a biologically determined discourse, the likes of which Blacks have fought against for

centuries. Henig et al's theory of civic capacity appears to go a long way with Hall in deconstructing the essential Black subject of history without promoting *Black* as a floating signifier. In the end, Henig et al. are able to risk essentialism.

Education and Democratic Theory and *The Color of School Reform* break new ground on what it means to incorporate ideology critique into school reform. Both books conceptualize the democratic project and find that its path is neither straight nor smooth. Many contradictions line the way and negotiations traverse from ideology to identity. In order to turn "street-fighting pluralism to a human capital regime" (Henig et al., p. 18), educational reformers are treated to the full complexity of democratic change that has eluded the literature on school reform. Fields and Feinberg remind us that there is nothing as practical as a good theory. Their ethnographic account attests to the messiness of real reform, the deliberate pace of democratic processes, and the importance of reform participants as beings-for-each-other. Henig et al.'s ambitious research in four Black-led cities chronicles the amount of necessary coordination that it takes to enact systemic reform. Pulling together strands from community organizations, parent groups, and business leaders, civic capacity represents a language of collaboration in these times of global warring and factionalism. Critical school reform does not only aim to improve student outcomes, but creates the preconditions for broader social emancipation.

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