

approach, would have been useful.³ Fuller might have used Bourdieu's work in order to explain the interconnections between Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital in order to theorize agency in relation to the girls who attended Southwell, the site of Fuller's research. Furthermore, the section on ethnicity in chapter 2 seems slightly confusing and out of place. This does not seem to have been an initial focus in Fuller's research, and it is reflected both in the way in which the issue is presented in chapter 2 and its subsequent use to explain ethnicity in relation to only certain parts of Fuller's data.

Despite the weaknesses, this volume does manage to tease out a number of important issues in relation to class and educational aspirations. By letting the voices of the girls of Southwell speak, the reader is given a glimpse of the struggles faced by a group of teenage girls on the cusp of adulthood. The choices Fuller brings to light in this volume are not straightforward and are often influenced in many ways, by parents, teachers, peers, and the agency of the girls themselves. Given the in-depth discussion of theory and thick description in presenting the girls' voices, this would make a good text for a graduate course syllabus and for students who are considering using class theories in their own research.

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³ On postmodern/poststructural theory, see Patricia Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* (New York: Routledge, 1991). On Bourdieu's cultural sociological approach, see esp. Lois McNay, *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), and "Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation," in *Feminism after Bourdieu*, ed. Lisa Adkins and Beverley Skeggs (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

School Knowledge in Comparative and Historical Perspective: Changing Curricula in Primary and Secondary Education edited by Aaron Benavot and Cecilia Braslavsky in collaboration with Nhung Truong. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Center, University of Hong Kong, 2006. 315 pp. \$189.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-962-8093-52-6.

With reforms in curriculum development taking place in various parts of the world, this is a welcome publication. I have for a long time been feeling the need to see a publication analyzing developments in curriculum development from a comparative and international perspective. This volume is admirable as a compendium that provides such an analysis in a selection of regions, for which the editors, Aaron Benavot and the late Cecilia Braslavsky, are to be commended. We also learn that Braslavsky did not live long enough to see this project reach its final stages, a point emphasized at the very outset. As such, one reads this work feeling a twinge of sadness for the demise of a person who did much to develop the curriculum in her country of origin and who directed UNESCO's International Bureau of Education until her untimely passing in 2006. Her contribution to curriculum de-

velopment as researcher (at the University of Buenos Aires), as curriculum development practitioner (at the heart of curriculum reform in Argentina), and later as coordinator of an international, rather global, effort in this regard is well captured in an essay by Cristian Cox toward the end of the volume.

The concluding chapter, penned by John Meyer, highlights some general patterns in the volume that are worth noting. The major thrust in most of the chapters concerns the intersections between the global and the local in curriculum development. As Meyer notices, gone are the days when love of country, and therefore feelings of patriotism, are expressed throughout the various curricula in many parts of the world. I would have thought this was abandoned a long time ago, except for those countries that received their formal independence in the 1960s and continued to pursue this discourse perhaps until the mid-1970s. He also mentions the welcome abandonment of the one-time obvious gender stereotyping in the social organization of knowledge. Judging from the trends indicated in the various surveys, this is thankfully a thing of the past and vindicates the large corpus of feminist scholarship that highlighted this wayward and discriminatory aspect of traditional education over the years.

Selectivity in secondary school education is also on the decrease, as indicated in the excellent overview of world models of education as provided by David H. Kamens and Benavot. Almost echoing the results of the Program for International Student Assessment survey, the two authors argue that the trend is toward increasing comprehensivization with regard to upper secondary schools, even though they notice a strong element of volatility among national educational systems over three time periods. The emphases are on diversity and decentralization, with more attention being devoted to parental and local officials' participation. The authors also argue that national features have little bearing on the choices in education made by certain countries. Predominant and popular world models (not necessarily American ones), rather than national ones, hold sway.

The themes that make their presence felt in various curricula are those that capture the global imagination during the historical period in question. In the postwar period, the emphasis in many countries would have been on, to play around with the title of one of Karl Mannheim's later works, people and society in an age of reconstruction. In this age, concern with citizenship and the "glocal" would be given prominence. The chapters in this volume are not found wanting in this regard. Citizenship, divested from specific national concerns, involving cross-border values and reflecting the notion that diversity is a normative good, is given expansive treatment in the excellent chapter by Yasemin Soysal and Suk-Ying Wong. One theme that features prominently in this volume is that of human rights, considered by some to be a feature of globalization itself (the globalization of human rights). The chapter by Francisco Ramirez, David Suarez, and John Meyer deals adequately with this issue. It traces the growth of human rights education indicating how this aspect of citizenship is very much a feature of what constitutes a global citizenship in a world characterized by "actual and perceived interdependence" (37).

The dominant discourse centered around the notion of competencies and curricula features prominently in this volume. Perhaps this discourse ought to have been examined more critically. Which competences are given prominence and which other competences (e.g., critical literacy) are avoided or given lip service?

In one of the chapters, historical competence, considered an important competence for present-day global citizenship and democracy, is emphasized. The chapter in question is the one coauthored by Braslavsky, Carla Borges, Souto Simao, and Nhung Truong. In this chapter, we are reminded of Dewey's writings on the reciprocal relationship between education and democracy, something worth emphasizing at a time when one-time taken-for-granted democratic spaces are shrinking through the onset of privatization, commodification, and corporatization. In this day and age, this discourse, as criticized by Henry Giroux and others who argue in favor of a critical education for a deliberative and substantive democracy, reflects a conception of education that is somewhat economic and very information and communication technology (ICT) oriented.

In this respect, I was surprised to notice a dearth of discussions concerning ICT and the curriculum and critical takes on it, given its prevalence in this day and age. However, the hegemony of English throughout the global education discourse and provision was given its due prominence in the chapter by Yung-Kyung Cha. This chapter should be read alongside recent critical works on the subject, such as *The Hegemony of English*.¹

There are chapters of a general nature, such as Ivor Goodson's chapter on curriculum change or Robert Fiala's chapter on ideology, utopia, and the curriculum. The latter is complemented by Rukhsana Zia's discussion on religious education and moral development in Muslim schools, a discussion that, I suppose, provides a foretaste to some of the arguments carried forward in *Education and the Arab "World."*² As suggested by the title of the book under review, there are also chapters that provide a historical dimension of curriculum development in certain countries. Silvina Gvirtz's chapter highlights this dimension as she focuses on the micropolitics of the school notebook in Argentina during the Peronist period. What is interesting here is the tension between the macropolitical Peronist doctrine centering around such figures as Eva Peron—who, like other cult leaders, becomes the embodiment of the state and the larger matriarchal figure—and teachers' resistance to it in the micropolitics of the classroom.

As expected, many of the chapters in this book are comparative in nature. All told, this is a most useful volume that should serve as a good source of reference for those interested in curriculum development and reform as well as educational policy in general.

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¹ Donaldo Macedo, Bessie Dendrinis, and Panayota Gounari, *The Hegemony of English* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2003).

² André Mazawi and Ronald Sultana, eds., *Education and the Arab "World": Political Projects, Struggles, and Geometries of Power* (New York: Routledge, 2010).