

PURSUIING EQUAL EDUCATION IN SOCIETIES OF DIFFERENCE

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Schooling is always an act of hope. An older generation hopes to pass on its learning to those who follow, a free society hopes to engage a new generation in the project of self-governance, and an unequal society hopes to offer genuine opportunities for individual economic mobility and success. Adults hope schools will help students become economically self-sufficient, capable of supporting their own dependents, and able to enhance the nation's economic competitiveness over time. Equally important, older generations hope to pass on their stores of knowledge and values as a cultural inheritance, which may include a specific national, cultural, or religious identity. Students hope for friends, fun, and success—though they may not always agree among themselves or with adults about how to measure it. In the United States, people place these hopes in public schools, which receive financial support from tax dollars, and private schools, which are assisted by public tax exemptions and tax-deductible private donations. With these public resources and local, state, and federal supervision, schooling becomes more than a repository of hopes; it is also a project of justice, inspiring disagreements about what just schooling entails. After all, they are only schools; they cannot solve all the inequities in society. *Just Schools* thus considers the problem of justice in a multicultural society and, at the same time, the relatively limited means schools have for addressing such problems through policies and practices.

This book explores “just schools” both as an inquiry into debates over justice and an examination of the specific issues of equality, freedom, and fairness during a period of intense school reform and demographic transformation. Largely focused on the United States, but with some attention to other countries, *Just Schools* explores contrasting and, at times, conflicting hopes for schooling as well as related disagreements among parents, teachers, and students. Central to our inquiry is the tension between promoting individual

development and opportunity for all children—regardless of race, culture, religion, immigration status, or class—and enabling social groups to pass on their traditions. At times, this tension appears as a choice between treating each student the same or instead recognizing students’ cultural, religious, linguistic, and racial backgrounds. At other times, the tension arises between commitments to desegregation and integration versus separate instruction for students grouped by religion, language background, culture, or race.

The status of group membership in efforts to achieve equality is especially fraught in American law and politics. Simultaneous commitments to treat individuals as individuals and to rectify ongoing group disparities animate elections and constitutional disputes. In a recent hotly debated decision, Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for four of the nine justices, overturned voluntary racial desegregation plans that were enacted by elected school boards in Seattle and Louisville to promote integration and educational opportunity. Rejecting “racial balancing” as an insufficiently compelling reason, and restricting the use of race-based classifications in assigning students to schools in almost all circumstances, Chief Justice Roberts repeated a line the Court has used before: “[A]t the heart of the Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection lies the simple command that the Government must treat citizens as individuals, not as simply components of a racial, religious, sexual or national class.”¹ Yet in vigorous dissents, Justice John Paul Stevens and Justice Stephen Breyer emphasized that the Constitution’s commitment to rectify racial disparities in schooling—with explicit use of racial classifications when necessary—was the vital meaning of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).² With Justice Kennedy joining those who rejected the plans, the result of this case sharply restricted official use of racially-based school assignments to overcome neighborhood racial imbalances. This is true even though white parents with choices pick schools in wealthier and whiter communities than the schools where families without resources live. American schools today are racially separate (Orfield and Lee 2004),³ and there are racial disparities in student achievement, resources, and access to opportunities (Casserly 2003).

Because this nation still struggles with the legacies and enduring realities of racial segregation in schooling, any homogeneous student population raises concerns about coerced separation, unequal opportunities, and failures to forge commonalities through daily contact. Yet no less troubling is the suggestion that a predominantly African American school is inherently inferior to an integrated school.⁴ Excellence must be possible for any group of students. Homogeneity in the student body must be distinguished from forced or unchosen segregation along a characteristic like race or ethnicity. Finally, the possibilities for passing on group traditions and pride are large and real in “majority-minority” schools; they are well demonstrated by excellent historically black colleges.

Outside the public school system, private schools that are organized around students' religious and cultural identities are actually constitutionally protected. In 1925, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected efforts to eliminate Catholic schools and "Americanize" immigrants. It struck down a statute requiring attendance at a common public school and ensured parents the power to select a private school to inculcate a religious identity or other "additional obligations" in their children (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters* 1925). That decision affirmed and spurred the development of parochial and other private schools as alternatives to the public "common school." Hence, the United States has long permitted groups organized around religion, culture, or language—as well as military training, the arts, and other specialties—to run their own private schools.

Since this decision, American schooling has grown more plural, with increasing opportunities for schools organized around group identities in public as well as private contexts. For example, public funding made available to entrepreneurial groups now underwrites charter schools; specialized public programs designed to draw students from across entire districts are organized around themes or programs and operate as magnet and pilot schools; and publicly-funded vouchers as well as public and private scholarships expand access to private schools. New schools can specialize in particular values and identities, or attempt new ways to recruit and integrate diverse students. They are limited only by competition and increasingly transparent measures of student achievement.

Hence this time of school reform is a propitious moment to consider how American schools do, and should, treat student differences and social multiculturalism. What do and what should new private schools, new experiments in public schooling, and demographic shifts within public schools mean for the cultural, racial, and religious identities of students in a diverse and at times fractious nation? What concerns about equality and identity arise in this period in which rising immigration complicates racial categories beyond the categories of black and white, religious and language differences become prominent, and student opportunities and achievements continue to correlate with race and socioeconomic status? Based on close observations of individual schools, assessments of social-psychological and educational research, and historical and legal analyses, this book offers vivid demonstrations of local, national, and international disagreements about whether equality in education requires distinctive groups to have access to the same instruction, similar achievement results, or recognition and resources.

The Equality-Difference Paradox

The challenge of promoting just schooling in a diverse society presents us with what can be called the *equality-difference paradox*: a tension between,

on the one side, social and political efforts to advance equality for all regardless of culture, religion, race, or class, and, on the other side, government support for pluralism and multiculturalism. Do schools promote integration along the lines of race, ethnicity, religion, and economic class, or instead do they divide students along these or other lines? Do schools with diverse student bodies encourage the development of one common identity, or instead do they foster distinctive group identities. And which of these avenues better expands opportunities for or confers respect on the individuals involved?

It may seem contradictory to advance the same chances and results for students while assisting different groups to develop and maintain diverse beliefs, values, family practices, and control of schools. Yet for “equal opportunity” to thrive, we may have to ensure each individual the very chance to attend very different schools. Similarly, inculcating national values and universalistic norms, such as respect for all persons, may seem at odds with commitments to respect different racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Yet through these overarching ideas, and out of respect for all persons, distinct traditions and groups may thrive. These twists reflect the recognition that academic and career achievement is only one dimension of personal meaning and satisfaction. Affiliation with a religious, cultural, linguistic, or racial group can be an equally, or even more important, dimension, and a free society is committed to enabling precisely such affiliations. Ironically, while inclusive democracies may work by inviting their members to forget their different heritages, the result sometimes leaves individuals lonely and comforted by only a thin sense of identity and belonging (Caughey 1986).⁵ In these cases the democracy itself may permit or even encourage people to nourish and enrich distinctive communities bound by thicker ties. As an unintended consequence, social and economic inequality, misunderstanding, prejudice, and political factions may increase. So equality and difference may be phases of social cycles; they may also signal contrasting choices of emphasis in school programs and policies.

Tensions between equality and difference actually appear repeatedly both in the work of scholars and in the voices of parents, teachers, students, administrators, and policy makers who are struggling to make schools work. The meanings of equality and difference certainly shift over time, as do attitudes about race, ethnicity, and conflict over identities (Peshkin 1991). Even with shifting understandings, people experience and argue about what seem to be competing tugs variously named *uniformity versus difference*, *individual opportunity versus group rights*, *inclusion versus multiculturalism*, *assimilation versus factions*, *commonality versus distinctiveness*, and *equality versus difference*.

For example, in longstanding and ongoing legal and policy maneuvers, some people push for greater commonality while others pursue opportunities for expression and preservation of group identities through schooling. Since

2001, the federal No Child Left Behind Act⁶ and related policies press for commonality at the state level by calling for statewide metrics of achievement and regular waves of student testing. These policies generate a level of standardization and commonality across each state and across the country that is unprecedented in the United States, given its strong tradition of local control of schooling. Although still far from the degree of national control over educational governance in a country like France, American schools now operate under curricular rubrics and assessment tools that press for shared, high expectations for student academic performance, with special attention to reducing racial and ethnic disparities.

Nonetheless, variety and difference persist in American schools. Even the national legislation is predicated upon state and local control of schools. It does not touch the distinctive missions of parochial and independent schools, nor the mounting experiments with charter and public magnet schools. Variety exists not only between schools but within them, as individual schools employ distinctive academic tracks and permit varying degrees of discretion to individual teachers regarding content and pedagogy. Individual teachers and schools pursue diverse views about how to improve schooling and reveal an American penchant for experimentation, competition, and product differentiation.

Given the legacies of racial and ethnic segregation, the explosion of immigrant children (Fix and Capps 2005),⁷ and the steady growth of both religious schools and specialized public schools organized around bilingual instruction, students' identities are salient. They are often the focus of school curricula, activities, dress-code regulations, and reform efforts. Some schools, and some groups within some schools, make the appreciation of distinctive cultures an end in itself. They promote appreciation of different groups, challenge group-based bias, and develop positive contact and collaborations among students from different groups (Banks, chapter 8, this volume; Sarat, chapter 4, this volume). Others stress cultural sensitivity as a means for boosting student learning and achievement (Banks, chapter 8, this volume; Sarat, chapter 4, this volume).

Critics of the focus on individual equality worry that individuals and groups lose something important when schools stress assimilation to a single set of cultural practices and norms. Critics of cultural sensitivity and some versions of multiculturalism fear that accommodation of group differences jeopardizes social cohesion, national identity, and individual chances for self-invention. One important crosscutting question is whether these worries and risks are genuine and severe or are instead products of symbolic and ideological fights. Some students and families think they face a choice between either pursuing academic achievement or preserving cultural difference. Pursuing academic success triggers for some the derogative label of "acting white" (Fryer and Austen-Smith 2005). Others, such as the Wisconsin Amish, op-

pose mandatory attendance at diverse public high schools as interference with passing on their way of life (*Wisconsin v. Yoder* 1972). Some of the research examined in this book indicates that there is no inevitable and necessary trade-off between promoting academic success and recognizing cultural differences. Indeed recognition and accommodation of cultural differences may be crucial to engaging some students, generating the kind of partnership with parents that enhances academic success, and creating classrooms that feel safe and “owned” by all students (Markus, chapter 3, this volume; Banks, chapter 8, this volume).

Research indicates that when teachers attend to the different identities and learning styles of students inflected by their families and cultural experiences, the disparities in achievement that divides racial groups diminish notably (Markus, chapter 3, this volume; Banks, chapter 8, this volume). Failure to create a coherent and positive school culture is associated with low-performing schools, but neglecting the values and priorities that children learn at home may doom schools’ chances for student success or jeopardize the partnership between parents and teachers that contributes so dramatically to effective education (Morrison, Rimm-Kauffman, and Pianta 2003; Barnard 2004). Likewise, national competitiveness increasingly requires adults who work well in teams. Schools can promote mutual respect and teamwork both by demystifying and celebrating the students’ diverse traditions, and by submerging individual identities under a school team or other joint project (National Competitiveness Council 1998; *Grutter v. Bollinger* 2003; *Gratz v. Bollinger* 2003). Hence, schools can boost students’ competencies through special responsiveness to their cultural backgrounds and group identities. That responsiveness can take place either within a single diverse school or through separate schools organized around distinctive cultural, linguistic, or religious identities.

A different kind of multicultural appreciation arises not within individual schools but instead across the school system as a whole. When the collection of schools available to individual students in a given city or state includes Islamic, Catholic, Jewish, Afrocentric, Arabic-language, and other distinctive private and, in some cases, public schools, the message to parents and to society is some degree of acceptance and appreciation of multiple educational settings. By allowing each of the options to satisfy the state’s requirement of compulsory schooling, the government endorses pluralism—even as it sets standardizing conditions for curricula and minimum qualifications for teachers (Minow 2001).

Members of some cultural communities prefer acknowledgment of difference or even separation in fulfilling the ideal of equality. In these cases, equality equates respect and recognition (Taylor 1992; Kymlicka 1996; Honneth 1996). Others worry that identifying and separating people by group membership, whether through government action or government permission

for private choices that result in separation, endangers equality, full inclusion, and equal access to resources (Fraser and Honneth 2003). And the risk of racially-based disparities in opportunities persists and grows as the ideal of desegregation shrinks in law and in practice (Dillon 2007).

Complicating matters, acknowledgment of differences is indispensable to redistributing resources from advantaged to disadvantaged groups, and racial and religious differences tend to track the distribution of advantages. Indeed, maintaining attention to racial categories is indispensable to the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires states to collect testing data sorted by race. Even as he joined four other justices in rejecting voluntary racial segregation plans because of their use of racial classifications, Justice Anthony Kennedy made clear that public schools can continue to track “enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race,” and may pursue the goal of bringing students of diverse backgrounds and races together through “strategic site selection of new schools, drawing attendance zones within general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods; allocating resources for special programs; recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion” (*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle Public School Dist. No. 1*. 2007, 8).

In the midst of local and national fights over schools, what each child deserves should not get lost. Yet, a formulation that focuses on each distinct child implicitly embraces the liberal individual, apart from family and larger group, as the unit of analysis. That, to some, is the biggest point of contention. Some people view the identity of the family or group to be equally or more important than the progress of the unique individual. Some stress that the individual cannot be known or supported without respecting the group affiliation. How much should or does a focus on each child call for lifting the child out of the family and facilitating separation from home, religion, ethnicity? How much should attending to what each child deserves involve recognizing, accommodating, and extending his or her home traditions or designing education that is continuous with the home environment?⁸

Whether the challenges of diversity are inherent in the nature of cultural identity or are instead produced by particular political or ideological arrangements (Appiah 2007; Sen 2007), a multicultural society risks clashes between groups and even more profound disagreements over the norms it uses to recognize and manage its multiculturalism. Nowhere are these conflicts more pronounced than in the design and operation of schools, where the tasks of cultural reproduction make the stakes vivid and large (Sleeter 2001).⁹

Schools in the United States were central places for debates over the meanings of equality even before the rise of public education. They have also been the sites of periodically intense fights over the treatment of students’ differences (Rudolph 1965; Kaestle 1983). The creation of the “common school” animated nineteenth century reformers. During the surge of immigration at the turn of the twentieth century, reformers tried to confine the

moral, legal, and social space for individuals and groups to practice or change their distinctive ways of life. By the 1980s, multiculturalism in the sense of verbal acknowledgment of racial, cultural, and linguistic identities swept the schools; and by 2000, religious diversity also acquired new acknowledgment in public as well as private school settings.

In other countries, waves of immigrants and refugees entering and crossing Europe since the 1980s have presented questions about the space for difference in schools that had little prior experience with such issues. Similarly, as immigration and settlement practices had changed in the United States by the turn of the twenty-first century, schools in Michigan, Maine, Illinois, and Kansas confronted new conflicts over dress codes, prayer rooms, and other potential accommodations for Muslim students. So as this new century unfolds, how schools treat students provokes debates in the suburbs of Paris, the neighborhoods of Amstcrsdam, the communities of Chicago, and the schools of Lewiston, Maine. These debates focus on the questions of uniformity versus difference, individual opportunity versus group rights, inclusion versus multiculturalism, assimilation versus factions, commonality versus distinctiveness, and equality versus difference.

Curiously, each side of these abstract tensions appeals to at least some conception of equality and justice. Uniformity indicates a civic republican model of shared citizenship in a single polity through which each individual receives equal membership and regard (primarily as a citizen of the nation), while recognizing difference matches equal regard in a different way. Individual opportunity signals equal starting points and chances for success, while group rights accord equal acknowledgment to distinctive and meaningful features of identities and practices of subcommunities. Appeals to justice and equality permeate disagreements about what these ideals mean for schools. Justice in schools pertains both to opportunities for academic success and social mobility as well as to the treatment of individual students while in school. Equal justice calls for equal distribution of opportunities and equal respect. But it remains entirely contested whether this justice is for parents or groups of adults who wish to pass on their traditions, or instead entirely to each child as a distinct individual. Further, if this justice is geared toward children, to what extent should their own preferences or some picture of their long-term interests guide the shaping of their group memberships? Then, should public officials, parents, religious leaders, or neighbors determine how much students should adhere to or be drawn out of the identities that they find at home?

At heart, then, the tension between equality and difference exposes disagreements over whether just schooling involves equal access to a single pathway of academic, economic, and social success, or instead equal respect and support for multiple pathways to success, grounded in distinct cultural

and communal traditions and aspirations, and even different perspectives on the individual's relationship to groups, the nation, and the world.

The stakes are high for the nation as a whole. Cultural reproduction for the entire nation is an inevitable dimension of education. National identities are implicated not only in the balance between individual and subgroup identities, but also in efforts to inculcate a sense of national heritage, patriotism, and identity. The national identity itself can embrace some version of multiculturalism, or it can instead seek to suppress or even strip away distinctive group identities. Subgroup identities can in turn offer pathways to the national identity, or they can instead operate as rivals. A private Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim school may inculcate a sense of American patriotism; such schools may foster a religious identity as part of that American pride or as a distinct and even overarching identity.

Besides a national political identity, schools may draw students into cultural practices influenced by popular culture or particular socioeconomic pockets. New immigrants may assimilate to the America they find. But depending on where they live and the quality of schools available to their children, this may involve lowering rather than raising their educational aspirations, their respect for government, or their hopes for joining the mainstream (Rumbaut and Portes 2001). And young people, ever inventive, energetic, and distinctive, may invent their own hybrid identities or methods for navigating the worlds fashioned by adults, introducing differences quite apart from the group identities familiar to their teachers and parents.

Even More Complex in Practice

Individual chapters of this book show how the equality-difference paradoxes unfold in practice, often with more complexities and nuance than might be imagined in the abstract. Any given individual can be seen through the lenses of race, religion, or nationality. Heather Lindkvist documents how Somali immigrants are seen by longstanding Americans in first racial and then religious terms. She then shows how the immigrants themselves use the multiple frames in negotiating their treatment (Lindkvist, chapter 6, this volume). Multiculturalism may be controversial in general, or in some places where parents say "we're all multiculturalists now," the divisions may arise over precisely what accommodations it entails for schools (Sarat, chapter 4, this volume; Glazer 1998). Students have choices and show inventiveness in shaping their own identities and responses to schools, yet classrooms and teachers also subtly affect how safe and welcome individual students from different backgrounds feel to articulate those feelings (Banks, chapter 8, this volume; Markus, chapter 3, this volume).

Equality and diversity point in the same direction at times as well. For ex-

ample, a private religious school aspires to prepare students for active participation in the democratic process (Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993), and a private Islamic school in Chicago seeks to cultivate universal ethical values (Riedel, chapter 5, this volume).

The tension between equality and difference resembles the contrast between republican and liberal values, much discussed in contemporary political theory. Republican values stress formation of a national civic identity, shared by all and ensuring equality to all, while demanding individuals to strip themselves of particular cultural or religious markers. This is a position exemplified by schooling in France, or so Americans imagine; a more complex understanding is explored in chapter 7 of this volume (Bowen).

In the first chapter, Martha Minow provides an analysis of legal and political debates over schooling since the famous antisegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. She suggests that models of equality have alternated in the United States between redistribution and recognition along lines of difference. Redistribution signals struggles over allocating economic and other resources to produce equal starting points (or equal results) for students regardless of group membership. Recognition is the focal point of struggles over public respect and accommodation for the experiences, privations, goals of particular groups. Since *Brown*, these debates have expanded beyond race to the categories of gender, language, disability, and religion. Meanwhile, the emergence of charter schools, magnet schools, and vouchers for private schools permits the development of more identity-based schools. Because having a coherent mission and committed teachers and parents may be more important than a national formula for student success, fights over the treatment of differences have more to do with national identity than with progress in student achievement. Students can learn, perform well on standardized tests, and even develop a sense of patriotism in parochial schools or other schools with specialized missions. Yet an increase from the current 11 percent enrollment in private schools (National Center for Education Statistics 2006) or other specialized schools would affect the polity and thus presents a question more about national character than one about improving individual students' prospects.

Hazel Markus explores how ethnicity and race matter as students develop identities and work to find their place in schools. Identifying two types of differences among students, chapter 3 distinguishes between *culturally derived differences* and *historically imposed status differences* (often called racial differences) that require attention if students are to identify with school. Giving rich depictions of the significance of these kinds of differences in light of models of the self, the chapter examines what it means for a school to be "identity safe" for students marked by different kinds of differences. It includes concrete directions for schools committed to ensuring each student a path toward success.

In chapter 4, Austin Sarat presents an ethnographic account of views of multiculturalism in the very liberal and largely middle class community of Amherst, Massachusetts. In this chapter, models of equality alternate. First, there are those who seek “soft multiculturalism,”—meaning some cultural accommodation for student differences, but not if it interferes with what kids are uniformly expected to know and demonstrate, if it means undermining authority of teachers, or if it reduces expectations of achievement. Alternatively, there are those who advocate “hard multiculturalism,” believing that the school should make each child feel welcome by accepting the local folkways, speech, dress, attitude toward authority, and slang the child brings—even if this requires some trade-offs with the teacher’s authority and expectations of scholastic achievement, mastery of standard English, and assimilation to mainstream cultural norms or standards.

The case study chapters by Barnaby Riedel and Heather Lindkvist focus, respectively, on the school experiences of Arab Muslim youth in a private school in the southwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, and Somali Muslim youth in a public school in Lewiston, Maine. At the Universal School in Bridgeview, Illinois, an American Islamic parochial school allows considerable religious expressive liberty. Arab Muslims commonly critique the concept of “culture” and local custom. They work hard to downplay the significance of ethnic, national, and religious differences by emphasizing character development and universal values. In this case, an Islamic school works to create an inclusive but distinctively Islamic community by making common cause with ethical teachings and approaches that match the character education used in some Christian and secular public schools. Meanwhile, despite the commitments to equality and uniformity in the public school system in Lewiston, Maine, Somali Muslims have managed, more or less successfully (although not without tension over conflicting expectations), to preserve key parochial aspects of their cultural and religious heritage: female headgear, special foods at school lunch, prayer during school hours, and forms of modest female dress during gym class. These two cases are of special interest because of the way these two Muslim communities have made use of various interpretations of equality creatively to promote communal purposes, whether through a privately funded experiment in ecumenicalism or through a publicly funded experiment in the preservation of parochial cultural practices.

In chapter 7, John Bowen describes the education system in France, where a national spirit of civic republicanism has evolved since the time of Bonaparte that holds (in part) that all extrafamilial experiences of children should be controlled by the ideals of political citizenship and equality. Historically the French state has strongly (and even coercively) discouraged the expression of any values supportive of social discrimination (for example, ethnic enclaves), in-group versus out-group selectivity, or parochial group identity below the level of the entire nation-state. In France, the identity of being a

“citizen” is meant to trump all other communal identities. Looking at the educational system in France today—which is a country that resists viewing itself as “multicultural” despite substantial Muslim and African immigration in recent decades—Bowen finds the pursuit of a form of equality-through-individual identification with the nation. Hence the nation forbids distinctive signs of identity within the public schools in order to fight “backwardness, provincialism, and religious obscurantism,” while sorting students into three tiers in middle school for different professional destinies. At the same time he finds that the state supports religious institutions with financial and other assistance, hence ensuring free exercise for adults and a degree of pluralism. However, this is under the gaze and strict regulatory control of the state.

In chapter 8, James Banks replaces the traditional dichotomy of liberal individual rights versus minority-group rights with a unified notion of multicultural citizenship as the single aspiration. It signifies a commitment to balance cultural, national, regional, and global identifications for students by means of a transformative program of citizenship education. It equips them with the capacities to challenge inequities in their communities and in the world, while closing the group achievement gap through culturally responsive teaching.

In the closing chapter, Richard Shweder offers an analysis of four core liberal values, ideals, or “expectancies” and their relevance to debates about schooling. He suggests that the models of equality alternate between an inclusion agenda—which aspires to make it possible for individual members of all groups and factions to attain “mainstream” educational, socioeconomic, occupational, and political status—and a pluralism agenda—under which all factional groups get to sustain and perpetuate their cultural or religious differences, diverse ways of life, and distinctive communal revelations and identities through schooling. He draws our attention to the potential conflict between the two agendas: one is aimed at Americanizing, assimilating, and mainstreaming minority groups in the name of equal opportunity and benevolent safekeeping, while the other is aimed at preserving cultural or subgroup diversity in the name of the autonomy and expressive liberty rights possessed by members of all groups.

Some chapters in this volume focus on attitudes within particular communities (Sarat, chapter 4; Lindkvist, chapter 6). Some look inside schools and classrooms (Riedel, chapter 5; Banks, chapter 8). Others take a national perspective (Minow, chapter 2; Bowen, chapter 7); and still others deal primarily with concepts at the core of modern liberalism (Markus, chapter 3; Shweder, chapter 9). For some, the challenges of diversity appear to be more or less inherent in the nature of cultural identity; for others, the associated challenges are historically embedded in the communities in question. The equality-difference paradox may be an inexorable problem of modernity, or it

may instead be the product of particular ways of thinking about identity and group membership. All of the chapters share the view that issues of identity and community deserve an importance neglected in the implementation studies and economic analyses that dominate national educational policy debates and research. With schools as the flash point of critical debates over identity and equality, the starting point of all the chapters is the particular challenge posed by widening economic and social disparities and significant demographic shifts, with special salience of Islamic communities as a test of multiculturalism and democratic inclusion. While none of the chapters argue that schools can “solve” the tension between liberal equality and group recognition, all of them acknowledge that schools are and will remain critical sites for working out and debating that tension.

What’s at Stake?

People repose extraordinary and often conflicting hopes in schools. Especially in the United States, the ideas of meritocracy, self-made men and women, social mobility, and democratic participation forge and color national identity and community investment. Thus, schools have been burdened—or empowered—by hopes of reforming society, remedying racial and economic stratification, producing harmony across ethnically and culturally divided groups, launching individuals on paths to economic success, passing on cultural inheritance, and allowing children to discover the freedom to invent themselves. Schools may often be just schools—simply a place where children learn their lessons. But they may also be vehicles for justice.

Any single nation whose members come from and affiliate with multiple cultures must struggle with the challenges posed by conflicting hopes for schools. For the United States—given the legal and social commitments to equal opportunity, the absence of any single cultural tradition, the centrality of education to the dream of overcoming slavery’s legacy, and the waves of migration across and immigration to the country—the struggle cuts to the core of national purpose. Ensuring that subgroups within the general population are able to coexist with each other, revitalizing a framework of ordered liberty, avoiding destructive conflict and intolerance, helping each individual contribute to the general well-being of the nation, and promoting the capacities of the next generation to take up the obligations of citizenship—these are the challenges for justice in education. The chapters here are efforts to deepen our understanding of the practical terms of these challenges and to get behind the labels that so often stymie insight. Although they are just schools, educational institutions inspire people to devise new vehicles for dreams of justice. Equality and difference both have their homes in that struggle for just schools.

Notes

1. Chief Justice Roberts cited this quote in his decision in the case, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle Public School Dist. No. 1* (2007). It is from the case *Miller v. Johnson* (1995) (plurality opinion), quoting *Metro Broadcasting* (1990) (Justice Sandra Day O'Connor dissenting).
2. The dissenting opinion in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle Public School Dist. No. 1* (2007), (Per Breyer, J., dissenting, joined by Justices Stevens, Souter, and Ginsberg, the plurality opinion), held that the plurality opinion “[m]isapplies the relevant constitutional principles, it announces legal rules that will obstruct efforts by state and local governments to deal effectively with the growing resegregation of public schools, it threatens to substitute for present calm a disruptive round of race-related litigation, and it undermines *Brown’s* promise of integrated primary and secondary education that local communities have sought to make a reality. This cannot be justified in the name of the Equal Protection Clause.” In a separate dissenting opinion, Justice Kennedy quoted *School Comm. of Boston v. Board of Education* (1967), in which the court rejected arguments comparable to those accepted by the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle Public School Dist. No. 1* majority: “It would be the height of irony if the racial imbalance act, enacted as it was with the laudable purpose of achieving equal educational opportunities, should, by prescribing school pupil allocations based on race, founder on unsuspected shoals in the Fourteenth Amendment.”
3. The average white student attends a school where 79 percent of the students are white; African American and Latino students are most likely to attend schools that enroll two-thirds African American and Latino students.
4. See *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle Public School Dist. No. 1* (2007), section B2, which discusses successes in some exemplary black schools and historically black colleges. Also see *United States v. Fordice* (1992).
5. The anthropologist John Caughey writes, “Thus, not only does democracy make men forget their ancestors, but also clouds their view of their descendants and isolates them from their contemporaries. Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart” (1986, 229).
6. Public Law 107-110, codified at 20 U.S.C. 1118 et seq., accessed December 18, 2007 at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>.
7. During recent years, the number of children with at least one immigrant parent has grown to one in five children enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade in U.S. public schools. This reflects the entrance of over 14 million immigrants to the United States during the 1990s. Hence, “the share of children of immigrants among the school-age population increased rapidly, tripling from 6 percent in 1970 to 19 percent in 2000. By the year 2010, children of immigrants will represent 25 percent of the K–12 student population,” with higher concentrations in six states (California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey) (Fix and Capps 2005).
8. A similar debate arises over ability grouping and identification of children with special needs for separate instruction: does a focus on the unique child call for

sorting students by abilities or does it call for integrating students in a common classroom while teachers and aids attend to the unique child's strengths and limitations? Attending to the learning styles of different students can boost their learning and demonstrated achievement, but the internal organization of a diverse student body into ability tracks can entrench suspicion and stereotypes across race, ethnicity, and class (Orfield and Losen 2002).

9. Educational programs that acknowledge or embrace multiculturalism in turn face critique from both conservatives and radicals.

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