

## FOREWORD

by

Hervé Varenne and Edmund W. Gordon

This series of three volumes is intended to explore educational processes in the broadest manner and from a variety of disciplinary orientations. Together, we are challenging each other and those interested in our approach to answer a difficult question that educational research has never quite answered satisfactorily: what sort of research should one conduct if one takes seriously the common idea that education is a much broader process than it is made to be when one takes schooling as the paradigmatic institution of education?

It is easy for people to agree that schools are but one of the many institutions, settings, or moments when all of us, as children, adolescents and adults, educate ourselves and each other about what is most important in our lives. It has been much more difficult for researchers to transform this easy consensus into a program of research and it remains extremely difficult to transform this consensus into policies and programs. It has been about impossible to escape the circle that starts with celebrating the individual child and ends labeling this child as deficient in this or that way. And it has been about impossible not to end advocating policies for the remediation of deficiencies that then become more or less benign bureaucracies requiring of their clients that they accept the label as valid.

We share the hope that something can be done to help those left less well developed by the limited exploitation of education more broadly defined. As researchers, teachers, counselors, and administrators in schools of education, we are deeply committed to using our positions to understand the conditions that produce human underdevelopment, and then to advocate for policies that may change these conditions. But we are also quite skeptical of what our peers in academia and politics have produced. We are convinced, on the basis of long careers that we must all try again to recast our work in terms of what we can now see as a systematic blindness to what may be most powerful in the education of people.

These three volumes build on and develop an earlier volume edited by Edmund W. Gordon, Beatrice L. Bridglall, and Aundra Saa Meroe, *Supplementary Education: The hidden curriculum of high academic achievement*

(2005). In that volume, the editors make the case for the complementarities between the teaching and learning that occur in schools, and the learning and teaching that occur in life. Having made that argument, the balance of the book is devoted to the elaboration of examples from practice and evaluation of the current state of the field.

All volumes bring together scholars from many disciplines willing to work on the needed recasting of the systematic study of education. Each volume has a distinct orientation. This first volume is a sample of work by young scholars in anthropology coming together to illustrate the kinds of human activity which any theory of education should take into account. The second volume brings together more senior scholars from across the spectrum of the behavioral sciences. They were charged to imagine what a review of the literature might look like, twenty years hence if the research we are calling for had been conducted. We hope that volume will serve as a “call for proposals” that will take future scholars into areas were few have gone before. The third volume will consist of reports on just the kind of research that we are calling for.

The senior editors came to the task of putting together these volumes from quite different, though broadly related, experiences. Edmund W. Gordon, emeritus professor from Teachers College and Yale University, has kept searching for the programs for children and youths who live in difficult conditions that are grounded in some of the best research in the behavioral sciences. He has looked for better answers through his experience in the practical and conceptual exploration of a wide variety of theoretical formulations. Along both routes we see the limitations of more narrow ways of thinking about education. Hervé Varenne, as anthropologist and professor of education at Teachers College, has been concerned with identifying what makes the most difference for the people of the United States both through ethnographic work in small towns, high schools, and families, and also through a continual rethinking of theories of culture and education. Gordon and Varenne started a fruitful collaboration as they discovered a convergence in their interest. They convened a “Study Group in Comprehensive Education” that brings together scholars from all over the United States to discuss broader ways of thinking about educational research and policy. These volumes are part of the overall effort.