

that people carry around in their heads as they make their way through the city of fact. To consider how those inner lives might encourage or inhibit individuals' investment of themselves in the neighborhood is to consider the role of cities of feeling in the sustainability of cities of fact. (p. 109)

This may not be the kind of therapy that Sandercock mentions, but it provides poetic punch for planners lacking sympathy for the creative powers of individual people lost in the abstractions of citizen participation.

Joe Barthel works as a private investigator helping trial lawyers defend death penalty and civil rights defendants. He investigates a defendant's family and community life, preparing a story for courtroom presentation. He starts the chapter telling his own conversion tale, how he learned that stories have the power to move and how he wanted to use this power to tell the stories of people unfairly constrained by the stories others impose. His brief stories offer tantalizing yet compelling evidence that a well-told story offers urbane solidarity in a fragmented metropolis.

### ► Conclusion

The book does not do exactly what the editors intend. Most chapters do not answer the questions set out in the introduction. But this is commonplace for such collections. The good news is that the book includes chapters that will help planners consider the merits of storytelling as a tool for planning. In this case, some of the parts make for a whole lot of good and useful reading and a good addition to your planning library.

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*Community Action for School Reform*, by Howell S. Baum. Albany: State University of New York Press. 2003. 297 pages. \$68.50 (hardback). \$22.95 (paperback).

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Howell Baum's *Community Action for School Reform* tells a refreshingly detailed and insightful story of the Southeast

Baltimore Education Task Force community group in partnership with a local university working to improve public schools. Baum's work is a much-needed contribution to a small but growing literature tying community participation, planning, and education reform.

This book comes at an important time. Many education reform initiatives, such as the small schools movement, seek to reconnect schools to their neighborhoods. While increasingly popular, such collaborations present many unexpected challenges for all parties, and Baum provides invaluable insights into these deeply entrenched and historical obstacles. This candid appraisal of an eight-year effort, however, does not overshadow Baum's clear belief in the importance and value of connecting—or reconnecting—schools to their neighborhoods and communities.

The story of the Task Force's commitment to improve Baltimore's schools unfolds as an eight-year case study of community activists working with the University of Maryland to reform public schools. The Task Force's goal: to address issues that compromise teaching and learning. Its method: strengthening communities through parental involvement and community organizing. Whereas many authors call for building civic capacity (e.g., Portz, Stein, and Jones 1999; Stone et al. 2001) and increasing parental and community involvement in educational improvement (e.g., Coleman 1987; Epstein 2001), Baum positions community action as a mechanism for developing networks, which "establish a collective will and capacity to improve education" (p. 269).

Containing eight parts, the book begins with a rich description of the history of school reform. Baum's theoretical foundation of "Knowledge, Research, and Action" frames the case description and analysis of the Task Force. Each chapter provides a detailed account of what Baum refers to as the "institutional side" of the school system, but this prevents the Task Force from penetrating the "technical side" of teaching and learning. While the Task Force had little contact with students or teachers, its victories include starting an after-school tutoring program, working with the Baltimore Empowerment Zone to allocate funds to the schools, and perhaps most significantly, putting education on Baltimore's community agenda for the first time.

Baum next presents a "community approach" to school reform. He sees schools, especially public schools, as integral, yet often overlooked, components of community development and city revitalization. The literature in this area is limited; Baum's work helps to fill a void by carefully and straightforwardly describing the complexities of working with schools and school districts. Baum's theory of community action involving participation, research, and action could easily be useful in other arenas of community-based activity.

Baum addresses the interests of multiple audiences from community organizers and educational practitioners to urban planning and education researchers. Schoolteachers will appreciate this work as a tool for breaking out of the classroom by seeing the value of working with community groups, countering the skepticism, overwork, and doubt such activity generates. School administrators are also given a window into the possibilities that lie beyond school walls. For community members and community-organizing practitioners, this book honestly describes how an organized community group, with next to no experience in education, can bring people together to explore frustrations and possibilities in educational improvement. The book benefits the urban planning community by showing schools as central, not marginalized, institutions in cities.

For researchers and university partners, this book describes how Baum negotiates working with community groups and navigating the complex terrain of school and district administration.

Baum highlights the peripheral role of schools in community change, community-based research, and community development. He paints a very clear picture of entrenched bureaucratic practices and policies that lead to difficulties for community groups in working with public schools. Understanding this reality is the first step to creation of productive school-community collaborations.

The Task Force's deliberate choice not to address pedagogical and curricular issues, the "technology of school," carries a cost; it might jeopardize the legitimacy of this book for the teaching community, who view classrooms at the heart of any successful school reform effort, thereby making its usefulness to educators more modest. While this may be beyond Baum's book, a further exploration of this dilemma is needed to better understand how to connect the educative work happening inside the classroom with community improvement initiatives happening outside of classrooms. Project-based learning endeavors and Social Enterprise for Learning (SEIL) models (McKoy 2000; Stern 2002) come to mind.

Baum draws from the limited literature on community development and public schools. He points to the work of Stone (1998); Stone et al. (2001); Portz, Stein, and Jones (1999); and Shirley (1997), dealing primarily with building civic capacity and social capital for educational reform. Baum continually notes the importance of personal and institutional urban connections if we are to address the "schools crisis" as an aspect of a larger "social crisis." Although the book does not tread beyond the institutional connection between one community-university partnership, its lessons can be applied more broadly. He seems to conclude that broader social reform must

preclude piecemeal school reform. That is, affordable housing, transportation, health care, poverty, crime, and drugs must be addressed in conjunction with school improvement.

Authors have argued why school quality is important to neighborhoods and cities (see Orfield 1999; Varady and Raffel 1995), but far less is known about how to design systematic policy to address the connection. Baum proves we need a larger community of actors involved with schools and education, building civic capacity. His work does a tremendous job of detailing the obstacles facing those in the community who wish to include public schools in broader community development strategies and how university researchers can be partners in these efforts.

The bureaucratic isolation of schools and school districts from community groups and other civic agencies is great. We need better understanding of how from an urban design and physical infrastructure lens, as well as from socially minded community and economic improvement angles, this isolation can be defeated. The chapter on the Baltimore Empowerment Zone highlights this, describing how there is no mention of schools in the draft "Southeast Community Plan" produced by the diverse Southeast Planning Council.

What Baum adds to the literature is an on-the-ground, detailed, and intimate description and analysis of a community group attempting to foster a culture of school improvement: creating social capital among important players. Like Shirley (1997), Baum stresses the importance of community action to create social capital and virtuous circles of engagement for educational improvement.

*Community Action for School Reform* serves as a great departure point for future research. It exposes the nuances that impede progress, the obstacles that we must understand if we are to move this type of work forward. Baum successfully chronicles the impediments facing communities organizing around school reform and never loses sight of its importance and possibilities. Thus, Baum delivers a very important book reflecting the reality of both community work and of school reform and places school improvement within a practical community development context.

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***Human Capital Investment for Central City Revitalization***, edited by Fritz W. Wagner, Timothy E. Joder, and Anthony J. Mumphrey Jr. New York: Routledge. 2003. 146 pages. \$75.00 (hardback).

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In their first chapter about “Human Capital Investment,” Robert Becker and Robert Collins define human capital as “the stock of knowledge . . . and training skills . . . that exists in a particular geographic area.” They note the dilemma that successful human capital investment may lead to people exiting the city with their acquired skills. But uncertainty about whether this book really is about central city revitalization occurs quickly, because the authors do not examine the implications of this mobility dilemma or discuss alternative approaches to revitalization. As the analyses unfold in the four substantive chapters, this question persists and leads to my conclusion that the book is mistitled. With a different title, and a stronger introduction and concluding chapters, this book would hold up better, because it has some merit concerning human capital investment but does not advance understanding of central city revitalization.

Margaret Dewar argues in chapter 2 that the federal Empowerment Zone program, for which the Clinton

Administration initially designated six cities in 1994 to receive \$100 million each over ten years, 1995 to 2004, should be analyzed to permit midcourse correction. Dewar’s research covers employer activities in three districts within Detroit, drawing mainly on 122 in-person interviews during 1998. Her research question addressed whether changes in employer behavior were caused by incentives and programs offered in the zone. Two incentives were emphasized: the Empowerment Zone Investment Credit, allowing an employer to claim a federal tax credit of 20 percent on the first \$15,000 of a qualified employee’s earnings, and deducting up to \$37,500 of the cost of depreciable property from federal tax obligations.

The results: among 184 employers, one used the tax credit on employee earnings and one used the depreciable property deduction. Conclusion: these incentives had no effect. Why? Although various explanations were given—profits too low to make the credit useful, time consuming processes, and reluctance to invite IRS scrutiny—the most common explanation was that employers were not aware of the benefits. Consequently, one can question whether the problem was the incentives or perhaps the timing of the research or the effectiveness of information dissemination.

Evaluation of the empowerment zone concept calls for geographic information about incomes, poverty, and employment. The 2000 census provided some of this information, and it could have been matched with 1990 data to discern trends. But despite the 2003 publication date of this book, research findings stem from 1999 or earlier, and no 2000 census data are used.

The absence of 2000 data is especially unfortunate, because the 2000 census revealed two important results. First, Detroit stabilized in income relative to the metropolitan area, holding its own in relative median family income and relative per capita income in 2000 compared with 1990. This was a major change after several decades of severe deterioration to a level of Detroit residents having about 60 percent of metropolitan income levels. Second, Paul Jargowsky (2003) found that “in Detroit, . . . the number of people living in high-poverty neighborhoods dropped nearly 75 percent over the decade.” Was there any connection between these income and poverty changes and the Empowerment Zone Program?

In chapter 3, “Building Communities, Building Coalitions: Initiatives for Urban Education,” Kathryn Doherty, Cheryl Jones, and Clarence Stone analyze obstacles to collaboration between community organizations and public schools in Baltimore and New Orleans. Using results of more than thirty interviews conducted in 1996, the authors diagnose the reasons why little collaboration occurs and why comprehensive approaches to education reform are sometimes praised and rarely