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**Review of *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society*. Nancy Feyl Chavkin. Reviewed by Steven R. Rose, Louisiana State University.**

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as the United States, theories based on pluralist notions offer more useful insights.

While Williamson and Pampel make an obvious contribution to the academic literature, the claim that their research is breaking new ground is disputable. The literature on the subject is now very extensive and while many will agree that Williamson and Pampel have undertaken a detailed and systematic study, some will question the need for yet another analysis of this kind. Similarly, while the inclusion of three developing countries in the study is lauded as a major innovation, the authors appear to be unaware of a substantial body of previous literature on the subject. Nevertheless, this is a sophisticated study which will shed light into the origins of modern day social security programs in different societies.

James Midgley  
Louisiana State University

Nancy Feyl Chavkin (Ed). *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993. \$59.50 hardcover; \$19.95 papercover.

For centuries, parents have been involved with the education of children. While parental involvement is not touted as a panacea for the problems encountered in educating a wide variety of populations, it has come to be recognized as an important aspect of educational policy, program, and practice. Parental participation in elementary and secondary education, and parental involvement in decision-making on behalf of handicapped children, is mandated by federal legislation.

Utilizing an ecological perspective, this book shows how the major socializing institutions of families and schools can be brought closer together through parent involvement programs. This book focuses upon the participation of ethnic, racial, and language minorities, poor people, and persons with low levels of education in effectively obtaining adequate school-based education for their children.

The first of the four main parts of the book consists of an overview chapter on collaboration between schools and disadvantaged parents which traces the long history of parents'

involvement in the education and schooling of their children. Surveys cited show the low level of school contact, which has sometimes been mistaken for a lack of interest, of lower SES parents in comparison with more affluent parents.

The second part, current research, which consists of five chapters, reports on the use of a variety of research strategies, with an emphasis upon large sample survey research, to explicate the relationships between minority parent involvement and children's school success. Among the many research findings which advance knowledge are those that examine the relationship between parental educational achievement and that of their children. One study shows the considerable concern of minority parents with the education of their youth, with levels of parental comfort with teachers and schools varying between minority groups.

The third part, practice perspectives, consists of six chapters, several of which contain data as a way of combining research with practice. Useful information for practitioners consisting of specific strategies for improving disadvantaged children's education through linking parents' and children's skills, and educational practices, such as parenting skills focused upon children's homework, are discussed. Also present is material on working with underserved populations, including an essay chapter on the cultural backgrounds of Asian-American immigrant parents, and another chapter about the cultural components, structure, and traditional teachings of American-Indian families. An international perspective is provided in a chapter which reports a convergence in findings about low-income parental involvement in children's schooling in England, Portugal, and the USA.

The fourth part, opportunities ahead, consists of three chapters which focus upon the future of parents and families. The chapters present a model of parental involvement, describe new programs, and include a systematic plan for helping minority parents. The final chapter raises and begins to answer several exploratory questions, and provides a useful critique of the context of research on parental involvement.

This book, which cites the available professional and research literature on parent involvement, examines recent and

current educational and social issues, such as school choice. As a compilation of writings that describe and evaluate many parent involvement intervention research programs, this book is positively recommended as a welcome contribution to the literature. Although the book is devoted to issues of program, practice and evaluation research, those interested in policy development will find useful material included from which to base a review of and plan selected social aspects of educational policy. The programmatic bases of a framework for understanding and improving parental involvement can be found throughout this edited collection of writings.

The intermediate level of the book makes it suitable for readers that have a background in concepts and practice related to social issues in education. This book will serve as a resource for applied social scientists who conduct research on minority parental involvement in schooling. It will be valuable to those who wish to gain a practical understanding of the direct operations of parent involvement programs, and will be useful as a resource for pupil personnel in providing material on the cultures of populations-at-risk in school settings, information about innovative programming, and ideas about practical strategies for helping parents who wish to further their children's education.

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Robert L. Rubinstein, Janet E. Killbride and Sharon Nagy. *Elders Living Alone: Frailty and the Perception of Choice*. Hawthorne: NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992. \$35.95 hardcover; \$18.95 papercover.

The dominant values of individualism and independence among American elderly are well known, if not well understood, throughout the world. Indeed, the American penchant for independence in old age is quite incomprehensible to many persons from societies where the idea of an elderly individual living alone is truly unthinkable.

This insightful book uses case illustrations to explore a sample of the American experience of independent living through