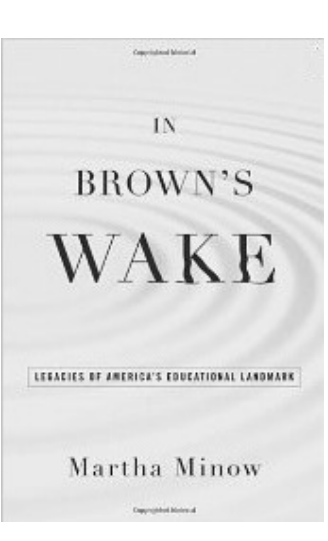


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<b>In Brown’s Wake: Legacies of America’s Educational Landmark</b>		
<b>Author:</b>	Martha Minow (2010)	
<b>Publisher:</b>	Oxford University Press, New York	
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The title of Harvard University Dean and Jeremiah Smith Jr. Professor of Law, Martha Minow’s ambitious work, *In Brown’s Wake: Legacies of America’s Educational Landmark* could be considered misleading to someone seeking a simple overview of the impact of *Brown* on schools in the U.S. today. Rather, she provides a sweeping and comprehensive historic account of the social, legislative and judicial movements that have shaped education policy and driven reform movements dating back several decades before the hallmark case that serves as an inspiration for her work. And while the obvious and intended recipients of the anticipated windfall of positive change implied by *Brown* were African American students faced with segregated schools, the author makes clear to the reader that there were no social or cultural segments of society left untouched by its theoretical implications.

While consisting of seven physical chapters, the book can be divided into five thematic sections beginning with an account of the history behind Brown’s design and the process of its enactment. Chapters 2-4 consist of a thorough examination of the aftershock of *Brown*’s initial impact, as the author systematically addresses each sector

of school populations separately, but with attention to the way in which these social and cultural groups are interrelated and even overlap on many occasions. The issues of school choice and social science each occupy their own discussion. Finally, the author incorporates an examination of *Brown's* global reach and the manner in which issues of segregation and equality are being approached internationally.

The book opens with an examination of the case itself, both within the context of the historical backdrop and current conditions of educational resources among African Americans today. The author concedes that, while great strides have been made in terms of civil rights in this country, an enormous chasm still exists in terms of school conditions and academic success for African American students in the U.S. as we enter the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With great thoroughness, the author details the courts' continued response to *Brown*, both in terms of local and state interpretation and legislative response to its mandates. A central theme comprised of inadequate measures and dissatisfaction with its progress emerges as continued segregation, found in new and innovative forms in the vast majority of U.S. schools, is propagated through the generation after generation of education professional.

Of particular interest to TESL-EJ readers is the author's examination English Language Learner (ELL) in U.S. schools and their quest for equal educational opportunities. The author illustrates the parallel nature of many of the barriers faced by newly immigrated students and those faced by African Americans, however, she emphasizes that *Brown* has manifested itself most prominently in the selection of program models and language instruction methods for ELL students. This comprehensive analysis provides the reader with an overview of the debate surrounding bilingual education and the impact of No Child Left Behind on linguistically and culturally diverse students, as well as the occasional desirability of segregated instruction when the intention is to support the maintenance of linguistic and cultural heritage.

The struggle for equal opportunities for ELLs is one among many discussed in this work. Gender in education is examined, both from a historical perspective, as well as a more contemporary discussion of the current movement toward single gender schools in some parts of the United States. In addition, the author brings to light the unintended impact of *Brown* on schools that are perceived as segregated for religious purposes, raising the issues of separation of church and state. Equal educational opportunity dependent on sexual orientation and best school context for educating transgendered students were most probably not among the intended outcomes of *Brown*, however, they find their place in the author's discussion of how *Brown* continues to influence the thinking of policy makers and educators in America. In this case, the author cautions that focus has shifted to whether segregated schools are appropriate and away from how to make integrated schools feel safe. In all cases, the reader is the beneficiary of the author's extensive research, evidenced by over 100 pages of citations and footnotes, in receiving a solid explanation of the history of each controversy impacted by *Brown*, as well as its manifestation in present-day educational debate.

Beyond the discussion of numerous segments of the U.S. school population, the author describes the unexpected influence of *Brown* on an arena outside of education. A tremendous shift in thinking regarding the social sciences resulted from their utility in the design and argument of *Brown*. Prior to 1954, social sciences had been used to support racial segregation in schools, portraying the practice as natural and beneficial to all parties concerned. The author explains that the NAACP lawyers who crafted the case for *Brown* were able to use the Clark's famous doll studies to support their claim that segregation was inherently harmful to the emotional and psychological well-being of African American children and adolescents. By shedding light on the empirical and descriptive nature of many of the social sciences and their practical application in the field of education, a reevaluation of both the utility and potential applications of this scientific arena was initiated.

Clearly in support of *Brown's* initiatives and theoretical underpinnings, the author weaves examples of progress and success throughout the narrative. However, this book focuses, in large part, on the remaining barriers and obstacles that continue to be faced by minority populations in U.S. schools today. Flaws in the enactment of *Brown's* idealistic goals are in abundance. Primarily, the author contends that in the years following *Brown*, the country was left with little clear direction or accountability in terms of how to go about integrating schools. There was an underestimation of the potential application of *Brown* outside of those issues facing African Americans. Through time it has become apparent that attempting to blindly apply the principles of *Brown* to all marginalized or disadvantaged populations is not always possible or appropriate. Paramount to one of the author's central themes is the notion that integrated schools may not always work to the advantage of the students that this movement seeks to advance. As a result of these complex and inter-related forces at work, when the course of history is examined, there has been a fair amount of inconsistency in how *Brown* is interpreted, both locally and by the very same Court that decided its outcome. In a discussion of gender segregation, the author makes the critical observation that *Brown*, and its reverberations, are used in many cases as compensatory tools to promote equality among different social groups. The case of single gender schools illustrates that, while the courts have supported schools specifically designed for girls, who have suffered as a result of inferior educational opportunities, they have more often frowned upon similar schools designed for their male counterparts. Much controversy has surrounded the courts' rulings on this and other seemingly contradictory findings that appear to grant support to one social group, while denying the same privilege to others.

In all, *In Brown's Wake: Legacies of America's Educational Landmark* serves as an important reminder of the interconnectedness of social groups and a demonstration of the myriad of perspectives that present themselves when social science encounters the law. As a doctoral student in an urban education program, the work is a "must read" simply for the foundational information it provides, as well as for its detailed account of the countless issues that remain unresolved in the aftermath of *Brown*. While this work

possesses, perhaps, a bit too broad a scope to interest the average mainstream classroom teacher, those directly charged with maintaining 504 and Individualized Educational Plans will appreciate the explanation of the policy and court rulings that created them. School and district administrators would also benefit from the author's extensive knowledge of current policy and the judicial and legislative actions that shaped it. In particular, these administrators stand to gain a firm understanding of the sources of funding and their intended recipients, as well as the genesis of some assessment policies that weigh heavily on U.S. schools today. For non-U.S. readers, the work is an example of vigilance required to ensure equity in education in democratic societies.

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