I am greatly honored by the opportunity to write the foreword to this imaginative and constructive volume. At issue here is one of the major problems of our time in education—how to incorporate and utilize our vast and growing amount of relevant knowledge in the service of education. Research directly related to education has been growing at a terrific pace for the last fifteen years in psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology—each discipline having important things to say about human growth and development with significant implications for the socialization of young people in our schools. The information tends to be fragmented, each specialist appealing to his or her own reference group. The psychologists write for and to each other, and not always to all of them; and so do anthropologists, linguists, and the rest. Yet each is directly concerned with enhancing our knowledge of human development. There is need periodically for revision and reorganization of our knowledge here, with a fresh look to create order out of the chaos. Dr. Nurcombe has done just such a service—not only for his colleagues in his native Australia, but also for the professionals on an international level.

By providing a conceptual model that is broad yet direct, one that encompasses the significant dimensions of development and is presented in a constructive spirit, Dr. Nurcombe offers a paradigm which is applicable to a wide array of educational contexts. The form of the model he provides has potential for universal applicability since he does take into account the idiosyncrasy of particular cultures. Sensitivity to the valuing of cultures is critical in these days of Western cultural imperialism, where with sophisticated technology and political power, we of the West have been in the process of destroying indigenous cultures in the United States, Australia, Canada, Africa, and elsewhere. Whether the destructive trend can be halted or whether the destructive aspects of so-called progress can be converted into constructive growth experience are questions which
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will be answered in due time. For me, Dr. Nurcombe has contributed significantly in the latter case, to avoid the evil consequences of the former.

My point is this. The science of education has to evolve in a context that takes into account the place and kind of the to-be-educated, intertwined with the objectives of the educator. Ignoring the potential by destroying the foundation from which the to-be-educated come is to deny their integrity as human beings. Applying Western models of education to "native" peoples creates the danger of destroying the very roots and identities of those "to be saved." In effect, intervention programs may create marginal individuals—rootless and alienated. The responsibility for the educator is considerable. Of course, there are those who would justify such a policy by operating from the principle of integration into the majority society. To take the integration theme seriously requires societal changes beyond education. It requires a society that truly accepts its minority members—an unrealistic expectation in 1975 anywhere. The "melting pot" theory has not worked in the United States, where it had 200 years to evolve; in America this theory was conceptualized for various ethnic groups—but never for racial groups. In fact, miscegenation was a dread and, until recently, in some states an illegal social act.

For racial groups, then, the problem is clear: how to make it as a black person in a white society. The black needs to live in two cultures, and one can only do that, I believe, if one culture provides a security blanket. The Bourke project appears to be providing that security blanket for Aboriginal children. It offers them skills and strategies to enhance their learning without destroying their origins or respect for themselves as individuals. The task is formidable but possible—especially with the honest participation of the white community.

How does the Bourke project fit the elegant competence-realization model developed by Nurcombe? Although he does not make the connections as explicit as I would like, it seems clear that his conception of the Bourke preschool project is to formulate the development of competence in a constructive way to enable the children to develop options as to how, where, what they might do. The children's style of dealing with problems, their fluency in so doing, and whether they do so in school or not—these are potential outcomes from a preschool experience. More important perhaps, and also of considerable interest, Dr. Nurcombe and his colleagues employed ideas from the United States but adapted them to the Bourke environment.

This poses the crucial question of transferability of programs from one culture to another; the validity of a Piaget-based program for Aborigine children is moot, as is a Bereiter-Englemann approach. Dr. Nurcombe and his colleagues are sensitive to this issue. Their research
results will have theoretical value regarding the viability of specific cognitive function, as well as having educational value—if it works, all to the good. Since the program does seem to make some difference, at least in the short run, there seems to be some generality for growth and development. How long will these effects last, and in what form? This is an open question. Do these effects spiral, serving as catalysts setting up subsequent changes? Only time will tell. Whatever the outcome, Dr. Nurcombe deserves our thanks for sharing his scholarship with us in a lucid and exciting style, helping us gain perspective in working with compensatory education programs.

A final note. I once had the pleasure of meeting Barry Nurcombe in person. I found in that meeting the commitment, the concern, the humanism so evident in his writing about so complex a set of issues. I feel this is a personal book and it is this quality which gives it strength. And although this volume will be of value to an array of professionals, my fervent hope is that public policy makers will read it also.

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