textual factors (e.g., students' school experiences, class differences, or ethnic and religious identities) informed youths' views on citizenship and the role of the state. Thus, while Lall and Saeed's work can speak to the broader trends across citizenship and Pakistan, greater context is needed for the evaluation of these claims along more specific lines, such as socioeconomic class, ethnicity, or regional identity.

This book is a critical read for all students, scholars, and policy makers who are interested in understanding the relationship between politics, religion, and radicalism in South Asia, as its in-depth analysis synthesizes questions on citizenship and national and religious identity. Although Lall and Saeed provide historical and political background throughout the text, knowledge of the South Asian political context would be helpful. As a doctoral student who studies the role of education in conflict affected settings, I see this as a necessary read for those interested in the important and pressing questions around citizenship and national identity—which will become increasingly important as countries turn inward to face the challenges posed by COVID-19.

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How the Other Half Learns: Equality, Excellence, and the Battle over School Choice

by Robert Pondiscio

New York: Avery, 2019. 384 pp. $27.00 (hardcover).

In 1890, Jacob Riis published *How the Other Half Lives*, a collection of photographs that shined a light on the abject poverty of New York City's slums. Poor tenement dwellers living in squalor comprised Riis's "other half." Though it makes no explicit connections to Riis, the title of Robert Pondiscio's new book, *How the Other Half Learns: Equality, Excellence, and the Battle over School Choice*, is an unmistakable reference to it. The focus of Pondiscio's book, however, is not the neglected, low-performing city schools to which society's privileged classes too often turn a blind eye. Instead it is Bronx 1, a well-resourced, high-achieving school in the Success Academy K–12 charter network. Though "no excuses" charter schools attract much attention, Pondiscio's reference suggests that the actual goings-on of classrooms too often remain hidden in our debates about them. *How the Other Half Learns* shines a light on one charter school's inner workings and offers a broader assessment of its network and, in the process, continues the discussion about school choice.

New York City's Success Academy, headed by education iconoclast Eva Moskowitz, continues to be one of the country's most controversial charter net-

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works. Its negative media coverage—a viral video of one teacher's seething censure of a student's arithmetic error "became a referendum" on the entire system (p. 84)—paired with its impressive outcomes (test scores often surpass those of New York's most coveted gifted and talented programs), raised a simple question for Pondiscio: "What do the kids do all day?" (p. 10). To find out, he embedded himself at Bronx 1 for one school year. When he began his fieldwork, Pondiscio, a civics teacher in Democracy Prep Public Schools, another New York City charter network, was skeptical of Success Academy, namely its fanatical test prep, "broken windows" disciplinary system, and seemingly paternalistic orientation toward parents. By the end of his research, however, he was a proud convert.

Despite Pondiscio's guiding question, the book winds up concentrating relatively little on classroom instruction. School culture becomes its definitive focus. Descriptions of Success classrooms, professional development trainings, and family engagement events reveal a remarkably unified system that nearly all parties have largely bought into, often enthusiastically. Central to this system is a behavior management system that employs a "maniacal level of noticing and addressing" student lapses (e.g., staff fixation on students' sock colors) (p. 50) and liberal use of suspensions; a no-apology, year-round emphasis on test prep, replete with chants and pep rallies; and a hands-on approach to parents and parenting. Parents of children in early grades, for example, are required to read to them every night and are instructed how to do so. "We received a lot of training," a teacher tells parents, "and we know this is the best way that children learn" (p. 187).

To be sure, there are cracks in Success's tidy system. There is the modicum of agency boys exercise by loosening their neckties. There was a mother and father's claim that their son, a child with behavioral challenges, was pushed out of Bronx 1 and into a neighborhood public school. There was the disaffected teacher who abruptly exited midyear and the reality that the network's "hastily assembled staff of relative strangers—nearly all of them young, many of them in their first adult jobs after college" (p. 112)—rarely stick around for long. And there are questions about how successful Success Academy's students are on leaving the regimented system that, for some, is all they know. The network's attempts to open its first high school, modeled after the freer feel of elite private schools, quickly fell into disarray, its faculty of seasoned private school educators reduced "to tracking student behavior on clipboards" (p. 158).

Unfortunately, while Pondiscio does not overlook these counterstories, his rootedness at Bronx 1 keeps him from pursuing them systematically. Opting for a more straightforward story, his fascination clearly lies more with Bronx 1's disciples than its apostates. Discussing the network's eventual use of "parent investment cards" to grade parents on adherence to school policy, for instance, he marvels that "the move was remarkable not for how much pushback the network received from parents, but for how little" (p. 96).

It is this fixture of school culture—parental engagement and buy-in—that gradually takes the spotlight in *How the Other Half Learns*, setting the stage for a somewhat delayed discussion of school choice. Eventually, the "other half" shifts from the black box of a successful charter school to a narrow slice of lower-income New York parents whose children's schools might be the low-performing ones in their catchment zone were it not for Success Academy in particular and school choice in general. They are parents with the knowledge of Success's rigorous program, the wherewithal to distinguish it from New York's dizzying array of other charter schools and networks, and the stamina to stick it out through Success's competitive lottery and the anxiety-inducing successive hoops to jump through, all designed to further weed out families that might not be the right match.

A telling example of the hoops is Pondiscio's recounting of a uniform fitting day, when parents bring their children to Bronx 1 to be measured for Success Academy shirts and pants. While the event offers tangible reassurance of how far families have come in the process, their children's admittance to the school is still uncertain at even this late stage in the admissions process. Measurements are taken for some students who ultimately won't be accepted. It is, Pondiscio explains, "yet another step in the process, largely unspoken but well understood, whereby Success Academy ensures that every seat goes to a fully committed family" (p. 317). Charter schools have long faced charges of "cherry-picking" their students; however, as Pondiscio makes clear, it is parents Success Academy cherry-picks, not students (pp. 266–267). And those parents must buy in fully. As one principal put it, "It's not Burger King. You can't have it your way" (p. 262). Those who don't—or, perhaps more accurately, *can't*—will not survive at Success.

The tenacity of parents who do/can buy in fully become, for Pondiscio, living proof of the necessity of school choice. These resourceful parents' resolve to secure a safe learning environment for their children—and school safety, Pondiscio explains, tops parents' reasons for avoiding traditional schools—is school choice's raison d'être. Why? Because it's what wealthier families do all the time. With relative ease, a well-off family can relocate to gain access to a better, safer neighborhood school furnished with competitive academic programs, or that family can exit the public system altogether for a private option. These actions are "unquestioned and unremarkable" (p. 276). Why forbid parents of lesser means their own form of this luxury, however imperfect? Pondiscio argues that to do so "is tantamount to a kind of enforced mediocrity" (p. 277). As for the argument that affording parents greater self-selection perpetuates inequality by enabling "engaged and invested families" to abandon traditional schools and thus bleed them of resources, Pondiscio argues that no parent should have to think of "their child as a public resource" (p. 278). These sorts of arguments, however, tilt toward whataboutism, particularly since Pondiscio's most important finding is that Success Academy shops for parents, not the other way around. As *How the Other Half Learns* vividly demonstrates, school

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choice for the wealthy and school choice for Success Academy parents are two starkly different phenomena. To argue for one on the basis of the other seems to obfuscate the book's powerful contribution.

These arguments also begin to clarify Pondiscio's intended audience. In *How the Other Half Lives*, the other "other half" to which Riis's photographs were directed was New York City's middle and upper classes who, residing just a short distance away from the city's poor, might as well have occupied a separate world entirely. But who is Pondiscio's "other half"? Though it is not stated outright, it becomes increasingly apparent over the book's 340 pages that it is not necessarily a privileged class oblivious to poor and working-class families' circumstances but informed members of this class who remain skeptical of charter schools in general and Success Academy in particular. This audience, Pondiscio seems to suggest, would deny parents of lesser means the luxury of choice "in the name of 'equity'" (p. 333) while exercising considerable choice themselves as far as where they send their own progeny. As such, the book is as much an exposé of Success Academy's mechanics as it is a proposed exposé of this intended audience, baiting readers to examine their own biases, playing often to the familiar gap between ideals and actions.

While this somewhat taunting style may earn school choice more doubters than believers, it helps Pondiscio's case that he, too, was initially a skeptic. With time, however, he became an ardent defender of each controversial component, convinced that the network's strictness helps enable its outcomes, that intensive parental engagement is imperative, and that, despite what the *New York Times* might lead the public to believe, these teachers really do care deeply for their students. Demonstrating this, Pondiscio closes the book by telling how, at the start of the following school year, he stood alongside a couple watching their five-year-old disappear through Bronx 1's doors. When the nervous father asked him if it's a good school, Pondiscio describes closing his notebook and answering the query, father-to-father, "It's a great school . . . You're really lucky" (p. 337).

Where, if at all, does *How the Other Half Learns* lead us in the school choice debate? Choice critics can make the argument that Success Academy's penchant for suspending students and its enculturation of a particular brand of parenting are paternalistic. Advocates, however, can make an equally compelling argument that to deny choices to less advantaged families, to require that they attend traditional public schools, however dim the prospects, is also paternalistic. Though *How the Other Half Learns* more often provokes debate than reconciles it, it does immerse readers in an extraordinarily cohesive school network so they can decide for themselves where they stand in that debate. In time, with Pondiscio's keen descriptions and sobering deliberations, readers may arrive at some reconciliation themselves. And though it may take a patient reader to wait to hear what Pondiscio makes of it all, the black box of Bronx 1 is worth opening.

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Making Up Our Mind: What School Choice Is Really About

by Sigal Ben-Porath and Michael Johanek

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 208 pp. $25.00 (paper).

School choice remains one of the more heated debates in the US education policy landscape. Although not always neatly hewing to standard ideological lines, partisans on both sides remain thoroughly dug into their positions, too often lobbing into the fray the same old arguments, whether or not they seem likely to catch the attention, let alone change the minds, of their ostensible targets.

Given the state of the debate on school choice, *Making Up Our Mind: What School Choice Is Really About* has its work cut out for it. An attempt to reframe the debate over school choice, the book offers nuanced historical and philosophical perspectives to encourage us to ask better, clearer questions about why school choice matters and what we should do about it. Written by philosopher Sigal Ben-Porath and historian Michael Johanek, this slim book makes a convincing case that the question we should be asking isn't whether or not to provide families a choice in schools but, rather, "*how* we will regulate *who* has *which* choices in our mixed market for schooling—and what we want to accomplish as a nation with that mix of choices" (p. 1).

One of this book's key contributions is showing us why our standard way of asking about school choice—Should parents have a choice in where their children are educated?—is neither historically sensible nor normatively appropriate. When we take a historical view of schooling in America, from the colonial period to today, we see that families have always had choices around where to send their children to school. Of course, there are still important regulatory questions about how we should shape the market for schooling, questions that have been approached in different ways in different eras. These questions about how to regulate the mix of school choices available to families, however, are more challenging than simply asking whether or not families ought to have some choice over the schools their children attend.

The standard question is problematic, as it implicitly neglects the fact that education is simultaneously a public, private, and positional good. As Ben-Porath and Johanek explain, education is a private good because it benefits the individual who receives it, but it is also "a public good, helping maintain a productive, well-organized, and democratic society" (p. 11). Education is, moreover, a positional good, as the amount of benefit any individual derives from their education rests in important respects on how much education others have received. Given these complexities, the authors argue that we must