

public, private, *and* positional aspects of education in debating how we should regulate our market for schooling.

Yet there are moments where additional context would have supported the authors' key claims. For instance, they argue that one of the distinctive features of our present moment is the significant involvement of philanthropic, corporate, and other private interests in shaping education policy, helping ensure that "public policy is shaped outside the public's reach" (p. 126). While they convincingly argue that this development ought to be considered when we think about the meaning and value of school choice, it would have been useful to note the work of the many education historians who have catalogued the significant money, effort, and time philanthropists put into developing an education system for African Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Motivated by a complex mix of duty, racist paternalism, and concern with securing continued access to Southern labor, Northern industrialists like John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Anson Phelps Stokes played outsized roles in shaping the education options open to African Americans through the first half of the twentieth century (Anderson, 1988; Watkins, 2001). Especially as so many contemporary education reforms primarily affect students of color in urban areas, this comparison would have offered valuable insight.

Making Up Our Mind makes a convincing case that there is significant value in beginning our education policy debates "from an understanding of the *shifting profile of choices* available to different families at a given time" (p. 122). I hope this book is read widely, as I believe it promises to enlighten our debate over school choice. And if we could get our legislators—or even their aides!—to read this book, it could help inform better education policy decisions in the future.

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SUDDENLY DIVERSE: HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS MANAGE RACE AND INEQUALITY

by Erica O. Turner

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Public schools in the United States are serving students from increasingly diverse racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. According to a 2018 report (de Brey et al., 2019), almost 50 percent of school-aged children

in the US are children of color, an increase from 37 percent in 2000; approximately 20 percent of school-aged children are living in poverty, consistent with a relatively steady trend that ranged from 16 percent in 2000 to 21 percent in 2010; and approximately 10 percent (4.9 million) of public school students are dual language learners or English learners. Such diversity is further complicated by the intersection of different backgrounds: around 30 percent of Black and Hispanic school-aged children live in poverty, a rate much higher than that for White children (10 percent), and over 75 percent of dual language learners are Hispanic. Facing the new reality of ever-changing student demographics, educators and researchers are compelled to ask, “How do we live the reality well?” (p. 6). In *Suddenly Diverse: How School Districts Manage Race and Inequality*, Erica O. Turner analyzes how school district officials, such as “school board members, superintendents, assistant superintendents, and central office managers” (p. ix), answer this question.

Suddenly Diverse shares the voices of thirty-seven mostly White public school district leaders from two Wisconsin school districts whom Turner interviewed in 2009–2010. In presenting them, Turner does not shy away from calling out the many contradictions and problems she noticed in these leaders’ attempts to make sense of diversity. The book’s ironic title, *Suddenly Diverse*, is a good example of this. The two focal districts—the “more working-class and more conservative” Milltown and the “more middle-class and quite politically liberal” Fairview (p. ix)—saw decades of demographic shifts, with an influx of migrants of color coming from other cities around the US. Yet the diversity “felt sudden to district leaders” (p. 10), dawning on them only as they were forced to face the increasing accountability under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), state divestment, and the flight of White families to neighboring suburbs.

In the midst of mounting pressure, district leaders had to deal with heightened contradictions in their roles. On the one hand, they were pursuing “the obligation of public schools to foster equality and democracy” by “challenging inequities in the status quo” (p. 3). On the other hand, White families “were beginning to view [the schools] as low-quality as the student populations became more racially diverse” (p. 127). Thus, district leaders felt the need to achieve this goal without “unsettl[ing] white majorities or elites,” whose support these public schools needed (p. 147). As a response to these challenges, leaders from both districts resorted to what Turner calls “color-blind managerialism,” an approach grounded in “managerial approaches and new color-blind understandings of inequity” (pp. 11–12). Under this new approach, the leaders employed a set of “new managerial policies, practices, and structures,” such as monitoring standardized test data without actually addressing issues around student learning and using “diversity” as the slogan for marketing to predominantly White middle-class parents, to *seemingly* address achievement gaps and celebrate diversity (p. 11).

In presenting the district leaders’ take on the “challenge” of increased diversity, Turner describes how the district leaders she studied attempted to address

inequity by introducing a new reliance on standardized test data. For example, Milltown leaders, noting the “achievement gap” in basic subject areas across racial groups, chose to replace an existing student program aimed at increasing the curriculum’s cultural relevancy with a series of “data retreats,” during which teachers gathered together to review test data, and an increased emphasis on “reports focused on mathematics and reading” (p. 107). Even Fairview leaders, who more actively embraced the notion of cultural relevancy for students of color, emphasized the goal of “excellence for all” in their policy, again obscuring the underlying issue of inequity (p. 106). Turner points out that these district-level decisions were most useful in outwardly “demonstrating the efforts and legitimacy” of the district leaders, while drawing attention away from “providing a real solution to inequity” in the districts (p. 104). In adopting these managerial strategies, the district leaders legitimized their work as “equitable” and presented themselves as “antiracists” without doing any “transformative work” for their increasingly diverse student body (p. 104).

To combat the declining popularity of schools in their districts, the district leaders also used “diversity” by presenting their diverse student population and curricula as sources of competitiveness to compete in the education market. Milltown leaders focused on marketing their new world language and International Baccalaureate courses to attract the interest of some White, middle-, and upper-middle-class families without ever considering “the possibility of trying to attract or retain more families of color—of any class—to the district” (p. 142). Similarly, Fairview leaders appealed to increased access to “racial capital” (Leong, 2013), the capital that comes from “*being associated with* people of color, even if the quality or depth of the relations are minimal” (p. 133). By touting increased “interracial interactions or relationships” in their schools and dual language programs that would build students’ multicultural capital, these leaders focused on how their schools (and their students of color and their cultures) could help prepare students for “success in competitive college admissions and a globalizing economy” (p. 134). These marketing strategies, Turner explains, were aimed at creating an image of “positively diverse” districts (p. 143) and, consequently, attracting desired consumers of their public education. Although she acknowledges that creating such a positive image is important, Turner critiques how district leaders’ decisions continued to focus on the needs of White families in the districts and even position students of color as sources of “instrumental benefit and educational advantage” for White children (p. 144).

However, Turner does not stop at presenting the shortcomings of individual district leaders. Highlighting the broad historical context in which district leaders acted, Turner rightfully reminds readers that “the circumstances that prompted district leaders to adopt color-blind managerialism were deeply rooted in social, political, and economic shifts that were not of district leaders’ or families’ making” (p. 34). For example, she explains how district leaders’ decisions to focus on data were informed by the state’s increased emphasis

on standardized test scores, continued monitoring, and subsequent penalties for underperformance. Indeed, Turner emphasizes that “demographic, economic, and political changes taking place at the current moment—all of which are intertwined with race—set the stage for color-blind managerialism,” and to understand these managerial practices and decisions, we need to understand the “macro structures and ideologies” (p. 153).

Suddenly Diverse concludes by highlighting the need for district leaders to consider broader context in order to avoid falling into the trap of resorting to color-blind managerialism, which perhaps, as Turner acknowledges, will leave readers’ desire for clear answers unsatisfied. While the book presents a few recommendations for district leaders, such as identifying “key contradictions in a given school district” through “book discussions and equity audits” (pp. 155–156) and “taking action to change practices and structures at institutional and societal levels” (p. 158), the reader may wonder where district leaders interested in following the recommendations should start, especially given their overwhelming responsibilities and often limited resources. While the book successfully uncovers the contradictions inherent in the system and of the district leaders’ own color-blind managerialism, district leaders reading this book may have benefitted from increased guidance for engaging in discussions and equity audits.

Situating the two school districts as a “part of larger demographic, economic, and political trajectories that remain relevant to school district equity today” (p. 161), *Suddenly Diverse* presents a valuable insight into how district leaders make sense of their evolving responsibilities and how their district-level decisions are shaped by broader sociocultural and political contexts. With the students in public schools becoming more and more diverse and the Every Student Succeeds Act continuing NCLB’s legacy of high-stakes accountability systems, district leaders will need to continue to ask, “How do we live the reality well?” (p. 6). As Turner clearly states, district leaders should remember that “a color-blind approach will not address the problems of school funding and racial and class segregation, but will recreate the existing inequities of a racialized and classed school marketplace” (p. 144), and our students will need more than that.

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