**Winton, S., & Parekh, G. (Eds.). (2020).** *Critical perspectives on education policy and schools, families, and communities.* **Information Age Press.**

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This volume edited by Sue Winton and Gillian Parekh brings together a group of contributors who engage in the work of critical policy analysis (CPA) to address inequities and exclusions that continue to haunt educational systems and structures. It specifically focuses on policies and practices within Canada and the United States in a manner that demonstrates the significant overlap of concerns across the national boundary of the 49th parallel. The volume consists of 12 chapters that adhere to a similar structure: a brief introduction, a defining of key terms, an overview of relevant literature, methodology and/ or research design, data analysis, and discussion as well as recommendations and concluding thoughts.
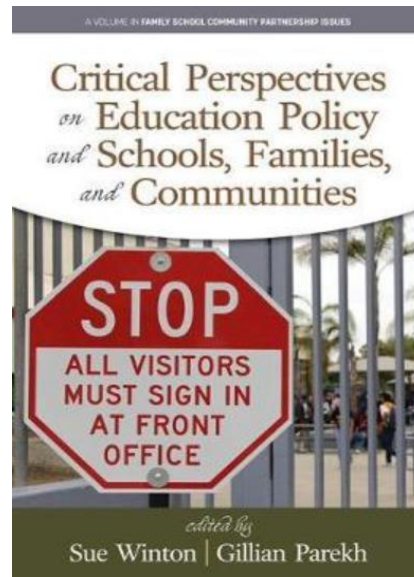
This structure contributes to the cohesiveness of this collection while providing contributors of each chapter the opportunity to critically explore educational policy in distinct ways. While the chapters focus on contexts within Canada and the United States, there are a range of geographic contexts represented from Jefferson County, Kentucky to Vancouver, British Columbia. Just as there are a range of geographies represented, there are also a variety of policy issues (e.g., school choice, practices of segregation, unequal access to educational programs and opportunities, etc.) addressed through a range of diverse research methods (e.g., interviews, youth participatory action research, document analysis) and theories (e.g., phenomenology, critical race theory, critical disability studies).

At approximately 20 pages long, each chapter is manageable and accessible. It is both the similarity in the structure of each chapter as well as the range in topics that

offer entry points for scholars and researchers that are new to the field as well as those who are well seasoned and experienced. For instance, within the introductory chapter, researchers that are new to CPA are offered a brief and clear overview of the broad range of practices that comprise CPA. Similarly, it is helpful to novice researchers that each chapter clearly defines key terms in a manner that invites readers to engage in concepts and the critical arguments conveyed. On the other hand, experienced educators, scholars, and researchers will be able to immediately identify an array of key policy issues that have preoccupied education for decades. Issues such as the inequitable distribution of resources, the impacts of neoliberalism on school funding as well as the impacts of racism, ableism, and classism on practices of segregation and exclusion are addressed throughout this edited collection.

While some chapters explicitly reference concerns around power imbalances within policy decision making, a concern with the circulation of power is evident in every chapter. For example, Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8 and 10 consider the location of power in policy decision making in both its localized (i.e., decentralized) and system-wide (i.e., centralized) forms. Diem, Browning and Sampson (Chapter 1) offer an overview of the tendency for both centralization and decentralization to occur in waves over several decades of analyzing policy practices within Clark County School District (CCSD) in Nevada. They offer a critical analysis of the most recent attempt to decentralize decision making within educational policy while also endeavoring to increase parental engagement and involvement. Through a detailed analysis, they determine that the lack of effective communication within CCSD ultimately contributed to inconsistent engagement of parents within communities that amplified issues around inequity and inaccessibility within decision-making processes for families. In contrast, Shah (Chapter 10) attributes the movement of a key program known as Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) from a decentralized decision-making structure to a centralized model as a main contributor to the ineffectiveness of this program to address inequities within local communities. When reading chapter 1 and chapter 10 within and against each other, both decentralized and centralized forms of educational decision making appear to be chronically plagued by an ineffectiveness to share power between families, educators, and system leaders in a manner that substantively addresses chronic issues of unequal access to school district resources.

Another key area of concern across several chapters within this collection is the impact of neoliberalism in the shaping of educational policies in ways that have assured their inextricable intertwinement. For example, Yoon (Chapter 4) delves into the impacts of the neoliberal ethos through a critical analysis of school choice policies at the secondary level. Yoon states: "School choice reinforces the myth of meritocracy that educational success lies in the hands of "responsible" individual… rather than in the circumstances of social inequality" (p. 60). According to Yoon, this orientation toward learning as a commodity to be acquired by savvy individuals who market themselves to niche programs and schools has instilled a competitive ethos while simultaneously increasing inequality and inaccessibility within publicly funded education systems. In a distinct yet linked analysis in chapter 6, there is a focus on how the cultivating of neoliberal individuals remains a central aim of

current institutional policies practices. Here Underwood, Church and van Rhijn address the impacts of orientations to being 'normal' for families and children. By outlining an array of rehabilitative services within communities, Underwood et al. expose the ableism that is embedded within taken for granted assumptions that being as close to normal as possible increases access and opportunity for success for children. Both chapters 4 and chapter 6 demonstrate the ways neoliberalism is a hegemonic force within educational policy and shapes our understanding of success in ways that reinforce and sustain a view of our fellow humans as competitors for scarce resources.

The most significant issue explored in this volume is the persistent presence of institutional racism within the policies and practices of district school boards across the United States and Canada. Western-centric conceptions of selfhood, along with policies that consistently define parental engagement in a manner the excludes immigrant and refugee families as well as families in low-income and/or racialized communities, consistently demonstrate the ways educational policies have failed to adequately address the racist logics that permeate our socio-cultural institutions. Lopez (Chapter 12) focuses on the ways media representations of refugees and immigrants sustain negative stereotypes that subsequently impact teacher perceptions and engagement with children and families in their communities. Grooms and Hoon Shin (Chapter 5) explore the lack of diversity within school leadership positions, which sustains discourses of White privilege. Both sets of authors emphasize that racism remains deeply embedded within the bones of education.

As *Critical Perspectives on Education Policy and Schools, Families and Communities* demonstrates, there is much work to be done to counter education policies and practices that sustain inequality, inaccessibility and injustice that are experienced within communities. One recommendation offered by Young and Carpenter (Chapter 11) invites educators to consider how we might move from the inclusive rhetoric present in countless policy documents to consider the actual enactment of the ways "caregivers from all levels, categories, and areas of society should be heard in concert with policy makers, researchers and educators" (p. 197). The recommendation offered here is representative of the inclination within this edited collection to engage in the critical analysis of educational policy while also believing that change is not only necessary but possible. Thus, this book offers many entry points to explore contemporary research in the area of educational policy while calling on educators to join in this much-needed policy work to bring about greater social justice and equality within education.

About the Reviewer

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