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## **MARKETING SCHOOLS, MARKETING CITIES: WHO WINS AND WHO LOSES WHEN SCHOOLS BECOME URBAN AMENITIES. MAIA BLOOMFIELD CUCCHIARA. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 2013. 304 PP.**

Reviewed by Miyoung Park, *University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education*

For those who have had the opportunity to stroll through the various areas of the City of Philadelphia, it is not hard to see that it is a city marked by noticeable division: affluent and energetic areas with modern urban amenities in stark contrast to under-resourced areas with abandoned row homes and graffiti. Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara's *Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses When Schools Become Urban Amenities* examines the revitalization strategies Philadelphia has employed to attract and keep professionals within the city with the goal of helping to build the City's economy and develop urban areas. As part of these efforts, Cucchiara discusses the fact that cities often develop alluring urban amenities such as museums, boutiques, coffee shops, and homes within walking distance of work in order to attract and retain groups of working, middle-class professionals. Specifically, she explores this kind of effort in Philadelphia by examining the Center City District (CCD), which is a business improvement area that promotes this type of revitalization in Center City, Philadelphia. Despite the efforts that were put into developing urban amenities in the CCD, there was still a noticeably significant number of families fleeing to the suburbs when their children became school aged. The CCD and the School District of Philadelphia partnered in 2004 to create the Center City Schools Initiative (CCSI), which sought to encourage professional families who were already living in Center City to send their children to public schools in the area. As part of this initiative, a few select schools in the CCD were improved in order to attract professional families. The assumption behind this initiative, like other urban amenities, was that the positive benefits of prosperity that come from professional, middle-class families staying in Center City would have a "trickle-down" effect on the rest of the city.

Cucchiara critically and thoughtfully examines the CCSI's efforts to market public schools to professional families and the questions the initiative surfaces about equity and democratic citizenship. Her main argument is that although those involved in the CCSI thought they were part of a solution, the initiative was actually quite problematic for two main reasons. First, the initiative targeted a specific group to benefit from their efforts. This group was already advantaged and their needs and interests were further being advantaged. Second, the resources used to advantage this particular group of professionals in Center City came partly from public funds within the School District of Philadelphia. Therefore, an already privileged group was being further privileged at the expense of an already under-privileged group of lower-income Philadelphia families outside of the CCD. Cucchiara explains the obvious, noticeable problems in this marketing strategy and provides insight into how this view of parents as consumers in the market of schools sends the unfortunate message that middle and upper-middle class families are inherently more important and more valuable than others. Cucchiara points out the problems that arise from the CCSI's underlying assumption that middle and upper-middle class parents have many things to offer the city while low-income parents do not.

Cucchiara offers a thorough, nuanced, and detailed account of what happened in one particular Center City Philadelphia school, Grant Elementary, that participated in the CCSI. By couching the initiative in a detailed explanation of Philadelphia's history, both in terms of cultural and social events as well as educational goals, she provides a context in which to understand why the CCSI came about in the first place. In Chapters 5 and 6, Cucchiara invites us into the inner workings of Grant Elementary School, where she represents the thoughts and concerns of the middle and upper-middle class parents as well as the working-class parents. By offering numerous, salient excerpts of parents' voices from different groups, she challenges the assumption that working-class parents and families always benefit from the improvements made by middle and upper-middle class parents. Throughout the book, Cucchiara gives a fine-grained analysis of data and detailed, thorough understandings of the City of Philadelphia, both in terms of education and in general. Cucchiara offers a readable, appropriate angle of analysis as she presents an unbiased and fair picture of different characters within the story. Although the CCSI and the partnership between CCD and the School District of Philadelphia was short lived, Cucchiara argues that the consequences of the actions and policy decisions made during the initiative are profound and can still be seen and felt today. Additionally, the CCSI informs similar initiatives in other cities around the country where urban centers are trying to attract and retain their working professionals.

Perhaps one thing missing in Cucchiara's critical analysis of the CCSI is a more detailed and explicit explanation of the consequences of middle class flight from urban centers. Although Cucchiara mentions this problem as one of the main reasons the CCSI took hold, the reader is left with a somewhat nebulous understanding of how "devastating" urban flight truly is or can be. For example, it may have been helpful for Cucchiara to paint a hypothetical picture of what the city of Philadelphia might look like if it continually loses its middle class families. In particular, what could this look like in terms of the economic ramifications for

the city? Although the book mentions that it would be devastating, the reader does not have a sense of what this devastation might actually look like.

*Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities: Who Wins and Who Loses When Schools Become Urban Amenities* is a must-read for anyone interested and invested in schools within Philadelphia as it provides an informative, contextualized understanding of both current and historical issues. More broadly, this book is useful to those interested in urban centers and urban education, particularly the nuanced relationship between revitalizing urban centers and improving urban education while increasing economic diversity in schools and decreasing existing inequalities. A main takeaway from Cucchiara's book is that schools cannot be seen as mere urban amenities that cater to a specific group of consumers. Instead, schools must continually and rigorously be held up to their promise as public institutions that have the powerful responsibility of equally educating *all* citizens. This main conclusion is well supported by Cucchiara's research and leaves the reader very much nodding in agreement as we are reminded of the role and responsibility that public institutions have to every single one of its citizens.

**MIYOUNG PARK** is a Ph.D. student in Penn GSE's Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education program, focusing on Science Education. Her research interests include effective science curriculum and pedagogy as well as science teacher preparation and professional development to cultivate creativity, motivation, confidence, and inquiry in students. Prior to her work at Penn, Miyoung taught high school Biology and Chemistry in Gyeonggi-do, South Korea.

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