

engagement ceremony, they were arrested, tried, and ultimately sentenced to 14 years in prison with hard labor, the most severe penalty possible. International outcry ensued, forcing then-president Bingu Wa Mutharika to simultaneously defend Malawian sovereignty while acknowledging the norms of his country's donors and creditors. He ultimately pardoned the two. But the experience reinforced the notion that LGBT rights were a foreign agenda that threatened Malawian sovereignty, which ultimately enabled Mutharika's use of politicized homophobia against civil society in two key ways.

In the first instance, Mutharika used politicized homophobia proactively in 2012. At this time, civil society was agitating for reform in the face of shortages in food, fuel, electricity, and foreign exchange. Mutharika was already disinclined toward NGOs, which he viewed as competing with the state for donor resources. In advance of planned protests, he successfully lumped all NGOs that opposed the state together with those in favor of LGBT rights, claiming that their goal was decriminalization of same-sex sex. As a result, Malawians who might have supported NGOs' general claims for state reforms disengaged because they did not agree with decriminalization.

In the second instance, Mutharika also used politicized homophobia proactively to create wedges between organizations and movements that otherwise could have banded together. Specifically, political elites frequently alleged that social movement leaders were trying to legalize same-sex marriage as well as undermine the government by working with foreign actors. The threat of such allegations, or their actual deployment, served as a powerful tool to keep women's and other groups from supporting LGBT rights and in general kept NGOs and other civil society organizations from working together, thus missing at least one crucial political opportunity to press for decriminalization.

Carefully researched and making extensive use of primary sources, Currier's book makes a significant contribution to sociology by expanding the reach of the discipline to sub-Saharan African countries and provides a number of tools for thinking about how elites in postcolonial states deploy politicized homophobia to solidify their authority. Countering Afro-pessimism, the book shows that homophobia is not an inherent trait of African countries, and through detailed analysis of its rise and use, offers knowledge beneficial to combatting it.

Diverse Families, Desirable Schools: Public Montessori in the Era of School Choice. By Mira Debs. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2019. Pp. xi+230. \$64.00 (cloth); \$33.00 (paper).

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American society is currently in the midst of widening socioeconomic inequality and increases in residential and school segregation by both race/ethnicity

and socioeconomic status. It is within this climate that the book *Diverse Families, Desirable Schools: Public Montessori in the Era of School Choice* by Mira Debs seeks to understand the role of school choice in exacerbating patterns of social inequality. The book is a case study that includes ethnographic observation of and interviews from 2013–15 in two racially and socioeconomically diverse public Montessori schools, “Birch” and “Vine,” in Hartford, Connecticut. Debs considers how progressive schools of choice like Montessori can support diversity and equity within the context of a district, school, community, and classroom that at times counteracts efforts of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic integration and leans toward elitism.

As a social institution, the system of education in the United States has seen a proliferation of school choice options for parents. While research in the sociology of education has long considered whether choice schools are academically superior to traditional public schools, a major contribution of Debs’s book lies in the interrogation of school choice as a socially constructed process. A key concept in the social construction of school choice is the idea of fit. Whether a school of choice “fits” with a particular student or a particular family is a social construction that is correlated with parents’ sociodemographic characteristics. For example, progressive education such as Montessori has its roots in Maria Montessori’s work with tenement children in Italy yet in the United States has become advertised for and claimed by white, middle-class parents. The focus on fit by the Hartford school district is part of an effort to use schools of choice like public Montessori to persuade white and Asian families to remain in the school system. This creates an imbalance of power, driven by racial/ethnic status, where black and Latinx families are being asked to choose any local school option, while white and Asian families choose schools based on the best fit for their child and their family.

Empirically, the book starts with the “hidden history” of public Montessori education in the United States. Debs details the history of this progressive schooling movement in the United States, where culture is central to the pedagogy. This includes early interest in Montessori by the elite in the early 1900s and then movements in the 1960s that engaged with culturally responsive education, Head Start, and countercultural education. This history at times seems overly specific to Montessori, yet it provides a rich context within which to better understand the current school choice landscape.

From interviews and ethnographic data, parents’ response to their choice school fell into one of three categories: *true believers* in the Montessori method, *satisfied* with the school but the mission of their choice school was not all that important to them, and *conflicted*—those who were ambivalent about the school. Because “fit” is socially constructed and progressive education such as Montessori has become a lever to attract white and Asian families, true believers were overwhelmingly white and Asian parents and conflicted parents were more likely to be black and Latinx parents. At the same time, Debs provides a multitude of examples at both schools suggesting that the school builds the most productive relationships with those who have fully embraced the mission—that is, true believers.

Cultural tensions emerged on the part of satisfied and conflicted parents, which underscored the problematic emphasis that schools place on fit. For example, Montessori has gardening at the center of its curriculum and some Latinx parents who work as migrant laborers felt the emphasis was not academically productive and even culturally insensitive. Similarly, a few black parents wanted more academic rigor because they recognize the stratified nature of the educational system; for students of color to be academically successful, students of color must try harder and achieve at higher levels than their white and Asian peers. Therefore, for some black parents, the Montessori approach's lack of emphasis on external academic progress standards was problematic. Finally, the nutrition emphasis of Montessori, where certain foods are openly discouraged and families are socially sanctioned for less than nutritious lunches, was seen by parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as elitist and divisive, creating groups of "Whole Foods kids" and "free lunch kids" within the school.

While the book concludes with some suggestions of how schools should change to better facilitate relationships with a diverse set of families, a larger implication might engage with the larger school choice system. One critique of this book lies in the lack of clarity concerning what is problematic about cultural conflict between families that is unique to Montessori or a more pervasive problem with schooling in general. Beginning with Pierre Bourdieu and social reproductionist critiques of schools as exclusionary to those who lack cultural capital, sociologists have long considered cultural conflict within schools as affecting student outcomes. A benefit of focusing on the Montessori case is that it allows for a dissection of exactly where cultural conflict develops between families and schools. An extension of this research would be twofold: continuing scholarship that critically examines the social construction of fit in the school choice arena and continuing to document with quality ethnographic methods like those in *Diverse Families, Desirable Schools* the sources and solutions of cultural conflict between families and schools.

Great Expectations: The Sociology of Survival and Success in Organized Team Sports. By Christopher B. Doob. New York: Routledge, 2018. Pp. xi+306. \$180.00 (cloth); \$49.95 (paper).

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In *Great Expectations: The Sociology of Survival and Success in Organized Team Sports*, Christopher Doob provides a well-written overview of the structural and social dynamics in organized team sports. The stages of athletes' involvement in organized sports (recruitment, retention, and advancement) are reviewed in the introduction and provide an overarching set of concepts that are used throughout the book to understand athletic involvement at all levels of participation from youth through professional sports.