

ing citizens, one that Yoshikawa frames in terms of the legal rights of children and their future contributions to society. Unfortunately, the author avoids more recent discussions on immigrant children who are *not* U.S. citizens living in the country. While writing about this topic opens up more difficult conversations about immigration policy, if the focus is on potential contributions to society, the developmental needs of all children—documented and undocumented—demand similar attention and care.

N.C.

BALANCING ACTS: YOUTH CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL CITY

by Natasha K. Warikoo

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 248 pp. \$21.95.

Balancing Acts: Youth Culture in the Global City is an exploration of the lives of second-generation immigrant youth in two ethnically diverse schools in New York and London. Natasha K. Warikoo carefully explains how youths' baggy pants, latest sneakers and trainers, and rap music do not signal a rejection of school culture and a lack of motivation to succeed in school. Rather, she explains, most youth do have a desire to succeed in school, *and* through music and dress they signal their adherence to youth cultural norms. Based on her dissertation research, Warikoo has written a book that is deeply respectful of the young people she studied. *Balancing Acts* gives parents, teachers, teacher educators, youth program directors, and others interested in youth an opportunity to understand, from the youths' perspective, the complexities of negotiating relationships in school, with friends, and with family.

Readers learn quickly that the information in the book is from an in-depth and comprehensive study with ethnographic, interview, and survey data collected during the 2003–2004 school year. However, Warikoo skillfully provides the readers with just enough research and background to support the well-chosen quotes from youth and to move the readers toward a deep understanding of these young people. We see these youth as complex people—people who can fight, skip school, and talk back to teachers while simultaneously voicing motivation to succeed in school and, in many cases, to pursue higher education. Warikoo shows us through the young people's own explanations that these behaviors are not in opposition to one another, and she shows us how a "peer status explanation" (p. 109) allows us to understand how these youth balance their desire and attempt to succeed in school while working to maintain and excel in their peer relationships.

Although we are given information from surveys, it is the youth voices that will stick with readers. For example, at the same time that we hear about a young person fighting, we hear logical explanations that show the students' skillful negotiation between youth culture and behavior that is accepted by adults. Robert, a high school student in Queens whose parents are African

American and Afro-Caribbean, explained that a bully was continuously picking on him. Though Robert initially attempted to walk away from the conflict, he soon realized that to stop harassment and to ultimately receive respect from bullying peers, he had to stand up to the bully. He explained, “I punched him in his face and his mouth was bleeding . . . I would never hit anybody just for hitting people’s sake” (p. 98).

We are given the opportunity to see these youth as complex and unique individuals, but we are also able to see the complexities of racial and ethnic identity and how these identities intersect with what is popular and accepted among youth. We see how youth can reject peers who do not dress in an accepted way, who are introverted, who show weakness, and who do not appropriately negotiate the “peer expectations of racially authentic cultural practices in their tastes in music and style” (p. 46). Readers learn that popularity, friendships, and reasons for acceptance in different groups are not exactly the same for students in London and New York. We find out, for example, that students in New York were more likely than students in London to define their in- and out-groups in terms of ethnicity or race.

For readers who work closely with youth, there may be multiple moments of recognition—of finally understanding the *why* behind students’ behaviors. The week before reading the book, I talked with a student who had been suspended for fighting in school. It became clear that he was probably telling the truth when he said that he “had to stand up for himself” and explained feelings of dismay that he had disappointed his teachers. However, within the book, there are multiple levels of complexity to keep in mind—school, social groups, adult expectations, individual and collective identity, to name a few. This complexity can be overwhelming, and readers may struggle to try to keep all of the variables in mind. Readers can understand how challenging it must be for young people to negotiate and integrate these various aspects of their lives. Warikoo clearly recognizes this complexity and at a timely point in chapter 6 provides readers with cases that show how all students have to balance. She presents the case of a student who is successful in the “balancing act” (p. 115), a student who attends more to peer expectations over those of adults around him, and a student who focuses more on success in the adult social world.

In the end, readers are sure to walk away with a profound respect for the challenges of being a student, a peer, a friend, a child, and a second-generation youth, but perhaps they will also come away with a new or renewed energy to consider how to engage with these youth in and out of school.

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