

first year of college, while college administrators may heed Nathan's call to provide sensitivity training to bolster staff efforts to support first-generation college students.

Readers may be left wishing that Nathan had presented even more practical guidance throughout the text, particularly after reading chapters 2 and 5, in which Nathan discusses the role of teacher professional development in understanding race and cultural responsive pedagogy and the role of action research and project-based learning in supporting a reciprocal relationship between individual and community enrichment. These short chapters necessarily leave much underexplored, and the critical topics raised, such as implementing antiracist curricula or nurturing student agency through creative learning opportunities, would benefit from an extended discussion allowing readers to more fully grasp the progressive alternatives Nathan gestures toward.

Nonetheless, in providing the reader with an intimate portrait of the on-the-ground experiences and narratives that have caused a seasoned educator to reformulate her educational philosophy and practice based on equity and collective action rather than individual merit and grit, *When Grit Isn't Enough* humanizes current debates on urban education, inequality, and opportunity. In addition to being a pleasure to read, the book will likely serve as an eye-opening text for teachers, school leaders, and policy makers willing to rethink their own assumptions about supporting student achievement.

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#### THE EXPERIENCE OF NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION

edited by Bonnie Urciuoli

*New York: Berghahn Books, 2018. 252 pp. \$120 (cloth).*

In the 1930s, John Dewey argued in *Experience and Education* for the importance of guided experience to true learning centered around a student's growth and development as an individual. Indeed, Dewey is considered one of the American originators of the concept of experience in education, a "progressive" pedagogical philosophy often contrasted with "regressive" skill learning, rote memorization, and a culture of (standardized) testing. Bonnie Urciuoli's 2018 edited volume *The Experience of Neoliberal Education* interrogates this stereotyped contrast between so-called progressive experience and regressive skill acquisition, illustrating that in a neoliberal age, experiences, no less than skills, have been reformulated as commodities subject to demands from the higher education marketplace that include optimizing value to both buyer (the student and student's family) and seller (the corporate university).

Urciuoli's introduction and Wesley Shumar's conclusion frame the volume's chapters and are also richly theoretical contributions in their own right. In the introduction, Urciuoli invites the reader to think about "the college experi-

ence” as a feature of commodification and institutional branding of colleges and universities. While the commodification of skill learning and the importance of higher education in producing students who can be “bundles of self-managed flexible skills” (p. 156) has been also described by Urciuoli in earlier work, the contribution of this volume lies in its exploration of the way in which college-going has also become a marketable commodity for both higher education institutions and students. “Individual cultural capital” (p. 9) in the form of not just skills but also experiences is packaged and sold to students, parents, and donors as “the college experience.”

Why higher education institutions might package experience in this way is the subject of Wesley Shumar’s chapter, “Caught Between Commodification and Audit,” which constructs a historical framework locating the preceding chapters as snapshots of the many forms the commodification of experience has taken over the past four decades. Although this chapter appears as the conclusion, in providing a unifying framework and structural mechanism for the commodification of experience in higher education, it is central to the book. Shumar argues that three phases of commodification in higher education have developed over time in response to economic stagnation in the 1970s and the consequent defunding of colleges and universities (and faculty positions). One of the earliest postwar forms of commodification in higher education began in the 1970s and 1980s with the spread of the idea that, instead of being constituted in a social relationship of mentorship and guidance between (expensive) faculty and students, education could be a product managed by administrative staff and marketed and sold to customers. This product could be thought of as specialized curricula tailored to specific groups of buyers but also expanded to include specialized experiences administered by experts in those experiences. Urciuoli’s chapter, “The Experience Experts,” highlights the expansion and increasing complexity of administrative staffing using one example of a now-common administrative specialization: “experts” and commercial expertise packages around managing students’ first year of college that are sold to institutions of higher education by multinational educational publishing firms.

Shumar places the second phase of commodification in the early 2000s with further privatization of basic services, deregulation, and a turn to a neoliberal model of economic governance in spite of national economic recovery. Deregulation allowed institutions of higher education to broaden their economic purchase while recasting themselves as local or regional drivers of urban redevelopment and gentrification. Shumar illustrates the expanded economic power of these institutions with a vignette of a prototypical but real university that has morphed into a corporate research park (where knowledge workers produce) and mall (where knowledge workers consume), all the while pushing working-class and people of color out of local neighborhoods. With this backdrop, in “Empathy as Industry” Jack LaViolette critiques one university’s use of the trope of community engagement as a central component of the col-

lege experience. Although the university described actively engaged in economic and political practices that displaced the local working-class community and contributed to housing and wage instability (e.g., by opposing living wage statutes and using its nonprofit status to avoid tax on endowment and real estate holdings), the institution's brand emphasized its collaboration with and service to the community in part through media images of kindly and empathetic undergraduates engaging with the local (deserving) poor and needy.

The 2008 financial crisis pushed many US schools to closure and led to the rise of "high-fee, high-aid" (p. 227) funding models in higher education. With postcrisis college education coming with increasingly higher costs, as documented in rising student debt and lower returns in terms of job opportunity and wage gains for new graduates, Shumar proposes a third and qualitatively different phase of commodification as universities were—and are—pressured to enact new forms of audit and performances of accountability in order to demonstrate value to their customers. For example, Sarah Bergbauer's chapter, "No Good Deed Goes Uncounted," describes in detail the ubiquitous quantification and auditing of volunteer hours at one college in order to support the college's marketing of "service" as a valuable element of its undergraduate experience and the college's brand.

The reader should be cautioned that although the economic events described follow a clear historical timeline, it is not as evident that the forms of commodification that the college experience takes are bound to these events, and Shumar himself acknowledges that the proposed phases overlap. As new economic events spark the rise of new forms of commodification, perhaps it is more appropriate to call these phases "waves" that roll across the education landscape and reshape the visible forms of the US college experience.

Urciuoli counsels that institutional responses and hence the commodification of learning can appear very different across different schools and countries. Indeed, this volume can be understood as an ethnographic "menu" of some, but not all, of the ways higher education institutions might package and sell educational experience. Some of these packages include research experience, as discussed by Richard Handler and Anastasia Baldrige; project experience by Alex Posecznick; social innovation experience by Chaise LaDousa; and service learning by Jack LaViolette, Sarah Bergbauer, and John Bodinger de Uriarte and Shari Jacobson. Notably, five of these authors were undergraduate students who contributed reflective essays providing illustrative, thoughtful, and sometimes poignant autoethnographic views of their commodified experience in higher education.

*The Experience of Neoliberal Education* is most powerful in its presentation and critique of these past and current forms of the college experience. Where more work is left to be done is in articulating an agenda or exemplars for the future, work that is hinted at but not fully developed in this book. Nevertheless, through this edited volume, Urciuoli and coauthors offer a coherent theoretical frame and thoughtful ethnographic illustrations that will be much

appreciated by readers interested in understanding the phenomenon of the college experience, the diverse forms it takes, and its role in the education marketplace. In addition, those who do not inhabit the world of higher education today may be surprised and edified by this critical illustration of the ways in which the various forms of experience in education, much like skills before them, have become subject to quantification and audit as packaged commodities in neoliberal colleges and universities.

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THE NEWCOMERS: FINDING REFUGE, FRIENDSHIP, AND HOPE IN AN AMERICAN CLASSROOM

by Helen Thorpe

New York: Scribner, 2017. 313 pp. \$28.00 (cloth).

Helen Thorpe's *The Newcomers: Finding Refuge, Friendship, and Hope in an American Classroom* offers a window into refugee resettlement and education in the United States. A journalist and author of several books, Thorpe builds on scholarship related to resettled refugees' language acquisition and schooling (e.g., Bigelow, 2010), employing longitudinal participant observations and interviews to portray the education of newcomers within the sociopolitical contexts that inform their experiences. Through her journalistic narrative, Thorpe engages with a wide variety of topics related to refugee resettlement and migration and does so in a way that is accessible to a broad audience. Her portrayal of a newcomer English class in Denver, Colorado, allows her to write about language teaching and learning for new arrivals, refugee resettlement policies and practices in the US, and the details of various conflicts around the world, including in Syria and Burma, which directly affect the students she profiles. Her data collection focuses on South High School in Denver and extends to Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where she seeks to understand the political and personal histories that have brought one family from East Africa to the United States.

The book, organized by seasons, allows readers to follow the students' academic school year. In the fall, we join seven students on their first day at South High School and meet their teacher, Eddie Williams, "the sort of teacher who devoted an enormous portion of his warmth, vitality, and intellect to his students" (p. 4). The seven students in Mr. Williams's newcomer class wear "shut-door expressions on their faces" (p. 4). They're all new to Denver and come from around the world, including from Mexico, Mozambique, and Thailand. They are at various stages in their English language and literacy development, with Saúl from El Salvador speaking the fewest words of English and Rahim and Ghasem from Afghanistan speaking and reading well enough that they would soon be transferred to more advanced English language classes.