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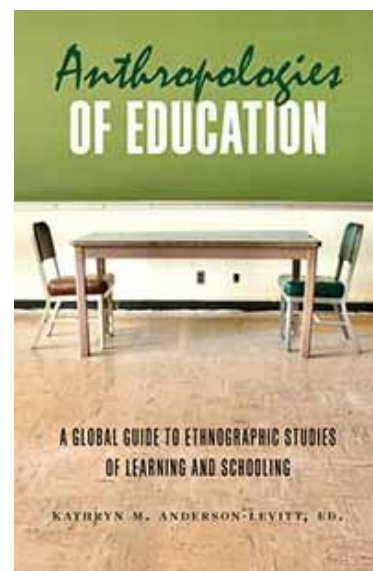


Anderson-Levitt, Kathryn M. (2012) *Anthropologies of Education: A Global Guide to Ethnographic Studies of Learning and Schooling*. NY: Berghahn Books.

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In *Anthropologies of Education: A Global Guide to Ethnographic Studies of Learning and Schooling*, Kathryn M. Anderson-Levitt presents a unique and thoughtful collection of essays about anthropological and ethnographic approaches to the study of education and schooling. Anthropology of education first appeared in the United States in the 1950s, ethnography of education in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and in many other countries in the last sixty years. Anderson-Levitt asks: “Do anthropology of education, pedagogical anthropology, and related terms mean the same thing in different parts of the world? What counts as ethnography of education from one nation to another?”



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This review was accepted under the previous Editor for English, Gene V Glass.

She seeks to answer these questions by compiling a survey of anthropologies and ethnographies of education from around the world to create a “modest anthropology of anthropology of education” (p. 2). **Kathryn Levitt-Anderson** is forthcoming about the pitfalls of trying to represent “global” scholarship from many nations, geographic regions and language zones. Despite the inherent risks of missed scholarship and misrepresentation, I agree with her that this volume is an important first step towards greater understanding and communication among anthropologists and education researchers.



The volume begins with an informative overview by Anderson-Levitt about the inception of this collection of essays. She introduces each of the chapters, providing helpful insight about the “world tour” of anthropologies. This includes surprises, disagreements and deficiencies readers may encounter as they learn about the ways scholars have adopted the theoretical and methodological underpinning of anthropology and ethnographic inquiry in a wide range of political, historical, institutional and cultural contexts.

The “world tour” begins with an introduction to “historical cultural anthropology of education” in Germany by Christoph Wulf and the findings from a long-term study of “ritual and performance in education and socialization” (p. 7). This first chapter sets up the rest of the book nicely by presenting an unique approach to ethnography and anthropology of education.

From there, readers are presented with a provocative critique of U.S.-based anthropology of education by Sara Delamont. She argues that it is a discipline, “obsessed by school failure among ethnic and racial minorities to the point of being blinded to other important topics” (p. 8). Delamont raises important concerns about U.S. scholarly ethnocentrism, making a compelling argument for U.S.-based anthropologists (and I think education researchers more broadly) to be diligent in reading scholarship outside their linguistic, national and disciplinary circles to avoid a “parochial ethnocentricity” that unwittingly casts non-U.S. scholarship as “second class” and precludes theoretical, methodological and thematic advancements in the field.

Focusing a critical lens on education scholarship in the United States, Delamont urges U.S.-based readers to leave behind their expectations of what anthropology and ethnography of education might mean. However, this editorial decision leaves U.S. and Canadian anthropology narrowly represented by a British scholar. Delamont's reliance on *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* as a source of evidence overlooks other anthropological and ethnographic approaches to the study of education, especially the dynamic relationship anthropologists of education in the United States have with educational research and their publication record in other scholarly journals.

The interdisciplinary nature of education research in the United States lends itself to a sharing of ideas between anthropology and other fields including sociology, psychology, and critical cultural studies. Anthropologists have benefited from developments in these fields and joined together with other education researchers to offer important perspectives on the study of culture and diversity within public schooling, the role of public schools in a global economy, and developments in school reform policy in the United States.

For example, innovations with multi-sited ethnography have enabled anthropologists to transcend conventional boundaries and look for sites of learning and cultural practices that are both in and out of school. These include new inquiries include digital media's influence on the ways in which young people develop literacies and navigate schooling. Anthropologists of education are increasingly designing studies to be more collaborative and leveraging ethnographic inquiry as a tool to encourage and support the efforts of students and community groups to make social changes happen.

Without having a chapter that provides a comprehensive presentation of anthropology and ethnography of education in the U.S., Canada and other English-language zones, the volume misses an important opportunity to present new developments in ethnographic methods and anthropological lines of inquiry. Acknowledging the connections and similarities, alongside the omissions, of U.S.-based anthropology of education would have strengthened this "global guide" by illustrating how U.S.

scholarship is continuous with (however often naïve of) other anthropologies of education.

The subsequent chapters are well-organized, informative and compelling. Contributors were successful in following Anderson-Levitt's request to introduce novices to their national or language zone's field of research rather than attempting to create comprehensive literature reviews. I enjoyed learning about how anthropological concepts and ethnographic methods were applied in various contexts and what researchers were discovering about education, schools and the politics of learning.

Chapters three, four and five provide an introduction to Latin American approaches to anthropology and education that foreground the relationships between educational processes and the cultural, historical and political dimensions of schooling. For example, anthropological research on educational processes in Mexico includes studies of culture, power and identity in topics ranging from indigenous education, youth culture and teaching. The chapter on anthropology and education in the Argentine context reminds readers of anthropology's historical connection to colonialism and underscores the influence state institutions (including dictatorial governments and international development agendas) have on researchers' relationship with policy makers. In Brazil, anthropology and education intersect with other disciplines (including sociology and psychology) and researchers navigate topics including race relations and education; youth, school and contemporary education; and indigenous education and childhood.

From Latin America, the collection travels to the "French-Speaking World" where "ethnographies *in* education" is the desired description of francophone ethnographies that grew out of sociological rather than anthropological traditions. Comparing ethnographies of education conducted in France, Canada, Belgium and Switzerland, the authors show that "this language zone functions as a single domain not only because of shared language but also because of collegial ties within the international association of French-speaking sociologists" (p. 12). Ethnographers in this language zone have primarily focused on school-based ethnographies with an increasing

focus on social class, ethnicity and linguistic diversity among students.

The chapters on Italy, Central Europe, and Scandinavia illustrate the variations in anthropology across regions, in response to institutional and political institutions, and in relationship to ethnographic methods. The topics range from studies of how schooling “creates illiteracy” in Italy, to a tradition of folklore studies and Roma studies in Central Europe. Educational Anthropology in Scandinavia is influenced by the welfare state emphasis on public education and “proper childhoods” and is comprised of three strands of research: school ethnography, the anthropology of children and youth, and anthropological development studies.

The chapters about Japan, China, and Israel provide wide-ranging examples of how anthropology and ethnography inform studies of education. The chapter on Japan describes the long-standing tradition of anthropology and education and its ties to U.S.-based anthropology of education. Topics include a focus on both formal and informal spaces of learning, ranging from ordinary educational practices to the experiences of immigrant youth. The chapter about China offers information about the more recent development of educational anthropology, its ties to U.S. sociology, and growth despite political and institutional challenges. The chapter on ethnography of education in Israel discusses the place of ethnography in efforts to integrate students into schools and other idiosyncratic educational settings.

The final regional chapter on Sub-Saharan Africa solidified important themes that emerged in this “anthropology of anthropology of education.” First, research is political: In Sub-Saharan Africa, access to training and resources for research is strongly influenced by development and aid agencies. The variations across regions, nations and zones suggest that the organization of departments, relationships with policy makers and sources of funding bear on research agendas around the world. Second, research raises important epistemological considerations about whose knowledge counts, what knowledge is valued, who and what are deemed worth studying. In the chapter on Sub-Saharan Africa, these decisions are often heavily influenced by aid and

development agencies, a contrast to Latin American studies about indigenous schooling and Scandinavian concerns about child welfare.

The concluding chapter by Agnès van Zanten focuses on ethnography as deeply “embedded into different social and political contexts” and the ways in which its founding tenets “are sustained, extended, questioned or transformed by its use in very different scientific contexts” (p. 303). Transformed through “hybridization” (p. 307) with other traditions and shaped by “social realities around the world” (p. 310), she found “abundant examples” of concepts shared by ethnographers and anthropologists in many different contexts, including “culture;” an emphasis on “local contexts and meaning;” “cultural integration;” “ethnic minorities and excluded groups;” “value systems;” “democratic interaction with informants” and “social equality” (p. 317). Where ethnography and anthropology may be “defined and enacted” differently around the world, it seems that anthropologists and ethnographers of education engage in a “shared ethnographic paradigm” (p. 317).

This “global guide” offers an important invitation for researchers to find inspiration for new lines of inquiry as they learn about practices in other regional and national communities of practice. *Anthropologies of Education* deserves the attention of ethnographers and anthropologists of education as well as education researchers more generally. Education research is a multi-disciplinary field and the collection of essays in this volume draws attention to the contributions anthropologists and ethnographers make to education research through methodologically sound approaches, essential concepts like culture, and critical insights about the role of schooling and educational processes in a multitude of contexts.

About the Reviewer

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