A Companion to the

Anthropology

of Education

Edited by Bradley A. U. Levinson
and Mica Pollock

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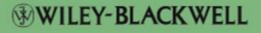A Companion to the
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The *Blackwell Companions to Anthropology* offers a series of comprehensive syntheses of the traditional subdisciplines, primary subjects, and geographic areas of inquiry for the field. Taken together, the series represents both a contemporary survey of anthropology and a cutting edge guide to the emerging research and intellectual trends in the field as a whole.

Forthcoming

A Companion to the Anthropology of Education

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Contributors

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Introduction

Mica Pollock and
Bradley A.U. Levinson

The anthropology of education sits at the crossroads of anthropology as a discipline, schooling as a professional field, and education as a perennial human endeavor. As anthropologists of education, we attempt to offer the insights and concepts of anthropology to educational theory and practice, and conversely, to enrich the discipline of anthropology by offering deep inquiry into educational processes.

The larger series of Companion volumes into which this volume fits is organized around named subfields or regional specializations of the discipline of anthropology, most of which correspond to a named section of the American Anthropological Association. The "anthropology of education" has been a self-conscious subdiscipline since the 1950s (see McDermott and Raley (Chapter 3), Wolcott (Chapter 7), Schensul (Chapter 8)). At the same time, we remain anthropologists, of course, and "education" is hardly a mere subset of cultural practice. Educational processes pervade the everyday conduct of social life. Anything related to teaching and learning, anywhere, at any age, "counts" as fair game for "anthropologists of education."

So how is the "anthropology of education" any different from "anthropology" writ large? In Chapter 3, McDermott and Raley write of often false struggles in anthropology to distinguish cultural "parts" from cultural "wholes"; they note that any "part" of cultural activity and the cultural activity "writ large" are mutually constitutive and in a sense not separate at all. The same could be said for "the anthropology of education" and "anthropology" (for a related argument, see also Levinson, 1999).

At the same time, the very existence of this book reinforces the notion of the "anthropology of education" as a separate subfield. Some of us literally have degrees in the subfield. More specifically, perhaps, anthropologists of education inquire more than many other anthropologists into the fate of young people, about their enculturation

and socialization, and about habits of human behavior and relationships of power that are taught and challenged in schools as cultural sites. But we also care more broadly about "education" – about how people of any age learn and teach others to organize behavior, in any setting. Like anthropologists throughout other subfields, we care about how identities and identifications are taught and shaped, anywhere, at any age; we care about how people learn and use language; we care about everyday negotiations over the effects of past histories; we care about dynamics of control, power, and inequality that shape everyday lives in societies.

Further, we are as internally varied as any set of anthropologists: differences of generation, of theoretical orientation or epistemological premise, of national tradition, and of personal commitment and experience provide a vast range of positions from which to think and speak about "education" as anthropologists.

Thus, in producing this book, we explicitly invited our authors to help define (or contest) "the subfield" of the anthropology of education. We also set them free to do so. As we explained in an invitational letter, the guiding questions for the book were these:

> Where and what and when is "education" to anthropologists? What educational processes, interactions, and settings have we examined, and what do we know about them?

Then, we gave them the following instructions:

> We assume that you will explain one core set of educational/education-related processes examined and understood in the field; one core set of key educational interactions that demand anthropological analysis; some key educational setting that demands anthropological analysis; and/or some key set of interacting stakeholders (e.g., youth, adults, parents, children, policymakers) you and others have studied.
>
> So then, the guiding questions for your chapter should be: Which authors and streams of scholarship have you found most centrally illuminating for understanding the "educational" processes or issues you explore in your work? Which scholars might you call the key "intellectual community" on this core issue in the anthropology of education? How does your own work exemplify an important approach to studying these educational processes? And how do any of the insights generated reach out beyond "anthropology of education" as typically framed, and shed light on major human processes?

The results of these initial queries are now in your hands: 32 chapters, by 56 scholars (often intergenerational pairs or teams by design), which together help to define and re-define the core knowledge and contributions that constitute the anthropology of education.

The parts of this book represent one of many possible formats we could have chosen for organizing its chapters, but they do reflect close kindred with the broader discipline. In Part I, "Histories and Generations," the chapters tend to explore the history of our subfield and that history's many ramifications – across different nations (e.g., Chapter 1, Anderson-Levitt), into different disciplines (e.g., history, Chapter 5, Rockwell), and "beyond the academy" (e.g., Chapter 8, Schensul). In Part II, "Education via Language," chapters explore the sociolinguistic foundations of much of the best work in our field. Among other things, authors show how the field has explored literacy (Chapter 10, Bartlett *et al.*; Chapter 14, Alim), language policy and socialization

(Chapter 11, McCarty and Warhol; Chapter 12, Baquedano-López and Hernandez), media as education (Chapter 13, Tobin and Henward), and classroom argumentation (Chapter 15, Wright, Kuipers, Viechnicki). In Part III, "States, Identities, and Education," authors explore the complex relationship between political order, subjectivity, and educational process. Domains of inquiry include nationalism (Chapter 16, Benei), citizenship (Chapter 17, Levinson), development and post-colonialism (Chapter 18, Stambach and Ngwane), childhood in civil society (Chapter 19, Anderson), and the action of state policies and proposed educational identities in China (Chapter 20, Fong and Kim), the Middle East (Chapter 21, Adely and Starrett), and Colombia (Chapter 22, Miñana and Arango), respectively. Part IV, "Roles, Experiences, and Institutions," takes up the subfield's work on how particular actors and institutions constitute one another in interactions over schooling; subjects of analysis include teachers (Chapter 25, Jewett and Schultz), immigrant children in schools (Chapter 23, Gibson and Koyama), bureaucratic school systems (Chapter 24, Díaz and Jiménez), and institutions of higher education (Chapter 26, Shumar and Mir). Hamann and Rosen (Chapter 27) point us toward the uniquely anthropological contribution of studying education policy as an institutionally located, concrete form of cultural activity. In Part V, "Interventions," we present examples of the applied and action-oriented work of our field. With strong theoretical grounding, the authors show us how to open transformative spaces through identifying family "funds of knowledge" (Chapter 28, González, Wyman, and O'Connor), developing a methodology for intercultural research dialogue (Chapter 29, Dietz and Mateos), engaging participatory action research with youth (Chapter 30, Cammarota), and documenting the public policy process (Chapter 32, Lopez, Valenzuela, and García). Hurtig and Dyrness (Chapter 31) demonstrate that parents can be – indeed often are – both critical educators and ethnographers themselves.

The chapters in this book also tap vital debates that have shaped our field in the past and continue to shape it today. Indeed, in back and forth with our authors, we have often prodded them to delve more directly into these debates. We wish to challenge any perception of our field as simply recycling formulaic notions about "education." Points of agreement are quite broad – about the importance of ethnography, certainly, and about the legitimacy of inquiry into the concepts and activities of "culture" and "education" – but beyond such generalities, agreement quickly breaks down. One example of such debate – even over the interpretation of a key figure in the field – can be discerned in two of the chapters that nearly bookend this volume. Harry Wolcott provides us with an early history of the subfield's development in the United States, recounting George Spindler's emphasis on cross-cultural fieldwork and "objective" interpretation. Wolcott uses this earlier history to caution today's generation of anthropologists of education against making the "problematic leap" into conducting action-oriented ethnography that explicitly pursues social justice. Yet Julio Cammarota, now (with others in this volume) an influential practitioner of this new kind of activist scholarship in our field, similarly cites George Spindler as theoretical inspiration for his approach.

Perhaps what binds us together most as a subdiscipline is that we engage *both* core tensions of the field of anthropology, *and* core tensions of the interdisciplinary field of "education." That is, we engage core tensions that span both fields. Schools of education, where many of us work, are notorious for the same core tensions named below.

CORE TENSION: WHEN AND WHERE IS "EDUCATION"?

Many of the chapters in this volume take up a core tension in the "anthropology of education": defining the word "education." While many outside our subfield assume that "education" equals "schooling," and that anthropologists of education only study schools, anthropologists of education know perhaps best of all that schooling is just a subset of the education that occurs throughout everyday life (see Friedman Hansen, 1979; Varenne, Chapter 4). At the same time, anthropologists of education study schools more than most other anthropologists. Many of us are deeply engaged in efforts to improve or transform schools, even as we question their efficacy or superiority as sites for learning and try to break down the barriers of theoretical orientation or educational practice that separate schools from other sites and modalities of learning.

Thus, in our subfield at the moment, many of us are attempting actively to remind ourselves and one another that education is far more than schooling alone – that "learning," "teaching," and even "pedagogy" happen everywhere (see, for instance, Varenne (Chapter 4), Erickson (Chapter 2), Tobin and Henward (Chapter 13), Cammarota (Chapter 30), González, Wyman, and O'Connor (Chapter 28)). Baquedano-López and Hernandez (Chapter 12) note that adults' "language socialization" of youth occurs everywhere, not just in schools (or homes); as they write, anthropologists of language socialization seek to understand "how linguistic and cultural competencies are acquired through routine and moment-to-moment interactions, expanding in this way our understanding of education in its broadest sense." Alim (Chapter 14) describes how language socialization *of* youth and *by* youth of everyone else occurs via popular media as well as within classrooms. Bartlett *et al.* (Chapter 10) note that "literacy" practices, too, occur throughout everyday life. Relatedly, in Chapter 21 and Chapter 22, respectively, Adely and Starrett and Miñana and Arango all indicate that schools are sites where cultural dramas get enacted particularly forcefully and explicitly. Issues of "diversity," gender, or religion get played out in schools because they are key sites for controlling young people and thus shaping the future of communities, but not because schools are the only place where these pervasive issues exist. Schools are simply containers and conveyors for culture, period.

CORE TENSION: GROUP CLAIMS VERSUS ANALYSES OF THE COMPLEXITY WITHIN GROUPS

Which claims about "groups" are warranted, and which are oversimplifications or even stereotypes? This question has been core to anthropology for decades. It has played out particularly heatedly in the anthropology of education, since many (but not all) of us study schools, and schools are themselves locations where simplistic ideas about "types of people" get reified (Pollock (ed.), 2008; see especially Díaz and Jiménez (Chapter 24)). Analyses of how elders raise young people are also ripe for oversimplified or stereotypical representations of how "cultures" reproduce themselves (for commentary, see McDermott and Raley (Chapter 3), and Erickson (Chapter 2)).

Indeed, many outsiders assume that anthropologists of education ourselves promote simplified analyses of how different "groups" interact with schools, approach

"achievement," and "achieve." Chapters in this volume, however, demonstrate our more nuanced analysis. Dietz and Mateos (Chapter 29) observe how a politics of identity that gave rise to the "multiculturalism" movement, subsequently institutionalized in educational programs worldwide, runs the risk of essentializing presumed racial and ethnic differences. They counsel us as anthropologists to avoid falling prey to such categorical identities in our work, and they propose an intercultural methodology for navigating difference with more nuance. González, Wyman, and O'Connor (Chapter 28) note how the "Funds of Knowledge" approach, designed to send teachers directly to children's homes to appreciate and learn from the complexity and wisdom there, ironically has been used in the education field to justify simplified analyses of groups' "home lives" for curricular inclusion. They make a call to reclaim the "Funds" project for truly nuanced analyses of actual home lives – in a sense, reclaiming the original ethnographic project of "Funds." Gibson and Koyama (Chapter 23) indicate what a nuanced analysis of immigrants' experiences in US school settings can look like. The experiences and behaviors of immigrants are too varied to simplistically "type" by immigrant "group," as some have done in the past in our field (and continue to do in the field of "education"). At the same time, some key ways of navigating the immigration experience can be analyzed and named, even if such behaviors are distributed widely across varied "groups." In Chapter 20, Fong and Kim ask perhaps most directly: Which claims can really be made about a shared "Chinese" culture or cultural stance toward "education" and childrearing worldwide? Which claims should be made only about the particularities of specific members of Chinese or Chinese-descent populations in particular places and historical periods? Again, ethnography can find patterns in everyday life without stereotyping, and anthropologists of education have a particular responsibility to keep asking and showing how this can be done.

CORE TENSION: DISTRIBUTED VERSUS FOCUSED ATTENTION TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF DIFFERENCE

In producing this book, we made some strategic decisions about the classic question of whether to separate attention to dynamics of "gender" or "class" or "race" or "nation" into separate chapters, or to distribute attention to those central concerns throughout the book. We went with the latter because it better reflected our authors' work, which examines such dynamics across varying domains. For example, Alim's take on Hip Hop (Chapter 14) demonstrates that young people who are typed as members of "races" circulate texts across lines of nation, struggle with received and chosen identity categories, navigate the use of multiple languages, and live complicated lives in which racialized experiences are often, but not always, central. Rather than organize their chapter analyses around codifying "Latino" or "Latin American" experiences in "education," for another example, authors embedded complex considerations of Latino and Latin American participants' lives in analyses of participatory research (Cammarota (Chapter 30)), parent–school relationships (Hurtig and Dyrness (Chapter 31)), language socialization (Baquedano-López and Hernandez (Chapter 12)), policy activism (Valenzuela, Lopez, and García (Chapter 32)), immigration (Gibson and Koyama (Chapter 23)), and post-colonial migration, in settings where no

"national origin" group from Latin America acts as expected (Díaz and Jiménez (Chapter 24)). We similarly considered it better to distribute an attention to gender throughout the volume (e.g., in Adely and Starrett's chapter on education in the Middle East (Chapter 22), in Shumar and Mir's chapter on higher education (Chapter 26), or in Jewett and Schultz's chapter on teachers (Chapter 25); cf. Hurtig and Dyrness (Chapter 31)), even while we also believe that focused attention to specific dynamics of difference in some pieces (e.g., Foley on "class" (Chapter 6)) offers important insights.

This tension (focusing or isolating attention to specific forms of difference and inequality, or distributing that attention) is central to the field of education itself. Indeed, it suffuses the course catalog in nearly every institution of higher education in which we work. In the end, we believe it is more commensurate with human experience to have analysis of various negotiations over difference and inequality distributed throughout the book, rather than isolated in single pieces.

Authors distributed the globe, too, throughout this book, rather than capturing single regions or nations solely in single chapters. Appropriately, our authors themselves come from around the globe. As Kathryn Anderson-Levitt makes very clear in her opening chapter, the anthropology of education has a worldwide purview. In this volume, we attempt to take stock of this purview, and include authors who represent multiple national traditions. Yet we also recognize that our view of the field still remains somewhat parochial, and strongly rooted in the anthropology of education where it developed earliest and most broadly: in the United States. The reasons for this are both pragmatic and personal: this is where our professional networks are strongest (we drew heavily from the Council on Anthropology of Education, a unit of the American Anthropological Association), and this is also where a Companion volume on the field will get most use in graduate education. (Also influencing our choice of authors, topics, and regions to cover was the knowledge that Anderson-Levitt's own book, *Anthropologies of Education*, was well into production. Knowing its contents, we see that book as a kind of complementary volume to our Companion, and together they provide a more comprehensive global view of the field.)

CORE TENSION: "EDUCATION" AS DEVELOPMENT VERSUS EDUCATION AS DOMINATION

Work in our subfield has also engaged the core tension between a view of education as developing – and even liberating – the modern citizen and his or her full potential, and a view of education (particularly schooling) as a tool of state or capitalist control, inculcation, and domination. As Levinson notes in Chapter 17, states and their associated policy elites may develop and reform schooling systems to prepare young people as docile, conforming workers for a global economy, or as "citizens" for robust democratic "participation." Chapters in this volume by Benei (Chapter 16), and Miñana and Arango (Chapter 22), suggest how public education systems in India and Colombia, respectively, inculcate strong nationalist sentiment or neo-liberal subjectivities. The chapters by Anderson-Levitt (Chapter 1), Rockwell (Chapter 5), and Stambach and

Ngwane (Chapter 18) show a more ambiguous landscape, in which the goals of personal/social development and superordinate domination are interwoven in complex ways in national education systems.

Relatedly, different chapters in the book confront another routine paradox: "education" (in schools and throughout everyday life) can be at once an effort to enforce cultural continuity, *and* an effort to promote cultural change (Levinson, 2000). For example, McCarty and Warhol (Chapter 11) discuss the challenge of creating "innovative" curriculum and pedagogy to "conserve" Indigenous languages, and Hurtig and Dyrness (Chapter 31) discuss the challenge of working with Latina mothers to develop "new" writing skills to publicly validate existing ways of mothering.

Core Tension: Advocacy Versus Science

Perhaps because we pay attention to young people more than do scholars in many other fields, anthropologists of education have often been particularly committed to challenging dynamics of inequality that harm young people and their families (for a critique of research that explicitly challenges social injustice, however, see Wolcott (Chapter 7)). Some of us use ethnography to become explicit, unapologetic advocates for improvements to children's lives (e.g., see the policy work of Lopez, Valenzuela, and García (Chapter 32)). Some of us are committed to supporting research participants to clarify and critique the circumstances of their own lives (Hurtig and Dyrness (Chapter 31), Schensul (Chapter 8), and Cammarota (Chapter 30)). In the tradition of Mead (1961), Henry (1963), and others, many of us are explicitly committed to making social critique as we do research, because the lives we join and analyze are themselves plagued by deep social problems and inequalities.

At the same time, anthropologists of education remain committed to analysis that is accurate and empirically grounded; none of us recommend "advocacy" without evidence. We seek ethnographic evidence that helps us to understand "educational" forces and experiences better, and to understand the conditions and forces that structure everyday lives; at times, we propose possible remedies to experiences that seem to participants to be harmful. In doing so, we – like other anthropologists – indeed tend to plant our flags in favor of human experiences that satisfy those living them.

Having identified some of the general commitments and tensions that bind us together, we now invite you into the vibrant conversation that keeps our field alive. There are many different ways to read across these chapters, but whichever way you choose as reader, we feel certain that this work will stimulate a broader conversation about how anthropologists can examine and improve "education."

Acknowledgements

intergenerational slice of our field. Yet of course, any large edited project of this sort always in the end offers just a certain slice of what might or could have been. Over the course of the last two years, we have invited a number of scholars in our field who, for a variety of their own reasons, could not contribute in the end. There were others not invited at the outset only because of original length constraints or expectations that related work would get "covered." We would like to acknowledge even non-authors' sincere interest and input in this project. For example, though the following invited authors in the end did not author chapters, the influence of their work is abundantly on display throughout: Bryan Brayboy, Shirley Brice Heath, Silvia Carrasco, Serafin Coronel-Molina, Margaret Eisenhart, Signithia Fordham, Michele Foster, Judith Green, Linda Herrera, Dorothy Holland, Rodney Hopson and Jackie Carson Copeland, Nancy Hornberger, Mizuko Ito, Jean Lave, Carol Lee and Yolanda Majors, Ritty Lukose, Hugh Mehan, Nobuo Shimahara, Brian Street, Susan Wright … and more!

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