

NEOLIBERALISM AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In this brilliantly and beautifully researched and written book, Sylvia Mac traces the history of neoliberal reforms in education as running parallel, yet antithetical to the inclusive education movement. Fueled by disaster capitalism and the corporatization, Mac draws on DisCrit and critical disability studies to carefully and thoughtfully lay bare the illusion of school choice for minorized and disabled students. I can't wait to teach this important and timely book.

—**Beth A. Ferri**, PhD, Professor, Syracuse University

In a time of increasing movement towards privatization of schools without critical examinations of the impact of that privatization (and the subsequent standardization of notions of “success” and “achievement”) on many subgroups of students, our field needs more thoughtful analyses that encourage deep interrogations of the impact of charter schools on our most vulnerable (and often most overlooked) groups of students. Dr. Sylvia Mac has written a beautiful ethnographic case study of a small charter school, exploring neoliberal ideologies as they intersect with notions of inclusivity and equity for disabled and neurodivergent students of color living in low-income situations. Her book provides important analyses of legacies of inequality throughout the histories of the school choice movement in education and the evolving frameworks for education of students with disabilities, leading to a deep analysis of ways in which ideals of equity and inclusion in a small charter school are irreconcilable with the realities of neoliberal ideas of success within a market of “choice.” Dr. Mac provides important recommendations for policy makers, teacher educators, and researchers interested in best supporting historically marginalized students to truly move towards more egalitarian and supportive educational settings.

—**Betina Hsieh**, PhD, Associate Professor of Teacher Education,
California State University, Long Beach

Sylvia Mac debuts the intersection of disability, inclusive education, and neoliberalism in a critical ethnographic portrayal of a small California charter school. Mac critically questions the concept of inclusion in this setting, showing that neoliberal values and inclusion are mutually exclusive. Inclusion conceals many social issues and neoliberal values,

such as independence, profit accumulation, and competition, which Mac unfolds as she shares her interviews, observations, and review of school documents. Mac deftly illustrates how free market reform has raised the ante for low-income, especially nonnative English-speaking children of color to succeed in an increasingly competitive and standardized schooling environment. We feel Santiago's abandonment by special education staff in the study skills class when he says he's "lost." The general teachers are in a similar situation without help. In the end, children who need differentiated instruction instead become deficient, instead of the system that labels them as so. *Neoliberalism and Inclusive Education* provides a poignant account of charter schooling, revealing that neoliberal values are smokescreened with cost-benefit analyses, strategic plans, and educational outcomes, manufacturing failure for the disabled.

–Denise Blum, PhD, Associate Professor,
Oklahoma State University

With her unfailingly trenchant analysis, Dr. Mac critiques the deployment of capital and power in the service of neoliberalism against vulnerable and underrepresented populations. She brings a critical ethnographic lens on a charter school to address how neoliberal ideology and inclusive education discourses spectacularly fail poor students of color with disabilities, addressing key gaps in what we know about how inclusive education is experienced by underrepresented students.

–Shabana Mir, PhD, Associate Professor,
American Islamic College, Chicago

STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Series Editor: Professor Rodney Hopson, University of Illinois-Urbana
Champaign, USA

Studies in Educational Ethnography presents original research monographs and edited volumes based on ethnographic perspectives, theories, and methodologies. Such research will advance the development of theory, practice, policy, and praxis for improving schooling and education in neighborhood, community, and global contexts.

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NEOLIBERALISM AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Students with Disabilities in the
Education Marketplace

BY

SYLVIA MAC

University of La Verne, USA



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*For my little peanut, who makes me better every day and without whom,
this book would not exist.*

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PREFACE

Sylvia Mac's book, *Neoliberalism and inclusive education*, extends her foundational dissertation analysis and brings more into focus the difficulties faced by students who face realities of urban school reform and disability by juxtaposing and presenting lives and experiences of students with disabilities in systems that promise educational excellence and innovation. Especially timely, Mac's book both interrogates the one-size-fits-all educational planning and mechanisms at place in the state of California and offers nuanced ways to think about ways to approach interdisciplinary, ethnography research in schools. It presents thoughtfully carved arguments, building on theories and epistemologies in the fields of education (broadly defined), educational anthropology, urban schooling, and especially where inclusive and special education are critical vessels to situate her work.

Mac's book (Volume 17) further entrenches the movement of the *Studies in Educational Ethnography* book series from the United Kingdom (founded in the mid-2000s by Prof. Geoffrey Walford) to the United States. Walford is credited with birthing the series, and the volume has been a catalyst for ethnographic research, perspectives, and methodologies featured that would extend our understandings of sociocultural educational phenomena and their global and local meanings. Since the move to the United States, we have now published:

- Volume 13: New directions in educational ethnography: Shifts, problems, and reconstruction (Rodney Hopson, William Rodick, Akashi Kaul, eds.)
- Volume 14: Native American Bilingual Education: An ethnography of powerful forces (Cheryl Crawley)
- Volume 15: Racial inequality in mathematics education: Exploring academic identity as a sense of belonging (Thierry Elin-Saintaine)
- Volume 16: Black boys' lived and everyday experiences in STEM (KiMi Wilson)

Now located in the Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology, Measurement, and Evaluation (QUERIES), Department of Educational Psychology, the

College of Education has been the academic home to multiple traditions of research and evaluation scholarship in humanities and social sciences for decades. Just as Walford had built a community of qualitative and ethnographic researchers through venues such as through Ethnography and Education conferences initially held at St. Hilda's College and other venues such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA), we too on this side of the pond have venues to extend the scholarly work for greater discovery and engagement, such as the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI) which hosts hundreds of scholars and practitioners who travel from around the world to the cornfields of Illinois or others such as the Ethnography of Education Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, Council on Anthropology and Education/American Anthropological Association and the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and other associations in the United States and North America.

The primary objective of *Studies in Educational Ethnography* is to present original research monographs or edited volumes based on ethnographic perspectives, theories, and methodologies. Such research will advance the development of theory, practice, policy, and praxis for improving schooling and education in neighborhood, community, and global contexts. In complex neighborhood, community, and global contexts, educational ethnographies should situate themselves beyond isolated classrooms or single sites and concern themselves with more than narrow methodological pursuits. Rather, the ethnographic research, perspectives, and methodologies featured in this series should extend our understandings of sociocultural educational phenomena and their global and local meanings. Studying classrooms and educational communities without concomitant understanding of the dynamics of broader structural forces renders ethnographic analyses potentially incomplete. We welcome the opportunity to engage colleagues who have ideas that may contribute to our series!

Rodney Hopson, *Volume Editor*