

main finding—that there is an independent relationship between people’s way of defining a human and their position on human rights—underscores a few academic claims but disabuses us of many others with empirical evidence, the first such study that has been done. Implicitly, the book suggests how we learn *falsely* to believe that biology is the culprit—namely, through the rehearsal of old academic debates in familiar yet unsubstantiated terms. *What is a Human?* is poised to change the very terms of this debate.

Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education, by **Michael Fabricant** and **Stephen Brier**. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. 310 pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781421420677.

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The contours of the story are well known: neoliberal logic is infiltrating higher education, accompanied with market solutions, public disinvestment, and a push toward efficiency. While everyone is familiar with the general argument, in *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier do a masterful job of moving from the abstract to the everyday. Instead of decrying amorphous “neoliberal forces,” *Austerity Blues* is filled with actors: those who built higher education systems in California and New York, those whose best intentions had unintended consequences, those who fought and either won or lost. The account provided in *Austerity Blues* is as refreshing as it is detailed and thoughtful. It also recognizes that public higher education—and, in particular, the funding of public higher education—is a consequence of policy decisions: there is nothing preordained about the current state of affairs, which gives *Austerity Blues* a hopeful ending.

The first three chapters of the book provide the political and economic context of higher education. The first chapter outlines the overall argument of the book, depicted through six propositions about the

restructuring of higher education; and the second two chapters, in addition to providing the national context, offer an engaging account of the higher education systems in California and New York (primarily CUNY, but also SUNY) from the Second World War through the 1970s. These chapters highlight the role of leadership, the influence of broader economic and political forces, and the importance of coalition-building.

The story of the struggle at CUNY to maintain free tuition as well as enact open admissions is quite telling. When Governor Rockefeller was almost certain that he had won the battle to abolish free tuition at CUNY in the early 1960s, the CUNY Board of Higher Education, along with alumni associations and New York City’s economic and political elites, joined forces in opposition to the plan. They won. Yet it was a bittersweet victory, as they lost the battle for state investment in building additional campuses and hiring faculty to accommodate the rapidly growing student population.

A similarly bittersweet victory for open admissions opened doors to many New Yorkers who were previously denied access to higher education; yet without adequate funding, including funding necessary to compensate for a lack of preparation in the city’s K–12 system, the system struggled financially and over time succumbed to both more stringent admission standards and to charging tuition. While it is clear whom the authors support, they provide a balanced account of these events. Moreover, even though they in many ways laud the time before the neoliberal era, they do not romanticize the past—they acknowledge the relentless challenges in the economic and political spheres and great inequalities among students and institutions even in the “golden era.”

The next three chapters take on central issues in neoliberal public universities: privatization, inequality, and technology. Privatization has many dimensions, from decreasing public investment to growing tuition and debt, the rise of for-profit institutions, growing attention to patents and other research-related sources of revenue, and online education. As a stratification scholar, I was particularly eager to read the chapter

on inequality. Although the overall patterns were foreshadowed in several places earlier, this chapter addresses both the individual and structural dimensions of inequality. Structurally, higher education is becoming increasingly unequal, with institutions at the top and bottom growing further apart. In addition, students are unequally distributed: those with the greatest needs are concentrated overwhelmingly at poorly resourced institutions and are carrying an ever-growing debt burden to finance their education.

I was surprised that variation within institutions—in particular, honors colleges, majors with special admissions requirements, and other ways in which schools create internal inequalities—did not get more attention in this chapter. Indeed, variation in student outcomes within institutions is greater than variation across them. Also, unfortunately, the current evidence on student learning in higher education and how specific factors, whether expenditures or faculty type, contribute to it, especially across different sociodemographic groups, is rather limited, leaving Fabricant and Brier with more suppositions than evidence-based arguments in those domains.

Although technology was already discussed in some depth in earlier chapters (with respect to MOOCs and for-profit institutions, which primarily offer courses online), Chapter Six is dedicated to the role of technology in instruction. This chapter takes the reader on a historical journey from correspondence courses to early experiments with computer-assisted instruction, digital start-up partnerships, open educational resources, and, finally, MOOCs. The history is fascinating and worth reading, as it provides a unique window into the current discussion. The underlying tone of the chapter is that technological initiatives are pursued in order to lower costs without regard for quality or equity—and, indeed, that they deepen inequality, particularly between public and private institutions (and students attending them).

The final chapter, in addition to the authors' manifesto for higher education, offers glimpses of hope through examples of resistance and faculty-led innovation. The authors provide a range of examples,

including the CUNY Digital Commons (a digital platform that allows faculty and graduate students to exchange ideas), the student debt strike after Corinthian Colleges filed for bankruptcy protection, the Tennessee Promise and other efforts advocating for free tuition at community colleges, and faculty resistance to Pathways (a curriculum standardization effort argued to lead to curriculum dilution) at CUNY. In addition to describing these inspiring examples, I wish the authors had engaged more extensively with variation across institutions. There is growing evidence that institutions within the same selectivity category and facing the same financial constraints have notably different approaches to market pressures and produce different student outcomes. While Arizona State University, led by Michael Crow, is highlighted as an example of a neoliberal university, there are many other institutions whose presidents and administrators have resisted (or at the very least moderated) the same market-driven tendencies. This variation is difficult to reconcile with the authors' conceptualization of administrators as neoliberal agents, framed in contrast to faculty and students, who are portrayed as champions of educational quality and equity.

One of the most profound sentences in the final chapter appears in the discussion of coalition-building, noting how various groups will participate in the struggle for the long haul "if they understand what they are resisting and what they are fighting to win" (p. 246). So far, it seems to me, we (higher education more broadly and higher education faculty specifically) have primarily focused on the resistance: resistance to state imposition of a one-sided vision of higher education, to economic interests dominating decision-making, to narrow metrics of student and faculty success. But we have been slow to offer a counter-narrative or an alternative set of solutions that are viable within the current economic and political context.

Austerity Blues raises many crucial questions about the purposes of public higher education, pervasive (and growing) inequality, and the consequences of divestment and austerity politics. Most importantly, it ends by asking: "What's next?" And in that question, it urges each one of us to

individually and collectively think about the future and our contribution to that future.

Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory, by Julian Go. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 248 pp. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780190625146.

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Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory is a book that sociologists ought to read and discuss. Author Julian Go calls for a new postcolonial sociology, one that makes visible and “critically examines the *culture* and *episteme* of empire” (p. 19). This is necessary because sociology and social theory emerged in the “heartland of empire” and are “part and parcel of the imperial episteme” (p. 4). As a result, social theory and sociology occlude the centrality of empire to modernity. This occlusion generates two major problems. The first one is metrocentrism. That is, sociology and social theory look at the world from the centers of empire. From this perspective, it is possible to see certain things, such as the rise of industrial capitalism, bureaucracy, and instrumental rationality, but not others, such as the reliance of capitalism on colonial exploitation, dispossession, racialization, and colonial difference.

The second problem that affects social theory and sociology is analytical bifurcation: the core regions of empire are seen as detached from its peripheries. The histories of the centers of empire are seen as unconnected to the histories of the empire’s peripheries. That allows social theory and sociology, for example, to talk about underdevelopment as detached from development, or to see the experience of migration from poorer to richer countries as detached from the history of empire and colonialism.

Postcolonial thought provides a way out of these problems. This is because postcolonial thought developed in opposition to empire. Go distinguishes two waves of postcolonial thought. The first one is composed of anticolonial thinkers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, and Frantz Fanon. These were

scholars and anticolonial activists who focused on a critique of the political economy of colonialism—although they also developed a critique of racialized and colonial subjectivity. In sociology, the main figure of the first wave was W. E. B. Du Bois. The second wave of postcolonial thought was composed mainly of academics situated in humanities departments, such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, who developed a critique of colonial forms of knowledge and representation.

Go builds on postcolonial thought to propose solutions to the problems of analytical bifurcation and metrocentrism.¹ To address analytical bifurcation, Go proposes to embrace relationality—that is, to look at different histories in their connections. The units of analysis are not isolated nation-states or national societies, but the patterns of relations between different states and societies. To address metrocentrism, Go proposes a subaltern standpoint—looking at the world from its peripheries—embedded in a broader perspectival realism. The latter means that no particular perspective or theory—including the postcolonial one—can get a full picture of social reality. It is a call for a pluralist sociology that allows for multiple perspectives on the social world.

Relationality, a subaltern standpoint, and perspectival realism are the building blocks of Go’s postcolonial sociology, a sociology that aims to address both the economic and cultural legacies of empire. Go builds these ideas on the works of postcolonial theorists, but he also argues that they are consistent with the work of contemporary social theorists, such as Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory or Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory.

The book is very well written and clearly argued. The chapters that describe previous waves of postcolonial thought provide an excellent introduction for sociologists who are not familiar with the work of the

¹ Julian Go also argues that sociology is relevant to postcolonial thought because it provides it with the empirical elements to develop its critique. This argument is interesting and important, but it is less developed and less relevant to the conversations this book needs to generate in sociology.