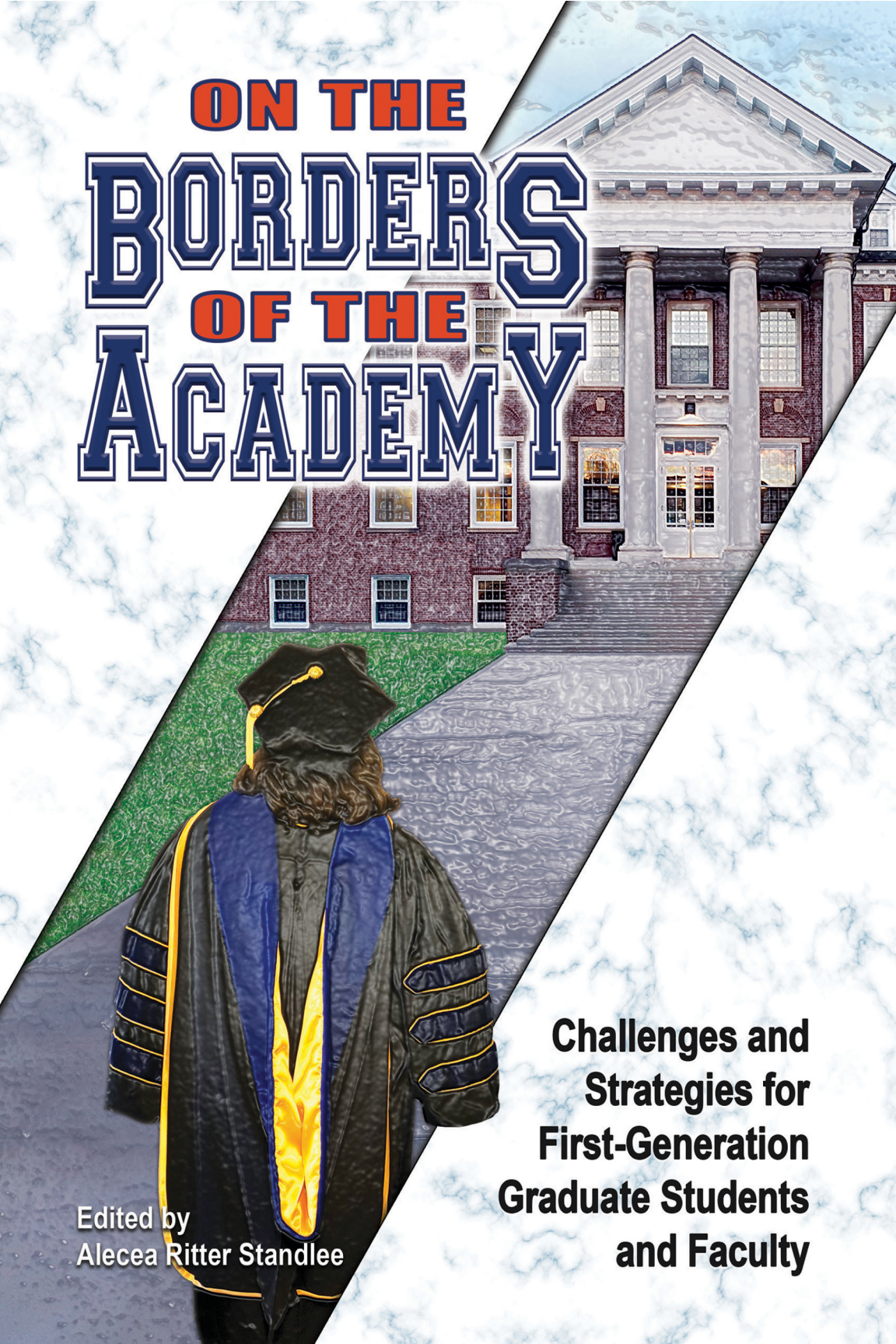
ON THE BORDERS OF THE ACADEMY



Challenges and Strategies for First-Generation Graduate Students and Faculty

Edited by
Alecea Ritter Standlee

ON THE BORDERS OF THE ACADEMY

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Vincent Serravallo is a first-generation college graduate and academic from working-class origins. His parents and their parents, none of whom went beyond grade school, were brickyard workers, garment workers, and construction laborers in New York's Hudson Valley dating back to the early 1900s. Brought up with a high regard for education, he received his bachelor's degree in sociology from the State University of New York at Oswego. After graduating, he worked at a large insurance company to earn money for graduate school. Based on the union campaign he experienced at that job, he wrote a master's thesis at the University of Kansas that analyzed employers' aggressive anti-union campaigns. In a later study, he found that university administrators used union-avoidance methods nearly identical to those of private businesses when faced with union drives by faculty. For his doctorate in sociology at the City University of New York Graduate Center, he combined ideas of Karl Marx and George Herbert Mead to study the influence of less-alienated labor on intergenerational mobility in a working-class community. His present research concerns academic labor in an era of changing higher education. He currently lives in Rochester, New York, and is an associate professor of sociology at Rochester Institute of Technology, where he teaches social and cultural theory, sociology of work, social inequality, and foundations of sociology.

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Alecea Ritter Standlee is a first-generation Ph.D. and college professor. Raised in poor rural communities by low-wage service workers in the Pacific Northwest, Alecea found her niche in higher education. After completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Idaho, she worked for multinational computer company, Dell Inc., but quickly realized her passion was in education. She would go on to earn a Ph.D. in sociology from Syracuse University, as well as an M.A. in women's studies at the University of Cincinnati. Her dissertation, "The Real Virtual World: Techno-Mediated Relationships in the Lives of College-Age Adults," conducted under the supervision of postmodern theorist Prof. Jackie Orr and feminist scholar Prof. Marjory DeVault, explored how communication technologies are used to establish, negotiate, and maintain interpersonal relationships. This experience solidified her commitment to principles of inclusion, social justice, and active scholarship. As a qualitative researcher, Alecea believes that giving voice to underrepresented research participants will yield robust and valuable data about the social world. Today, as a professor at Gettysburg College, she specializes in teaching and research in the areas of social theory, gender, sociology of technology, and social inequality, with a particular emphasis on the impact of first-generation status on the college experience. Her current scholarship examines the social and cultural implications of communication technologies on the role of socio-economic status, gender, and geographic location in the formation of interpersonal relationships and complex social networks.

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INTRODUCTION

Alecea Ritter Standlee

The 21st century, though not long underway, has already become an era of paradigmatic shifts in the culture and experience of higher education, especially in the Western world. Higher education in the United States, for example, is in the midst of great transformation. Even as higher education becomes ever more essential for lifelong success, the cost of college is increasing. Financial support for public institutions has declined, and student financial aid burdens graduates with more debt than ever before. These shifts are fundamentally linked to the history of increasing accessibility and decreasing exclusivity of higher education in the latter half of the 20th century. As a result of shifting social expectations and the rise of egalitarian philosophies of education, institutions of higher learning have worked to provide a more diverse and less stratified experience for students and faculty, making higher education more accessible to more students. At the heart of this transformation is the first-generation student. In order to understand this transformation, it is essential to discuss what first-generation and working-class status means, as well as some of the specific challenges students with this status face in today's academy.

Before we consider the challenges and controversies that surround first-generation students and faculty in higher education, we must first

address a matter of definition. On the surface, first-generation academic status is easily defined: it applies to graduate students and faculty whose parents did not graduate from, or perhaps even attend, college. Yet this group is deeply diverse and profoundly complex. Traditional intersectional frameworks that link together social class (which may function as a proxy for first-generation status), racial identity, and gender identity are a useful starting point for defining first-generation students. However, seeking to better understand the experience of the first-generation student requires a much more complex approach. While in some cases class status can provide insight into first-generation status, specifically for poor and working-class individuals, no simple correlation between these terms can be assumed. An educated parent may be financially successful or destitute, and their education may have taken place at an elite university or a struggling community college. Similarly, a less educated parent may be financially successful, thus allowing a very different educational experience for a child than a financially desperate parent could provide. Furthermore, racial identity, especially if coupled with immigrant status, may be profoundly impactful for first-generation academics. Due to the diversity of intersectional identities among this group, it is difficult to articulate a universal experience, though the authors in this volume effectively express shared experiences among many, if not all, first-generation scholars.

To further compound this complexity, many authors in this volume have elected to utilize a culturally specific class identity that in some cases functions as proxy for their first-generation identity. The identity of "working class," like "first generation," carries with it a host of meanings, some of which include undertones of racial identity—often whiteness—within the highly contested political environment that we currently inhabit. During the contentious 2016 election year, the discursive identity of "white working class," which has a long and complex racial history, was again a central tool to maintain racial and class hierarchies. In the aftermath of the election, due in part to partisan media and through the efforts of a revitalized white supremacist movement, the term "working class" became a proxy for a particular brand of racialized narrative. This narrative focused on maintaining racial barriers between working-class whites and non-whites, policed carefully by both poor whites—who faced the decline of their own white privilege, while struggling to deal with class marginalization—and wealthy political elites who benefit from an internally divided working class. Despite the co-option of the label "working class" as a political tool to support racial hierarchies, many working-class

people of all races struggle against this narrative as they enter both the work force and higher education.

In addition, working-class status, as a marginalized identity, may extend to individuals who would normally be excluded from the category "first generation," in the sense that one or both parents may have completed some form of higher education, but were not able to parlay that into movement up the socio-economic ladder. These "mixed-status" students may experience a cultural environment and childhood socialization similar to more traditional first-generation students, despite some parental familiarity with college. In order to address some of these complexities, we must cultivate a tolerance for ambiguity. Therefore, in this volume, the terms first generation and working class, rather than being constrained by strict definitional guidelines, are allowed to serve as self-defined identity categories. Like racial, religious, or sexual identity categories, first-generation and working-class status are narratively constructed and often contested by the very individuals who define themselves as such. In addition, evolving social and political contexts add to the shifting nature of these conceptual frameworks. At times, this means that contradictions and slippery abstractions may emerge in the volume. Yet if we value the voices of first-generation and working-class scholars themselves, as well as the knowledge gained through research, such discursive slippage must be embraced. Discursive flexibility is essential to knowledge generation in this evolving field, as the diverse contributors (and, in many cases, their research participants) attest.

Definitions notwithstanding, much recent research has been done on the experiences and challenges faced by first-generation and working-class undergraduate students, in both public and private institutions of higher learning. What has emerged is evidence of an educational system that is struggling with the demands and the limitations imposed by a changing political environment and by shifts in the demographic makeup and cultural identities within the student population. From the perspective of the first-generation student, the challenges and demands of entering the higher educational environment are immense. Some of these challenges are the result of external forces that target higher education with attacks that are disproportionally visited upon the historically marginalized, including poor and working-class first-generation students. The recently passed 2017 tax bill, which pays for tax cuts for high earners and corporations in part by targeting higher education, along with the massive budget cuts to state-supported public colleges and universities we have

seen in recent years, undermines accessibility to college for first-generation and low-income students. This trend has begun to reverse some of the educational gains made in the late 20th century. As educational access and upward mobility become more difficult for the poor and working class, anti-intellectualism and distrust of science and information grow—as does, not coincidentally, income inequality and the power of social and political elites. Today, working-class and first-generation students, even as they struggle to adapt and internalize the social norms of their new educational environments, continue to face difficulties shaped by regressive forces that seek to undermine higher education as a means to maintain social hierarchies and concentrate power into the hands of a few.

Research in this area has made profound contributions to general knowledge about the experience of first-generation students, especially undergraduates. Committed institutions have developed programs to better support the needs of this group, and lobbyists and activists have worked to push back the rising tide of anti-intellectualism that endangers access to quality higher learning for all students, including those in the first generation. At the same time, graduate students and faculty members from first-generation and/or working-class backgrounds face profound disconnections and challenges as they enter the academic job market. The experiences of graduate students and faculty members have been less comprehensively researched than those of undergraduate students, and the goal of this volume is to contribute to the emerging field of study in this area. Unlike undergraduates, who, while they may struggle to adapt and succeed, generally view higher education as a temporary—albeit profoundly transformational—life stage, many graduate students and most faculty members view higher education as their life's work. In order to understand their experiences, it is necessary to look at the interactions between both the individual and his or her class status, the institutional expectations and norms of individual colleges and universities, and the broader social environment of higher education. In order to understand the experience of the first-generation and working-class graduate students and faculty members represented in this volume, it is useful to begin with a discussion of the broader cultural environment in which higher education, and those committed to it, are situated.

Situating Higher Education, Past and Present

Historically, the United States has been a leader in educational innovation. This is, no doubt, in part because of the complex relationship between

public education and civil society. That an educated public is necessary to allow for effective and informed participation in the democratic process is not a concept that originated in the United States, but nonetheless has informed federal and state support for education since the creation of the earliest public schools. Yet even as public primary and secondary education were embraced by educational activists and reformers in the 19th and 20th centuries, higher education remained, in many ways, the province of the rarified social classes.

Access to higher education has been denied again and again to marginalized groups within American society. Women and people of color have been viewed as unfit to enter the hallowed halls of knowledge, and have faced opposition, both explicit and implicit, in accessing higher education. Yet educational institutions arose to meet the needs of those otherwise left out in the cold. Women's colleges and Historically Black Colleges/Universities played an essential role in allowing access to higher education. Higher education has functioned as a gateway to middle- and upper-class lifestyles, imparting intellectual gifts as well as financial and social capital on a select few. Despite these emerging spaces of inclusivity, educational attainment for marginalized racial groups remained well below that of their white counterparts for much of the 20th century, while women remained underrepresented in many fields. A major reason for the persistence of these inequalities is evident in their intersection with class status.

For the poor and working class, educational attainment remained low throughout the early 20th century, though whites and men did slightly better than other groups. Thus, in the middle of the 20th century, demands for fundamental transformations in higher education emerged. Access to educational resources led to the ability to more directly engage in civil society, and the demand that the benefits of higher education be extended beyond the middle and upper classes to the poor and working class began a new transformation in higher education. The demands on educational institutions, communities, and governments were reflections of an era of civil and cultural engagement, when change was embraced and social upheaval was normalized. Higher education responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm, but doors previously closed to the poor and working class opened, and higher education became a space in which students who benefited from intergenerational transmissions of educational privilege sat side by side with first-generation students, who were, fundamentally, strangers in a strange land.

This change in access led to a fundamental shift in the cultural view of higher education. No longer a space of exclusivity, higher education has become increasingly important for long-term financial and career success. Yet, as is often the case when a space of privilege is made available to the marginalized, it becomes subject to delegitimization. For example, when women enter a previously masculine-dominated work space, the status and financial rewards of that industry tend to decline. This reflects a cultural misogyny that associates femininity with being "lesser." Higher education is increasingly inhabited by women, people of color, and the poor and working class in the form of first-generation students. As a result, higher education has been targeted by individuals and groups who, unable to maintain the elitism of the space, have focused on devaluing it.

For most of its history, higher education represented, at its core, the expansion of the human mind and scientific development, the encouragement of intellectual curiosity, and the cultivation of a flexible mind. Effectively, the goal was to foster a broad set of knowledge and skills that allowed for long-term career success, deep and profound engagement in civil discourse, and personal happiness. In response to the demands for access to and equality in higher education, political actors, beginning with Ronald Reagan and today including a significant majority of conservative political figures, began to characterize higher education, not as a means to develop a comprehensive understanding of the universe, a space to develop a profound life philosophy or to make scientific discoveries that contribute to the sum total of human knowledge, but rather as a means to get a job. Furthermore, attempts to undermine educational quality, especially in public higher education, have taken the form of pressure on institutions to present speakers with no scientific or educational merit on equal terms with luminaries in their field. The effect of these transformations has been to deny the historic benefits of higher education to women, people of color, and perhaps most completely to the poor and working-class students who fought so hard for access to these benefits, even as it stabilizes and even expands the concentration of power among elites. In the current social environment, explicit attacks on higher education have had profound consequences. A 2017 study of social attitudes found that over half of all registered Republicans consider higher education harmful to the country, and support for educational budget cuts as well as increased taxation on institutions and students has grown. States across the United States have cut budgets to higher education, forced the hiring of business leaders as university presidents, and

undermined educational freedoms in the form of political attacks and the removal of tenure protections. Meanwhile, current federal government leaders have proposed increased taxes on colleges and universities, implemented cuts to and limitations on student lending and, as this volume goes to press, are working toward widespread cuts to public education as a whole. Such successful attempts to increase barriers to education have become increasingly successful, resulting in a concentration of power among the wealthiest and most politically powerful citizens. This allows for the increasing control of elites over financial, political, and discursive realms, rendering higher education and the media, which have historically functioned as sites for democratic discourse and the transmission of knowledge, as embattled resisters or even co-opted tools of the powerful.

At the same time, we have seen the normalization of cultural discourse that calls into question the value of higher education, creating a narrative that focuses increasingly on credentialing and applied labor, specifically for the working class. While upper-class families continue to consider high-quality education a necessary part of their world, poor and working-class families are increasingly encouraged to view education as either a credentialing barrier to a regular income or an unnecessary indulgence. This discourse also constructs higher education, specifically the liberal arts tradition, as not simply elitist, but destructive to working-class identities and culture. Higher levels of education have long been linked with socially progressive attitudes and a decline in discriminatory behavior, and political actors who work to maintain social stratification have seized upon this reality as a means to undermine the value of education by defining it as propaganda. The consequences of these events cannot be overstated, as first-generation and working-class families have increasingly internalized the notion that education is a useless hoop to jump through at best, and undesirable or even harmful to people at worst, rather than as a means to a more stable, healthier, and happier life. As education becomes less accessible due to limitations on financial support, and less desirable due to discursive constructions that make it seem worthless or destructive to working-class and poor families, first-generation students who do enter higher education face significant barriers to their success.

In this ideological struggle about the meaning and nature of higher education, the first-generation and working-class student has become the site of conflicting narratives. On one side, social and political actors normalize the idea that the first-generation and working-class student is most in need of, and demanding of, a career-focused trajectory that values credentials and efficiency over knowledge generation and acquisition. The

other side of the philosophical divide argues that what first-generation, working-class students need and want most are the foundational educational resources that foster intellectual curiosity and critical thinking, both of which have been at the root of higher education since antiquity. Faced with this narrative conflict, and struggling with a hostile political environment, institutions have responded in a variety of ways. Some have adopted a vocational, career-focused model, moving away from the ideal of a comprehensive education—as evidenced by the decline in support for general education curricula and the rise of educational models that focus on rapid degree completion rather than quality of instruction. Others—most commonly elite institutions—have in effect demanded class assimilation from new students, implicitly communicating expectations that student conform to upper-class norms of behavior and adopt upper-class cultural identities in order to succeed. Such institutions can become cultural monoliths profoundly alienating to first-generation and working-class students.

Institutions whose social norms and identity are rooted in a history of upper-class, elite culture can find their traditions and expectations under attack, both from groups that question their elitism and from groups that challenge the value of their educational goals. One response may be to resist changes in culture and defend age-old institutional traditions. This can impose demands for conformity that are challenging for all individuals within the institution, but profoundly so for first-generation students, faculty, and staff. For example, collegiality and departmental "fit" often require that faculty and grad students demonstrate class conformity through their knowledge of art, music, and international travel, as well as their skill in adopting upper-class customs in social situations like formal dinners and cocktail parties. Upper-class expectations about conflict management styles, self-promotion, social networking, family and work structures, and physical appearance and dress, can shape perceptions of fit and belonging for first-generation faculty and graduate students. All of these factors can play a role in how successful graduate students and faculty are in securing grants, finding appropriate mentorship, and advancing within the profession.

Thoughtful institutions will attempt to create genuine flexibility in accommodating a changing student and faculty population, and continue to provide quality comprehensive education in the true liberal arts sense. Institutions that work to include diverse race, class, sexual, and cultural identities within their faculty and staff, as well as within their curriculum,

provide a more positive and welcoming environment. Some institutions require courses that address diverse class and racial experiences, while others maintain theme housing or student support groups for first-generation, nontraditional, and other marginalized populations. Focusing on inclusion and support not only helps first-generation students succeed, but also fosters a more diverse, adaptable, and emotionally intelligent student body and faculty culture.

Whatever their strategies, colleges and universities across the country have faced profound changes, many of which are linked with the rise in first-generation, working-class, and other previously excluded groups. Even as institutions of higher learning struggle with both the real differences in their increasingly diverse student bodies (both graduate and undergraduate) and faculty, and the pressures imposed by external actors seeking to preserve cultural exclusivity, students and faculty members also struggle with new cultural and social expectations, many of which are currently in flux. Faced with conflicting demands to support free speech and condemn hate speech, to embrace diversity but also welcome conservative outlooks, faculty and students may experience a kind of intellectual paralysis. At the same time that they struggle to support and integrate first-generation students, institutions are faced with political and financial coercion to reinforce and even recreate barriers to upward mobility. Furthermore, faculty and students find it difficult to navigate a first-generation and working-class identity increasingly controlled and defined by a small group of anti-intellectual and anti-equality figures. To date, relatively few scholars have written on the difficulties faced by first-generation and working-class graduate students and faculty in academia. This volume seeks to provide an outlet for innovative research and personal narratives in this area. Here we find mentors and peers sharing the strategies that have allowed them to survive, and sometimes thrive, in academic settings across the country.

Understanding the Experience of Working-Class Faculty

As many of the researchers and essayists in this volume discuss, first-generation and working-class academics often find themselves in a liminal space, negotiating transitions and conflicts between the upper-middle-class norms of their peers and work environments and the norms embedded in their working-class histories. While the scholars represented in this volume approach the experiences and needs of working-class and first-generation academics from a variety of perspectives, taken together they provide a

rich discussion of the issues surrounding higher education in general and class-based challenges in particular.

The first section focuses on first-generation career academics—those who have spent, or are poised to spend, their working lives in higher education. Engaging such issues as work environment, marginality, social capital, and educational background, these contributors provide a profile of the contemporary first-generation faculty member, conveying a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by first-generation professors and academic professionals as they work and teach within the academy. In this discussion, we see several key elements central to understanding the experience of working-class and first-generation faculty members in higher education. They articulate the fundamental truth that higher education is shaped by its history as a middle- and upper-class environment. The social and cultural norms of higher education are, at a very basic level, a reflection of the cultural norms of upper-middle-class Americans.

In Chapter 1, Vincent Serravallo explores the fundamental challenges of moving into and across the cultural and class boundaries of higher education. As a working-class academic—that is, an individual from a working-class home who has now entered the rarified heights of academe—he effectively describes the very real cultural differences and challenges faced by such class transgressors. Jim Vander Putten also engages with the challenges of class transgression as he addresses the transformational role educational experiences in the lives of college faculty from working-class and first-generation backgrounds.

Michelle Tokarczyk brings together the issues of first-generation and class status by addressing the complex interactions among her own lived experience, the institutional norms of a liberal arts college, and the tensions that exist between institutions and faculty members as a result of class difference. Meghan Pifer and Karley Riffe's chapter investigates the perceptions of academic work within the academy as they are articulated and understood by working-class and first-generation academics, as derived through a content analysis of their self-reflective writing. Among the most profound of their findings is the degree to which working-class academics struggle with the kind of inter-class border crossings that Serravallo so ably delineates. Together, these chapters provide a powerful picture of the cultural environment of academic workers and highlight some of the ways in which social class plays a profound role in success and survival.

As Serravallo and Pifer and Riffe discuss in detail, the social norms of

higher education are often fundamentally different from the norms of working-class Americans. This can have profound effects on working-class and first-generation academics' mobility within an institution. Failure to effectively conform to social norms may lead to the kind of interpersonal conflict between colleagues that can damage departments for decades. Furthermore, any attempt to introduce working-class norms into an institutional culture can be viewed negatively not only by colleagues, but by students and administrators. Working-class academics run the risk of being viewed as "difficult" or "gauche," which can have long-term career impacts.

Yet "passing" as upper-middle class, which involves conforming, is not without its risks. At times, establishing the trust needed to build social capital within one's new class environment can mean the abandonment of old bonds and the unlearning of skills previously considered essential. In effectively passing as a member of the elite, working-class academics are encouraged to entirely differentiate themselves from other members of their birth class. Furthermore, as Tokarczyk notes, working-class and/or first-generation academics may also experience "imposter syndrome." The persistent sense of not belonging has both personal and professional consequences. This section provides a comprehensive and thought-provoking assessment of the challenges faced by the working-class/first-generation faculty members within the academy. For those interested in entering this environment and who will engage in class transgression to do so, the experience can be both challenging and rewarding. Graduate school is the entry point and "makes or breaks" their professionalization as academics.

Graduate Students and Academic Professionalization

The second section of this volume is devoted to the experience of academic professionalization and graduate school socialization. These contributors focus on addressing lived experiences of graduate students as a labor force, as students, and as individuals engaged in the difficult work of reshaping their understanding of the world. The scholars represented in this section have worked to identify and articulate an academic culture in which the demands and the limitations imposed by changing educational environments are disproportionally visited upon the historically marginalized, including poor and working-class first-generation graduate students. Within an increasingly competitive and challenging environment, first-generation students, who lack the social capital of many of their peers, face unique challenges. As working-class and first-generation

graduate students engage with the process of academic socialization and professionalization, they experience not only new expectations and new modes of social and intellectual engagement, but also experiences that conflict with their own sense of identity and values.

Kathleen Mullins explores the experiences of working-class graduate students, challenging conventional narratives rooted in individualistic explanations of these academic success stories, while also identifying important "resilience factors" such as access to strong K–12 educational programs, emotional support, and lived experiences that foster responsibility and self-discipline. She challenges the notion of a universally positive experience in these supposed success stories, arguing that graduate school confronts first-generation students with high expectations for acculturation to the norms of academia. As a result, cultural differences that are accepted in undergraduate students become increasingly difficult to manage for students at the graduate level.

David Marquard elaborates on this theme, examining the narratives of working-class graduate students who experience their engagement with the culture of academia as a frustrating experience of "outsider status." Highlighting issues such as anger and shame, he addresses the emotional and narrative consequences of this marginalization, as working-class graduate students struggle to fit into their new environment. Mullins and Marquard both address experiences of loss rooted in family and class identity, and the sense of marginality experienced by working-class graduate students inside the classroom and within academia in general.

Faculty and academic professionals often expect graduate students to be comfortable with the social and cultural discourse of higher education, and with the middle- and upper-class environment in which it has historically been situated. Elvia Ramirez expands upon this issue, discussing the ways in which not only class and first-generation status, but also race and ethnicity, play a profound role in academic professionalization. Addressing the personal experiences of Latino/as and the institutional norms and expectations that surround them, Ramirez effectively illustrates the sense of marginality experienced by working-class students in general and by working-class students of color in particular. She notes how cultural practices normalized within higher education can create an environment of hostility for first-generation Latino/as that is rooted in both race and class differences.

The writing team of Aaron Hoy, Marcus Bell, Selene Cammer-Bechtold, and Mauricio Torres further this discussion by analyzing the

specific structures that make the academy a foreign and even hostile place for working-class and first-generation students, and for students of color. The neoliberalization of higher education has fundamentally reshaped higher education in ways that have profound impacts on both daily practices and career trajectories. As first-generation academics, the authors of this chapter acknowledge the ways in which their experience of the academy is shaped by the increasing focus on professionalization and consumerism, with a corresponding decrease in attention to the creation of knowledge. Yet they also ably articulate the ways in which acknowledging such forces in no way keeps them from being subject to them.

JanRose Ottaway Martin provides a comprehensive discussion of the "leaky pipeline," the educational phenomenon that occurs when certain populations, most notably women, people of color, and working-class students decline in educational participation at increasing rates that correspond with higher levels of education. Malar Hirudayaraj wraps up the section by addressing the consequences of the "leaky pipeline" as she addresses the ways in which the challenges and institutional structures discussed in this section can result in working-class and first-generation students being forced to opt out of higher education altogether. Ottaway Martin and Hirudayaraj both address the consequences of shifting cultural expectations and access around educational attainment, while also acknowledging that many improvements must occur to provide all students with the real benefits of higher education, especially at the graduate level.

Surviving and Thriving in Academia

Finally, in deference to the power of narrative voice and the profound ways in which the silencing of a population or group can be an act of violence—a means to take away individual voice and with it, the right to self-definition—the final section of the book is devoted to the narrative voice of the marginalized. This section provides personal essays from first-generation students and academics themselves, granting insight into the struggles and strengths of living and working in an unfamiliar landscape. These chapters give the reader insight into the lived experience of first-generation academics, while providing practical advice for survival and success.

Sarah Smith and Saran Donahoo tell us powerful and compelling stories that take us on journeys real and imagined. Smith discusses her journey from extreme poverty to a career in higher education, and Donahoo uses the allegory of Dorothy and Oz to emphasize the profound

importance of social capital in the form of mentors, peers, and institutional support mechanisms. Finally, Rosanne Ecker and Taren Swindle discuss some of the practical ways in which academic institutions and first-generation and working-class students themselves can mobilize support and resources. Ecker describes a range of programming initiatives to support first-generation graduate students, while Swindle offers a practical guide to networking and acculturation for the same population. This section of the book provides a more immediate sense of what it is like to live and work as a permanent resident in a strange space during a time of transformation.

Moving Forward

Taken as a whole, this volume asks and perhaps even answers some profound questions about higher education, from the perspective of a population that is simultaneously both "insider" and "outsider." The struggle of higher education in the 21st century is rooted in such questions. How, for example, do we make higher education a space simultaneously welcoming to the needs of the historically marginalized and resistant to the forces of neoliberalization and delegitimization that are levied against it by powerful actors? How does one embrace the institutional values and expectations of knowledge work, while still maintaining the connections and values that come with a working-class identity? How do we resist the array of social forces that are working to undermine educational access—discursively, politically, and culturally? As working-class and first-generation students and faculty members enter the hallowed halls of higher education—not as travelers moving through, but as settlers who will be leaders—we must think deeply about our own road to success, and how our identities and experiences can reshape and, in some cases even preserve, the core values of our new home. As women, people of color, and those from the working class enter higher education, we face profound challenges, yet bring with us possibilities for profound transformation.

The authors in this volume discuss strategies and tools for confronting the challenges of higher education, and also highlight some of the battles we face from both inside and outside the walls of the academy. There is no question that in welcoming the marginalized, higher education has opened its doors to transformation, even as it faces resistance from forces that seek to recreate hierarchies and protect concentrations of power. Working-class and first-generation academics must be leaders in

shaping that transformation, both to open the path for those who follow and to reject the forces that would use our identities to undermine higher education, denying the real benefits of knowledge to the breadth of the population. The challenges higher education is currently facing are mirrored within the United States more broadly. Powerful political forces promote the delegitimization of scientific knowledge and a general sense of anti-intellectualism as a means to police class borders and reinforce boundaries of power. Ultimately, this volume seeks to provide first-generation graduate students, faculty members, and their allies and mentors insight into the changing face of higher education and the unique challenges faced both by newcomers to the academy and by the "outsiders within."

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A volume by and about higher education's "outsiders within": first-generation graduate students and faculty members

> "There is no question that in welcoming the marginalized, higher education has opened its doors to transformation, even as it faces resistance from forces that seek to recreate hierarchies and protect concentrations of power. Working-class and first-generation academics must be leaders in shaping that transformation, both to open the path for those who follow and also to reject the forces that would use our identities to undermine higher education, and to deny the real benefits of knowledge to the breadth of the population."
>
> — from the Introduction

One of the most significant achievements in U.S. higher education during the latter half of the 20th century was the increasing access enjoyed by historically marginalized populations, including women, people of color, and the poor and working class. With this achievement has come a growing population of first-generation graduate students and faculty members, who struggle at times to navigate unfamiliar territory. Today, these individuals and institutions are faced with profound challenges in adapting to shifts within a social environment increasingly hostile to education. The growing diversity in higher education has left it open to attacks by those who wish to maintain systems of privilege and inequality. This book offers insight on the challenges of first-generation academics, as well as practical tools for navigating the halls of the academy for individuals and institutional allies alike.

Topics include:

- Class transgression
- Navigating outsider status
- Gaining social capital
- Experiencing tokenism and marginality
- Academic work environment
- Neolibralization of academic labor

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