This volume investigates the ubiquitous education of everyday life as people contest the normal, settle on a new convention, and deal with the difficulties that arise. By documenting adolescent Dominican girls, young men in Silicon Valley, successful venture capitalists, and others imagining, explaining, and challenging the status quo, this book presents evidence that the proper starting point for education is struggle and play within and around institutionalized social and cultural conditions. Through a development of Varenne’s earlier research at the intersection of anthropology and education, this book highlights transformative work that constructs new cultures, and it presents a revitalized theory of culture, difference, and education.

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To the students, colleagues and peers with whom we have educated ourselves over the many years of our lives together

“I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.”

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: When Is Education? 1
HERVÉ VARENNE

PART I
Making Trouble and Designing New Normals 17

1 Normals, Emerging, and Diverging 21
HERVÉ VARENNE

2 Girls, Taking New Directions 35
SARAH WESSLER AND HERVÉ VARENNE

3 Designing, Animating, and Repairing a Suitable Do-it-Yourself Biology Lab 49
MICHAEL SCROGGINS AND HERVÉ VARENNE

4 Redesigning Capitalism 63
DANIEL SOULELES AND HERVÉ VARENNE

5 Teachers, Educating Themselves About Their School 79
JILL KOYAMA AND HERVÉ VARENNE

PART II
Living With Difficult Normals, Old and New 95

6 Figuring Out the Ages of Autism 101
JULIETTE DE WOLFE AND HERVÉ VARENNE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mothers, Educating Themselves About Their Children’s Futures in Mexico and the United States</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GABRIELLE OLIVEIRA AND HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To Not/Wear or to Not Not/Wear Hijab: The Girls and Boys of Bangladesh Avenue, in America</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUNANDA SAMADDAR CORRADO AND HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Animals Instructing Humans Instructing Animals</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JENNIFER VAN TIEM AND HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What Next? Keeping Life in Education</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appendix 1 Coda: On “Culture”</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Appendix 2 Coda: On “Power”</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Appendix 3 Coda: “It Takes a Polity”</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Appendix 4 The Power of the Single Case</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Appendix 5 Comments on Tobin’s Contribution to Comparative Research in Anthropology and in Education</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HERVÉ VARENNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References  
Author Index
This is the moment when the author thanks the many who participate in the making of any work. It is also a moment when the author mentions that, though many did participate, the responsibility for the final product rests solely with the author. The acknowledgment task is more complex when the work is the product of a collectivity with multiple ties to the many involved in the elaboration of parts of the work. The partial solution we use in the book is to include a special acknowledgment section in each of the ethnographic chapters. Many, in all sorts of settings, allowed us entry into their lives, and we are very thankful for their openness.

But this solution is not really satisfactory. This dissatisfaction led to my writing an extended coda “on collaboration” (Appendix 3) that is also an extended acknowledgment of the hosts with whom I have been in conversation over the many years of my career. This book, I argue, is a “next” statement in this conversation about education in (everyday) life. I hope this book, as statement, is taken in the spirit of a return gift that will trigger further statements in the future of a conversation that will probably not end any time soon.

I do want to thank those who have helped with the final production of the book. I will mention Corinne Kentor, Angelique Olmo, Rachel Simon, and Bridget Bartolini. Corinne Kentor was particularly helpful in the final editing of the manuscript and deserves a special mention. My editors at Routledge must also be thanked for making my work, and that of all my coauthors, available to a broader audience.

And I want to mention those who cannot be mentioned, except in this particular position in a book: my wife, children, their spouses, their children. All keep challenging me in surprising ways that are delightful even when they smart. I like to tell of one such moment when my mother’s mother surprised me. She had never quite made it to eighth grade but she was also mother-in-law to a university professor. So, perhaps, she knew just what to teach a newly minted Ph.D.: “Tu as plus d’instruction que moi, mais pas plus d’éducation.” She knew what it took me many more years to learn, and then to say—schooling is not education. When, 50 years later, in my 70s, I enter new “communities of practice” in hospitals or...
Acknowledgments

rehabilitation centers, or when I face Medicare regulations, I acknowledge
my grandmother’s wisdom. I also acknowledge the wisdom in the wonder
of a grandson telling how he and his friends discovered that I had written
a blog about memes. Who would have thought a grandfather did such
things! How do you tell him that he got it wrong? And, perhaps, how
do you escape the lecture the anthropologist in the grandfather could not
then try not to give?

Who was learning more at such moments is something I am glad no one
is trying to measure, assess, or transform into gate-keeping moments. My
grandson was happy. I was happy. For all these moments, even the more
difficult ones, I am thankful.

Hervé Varenne