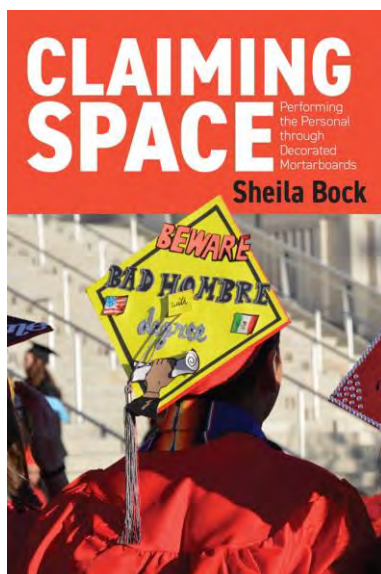


BIPOC families to seek solace through play reminds you that play is not just for children—it's for individuals seeking a sense of normalcy in a place of constant devaluing.

The Portraits section takes a snapshot of the physical forms of nuanced play that took place during the worldwide shutdown. There were multiple inclusions of fieldwork interviews with parents and guardians within this section that brought the humanity of the situation to life. Weaving together research in teddy bear challenges, the elevation of friendships, and images of the unique ways familial play was carried out illuminated the time capsule that this book truly is. "Digital Heroes of the Imagination: An Exploration of Disabled-Led Play in England during the Covid-19 Pandemic" spoke of the othering often apparent with disabled communities and the right to play. This piece of research highlighted the ableist system that play often falls into, and the "Digital Heroes of the Imagination" that shine a light on a brighter, more inclusive world. Upon reading *Landscapes* I hope to see more incorporation of the disabled communities' experiences in play-based research, because it is long overdue.

Lastly, *Shifting Frames* displayed a cultural shift in both the way we play and the ways we think about play. The house float creations during "Yardi Gras" or the online forms that play evolved into were fascinating reads that pushed the boundaries of our definition of play, both in meaning and in participants. However, the emphasis on the seriousness of play as an activity that aids in community survival was what moved me most. Using the creativity and connectedness that play ultimately produces as a medium to get through difficult times is a revolutionary concept, whether you are 10 or 76.

"Brian Sutton-Smith called play 'dialudic'... 'ludic' (Latin for 'play') and 'dialectic', a process of attempting to find truth through conflict and disagreement" (441). This compilation of research-based essays, emotional explorations, and frozen moments in time further emphasized how play not only teaches you how to smile but also reminds you what's worth smiling for. *Play in a Covid Frame* is an excellent representation of the future of play-based research, and I am excited to see its impact on works to come. All in all, whether a folklorist, cultural organizer, teacher, or parent, this book will speak to you, much like a child and their teddy bear.



*Claiming Space: Performing the Personal through Decorated Mortarboards*, by Sheila Bock

(Logan: Utah State University Press, 2023, 160 pp.)

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This interesting and relevant book by Sheila Bock is an in-depth look at how students use the decorating of mortarboards to communicate how they have negotiated their own identities within the realm of higher education. Juxtaposing the formality of the graduation ceremony and higher education in general, Bock shows how students take the "blank canvas" to show not only their

personal traits and experiences, but also their “sentiments of appreciation, pride, optimism, relief, uncertainty, or frustration” (5). Her research is couched in a performance-centered approach to material culture that borders on bodylore (although Bock does not use this term). She collected a copious amount of ethnographic data through interviews and surveys from graduating seniors from 26 universities around the country, including the University of Las Vegas, Boston University, The Ohio State University, and San Francisco State University. The vast number of students Bock documented allowed for diverse responses, which was key to the book’s central theme: Higher education is often based on Western European traditions that can clash with the eclectic lived experiences of modern students. Mortarboards then can become a way for students to express some of their frustrations to both the audience at the graduation and to a larger audience via social media. Thus, *Claiming Space* can be a valuable asset to educators looking to support students, especially minority students, as they negotiate their sense of self through the formality of education.

In Chapter 2, Bock sets up the performative element of mortarboards by including vignettes that outline how ten students used their decorations to communicate who they are in relation to the university and/or larger social narratives. The vignettes are referenced throughout the book and corroborate Bock’s points about how student lives contrast with traditional perceptions of university life. This is expanded on in Chapter 3 as Bock looks at Native American and Black students whose traditions have clashed with graduation guidelines and highlights a “presumption of assimilation” (71). For these students, the mortarboard becomes an even more important space to reclaim identity. Chapter 4 builds on this by looking at national debates about identity and how Latinx students use their mortarboards to claim a space within the Western European dominant culture. She brings in the #latinxgradcaps trend to show how students are using the ceremony to project their pride in their own identities. Chapter 5 looks at how students play with the linear structure of the graduation ceremony and Western culture in general. Bock looks at Queer identities to show how the timelines of many students often differ from the expectations of high school, college, job, marriage, and children. She also shows how mortarboards can often be playful, using SpongeBob SquarePants iconography to demonstrate fears about “adulting.” All this comes together to bring an understanding of mortarboards and students’ views about their education.

What impressed me is how Bock took something that could seemingly be viewed as a playful tradition and broke through the “triviality barrier” to show how much can be learned about students’ lived experiences through an ethnographic lens. I would recommend this book to educators as a way to think outside the pedagogical norms to discover ways students are negotiating the nuances of formal educational expectations with their sense of self.