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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 43
Issue 3 September

Article 14

2016

Review of Life In and Against the Odds: Debts of Freedom and the Speculative Roots of U.S. Culture. Heidi Hoechst. Reviewed by
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Recommended Citation

Vang, Cindy (2016) "Review of *Life In and Against the Odds: Debts of Freedom and the Speculative Roots of U.S. Culture.* Heidi Hoechst. Reviewed by Cindy Vang," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 3 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol43/iss3/14>

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anger among participants.

In many parts of the book, Jackson overemphasizes the psychological underpinnings of violent behavior and does not discuss the significant role that poverty plays as a barrier to meeting many of the psychological and social needs which aim to prevent violent behaviors. However, this book is excellent for anyone serious about gaining an in-depth understanding of the issue of black male violence. Social workers can benefit from this book in terms of understanding the problem of black-on-black violence among young black males in an effort to find pragmatic solutions.

Husain Lateef, Arizona State University

Heidi Hoechst, *Life In and Against the Odds: Debts of Freedom and the Speculative Roots of U.S. Culture*. Temple University Press (2015), 312 pages, \$30.00 (paperback).

In *Life in and Against the Odds*, Heidi Hoechst examines the growth and progression of speculative nationalism in the United States from pre-Revolutionary War to recent events. Speculative nationalism is explored as a mechanism for withholding freedom and perpetuating racial and gender division. Socioeconomic inequalities continue to grow between the few who are profiting and the majority who are left out, and Hoechst warns of the consequences of such enduring injustices to our collective liberation. Even against the backdrop of injustice, Hoechst provides moments of people going “against the odds” to signify how collective and individual efforts defied speculative nationalism. I appreciated and thoroughly enjoyed learning more about specific “against the odds” lived experiences, particularly the resistance from Native Americans and offspring of African Americans who reinvent their own dance and music.

Part one of the book focuses on land as a crucial point for early American nationalism. Fictional stories and the writings and career of Frederick Law Olmstead set the stage for the exploration of how land was used to convey speculative nationalism. The acquisition of land through violence and illegal means, as well as the examination of slave labor,

reflect the racialized beginnings of the United States and the lasting legacy of those early decisions and views. These focal examples highlight Hoechst's commitment to confront players that historically and currently benefit from speculative economic climates.

In order to regain and retain national loyalty during the early part of the twentieth century, part two highlights how Constance Rourke's exploration of American art and folk culture and the narratives and scholarly writings of two prolific thinkers, F. O. Matthiessen and W.E.B. DuBois, challenge and promote speculative nationalism. Hoechst's use of Rourke's work is wonderfully woven into this part of the book to showcase how different dimensions of culture can influence speculative nationalism. Matthiessen and DuBois both showcase the pull and rejection of speculation in a natural way through the moments of doubt and discovery each scholar encountered.

In part three, the collapse of the housing market is smartly examined as a prime example of the racial divide that we continue to inherit as a result of speculative nationalism. Hoechst incorporates various policies enacted in the later part of the twentieth and early twenty-first century to reinforce poverty, especially among women, African Americans, and Latinos. The second half of part three touches on the puppetry festival of a neighborhood in Minnesota on May Day that annually defies speculative nationalism by imagining and displaying a world of justice and equality. This observed collective power neatly concludes the book on a hopeful note that transforming society is possible with long-term commitment to addressing the collective injustices of our past.

For those with limited knowledge of American history and American studies jargon, the context may be difficult to follow. References to specific narratives and figures are made throughout the book that add to the argument, however, the backdrop of these historical time periods is so vast that readers may become confused, as injections of these narratives and figures are not thoroughly explicated. Furthermore, American studies jargon is scattered throughout the book and requires some background knowledge to fully comprehend the significance of these terms.

The book adds to the discourse of American Studies,

particularly to the racial and gender inequalities that have permeated the country historically and in present time. The idea of deferred justice challenges readers to re-imagine a reality in which liberation is on hold. Liberation is deeply tied to the roots of American history. However, the vast majority of Americans have yet to truly live the values attached to American nationalism. This book acknowledges this reality and provides a potential solution through collective action, and is recommended for those interested in American Studies, American history, race relations, and social movements.

Cindy Vang, Arizona State University

David Stoesz, *The Dynamic Welfare State*. Oxford University Press (2016), 282 pages, \$35.00 (hardcover).

This book collects and expands research and ideas on the welfare state that David Stoesz has been proposing for the last decade or so. It is very well written, and when the research is presented in this more systematic manner, it allows the reader to see how these ideas mesh. This is a book that every professional concerned with social welfare history and policy will want to digest carefully.

In very broad terms, Stoesz views the American welfare state as including all areas of society primarily concerned with the provision of health, education, security and the benefits of general well-being. In other words, the "state" in "welfare state" refers as much to a state of being as it does specifically to government policy itself. This is a stimulating perspective, certainly worth considering, but it also needs to be questioned. It allows Stoesz to include a massive layer of welfare provisions under the umbrella of the American welfare state that many readers may find misplaced or downright misleading. For example, when comparing the American welfare state with that of other nations in the area of provisions for retirement, Stoesz insists that we have to include private pensions and 401K programs, and not limit our view to only government programs themselves. In the case of this example of retirement security, therefore, America moves from one of the bottom of the developed nations when only government programs are