



## David Labaree

Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education, Emeritus  
Graduate School of Education

 Curriculum Vitae available Online

### CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Admin. Support**

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### Bio

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#### BIO

I am a sociologically oriented historian of education who seeks to explore some of the major processes and patterns that define the relationship between education and society in the United States. In my research, I aim to analyze the evolving institutional character of educational organizations (such as the high school, community college, education school, and university) and the evolving role of key groups that affect education (such as teachers, teacher educators, and reform movements) in the context of the broader purposes and functions of education in a liberal democracy. Within this broad approach to the subject, I have focused in the past on two major areas of study. One is the pressure exerted by markets on democratic education; the other is the peculiar nature of education schools as they have evolved over the years in the U.S.

#### ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Emeritus Faculty, Acad Council, Graduate School of Education

#### ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Professor of History (by courtesy), Stanford Graduate School of Education, (2008- present)
- Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education, Stanford Graduate School of Education, (2017- present)
- Professor of Education, Stanford Graduate School of Education, (2003- present)

#### BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Member of Executive Board, American Educational Research Association (2004 - 2005)
- Vice president of Division F (History of Education), American Educational Research Association (2003 - 2006)
- President, History of Education Society (2004 - 2005)
- Member, Board of Directors, John Dewey Society (2014 - 2016)
- Chair of SHIPS Area Committee, Stanford Graduate School of Education (2009 - present)
- Fellow, American Educational Research Association (2013 - present)
- Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Stanford Graduate School of Education (2005 - 2008)
- Coordinator of MSU, Ph.D. program in Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy (1996 - 2001)
- Assistant Professor to Professor of Teacher Education, Michigan State University (1985 - 2003)

## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- PhD, University of Pennsylvania , Sociology (1983)
- MA, University of Pennsylvania , Sociology (1978)
- BA, Harvard College , Social Relations (1970)

## LINKS

- Webpage: <https://people.stanford.edu/dlabaree/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DLabaree>
- Blog: <https://davidlabaree.com/>

## Research & Scholarship

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### RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Higher Education
- History of Education
- Psychology

### CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Most Recent Book:

My new book – *A Perfect Mess: The Unlikely Ascendancy of American Higher Education* – is an essay about the nature of the American system of higher education. American higher education is an anomaly. In the second half of the 20th century it surged past its European forebears to become the dominant system in the world – with more money, influence, Nobel prizes, and drawing power than any of the systems that served as its models. By all rights, this never should have happened. Its origins were remarkably humble, arising from a loose assortment of parochial 19th century liberal arts colleges, which emerged in the pursuit of sectarian expansion and civic boosterism more than scholarly distinction. It was not even a system in the usual sense of the word, since it emerged with no plan, no planner, no prospects, and no reliable source of support. Yet these weaknesses of the American system in the 19th century turned out to be strengths in the 20th. From the difficult circumstances of trying to survive in an environment with a weak state, a divided church, and intense competition with peer institutions, American colleges developed into a system of higher education that was lean, adaptable, consumer-sensitive, self-supporting, and radically decentralized. This put the system in a strong position to expand and prosper when, before the turn of the century, it finally got what it was most grievously lacking: academic credibility (which came when it adopted elements of the German research university) and large student enrollments (which came when middle class families started to see social advantage in sending their children to college).

This system is extraordinarily complex, bringing together contradictory educational goals, a broad array political constituencies, diverse sources of funds, and multiple forms of authority into a single institutional arena characterized by creative tension and local autonomy. One tension is between the influence of the market and the influence of the state. Another arises from the conflict among three social-political visions of higher education – as undergraduate college (populist), graduate school (elite), and land grant college (practical). A third arises from the way the system combines three alternative modes of authority – traditional, rational, and charismatic. In combination, these elements promote organizational complexity, radical stratification, broad political and financial support, partial autonomy, and adaptive entrepreneurial behavior.

## Publications

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### PUBLICATIONS

- **The dynamic tension at the core of the grammar of schooling** *PHI DELTA KAPPAN*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2021; 103 (2): 28-32
- **Policy Dialogue: The Problems and Promises of Higher Education in the United States** *HISTORY OF EDUCATION QUARTERLY*  
Goldrick-Rab, S., Labaree, D.  
2021; 61 (3): 341-350
- **Turtles All the Way Down: Academic Writing as Formalism** *JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2020
- **Nothing Succeeds Like Failure: The Sad History of American Business Schools. (Book Review)** *HISTORY OF EDUCATION QUARTERLY*  
Book Review Authored by: Labaree, D. F.  
2020; 60 (2): 261–63
- **Two cheers for school bureaucracy** *PHI DELTA KAPPAN*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2020; 101 (6): 53–56
- **Research Universities and the Public Good: Discovery for an Uncertain Future (Book Review)** *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*  
Book Review Authored by: Labaree, D. F.  
2019; 125 (2): 610–12
- **Public schools for private gain: The declining American commitment to serving the public good** *PHI DELTA KAPPAN*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2018; 100 (3): 8–13
- **An Affair to Remember: America's Brief Fling with the University as a Public Good** *JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2016; 50 (1): 20-36
- **Learning to Love the Bomb: The Cold War Brings the Best of Times to American Higher Education** *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: DISCOURSES OF CHANGE AND CHANGES OF DISCOURSE*  
Labaree, D. F., Smeyers, P., Depaepe, M.  
2016; 9: 101–17
- **Learning to love the bomb: The Cold War brings the best of times to American higher education** *Educational research: Discourses of change and changes of discourse*  
Labaree, D. F.  
Springer.2016: 101–117
- **Let's Measure What No One Teaches: PISA, NCLB, and the Shrinking Aims of Education** *TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2014; 116 (9)
- **Accountability: Antecedents, Power, and Processes** *TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD*  
Meyer, H., Troehler, D., Labaree, D. F., Hutt, E. L.  
2014; 116 (9)
- **2013 Dewey Lecture: College—What Is It Good For?** *Education and culturE*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2014; 30 (1): 3-15
- **Targeting Teachers** *PUBLIC EDUCATION UNDER SIEGE*  
Labaree, D. F., Katz, M. B., Rose, M.

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2013: 30–39

- **The power of the parochial in shaping the American system of higher education** *Educational Research: The Importance and Effects of Institutional Spaces*  
Labaree, D. F.  
Springer.2013: 31–46
- **Balancing access and advantage in the history of American schooling** *Bildungsungleichheit und Gerechtigkeit: Wissenschaftliche und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2013; 101
- **A system without a plan: Emergence of an American system of higher education in the twentieth century** *Bildungsgeschichte: International Journal for the Historiography of Education*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2013; 3 (1): 46-59
- **School syndrome: Understanding the USA's magical belief that schooling can somehow improve society, promote access, and preserve advantage** *JOURNAL OF CURRICULUM STUDIES*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2012; 44 (2): 143-163
- **A sermon on educational research** *International Journal for the Historiography of Education*  
Labaree, D.  
2012; 2 (1): 74
- **Someone has to fail**  
Labaree, D. F.  
Harvard University Press.2012
- **THE LURE OF STATISTICS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS** *EDUCATIONAL THEORY*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2011; 61 (6): 621–32
- **CONSUMING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL** *EDUCATIONAL THEORY*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2011; 61 (4): 381–94
- **Targeting Teachers** *DISSENT*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2011; 58 (3): 9-14
- **Targeting teachers** *Dissent*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2011; 58 (3): 9-14
- **Do no harm** *Teacher Education and Practice*  
Labaree, D.  
2011; 24 (4): 437-439
- **Adventures in scholarship** *Leaders in the Historical Study of American Education*  
Labaree, D. F.  
Springer.2011: 193–204
- **The lure of statistics for educational researchers** *Educational Theory*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2011; 61 (6): 621-632
- **When Is School an Answer to What Social Problems?** *Education systems in historical, cultural, and sociological perspectives*  
Labaree, D. F.  
Springer.2011: 77–89

- **Teach for America and Teacher Ed: Heads They Win, Tails We Lose** *JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION*  
Labaree, D.  
2010; 61 (1-2): 48-55
- **The Lure of Statistics for Educational Researchers** *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: THE ETHICS AND AESTHETICS OF STATISTICS*  
Labaree, D. F., Smeyers, P., Depaepe, M.  
2010; 5: 13–25
- **Educational Formalism and the Language of Goals in American Education, Educational Reform, and Educational History** *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: PROOFS, ARGUMENTS, AND OTHER REASONINGS*  
Labaree, D. F., Smeyers, P., Depaepe, M.  
2009; 4: 41–60
- **THE WINNING WAYS OF A LOSING STRATEGY: EDUCATIONALIZING SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE UNITED STATES** *EDUCATIONAL THEORY*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2008; 58 (4): 447–60
- **Comments on Bulterman-Bos The Dysfunctional Pursuit of Relevance in Education Research** *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2008; 37 (7): 421-423
- **Mutual Subversion: A Short History of the Liberal and the Professional in American Higher Education** *HISTORY OF EDUCATION QUARTERLY*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2006; 46 (1): 1–15
- **Education, markets, and the public good: The selected works of David F. Labaree**  
Labaree, D. F.  
Routledge.2006
- **The trouble with ed schools**  
Labaree, D. F.  
Yale University Press.2006
- **Life on the margins** *JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION*  
Labaree, D. F.  
2005; 56 (3): 186-191
- **Progressivism, schools and schools of education: An American romance** *25th Session of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education*  
Labaree, D. F.  
ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD.2005: 275–88
- **Citizens and consumers: Changing Visions of Virtue and Opportunity in US Education in the 19 th and 20 th Centuries** *Conference on "Republican and Non-Republican Imaginations," University of Applied Sciences*  
Labaree, D.  
2007