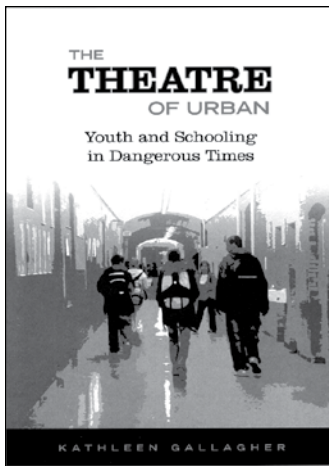


THE THEATRE OF URBAN

Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times

KATHLEEN GALLAGHER



Because of its powerful socializing effects, the school has always been a site of cultural, political, and academic conflict. In an age where terms such as ‘hard-to-teach,’ and ‘at-risk’ beset our pedagogical discourses, where students have grown up in systems plagued by anti-immigrant, anti-welfare, ‘zero-tolerance’ rhetoric, how we frame and understand the dynamics of classrooms has serious ethical implications and powerful consequences.

Using theatre and drama education as a special window into school life in four urban secondary schools in Toronto and New York City, *The Theatre of Urban* examines the ways in which these schools reflect the cultural and political shifts in big city North American schooling policies, politics, and practices of the early twenty-first century.

Resisting facile comparisons of Canadian and American schooling systems, Kathleen Gallagher opts instead for a rigorous analysis of the context-specific features, both the differences and similarities, between urban cultures and urban schools in the two countries. Gallagher re-examines familiar ‘urban issues’ facing these schools, such as racism, classism, (hetero)sexism, and religious fundamentalism in light of the theatre performances of diverse young people and their reflections upon their own creative work together. By using theatre as a sociological lens, *The Theatre of Urban* not only explores the very notion of performance in a novel and interesting way, it also provides new insights into the conflicts that often erupt in these highly charged school spaces.

Kathleen Gallagher is an associate professor and Canada Research Chair at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

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