

The authors conclude that the primary purpose of teaching the subject should be to inform about education, both formal and informal, in the past, not to inspire or disillusion students. The diversity in the field "reflects the current state of culture in the United States," namely, "we value diversity and revel in our differences" (p. 257).

The sole article devoted to Canada was written by Kas Mazurek of the University of Lethbridge. Mazurek asserts that Canadian educational historians are divided into camps where they are not "committed to the same rules and standards for practice" and there is no one "single, unifying paradigm" (p. 114). This situation he describes as "unfortunate" because it leads to the "Balkanization" of the profession and to courses being taught from different perspectives, a feature which by contrast Saslaw and Hiner (and this reviewer too) regard as both commendable and desirable. Mazurek laments the demise of the survey course, which has been replaced, he maintains, by courses taught from a particular perspective, such as class, feminist, or ethnic. But this does not describe the current situation in my department at U.B.C., where the survey course still pertains at the B.Ed. level. Mazurek anticipates the happy day when these "fierce ideological battles" abate and "one orientation succeeds in imposing its hegemony" (p. 115). His language here is reminiscent of the battles in the 1970s between moderate and radical revisionists, the latter propounding a social control approach to the writing of educational history. To assert that these battles continue into the 1990s sounds very

anachronistic to me. While the field is diverse in both subject matter and methodology (oral history to Foucault and Gramsci), all approaches are respected and accorded due consideration in courses. The dominance of one over another is neither sought nor anticipated. Graduate students turn to those advisors whose approaches as reflected in their work the students favour. The various approaches often complement each other and are therefore sometimes used selectively in an integrative fashion by graduate students. To this reviewer the field is not at all characterized by the bitter battles of the seventies but rather by an openness to new theoretical and methodological approaches. Herein lies the strength of the field in Canada today, not in the absence of ideological contestation cited recently as a problem by the likes of Harvey Graff and Ian Davey.

The diversity and vitality of the field is evident when one considers the various approaches represented by Bruce Curtis, Jean Barman, Brian Tittle, Alison Prentice, Neil Sutherland, Bob Gidney and Wyn Millar, Nadia Fahmy-Eid, Paul Axelrod, and Chad Gaffield. One paradigm will not triumph in the field nor should it. Diversity is to be applauded not condemned.

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Bruce Curtis, D.W. Livingstone, and Harry Smaller. *Stacking the Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class*

Kids in Ontario Schools. Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves, 1992. Pp. 136.

I knew it was a Special [Education classroom, because] our number was 101S. I always figured, "Well, I'm dumb. They've stuck me in the 'dumb' class. So here I am, dumb." (A Saskatchewan aboriginal woman)

Stories of abandoning school after being placed in "the dumb room" or treated as if they were "dumb" are not infrequent amongst aboriginal people in Canada. Subjective accounts like these, generated in Western Canada, recently have been given some historical, more contextualized, and objective framing through the scholarship in *Stacking the Deck*. That is, through the use of historical research, interviews, and survey methodology, this book makes transparent some of the processes many of us have only implicitly felt or heard in the personal and singular accounts of ourselves and others. Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller also bring to critical writing on education dimensions largely missing from the post-modernist and/or post-structuralist theorizing in the field of critical pedagogy: the dimensions of class, history, and political economy (though political economy is not a dominant feature of this text). Except with theoretical gestures, the actual operations of class reproduction through schooling are too often ignored in current critical texts on education. While Curtis et al. place social class at the centre of their theoretical considerations,

they consistently show that class, gender, and "race" are integrally related.

Chapter One is given to a general description of the problem, which in part is that so few people, including working people themselves, realize that the "deck is stacked" against them with reference to access to equal opportunities and benefits in schools. Thus, the authors conclude the chapter and set up their work which follows by arguing that

there is no reputable scientific evidence that working-class kids have less innate ability than their dominant-class peers. Therefore, there is no social justification for children from dominant class families to be more than twice as likely to finish high school and more than five times as likely to complete university as unskilled workers' kids. So, working-class people have been sold a bill of goods, and the waste of human potential is gigantic. (p. 25)

For those of us who have spent our working lives with marginalized groups which are usually defined into other social categories, such as a class-blind conception of "Native people," this injection of class analysis is useful. It broadens the analysis of the problem and therefore points to possible allies for change. This wastage of human potential has been persistent throughout the history of Canadian public schooling, the authors show in Chapter Two. At the same time that state-supported education has been primarily designed for children of the

privileged, school curricula have been shaped to quiet the possibilities of resistance to such policies. Yet the selling of the idea that a good education is available on equal terms to all has not been done without important shifts in and conflicts over policy. Conflicts over the imposition of standardized testing in more than one instance have symbolized this. On significant occasions since the late nineteenth century, policy shifts concerning the specific nature of schooling for the working class have also been responses to ruling concerns about Canada's competitiveness in the world marketplace, foretelling today's neo-conservative despair about the need for "basic skills restructuring." Despite the location of constitutional responsibility for education primarily in the hands of the provinces, the federal government has also been complicit in policy generation for the purposes of class-segregating education. When somewhat progressive educational reforms, such as the recommendations of the 1968 Hall-Dennis Report, have been introduced, they have just as quickly been eroded. The soft-selling of class-based inequality within the school system has often been dependent upon the power of the dominant group to interpret seemingly neutral or progressive school policies in its own interests. For example, the implementation of "manual training" in the late nineteenth century, the growing use of guidance counsellors, and more recently the rapid growth of Special Education classrooms have all been used to lock working-class kids into academic patterns destining them for working-class jobs.

Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller show that

students are not streamed in any random way: rather, children of working-class, ethnic/racial-minority and single-parent families end up in the lower streams in highly disproportionate numbers. How and why does this happen? (p. 53)

The authors use Chapters Three (elementary education) and Four (secondary education) to document their answers to this question. Class-based differences are not demonstrated only with regard to conventional streaming, however, but also between kinds of school programmes. Many may not notice the "streaming at the 'top'" which occurs through the use of programmes for the "gifted," immersion, and the growth of private schools. Not only do children enrolled in such privileged reserves benefit, but so do the teachers who work with them, enjoying markedly better working conditions. Again, militant parents of streamed children have helped force the closure of some educational ghettos, but in general these are the people who do not enjoy the ears of the policymakers, so change is slow. After the record of the Social Contract in Ontario it should be of little surprise that progressives and working-class parents have not been able to rely on the social democratic Rae government to begin its promised destreaming. Instead, this government has dramatically slowed a programme initiated by the former Peterson

government, the authors note. In the contemporary period, as Special Education students are being integrated into classrooms out of a combination, it would seem, of progressive liberal initiative and cost-cutting efficiency, the rapid growth of private schools harkens a new avenue for class discrimination. The book concludes with a chapter articulating a programme for change which is broad, well-reasoned, and largely based on existing initiatives such as criterion-referenced, community-controlled assessment processes and family groupings of grades.

I argued at the outset that *Stacking the Deck's* case study of only one province does not present a crippling limitation. If relevance to our own experience is a criterion, this Canadian study is more worthwhile than most existing alternatives. Three other limitations of the text are at least equally unsettling. First, many of the Canadian studies the authors cite for corroboration or reference are dated. Second, primary research conducted for the book relied upon interviews alone—no participant observation was conducted to enrich our understanding of the ways in which “subtle streaming” (pp. 70-77) actually takes place in contemporary classrooms. Both of these limitations highlight the need for more ethnographic research on class reproduction in Canadian schooling. Third, probably because the book was not published primarily for an academic audience, there is no clear description of the group from which the interviews were taken. This has implications for our judgements concerning

representativeness, for example. These problems notwithstanding, the body of knowledge presented here establishes without question that the preservation of class inequality is a systemic feature of Ontario and, perhaps, all Canadian schooling. Ethical grounds aside, can we afford this waste of human potential?

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Robert H. MacDonald. *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993. Pp. 258. \$35.00 Cdn cloth.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many middle-class Britons were concerned about the apparent degeneracy of the nation's citizens. The working class, many believed, was ungodly, foreign, and increasingly uncontrollable; Britain's youth, and particularly its boys, were becoming “soft, and perhaps even effeminate” (p. 21). In an attempt “to save a generation of boys from godlessness and degeneracy” (p. 12) and to reinvigorate the nation, a number of organizations were established to promote “virility, discipline, love of nature, Christianity, patriotism [and] imperialism” (p. 12) among young British boys. *Sons of the Empire* is, in part, the story of the Boy Scout movement, the organization that by skilfully using the marketplace and the press became the most successful