

Kate Rousmaniere, *City Teachers: Teaching and School Reform in Historical Perspective*. New York and London: Teachers College Press, 1997. Pp. vii, 179.

To curriculum reformers, the problem of the curriculum... was how to educate the nation's youth to be economically productive and socially conscious individuals. To teachers, the problem... was how to juggle a complicated collection of curriculum directives and demands with too few resources. (73)

So concludes Kate Rousmaniere's important chapter dealing with curriculum changes in New York City's schools during the 1920s. As in the current climate of widespread and deep educational changes, the difficult process of redesigning the curriculum in the 1920s was one of the defining touchstones of conflicting visions for the modern educational system. Beyond the microcosm of curricular reform, those competing (indeed, dissonant) visions of educational objectives, structures, and processes often pitted school reformers/administrators against the mass of front-line workers—the teachers. As charted in *City Teachers*, the recasting of the educational enterprise during this period lays bare a conflict between two types of school cultures: reformers intent on increased efficiency through newly-defined bureaucratic structures, versus an older form of localized teacher culture, based on the loose norms of camaraderie, cooperation, and sharing of limited resources.

Rousmaniere's book is in many respects a fine and moving study, carefully researched, well written, and motivated by a desire to give voice to a now largely-discounted view of the educational enterprise. But her analysis is far more sympathetic towards one of the contestants, blurring the broader issues at stake. A former educator herself, Rousmaniere proudly takes up the cause of New York's wronged teachers. Herein lies the book's greatest strength and most pronounced failing.

Through the words of her research subjects, she mounts a passionate and well-documented defence of teacher culture without giving full, or even fair, credit to the broader educational movements of the day that motivated demands made by seemingly heartless administrators. Rousmaniere situates her analysis of teachers' "internalized narratives" within a context of (and as contra-distinctive to) school reformers' blueprint for New York City education in the early twentieth century. She detects four broad themes in her investigation of teachers' narratives which, she argues, constitute the scaffold for the central elements of teacher culture as it developed during the 1920s. These four themes underpin some very stimulating and careful research into various components of teacher culture: teacher education and socialization, curriculum expectations and changes, the physical workplaces for teachers, supervision of teachers, and classroom management and climate.

The first is that city teachers' work load increased steadily without concomitant supports. Expectations mushroomed as the school came to be seen as the central agency for socialization of urban youth. Children of the poor, illiterate, sick, and/or troubled immigrant population were placed in the city's classrooms not only to be educated in literacy and numeracy skills, but to be taught American societal norms. Expansion of the public school system's clientele occurred simultaneously with enlargement of the curriculum to meet these many demands, but without adequate planning or any taking into account of the logical impact upon educational staff. In fact, intensification and expansion of teachers' work meant reduction in teachers' personal control over resources (as bureaucratic structures were introduced) without financial compensation or institutional guidance.

Rousmaniere's second theme is physical and psychic isolation of teachers both from their peers and from administrators. Age and ability grading put teachers into separate classrooms on different floors. Frenetic schedules permitted no common preparation or socializing time, and the ideology of professionalism emphasized teachers' individual responsibilities over any collective possibilities.

Thirdly, the author finds a persistent discrepancy between administrators' and teachers' notions of function and order. Where bureaucratic administrators sought a system of rational planning and management as a vehicle for progressive education and social reform, teachers actively resisted such initiatives as undermining traditional and humane forms of teacher practice. Where administrators called for a highly centralized, bureaucratized, and hierarchical corporate structure, teachers demanded more localized arrangements to allow maximum flexibility and personalized but authoritative interaction between ward bosses, teachers, parents, and children.

Fourthly, Rousmaniere charts teachers' responses to deterioration of their working conditions as expectations mounted. These ranged from adaptation to creative resistance. Most often, teachers chose accommodation, but in so doing subverted any possibility of organized movement to force systemic change. Instead, teachers became themselves implicated in oppressive structures through schismatic in-fighting. Divided by organizational structures, repression of radical voices, and a professional ideology emphasizing individual achievement, teachers of the era could consistently muster only begrudging cooperation.

Rousmaniere's own devotion to teacher culture is reflected in her extensive use of teacher accounts to determine the "significant issues that the occupation of teaching raised to its workers on a daily basis." (7) Relying on such narratives, she tells us, allows her to track the "commonplaces of schooling," the broad themes which gave the profession its texture: desires, frustrations, and normative values of teachers "making do" in unenviable

circumstances. Happily, she provides sufficient academic context for us to make sense of teacher complaints within a broader pattern of professional change. Yet this strength of her book is limited by reliance on an apparently largely homogenous group of teachers, the vast majority of them women elementary school teachers (as judged from the quotations offered, since surprisingly there is no direct credit to the group beyond noting that they were contacted through the New York Retired Teachers Association). Rousmaniere appears to accept at face value teachers' critiques and the aggrieved tone of virtually all their reactions to educational "reforms." Since the author's chief point is that for the most part these reforms made the life of the teacher more difficult, confused, and unproductive, her uncritical reliance on such accounts looks like special pleading.

Her book takes a "great divide between administrators' ideas and teachers' actual needs and practices" (2) as its dominant image. This rather easy opposition must be questioned. Against the evidence she offers for the dislocating effects of changing curricula and texts, it must be noted that the strain of working from new textbooks to support revised curricula was hardly received by all teachers in the same spirit. What some saw as a repressive burden others welcomed as an aid. We must remind ourselves that even periods of wrenching cultural change are never as simple or as oppositional as they first appear.

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The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality by Mary Louise Adams Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. Pp. viii, 224.

I quite like it when a book does what it says it intends to do in both its title and introduction. And I quite like it when an historical account shakes important assumptions about something as taken-for-granted as heterosexuality. Adams is not of course the first Canadian scholar to investigate the regulatory discourses of heterosexuality in any given historical moment, but she does a nice job both of "troubling normal" and of demonstrating the "making of heterosexuality" to be an historical process "not reducible to any type of natural or biological essence" (166). Her introduction states that the book "identifies a variety of processes involved in the normalization of particular forms of heterosexuality in the postwar period" (17), and indeed it does just that. Her conclusion suggests that what she has "paid most attention to are those points where discourses about youth and discourses about sexuality became intertwined" (167), and indeed she has.

Adams challenges our historically produced common-sense notions about heterosexuality in the professional, political, and personal areas. According