

Paul Stortz and E. Lisa Panayotidis, eds.
Historical Identities: The Professoriate in Canada.

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Given the title, subject matter and need for such a work, this book could have been a monograph. That it is not perhaps reflects the state of the discipline or the resources required for such an undertaking. Imposing rational order on the natural chaos of thematic essays is no easy task and one can admire the individual contributions while commiserating with the editors whose task it was to draw the parts together into a coherent whole that is something more than the sum of them. Essay volumes purporting to address large or important topics lend themselves only too well to minute if not microscopic treatments of highly specialized subjects. They let historians off the hook by not compelling them to treat the big picture. Content completely overwhelms or ignores context.

It is fair to say that Canadian professors have not been studied except biographically or in relation to their employing universities, areas of academic expertise with which they are identified, or significant professional subthemes like academic freedom. These essays offer a useful segue into a subject which one hopes will be followed up with a monograph of equal if not greater length and depth—and a sharper and more consistent focus. The approach adopted by the editors is social, even psychosocial, and by and large informs the fourteen essays, which are arranged into five sections; a scheme intended to emphasize that the essays collectively are an historical sociology or cultural anthropology of university teachers. Other approaches—intellectual, institutional, professional, structural, developmental—also have much to offer and might have been taken or at least tried. Some of the essays do not rise above the level of dense case study, which, however compelling in and of themselves, do not escape the microhistorical straitjacket. The time scale is modern not to say contemporary: 1880 through 1990, with an emphasis on the period following the Second World War; the work is a tract for the times. Little that is fashionable is left out, though race and ethnicity are conspicuous by their absence. The tendency throughout is to

detach the history of professors from the history of higher education in its academic or administrative character. We learn instead how professors negotiated their private, not to mention intimate lives and how they interacted with the world outside the academy. This is a refreshing turn. Whether it moves scholarship further towards a Canadian history of the professoriate or of university teachers as a learned profession is another matter.

Section 1 is historiographical, enlarging on the theme of the editors' introduction; it comprises a single essay on the international history of the professoriate by William Bruneau. Why international rather than Canadian? Excellent though Bruneau's essay is, locating the professoriate in Canada in the context of the international history of the professoriate would have been more pertinent and helpful. There follows "The Professoriate and the State" (two essays), "Institutional Development, Society and the Professoriate" (four essays), "Gendered Voices in the Professoriate" (four essays) and "Subjectivity, Identity and the Making of the Professoriate" (three essays). Remarkably, Thérèse Hamel's essay on "the experience of professors in normal schools [teacher colleges] and faculties of education during the Quiet Revolution in Québec" was not published in its original French but in English translation. One wonders what francophone readers are to make of that, and how much may have been lost (or gained) in translation. Two of the essays in the last section are contributed by the editors, who write fascinatingly about the University of Toronto in the years between 1898 and 1945. If the book has a unifying, overarching theme, it is collective identity formation. Indeed, use of the term 'professoriate' implies as much. How large that theme should loom in any effort towards a Canadian history of the professoriate remains unclear. Viewing university teachers principally, not to say exclusively from the socio-historical perspective is instructive but somehow limiting and unsatisfactory. Can the history of university teachers be separated from the history of universities except at the risk of sacrificing meaningful historical context? The tension between historic contextualization and externalization of the professorial experience is palpable.

Chapter endnotes, bibliography and index are all exemplary and reflect great credit on editors and authors alike. Puzzlingly, however, there is no list of the thirteen illustrations. The thirty-page bibliography "includes a selection of mostly English-language texts [i.e., monographs] and articles published since 1985 that are related to the history of the professoriate in Canada" (381). Helpfully introduced and divided into eight thematic categories, the Select Bibliography records under "intellectual histories" the work which clearly inspired the present one: Paul Axelrod and John G. Reid's edited volume, *Youth, University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (1989). For "youth" [students] then, read "professors" now. *Historical Identities* features return engagements by two of the contributors to the earlier volume: Malcolm MacLeod, formerly professor of history at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Barry Moody, professor of history at Acadia University. Twenty years ago MacLeod gave us a study of the student body at Memorial University College, of which he was writing the history since published; here he gives us a study of faculty development at MUC's successor, Memorial

University of Newfoundland. Then Moody gave us a study of “Acadia and the Great War;” now he gives us an episode in the career of Theodore Harding Rand, briefly professor of “didactics” at Acadia, 1883–85, and afterwards chancellor of McMaster University. One of the many strengths of *Historical Identities* is its connection to and continuity with *Youth, University and Canadian Society*, to which it will stand as a worthy companion volume.