had continued after the 1970s, would higher education be less stratified today? We cannot answer these questions because we do not have enough empirical evidence. We need the scholarship that will answer these questions and others raised by the significant changes in higher education since the 1970s. We cannot simply accept Labaree's claim that these changes represent a return to the mean.

Specific objections, however, do not do full justice to a book like this one. I salute Labaree for his ambitions. We need broad historical syntheses that attempt to shed light on political problems. I am sympathetic to Labaree's desire to protect American higher education from the meddling of policy makers or the disruptive potential of reformers who want to take the profitable aspects of higher education and let someone else worry about those functions that are not self-supporting. But higher education cannot escape change—it is not a complex institution of perfectly-balanced, opposing impulses that will stay the way it is if we only leave it alone. We need to shape its future and we will be better able to do this wisely if we understand the developments of the late twentieth century.

Julie A. Reuben
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Jason Reid

Get Out of My Room! A History of Teen Bedrooms in America

The sign pictured on the book's cover may read "Keep Out!," but in *Get Out of My Room! A History of Teen Bedrooms in America*, Jason Reid props the door wide open and invites readers inside for a good snoop. What we find are eight engaging and well-researched chapters charting the emergence and spread of the teenaged bedroom from the antebellum era to the early twenty-first century, and examining the various experts who popularized the ideal. It is a compelling history that reveals how teens' rooms became the idealized locus of children's maturation, personal expression, and educational enrichment, while continuously shaping and reflecting broader social and cultural change in the United States.

In the first chapter, Reid finds support for the idea of separate bedrooms for children (and especially for girls) among select architects, child-rearing experts, and young people themselves beginning in the early nineteenth century. In four subsequent chapters, he traces the growth of both the idea and the practice of separate bedrooms in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the 1920s, many child development experts championed separate bedrooms for both girls and boys, claiming they would increase a teenagers' academic ability, cultivate liberal values of self-reliance, individuality, and love of property, and improve parent-child relations. Business interests adopted these arguments to sell furnishings and room décor. By the 1960s, separate bedrooms were widespread, and the privacy of these spaces—as well

as teenagers' autonomy within them—was increasingly sacrosanct. Reid explores the tension between the privacy that experts believed adolescents needed to mature and rising concerns in the 1970s and 1980s about drug use and sexual activity conducted behind closed (or locked) doors. While the teenaged bedroom promised, throughout the twentieth century, to grant parents a modicum of oversight by keeping children in the home, parents who respected their children's privacy were often unaware of their offspring's activities and proclivities.

Reid also examines how technology made its way into the bedroom. Again, the post-Second World War period marked a significant shift, as solid-state transistors and more inexpensive telecommunications services made radios and telephones more affordable, and advertisers marketed their smaller size allowing more discrete listening to teenaged consumers, often in gendered ways. Reid argues that stereos, televisions, and second phone lines promoted privacy, encouraged teenaged consumption, and helped make bedrooms into personal sanctuaries for adolescents of varied socio-economic backgrounds.

The final chapter documents and analyzes cultural representations of the teen bedroom on screen, in popular music, and in literature. Reid concludes by noting a more recent shift in the meaning of the teenaged bedroom—as more young Americans struggle to live independently, the teenaged bedroom represents their "failure to launch" (229) into adulthood.

While expert and popular advice receives ample attention throughout the narrative, Reid also considers the changing economic factors and material conditions that shaped the availability and meaning of teen bedrooms. Rising incomes and shrinking family size over the entire period increased the number of American families who could achieve the separate bedroom ideal; these changes occurred slowly in the nineteenth century and accelerated after the Second World War. However, Reid is careful to note exceptions to this trend. African-American teens were less likely to have their own rooms, for example, while some low-income families went to great lengths to give adolescents the privacy they desired.

Get Out of My Room! draws on a rich array of sources—from child-rearing manuals, psychological studies, and government reports, to newspaper columns, magazines, and other forms of popular culture. The voices of teens themselves are heard in memoirs, biographies, and published interviews. These accounts echo and sometimes contradict the experts' advice and news reports, acting to strengthen and balance Reid's arguments. The first-hand accounts and photographs from nineteen Americans also provide lively anecdotes; however, more information about Reid's survey methods in collecting them would help to contextualize these personal recollections.

While "normative" (5) by the 1960s, Reid argues that the teen bedroom continued to be a site of multiple contradictions. Business interests including department stores, furniture manufacturers, and interior design experts promoted teenaged autonomy and encouraged a Do-It-Yourself aesthetic in room décor beginning in the inter-war period. While this approach was meant to promote separate bedrooms and garner teenaged business, it also undercut designers' authority by insisting that only teenagers could decorate their own rooms, and that they could do so easily and

inexpensively. While Reid reminds us that there was a great deal of diversity in teens' room décor, he also notes the irony of teenagers' increasing reliance on the ephemera of consumer culture — including pinups and posters, advertisements, pop and beer cans — used to supposedly express their own personal identity.

Get Out of My Room! could benefit from a deeper examination of the relationship between the teen bedroom and notions of sexual development and sexual experience. As Marie Louise Adams has argued, domesticity was a key facet of Cold War containment, increasing adults' desire to see adolescents develop what were described as normal heterosexual relationships.[3] Educational films from the period — few of which are examined in Reid's book — may have shed light on experts' views on the bedroom's role in the sexual maturation process. Also unaddressed is the question of sexual violence in teen bedrooms. Given the often-close relationship between victim and perpetrator in cases of rape and sexual abuse, it is worth asking how often these crimes were committed in teen bedrooms, and whether experts and families were concerned about them. Police and court records might be one way to explore the role of teen bedrooms in these tragic, but important, events.

Nevertheless, *Get Out of My Room!* is a valuable addition to the history of childhood and youth because it clearly demonstrates the central role that autonomous teen bedrooms have played in American culture, child-rearing and family relations, development psychology, and residential architecture. Reid successfully argues that the teen bedroom has been both an intensely personal and intimate space, as well as the frontline for debates about children's development, autonomy, and rights in American society.

Katharine Rollwagen
Vancouver Island University

Jonathan Zimmerman and Emily Robertson

The Case for Contention: Teaching Controversial Issues in American Schools

The polarization in American political life is now profound. Spearheading the daily public controversy is the willingness of the president and his spokespeople to lie brazenly, and apparently to believe ardently in their own fabrications. This predicament emerged after ten years of Twitter, a few more of Facebook and the iPhone — the technological platforms for ideological schism — and decades into erosion of "the authority of experts," identified by Thomas Haskell in a book by that name in 1984. It represents either the far end of a pendulum swing, after which reason, civil deliberation, and respect for evidence will become more prominent in public discourse,

---

3 Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 84.