

Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation
BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Tamara Gene Myers

Youth Squad: Policing Children in the Twentieth Century

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. 272 pp.

Histories of youth and childhood in Canada have proliferated in the twenty-first century, with several analysing relationships between colonialism and recreational group membership, categorizations of disabilities, legacies of educational progressivism, and other topics. The role of policing in shaping childhood has been relatively unexamined, having been overshadowed by studies of civil and voluntary groups. Tamara Myers' new book, therefore, offers an important new perspective on a topic that has been reinvigorated in new scholarship—the coercive and transforming role of the state in regulating the lives of youth. In Myers' portrait, this regulation is informed by the interests and input of youth themselves, although she recognizes that colonialism, along with racial and gender discrimination, have created important boundaries around youth agency.

Myers argues that North American police forces, between the 1930s and 1960s, took a “youth turn,” implementing a set of policies and practices directed at children and adolescents” (4). Police departments, she posits, sought to insert themselves into a juvenile justice system that had failed to prevent youth crime in the early twentieth-century. Police increased the daily social control of youth and established “themselves as a community authority governing delinquency, child welfare, and even childhood” (6). She presents her argument in chapters on the rise of “inclusionary” social control in policing youth activities, curfews, organized athletics, and traffic safety campaigns (12).

Myers utilizes a wide array of primary sources from across Canada and some in the United States. The scope of the study runs from New York to Montreal to Western Canada, relying on a precarious transnational perspective that is grounded in some examination of the institutional and intellectual sinews that link these disparate North American cities. Myers establishes links between New York and Montreal in the development of police youth squads more substantively than for other movements in Calgary and Vancouver, however. Readers may feel that these links are undertheorized if not under examined. Myer's North American perspective, however, is a welcome one in the Canadian literature on state formation and social control.

Myers traces two key dichotomies in twentieth-century crime prevention—one between environmentalism and naturalism, and another between conceptions of

youth as “being at once endangered and dangerous” (179). Periods of increased police intervention in youth sports, education, and activities generally coincide with periods where youth are conceived as both dangerous and susceptible to environmental pressures like poverty, crime, and sexual influences. Myers subtly traces the pitch and yaw between both dichotomies, making sense of potentially strange coinciding campaigns—like those against child deaths from car accidents and the hiring of female police officers to engage young women in Montreal. These disparate campaigns were linked by an overriding purpose of making children safe for industrial capitalism and modern cities, rather than making industrial capitalism safe for children. Myers thus links her ideas about the integration of police forces into the lives of youths to the growth and maintenance of the twentieth-century liberal order itself. The answers offered by police agencies to divergent threats to childhood were intrinsically linked to the larger ethics of liberalism—namely that children must learn and live personal responsibility in a life characterized by economic struggle against others in a seemingly egalitarian society.

Race and class are well theorized by Myers, and she pays concerted attention to representations of Black and Indigenous youths in police-produced films, literature, and ephemera. Myers makes it clear that police agencies did not envision an egalitarian field when it came to race and urban geography. On issues of disability, Myers is less clear. Many of the institutions and practices that she identifies as part of histories of youth regulation arose in response to childhood disabilities, including the institutionalization of children labelled as intellectually disabled. While police forces became part of a concerted campaign to protect children, armed with the knowledge that “criminals were made, not born,” (8) provinces and cities also hardened attitudes and practices against those targeted by eugenics and hardening notions of bodily “normality.” The rise of a youth-oriented police campaign of crime prevention through engagement is difficult to separate from the rise of eugenics in the 1920s and 30s. Disability, therefore, represents more than simply a group of children left out of the story, but an important factor downplayed in the final argument itself. Police, for example, played important supportive roles for blind homeless children in late nineteenth-century Winnipeg. They also often acted as liaisons between provinces with deaf educational programs and parents of deaf children long before the organized, concerted campaigns described by Myers.

Police have long been involved in social work and “crime prevention,” and Myers traces the origins of this story, while pointing ahead to the intensification of police involvement in youth lives in the 1990s. Like earlier policing initiatives, these new and more intrusive campaigns have established the policing of the racial distinctions within the category of youth as a key, if not always explicit, goal of urban policing. Instead of simply making youth safe for capitalism in the neoliberal era, police forces have targeted Black and Indigenous youth in Canada in service to longer-established notions of white supremacy and a racial economic order. New demands for defunding police departments and reallocating resources toward social and mental health provision call attention to Myers’ book and make it indispensable in our moment. Myers explains in part how we ended up with police forces

that make up the first line of municipal responses to mental health emergencies, social work, crime prevention, and other initiatives better suited to professionals trained in these disparate fields.

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Philippe Roy-Lysencourt, Thérèse Nadeau-Lacour, and Raymond Brodeur, eds.

Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation : Singularité et universalité d'une femme de cœur et de raison

Presses de l'Université Laval, 2019. 324 pp.

Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation is a well-known figure in the history of education in Canada. And for good reason. She was a founder of what was arguably the first school for girls in the Americas north of Mexico, an institution that still stands in the Upper Town of Vieux Québec today. As a prodigious writer and careful observer, she has left us with some of our most important sources for the history of New France. Much has been written about Marie de l'Incarnation already, and scholarly interest in this seventeenth-century Ursuline nun has not ended yet.

This book, the outcome of a colloquium held in 2018 to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Centre d'Études Marie-de-l'Incarnation at Université Laval, is proof of continued interest across a range of fields. It includes twenty-two essays by an international group of contributors examining Marie de l'Incarnation and her legacy from multi-disciplinary perspectives of history, literature, theology, and philosophy. The essays are varied in length and approach. Some are analytical and based on original research, while others are primarily descriptions or reflections. Several are particularly likely to interest historians of education. Isabelle Landy-Houillon's "Marie de l'Incarnation écrivaine?" and Amandine Bonesso's "La *Relation de 1654* de Marie de l'Incarnation: de l'écriture autobiographique à l'écriture didactique" provide helpful guidance for how to read Marie de l'Incarnation's writings in the historical and literary contexts of her time. Mary Dunn's "Singularity and Universality in *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*" explores what we can learn about Marie when we understand the biography written by Marie's son as part of a larger hagiographic tradition. Raymond Brodeur in "Entre tradition et créativité. La singularité des emplois catéchétiques de Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation" looks at how Marie de l'Incarnation taught Christian doctrine to novices. In "De Marie Guyart de l'Incarnation aux femmes « ordinaires » de la Nouvelle-France," Dominique Deslandres argues that while Marie de l'Incarnation must be recognized as "notre première génie nationale," (265) she should not be seen as so exceptional a "femme forte" (270) as she is sometimes made out to be, since many French women of her time were involved in education, social assistance, and healthcare. Philippe Roy-Lysencourt's "Les Amérindiens dans la pensée et la vie de Marie de l'Incarnation"