

Book Reviews / Recensions

Ildikó Hock. (2003). *Test Construction and Validation: Case Description of Constructing and Validating a Test of English for Teaching Purposes*. Budapest, Hungary: Adadémiai Kiadó. 275 pages. ISBN: 963 05 8033 0 (hardcover).

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Test development and the interpretation of test scores in education is a complex process. Test developers begin with a clear conceptualization of the construct to be measured and proceed with validation studies designed to assess whether the construct is adequately represented, and to evaluate the relevance, value implications, and social consequences of the test (Messick, 1989). In addition, test developers also examine a test's reliability, authenticity, interactiveness, impact, and practicality (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Hock provides a practical application of Messick's (1989) and Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework for test development. She reports the research methodology adopted to develop a Test of English for Teaching Purposes (TETP), and provides validity evidence for TETP test score use in a Hungarian University English Language Teacher Training Program. The volume primarily serves as a source for university-level language teachers and teacher-education programs to guide the development of technically sound foreign language performance and competency assessments.

Part I of this book describes a baseline study that focused on a detailed investigation of both the English language tasks and the corresponding language that EFL teachers use to accomplish these tasks. Part II focuses on test planning, development, test taking, and scoring. Part III presents an analytical assessment of the validation process through an examination of the test design, content relevance, task usefulness, test-taker characteristics and feedback, and consistency and accuracy of the measures.

Hock clearly describes techniques for gathering information about the construct, including an extensive literature review, a teacher-observation checklist, teacher and student questionnaires, and the results of brainstorming sessions about the construct with teacher candidates, mentors, and teacher educators. She uses the vast array of information from the literature and data collected in Part I of the book to construct the detailed test specifications and tasks discussed in Part II. Aspects of

language performance and proficiency deemed vital to this particular EFL teaching context include native-like pronunciation, an awareness of pronunciation rules and grammatical structures, and knowledge of words and phrases. To assess these aspects of language, she has divided the TETP into an oral section, which is performance-based, and a use-of-English section, which is competency-based.

Despite the complexity of the construct, Hock has translated her research into a clear definition of communicative English language ability for classroom teaching. A prominent strength of the book is the comprehensive analysis of the target language use domain. Regrettably, however, Hock's construct definition neglects the teachers' out-of-class English language requirements (e.g., the language required for lesson preparation and marking students' assignments). To extend the construct to include specific language-related pedagogical skills that might influence the success of language performance both in and out of the classroom, Hock might have asked Hungarian EFL teachers to keep logs of the independent teacher-related skills and activities they incur outside the classroom. This would facilitate a more complete analysis of EFL teacher language and provide justification for the written assessment tasks included in the oral section of the test. Furthermore, given the nature of the tasks included in the oral section, the name is misleading because this section of the test is actually an integrative assessment that assesses listening, speaking, writing, and grammatical knowledge.

Although Hock indicates that she asked seven individuals (two teacher trainers and five students from the target population) to take the pilot version of the use-of-English section and comment on the technical quality of the assessment, she did not ask these individuals to comment on the domain clarity or to evaluate the relevance and representativeness of the items. To correct this problem, she could have asked several specialists in the area of EFL language teaching to use a standardized procedure to rate the relevance of each test item, and the representativeness of the set of relevant items (i.e., the test) in relation to the construct of classroom language use. Then she could have examined the degree of agreement among the judges and the central tendency of the ratings for each item and used the results of this analysis to revise and improve the test.

Probably the two main limitations of the validation studies outlined in Part III of the book involve the small sample sizes ($n = 26$ for the oral section and $n = 65$ for the English-use section) and the representativeness of the pilot sample. Thus the statistical analyses (e.g., classical item analysis, factor analysis, multi-trait multi-method comparisons of intercorrelations) do not have sufficient power to establish trustworthy

test score interpretations. The investigations of performance patterns for particular tasks and task types as well as group performance differences on the oral section of the test are especially problematic considering the small group sizes (n = 17 for fourth-year full-time students; n = 4 for fourth-year correspondence students; n = 3 for fifth-year full-time students; n = 2 for fifth-year correspondence students).

In general, *Test Construction and Validation* is a useful text for those concerned with language testing, and more specifically with the assessment of English for teaching purposes. Hock does a fine job of presenting a practical application of a useful methodological framework to serve the needs of test developers in university-level teacher-education programs or other educational assessment systems. She describes an orderly, systematic approach to test development and the interpretation of test scores, which serves to orient even those not familiar with the methodology to the process of test construction and validation.

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Kenneth Westhues. (2004) *Administrative Mobbing at the University of Toronto: The Trial, Degradation and Dismissal of a Professor During the Presidency of J. Robert S. Prichard*. Queenston, ON: The Edwin Mellen Press. 494 pages. ISBN: 0-7734-6483-2.

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Westhues' analysis of the "administrative mobbing" of Herbert Richardson at the University of Toronto is a profoundly disturbing yet compelling book. It is disturbing because it reveals what can happen to a tenured professor in the academy when the senior administration adopts a stance, on evidently questionable grounds, to exclude him permanently from the academy despite his stellar career. It is compelling reading because the story that Westhues assembles resonates with faculty members in the

academy by emphasizing their intrinsic vulnerability to a process of administrative mobbing. It is more compelling yet, I submit, for people like me who, as Dean of Education, are members of the management cadre at their university and who recognize — as I do — how easily legitimate administrative decision making in personnel matters can become torqued into an orthodoxy of belief that can result in an administrative vendetta and subsequent mobbing of a hapless member of faculty. In displaying the vulnerability of established faculty members to administrative censure and in reminding those of us in positions of administrative authority of the ease with which such authority may become distorted, Westhues' book does a signal service to all of us in the academy.

The book itself is in two parts. The first is the case study of administrative mobbing of the professor, recounted chronologically and based on Westhues' careful analysis of primary source documents from Richardson's files and other public documents available to him. The voices of the key administrative players in this academic tragedy are silent; this is a critical shortcoming of the analysis. Westhues does, however, interpose throughout the book single pages comparing and contrasting stories of others from other universities who have been subjected to administrative mobbing. These provide complementary and contrasting perspectives enabling the reader to juxtapose the details of the Richardson case with these others. The second part is a series of ten essays by distinguished scholars in various disciplines, which provide a set of cogent and critical reviews and commentaries on the case itself and the facts and circumstances of Richardson's ultimate exclusion from the academy.

The case study demonstrates multiple dimensions of interest. Professor Richardson, a Calvinist theologian from the United States, joined the faculty of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto in 1968. His decision to join St. Michael's — a Catholic theological college — was motivated by the ecumenical movement in Christianity provoked by Vatican II. Richardson's career flourished at St. Michael's until institutional realignment within the University of Toronto, the changing social role of religion, and the re-emergence of conservative theological forces in the Catholic Church in the early to mid-1980s altered the relationship of St. Michael's to the University of Toronto and threatened Professor Richardson's position as a Calvinist in a Catholic college.

Encouraged to leave St. Michael's in 1987, Richardson declined the option and returned following a sabbatical year. At this point the decision to force his exit gathered momentum. St. Michael's decided to require all faculty to sign a memorandum of agreement affirming their responsibility

to teach authentically and accurately the faith tradition and theology of Roman Catholicism. Richardson refused to sign on grounds of conscience. He could not, as a committed Calvinist and as a tenured professor entitled to academic freedom, agree to teach Catholic theology.

From this point on, the wheel of exclusion moves with increasing speed and institutional resolve as the university administrators began to express concern about Richardson's teaching and grading criteria, as well as his outside employment as the founder and chief executive officer of the Edwin Mellen Press. The penultimate stage before instituting a charge of dismissal was a proposal to transfer him from St. Michael's College to the Department of Religious Studies. These events culminated in June 1993 with the formal notice from the University of Toronto that it was initiating steps to dismiss him on grounds of an alleged abuse of a medical leave, his alleged failure to report on his outside activities with the Mellen Press, alleged gross misconduct in teaching, and scholarly misconduct in his published research. Ultimately the Tribunal created to hear these charges upheld the first two and rejected the last two charges. As a result, Richardson was dismissed.

Westhues' study of the trial, degradation, and dismissal from the University of Toronto is much more detailed and heartrending than this lone review allows. It wounds the soul of the reader — particularly the academic reader, and especially so one who (naively it now seems) has attributed integrity and fundamental fairness to those who hold authority in universities. Westhues' analysis definitely leaves the impression that the charges against Richardson were trumped up and specious, used expediently to remove a now unwanted colleague. The danger of adopting the mindset of administrative righteousness to exclude the faculty member whose performance has been stellar but who has become a burr under the institutional saddle is revealed in all its vengeful poignancy in Westhues' sharply focused analysis.

Westhues' treatment of the Richardson case makes a powerful and useful theoretical contribution as well. By situating his analysis with the construct of "administrative mobbing," Westhues introduces a notion of significant theoretical impact. Unfamiliar to many readers and absent from the literature in educational administration to my knowledge, "administrative mobbing" is predicated on institutional adoption of a stance by the administrative cadre to eliminate a particular individual from the organization. As Westhues characterizes the process,

workplace mobbing is the collective expression of the eliminative impulse in formal

organizations. It is a conspiracy of employees, sometimes acknowledged but more often than not, to humiliate, degrade, and get rid of a fellow employee, when rules prevent achievement of these ends through violence. (p. 42)

The administrative literature is replete with injunctions and exhortations about the noble role of administrators in organizations. Administrators and executive officers are enjoined and encouraged to act benevolently, courageously, compassionately as they seek to achieve organizational goals. The literature is virtually silent in documenting, describing, and explaining the operation of questionable or base values in administrative life — values like malevolence, malice, cowardice, and self-protection — when faced with unconscionable facts and circumstances. Westhues' analysis raises by implication that not-altogether-praiseworthy agendas may have driven the institutional stance that led to Richardson's mobbing and eventual dismissal from the academy.

Extending the theoretical contribution is the supposition — in the absence from Westhues' analysis of the voices of the key University of Toronto administrators themselves — that the decision to secure Richardson's dismissal was pursued with a relentless banality. This apparently relentless banality of purpose appears to have permeated the assumptive and positional world of the administrators. One is left with the impression that not only was Richardson "tried, degraded, and dismissed," he was also persecuted from the time he returned from sabbatical in 1988 until his dismissal in 1994.

Often book reviewers commend the book under review as valuable or sometimes essential reading. This book is that and more besides. This book and the issues it raises should be on the desk and bedside table of every academic administrator in the post-secondary sector in Canada; it should also be in the course syllabus for every program in higher education/post-secondary administration in Canada. Westhues' analysis raises issues of institutional life that strike at the heart of what it means to be a post-secondary administrator in a civil and civilized society.

Jeanne-Marie Mannavarayan. (2002). *The French Immersion Debate. French for All or All for French?* Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 158 p. ISBN: 1-55059-226-2.

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Challenging the underlying assumption that all students can enrol in French immersion programs, Mannavarayan presents a critical perspective of these programs. Although she believes that all children should have the opportunity to become bilingual, she suggests that it is unfair to push non-academic students into continuing their immersion program if they lack ability or interest. To build her case, Mannavarayan completes an extensive literature review to provide a platform for her discussion of the suitability of French immersion programs for all students.

Her introductory chapter, filling a void in the existing literature, provides an ethnographic account of the realities of students who leave French immersion programs. She collected her primary data while working as a French, second-language teacher, providing personal observations and the life history of seven of her former immersion students, four boys and three girls. Mannavarayan shows that such immersion leavers experience academic difficulty with reading and writing in French, and may have trouble grasping what is going on in class. These students commonly develop low self-esteem and emotional distress as a result of their ongoing learning difficulties.

Although Mannavarayan feels that it is generally better for these students to transfer into regular English programs, she points out that their parents often have trouble coming to terms with the idea. Indeed, the parents typically push their children to stay in immersion programs because they want them to graduate with an immersion certificate and get a better job. Many parents also view their children's leaving immersion as a personal failure, especially when they had invested in private French tutoring lessons or hoped their children continue immersion because they were Francophone. Mannavarayan notes that most students in her study did not regret their decision to leave immersion because they usually ended up getting better grades in the regular English program.

Her classroom experiences incited Mannavarayan to conduct an extensive literature review on the suitability of French immersion programs for all children. Her analysis shows that in spite of evidence of immersion attrition, a large body of research exists on immersion success. This research indicates that immersion programs enhance the cognitive

development of children at no cost to their English language skills. Besides doing relatively well in French, immersion students succeeded in academic subjects such as science, math, and social sciences. Mannavarayan questions the statistical findings that indicate that most students leave immersion programs before they complete high school. She found controversy in the literature; some studies suggested that immersion attrition is linked to motivational and attitudinal problems among students while others suggested that student disability is the main factor.

To understand the origins of learning difficulties experienced by some immersion students, Mannavarayan examined factors that influence second-language learning. Her literature review shows that intelligence is no longer the only or the most important factor in learning a second language. Indeed, studies show that immersion success is linked to student personality traits and attitudes towards the program. Some researchers suggest that social class background plays an important role in determining whether students display the academic skills valued in school settings. Mannavarayan also cites the developmental interdependence hypothesis developed by Cummins (1978), which suggests that competence in a second language depends on the developmental stage of the mother tongue, to explain why Anglophone students with a good mastery of English tend to successfully learn French as their second language. However, she fails to mention recent research on immersion students from heritage language backgrounds (Dagenais & Day, 1999) or from minority Francophone communities (Dolbec 1994; Lapalme, 1993; Makropoulos, 2003). Mannavarayan provides an overview of studies that examine the relationship between first language maintenance and second- language acquisition, but fails to mention recent research on immersion students from heritage language backgrounds (Dagenais & Day, 1999) or from minority Francophone communities (Dolbec, 1994; Lapalme; 1993; Makropoulos, 2003).

Mannavarayan points out that research in second-language learning does not sufficiently explain the difficulties of some students in immersion. She believes that studies are needed to address the immersion learning in relation to students' personal and emotional needs and parents' expectations. At the practical level, Mannavarayan also suggests the need to provide appropriate help for students with academic difficulties to allow them to function without finding learning frustrating. She concludes that such initiatives should not overshadow the ultimate objective of a well-rounded education: providing students the opportunity to develop their self-esteem and reach their full potential.

This book successfully challenges the idea that French immersion is a

suitable and desirable program for all students. Her conclusion, however, cannot be generalized to other bilingual programs, especially those involving minority language students who usually have no trouble picking up a second language when it is the main lingua franca. Indeed, French immersion is an academically oriented bilingual program geared for English majority students who do not need to learn French to integrate into society, and who often lack regular exposure to the language outside of the classroom setting. Notwithstanding these nuances, Mannavarayan's book is an excellent read that will undoubtedly interest parents, professionals, and academics who share a common interest in bilingual education.

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Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, & Sara Delamont. (2003). *Key Themes in Qualitative Research: Continuities and Change*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. 232 pages. ISBN: 0-7591-0127-2 (paperback).

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Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont identify a number of tensions in ethnographic inquiry, especially as such tensions emerge in British and American anthropology and sociology. The authors' primary purpose is to trace the continuities of these tensions through time and to note the shifts and changes within them. The tensions they identify also provide a context for considering trends in postmodern research.

Each chapter outlines a particular tension. The authors identify a classic text that exemplifies the issue and sets it historically. They then examine the tension in terms of current intellectual inquiry. Chapter 1, for example, deals with familiarity and strangeness through reference to Geer's (1964) work. This paper demonstrates a traditional view of the ethnographer making the familiar strange and the strange familiar through a position that clearly separates the researcher from those researched—an insider/outsider dichotomy. The authors then discuss how recent thinking serves to blur the boundary between what is strange and what is familiar. They also problematize the way that strangeness and familiarity are constructed. Nevertheless, the authors argue, the imperative to make sense of different social worlds and to interrogate the transparency of those we know well remains consistent as well as worthy ethnographic work.

Related to the above, and examined in Chapter 2, is the tension of researchers and their subject positions in the research—to what degree do they reveal and/or examine their roles in the research process? The authors showcase Powdermaker's (1966) work as an early example of the autobiographical impulse in ethnographic fieldwork. The autobiographical, at the time, was primarily about the researcher examining how she negotiated her roles as one outside of the social world being studied and also as one involved in it. Recent developments in autoethnography serve to underline this tension and how its focus has now changed to question how researchers and their research methods serve to construct the social world being investigated.

Additional tensions delineated throughout the chapters include discussions about the political aspects of ethnography. Earlier work tended to distinguish research conducted in political contexts from that which was considered apolitical; however, recent thinking emphasizes the political investment of all research endeavours. The authors also discuss

methodological concerns such as participant observation and interviewing and how these two were once viewed together as ways of “filling in the gaps”—gaining a clearer sense of what was “really going on.” Currently, many researchers consider the ways in which research methods themselves construct experience. Such a perspective serves to foreground how different research approaches can create different versions of experience rather than trying to sift out what is “really” happening.

Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont also examine truth: both the tension created by the question of whether or not an informant is telling “the truth” to more current queries about what counts as truth and how different contexts create truth. This discussion leads to related issues of validity, plausibility, and triangulation. The authors demonstrate how, in grounded theory, for example, the heuristic potential for generating theory has been deformed and codified over time into a rigid set of procedures for data analysis. The original creative impetus has been lost in the pursuit of coding software that enables researchers to manage their data. The authors also consider important issues of writing and representation.

In each chapter, the authors outline a tension, weave a thread of consistency by tracing changes in how the tension has manifested itself over time. The authors note, repeatedly, that they intend their discussions of classic ethnographic pieces to show the continuities in ethnographic studies, and not to denigrate or devalue this work.

Because they use the term empirical ethnography at times and because they are interested in historical contextualization, I expected that the authors would conceptualize more clearly the relationship of empiricism to Western metaphysics and how, specifically, this relationship differs from current research orientations. I also found that the language associated with ethnography, terms such as data and analysis for example, was rendered unproblematic throughout. The interrogation of such language is crucial in addressing the tensions outlined in the book, and is an issue that all qualitative researchers must consider. I also found references to “the extremes of ‘postmodernist’ confusion and disarray” (p. 164) and its “carnavalesque diversity” (p. 196) to be rather extreme kinds of comments themselves. I do, however, appreciate the point made that some researchers may perceive the lines between postmodern trends in current research and in previous research as too definite, that there are, as the authors demonstrate, continuities and threads of concern that stretch over time. I also found thought-provoking the comments about how the transparency of the researcher/writer as authority in previous work is now, at times, supplanted by a researcher/writer engaged with textual experimentation. Paradoxically, in both cases, the researcher/writer can be central. The

authors entreat researchers to guard against being too self-involved while playing with text and to return always to the purpose of making sense of social worlds. Compelling too was the reminder that what is avant-garde is so only because it is the work of the few that raise questions for all.

Overall, *Key Themes* is a useful book for educational researchers conducting ethnographic inquiries—and for those engaged with participant observation and/or interview as research method. The historical contextualization in anthropology and sociology is helpful, as is the delineation of key classic texts. The tensions outlined are relevant to all involved with qualitative research.

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Norah L. Lewis. (Ed.). (2002). *Freedom to Play: We Made Our Own Fun*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 224 pages. ISBN 0-88920-406-3.

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As a preadolescent, I was part of a group of friends who got together almost every evening to play games. Depending on the number of kids around, we played croquet, a game called rescue that a friend from Trinidad taught us, and others, but by far the favourite was kick the can. We had such a good time that everything else, TV, homework, chores, took a back seat to the game. One evening my parents taught us a new game, run sheep run, that replaced kick the can for a short time. We asked our parents about other games from their youth and we were introduced to ante-I-over as well. These memories came flooding back to me as I read *Freedom to Play*.

Current brain research indicates that physical activity plays an important role in brain development in children. As well, researchers such as Pellegrini (1998), Bjorkland and Brown (1998), and Byers (1998) believe that play has an important role in learning. Although several theories explain why humans play, no researchers disagree on its benefit.

In the 1950s, Piaget proposed that children create and learn about the world through play. Nevertheless, recent research suggests a significant decline in the time children are involved in self-generated, free time play (Bailey, 2000), perhaps because of television and other technologies. As a physical educator, I excitedly began to read this book within this framework, and appreciated its value.

Freedom to Play is part of a multidisciplinary series called *Studies of Childhood and Family in Canada*, a series that focuses on the intersections of age, class, race, gender, and region to understand childhood and family, both historically and currently. In her qualitative study, Lewis considers games, activities, and amusements that were part of the culture of Canadian childhood before television became standard in most homes. Lewis uses four methods to collect data from people who were Canadian and Newfoundland children in the pre-television era: letters written by children to five newspapers; reflections from participants, or "players," on memories of childhood games and activities; memories from participants during casual conversations about play; and selections from 11 Canadian writers who described specific games or activities from their own childhood.

Following the introduction, Lewis presents the six themes of the study with a chapter dedicated to each. I found all the contributions interesting, and many fascinating such as Tony Plomp's contribution, "Through the Eyes of a Newcomer," where he compares activities in post-war Holland to those in Canada.

The last section of the introduction, "Fun or More Fun?" acts as a discussion of the study. Here I began to have concerns about the study because Lewis makes statements to reach conclusions that are not supported by data. For example, Lewis states that "although letter writers enjoyed being involved in organizations for children and youth, adults tended not to recall such organizations as a vital part of their childhood" (p. 22). Unless she asked her participants this question directly in her questionnaire, they would have no reason to recall these organizations, and, unfortunately, we are not given information about the questions asked. Secondly, unless the contributors were the same people who wrote the letters as children, her assumption in this statement is questionable. I have a similar concern about her statement that "Children of pre-television time do not recall boredom as a companion or even a problem" (p. 22). I wonder if the responses would have been different had participants been asked to recall periods of boredom. Unfortunately, we do not know. Of greater concern is the discussion comparing today's youth with pre-television youth. Because data collection is exclusively from players who

were children in the pre-television era, I believe including a comparison to today's youth is inappropriate. Even if the contributors were asked to make a comparison, they are not in a position to do so objectively.

I met with other frustrations as I read the book. Lewis has included the players' contributions in their entirety. First, the comprehensive nature of many of the offerings makes the book repetitive as players recall the same games and activities. This creates the danger that many readers may find the book boring in places. Second, Lewis has placed contributions in the theme to which she feels they are best suited. As a result, many contributions end up as part of one theme when they could just as easily have been part of many other themes. In fact, some offerings end up in themes they seem to have little to do with. For example, a series of entries (p. 78) taken from letters written to newspapers relating experiences about field days and picnics are included in the theme "Playing Is Playing When Shared," when they clearly better fit the characteristics of "Playing Is Playing Games" or "There Was Always Something to Do." This style makes the book difficult to use as a reference book if you are interested only in one or two aspects of the study. I believe Lewis might have found categories within contributions to include in the appropriate theme, making the themes more relevant and making the book more useful as a reference.

In her introduction, Lewis discusses the importance of play to the development of children and supports her claims with several references. Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not include several issues that would make it useful to educators interested in incorporating play in their curriculum. I would have been interested to learn more about how these games were passed on from generation to generation but for the most part seem to be disappearing from the culture of children in one or two generations. Do kids no longer know the games or do they just not wish to play them anymore? In either case, given the importance of play to child development, it is a shame that these activities are being lost. Despite my criticisms of this book as a study, I enjoyed reading it and believe it would be of interest to classroom teachers, physical educators, or recreation leaders. It would also be of interest to those wishing to take a pleasant journey back to their own days of freedom to play.

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Charles Ungerleider. (2003). *Failing Our Kids: How We Are Ruining Our Public Schools*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd. 306 pages. ISBN: 0-7710-8681-4

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I gritted my teeth when I picked up Ungerleider's book. *Failing Our Kids* — yet another diatribe against teachers and public education, probably an exhortation for rigorous testing and market-driven education. But I had to read it: it's Canadian.

Ungerleider is not like that. *Failing Our Kids* comes out of Ungerleider's valuing of teachers and public education and his concern for the future of Canada. As he writes in the conclusion of his book: "if we care about Canada, we must care about our public schools" (p. 294).

His concern for schools in no way dulls his critique of public education. Teacher, teacher educator, associate dean in the Faculty of Education at UBC, deputy minister of education for British Columbia, Charles Ungerleider has acquired a wide-angle view of the education enterprise, and his gaze includes all: students, parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers, politicians.

Early in his critique, Ungerleider analyzes children and poverty. Wisely, he embeds issues of gender and race within the rubric of poverty. His solution is simple: wage equity. He recognizes that men and women do not have wage parity, equal pay for equal work. Yet most families in poverty are led by women, often as single parents. Improving their economic status would go a long way toward dealing with the child poverty issue. He also argues that secondary schools should become centres for universal daycare, where students earn credit for caring for young children and acquire parenting skills. Simple solutions these, but solutions upon which society has stalled.

Ungerleider tackles the media and links them with issues of morals. The media have assumed a dominant place in the lives of children and youth, with their socialization happening by chance in front of a TV set or computer. Ungerleider notes that schools now have to make up during early school years for the socialization of the media that formerly came from the family, church, and community. His solution: schools demand that other institutions, such as the family, address educational issues that

are traced to the dominant influence of the media.

Using his insider knowledge, Ungerleider critiques the two dominant conflicting philosophies of education: the traditionalists and the progressivists. This debate doesn't interest Ungerleider. He sees the issue as one of achieving a balance between serving the needs of individual children and the needs of society. Educators look foolish in the eyes of parents who don't understand this philosophical warring, and he urges school personnel to involve parents and other community members in discussions to understand schools.

Ungerleider forays into the aims of schools debate. He argues for education rather than training. Students need to learn about their "economic roles," but they should receive workplace training. He would see a market-place economy, but not a market-place society or schools. He has an interesting take on ICT, arguing that the benefits of computers and technology are unknown, and probably not worth the huge expense they inflict on school systems. The real problem, says Ungerleider, lies in what is sacrificed in schools to support the technological appetite.

Ungerleider supports special education, but points out that the administration of special education has gone off track. Relying on a medical model of special education, teachers have lost confidence in working with students who don't learn as quickly as others because they believe that they need specialist credentials to work with specific diagnosed problems, failing to realize that most special education is really about good teaching techniques that are applicable to all children.

Although Ungerleider values teachers' unions, acknowledging their importance in maintaining a quality profession, he points out that union organizers often lose track of reality. Their strikes, for example, alienate students and parents, their strongest political allies. He has hard criticism for the neo-liberal view of education, as evidenced in the provincial policy in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. These governments believe that giving parents choice moves market-place survival of the fittest into education. By publishing test results, by giving parents choice, the best schools survive, the poorest atrophy. What actually happens, Ungerleider argues, is increased economic and ethnic segregation. Only the advantaged in society are in a position to act upon and benefit from choices provided by a voucher system, charter schools, private schools — or those schools that appear to have highest test scores. These procedures further undermine public education and fail to consider the growing plurality of Canadian society. In fact, schools that are caught up in this competitive struggle don't improve the quality of education for students; they work to differentiate themselves from each other.

For Ungerleider, education is very much a political process. For this reason, schools and educators need to be open for discussion and debate. They need, above all, to involve parents in the process, seeking them as political advocates. Governments, too, need to recognize their limitations. Most governments, and most planning and decisions, are limited by the election cycle: initiatives that have payoff within four years.

Failing Our Kids makes an interesting complement to Saskatchewan's role of the schools report: *School^{Plus}: A Vision for Children and Youth*. *School^{Plus}* provides a list of "tectonic forces": issues facing schools. These forces coincide with much of Ungerleider's analysis, with Ungerleider putting flesh on the *School^{Plus}* bones. Ungerleider's vision, however, lies very much within the education establishment. He is about fixing schools. The *School^{Plus}* vision is much about fixing society.

Is there a Canadian critique of education? I think there is, a thought that is captured in my first reaction to Ungerleider's book. I had expected a book that would concentrate on teacher and school failure. But Ungerleider takes a softer approach, an approach that brings in all institutions and personnel involved with schools. He argues for a collaborative dialogue, a partnership if you will, among those concerned with public education.

In contrast, the American critique of schools over the past decade has attacked schools. The failure lies within, and with teachers. American schools are caught in the net of a conservative ideology. Ungerleider puts it this way:

Conservative groups claim that high cost and low quality are characteristic of all American public schools. They believe that giving parents choice will address high costs and low quality and that the cost of public education will decline if parents choose private schools. The quality will improve, they argue, by forcing schools to compete, rewarding successes and punishing failures. (p. 179)

Canadian have not yet travelled completely down this path. The work of the Fraser Institute and the neo-liberal thinking of some provincial governments has emulated American thinking. However, Canadian educators, and some provinces, have not accepted this competitive model of school improvement. Ungerleider's critique of education, his way of going about examining schools, reflects the opinion of Adams (2003), whose book, *Fire and Ice*, outlines differences between Canadians and Americans in their approach to social issues, with Canadians more concerned with social issues and Americans with economic achievement.

Failing Our Kids is a good read. Ungerleider has abandoned the academic writing style — references and footnotes are virtually non-existent — to make his book accessible to non-educators. His writing is clear and crisp,

often folksy. About testing he says, " 'You can't fatten a pig by weighing it'" (p. 250). On the issue of increased costs and reduced achievement in schools, Ungerleider points out, "The cost of gasoline has risen dramatically over the past twenty years, but my car's mileage has not improved!" (p. 181). Ungerleider's book makes an excellent, but challenging, source for undergraduate teacher-education students and provides a comprehensive summary of contemporary issues for those involved in policy.

REFERENCES

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