

The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada

Xiaobei Chen, Rebecca Raby, and Patrizia Albanese, Editors (2017).

Toronto: Canadian Scholars. 425 pages.

\$74.95 (print). ISBN 978-1-77338-018-6 (softcover). 978-1-77338-019-3 (PDF).

978-1-77338-020-9 (EPUB).

The editors and contributors to *The Sociology of Childhood and Youth in Canada* seek to revise childhood and youth studies through inversion of their developmental stages. We see child-centered stories that revamp the criteria that one uses to define what young folks need to know and be in society. The contributors treat us to a wealth of sources and methods for representation of youngsters' lives. The volume has 20 chapters in four sections, an introductory essay, and a glossary at the end.

The introductory chapter notifies the reader that children and youth are individuals whose lives do not neatly fit the contexts that experts assign. The editors depict the very real challenges that any student of research with children, youth, and their families faces. There is a perennial topic in Section I: Research on and with Children and Youth, which concerns how researchers form relationships with youngsters. The writing in the five chapters is quite lively, and contributors write to the research neophyte. Section II: Social Constructions of Childhood and Youth, investigates experiences and texts in children's lives. We look at studies in disability, friendships, and storybooks. Section III: Inequalities and Intersections in Experiences of Childhood and Youth, shakes the assumption of benevolence in institutions. Section IV: Citizenship, Rights, and Social Engagement, points out that international standards such as those in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) buttress the need for recognition of children as participants in determination of their life courses. There is a perennial reminder that international law like the CRC may articulate Western norms and ideals of childhood.

The editors give us a wide scope of topics, and possibilities for further research programs may be imagined. It is laudable to draw in readers who are students as active participants in creation of research questions and consideration of ethical issues. I carefully read the glossary, and it is an enjoyable read on its own. Its writing reminds readers of key methods and lessons from the studies in the collection. I applaud inclusion of research in Francophone educational contexts. Investigators decouple a traditional relationship between pedagogy and Quebec nationalism. This pairing is being ruptured through focus on the child as a "unit of analysis" (p. 51) who depicts the school environment and not "the other way around." I like that methods are part of the stories because all researchers make and remake plans as they collect and analyze data. Such weaving of methodological insights into story shows how research actually occurs.

The authors make great effort to ensure that their unique studies pose arguments and questions of interest to readers. Unfortunately, there is a significant problem:

there is simply too much information in the chapters. To illustrate my criticism, I refer to chapter 16 by Cameron Greensmith and Adam Davies. There is brief mention of a student, David, who did once attend his school's gay-straight alliance (GSA) meetings but decided not to continue involvement because in his opinion, lesbians and tea dominated the club's rhythm. In sum, he did not feel included in the club. I did really enjoy reading this anecdote, and Greensmith and Davies are correct that it deserves picking apart, as there are issues of sexism, racism, power, diversity, and complexity that affect development of GSAs in schools. This story could be the focus of the entire chapter, but the authors introduce it and then leap to another topic. A counterpoint to chapter 16 is Jihan Abbas' superb chapter six, which begins with her memories of her brother, her home, and her childhood. She uses literature to comprehend her experiences, frustrations, and hopes for children with disabilities.

Significant topics that are likely to interest readers get short shrift. In chapter five, Jacqueline Kennelly, Valerie Stam, and Lynette Schick have a relationship that transcends standard understandings of roles and responsibilities of faculty, their students, and their community coinvestigators, collaborators, and consultants. What we witness are exposures of everyone's vulnerabilities and mentorship through care of one another. Unfortunately, this lesson is an implicit one—I think that it is such a powerful one that it needs extensive discussion in an additional part of the essay.

Several chapters refer to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans-2*. I think that there is a need for a single chapter that identifies the concepts of childhood in the document, analyzes its relevant parts, and outlines rigorously implications for researchers. There could be a direct inference on how the concepts of childhood and attendant research guidelines could affect the review processes of research ethics boards in Canadian universities and colleges.

Many contributors frame their positionalities with the aid of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of doxa, field, habitus, and symbolic capital. For effective comprehension by students, a chapter prior to the meat of the collection or at the end of it for review would be of value. It could also be a comprehensive introduction or review of theories of relevance to the sociology of childhood, for example, in work by Michel Foucault.

The biggest problem in this book is its majority focus on urban Ontario, in spite of its claim to represent childhoods in Canada. An explanation for reliance on Ontario is necessary—I am sure students using the book in postsecondary institutions are going to wonder how a body of work set mainly in and around Toronto—where only a quarter of the nation's population resides—accounts for all children and youth in Canada. While I believe that there is an urban hue on childhood since the postwar years, I wonder why the editors did not take a greater effort to seek contributors who study rural sociology or conduct research in rural and remote areas of Canada.

The questions that appear at the end of every chapter could be launch pads for investigation by students in their local lives. In sum, the book's placement of children and youth knowledges as roots that give expression to possibilities capsize the developmental and dependent caricatures of the child figure.

Review by Jonathan Anuik

Jonathan Anuik received his Ph.D. degree in History from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Canada. He is currently an associate professor in the Educational Policy Studies department at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, where he teaches courses in Indigenous educational history and policy. He researches nourishing the learning spirit, youth and teachers in Archie comics, and the pedagogy of the history of education in teacher education.