

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

LORNE TEPPERMAN and JAMES CURTIS, *Social Problems: A Canadian Perspective*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2004, viii + 455p., index.

Tepperman and Curtis tackle a formidable textbook topic in this carefully researched and written book. Well balanced between the presentation of Canadian 'social problems,' and the sociological theories developed to explain them, the authors make a sound contribution to the teaching enterprises of sociology, Canadian studies and social work. This text engages the student reader and primes one's seminar for lively discussion. The chapters range from poverty and economic inequality to environment and technology, from work and unemployment, to sexism and gender inequality, and more.

There are 41 figures and charts, 19 tables, and 44 boxed inserts amenable to overhead and power point presentations though these are not available as ancillary instructor resources. What is available is a comprehensive publisher website that provides instructors with chapter summaries and learning objectives, a test bank, and teaching aid references that include videotapes, appropriate peer reviewed journals on the particular topic, supplementary texts, a 'Hollywood' film title, and popular song titles. I must admit, the song titles presented both a sociological context to the noise I have been subjected to in a house full of adolescents (Eminem, *Kill You*; Prozzak, *www.nevergetoveryou*), and a trip down the memory lane of a misspent youth (McCartney, *Treat Her Gently*; Steppenwolf, *The Pusher Man*).

There is a lacking in the book that could preclude it from first year text adoption and challenge the instructor to ensure appropriate consideration in the classroom or with a supplementary text. The authors' use of the sociological concepts of class and status lacks in both definition and theoretical presentation. For example, the authors' nearest definition of class is a bourgeoisie/ proletariat dichotomy of those elites who own the means of production and those who must sell their labour (p.17, 43, 212). No more is offered. More confusing to the novice sociology reader is the use of terms such as 'class consciousness,' (pp.165-6) 'middle and upper classes' versus 'working classes,' (p.66) 'bottom end of class and status hierarchies,' (pp.165-6) and 'the underclasses' (p.331). There was a lack of definitions and theoretical presentations to support these terms.

The book fares no better with the concept of status. On page five one finds 'low socio-economic status.' Well into the book the authors present us with 'unequal economic statuses' and 'contributing to class inequality' on the same page without discussion of the concepts (p. 432.). The only definition of status found is in the introductory chapter glossary: "a socially defined position a person holds in a given social group (for example, nurse or student). Note that status is a purely relational term, as each status only exists through its relation to one or more other statuses" (p.29).

More is needed here. It is important to ensure student readers appreciate the definitional and methodological debates behind such terms to develop an understanding of stratification that goes beyond the knowing nods otherwise based on stereotyped assumptions.

For those seeking an undergraduate sociology text or one in the helping professions with a focus on Canadian social problems, even with the caveat presented above, this book deserves consideration.

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