

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

ROBERT SWEET and PAUL ANISEF (Eds.) *Preparing for Post-Secondary Education: New Roles for Governments and Families*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005, 304 p.

Drawing on the national 1999 Survey of Approaches to Educational Planning (SAEP) by Statistics Canada, this collection of chapters adds to the literature around how parents negotiate and plan for their children's potential post-secondary attendance. The data explicitly address parental views and strategies on post-secondary planning and saving in relation to governments and schools. Collectively, the authors explore educational planning within a "structure-process" framework, which helpfully recognizes the dynamic relationships between changing educational planning strategies by families and the broader socio-economic context of Canadian post-secondary funding. Based on empirical data and analyses, this book will appeal to government officials and policy-makers with an interest in post-secondary education and issues around access, and academics with an interest in the links between social capital and education.

The book is organized into two parts. The first part reviews the broader context of post-secondary education, and usefully provides some empirical data for trends which are often discussed generally but rarely identified in concrete terms. One author, for example, presents data on how parental education is very strongly correlated to participation in the post-secondary system. At the same time, this section provides a discussion of debates around funding and access to post-secondary education, with an excellent empirical analysis of the various funding mechanisms employed in Canada, along with the consequences, related to who pays for education and how. At the heart of this section is a concern with the systemic mechanisms of how governments have changed their relationship to families and students and their ability to access the post-secondary education system, whether that be through rising tuition costs and student debt, private or public funding, or financial aid schemes.

The second part of this book tackles the roles of families in relation to post-secondary access and participation. In particular, the authors explore the different features of familial home life and composition that relate to access including family size and structure, parental involvement, gender, class, and rural-urban differences. By attempting to capture the key elements of the changing context of family planning for children's post-secondary education, the book actively contributes to Pierre Bourdieu's

theory of social capital. Social capital is taken to be a resource that is connected to membership within groups or social networks which can be mobilized by individuals for their own benefit. The authors in this collection clearly understand family to comprise a form of social capital. Their efforts to quantify various components of how familial capital can operate in relation to post-secondary access and participation is therefore an important contribution to the field of education studies and the role of the family and how educational achievement is acquired and achieved.

Tangentially this book also makes an important contribution to the associated human capital theory outlined by economists Edward Glaeser and Robert Lucas. Human capital theory contends that economic growth is driven by concentrations of educated people. If we begin with the assumption that access and participation in post-secondary education is crucial to today's "knowledge" economy, as these authors clearly do, then identifying the factors that augment the potential for acquiring a high degree of human capital for Canadian students clearly becomes an essential imperative for both families and governments.

Readers looking for a critique of the "new roles for governments and families" may be disappointed with this book as it does not address the deeper political and ideological aspects of a shift from Keynesian welfare spending in post-secondary education to the current context of "structural uncertainties," coupled with a shift to new relationships that sees individuals and families increasingly made responsible for their own well-being. At the same time, the book in no way proposes to ruminate on the underpinnings of liberal state governance but rather commits itself to a concrete empirical discovery of the current context and systemic features in family planning for post-secondary access and participation. The book's strength lies in its empirical rigor in taking up this task, and in its ability to open up new paths of inquiry in moving forward to a better understanding how post-secondary education access could be more equitably achieved by Canadian students.

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