

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

LORNE TEPPERMAN and HARLEY DICKINSON (Eds.) *Reading Sociology: Canadian Perspectives*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2007, xvii + 318 p.

Reading Sociology is bound to pique the interest of undergraduate students and instructors alike. The editors, Lorne Tepperman and Harley Dickinson, have pulled together an eclectic collection of articles written by contemporary sociologists that introduces the reader to a wide array of current trends in Canadian sociology. The chapters that make the cut are abbreviated versions of papers presented at the 2005 annual meeting of the Canadian Sociological Association, research published in the *Canadian Review of Sociology* or given as honorary Porter lectures. These chapters represent high quality research conducted by both established and up-and-coming scholars who practice sociology. To name a few, the contributors include Roderic Beaujot, Craig Calhoun, Bruce Curtis, Ann Duffy, Margrit Eichler, Gordon Laxer, David W. Livingstone, Janet McLellan, Barbara Marshall, Ralph Matthews, Robert Prus, Marilee Reimer, and Stephen Riggins. Actually, in total there are ninety-eight contributors and seventy chapters. Nineteen of the chapters are co-authored, signaling the importance of collaborative work in current sociological research and writing. Collectively, the chapters illustrate in a variety of ways how to “do sociology,” and showcase the kinds of topics that are being discussed now in Canada and the range of possible career trajectories for contemporary sociologists. In other words, the research of the contributing authors offers students a preview of sociology as a discipline, practice and profession. Reading scholarly work produced by present-day sociologists, as opposed to reading a text *about* sociology, opens up many different and exciting pedagogical possibilities.

Reading Sociology is intended to be a companion text for introductory sociology courses at universities and colleges. Its organization follows the pattern found in most introductory sociology textbooks in that the material is divided into the usual topics. The result is a textbook comprised of 15 parts: What is Sociology?; Theories and Methods; Culture; Socialization; Deviance; Families; Education; Work; Aging; Health; Inequality and Stratification; Sex and Gender; Immigration, Race and Ethnicity; Globalization; States and Government; and Environment. Each part has a brief introduction that locates the topic within the discipline of sociology, paying attention to key concepts, theories or methods, and summarizes the articles that follow. Particularly useful for students is the inclusion of “Questions for Critical Thought” at the end of each topic and a glossary of

highlighted terms at the end of the text. However, the text lacks an index, which may perturb students and instructors.

In general, *Reading Sociology* both highlights longstanding traditions in sociological inquiry and demonstrates the dynamism of theories and methods necessary to produce nuanced and innovative explanations of micro- and macro-level social phenomena. The collection of work by real, live sociologists means that students get more than just a survey of the possible methodologies and theoretical approaches; instead, they get to see how these theories and methods are taken-up by contemporary sociologists in studies of the social world. In *Reading Sociology* these lessons are grounded in Canadian content, including subject matter that has made news headlines and other, more invisible, social problems. It is often the case that “Canadian” textbooks are simply adapted versions of texts intended for American readers. This is not the case here, which likely reflects Oxford’s partnership with the Canadian Sociological Association in the publication of the text. *Reading Sociology* is comprised of a critical mass of Canadian content and contributors, and yet manages to stave off insularity with contributions written by international scholars about global contexts. Nearly all of the contributing authors represent Canadian universities or organizations and most of the studies draw on Canadian-specific data. Nevertheless, there are gaps in content and representation. Work on people in the North, Aboriginal peoples, and people with disabilities are underrepresented. In terms of content, Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta dominate the case studies and ethnographies. Likewise, contributors representing universities and colleges in Ontario are disproportionately overrepresented; universities and colleges in Alberta and British Columbia have strong representation. The other provinces and territories are either poorly represented or entirely absent.

The use of shortened versions of complete papers poses challenges and presents opportunities. One of the potential disadvantages of this format is that the papers may seem incomplete or underdeveloped and are thus sometimes unclear. But for the most part, chapters in this text escape this pitfall. On the other hand, there are clear advantages to this format. Students are introduced to a wider range of sociological literature than would be possible with full-length papers. And, linked to this, the abbreviated format allows for the possibility of including the works of a wider selection of scholars in the field. *Reading Sociology* succeeds in these regards.

Overall, this is a solid compilation of high quality research that will resonate with and engage Canadian students. The chapters are generally accessible, interesting, and timely. *Reading Sociology* would make an excellent accompanying text for introductory sociology courses at universities and colleges across Canada. It is bound to encourage lively discussion in the classroom and help students begin to see the social issues in private troubles.

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