



SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN THE CLASSROOM



A webinar co-organized by the Canadian Sociological Association's Sociology of Education Research Cluster (CSA) and the Canadian Association of Sociology of Education (CASE).

Host: **Dr. Anna Katyn Chmielewski**, University of Toronto
Discussant: **Dr. Alana Butler**, Queen's University

**THURSDAY,
NOVEMBER 27
12:00 – 1:15PM EST.**

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Presentation 1



Véronique Grenier,

Banting Postdoctoral Researcher,
Institut national de la recherche
scientifique, Centre Urbanisation
Culture Société

Discipline and exclusion in selective programs: The case of a public high school located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area

Most public high schools in Quebec now offer the regular program and a range of specialized programs, often enriched and selective. This presentation addresses the following question: How does the stratification of the educational offerings shape the internal functioning of public high schools, staff practices, and students’ experiences?

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with staff members and students from a public high school located in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area of Quebec City, this presentation examines how students enrolled in enriched and selective programs are subject to practices of regulation and exclusion. The analytical framework uses various concepts rooted in a sociology of school markets (Felouzis, Maroy and van Zanten, 2013) to position the school within the competitive context that prevails (Kamanzi, 2019). It also mobilizes Foucault’s (1975) approach of schools as institutions of discipline.

The findings reveal a school compelled to compete within the local educational market, caught between the need to attract ‘good’ students to enhance its reputation and the imperative to maintain sufficient enrollment to secure funding. To manage this tension, the school relies on ‘minimal’ selection criteria coupled with a disciplinary apparatus that regulates students’ academic performances and behavior. Those not meeting the expectations risk exclusion. By focusing on a school situated in a disadvantaged context, this presentation contributes to discussions on equity and justice in education by making visible mechanisms through which schools regulate and exclude. Ultimately, it underscores how the current competitive context produces ‘new’ forms of regulation and exclusion that reinforce educational inequalities.

Presentation 2



Lulu Larcenciel,

PhD Student & Research Assistant
at Brock University (Dept of
Child & Youth Studies)

Troubling “Social Skills” Goals: What Autistic youth testimonies can teach us about social learning and education

This seminar interrogates “social skills” training and therapies through first-hand insights of young Autistic people across psychological, sociological, educational, and therapeutic research, including Larcenciel’s (2025) transdisciplinary study on the experiences of Canadian youth who have undergone such programming. These findings coalesce in a prism of social motivation, social masking, and coercion to strive for neuroconformity, often at extreme cost to Autistic health and wellbeing. Along with youth reports of social identity-building and interaction, critical anti-colonial analysis can illuminate a series of flaws and repressive structures in common “social skill” intervention goals. Autistic students are held to ableist and colonial behavioural expectations through programs wherein performing to oppressive neuronormative standards is an established treatment/lesson objective. Enforcement of these standards is especially punitive for those embodying multiple intersections of marginalized identity (with Black, Indigenous, and POC Autistic students reporting prejudice and persecution when unable or unwilling to meet them). Nonspeaking students, and those with intellectual disabilities or motor disabilities like apraxia, are also distinctly dehumanized and isolated by these “skill” goals.

Webinar participants will benefit from exposure to direct insights about educational and therapeutic practices from Autistic youth, as well as a set of specific recommendations for ethical support of social development (formulated through participatory analysis). These recommendations call on educators to look beyond the frames of typical/atypical or compliant/noncompliant behaviour and into young people’s complex internal experiences, and to consider the past and present of operationalized colonial control over students’ bodyminds in our education systems.