

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

LESLEY ANDRES AND FINOLA FINLAY, eds., *Student Affairs: Experiencing Higher Education*. Vancouver: UBC Press. 2004. xiii +267 p.

Do not read this book in order to understand Bourdieu or Archer or Coleman. Most of the authors in this edited collection do mention the agency-structure model described in Andres's introduction as involving "the dynamic relationship between students as agents within societal institutions and institutions as living structures that impact on the lives of students" (3). She interprets this in a Bourdieuan fashion as a confrontation between a field of forces and a field of struggles. But the various research projects are neither elucidations nor tests of the theory.

Do not read this book for empirical generalizations about higher-education students in Canada and how they're changing. The analysis is rarely based on any random selection or representative sampling. In some cases, we are not told how the sample is derived. Four chapters are based on samples as low as 5, 8, 10, and 14. Another chapter is based primarily on the author's personal reflections.

Rather, read this book in the mood of opening towards others, in the sense in which Joseph Knecht in Hesse's *Magister Ludi* finds information, artistry, creation and challenge outside the academic game. Read this book and develop a sympathy for the hard-of-hearing student struggling to find out what question was asked; the frenetic student-mother burning the candle at both ends organizing courses and meals and diapers all at once and feeling guilty about her inadequacy; the Indigenous student who needs her oral traditions and long-standing relationships with the land to be recognized, respected, and reciprocated by the university; the international student isolated, segregated, and lonely far from home.

This focus on the experience of individuals is practical for higher education studies. The groups treated in this book are hard-of-hearing students, Indigenous students, international students, students who are mothers, students who are re-entering, high school students choosing their careers, co-op students, and third-year psychology students. (Adamuti-Trache's chapter on females choosing not to follow the science career route was the only quantitative chapter and the only one with no reference to experience.)

Pillay analyzes the transition from secondary school to higher education utilizing data from Andres's amazing Paths on Life's Way longitudinal

research to show the poverty of high-school guidance programs and recommends a number of changes to high-school counseling. But why rely only on school counselors: should not universities themselves take more of a lead in making career education information available through different media like television, radio, print, and web?

There were two clear winners among the university programs. Grosjean found that co-op students were very happy with their programs. His only hesitancy was the possibility that the difficulty of access to the programs might be creating a vocational elite. Hawkey found that third-year Psychology students in the science program gained a sense of disciplinary identity and competence by being immersed in department research projects.

Several articles were perspicacious in their exposition of student experiences. As a university teacher, reading this book has given me a broader understanding of a range of student problems. Having read about the experiences will assist me as an academic when I attempt to interact with my students in different courses.

Each author was asked for prescriptions for change. Most of the authors obliged, and I have extracted some of their recommendations for different social groups.

Governments will have to change. Thompson wants the province to retract its welfare cuts. Marker wants competitive grant allocations not to favour researchers with substantive publication records but rather those with “a long-standing reputation of commitment and integrity within a First Nation community” (181).

Universities as institutions also need change. Thompson wants universities to support comprehensive daycare on campuses and to provide more women’s centre workshops and support groups. Marker states that it’s not enough for universities to increase the number of First Nations graduates, but that First Nations knowledge and perspectives need to be “engaged with throughout the university” (183). Warick wants universities to make it mandatory for all university instructors to take courses on hearing loss and its effects and courses on strategies to promote communication and student involvement. She also wants senior administrators to put interaction with students in faculty job descriptions.

Other students are going to have to change as well. Marker wants them to take courses that open their eyes to First Nations epistemologies and aspirations. Leversidge wants Nursing courses to be less intensive so that re-entering students can more easily keep up with others and won’t continue to suffer from sleep deficits. Warick wants other students to enunciate clearly when they ask questions in class so that hard-of-hearing students will not be even further disadvantaged. Lyakhovetska wants other students to include international students in their social lives.

But most of all, faculty will have to change. For most authors, that's where the rubber hits the road. Faculty need to listen to what re/entering students have to say and acknowledge their concerns. "It's imperative that provision for students to participate as researchers with a faculty member should be greatly expanded" (138). Professors should encourage Canadian students to write papers with, and do oral presentations with, international students.

Where should we go from here? I'd like some theorizing about the overall range of experiences that are relevant. Why do we have just these chapters and not others? Why not a chapter on other disabilities such as dyslexia or MS or Attention Deficit Disorder? Why not a chapter on individuals who stutter? What about Francophones? What about students who are responsible for their aged parents with Alzheimer's? What about first-generation working-class students who are the first in their family to attend university, the so-called Strangers in Paradise? These rhetorical questions are not intended as criticisms in any way (as my difficulties caused by deafness are in no way diminished by your barriers caused by blindness), but rather to suggest that the next challenge is to step up the abstraction ladder and conceptualize the whole range of problems experienced by students. Then, in their next book, Andres and Finlay could go beyond the particular problems faced by specific groups and scope out the whole range. Such a development would also assist in formulating the policy alternatives more effectively for decision-makers with limited resources and attention spans.

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