

Back to School:
Towards a New Agenda
for the History of Education

THE CENTRAL HISTORIOGRAPHICAL QUESTION of the 1980s results from the research activity of the 1970s: What are the relationships among the new subfields of social history and between these subfields and the traditional "grand events"? Historians of various orientations have given this question a great deal of consideration in recent years and not surprisingly have come to quite different conclusions. Nonetheless, one trend is clear. The talk is now of synthesis, of integration, of coherence. In the 1970s, the development of new fields of social history represented an expanding historical consciousness; now this development is often discussed in terms of fragmentation. The 1980s has become a decade of nostalgia, of longing for a time when writing about the past seemed a lot simpler and the results more fun to read.¹

Research on education has been a central part of the new historiography of the past two decades. In the 1970s almost every study in the history of education began by quoting Bernard Bailyn's encouragement to go beyond the traditional internalist approach by defining education in broad terms and by analyzing it in the larger context of family and community. By 1982, however, Bailyn was lamenting the results. Scholars were now advised to turn back to the general themes and to write "readable accounts" which would include anecdotes.² This advice closely followed Lawrence Stone's similar attempt to recapture a style and focus disparagingly shoved aside just a few years before. In the early 1970s, Stone had been instrumental in promoting research on the history of education, and his emphasis on the need for conceptually clear, systematic analysis had fueled the rapid growth of social history.³ However, Stone's call for the "revival of narrative" reflected considerable discomfort with the new historical studies. In the wake of such concerns, research on the history of education lost momentum and in some ways even lost direction.⁴

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- 1 A selection of perspectives is presented in James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams, eds., *Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1983).
- 2 Bernard Bailyn, "The Challenge of Modern Historiography", *American Historical Review*, LXXXVII, 2 (April 1982), pp. 1-24.
- 3 Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900", *Past and Present*, XLII (February, 1969), pp. 67-139, and his later edited book, *Schooling and Society* (Baltimore and London, 1976).
- 4 Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History", *Past and Present*, LXXXV (November, 1979), pp. 5-24.

In Canada research on education has reflected the general historiographical developments, as modified by the particular features of the Canadian context.⁵ One of the most interesting phenomena is the shifting geographic pattern of scholarly momentum within Canada. Ontario dominated the early to mid-1970s; a conference in Toronto led to the collection edited by Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, entitled *Egerton Ryerson and His Times* (Toronto, Macmillan, 1978). Ontario's predominance in the mid-1970s was also reflected in the important volume edited by Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, entitled, *Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past* (New York, New York University Press, 1975). Quite unexpectedly, research energy then shifted to the West. Indeed, the main impetus for the establishment of the Canadian History of Education Association came from scholars in Alberta and British Columbia. The shift of momentum to Western Canada produced collections such as David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Robert M. Stamp, eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West* (Calgary, Detselig Enterprises, 1979); and J. Donald Wilson, ed., *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History* (Vancouver, Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, University of British Columbia, 1984). Since that time, however, the most concerted activity has occurred in francophone Quebec.⁶ It was appropriate, therefore, that so many historians of education gathered at the Université de Montréal for the Canadian Historical Association's meeting in June 1985.

Research on the history of education in Atlantic Canada has led to a steady but small stream of publications. The recent *Acadiensis Index* (covering the 1971-1983 period) lists 14 articles under the general subject of Education. However, scholarly enthusiasm for educational history in Atlantic Canada appears to be increasing and, in fact, important developments have recently occurred.⁷ John Reid's two-volume study, *Mount Allison University: A History to 1963* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), stands at the forefront of research on higher education not only in Canada but elsewhere as well. Such research will undoubtedly be encouraged by the next Canadian History of Education Associa-

5 J. Donald Wilson, "Historiographical Perspectives on Canadian Educational History", *Journal of Educational Thought*, II, 1 (1977), pp. 49-63, and, more recently, Wilson's introductory essay in *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History* (Vancouver, 1984). The general field of social history in the 19th century is surveyed in David Gagan and H.E. Turner, "Social History in Canada: A Report on the 'State of the Art'", *Archivaria*, XIV (Summer 1982), pp. 27-52.

6 In addition to work discussed below, see Nadia Eid, "Education et classes sociales au milieu de 19e siècle", *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française*, XXXII, 2 (septembre 1978), pp. 159-79; and Jacques Dorion, *Les écoles de rang au Québec* (Montreal, 1979).

7 Research on Atlantic Canada includes Judith Fingard, "Attitudes Toward the Education of the Poor in Colonial Halifax", *Acadiensis*, II, 2 (Spring 1973), pp. 15-42; David Alexander, "Literacy and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Newfoundland", *Acadiensis*, X, 1 (Autumn 1980), pp. 3-34; and Robert Nicholas Bérard, "Moral Education in Nova Scotia, 1880-1920", *Acadiensis*, XIV, 1 (Autumn 1984), pp. 49-64.

tion Conference to be held at Dalhousie University in October 1986. Of course, the changing geographic pattern has certainly not precluded continued research in all regions of Canada.⁸ Indeed, the one major provincial history to appear in recent years is Robert Stamp's *The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982), published at a time when historiographical energy had become most apparent in the West. However, the appearance of volumes such as J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones, eds., *Schooling and Society in Twentieth Century British Columbia* (Calgary, Detselig Enterprises, 1980), and then later *Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses d'école: Femmes, famille et éducation dans l'histoire du Québec* (Montréal, Boréal Express, 1983) reflects a degree of regional research activity which has not yet been maintained in any part of the country for more than several years.

A great deal of the most exciting research on education has been inspired by basically non-educational questions. Many scholars since 1970 have studied the history of education primarily for what it can reveal about subjects such as family, class, ethnicity and gender. In Ontario, scholars of social structure, of family and social class, were primarily responsible for the energy and excitement of the early to mid-1970s. In the West, those scholars who were most active in the late 1970s and early 1980s were often from Faculties of Education and were interested in topics such as ethnicity, childhood, and rural change. For their part, many Quebec researchers are now examining the history of education as it relates to the history of women. Other important francophone studies are also emerging, but the production of scholars interested in topics such as female school attendance or domestic science has been most impressive.

The history of education has become in some ways a field of social history which is both more than and less than other fields such as the history of the family. Educational history attracts researchers from a wide variety of social history fields who examine schooling as a dimension of these other fields. This pattern raises the question of relationships among the new sub-fields of social history and the ways in which historians of education in particular should respond. How should the history of education be defined? What should be the research agenda? How should research findings be presented to readers?

The answers to such questions seemed much clearer in 1970 which brought the publication of J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Phillipe Audet's collective work *Canadian Education: A History* (1970). This volume both reflected the past and anticipated the future of educational historiography in Canada. For the most part, the chapters of the book were narratives adhering closely to time and place as organizing principles. The authors defined education

8 Very little comparative work between particular regions and other areas has been attempted although suggestive discussions have been offered in work such as Alan Pomfret, "Comparative Historical School Change: Newfoundland, Southern Ontario, and New England", *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, IV, 3 (1979), pp. 241-73 and R.D. Gidney, "Making Nineteenth-Century School Systems: the Upper Canadian Experience and its Relevance to English Historiography", *History of Education*, IX, 2 (1980), pp. 101-16.

narrowly, taking the process to mean formal instruction in schools. At the same time, however, these authors expressed concern that they were not telling the whole story; while writing quite traditionally, they admitted that the history of education could be viewed in much larger terms and analysed in much greater depth.

The reform of educational historiography began in earnest in 1972 with the publication of a special issue of the *History of Education Quarterly*, which later became the focus of Katz and Mattingly, eds., *Education and Social Change*. In this special issue, one simple question heralded the start of a new era of research in Canada. Michael Katz asked "Who Went to School?", thereby exposing at once both the narrowness of the established definition of the history of education and the inadequacy of narrative as an historiographical approach. Other articles in this collection concerned topics such as juvenile delinquency, the public health movement, and patterns of literacy.

The central importance of this collection was its focus on the educational experience and character of the general population. In turn, this focus became a major part of Michael Katz's prize-winning *The People of Hamilton, Canada West* (1975) which documented the ways in which behaviour such as school enrollment varied according to individual and family characteristics in a growing mid-19th century commercial city. The meaning of a larger context of constant population turnover and surprising social stability is pursued further in Katz's most recent major work, *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982) written with Michael Doucet and Mark Stern. Some historians see this book as simply a less successful version of *The People of Hamilton*. Another perspective views the companion volume to *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* as *The Irony of Early School Reform*, Katz's first major work published in 1966. In this sense, the key chapter of *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism* is the concluding essay on the emergence of an institutional society. This essay analyzes the meaning of changing modes of production for the nature of social organization, thus placing the history of education firmly within the larger social history of the 19th century. The analysis harkens back to Katz's study of Massachusetts and it represents a distillation of his decade of research on education and social structure in the context of a Canadian city.

While Katz and certain other scholars focused on behavioural trends within particular communities, a related group re-examined the ambitions of the leading educational figures during the same period. These historians confronted head-on the once-definitive works, such as Charles Phillips' *The Development of Education in Canada* (1957). Alison Prentice's *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1977) took aim at the established view of school-building as a humanitarian effort undertaken by altruistic social leaders. Prentice attempted to show that in building public educational systems, the school promoters were striving to control rather than liberate, and to socialize rather than

educate. Prentice's argument was the most extensive expression of the concept of social control in Canadian educational history. *The School Promoters* articulated the basic framework applied in a substantial number of studies related to various aspects of institution-building in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Research on the ideas and values of official educators assumed or at least implied that such educators were able to fulfill their ambitions, but this success may have been more apparent than real. Robert Gidney and Douglas Lawr were among the first historians in Canada to respond to the methodological problems of focusing solely on the ideas of the major school promoters. Were those ideas shared widely? Were official directives accepted at the community level? What were the views and attitudes of local trustees and parents? Such questions inspired Lawr and Gidney to begin the unending task of reading the metres and metres of mail sent to the Education Department in Canada West from the time of its inception. Before Lawr's untimely death, these two historians wrote a series of articles which attempted to offer a fresh characterization of popular attitudes toward the promotion of a provincial school system in Canada West/Ontario.⁹ Lawr and Gidney argued that Ryerson was responding to, as much as leading, popular opinion on schooling and its appropriate administrative structure; the process involved collaboration as much as control. Their reading of the letters from small towns and townships challenged the appropriateness of social control as an explanatory concept in this period of the history of education. Lawr and Gidney's "populist" research strategy helped broaden the focus of attention among historians interested in the attitudinal underpinnings of educational change. Research on the *mentalité* of the historically anonymous became more evident in the late 1970s. Although such research is more discussed than undertaken, the importance of probing into popular consciousness can no longer be denied.

Much of the early debate on educational historiography emerged from research on previously unexamined sources. New questions led to new sources and both the theory and method of research took unexpected turns. The recent work of Bruce Curtis, however, has used familiar evidence to raise serious questions about the aims and implications of school promotion as portrayed by both social control advocates and those who see a more broadly-based dialectic. Quite consciously, Curtis builds his analysis on precisely the same evidence which other historians previously used to reach very different conclusions. In this way,

9 Their articles included "The Development of an Administrative System for the Public Schools: The First Stage, 1841-1850", in Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times* (Toronto, 1978); "Who Ran the Schools? Local vs. Central Control of Policy-Making in Nineteenth-Century Ontario", *Ontario History*, LXXII, 3 (June 1980), pp. 131-43; "Community vs. Bureaucracy? The Origins of Bureaucratic Procedure in the Upper Canadian School System", *Journal of Social History*, XIII, 3 (1980), pp. 438-57. See also R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar, "Rural Schools and the Decline of Community Control in Nineteenth Century Ontario", *Fourth Annual History of Ontario Seminar Proceedings* (1979).

Curtis brings to the fore the question of theory. His work emphasizes the extent to which basic interpretive issues in the history of education still remain on the research agenda. In his published work, Curtis has argued that the history of education is first and foremost the history of politics.¹⁰ Unlike historians whose recent work has emphasized the connection between economic change and educational development, Curtis sees school promotion as an attempt to create a "public" which would accept and internalize the assumptions and expectations of the emerging Canadian state. This promotion was not inspired by fear of urban working-class unrest but rather by the state-building efforts of the 1840s. Curtis connects the activity of those like Ryerson in the 1840s to political events such as the Rebellions, the Act of Union, and the consequent ambitions of Tory politicians. This interpretation seeks to make intelligible both Ryerson's apparently contradictory statements made to different audiences, and the actual timing of school-building, which occurred in a rural society with only a few major commercial cities.

At the heart of debates about the process of school-building rest assumptions about the extent to which social conflict characterized the new educational development. Historians have reported on relatively few instances in which individuals and groups expressed militant opposition to official desires. Examples of conflict from various historical periods include the free school controversy in Toronto at the mid-nineteenth century; the stand-off between francophone mothers armed with hat pins and administrators wielding English-language policy directives in early twentieth century Ottawa; and the militant struggles between teachers and officials in Quebec during the 1960s. Elements of such conflicts are all present in the current British Columbia context in which the provincial government has been firing all the members of certain school boards. However, this development and the historical precedents appear, if judged by the research literature, to be exceptions to the more usual pattern of support for educational development.¹¹ Educators have never been satisfied with popular attitudes and behaviour, especially among working-class and ethnic groups. While this dissatisfaction may have been ill-founded, it is more likely that educators were correctly realizing that a "public" had not been completely constructed and that hegemony had not been truly established. The challenge for historians is to develop appropriate strategies for identifying and evaluating ele-

10 See Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846", *Studies in Political Economy*, 10 (Winter, 1983), pp. 99-121 and Curtis, "Capitalist Development and Educational Reform: Comparative Material from England, Ireland and Upper Canada to 1850", *Theory and Society*, XIII, 1 (1984), pp. 41-68. A helpful historiographical discussion is Geoffrey Partington, "Two Marxisms and the History of Education", *History of Education*, XIII, 4 (1984), pp. 251-70.

11 Traditional descriptions of conflict include Paul Crunican, *Priests and Politicians: Manitoba Schools and the Election of 1896* (Toronto, 1974). An example of more popularly-oriented resistance is Alan H. Child, "A Little Tempest: Public Reaction to the Formation of a Large Educational Unit in the Peace River District of British Columbia", *BC Studies*, XVI (Winter 1972-73), pp. 57-70.

ments of popular resistance, controversy, and conflict in the history of education. The need to look specifically for conflict is crucial since familiar sources such as annual school reports and the manuscript census do not directly deal with this topic. Researchers of working-class history have demonstrated that newspapers are a rich source of information about conflict related to the conditions of labour. Their work shows that established histories have greatly underestimated the extent of local, regional, and national disputes at the workplace. These researchers have, for the most part, ignored the history of education, but the findings of working-class historians suggest by way of analogy that the extent of conflict in the history of education may indeed be greater than currently assumed.¹²

Despite concerted efforts to standardize and systematize formal instruction, the school experience has featured much diversity. The establishment of provincial systems with uniform rules and regulations encouraged educational homogenization but did not erase the relationship between individual experience and the characteristics of gender, social class, ethnicity, race, and region. One of the most active areas of research in the 1970s developed from the examination of school attendance patterns. Studies revealed surprisingly active school participation throughout most communities but also substantial differences in enrollment and attendance especially among older children. Interestingly, these differences were not always the same across various communities and attempts to identify a general pattern based on factors such as ethnicity and social class have been only partially successful. Nonetheless, studies show clearly that school participation has never developed into a standard pattern for all children and youth.¹³

The reality of continued diversity in educational experience indicates the need to review and perhaps reassess the recent and dominant emphasis of social historians on the economic context of 19th century school development. What were the ways in which economic factors can be considered to have inspired, influenced and determined the direction of educational reform? To what extent can historians actually demonstrate a direct connection between school and economy? And, perhaps most importantly, what has the establishment of school systems meant for the nature of economic change in Canadian history? These

12 Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *'Dreaming of What Might Be': The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Cambridge, 1982). Another point of entry into this issue is suggested in Michael Cross, "'The Laws are like Cobwebs': Popular Resistance to Authority in Mid-Nineteenth Century British North America", *Dalhousie Law Journal*, VIII, 3 (June, 1984).

13 The reality of diversity has also been emphasized in the cases of England and France: see Robert J. Hind, "Elementary Schools in Nineteenth-Century England: Their Social and Historical Contexts", *Historical Reflections*, XI, 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 189-206; Raymond Grew and Patrick J. Harrigan with James Whitney, "The Availability of Schooling in Nineteenth Century France", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XI, 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 25-64; and Raymond Grew, Patrick J. Harrigan, and James B. Whitney, "La scolarisation en France, 1829-1906", *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, XXXIX, 1 (janvier-février 1984), pp. 116-157.

questions emphasize the need to view education as both an independent and dependent variable in the historical process. Pre-1970s historiography generally viewed education as a determining force which engendered positive developments not only economically but also socially and politically. In contrast, revisionists portrayed education as essentially a reflection of larger social characteristics, especially inequality. In this perspective, schools confirmed rather than altered existing social patterns. The revisionist perspective did, however, also imply and sometimes emphasize that schools have been more than dependent variables. In fact, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis attribute a substantial role to education as a determining factor of social structure in the United States.¹⁴ School systems constitute an "institution which serves to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life...by facilitating a smooth integration of youth into the labor force". In this view, schools actually "create and reinforce patterns of social class, racial and sexual identification among students...".

At the same time, research has also shown that in several basic ways schools appear to have had very little impact on students. Despite the whiggish insistence on schools as positive forces and the revisionist emphasis on schools as negative factors, historians have failed to demonstrate, other than by inference, that education has been effective in either sense. This failure is significant since several studies question whether or not schools have played a major role even in such basic developments as the spread of literacy. Harvey Graff does not directly pursue this issue in *The Literacy Myth* (1979) but the evidence he presents demonstrates that, however defined, surprisingly high levels of literacy were reached before school systems were fully established. In other words, some ability to read and write was usual in a population which had access only to voluntarily established community-based education even in the most favourable circumstances.¹⁵ Studies on other times and places go further to raise questions about the contribution which schools have made to literacy. Harvey Chisick's study of certain data from France demonstrates that even those individuals who attended school may have become illiterate adults. A related study from England points out that before the late 19th century the efforts of educators were often stymied by irregular attendance and the general irrelevance of the curriculum to non-school activity. Sylvia A. Harrop emphasizes that only those who wanted or needed to be literate actually learned the appropriate skills, and in many cases this learning occurred in relatively informal contexts such as book clubs, botanical societies, mechanics institutes and mutual improvement societies. She concludes that "what the literacy figures show is likely to depend as much on what happened after the years of school attendance as during them".¹⁶ Such studies

14 Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*, (London, 1976).

15 See Harvey J. Graff, ed., *Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader* (Cambridge, 1981). Other Canadian work includes Allan Greer, "The Pattern of Literacy in Quebec, 1745-1899", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XI, 22 (November 1978), pp. 293-335.

16 Harvey Chisick, "School Attendance, Literacy and Acculturation: *Petites écoles* and Popular

encourage the somewhat startling conclusion that historians of quite disparate interpretive orientations have collectively overrated the importance of formal schooling to actual experience.

Interestingly, this possibility is emerging just as scholars from other fields have begun turning to the history of education in anticipation of finding that schools have indeed acted as a critical independent variable in modern social change. The result is that a debate of widespread importance is being joined by not only historians but also by social scientists from other disciplines. A major component of this debate involves research on the fertility transition.¹⁷ John C. Caldwell is the most explicit proponent of the view that widespread education contributed meaningfully to the major fertility decline of the late 19th century. In his *Theory of Fertility Decline* (New York, Academic Press, 1982) Caldwell argues that mass exposure to formal education leads to a restructuring of relationships within families and thereby to larger social and economic phenomena which make children less desirable to adults. This process includes a series of specific mechanisms all of which involve the fact that mass education, regardless of specific content, leads to new values, attitudes and expectations. Caldwell's argument emerges from a global perspective which seeks to reconcile the experience of western society with developments in other parts of the world. His general conclusion is that "mass education produces declines in fertility". Caldwell's argument rests somewhat on the fringe of current opinion but there is no doubt that scholarly action has now moved decisively in the direction of "soft variables". In all likelihood, education will continue to be the object of broadly-based research interest.

The advent of mass schooling may, by itself, have been of critical importance to the direction of modern social change but historians have yet to explore the full dimensions of this schooling. This need is suggested by the limited number of studies which examine schools other than those administered by religious or government agencies. Historians have especially ignored such schools after the late 19th century when uniform publicly-funded educational systems became so pervasive. Yet school systems have never captured all formal educational activity, and one of the most promising areas of research concerns the extent to which certain formal instruction operated outside the dominant school structure. Jean Barman's *Growing Up British in British Columbia: Boys in Private School*

Education in Eighteenth-Century France", *Europa*, III, 2 (Spring-Summer 1980), pp. 185-223; and Sylvia A. Harrop, "Adult Education and Literacy: the importance of post-school education for literacy levels in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries", *History of Education*, XIII, 3 (September 1984), pp. 191-206.

17 A review of the 1970s perspectives is offered in Harvey J. Graff, "Literacy, Education, and Fertility, Past and Present: A Critical Review", *Population and Development Review*, V, 1 (March 1979), pp. 105-40. From another perspective, Brian Simon answers his own question in the affirmative in "Can Education Change Society?" in Wilson, ed., *An Imperfect Past*. Also, see the evidence presented in A.J.B. Johnston, "Education and Female Literacy at Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg: The Work of the Soeurs de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame", in Wilson, ed., *An Imperfect Past*.

(Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1984) emphasizes the importance of institutions which had distinct financing, ambitions, and clientele.¹⁸ The historical record of such institutions is quite meagre since many lasted only a few years and few kept documents beyond internal requirements. The result is that sources for only a handful of the private boys' schools in British Columbia are extant. However, a variety of alumni are still alive and their oral histories become for Barman the major evidence for examining the nature and meaning of elite schooling, especially during the 1920s and 1930s. Barman estimates that approximately 7,500 students attended private boys schools during the first half of the 20th century. While this number represents only a tiny fraction of the province's school population during this period, the qualitative importance of this elite education goes well beyond its quantitative role; an "old Boy" counts more than once.

Another aspect of the world of formal instruction outside the public systems involves the myriad of privately-run schools established to teach skills such as hair-cutting, telegraphy, and secretarial work. The amount of historical evidence for these schools makes the sources available on private boys' schools appear extensive. Almost by definition, the schools were short-lived, serving specific needs at specific points in time, and leaving only traces of their existence once needs changed or came to be fulfilled in other ways. One preliminary study of such schools involved the systematic collection of data from advertisements published during the 1920s in Vancouver's daily newspaper, *The Province*. This study identified approximately 50 different schools representing 18 types of instruction. Specific course descriptions, numbers of students, background of teachers, and much of the other information may never be known, but these schools clearly did represent an educational alternative.¹⁹

An understanding of schools which operated outside the established systems would be an important contribution to a general appreciation of the history of education. In fact, such schools may be the early warning signals of general educational change. An example from contemporary society would be the schools suddenly established in commercial locations to teach computer programming. These schools are now being effectively challenged by boards of education and university extension programmes but, for about a decade, computer schools flourished with very little competition from the educational establishment. The reasons for the slow response of official educators to new demands deserves study. At the same time, the evidence also shows clearly that not all special-purpose schools need fear that their roles will be co-opted by the mainstream

18 See also Dana Johnson, "For the Privileged Few: The Private and Specialist Schools of Ontario, 1800-1930", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 215 (February 1984).

19 This research has been undertaken at the Historical Atlas of Canada Project, Vol. III, where Chad Gaffield is responsible for the history of education. Another example of research on formal education in non-school settings is Ruth Roach Pierson and Marjorie Cohen, "Educating Women for Work: Government Training Programs for Women before, during and after World War II", in M. Cross and G.S. Kealey, eds., *Modern Canada, 1930-1980s* (Toronto, 1984).

system. For example, one of the important types of schools in Vancouver during the 1920s taught hairdressing; a glance at the Yellow Pages shows clearly that such schools remain numerous today. An important historical question, therefore, concerns the nature of the decisions made by official educators in response to the success of schools directed toward particular types of instruction.

The development of overtly vocational training as a major purpose of school systems in Canada has a long and complex history which several scholars such as Robert Stamp have examined at some length.²⁰ A fine recent study is Jean-Pierre Charland's survey of technical and vocational training in Quebec, *Histoire de l'enseignement technique et professionnel* (Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982). Charland traces the ways in which Quebec educators came to see schooling as a means to train the labour force of the emerging industrial society. This study provides longitudinal and geographic data about not only the vocational courses and schools but also the students who experienced this education. Domestic science became the female counterpart to such education. Nicole Thivierge, *Histoire de l'enseignement ménager-familial au Québec, 1882-1970* (Québec, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982), has undertaken the most extensive study of the programmes to produce the desired wives and mothers. Her evidence from Quebec is not precisely comparable to the historical record elsewhere, but the thrust of Thivierge's conclusions is certainly familiar. Her study documents the rapid growth of domestic science programmes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Like Charland, she also examines the backgrounds of students, especially with respect to the occupational status of their fathers. Thivierge's study is particularly valuable since she examines this aspect of the history of education in the context of related topics such as the history of women and the history of the Catholic Church. The result is a sophisticated contribution to the general field of social history. In the context of other research such as Charland's, this study explains why francophone researchers are now in the forefront of educational historiography.

In the past decade, francophone historians have particularly emphasized the changing relationships among family, work and education. They have argued that a key dimension of these relationships has involved the changing ways in which women have received education, beginning with the time of New France.²¹ Interestingly, historians have not only examined this education in Quebec but

20 Robert M. Stamp, "Teaching Girls Their 'God-Given Place in Life': The Introduction of Home Economics in the Schools", *Atlantis*, II, 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 18-34; Peter N. Moogk, "Manual Education and Economic Life in New France", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, LLXVII (1977), pp. 125-68; and Timothy A. Dunn, "Teaching the Meaning of Work: Vocational Education in British Columbia, 1900-1929", in Jones, Sheehan and Stamp, eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*.

21 Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard, eds., *Les femmes dans la société québécoise: aspects historiques* (Montreal, 1977); Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard, eds., *Travailleuses et féministes: les femmes dans la société québécoise* (Montréal, 1983).

have also engaged in comparative studies of Ontario and France.²² Even more importantly, historians such as Nadia Fahmy-Eid, Micheline Dumont and Marie Lavigne have brought together in their research the often separate fields of women's history, demography, working class history, and education. The result has been a series of substantial works including what has become a rare phenomenon indeed, a synthetic survey. *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* (Montréal, Les Quinze, 1982) is a collective work but also a single text placing the position and mentality of women in the larger context of Quebec's history. This survey as well as the collections of essays such as *Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses d'école* represent major contributions to educational historiography. They provide models for similar research in other regions of Canada.²³

In Atlantic Canada, researchers are demonstrating the vast amount of textual evidence available on the history of women. Forsaken by many historians in the 1970s on account of their impressionistic quality, textual sources such as diaries and memoirs are now being sought with renewed determination. Scholars are looking to such sources for explanations of behavioural patterns, and for insight into changing mentalities. While literary evidence was earlier dismissed as the product of only a tiny minority of the population, researchers are now showing that a wide range of social groups have left written records of their innermost thoughts. For example, Margaret Conrad has recently suggested the potential of "private chronicles" for the history of women in Atlantic Canada in her study, *Recording Angels: The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950* (Ottawa, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1982).²⁴ This suggestion follows from the success of the Maritime Women's Archives Project which has found an "abundance" of diaries and correspondence. Not suprisingly, an important topic in such sources is education. A particularly relevant example is the fascinating evidence offered by a local historian, James Doyle Davison, in *Alice T. Shaw and Her Grand Pre Seminary: Female Education in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* (Wolfville, N.S., [the author], 1981).

Current work on the female experience of education has roots in the research

22 Marta Danylewycz, Beth Light and Alison Prentice, "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching: A Nineteenth-Century Ontario and Quebec Case Study", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XVI, 31 (May 1983), pp. 81-109; Nadia Fahmy-Eid and Nicole Laurin-Frenette, "Théories de la famille et rapports famille-pouvoirs dans le secteur éducatif au Québec et en France (1850-1960)", *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française*, XXXIV, 2 (septembre 1980), pp. 197-221.

23 Also, see Nancy M. Sheehan, "'Women Helping Women': The WCTU and the Foreign Population in The West, 1905-1930", *International Journal of Women's Studies*, VI, 5, (1983) pp. 395-411; and Nancy M. Sheehan, "National Pressure Groups and Provincial Curriculum Policy: Temperance in Nova Scotia's Schools, 1880-1940", *Canadian Journal of Education*, IX, 1 (1984), pp. 73-88.

24 Reprinted in Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, eds., *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Volume Two* (Toronto, 1985).

energy of the mid-1970s on what came to be called the feminization of teaching. Alison Prentice identified the importance of this topic in a pathbreaking article which drew together a host of factors related not only to schooling but also to the image and reality of gender as a determining variable of the historical process.²⁵ This topic has continued to be viewed in new and more profound ways during the past decade. Moreover, Prentice and others such as Marta Danylewycz, who before her tragic death studied the sexual division of labour in teaching, have employed systematic research strategies which reflect a sensitivity to the value of a wide array of historical sources.²⁶ In fact, they were among the small number of researchers who confronted head-on the challenge of reconciling data on similar variables from different sources.²⁷ In this sense, the study of gender and teaching has produced some of the most telling results of recent historiography.

One important revision of the initial conceptualization of the way in which women became the characteristic teachers of the new public school systems involved the historical background of this process. The notion of feminization implies a change from male to female. In a sense, this notion is appropriate to the decades of the mid-19th century for reasons which Prentice's 1975 article made clear. However, the importance of women as teachers in the earlier 19th century qualifies the extent of feminization. Similarly, the major contribution of the female religious orders in New France suggests that a longer historical perspective must be applied to the question of gender and teaching.²⁷ Evidence from more recent times also suggests that the predominance of women within teaching may come to be seen as a characteristic of only certain decades in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The aggregate Canadian data show that by 1875, female teachers outnumbered male teachers by approximately a 2:1 ratio in the country's public, elementary and secondary schools; this disproportion increased to more than 4:1 in favour of females by 1905. Since the First World War, however, the relative numerical importance of male teachers has steadily increased, and by 1970, the ratio of female to male teachers among teachers

25 Alison Prentice, "The Feminization of Teaching in British North America and Canada, 1845-1875", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, VIII, 15 (May 1975), pp. 5-20. See also W.E. Bryans, "Virtuous Women at Half the Price: The Feminization of the Teaching Force and Early Women Teacher Organizations in Ontario", M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975.

26 Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, "Teachers, Gender, and Bureaucratizing School Systems in Nineteenth Century Montreal and Toronto", *History of Education Quarterly*, XIV, 1 (Spring 1984), pp. 75-100. An early call for research on teachers was John Calam, "A Letter from Quesnel: The Teacher in History, and Other Fables", *History of Education Quarterly*, XV, 1 (Summer 1975), pp. 131-45.

27 Susan Laskin, Beth Light and Alison Prentice, "Studying the History of Occupation: Quantitative Sources on Canadian Teachers in the Nineteenth Century", *Archivaria*, XIV (Summer 1982), pp. 75-92.

27 *Mâitresses de maison, maîtresses d'école* and A.J.B. Johnston, "Formal Education at Colonial Louisbourg", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 136 (August, 1980).

dropped to 1.5:1.²⁸ Since teachers are now unionized and gender-based salary inequities are not officially permissible, the question no longer relates to the availability of “virtuous women at half the price”. Have men been increasingly hired as the financial incentive to hire women has decreased? Or is a balancing of the sex ratio now naturally taking place? The implications of this question involve not only the specific relationship between gender and teaching but also, as the work of Prentice and other collaborators consistently demonstrates, to the history of women.

One particularly intriguing aspect of the meaning of gender in education concerns its role within the process of instructional innovation. Alison Prentice sees the introduction of blackboards into the classroom as a technological innovation which was an important factor in determining the nature of instruction in schools by the later 19th century.²⁹ In this view, the ability to use one large blackboard to which all students’ attention could be directed changed pedagogy by undermining the potential for individual-specific learning. By itself, this argument deserves serious consideration; historians have only begun to examine the extent to which technological innovations have engendered social change or, alternatively, have only reflected re-organizations already underway. But such possibilities take on added significance when joined with other considerations such as the role of gender. For example, Prentice has raised the question of whether or not female and male teachers differed in their reaction to and use of blackboards.³⁰ Did this new technology have a gender-based differential impact in classrooms? This question — and its modern counterpart related to computers — pushes the discussion of both material and social development in the history of education into new and exciting domains which promise to reward adventurous researchers.

Discussion of topics such as teachers and blackboards directs attention away from the ambitions of superintendents and trustees and toward the experience of the classroom. Regardless of what was intended, what actually happened? This question focuses on the experiential meaning of education, and it emphasizes the importance of understanding the history of education from the point of view of all those who have been involved in the process. Current analysis still fundamentally ignores the largest group involved in education, the students. We know something about behavioural trends such as school enrollment and to a lesser extent school attendance. Research has also explored certain aspects of children’s experience as workers, although the historical record of such activity is usually very incomplete.³¹ But the relative lack of attention to children them-

28 *Historical compendium of education statistics from Confederation to 1975*, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 81-568.

29 This argument is part of Alison Prentice’s research on the history of education for the Historical Atlas of Canada Project, Vol. II.

30 A brief discussion is offered in Laskin, Light, and Prentice, “Studying the History of Occupation”.

31 The best overview is Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto, 1982).

selves represents a major weakness in the current historiography of education.

In this context, a promising development has been the establishment of the Canadian Childhood History Project at the University of British Columbia, where Neil Sutherland, whose *Children in English-Canadian Society: Forming the Twentieth Century Consensus* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1976) was one of the major achievements of the 1970s, has now turned to the objects of the social policy he examined. Sutherland is attempting to overcome the research problems of studying children by interviewing elderly individuals about their past. His description of "Memory Public School" relies a great deal on the recollections of those who attended school in the 1920s and 1930s, but also incorporates evidence from school reports and other documentary sources of these decades.³² Sutherland's ambition is to recreate a "waist-high" view of education in which a school day involved flights from bullies as much as the pursuit of arithmetic.

The difficulty of studying actual children as distinct from concepts of childhood has also been faced by historians such as Joy Parr and Bettina Bradbury. Their research uses the records of particular institutions to reconstruct the experience of children who, for various reasons, came under official supervision. Parr and Bradbury both emphasize the extent to which family, work, and schooling composed a web of relationships which defined individual lives in the 19th century. Children are portrayed as active human beings struggling both to survive and to secure their own integrity in a world which sees children's rights at best as a minor consideration.³³

Other work includes Thérèse Hamel, "Obligation scolaire et travail des enfants au Québec, 1900-1950", *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française*, XXXVIII, 1 (été 1984), pp. 39-58; Chad Gaffield and David Levine, "Dependency and Adolescence on the Canadian Frontier: Orillia, Ontario in 1871", *History of Education Quarterly*, XVIII, 1 (Spring 1978), pp. 35-48; Chad Gaffield, "Canadian Families in Cultural Context: Hypotheses from the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1979), pp. 48-70; Ian Davey, "The Rhythm of Work and the Rhythm of School", in McDonald and Chaiton, eds., *Egerton Ryerson and His Times*; and Jane Syngé, "The Transition from School to Work: Growing Up Working Class in early 20th Century Hamilton, Ontario", in K. Ishwara, ed., *Childhood and Adolescence in Canada* (Toronto, 1979). Literature reviews include Craig Heron, "Saving the Children", *Acadiensis*, XIII, 1 (Autumn 1983), pp. 168-75; Konrad Jarausch, "Restoring Youth to its own History", *History of Education Quarterly*, XV, 4 (Winter, 1975), pp. 445-456; N. Ray Hiner, "The Child in American Historiography", *Psychohistory Review*, VII (1978); Aurel Ende, "Children in History: A Personal Review of the Past Decade's Published Research", *The Journal of Psychohistory*, XI, 1 (Summer 1983), pp. 65-70; Harry Hendrick, "The History of Childhood and Youth", *Social History*, IX, 1 (January 1984), pp. 87-96; and Barbara Finkelstein, "Literature Review: Incorporating Children into the History of Education", *Journal of Educational Thought*, XVIII, 1 (April 1984), pp. 21-42.

32 Neil Sutherland, "The Triumph of 'Formalism': The 'new' education in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s", paper presented to the Canadian History of Education Conference, Toronto, 1982. The question of oral history is pursued in the "Family History Issue", *Oral History*, III, 2 (1975), Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 1978), and Thea Thompson, *Edwardian Childhoods* (London, 1981).

33 Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (Montreal,

Despite such work, historical analysis of children remains very incomplete and still biased by adult assumptions. Even the term "waist-high" uses adults as a frame of reference. Similarly, the written records used to study children were rarely created by them. One source in which children do speak for themselves is correspondence such as Joy Parr used in her study of the young British immigrants shipped to Canada during the late 19th and early 20th century. Unfortunately, such correspondence is unusual and even those few letters which are written are rarely saved since their content is usually considered to have only sentimental value.³⁴ The existence of evidence in which children speak for themselves may still be far greater than the historical literature implies. For example, dozens of children testified before the 1889 Commission on Capital and Labour but their voices have remained even more than "muffled". This source is weakened by the fact that the children are responding to adult questions and they appear to have had their responses cut-off at certain times. Still, this oral testimony represents a valuable way of beginning to understand the attitudes and perceptions of children about work, school and family.³⁵ Moreover, we should recognize that potential evidence for writing the history of children is not necessarily less valuable simply as a result of adult provenance. Records created by "others" can in fact be exceedingly useful if examined with due care. An excellent example of such usefulness is Cornelius Jaenen's study of Amerindian society, *Friend and Foe* which is completely based on French literary accounts. Jaenen uses the French evidence to allow the inarticulate to tell us their history.³⁶ A similar challenge is presented to historians of children who for the most part remain just as silent in the historical record as the Amerindians.

The suggestion that researchers should attempt to integrate an understanding of the experience of children into general interpretations of the history of education is strengthened by a number of studies from Great Britain. These studies are based upon extensive collections of literary evidence often in the form of autobiographies. One of the most fascinating books is John Burnett's compilation, *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London, 1982).³⁷ This volume brings together lengthy excerpts of the unpublished work of "ordinary" 19th century in-

1980). Bradbury's first major article was "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s", *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1979), pp. 79-96.

34 An example of correspondence is presented in "At Boarding School", in Alison L. Prentice and Susan E. Houston, eds., *Family, School, and Society in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto, 1975).

35 Excerpts are offered in Gregory Kealey, ed., *Canada Investigates Industrialism* (Toronto, 1973). Also, see Fernand Harvey, *Révolution industrielle et travailleurs* (Montreal, 1978) and S.M. Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s", *Atlantis*, III, 1 (Fall, 1977), pp. 66-83.

36 Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto, 1976).

37 See also David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* (London, 1981).

dividuals. The section on education includes an introductory chapter in which Burnett relates autobiographical evidence to established interpretations in the historical literature. Together with other sections on childhood and the family, this evidence offers a basis for new hypotheses about the experience of being school-age in the 19th century. Many of the accounts emphasize a desire to escape adult supervision including that of teachers. One of the writers, James Hopkinson, remembered:

I did not like going to school. I can remember my Mother having to carry me across the street to an old woman's school while I squealed all the way we went. Arrived at school, I was so naughty that the school mistress had to pin me to her apron in my efforts to be free. She then put me behind the door, which I liked very well, as I pulled out my marbles and began to play....

The image of children wanting to play out of the view of adults is consistent with the earlier and better known research of Iona and Peter Opie. They spent years collecting snippets of information about the experience of British children in all aspects of their lives. Their first major work examined the *Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959) including the ways in which children have rhymed, punned, riddled, swore, spit, jeered, joked and sung in classrooms, playgrounds, and in the street. The evidence for this study comes from the reports of some 5,000 children spread throughout England, Scotland, and Wales during the 1950s. In many cases, the Opies compare these reports to related evidence from throughout history. They observe a remarkable degree of continuity in the ways in which children have expressed themselves from one generation to the next. Their general conclusion is that the world of children exists, at least to some extent, beyond the reach of adult-based social change. This conclusion is further supported by the Opies' later volume entitled *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969). Once again, the evidence suggests that children have their own culture passed down among themselves from the older to the younger. Their games appear to have a timeless quality which belies adult perceptions of constant social change.³⁸

Such evidence supports the possibility that the way children think, the way they perceive themselves, each other and the rest of the world is not simply a less refined or incomplete version of adult mentality. In Canada, this possibility became the starting point of a series of research projects conducted by sociologists at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the 1970s.³⁹ These projects pursued the possibility of a sociology of children's culture with specific reference to the everyday life of children in classrooms. The ambition of researchers such as Ronald J. Silvers was to learn how children "comprehend and

38 Iona and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (London, 1959); Iona and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (London, 1969).

39 "Colloquium on Everyday Life in Educational Settings", *Interchange*, VI, 4 (1975), pp. 34-56.

construct the world” and “to develop procedures for exploring the life-world of children and for uncovering discernible differences between their understandings and those of adults”. The Children’s Culture Project strove to discover “children’s competencies” defined as “distinctive forms of ability for accomplishments in understanding that are common to children but generally not shared by adults”. Taken together, this perspective indicates that children not only have their own forms of expression and social interaction but also their own way of interpreting the world around them.

For historians of education, research on the experience and perceptions of children in contemporary and past periods suggests that consideration of only, or perhaps even primarily, adults may seriously distort our appreciation of the actual historical record. Children may, in fact, be significant agents in the process of educational change. The nature of their participation may have affected the overall character of schooling in various historical periods. One way of pursuing this argument especially for the post-1850 period involves a focus on what could be termed the “culture of the classroom”. The starting point for such research is an appreciation that, by definition, education is a relationship, indeed a web of relationships, between the teacher and each student and among the students themselves. Teachers must be considered in the context of students just as students cannot be conceptually separated from their relationships with other students as well as the teacher. Current understanding of the nature of teacher-pupil relationships in various historical contexts is fragmentary at best. Images of teachers wielding straps compete with descriptions of nurturing mother-figures. Recollections of cruel teachers are juxtaposed with memories of caring and perhaps inspirational instructors. Nonetheless, larger intellectual and structural forces have undoubtedly also been at work, and the real historical questions involve the impact of the changing ideas and physical setting of education on this relationship. Some guidance is provided by the extensive research of the past two decades on the nature of parent-child relationships in different historical periods. Linda A. Pollock has recently reviewed this work in the case of Britain in her book, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983).⁴¹ She concludes that, despite well-known studies such as that of Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), adults viewed children in quite similar ways for at least the period between the 16th and 19th centuries. A constant feature of the parent-child relationship has been one of emotional attachment. For example, Pollock finds no evidence for Ariès’ contention that pupils were severely beaten at school because their parents supported such behaviour. Rather, the literary evidence which Pollock has examined suggests that discipline has historically been much more severe at school than at home.

More detailed studies of parent-child relationships in specific historical con-

40 Ronald J. Silvers, “Discovering Children’s Culture”, *Interchange*, VI, 4 (1975), pp. 47-53.
 41 See also Veronica Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape the Years One to Five, 1920-1940”, in Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*.

texts reveal considerable variety in these relationships depending on factors such as gender and social class. For example, Judith Hallett's study of Roman society describes a quite distinct intensity of attachment between fathers and daughters. The result was that elite women may have had more influence than their legal and political status would imply.⁴² This study and related research on other times and places suggests by way of analogy that analysis of the teacher-pupil relationship has intriguing possibilities for an understanding of the culture of the classroom. Have male and female teachers viewed boys and girls differently? In turn, have pupils seen male and female teachers differently? How have the class backgrounds of individual teachers and individual students affected their interaction in the classroom? Such questions will undoubtedly elicit different responses for various grade levels and in distinct historical settings. For this reason, comparative research on teacher-pupil relationships should contribute significantly to an appreciation of the changing nature of the culture of the classroom.

Beyond teachers exist the multifaceted relationships among pupils. In the context of recent research on the history of children, these relationships may be the most important element of the school experience. Indeed, schools are forums of peer sociability. They may have been designed to bring children under the influence of particular adults but, in addition, they bring large numbers of children under the influence of each other usually to a greater degree than adults anticipate or desire. In fact, classrooms have historically produced society's most unbalanced ratio of children to adults, perhaps 50 or sometimes even 80 children to one adult. Such a ratio has been vastly different from households or even the streets. For children, school provides an unrivalled setting for relationships with their peers. Research on the ways in which children have interacted with each other is also fragmentary. Memories of school bullies or struggles with gangs are not unusual; even the subtle harassment of stares or passing remarks shows that camaraderie among children has clear limits. Nonetheless, friendships born among children at school are surely an important historical phenomenon. Peer pressure is usually viewed as a case of groups against individuals, but more characteristically, peer pressure involved rival groups, as those in the minority seek support among others like themselves. In this context, research on topics such as the impact of age-grading would be especially valuable. How did the division of children into groups based strictly on age affect their relationships with each other? Were more "natural" solidarities destroyed? Or, perhaps, were appropriate relationships enhanced?

Beyond the question of relationships, analysis of the culture of the classroom concerns the physical setting, including the nature of instructional aids. Although some research has now been done on the introduction of blackboards, historians have not examined the implications of other material such as maps and globes, which educational officials considered absolutely necessary by the

42 Judith P. Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society: Women and the Elite Family* (Princeton, 1984).

later 19th century. The most detailed research has been devoted to the content of books especially during the formative decades of the 1830s and 1840s.⁴³ For the most part, however, this research is designed to reveal the attitudes and ambitions of educators. Although some work has been undertaken, the historical literature still rarely considers questions about books posed from the point of view of pupils. Which schools used which books? How great was the variety of schoolbooks in the years after the mid-19th century? Did children exposed to certain books actually develop ideas distinct from children exposed to other books?⁴⁴

Questions about instructional aids lead naturally to consideration of the overall physical setting of formal education. Research on school architecture is only recently beginning to consider the meaning of various structures for the pupils as well as the designers. Recent studies especially by Dana Johnson and Ivan Saunders demonstrate the value of both visual and documentary evidence for understanding the changing environment within which children have experienced an increasing amount of formal education since the early 19th century.⁴⁵ Johnson traces the transitions in certain Ontario cities between modest one-room schoolhouses and the eventual large buildings with specialized classrooms. These transitions are seen as reflections of increased school enrollment, curriculum changes, and new concerns about the health standards of classrooms.

The importance of examining the physical setting of education and the relationships which characterize the culture of the classroom is certainly not limited in the history of education to the study of children. Some of the most interesting recent research is now being directed toward the older students of higher education. This attention follows several years in which writing the histories of specific universities became a major historiographical growth industry.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, many of these histories can only be appreciated by alumni. Institutionally-limited, whiggishly-underpinned, and anecdotedly-laden, most of the recent

43 J. Donald Wilson, "Common School Texts in Use in Upper Canada Prior to 1845", *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* (1970); James Love, "Cultural Survival and Social Control: The Development of a Curriculum for Upper Canada's Common Schools in 1846", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XV, 30 (November 1982), pp. 357-82.

44 Bruce Curtis, "Schoolbooks and the Myth of Curricular Republicanism: the State and the Curriculum in Canada West, 1820-1850", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XVI, 32 (November 1983), pp. 305-29.

45 Dana Johnson, "Going to School in Ontario: The Urban Primary School 1850-1930", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 213 (February 1984); Dana Johnson, "Pursuing Higher Education: Going to Secondary School in Ontario, 1800-1930", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 214 (February 1984); Ivan J. Saunders, "A Survey of Saskatchewan Schoolhouse Architecture to 1930", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 223 (November 1984); Ivan J. Saunders, "A Survey of Manitoba School Architecture to 1930s", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 222 (November, 1984); and C.A. Hale, "New Brunswick: Interim Report on Common School Architecture in the 19th Century", *Research Bulletin* (Parks Canada) 202 (August 1983).

46 Quite tolerant assessments are offered in Paul Axelrod, "The Queen's Way", *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 91, 4 (Winter, 1984), pp. 765-71 and John G. Reid, "Some Recent Histories of Canadian Universities", *American Review of Canadian Studies*, XIV, 4 (Fall 1984), pp. 369-73.

books perceive particular universities from the perspective of their administrative offices. The result is a series of two-dimensional internalist volumes which ignore the big questions in favour of obscure details. Important exceptions to this pattern in recent years are Paul Axelrod's *Scholars and Dollars: Politics, Economics, and the Universities of Ontario, 1945-1980* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982) and John Reid's comprehensive history of Mount Allison University. Reid's study demonstrates the high level of scholarship which a university history can actually attain in the right hands. His research exposes the artificial and harmful nature of the established division between scholars of "Higher Education" and the "History of Education". Heretofore, such scholars have functioned within distinct learned societies, written for different journals, and generally ignored each other. Reid implicitly undermines this pattern by showing the extent to which both fields can be enriched by expanding their self-definitions. Higher education is related both to "lower" forms of instruction and to broader questions of social context.

One important distinguishing feature of Reid's research on Mount Allison is his attempt to examine systematically who actually attended at various points in the institution's history. In his most recent work, Paul Axelrod uses this question as a starting point for a detailed examination of the meaning of Dalhousie University for students in the 1930s.⁴⁷ In addition to examining the family background of the Dalhousie students at this time, Axelrod uses a wide array of evidence in attempting to portray student life. Similar work on students at Queen's University is being undertaken at the Historical Atlas of Canada Project.⁴⁸ Taken together, such research represents a significant departure from the established thrust of writing about the history of higher education; belatedly, historians are now studying the social history of universities.

This survey of certain achievements and possibilities in the historiography of education makes clear that the challenge of the 1980s is not to revive narrative or to impose coherence on "incoherent" research results. Rather, the challenge is to build upon and extend the social history perspectives developed in the past 15 years. Recent research suggests that one of the most promising ways to

47 Paul Axelrod, "Moulding the Middle Class: Student Life at Dalhousie University in the 1930s", *Acadiensis*, XV, 1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 84-122. A major achievement from the United States is Colin B. Burke, *American Collegiate Populations: A Test of the Traditional View* (New York, 1982).

48 The Queen's study is being undertaken by Chad Gaffield and Lynne Marks for the Historical Atlas of Canada Project, Vol. III. Also, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "Feminism Constrained: The Graduates of Canada's Medical Schools for Women", in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Social Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto, 1979). While a great deal of attention is now being directed toward higher education, very little has been done on secondary schooling. The importance of this topic is suggested by Robert M. Stamp, "Canadian High Schools in the 1920s and 1930s: The Social Challenge to the Academic Tradition", *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1978), pp. 76-93, and Gidney and Lawr, "Egerton Ryerson and the Origins of the Ontario Secondary School", *Canadian Historical Review*, LX, 4 (December 1979), pp. 442-65.

respond to this challenge is to focus on the history of education *as education* and to analyze the changing ways in which this aspect of the historical process has interacted with related elements of social change. In other words, it is time for historians of education to go “back to school”, although in ways that Charles Phillips would hardly recognize. The topics of books, pupils, teachers and schools may have long traditions in the scholarly literature but analyses of issues such as conflict, diversity, and the character of relationships are a recent development. The evidence now emphasizes that historians of education must pursue a lower level of explanation than is claimed in either traditional narratives or pursued in the social science history of the early 1970s.⁴⁹ The goal of this pursuit must be an appropriate awareness of the general factors such as gender, class and ethnicity which have converged in innumerable ways in various times and places. By specifically examining topics such as the “culture of the classroom” historians can examine the actual ways in which such factors have determined the everyday experience of education. Research on the experience of education, as opposed to the ambitions of officials or even parents, should reveal the mechanisms by which schooling has operated as both an independent and dependent variable of social change. This approach suggests ways in which the study of education can continue to mature as a field of social history and can further contribute to a general understanding not only of Canada’s past but of the experience of other countries as well.

CHAD GAFFIELD

49 For comments on this issue, see the articles included in “Statistics, Epistemology, and History: Part 1”, *Historical Methods*, XVII, 3 (Summer, 1984).