

of making sense of the world. The author makes no real attempt to discuss the difficulties of carrying out research in learning that is at once carefully controlled yet reasonably generalizable, but implies that the limitations of experimental psychology frequently stem from the perversity of experimental psychologists. The book goes on to describe the processes of learning to speak and to read, and examines the implications of cognitive learning for both written and spoken language. Smith argues persuasively that reading is essentially an exercise in comprehension, and that "learning to read, like reading, is easier if you can make sense of what you are doing" (p. 186). The implications for the teaching of reading and writing are thoughtfully discussed, establishing the chapter (from the point of view of this reviewer) as the most stimulating in the book. The subsequent section concerns individual differences in cognitive skills. It is essentially a brief discussion of cognitive styles, intelligence and intelligence testing, and differences in language codes and dialects. The chapter is a short one, and because these diverse topics are only superficially covered and tenuously linked, adds little to overall impact of the book.

Comprehension and Learning concludes with an overview of the implications of Smith's theory for the instructional process. The theme of the first part of the book, that learning is essentially a process that the child himself can manage, is complemented by the author's analysis of the teachers' role. He does not offer sets of rules or specific procedures, contending that the learning process is so poorly understood that such rules are usually no more than "slogans" employing "very diffuse and superficial terms" (p. 225). He stresses that teachers cannot train or discipline children into learning, because learning requires cognitive involvement. As Smith sees it,

the teacher's task is a restorative one . . . to persuade the child once more that he is in an environment where learning is worth the trouble and risk involved, because it will pay off. And that involves finding situations in which the child wants to learn and can succeed (p. 227).

Smith's intention, expressed in the Introduction, is to provide a "broad conceptual framework that will enable teachers to make their own decisions in the classroom" (p. 7). The book does not present a carefully elaborated, precise theory of learning along with supportive research evidence — its objective is to provoke inquiry rather than to provide solutions. If the reader questions Smith's basic assumptions and is skeptical of his generalizations about human behaviour, then the book will have almost certainly achieved its purpose.

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Daniel J. Sullivan. *Public Aid to Nonpublic Schools*. Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1974. Pp. 146.

Public fiscal support for nonpublic schools has long been debated by many groups in the United States and the issue is not without some import on the Canadian scene. Consequently, as this volume is touted as an endeavour to introduce new and salient information regarding this matter, one might anticipate the reading of an important contribution to the resolution of a question that is contentious both morally and politically. Unfortunately for anyone who has already addressed the issue in any depth, such an expectation will be left unfulfilled.

Dr. Sullivan, an economist, and a man with an expressed disaffection for public aid to nonpublic schools, has, not surprisingly, employed an economic framework for the majority of his analysis. Looking beyond the obvious, however, it would appear that this is the only appropriate strategy through which he might negate a now important argument of pro public aid forces; that historically nonpublic schools have, by their very existence, reduced the cost of public education and that unless their continuing decline in simple numbers is stopped this advantage will be lost.

The heart of the book attacks this pro-aid argument to the point of overkill though the comprehensive and lucid presentation of information brought to bear from a broad spectrum of sources to explain this issue may be of some historical value in the future. It seems a waste, though, to employ seventy pages to prove a point already known to most people. That being, with fixed resources available, to give more to one you simply have to take from the other. It hardly contributes much insight into the problem.

If Sullivan had restricted himself only to the distribution of fixed resources question one might describe the book's overall import as at least of relevance to a few interested, but uninformed, or detail-conscious readers. However, he did not so limit himself and the remainder of what he says affects that assessment negatively.

First, the economic question is pursued from two additional perspectives. On one dimension he tells us that despite spiralling costs and declining numbers private schools are not going to disappear. He might be right but in the absence of any evidence or logic to support it and in the face of the opposite occurring it is a difficult point to accept. On the other dimension he states that nonpublic school closures are not a problem because public schools are not full and can yet assimilate a fair number of additional students without significant increase in costs. From a national United States perspective, around which his analysis is based, the point is valid. Examined realistically, though, it is not, for the vast majority of U.S. nonpublic schools remaining are located in major urban centers; locales already suffering from overcrowded public schools and inadequate funding. One need only examine the demographic data presented by Sullivan for a graphic illustration that though considerable space is available it is not in the proper areas.

Second, though entirely outside the economic realm, Sullivan attacks two of the three remaining substantive pro-aid arguments. Those of social benefits through provision of choice to parents and educational benefits from stimulating innovations through competition. It is not that they cannot be attacked but putting them down with the statement, "However, it was shown that the available evidence supports the second and third allegations only for a handful of nonpublic schools", when in truth he did not do this that lacks credibility. In fact, though the statements ring true for the social question given the continuing reduction in the number of private schools operating in the U.S., it is hard to see how the statement even applies to the innovation argument. Large numbers of schools do not necessarily equate with large numbers of new approaches to education.

Finally, as this volume is offered as study of public support for private schools and with varying degrees of intensity attacks three of the pro-aid arguments one must wonder why the author avoids the last pro-aid argument of

double taxation. In the U.S. all private property owners must support public schools independent of whether or not they likewise help or underwrite private ones and this is a contentious issue to those so affected. Though not major, this point is perhaps significant in denoting that the book is not a complete analysis of the issues. And, it is, in fact, a somewhat surprising omission for it could have been readily and quite properly dismissed by referring to its apparent violation of the U.S. Constitution if implemented.

In summary for readers seeking a comprehensive, objective analysis of the major issues regarding support for private schools *Public Aid to Nonpublic Schools* is not the book to read. For individuals seeking a rather comprehensive demographic trend analysis of recent public and private schooling costs and enrolments in the United States it should suffice.

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Phillip Lopate. *Being with Children*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1975. Pp. viii, 392. \$8.95.

Being with Children is an account of the experiences of a writer who taught creative writing in an inner-city elementary school. Phillip Lopate was one of the many artists and writers who were placed in American classrooms in the late sixties and early seventies in the hope that they would be able to rejuvenate lifeless curricula and revive listless children where teachers had failed to do so. Lopate headed a team of writers, working on a joint project of Teachers and Writers Collaborative and Columbia University, who found themselves teaching in a Manhattan elementary school.

As an outsider, Lopate's position at Public School 90 was a privileged one. He could be unconventional in his approach to teaching creative writing, and he could be objective about what was going on around him. These two aspects of his position, which are reflected in the book by fascinating descriptions of how he set about his task, and by commentary on the results of his efforts, are carefully interwoven into a lively narrative. In addition, the outsider's viewpoint allows the author a freer hand in recounting his experiences. Both the descriptive and the reflective parts of the book are written in a personal and often anecdotal style. The result is not only informative but also highly entertaining — a combination unfortunately all too rare in today's educational writing.

The bulk of the book is centered on the author's work with various groups of fifth and sixth graders over a period of two years. During this time, we witness a progression from early, rather nervous classroom lessons, where the children suspect that Lopate "is merely another in a long series of adult foremen", to experiments with theatre, sound and videotape recording, and finally to a rough and raucous, but triumphant performance of *West Side Story* with a sixth-grade cast. As Lopate gains confidence and maturity, and as he moves away from traditional approaches to teaching writing, we also witness the emergence of his belief that the "creative spark" is the same no matter what medium of self-expression is used to kindle it. Finally, we perceive the author's thinking developing in another direction. As he gets to know the children over the months, he rejects the idea of the innocent child easily and spontaneously producing poetry. The hard facts tell him that not