

power relationships between players in their selected scenarios. In a study of children, especially as they relate to teachers and other adults, this naive perspective seems irresponsible. Also invisible are gender issues, social class considerations, and any references to racial or ethnic identities of individuals; by remaining unaddressed these issues are, in my view, symbolically marginalized and devalued by these authors.

The Eurocentric focus of the authors is perhaps explained by acknowledging their mutual origins in the Netherlands, but tacit generalizations to a universal meaning for all children's lives must be circumscribed accordingly. Virtually all of the references cited are by North American or European authors, and any historical or cultural issues imply Western societies exclusively. In their discussion of the cultural development of inwardness, for example, the only work cited is a from a German historian.

Impeded by these serious omissions and limitations, this book fails to deliver on its impossible quest to locate an essential meaning of secrecy for all children. Nonetheless the authors offer a compelling and unique look at an issue to which we can all relate at some level, for certainly, we have all been children and we have all kept secrets. Perhaps the authors' final concession serves as the best rationale for the limited relevance of their approach and the resultant findings: "The search for meaning itself and some glimpses of revelation may be more gratifying than some absolute final disclosure" (p. 171).

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Brathwaite, K. & James, C.E. (Eds.). (1996). *Educating African Canadians*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Co. 328 pp. (Softcover).

The anthology, *Educating African Canadians* focuses on the special difficulties the Canadian public schools have in educating African Canadians.

The contributors in each of the book's five sections explain why the Canadian educational system so far has failed to meet the needs of this population, and they present literature reviews, student interviews, personal narratives, and examples of various programs to show how certain institutional practices lead many African-Canadian students to experience the effects of discrimination and marginalization which beget underachievement and dropouts.

Part One, with chapters that assess the educational experiences of these students, focuses primarily on African-American (Black) dropouts. For example, George Sefa Dei presents theoretical approaches, as well as students' narratives advancing economic hardships, low teacher expectations, racism, sexism, the absence of Black teachers, and lack of positive racial identity as reasons for dropping out. Carl James and Keren Brathwaite highlight a chronology of issues from 1960 to the present to determine if a paradigm shift has occurred in the 1990s with regard to educating Black Canadian students. These contributors maintain that the 1960s left behind tremendous dropout rates and both discouraged and disengaged students. Although the 1970s and 1980s showed significant increases of Blacks in Canada which led to new multicultural education policies, research often pointed to African-Canadians as exhibiting psychological and cultural maladjustment. Since the 1960s, Black parents, community advocates, and others have fought these racist notions while maintaining that little changes in Canadian schools.

Part Two critically assesses the relationship between parents, schools, and the community. As did Chapter One, Agnes Calliste presents anti-racist education struggles between 1960 and 1990 from a social perspective. She asserts that the Black Power Movement of the 1960s inspired Black Canadians to organize programs to help educate their parents and community members to racial educational policies. Since the 1970s, parents and community members have actively involved themselves in education, but they need to organize better to achieve greater economic and political change.

Keren Brathwaite and Venetta Goodall continue the discussion of parental involvement in schools, Brathwaite maintaining that those schools have yet fully to support and welcome the role of the Black parent. Goodall suggests a practical approach to parental involvement by explaining how parents might organize a class carnival. With their students writing invitations, creating posters, and composing songs for the carnival, the parents could provide practical experiences in such various subjects as math, reading, oral and written language, music, and art.

Part Three takes up issues of the curriculum. Andrew Allen urges teachers that when selecting material, they should involve their students, teach them critical thinking skills, and attend to their reaction to the new material.

Both Carl James and Althea Prince assert that because of the limited knowledge they have of African-Canadians, teachers often celebrate Black-Canadians only during Black History Month. Prince asserts that, armed with a generous supplementary knowledge of Black heritage, they should be able to establish curricula that reflect their preparation and to teach engaging lessons on African heritage.

Part Four presents programs that enhance the educational attainment of Black students. Contributor Frederick Case stresses the importance of developing a school-university partnership that reaches into the community, and Patrick Solomon challenges school administrators to develop programs that employ more African-Canadian teachers. After all, Black children benefit from role modeling upon and mentoring with African-Canadian teachers. Finally, Keith Allen explains the Transitional Year Program, an intensive one-year full time remedial university program that equips adult students to enter degree programs like the humanities and social sciences.

Part Five centers on developing a culturally appropriate education. This section involves such subjects as using athletics as a means of coping with alienation in mainstream environments and the implementation of cultural studies in schools. The highlight of this section, however, becomes African-centered schools. Throughout the book, several contributors hint that African-centered schools presents a solution to the underachievement and dropout rates of African-Canadians. But in the book's final chapter, George Sefa Dei examines the pros and cons of the issue and concludes that African-centered schools could provide a useful, alternative educational environment for students who cannot adjust to conventional schools.

Educating African Canadians can serve as a valuable resource for prospective teachers enrolled in teacher education courses, for parents who often struggle to understand their children's cultural dilemmas in school, and for administrators eager to design schools that meet the needs of all their students. The book thoroughly explains theoretical issues regarding African-Canadian student achievement in schools and offers some practical applications. To complement the discussion on changing the curriculum, however, it would have been beneficial to have included a sample curriculum as a guide for teachers interested in revising their curricula to accommodate greater ethnic diversity. The book does, however, provide its readers with an

extensive bibliography for further research. It also includes short descriptive profiles of the contributors.

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Mehan, H., Villaneuva, I, Hubbard, L, & Lintz, A. (1996). *Constructing school success: The consequences of untracking low achieving students*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 247 pp. (Softcover).

Over the past decade we have seen more and more attempts to bolster the academic success of low-achieving students and provide a more egalitarian school environment. Not surprisingly, we see academics from a variety of content areas supporting these revolutionary positions with evidence from each of their disciplines.

Evidence in this book arises from sociological and philosophical perspectives, as well as from critical theory and educational practice. The authors integrate a sometimes polemical approach to deconstruct an educational status quo which favors some and harms others. Unfortunately, because a curriculum approach was missing, the discussion lacks provision to support and sustain any reformed curriculum practices. So while we identified genuine methodological problems we lacked their correlating empirical solutions. This book offers however a significant first step in that direction. While the book is forceful in realistic portrayals of segregation and unequal access, the authors are also compassionate in their efforts to transform obstacles into opportunities for many disadvantaged students.

In the backdrop of an untracking program called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), that places previously disadvantaged students in the same college prep classes as academically advantaged students, Mehan and colleagues allow us to see how low-achieving, low-income, and linguistic and ethnic minority students are successfully prepared for college within a more egalitarian school setting.