

Comment

On "The State of Sociology of Education in Anglophone Canada," by B. Y. Card, in *CSSE Bulletin*, vol. 2, no. 1 (February 1975). Comment by A. Richard King, University of Victoria.

Card's overview analysis is uniquely useful to an immigrant teacher who must continually seek to sift out, identify, and incorporate a Canadian ethos into his work. For the past six years I have taught "Anthropology and Education" as a social foundations course at our faculty. Had Card's article been available six years ago both students and I would have benefited. The fact that no medium existed and one now exists is a powerful positive affirmation of the CSSE direction.

Among a number of intriguing aspects of Card's analysis, his reference to a colleague and me triggers a chain of thought about the sociology of education knowledge. Qualifying his comments as "only a cursory glance at a complex and unresearched aspect," Card begins a paragraph with "The . . . school as a social group and the sociology of educational organizations have been studied more frequently by educators than by sociologists." Later he identifies some contribution as having been made by social anthropologists Wolcott and King "working out of Stanford University."

I intend no challenge to Card's major premises nor to the accuracy of his statements. However, my personal knowledge of our specific situation as we were "working out of Stanford University" leads me to some ideas about the sociology of educational knowledge that are perhaps different from the inferences which may be derived from reading the above words in their present context. Reflecting further leads to an obvious conclusion that perhaps other specific researches were similarly undertaken in contexts and for reasons which do not appear in simple descriptions of who did what and when, and that such facts have important implications not only about the sociology of knowledge but the nature and quality of research.

A first significant fact is that a Canadian government bureaucrat was the source of the idea and plan which led Wolcott and me to undertake our studies. Lyman Jampolsky was at that time Regional Superintendent of Education for the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Jampolsky's dissatisfaction with the nature of schooling provided for native Indian children, and his frustrations at not being able to do much to modify that schooling, led him to seek out a new kind of

research approach in hopes of obtaining “objective” information which would support his ideas and perhaps indicate some directions for change. He came to Stanford looking for qualified teachers with social-science-research-methodology competence to undertake participant observation research. One major reason was that he had no money available with which to support research; it could only be accomplished by hiring teachers who could function in the dual roles, but basically in the teaching role.

Wolcott and I both began our professional careers as public school teachers, then moved on to graduate studies at Stanford in the “International Development Education Program,” which provides a PhD in comparative education and requires development of a major field of academic competence in one of the conventional disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology, political science, economics). We had both been in anthropology with George Spindler as our major advisor and both faced a need to develop a year-long field study to complete our degrees. Prior to Jampolsky’s appearance, I had never thought of doing my research year among Indians or even in North America; I think the same is true of Wolcott. Thus, whatever the consequences from our studies for the advancement of knowledge or for our own personal careers, Jampolsky and all that led Jampolsky to his actions and decisions are basically responsible.

Stanford University is also moderately significant since it was — and is — one of the few North American universities which encouraged teachers to become social scientists other than psychologists. One recalls, however, that the field-research requirement included a cross-cultural (i.e. “foreign”) setting and thus Canada was an acceptable site in program terms by virtue of being another nation. This is relevant only because the phrase “working out of Stanford University” seems to imply some special focus of interest in Canadian education generated from within that university. Not so; we could have as well been in Nigeria, Thailand, or Chile to satisfy the university requirements.

These facts shed some new light upon Card’s assertion that studies have been undertaken “more frequently by educators than by sociologists.” An inference to be derived from those words is that within the educational system writ large has emerged a stimulus for encouraging or generating social science research in schools or school systems. Beyond that inference is yet another: that the educators have felt strong need for or attached high value to such research, presumably because it has been rewarding to them *in their functions as educators*. One thus develops a rather rosy view of the climate for social-science research in schools — a sense of congruence of definition, need, and outcome utility between educators and researchers. In my experience, this is an overly sanguine perspective. The rewards available from research are topheavy in favor of the researcher; all too often minimal or even negative for the educator. The educator has problems of school dysfunction. His definition of rewarding outcome will be information which will provide new understandings and, hopefully, lead to solutions of

his problems. The researcher has problems of quite another nature; academic respectability, logical analysis, an aura of “objectivity,” prestige and status advancement, his own curiosity, all are variously areas of reward which are often *not* congruent with the educator’s reward system. Such is uniquely the case where “dysfunction” is a basic shared assumption.

Whether dysfunction be manifest in ethnocentrism, oppression, conflict, incompetence, or any other of the multiple sources in our schools today, the rewarding outcome for the researcher may well do little more than to lay bare some of the most sore aspects of school operation. It is little wonder that the general climate for social-science research in school systems has been one of suspicion, defensiveness, and recalcitrance.

Back to the case at hand, we were all technically “educators,” as Card has said. Wolcott and I were, however, graduate students working toward degree and prestige rewards in anthropology, not in education. These were readily obtainable. In the domain of the sociology of knowledge, I think I can discern some distinctively Canadian processes involving a complex matrix of institutions, society, and government implicit in this one case. It would be fascinating to develop a corpus of similar “research context” cases for further analysis.

Reply by B. Y. Card

In a paper of very limited length there was no possibility of going into details about anything, including anthropologists “working out of Stanford.” I knew Lyman Jampolsky well prior to his employment with Indian Affairs, as he was principal of the high school in Cardston, my home town. I think your mention of his work is a contribution to the record of sociology and anthropology of education in Canada. What you say about Stanford’s encouragement of teachers to be something other than psychologists is important also. That was why I chose Stanford for my own doctorate in sociology and educational sociology. I agree that Stanford did not have any particular Canadian interest, though I do not think my writing necessarily carries this implication. I will say that in my own case, my Stanford professors were interested in my interest in Canada and encouraged me to pursue that interest.

Your critical comment on who is rewarded and why from social science research in education is insightful. If my writing implies a rosy view of educator production of social science knowledge about education, I surely am distorting the real situation. However, the examples I gave do have intrinsic merit, though I would not claim that educators have covered the field of education with adequate or even meritorious research. Perhaps we’ll see what educators can do along this line in the release of the Internal Report of the OECD Review of Canadian Education — the first major nationwide, comprehensive survey of Canadian education undertaken under Canadian educator auspices.