Book Review

Caroline Eick. *Race-Class Relations and Integration in Secondary Education: The Case of Miller High*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 246 pp. Hardcover $85.00.

Recently, a series of forums on Facebook provided a space for individuals to discuss their experiences living in a city or attending a particular school. A noticeable aspect of the posts is that people had experiences that connected to their particular classmates and age groups but not necessarily to other people who may have attended the school or come of age in the cities in earlier or later years. These Facebook groups allow us to learn about the experiences across generations. In a similar manner, Caroline Eick's *Race-Class Relations and Integration in Secondary Education* essentially captures three generations of high school students' experiences from the period right before desegregation until the year 2000. Using intersectionality as a theoretical lens, Eick explores the connection between race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and religion as each category interacts in different ways to impact students' experiences.

This study is a unique contribution to school desegregation history for several reasons. First, it looks at a suburban school in Baltimore County, Maryland, that was, at one time, considered "country" but grew substantially as a result of immigration, mostly of Russian Jews, and the migration of blacks from the city of Baltimore and other surrounding areas. Many studies examine larger cities, although there is increasing examination of suburban areas. Second, it is intergenerational and provides accounts of a variety of experiences based on the larger social context of the community and the nation. Third, it examines how the immigration of Russian Jews added dimensions of ethnicity, religion, and nationality to an already complicated mix of race, class, and gender. Typically, desegregation studies that examine ethnicities outside of blacks and whites examine Latinos or other students of color. The addition of white immigrants to the mix provides a distinctive element. Finally, this book is among the few studies that examine student desegregation experiences with the use of oral history. This book complements the groundbreaking and outstanding study by Amy Stuart Wells, Jennifer Jellison Holme, Anita Tijerina Revilla, and Awo Korantemaa Atanda's (2009), entitled *Both Sides Now: The Story of Desegregation's Graduates*, which focuses on the impact of desegregation on the class of 1980, from five schools in five different regions of the country. In *Both Sides Now*, Wells et al. interviewed over 242 students

and expanded the black/white paradigm by examining schools where desegregation impacted blacks, whites, and Latinos.

Eick divides her study into three sections. In Part I, the "Divided Generation (1950 to 1969)," Eick examines a group of students who attended Miller High School immediately before and after desegregation in 1956, which was made up of local whites and blacks who had long-standing roots in the community. Racial divide in the larger society carried into the school as these students grappled with what it meant to share a common space. Class, race, and gender served as important intersections for how groups of students perceived school benefits. The second group of students was "The Border-Crossing Generation (1970 to 1985)," and of the three generations of students, these students had the most authentic, integrative experience in which interaction across racial boundaries was more frequent. Class was a bigger divide unless poorer students managed to break into the upper track or participated in sports. Students in the lower tracks were not as connected as students who were in the upper track and on athletic teams or in other extracurricular activities. The third group, "The Redivided Generation (1986-2000)," was a causality of immigration and migration that exacerbated racial and ethnic tensions. Well-to-do and upper track students and student-athletes still were the most likely to interact across race, but the addition of new students and the conservative swing of national politics impacted the potential for collegiality to spread beyond the Border-Crossing Generation.

The strength of the book lies in Eick's analysis and use of interviews to provide a glimpse into the lives of students in this school. Her masterful analysis adds clarity and makes it easy for readers to understand the meaning of interviewees' responses. There was really no place in the book where the reader was left without a sense of what informants meant and how the students interacted within the contexts of the school and community.

There are a few concerns for any study that relies on oral history interviews; however, Eick attempts to address them in her addendum on methodology. Although the field of history has grown in its acceptance of oral history, many still feel trepidation about its use as the basis of a study. As memory is faulty and at times unreliable, Eick looks more to the meaning memory offers rather than just accuracy. It is in this meaning making that oral historians sometimes draw a connection as to how events impact individuals and groups. The lack of accuracy can also be addressed with the triangulation of archival data and secondary sources. Without oral history interviews, historians have less of a chance to understand what really occurred in schools. Documents alone do not provide a clear understanding of how schooling impacts individual students or how school culture operates.

With that said, the opposite effect can happen. Too much reliance on too few interviews can distort an experience. Eick states, "no ultimate number of testimonies can be set to legitimate a social historical consciousness... No number can be set because no exhaustive history of all possible configurations of student relationships can ever be told. It is because the 'exhaustive' will forever be out of reach in relational histories of education that histories of whatever possible configurations must be told" (p. 160). While no history is complete, interviewing thirty-seven people to cover a period of fifty years will not give a full view of a school's history but rather a glimpse at what occurred. Eick defends her use of so few students as a result of lack of resources and access and because she was not interested in producing a collective history. In spite of this flaw, she makes up for it with the thorough interpretations of what she gained from those interviews. Anyone who has conducted an oral history project knows that it is often difficult to set and achieve the goals of interviewing everyone a researcher identifies. As much as oral historians try to control the type and number of participants, access usually dictates who will ultimately be interviewed.

Perhaps another weakness is that Eick did not speak to any black students from the Redivided Generation, though she makes claims about their experiences based on what others told her. When she asked two black interviewees to speak to family members, the interviewees indicated that their family members would not want to speak to her. Without having spoken to the students directly, Eick believed her whiteness and high level of education served as a turn-off to black students who had adversarial relationships with representatives from the "educational establishment." While the late 1980s and early 1990s represented a time of enhanced cultural consciousness among some black youth as a result of influences such as politically conscious hip-hop and international politics and protests surrounding South African apartheid, it is hard to say that somehow this generation was more at odds with whites than those in the Black Power era. When Eick interviewed blacks in the Black Power era, she interviewed one student who did not fit the norm of the black experience because he had white friends. Perhaps if she had been able to interview someone like that in the Redivided Generation, her interpretations may have been different. I believe that Eick overreached her interpretation of the why blacks from the Redivided Generation would not participate, especially since she did not directly speak to those students and did not mention attempts to contact other black students from that time. Funding limitations and lack of time to gain access into this community probably served as the greater reason for not being able to talk to anyone from that group. However, Eick's bravery in mentioning this should be commended.

A final area of review is Eick's use of theory. In the May 2011 issue of *History of Education Quarterly*, contributors discussed the use of theory in the history of American education. In this issue, Eick's article was a synopsis of her book, and she discussed the use of intersectionality as her theoretical framework. In the same issue, Wayne J. Urban responded to her use of intersectionality: "I think that it is quite possible that Eick could have come up with a study and an analysis very much like the one she discussed in this essay without benefit of intersectionality" (p. 232). I tend to agree with Urban that this book could have been written without the theory of intersectionality. History often brings out the theoretical without necessarily naming it or being limited by it.

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