

arguing somewhat contradictorily that women were either by nature incapable of learning or, once educated, would become so empowered that they would constitute a major threat to the social fabric of the nation. At the other end were those very articulate men, like the Rev. Thomas Webster, who called for the complete equality of men and women, not only in education, but in life itself. Between them were the defenders of separate education and coeducation in various forms. All of these arguments, it is interesting to note, relied heavily upon the metaphor of the family to explain and defend their positions — a fact that should caution those historians who define the relationship between gender and religion very narrowly and are quick to take all metaphors at face value.

The second issue is the powerful role played by the state in the history of women's education within the Methodist Church. Drawing upon the work of Robert Gidney, Wyn Millar, and Bruce Curtis, the author is able to document how a rich diversity of educational experiments was drawn over time into a system of secondary and post-secondary institutions and how the character of this system was largely determined by the enormous power of the educational bureaucracy of the provincial state. In effect, even in an area of education that purposely set itself apart from the public system, the "Godless" state was able to impose its will and eventually make these experiments conform to its own goals and objectives.

The third theme is purposefully political and should be taken as an object lesson by all those who are deeply concerned about the place of women within the university. If the traditional story line in the history of education is one of progress and inclusion — carrying an ever brighter lamp of learning to more and more people — Johanna Selles shows that the history of higher education for women in the Methodist Church has been one of continual struggle in the face of persistent (although by no means universal) opposition. Women were excluded from college and struggled hard to get back in; even as their presence in the university grew, they found that their claim to a place of their own was contested all the more strongly. Given recent events, I see no reason to believe that the same theme does not continue to inform the history of the education of women.

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Elliott West — *Growing Up in Twentieth-Century America: A History and Reference Guide*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. Pp. xiv, 378.

Elliot West's *Growing up in Twentieth-Century America* provides a competent overview of the history of American children since 1900. It is well researched and reads easily so as to be reliable and accessible to interested scholars of various specialities and disciplines, as well as to secondary school social studies teachers. Because it is intended as a "reference guide", the book has been organized chronologically into four chapters (1900–1920, 1921–1940, 1941–1960, 1961–present) with six sections repeated in each (at home, at play, at work, at school, health, and law).

This organizational strategy allows the reader to focus upon one topic by skipping between chapters or to receive a wider introduction to one period of time by reading an entire chapter. At the end of each chapter, West provides brief bibliographic essays to correspond with each of the six sections. The index is thorough and helpful, but the bibliographies would be less redundant and easier to use if they had been combined at the end of the book. In addition, the text notation should have been much more fulsome. By comparison, *Growing Up in Twentieth-Century America* does not approach the bibliographic standards of Joseph Hawes and Ray Hiner's *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (1985) or Hawes's and Elizabeth Nybakken's *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (1991).

As "a history", the book makes three central and largely indisputable claims: growing up is and has been a diverse experience; children and parents have had and continue to have the ability to shape it; and the socialization of children has always been intimately linked to the construction and maintenance of society. West emphasizes the individual agency of adults and children alike, skilfully bringing the plurality of children's experiences into high relief. On page after page, he weaves together the words of children and adults with figures and facts about larger behavioural patterns and policy reforms. He offers vivid and fascinating descriptions of the material context of children at play, at work, and at school. Teachers at all levels will find many stories and examples to help bring their lectures alive.

The quality of West's graphic demonstration of diversity and agency is not matched in the interpretive aspects of the book. Thus, the implicit synthetic demands of his third claim go largely unmet. When historians invoke the concept of "society", they implicitly set for themselves a task of providing general claims about the social causes, consequences, and meanings of the stories they tell. They do this in order to make history matter. Balancing empirical details and interpretive coherence while maintaining a sense of human agency in the past becomes more difficult as the scope of a project widens, but it has been achieved with considerable finesse in similar works. For example, Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg's *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (1988) and John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman's *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (1988) clearly advanced the theme of a contested, but triumphant expressive individualism in the American past. Likewise, the whiggish theme of manifest destiny and the presidential synthesis provided frameworks for generations of survey textbooks in American history. On the contrary, the structure of *Growing Up in Twentieth-Century America* does not follow any synthetic logic. Instead, West chose to divide his book into successive 20-year blocks of time, each chapter treating the same topics. In the book's introduction, which was far too brief, West admits that his categories are "artificial". This begs the question, "Why?" Should not the structure of the book follow an overall narrative argument or at least attempt to demonstrate a set of larger claims? For these reasons, *Growing Up in Twentieth-Century America* does not match the interpretive depth of many college-level American history textbooks, nor achieve their level of historiographical significance. Those who teach courses on families and children will find *Growing Up in Twentieth-*

*Century America* a valuable source of information to share with students, however, even with its shortcomings.

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