

Robert C. Vipond, *Making a Global City: How One Toronto School Embraced Diversity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 280 pp., ISBN: 978-1442631953.

Robert Vipond's micro-analysis of the Clinton Street Public School in Toronto weaves immigration, urbanization, and adaptation in this succinct and readable study. Vipond, a Political Scientist at the University of Toronto, spans the history of the school from its foundation in 1888 to the present. He identifies three periods based on the settling of the neighbourhood: Jewish, European, and World. In so doing, he outlines the Canadian urban experience. He argues that immigrant adaptation put in motion the process of acquiring citizenship. This development was marked by accommodations by the Toronto Board of Education that gradually and haltingly came to the realization that Canada was a multicultural country. Vipond's main source is the complete set of registration cards of students from 1920 to 1990 in the Clinton archives, interviews, Toronto District School Board archives, and secondary works. *Making a Global City* challenges assumptions about adaptation, assimilation, and citizenship, while providing a vivid picture of a community in constant transition.

Clinton Street starts just south of College Street and runs north to Dupont Street, a distance of about two kilometres. It lies half a kilometre west of Bathurst Street, a major artery. Its first settlers were Anglo Canadian workers and merchants who had moved west from the city centre, creating a mixed socio-economic pattern. Homes were more spacious than in the older neighbourhoods. With the electrification of the streetcar line on College Street, migration increased. The neighbourhood became attractive to Jewish immigrants who had the means to move from the crowded Spadina/Kensington vicinity, yet close enough by public transportation to their jobs in the garment industry. Consequently, the school outgrew the original building.

A new structure was erected in 1913. During this period Toronto was slowly becoming less Anglo-Celtic, and Jews came to represent 6 percent of the population, the city's largest ethno-cultural community. In 1920, 20 percent of the Clinton Street Public School was Jewish, growing to 70 percent a decade later. The Depression and World War II hindered further mobility. The post-war migration northward along the Bathurst Street corridor dropped the Jewish enrollment to 30 percent in 1950 and to 5 percent by 1960. The challenge for the Board and the staff at Clinton was how to create a community of citizens in a diverse religious setting. In part, the process was eased because, in Vipond's words, for Jews, "schools mattered." Schools were a gateway to socio-economic mobility. Jewish children were more likely to enter high school in Ontario and post-secondary institutions than other Canadians. Further, Jews rapidly adapted to Canadian life. Vipond quotes Louis Rosenberg's momentous analysis, which states that 95 percent of Canada's Jews spoke English in 1931. With due deference to Rosenberg, I find this to be inconceivable. The norm in immigrant

homes was that the parents spoke Yiddish and the children answered in English.

Nevertheless, Jews faced socio-religious barriers. The Toronto Board of Education mandated compulsory religious, i.e., Christian Education, where the readings included “Jews put Jesus to death,” and instituted the reading of the Lord’s Prayer. Yet, the Clinton school didn’t acquiesce. Canadian Jewish Congress, led by Rabbi Abraham Feinberg, protested, and the teaching staff, understanding its environment, refused to comply. Outside the school’s confines, however, Jewish children were subjected to anti-Semitic provocations, mostly by Anglo Canadian youth. The most visible such act of anti-Semitism in interwar Canada was the nearby Christie Pitts Riot in 1933. Local gangs picked on Jewish boys, who retaliated in turn.

Vipond makes a compelling point with regard to the assimilation versus integration debate at the time. The former, he argues, is a “one-way street” that was recognized as incompatible with the ethno-cultural diversity. It became clear to the staff that the school had to adapt to the community. Vipond states that this was not a gradual development. Rather, he contends that the movement took the form of a jazz composition – melody alternating with improvisation. So it was with student life at Clinton. As the Jewish community moved to other areas of Toronto it was replaced in large part by Italians followed by the Portuguese from the 1950s to the 1970s. The Immigration Act of 1952 gave the government “broad discretion” to deny prospective immigrants, but the realities of the labour shortage opened the gates, with chain migration resulting. Italian children constituted, at their peak, 65 percent of the Clinton Street Public School enrollment in 1965 and Portuguese children constituted almost 20 percent at their peak in 1975. This was rather dramatic considering the attraction of the Catholic School Board for many families.

During this “European phase,” Canadians, especially in multi-ethnic cities, were undergoing rapid change. Assimilation was in question. To “what” were immigrants assimilating? “Canadian values”? In short order, The Bilingual/Bicultural Commission, the Expo ’67 World’s Fair, Trudeau, and Official Multiculturalism led to rapid transformations. The Hall-Dennis Commission on “Living and Learning” overturned the traditional Anglo-dominant model of education in Ontario.

By 1970, Clinton was moving into its third phase, that of a global school. The neighbourhood was marked by immigration from Latin America, Asia, and the West Indies. A decade later, Clinton attracted “white painters,” that is naturalized Canadians who wanted to live in the lively mix of cultures, close to Bloor, College, and Dundas Streets, where the “Little Italy” of the 1950s and 60s is now “little Italian (and almost every other ethnicity) restaurants.” By 1990, close to 30 percent of Clinton students were children of these urban migrants. But there were not, and there increasingly are not, many children left at the Clinton school. Families have shrunk as Clinton

has become too expensive for growing lower-middle-class families, resulting in drastically declined enrollment. The school building now also houses daycare and disability centres.

Vipond closes with the view that “Clinton parents defied the ‘either-or,’ black-and-white binary of thinking about citizenship in Canada.... They supported a moderate multiculturalism that ventured into territory that assimilationists considered dangerous but stopped short of what the Toronto Board of Education believed equity demanded.” The “moderate multiculturalism” at Clinton, Vipond argues, “connects past, present, and future. Because culture is constructed or invented, it is inherently dynamic.”

Clinton is a microcosm of Toronto. A neighbouring school, King Edward, was, in the 1980s, the exemplar of what the city, nay, Canada was becoming. The school claimed that there were some sixty home-languages spoken. Though this was an exaggeration, it spoke volumes of the national trend that continues today. The Canada 2016 Census showed that a majority of residents of the Greater Toronto Area identify themselves as “visible minorities.” Vipond, in this engaging micro-study, helps us understand how this process has unfolded.

Franklin Bialystok
University of Toronto