

Curriculum History: Early 20th Century American Schooling As Cultural Theses About Who the Child is and Should Be*

La historia del currículum: La educación en los estados unidos a principios del siglo XX, como tesis cultural acerca de lo que el niño es y debe ser

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Abstract:

This essay considers schooling as planning to change the conditions of people that changed people. The production of schooling and its sciences were not produced through an evolutionary process. They were assembled through an uneven flow of events, ideas, institutions and narratives. Further and to play with a fashionable of globalization, schooling and its sciences were embodied in a field of practices that transverse and were differentiated across Europe and North America into the early 20th century. The cultural theses in pedagogy embodied values and norms about the hope of the future of the nation through making of the child; and with that hope was the recognition and production of differences.

Key words: Politics of school knowledge, pedagogies, schooling, education sciences

Resumen:

Este ensayo considera la educación como una planificación para el cambio de las condiciones de las personas que cambian a las personas. La producción de la escolarización y sus ciencias no se desarrollaron a partir de un proceso evolutivo. Se acoplaron a través de un flujo discontinuo de hechos, ideas, instituciones y narrativas. Además y para jugar con la tendencia de la globalización, la educación y sus ciencias se vieron representadas en un campo de practicas que atravesaron y se diferenciaron por toda Europa y Norteamérica a principios del siglo XX. Las tesis culturales en pedagogía representan los valores y las normas sobre la esperanza para el futuro de la nación a partir de la educación del niño; y con esta esperanza también se reconocieron y se produjeron diferencias.

Palabras clave: Política de conocimiento escolar, pedagogías, escolarización, ciencias de la educación

Schooling embodies a salvation theme of North American and European modernity. That salvation theme embodies the Enlightenment's project of emancipation. The child is the future cosmopolitan citizen of the nation whose reason and rationality produce liberty, freedom and progress. The emancipatory project of schooling embodies historical ironies and paradoxes of modernity in at least two different layers.

First, schooling joins the social administration of progress and the freedom and liberty of individuality, two central registers of modernity. The founders of the American and French Republic recognized that the citizen was not born but made. The modern state was dependent on making the citizen whose participation the new nation was dependent on for its existence¹. Schooling was to contribute to making the new society through making the new child. The theories of the child and teaching from the late 19th century were technologies to transcribe Enlightenment hopes about human agency, reason and the rationality of science into principles of everyday life.

Second, the irony is that the hopes for the social administration of freedom embodied fears about dangerous people who did not embody the qualities and characteristics of the new citizen. Curriculum and teaching were comparative systems that recognized and differentiated "the civilized" from "others," the uncivilized, the savage, the backward, and today's "socially disadvantaged" child.

These ironies and paradoxes are embodied in modernity. Wagner (1994) argues that modernity cannot simply be written in terms of increasing autonomy and democracy, but rather in terms of changing notions of the substantive foundations of a self-realization and of shifting emphases between individualized enablements and public/collective capabilities" (p. xiv). The ironies and paradoxes of modernity are generated in the cultural theses about modes of living in pedagogy.

1. CURRICULUM AND GOVERNING WHO THE CHILD IS AND SHOULD BE

The development of mass public schooling of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were part of cross Atlantic nation building projects linked with movements of politics, trade and capitalism. The modern welfare state assumed the responsibility to care for its populations. Social insurance schemes concerned with old age and sickness, poor relief state, new state formed ownership of streetcars, city planning, the regulation of the risks of wage labor through unemployment policies, the building of infrastructures for the social reconstruction of countryside, and public housing were instituted for the administration of society in the name of the common good.

¹ I use the notion of modern hesitantly in this text for literary convenience. My concern is not to engage in the periodization. It is to explore the slow and uneven changes in the categories, epistemologies, and distinctions that make possible the school as it overlaps with other institutional developments that are often placed together as modernity.

The salvation stories were tied to the transformations of the governing principles of a liberal democracy by which individuals were expected to participate in society. Whereas the previous world sought its truth in divine providence, the 'modern' pedagogical knowledge took certain religious views about salvation and combined them with scientific disposition towards how truth and self governing was to be sought. The new salvation story was told in the name of the citizen who was to shed the previous beliefs and dispositions of religion and an inherited social order and replace them with the obligations, responsibilities and personal discipline embodied in liberal democratic ideals. The inscription of salvation themes that joined the state and schooling circulated in Europe and North America. The history of the secondary school in France, as Durkheim argued, can be read as well as the civilizing mission of the school through its changing cultural theses about the modes of living that embody an "enlightened society."

The word "social" gave reference to the new tasks of planning for progress and individual betterment - social economics, social politics; these were testimony to the growing consciousness of the possibility of intervention in the reform movements that traversed Northern American and European countries as part of social Protestantism movements. *The Social Question*, for example, gave expression to Protestant reformers concern with the moral disorder perceived in the new urban centers (Rodgers, 1998, 65). The English Fabian Society, the German Evangelical Social Congress, French Protestants in the Musée Social, as well as the Settlement House movements gave focus to international efforts to change the conditions of the city that also changed people.

American Progressive education movements were part of the cross-Atlantic Protestant reform movement concerned with the perceived moral disorder of the city. The reforms embodied themes of salvation and redemption of urban populations that overlapped a universal Protestantism with the norms of participation and agency of the Republicanism of the nation². The spread of mass schooling embodied "salvation stories" that connected the individual to a larger collective sense of mission and progress which the nation gave express. The curriculum and the new sciences of pedagogy American linked the governing patterns of society and its principles of collective belonging with the inner governing "thought" and experiences of daily life of individuals. Lasch (1977) has argued, for example, that 'new' ideas of childhood in the 19th century helped to precipitate the new idea of the family as interwoven problems of the social administration of the State, public health and moralists.

One can read much of Anglo-American traditions of pedagogy in relation to the Scottish Enlightenment and the Reformation that secularized salvation themes in the school. The education of the child was to guarantee the redemption of society. Hamilton (1989) argues, for example, that Calvinist influences of the Scottish Enlightenment were brought to the US to emphasize

² For a discussion of the secularization of religion into civic society, see Bellah (1968).

instructional systems with well-ordered forms of social organization to provide more efficient systems of moral supervision and labor organization. He argues, further, that there is a close relation between changing pedagogical discursive practices, changing conceptions of labor processes, and changing assumptions about the individual and the state.

Pedagogy was a central strategy in this social administration of the child. The new psychologies of the child development embodied distinctions and differentiations that were to regulate not only information but who the child was and should be. Pedagogy placed faith in the rational individual as the locus of change.

2. SCIENCE AS METHODS TO PLAN THE NEW SOCIETY AND AS A CULTURAL THESIS ABOUT EVERYDAY MODES OF LIVING.

The discourses of science inscribed in the new pedagogies (Popkewitz 1991). Science was seen as part of the Enlightenment heritage in which progress was obtained. The social sciences, like the physical sciences in ordering the mastery of the natural world, were to describe, explain and give direction for solving "the social problem". But the social sciences were not 'merely' ideas to interpret social life; the concepts were recursively part of social practices.

The faith in science had a millennialist belief in rational knowledge as a positive force for action. From city government reforms to the studies of the family, child and urban housing, progressives sought to rescue those who suffered from or fell from grace in the debilitating qualities of the city and to change their modes of living. The *urbane* of the city in Progressivism would use the expertise of science to study the *urban* conditions that produced moral decay, and work with government for effective reform to eliminate evils and purify its citizens of moral transgressions. Protestant elites felt that the social sciences, for example, would counter the disintegration of the moral order in urban life. Science was to identify the causes of alcoholism, delinquency, prostitution, among other practices, from which interventions could be devised to correct the dysfunctional norms and rectify the social conditions.

Science had two different trajectories in social planning.

One was the mastery promised to calculate and change the conditions of social life. Studies of urban planning, health conditions, labor conditions, for example, were done and new laws produced for the social betterment of urban populations.

Second, science was a way of ordering and planning daily life. Theories of the family and child development gave attention to cultural theses for ordering and constituting experience, reflection and action in daily life. Research on "thought," behavior, communities, and interactions, for example, generated principles about action. These principles were a more general cultural disposition about reflection and acting that had little to do with the realms of interpreting and understanding formed in the natural and physical sciences.

Thorndike's behaviorism and Dewey's pragmatism, although different in its notions of psychology of the person, brought into pedagogical thought generalized notions about how individuality ordered the present and gave personal mastery to their future.

Modes of living "scientifically" were ordering devices in the selection of school subjects in mathematics, science, music, and literature (see, e.g. Gustasson, 2005). The content of school subjects drew upon academic disciplines but the selection and organization of knowledge "fit" into and were to serve psychological purposes of child development and learning. Classroom didactics, instructional materials and the time-slotting of school subjects shaped and fashioned the knowledge of the curriculum (Goodson 1987, Popkewitz 1987). Teaching transmogrified disciplinary knowledge into technologies of lesson planning, hierarchies of objectives in a basal reading series, and the administration of achievement tests.

The double quality of the sciences of education -to enact changes in the conditions of people produced changes in people- is embodied in the domestic sciences. These sciences focused on the Social Question of reforming the urban family. The sciences gave attention to the physical and moral conditions of the urban family by ordering and classified the health conditions of the home. But health was not only about physical issues of disease. Medical discourses were metaphors for child rearing that overlapped concerns about home cleanliness, and nutritional practices of the home with the moral well-being of the child. Daily life in the family was rationalized as parents (typically mothers) were to practice hygienic approaches in preparing foods and organizing patterns of daily diets. Child psychologies were introduced through notions of child development whose values embodied images of the moral life that one should life.

The domestic sciences and the pedagogies of the school transported early Puritan salvation themes into narratives of an American Exceptionalism, a narrative of the nation as the Chosen People whose enlightenment's vision placed the nation and its citizen as a unique human experiment for moving civilization toward the highest ideals of human values and progress. The cultural theses of the sciences narrated an individual who was action-oriented and problem-oriented as was American society at large. The individual was a purposeful agent of change in a world filled with contingency. The future had no guarantees as it was ordered through the decision making and agency of its citizen.

The Exceptionalism was given evolutionary qualities through the incorporation of Social Darwinisms. The development of the child embodied the technologies of science to artificially intervene in order to produce a more progressive society and individuality. The sociologist Charles Horton Cooley evoked the cosmopolitanism of the American Exceptionalism when talking about the social sciences and urban conditions. Cooley (1909) saw the United States as "*nearer, perhaps, to the spirit of the coming order*" (p. 167) that is totally different from anything before it "because it places a greater emphasis on individuality and innovation" and does not inherit the class culture of Europe" (in

Ross, 1972, 245). In his second edition of *Principles of Sociology*, Edward Alsworth Ross (1920/1930), an early founder of American sociology, evoked an international perspective in talking about the civilizing qualities of American society and its schools. Ross believed that the common school replaced the medieval church in providing for the cohesion, "*concord and obedience*" (p. 524) necessary for modern societies. Education, he argued, is the social institution to produce a like-mindedness among diverse populations through stressing "the *present* and the *future* rather than the *past*" (p. 259, italics in original). Social and individual change was installed as an incessant element of that vision.

The qualities of "the self" and its collective home overlapped with the reformist Protestantism that earlier I spoke about with the Social Question. The theories and methods of the social sciences problematized and calculated *thought*, talk, feelings, and actions to shape moral agency through governing the principles of reflection and participation. Albion Small (1896), a former Baptist minister hired to start a Department of Sociology at the new Rockefeller sponsored University of Chicago³, gave attention to the family, urban reform and the future of the nation. For Small and later for his colleague, John Dewey, the teacher held the key to the future of society through remaking the inner qualities of the child. This anthropological psychology was expressed as:

"Sociology knows no means for the amelioration or reform of society more radical than those of which teachers hold the leverage. The teacher... will read his success only in the record of men and women who go from the school eager to explore wider and deeper these social relations, and zealous to do their part in making a better future" (Small, 1896, p.184).

The hope for future entailed a destabilizing of the past. Old traditions were feared, to be shed and new ones installed so the future, Dewey argued, will be without an authoritarian system of religious and civil institutions, and any fixed classes and ancient institutions. "*The old culture is doomed for us because it was built upon an alliance of political and spiritual powers, an equilibrium of governing and leisure classes, which no longer exists*" (Dewey, 1916/1929, pp.501-2). The dismantling of the old and the inscription of the future embodied a cosmopolitan individuality in which intelligent action and a problem-solving voluntarism contributed to the making of the national character.

The de-stabilizing of the past and the making of the future embodied cultural theses to order everyday living. The psychological construction of the child in John Dewey's pragmatism and Edward L. Thorndike viewed their sciences of education as contributing to progressive education in the tradition of the Enlightenment. Each saw science as a useful and vital social agent in making a progressive society. That progressive society required that the school construct the freedom and liberty of the child through inscribing principles of reason and the reasonable person. Dewey viewed individuality as having plasticity and a social basis. Dewey's pragmatism was a designing project of the

³ It is important to note that eastern elite universities as Yale, Columbia, Harvard, Dartmouth, Princeton, were initially schools to train clergy.

individual who consciously deployed the creative power of science in daily life. In contrast to the anthropological psychology of Dewey, Thorndike's science was to bring out what was natural or innate in the child to produce a more humane society and moral order.

3. PLANNING THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY AS MODES OF "MODERN" LIVING

The new disciplines of sociology and psychology were instrumental technologies in the reforms of the child and the family. The rationalizing of the *habitus* of the urban home of the poor entered into bourgeois living as well to change gendered relations. The family was an administrative practice that brought love and sympathy into the industrial world. The image of the family was the earliest and the most immediate place for the paradigm of self-abridgement of culture and linking of individuality to collective belonging and "home." The school curriculum narrated images of the family, yet had to supersede the latter's norms and cultural values in order to produce the citizen whose future actions guaranteed the future of the Republic.

The cultural theses of the modes of living were given expression through the notion of community. Different strands of Progressive Education looked to nature as a nostalgic image of a past rural community that provides a way to think about the reform of the family. The image of the past was not something recouped from previous traditions. The notion of community drew from and adapted German social theories about the fall and resurrection of the city as a center of culture, belonging and home. The German sociologist Tönnies (1887/1957), for example, was brought into the American conversations about the Social Question of the moral disorder of the city. Tönnies contrasted the pastoral world symbolized in the notion of *community* (*Gemeinschaft*) with modernity as expressed in the notion of *society* (*Gesellschaft*). The pastoral vision of community in *Gemeinschaft* was where neighbors prior to modernity come closest to nature. The laws, conventions, and rule of public opinion in *Gesellschaft* were positioned as without the moral or ethical grounding of the memorialized pastoral images of Christianity.

The social and psychological sciences re-inscribed the pastoral image of *Gemeinschaft* in designing urban life. G. Stanley Hall's child study embodied a romantic desire to build organic values of a pastoral community into an increasingly specialized and mechanized urban, industrial, scientific civilization (Ross, 1972, 335-337). Halls (1893/1924) studies of the adolescent were a strategy to reconcile faith and reason, Christian belief and "Enlightenment empiricism" in the making of an American society. The University of Chicago's community sociology and social psychology embodied cultural theses to reconfigure the modes of living in which immigrant and African American families participated in the city. Tied to the settlement house movements designed to improve the conditions of urban life, the cathedral of the pastoral community's authenticity in face-to-face relation was given an urban existence. Cooley, for example, deployed the concept of community as a regulatory principle to think about the stability and change of society. Cooley's notion of

community articulated a romantic liberalism given shape by "*a more general spirit of human nature*" that was imagined in the national Exceptionalism of the nation (quoted in Ross, 1991, 245).

The patterns of small community interactions were to eliminate the alienating qualities of modernity.

The primary group was an intellectual tool to link face-to-face relations and community (*Gemeinschaft*) with the conditions of modernity (*Gesellschaft*) (Popkewitz, 2004). Cooley (1909) saw the family as *a primary group* where a child learns of civilization through face-to-face interaction -an assumption that persists in various forms in contemporary social and psychological thought. The communication systems of the family would, for Cooley, establish Christian principles that stressed a moral imperative of life and self-sacrifice for the good of the group. He thought that proper socialization by the family and the neighborhood would enable the child to lose the greed, lust and pride of power that was innate to the infant, and thus enable the child to become fit for civilized society.

Community and the *primary group* were central notions through which domains of a moral community thought "*lost*" in urbanization and industrialization were to be re-inscribed in urban social life. The theories of communication and interaction in education as "*habits of thinking*" were to "*create attitudes favorable to effective thought...*" (Boyer, 1978, 73-79). Dewey and his Chicago colleague George Herbert Mead pursued the planning of the individual through processes of mediation and self-realization in the domains of community. Dewey's notions of "intelligent action", problem solving and community *urbanized* the notion of *Gemeinschaft* pastoral, rural face-to-face community into a mode of life in the industrial conditions of *Gesellschaft*. Mead's social interactionism re-visioned the imagined *Gemeinschaft* as an urban idea of community 'without doing violence to liberal democratic values' (Franklin, 1986, 8). Interactions and communication patterns were processes of mediation that linked individuality to collective belonging and a "home."

Theories of the child, family, and community embodied inscriptions to govern individual lives, and to carry out responsibilities that are not only for self development and growth but also for standardized public virtues. The invention of a range of technologies enabled the family to inscribe the norms of public duty while not destroying its private authority. Rose (1999) refers to these as technologies of *responsibilization*.

The government of freedom, here, may be analyzed in terms of the deployment of technologies of *responsibilization*. The home was to be transformed into a purified, cleansed, moralized, domestic space. It was to undertake the moral training of its children. It was to domesticate and familiarize the dangerous passions of adults, tearing them away from public vice, the gin palace and the gambling hall, imposing a duty of responsibility to each other, to home, and to children, and a wish to better their own condition. The family, from then on, has a key role in strategies for the government of freedom. It links public objectives for good health and good order of the social body with the desire of individuals for

personal health and well-being. A "private" ethic of good health and morality can thus be articulated on to a "public" ethic of social order and public hygiene, yet without destroying the autonomy of the family- indeed by promising to enhance it (p. 74).

4. THE HOPE OF INCLUSION AND FEAR OF THE EXCLUDED

Ironically, planning for a more inclusive society had its dark side in the fears of moral order and the dangers to the future of society. The hope in planning lied in the belief of science to plan and artificially produce a more inclusive society and individual. The locus of change was the urban conditions that inscribed a comparative method to establish a continuum of values that compared and divided the qualities of those who do not and cannot participate in the progress of society. The *comparative mode of thought recognized and differentiated the poor and racialized groups from the social "body."* The distinctions and comparison were expressed in The Social Question discussed earlier as linking the perceptions of moral disorder of the city to race, social class and ethnicity.

Particular populations were targeted as a special problem in the gesture toward the interests of the whole, signified as the hope of progress and freedom. The urbane Protestant reformers of the city studied the poor as what Jane Addams, a leader of the Settlement House Movement working with urban immigrants and African Americans, called "types and groups." Research was to identify the conditions that produced urban moral decay and work with government for effective reforms to eliminate the evils of the city and purify its citizens of moral transgressions. Surveys, ethnographies and interviews – tools of the new disciplines of sociology and psychology - mapped the conditions of the city and daily life of the immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, the poor, and Negroes (see, e.g., Lasch-Quinn, 1993). George Herbert Cooley (1909) notions of community, for example, focused on communication systems re-establishing the family on universal Christian principles that stressed a moral imperative to life and self-sacrifice for the good of the group. Cooley thought that proper socialization in the family and the neighborhood would enable the child to shed the greed, lust, and pride of power that were innate to the infant, and thus mold the child as fit for civilized society.

School subjects memorialized collective narratives through the twin hopes of progress and the fears of the dangerous. Music education by the turn of the 20th century, for example, was to mold the population into cosmopolitan, democratic citizens (the hope) and eliminate juvenile delinquency and other evils of society (the fears) through providing for productive use of leisure and self-cultivation (Gustafson, 2005). Listening habits were classified as age-appropriate behavior that inscribed a scale of value from an immature or primitive human development to a fully endowed capacity that corresponded to race and nationality. Singing embodied the child who expressed a home life of industriousness and patriotism set against racial images and narratives of Blacks and immigrants. Music was related to the health of the child with jazz described in the 1920s as causing disease in young girls and in society as a whole. A

growing body of psychoacoustics literature gauged the effects of musical sound and systematized means of observing music's internal "motor" nature in external behaviors such as dance movements, inattentiveness, musical taste, excitation, and foot-tapping. Carl Seashore, a psychology professor, claimed that a full 10% of the children tested for musical talent were unfit for musical appreciation. In teaching manuals, the child who did not learn the music was "distracted," a determinate category bound to moral and social distinctions about the child as a drifter, a name-caller, a gang-joiner, a juvenile offender, a joke-maker, a potential religious fanatic, having acute emotional stress and an intense interest in sex.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The production of schooling and its sciences were not produced through an evolutionary process. They were assembled through an uneven flow of events, ideas, institutions and narratives. Further and to play with a fashionable of globalization, schooling and its sciences were embodied in a field of practices that transverse and were differentiated across Europe and North America into the early 20th century. The urbanizations of pastoral images that gave intelligibility to the moral ordering of the child made sense not only in Tönnies' Germany but to others sites in the transatlantic transformations. Once saying this, however, it was not a universal process that I speak to but one that requires historical specificity to the field of nuances and differentiations.

This essay considered schooling as planning to change the conditions of people that changed people. The politics of schooling is, I believe, in this social planning the self and the comparative modes reason that differentiated individuality in a global set of changes to make modern pedagogy and notions of childhood possible. Embodied in schooling were cultural theses about modes of living. The cultural theses in pedagogy embodied values and norms about the hope of the future of the nation through making of the child; and with that hope was the recognition and production of differences. The hopes and fears were embodied in principles that differentiated the qualities of the cosmopolitanism of the child from the populations who does not "fit" those qualities and thus can never "of the average."

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