

Defining the "Child" in Educational Discourse:  
a history of the present\*.

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What is a child?

At the beginning of the seventeenth century Louis XIII is being raised  
like many aristocratic children of France at the time. In his daily  
life Louis is attended by his nanny, servants, parents, and doctor.  
His doctor, Heroard, keeps a meticulous diary on the life and learnings  
of the future King. By the age of three Louis is playing the violin  
and lute, dancing in ballets, singing satirical songs, learning tennis,  
gambling in games of chance, playing with dolls and mixing with  
soldiers. From the adults around him Louis is also learning how to  
relate to his body. In what might be labeled at the end of the  
twentieth century as anything but funny the young Louis entertains and  
is entertained by palace staff, family and distinguished visitors,

Louis XIII was not yet one year old: 'He laughed uproariously when his nanny waggled his cock with her fingers'. An amusing trick which the child soon copied. Calling a page, 'he shouted "Hey, there!" and pulled up his robe, showing him his cock'.

He was one year old: 'In high spirits,' notes Heroard, 'he made everybody kiss his cock.' This amused them all. Similarly everyone considered his behaviour towards two visitors, a certain de Bonieres and his daughter, highly amusing: 'He laughed at him, lifted up his robe and showed him his cock, but even more so to his daughter, for then, holding it and giving his little laugh, he shook the whole of his body up and down'. They thought this so funny that the child took care to repeat a gesture which had been such a success; in the presence of a

'little lady', 'he lifted up his coat, and showed her his cock with such fervour that he was quite beside himself. He lay on his back to show it to her' (Ariés, quoting Heroard, 1962, p.100).

In the first three years of Louis' life nobody showed any reluctance or saw any harm in jokingly touching his sexual parts, including both of his parents. By the age of seven (the end of childhood for aristocratic children) Louis knew where babies came from, had amused the court and his parents with his first erections and had explored the "private parts" of adult men and women in the palace (Ariés, 1962). Louis XIII's early life undermines any simplicity or obviousness in responding to the opening question, "What is a child?". What we view as a "normal childhood" is culturally and temporally specific. To view a person as a "child", as a distinct subject and therefore as an object of concern and inquiry, is a relatively recent event. While children have always been identifiable by their physical size and age, the meanings these differences have been given is not universal. Our present day "Western" beliefs in children as dependent, vulnerable, requiring segregation and delay from responsibility is a particularly modernist shift in views of the young (see further Archard, 1992). The focus of this paper is the production of "childhood" in the public school movement of the US. I explore the boundaries of the "child" and "childhood" through a "history of the present" (see Foucault, 1979). A history of the present "is a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges" through analyzing "the modification of rules of formation of statements which are accepted as scientifically true" (Foucault, 1980, p.112-117). As such, it points to the cultural and historical specificity of categories used to debate and practice schooling today.

I focus upon two aspects of "childhood's" production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first aspect is the belief in public schooling and "childhood" as a nexus of rescue. I use the slogan childhood-as-rescue adapted from the work of Peter Schnell (1977) to symbolize this nexus.

Second, I deconstruct the idea of childhood-as-rescue through an

analysis of the Child-study movement. I utilize Morrison's (1992) conception of encoding to explore the historical convergence of discourses of "race" and "nature" that set limits on the "child". I argue that the boundaries of the "child" became manifest in the differential provision of public schooling as an institution of "rescue".

I conclude by reflecting upon the prominence of the "child" in present educational discourse. I question the boundaries framing "childhood" as "natural", as a taken-for-granted site for "rescue" and "reform", and as a fail-safe place for the administration of "care".

Constructing Childhood-as-rescue and Public Schooling

Rescue of "the young" and "the race" or "nation" was a frequently iterated theme in discourses of the 1800's. The campaigns for public schooling which began most strongly in Massachusetts frequently spoke in terms of Christian salvation, moral protection and the moral, intellectual and social improvement of the young. The themes of rescue have become a central part of present day historical explanations concerning "childhood" especially.

Histories of the simultaneous emergence of "childhood" and common schooling fall primarily within the field of psychohistory (see further deMause, 1975; Finkelstein, 1989). A central premise of psychohistorical narratives is that without the idea of "childhood" there could be no idea of the school and with the idea of the school came confirmation of the idea of "childhood" (deMause, 1975; Finkelstein, 1975, 1976, 1989; Hawes & Hiner, 1991; Schnell, 1977).

Despite this commonality there are more frequently disputed themes. One assumption often debated is that contemporary ideas of "childhood"

and schooling are the results of an evolutionary process - a process which has moved humanity from barbarism and cruelty towards children to a softer, more Rousseauian, and "civilized" stance (1). For example, Lloyd deMause, probably the most well-known psychohistorian of childhood in the US, begins his *Evolution of Childhood* with

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten terrorized, and sexually abused. (1974, p.1).

There have been counterarguments to the evolutionary idealist view, however, which lean towards more sociological explanations for the emergence of schooling and "childhood" (Schnell, 1977). These accounts point to several origins which straddle descriptions of both broader societal changes and more "mental" or individualized responses to them (see Finkelstein, 1975, 1976, 1989; Kaestle, 1983, Katz, 1968; Sandin, 1988; Sommerville, 1982). In particular, the pernicious or repressive effects of a class-based system are emphasized. For example, the rise of industrialism, the emergence of the middle classes, urbanization, the acculturation of European immigrants and a concomitant anxiety on

the parts of parents and religious workers at having the young "on the streets" are often cited as major stimuli for schooling and "childhood" that revisionist theories of social control or social conflict have highlighted (see further Schnell, 1977).

Different psychohistorical accounts, then, have posited different relationships between the emergence of "childhood" and schooling in the US. Schnell (1977) argues that what has been missed in accounts that deal centrally with this conjuncture is an idea of "childhood" as an ideology (in Erik Erickson's sense) of rescue. Assimilated first by the middle classes in the US and Canada in relation to young boys, "childhood" was eventually intended to benefit all children even if it did not actually play out this way in practice (Schnell, 1977). As such, the fundamental meaning of "childhood" implied "rescue" and the simultaneous rise of common schooling in the 1800's represented "the most ordered of rescues" (Schnell, 1977, p.39).

"Childhood-as-rescue" is a slogan I have adapted from Schnell's discussion to symbolize this nexus between ideas. I use it as a concept which I draw upon and deconstruct. That is, in the following section I elucidate the major themes of "rescue" in psychohistorical narratives. I accept the slogan as a reflection of impulses in the 1800's. I then re-read discourses from the turn of the century which structured both the idea of childhood-as-rescue in the 1800's and psychohistorical accounts of it in the present. I begin, then, with a brief synopsis of psychohistorical views of "childhood" and three dimensions of "rescue" that were prevalent iterations in the nineteenth century.

**Economic, Moral and Intellectual Rescue in Psychohistorical Narratives**  
As I noted above, one point of agreement in psychohistorical narratives is that a "concept of childhood" was important to the creation of common schools. "Middle class activism" in the early 1800's is cited as the mobilizing force for "childhood" and schooling,

The central role of the middle classes in the promotion of common schooling is a commonplace in all the major interpretations of nineteenth century education. Whether their influence is viewed as beneficial or pernicious, all agree that middle class humanitarianism, Christian or secular, provided the campaigning that fired the cry for popular education. That the middle classes first assimilated childhood as part of their ideology gives us a key with which to unlock the meaning of those campaigns (1977, p.46).

Specific meanings were inscribed in these campaigns. The first of

these concerned calls for common schooling as a means towards socio-economic betterment. Some men of the middle classes in urban settings had access to older forms of training like apprenticeships. Other forms of training were needed, though, if mobility was desired. More forms of training would lead to more future choices and social improvement. The four criteria for defining childhood as identified by Ariés (1965), dependence, protection, segregation and delayed

responsibility, "coincided nicely with their [middle class] existing preference for extensive instruction" (Schnell, 1977, p.46). A period of training ("childhood") and a place of training ("school") made sense.

"Childhood", then, bolstered middle class campaigns for schooling by articulating education to further opportunity for economic betterment. Finkelstein (1975) suggests that such functionality did not simply rest with a desire for economic mobility of men alone, but that it also sprang from the desire of some middle class and working class women to be freed (rescued?) from several of their younger children for part of the day while working in the home, beyond the home or both.

Beyond economic concerns, but bound to them, lies a second way in which "childhood" was seen as functional to the middle classes. Specific kinds of morality undergirded "childhood". Ideas of "the family" as a safe haven for the young were integral to the form of morality desired (see Finkelstein, 1975, 1976; Hunter, 1983; Katz, 1968; Marsden, 1988; Sandin, 1988; Sommerville, 1982). "The family" as a nuclear entity, as a home or nest, and as a space where the segregation of the young and of the genders was lived out structured the meaning of "childhood" and the form of moral protection deemed appropriate for it by the middle classes.

In addition, moral protection was underpinned by ideas of salvation in relation to Protestant Christian beliefs. Morality was often judged by the degree to which a person moved towards or away from "Godliness". To be saved from the "old deluder, Satan", and to demonstrate one's Destiny as "rescued" meant to entertain a belief in Falling, in the possibility of Hell (2). "Rescue" required, then, children to be weak physically and spiritually. Their weakness relative to adults was portrayed as a temporary disability and inscribed as a childish incompetence with moral consequences. Schooling, and literacy in regards to the Bible in particular, would be a means of guarding against the possibility of "moral depravity".

Ascribing vulnerability to children was a new concept. It promoted children's segregation, protection and delay into the risk taking of the adult world on moral grounds. The social groups whose children were "still largely independent, not segregated, exposed to drink, crime, neglect, and hard labor, and made to assume responsibilities early" became identified as not providing their young with a "childhood" (Schnell, 1977, p.47).

The proliferation of new services solely for children in the 1800's is indicative of a shift in mentality regarding the moral vulnerability of society's youngest members. Orphanages, corrective institutions for "juvenile delinquents" and common schools were some of the material realities that evidenced the production of childhood, its institutionalization, and the systemic surveillance of its morality (Finkelstein, 1975; Schnell, 1977).

Related to notions of moral rescue were notions of intelligence (see Summerfield, 1984). "Childhood" was considered a time of inferior intellectual abilities relative to adulthood. To move beyond this required some form of intervention. The Boston School Committee, for

instance, in the 1860's defined the teachers' role as,

Taking children at random from a great city, undisciplined, uninstructed, often with inveterate forwardness and obstinacy, and with the inherited stupidity of centuries of ignorant ancestors,

forming them from animals into intellectual beings, and...from intellectual beings into spiritual beings, giving to many their first appreciation of what is wise, what is true, what is lovely and what is pure (quoted in Katz, 1968, p.120).

In summary, middle class conceptions of economic mobility, morality and intelligence were linked in the production of "childhood" as a stage of life. "Having" a childhood meant being able to be rescued in all three dimensions. Childhood-as-rescue was a call for "social and individual improvement" in a particular direction (Schnell, 1977, p.46). Common schools were a response in pursuing this direction. Together, having a childhood and attending public school were to protect and save the young.

Re-reading Childhood-as-rescue: encoding "race" and governing "nature". Psychohistorical narratives assume a certain "logic" about schooling's spread as a form of conscious class-based activism. The relationship between subjects and action is psychological and causal. The economic is taken as a pivotal structure which spawns notions of morality and intelligence that further determine action and outcome. A teleological view of change results.

Re-reading childhood-as-rescue requires a less global and singular perspective on history and causation. Histories constructed today (including this one) build upon concepts and binaries of the past. Childhood-as-rescue embodies concepts and binaries which have been transported to the present through psychohistorical narratives. Therefore, my deconstruction of it as an historically specific artifact also acts to deconstruct present histories which report it.

My re-reading of childhood-as-rescue takes place through the Child-study movement. First, I briefly outline the central ideas of Child-study theory. Second, I explore the ways in which oppositions of "race" and ideas of "nature" circulated through the reasoning (3). It is here that I draw upon Morrison's deconstruction of binaries of "race" to nuance "childhood" as a concept incorporating in its production a system of inclusions and exclusions based upon blackness/whiteness. I question who and what was meant by the "child" and what "childhood" was meant to "rescue" the young from. Third, I explore the construction of the "child" as a complex of multiple binaries that included but went beyond blackness/whiteness. And lastly, I consider some implications of a history of the present of the "child" in educational activities today.

Child-study, "Race" and "Nature": defining "childhood"

Central Theories of Child-study.

The Child-study movement was the first curriculum reform movement in US public schools, burgeoning in the 1890's and early 1900's (Kliebard,

1986). It is a convenient site for deconstructing "childhood" and its boundaries because it so explicitly spoke of both the "nature" of "children" and the "nature" of "races" as though they were irrefutable scientific truths in a decade where the persecution of African Americans was escalating to new peaks.

The key idea of the movement was that children needed to be studied closely so that a curriculum could be constructed in relation to their "nature" (Hall, 1888). Which traits were studied closely and what inferences were to be drawn were guided by a theory called culture-epoch theory. It is through culture-epoch theory that discourses of "race" and of "nature" met to define the "child". Culture-epoch theory was a response to the new Darwinistic theories of biological evolution as applied to the social realm ("Social Darwinism"). It posited that children develop in ways that parallel the evolution of "the" "human race". That is, over the centuries, a higher form of humans were thought to have evolved from "savagery" to "civilization" based upon the biological imperatives of genetics and "natural selection". The "child", in its growth toward adulthood developed in stages marked by this history of evolution.

In *Genetic Philosophy of Education: An Epitome of the Published Educational Writings of President G. Stanley Hall of Clark University*, this parallelism known as the "law of recapitulation" is explained,

The most general formulation of all the facts of development that we yet possess is contained in the law of recapitulation. This law declares that the individual, in his (sic) development, passes through stages similar to those through which the race has passed, and in the same order; that the human individual of the higher races, for example, in the brief period from the earliest moment of life to maturity, passes through or represents all the stages of life, through which the race has passed from that of a single-celled animal to that of present adult civilised man (Partridge, 1912, p.27-28; original emphasis).

A correspondence between "childhood" and "savagery" thus marks the beginning of the development of the young. For instance,

That the passing traits of the child resemble the characteristics of the savage in many particulars cannot be denied. In regard to fickleness and lack of power of long-sustained effort, optimism, and freedom from care and work, close relation to nature, the tendency to personify natural objects, and to confuse the animate and inanimate, in readiness to imitate, and to act upon suggestion, the child and primitive man are much alike. Both child and savage confuse the real and ideal, the waking life and the dream life. They are alike in the manner in which they see resemblances, in their use of analogy, in the way in which they construct language forms. The sayings of the child much resemble the folk-lore of primitive peoples (Partridge, 1912, p.76-77).

Culture-epoch theory guided what teachers were to observe in children. Physical traits like complexion, head circumference and limb length, moral traits like obedience or disobedience and intellectual traits like how many objects could be recognized from the environment were recorded. Thus "the passing traits of the child" were expected to manifest themselves in ways that demonstrated a growth through "savagery" and teachers were encouraged to monitor this so that curricula could be constructed in relation to the child's "nature".

Re-reading Rescue through "Race" and "Nature"

The Limits of the "Child"

Culture-epoch theory embodies in its reasoning a particular narrative about "races". It is a narrative dependent upon oppositions - oppositions which Morrison (1992) suggests historically structure the meaning of many concepts in the US. Morrison argues that it is the opposition of blackness/whiteness which drives the understanding of literary texts. Understanding "freedom" and "choice", for example, is historically dependent upon the pervasiveness of slavery. It was the slavery of Africans and "the one step removed" work of Africans after slavery's uneven and drawn out abolition that was crucial to understanding what freedom meant and its embodiment in the Constitution (Du Bois, 1918). Thus, "freedom" has encoded a dependence of "whiteness" upon constructions of "blackness".

This has significance for how childhood-as-rescue can be re-read.

Firstly, "childhood" as a "cultural-epoch" embodied oppositions. The reasoning in culture-epoch theory constructed a child/adult binary and a savage/civilized binary simultaneously as "natural". More importantly, though, this description of evolution and "child development" along axes of opposition was not a value-free narrative about "nature".

Sylvia Wynter (1995) argues for instance that what had been learnt in the nineteenth century as genetic facts about the survival of particular species had mapped onto them bourgeois and culture-specific discourses that gave higher value to the evolution of "whiteness" in

the human realm. The development of "eugenics" in the 1890's, a term first coined by Francis Galton, coincided with the rapid rise of Child-study's popularity. Eugenics gave a moral and intellectual commentary to the "nature" of "races". The moral, the intellectual and "nature" became grounded in the deployment of scientific techniques which were used to create "data" about "race" (Gould, 1981).

There were at the turn of the century, for instance, a variety of tools through which "data" was collected and used to justify social hierarchies between people in terms of "nature". In "Western" contexts the construction of "races" was particularly dependent upon a range of pseudo-scientific theories heavily reliant on physical classification. The practice of craniology, phrenology and physiognomy posited that the measurement of physical attributes like head size, brain weight, jaw angle, and limb length inferred human character and potential.



Frequently, the techniques of sciences like anthropology were interwoven with justifications drawn from Biblical or literary references (Marsden, 1990). By the turn of the century these techniques of external measurements had moved "inside" the head and gained popularity in reference to intelligence testing especially (Gould, 1981; Wynter, 1995). "Backwardness" had become a category of schooling (see Franklin, 1994).

The practice of scientific techniques as "evidence gathering" acted to normalize oppositions of "race". The techniques employed assumed differential values in what was measured. Measurements of Africans were positioned as evidence of "savagery", low morality and limited intelligence. Measurements of fair-skinned northern Europeans were positioned oppositionally as signs of civility, high morality and advanced intelligence. The "data" gave "race" what appeared within the discursive context to be objective, material and "natural" qualities. Child-study saw as its central task, then, the measurement and observation of qualities of "race" in children. Because the "nature" of the "child" could not be divorced from the "nature" of its "race" the techniques used to produce "truths" about "race" were transplanted to produce "truths" about the "child". Both "childhood" and "race" were thus given a newly reinforced salience in a biologically determined form.

In the 1890's the salience given "race" permeated actions both within and beyond education. The violence directed at African Americans took on a new intensity. The large rise in lynching of African American men, the reaching of new peaks of abuse of African American women and girls, the disenfranchisement of African American men again after gaining the vote (theoretically) through the abolition of slavery, and, the lack of provision of public schools for African American children are markers of the depth to which the subjectivities of "whiteness" in particular were based upon a racialized hierarchy of "worth" (4).

The import of this hierarchy in educational discourse was that not all children could equally occupy the site of the "child". While all children were posited with a "nature" the subject who could occupy the site of the "child" (and especially the child) could not have been African American. Africanism, positioned as the embodiment of both "blackness" and "savagery", also occupied the base of the evolutionary pyramid in culture-epoch theory. "Blackness" was thus constructed as synonymous with "savagery" and with "childhood" at all ages. Being a "child" and having a "childhood" encoded "whiteness" as the epitome of "civility" and "rescuability" while "blackness" became the marker of alterity which defined its boundaries.

The limits of the "child" and of having a "childhood" come into view. One could only "have" a "childhood" if one was eventually able to occupy "adulthood". One could not occupy "adulthood" if one was thought to have inherited "savagery". "Nature" was thought to have endowed different "races" and the young with particular limits. In

Child-study, "blackness" was the "space of otherness" in giving meaning

to these limits. To move beyond "childhood" meant in part to move beyond "blackness".

#### The Limits of Rescue

The second point to note about culture-epoch theory is that this intersection of "race" and "nature" impacted the rescue imaginable for children. For "the black child", schooling was thought to have no effect because "savagery" was aligned with permanent "childhood" and irrationality. Hence public schools like those attended by "white children" were not recommended for African Americans. As G. Stanley Hall, the father of Child-study explained,

...there are many who ought not be educated, and who would be better in mind, body and morals if they knew no school. What shall it profit a child to gain the world of knowledge and lose his (sic) own health? Cramming and over-schooling have impaired many a feeble mind, for which, as the proverb says, nothing is so dangerous as ideas too large for it...Thus, while I would abate no whit from the praise of learning and education for all who are fit for them, I would bring discrimination down to the very basis of our educational pyramid (Hall, 1901, p.25).

The "rescue" of the "child" had become a very shadowed moment. Culture-epoch theory encoded not only a differential rescue of children but also an idea of saving "whiteness" from "blackness". "Blackness", positioned as the ancestor from which others grew up out of or playfully revisited, was integral to the "growth" or "evolution" of "whiteness". To interfere in the growth of "a white child" would be to disturb its trajectory towards a destiny of "superiority" (eg. "the higher race"). "Good teaching", then, was the building of a curriculum that facilitated the growth of "whiteness" beyond its first "savage" stages (ie. "childhood"). The rescue of "whiteness" from "blackness" was pivotal in what it meant to learn, to care, and to respect "nature". Going against what was believed to be "educational", "caring" and "natural" meant being a "bad teacher" (5).

"Blackness", then, constituted a definitional presence through which systems of inclusion/exclusion were inscribed in the "child". Encoded in the movement as "scientific pedagogy" or understanding the "nature of children" and inflected in the meaning of "childhood" itself, "blackness" became the property through which "whiteness" again secured itself.

#### Complexities in Child-study Discourse

To understand how discourses at the time enabled a positioning of "blackness" as the means to "whiteness" and projected a local rescue as though it were a rescue of all the young the very fine-tuned gradations between populational groups that in specific, interrelated and complex ways went beyond and yet included black/white binaries needs to be considered. Here I focus on some of the complexities that Child-study traversed. I look firstly at some general nuances surrounding conceptions of savagery/civility in Child-study. Secondly, I examine a specific relationship between multiple binaries which created a special

child/normal child dichotomy shadowed by "race".

### Savagery/Civility

The first example of complexity relates to what initially appears as a simple correlation between savagery/civility and blackness/whiteness. While "savagery" and "civility" were juxtaposed markers of identity, there is at times an ambiguity surrounding whether this was imposed strictly as a black/white positioning respectively. "Blackness" and "whiteness" were undeniably positioned as oppositional in many ways and did contribute to the boundaries of savagery/civility. However, the savagery/civility binary was not only conjoined to polar conceptions of

color. "Savagery" could be occupied by groups constructed as "Indian" or "Oriental" or "Immigrant" and "civilized" required a very particular alignment of qualities that included not just "whiteness" but Protestant Christianity, English speaking, law abiding, maleness, sedentariness, adulthood, heterosexuality, and economic independence. For example,

The mixed and roving character of our people makes good schooling hard.

New waves of humanity are constantly breaking on our shores. There are something like a million newcomers each year. But for this supply what would become of our increase of population, our industries, etc.? Once immigrants were Celtic, Teutonic, and from the north of Europe; now they are from the south and east, Italians, Armenians, Russians, Finns, and even Orientals (sic), despite the checks put upon the yellow peril. More and more of these fresh arrivals speak a tongue remote from our own, and the most the school can do is to teach them a little English and induct them into our ways of living and thinking. All must be smelted in one crucible...Again, having immigrated here, they continue to wander, and the traditions of their migratory, nomad life are very strong in all classes of our population...Truancy and other laws are easily evaded where humanity swirls, and education on the fly is sure to be superficial with these peek-a-boo pupils (Hall, 1911, pp. 596-597).

"Savagery" could then, be permanent in several alignments that fell outside of "blackness". To grow away from it required very specific configurations of "whiteness" that included more than just "whiteness" per se. Hence, the Ideal School as Based on Child-Study included a very narrow range of what the "ideal child" was (see Hall, 1901). Being ideal meant being "the right race" in addition to an array of other markers of identity that signified one as "rescuable".

### Special Child/Normal Child

In the Ideal School pedagogical strategies were differentiated for girls and boys and different classes of children. The pedagogies embodied a reasoning which naturalized categories of children and their potentials. The Ideal School, though, did not educate boys or girls of any class who were deemed "special" and hence without "potential" at

all.

Rather, physically and mentally impaired children were discussed as "Educational Problems" (see Hall, 1911), In a chapter on "The Special Child", for instance, the overlapping assumptions of its "race" are implied,

If the rate of increase of the best children diminishes and that of the worst increases, the destiny of our land is sealed and our people are doomed to inevitable decay and ultimate extinction. These three big D's we deal with, the defectives, delinquents, and dependents, the great Biologos or spirit of life would designate or describe by another adjective big D not fit to print or speak, for they are a fearful drag upon our civilization...From the standpoint of eugenic evolution alone considered, these classes are mostly fit only for extermination in the interests of the progress of the race. On the principle of selection and the survival of the best, they should be treated as Burbank treats the huge pile of plants he has cultivated and bred from what would not yield the best products and so burns. These are the tailings of the mine, the wastage and by-product of civilization (1911, p.77).

It is here that categories of "race" and categories of physical and mental health subliminally intersect. "Nature" (God, "the great Biologos") has created "defectives, delinquents and dependents" and while "the progress of the race" is not positioned as a progress evidenced by "blackness" the "three big D's" could still be occupied by various children of "whiteness" and by either gender. The impulse

which the reasoning embodies, though, is stacked toward filling the D's with population groups that are already constructed as a "drag upon civilization" through systems of knowledge imposed elsewhere. Thus, the interaction of discourses creates a "normalizing effect" where "blackness" and "whiteness" both inform and are informed by other boundaries. In rubbing up against other binaries like special child/normal child, "blackness" becomes aligned with the "special child" and "whiteness" with the "normal child". Despite the multiple possibilities of who "the special child" could be in practice ie. any child with physical or mental "disabilities" what is encoded is the "naturalness" of "blackness" as "physically and mentally defective". "The special child" is thus positioned as a "drag upon civilization" and "blackness" as the body which straddles both. The intersection of value-laden binaries thus sets limits on who the "normal child" could be.

#### Summary

The Child-study movement came to prominence in a social context that seemed to be changing rapidly. Modernity had brought to the North American continent industrialization, urbanization, massive immigration, migration within, a meeting of religions, languages, dispositions, values, labor knowledge and styles, family formations and foods. By creating categories of classification that helped define the form that inclusions and exclusions would take in educational realms

Child-study theory cast certainty into what appeared to be disarray. Limits on the egalitarian principles of liberal modernity were thus set through notions of caring for and centering the "child".

The multiple binaries that set limits on the "child" did not generate a static conception of "childhood" and its rescue however. The production of knowledge about "children" and about "races" and the "normalizing processes" this incorporated was a never-quite-complete task in a period of "crisis" (see further Baker, in press; Wagner, 1994). Hence, by 1917, the provision of public schooling for African American children was a discernible impulse in state discourse (see further Bureau of Education, 1917).

Child-study, then, like any movement, was not a simple matter of liberation versus constraint, production versus repression, or desire versus fear. Rather, the multiple binaries which set limits on the "child" embodied a range of liberatory and repressive moments that were played out through the uneven provision of schooling and the differential rescue of children. Thus, while inspiring a protective and romantic stance towards the "child" it simultaneously decentered the protection of many "children" through its "spaces of otherness".

NON-CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: "CHILDHOOD" IN EDUCATIONAL WORK IN THE PRESENT

How might this view of the boundaries of the "child" inform a view of the "childhood" in the present? I suggest three perspectives on the "child" and "childhood" related to "nature", to educational "reform", and to the administration of "care" as "child-centeredness".

Firstly, the "naturalness" of "childhood" may be better viewed as a cultural phenomenon. The "child" seems to be a product of categories, concepts and hierarchies through which we perceive things as being "natural". In the present this means our categorizations of child development, growth and abilities in relation to schooling (signified by labels like "ready to learn", "at risk", "attention deficit disorder", "emotionally disturbed" etc) may owe less to "nature" and more to how we interpret the young in relation to culturally specific ideals. The "ideal child" who has an "idyllic childhood" encodes certain habits, behaviors, dispositions and physical appearances as "normal", aligning categories of "race", "gender", "class" and "ability" in a multitude of inclusionary and exclusionary ways. In the US, the "categories of deficit" are disproportionately filled with children further labeled as "minority" and "poor". Being "not quite the ideal child" for the schooling system to "deal with" seems a space

of otherness reserved for children already othered through a variety of discourses. It is important to consider, then, how the good intentions of identifying children "having difficulties" inadvertently perpetuates forms of social organization that see failure not simply as necessary but as "natural", as a sign of limitations that centers blame within "the child of difference" (or their "parent/s" or "communities").

This leads to questions for which there are no single shot, recipe answers. What forms of social organization, what ways of looking at the world would allow no space for springboarding the ideal "child" off

the back of "blackness" especially? What cultural contexts would enable a view that it is "normal" to have a wide range of humans rather than a narrow range of "normal humans"?

Secondly, it seems that efforts to reform the "child" or reform the "teacher" need to look beyond both. The "child", whether it be in a "child-centered" classroom or not already has centered within it discourses of otherness. The problem, then, may be not so much what the "teacher" does to or with the "child" in constructing a curriculum but with the categories and alignments that each contains in the first place. This is because the "child" and the "teacher" embody norms that privilege certain ways of being. The norms are not free-floating "choices" that can be brought into the classroom through a series of rational decisions. They are already there, embodied in the meanings of what it is to be a "child" and hence a "teacher" of children. Thus, questions directed at the level of "So what does this mean for classroom practice?" miss the point. The "teacher" and the "child" cannot be extracted from a system of relations that set up the fields upon which we play, are given meaning, and upon which we all come to know and judge and each other through the languages we learn. How power circulates through asymmetrical and overlapping concepts in discourses surrounding "childhood" and its rescue, then, produces the "personal interactions" that drive classroom life. The schooled "child" and the educated "teacher" thus lie both within and beyond the parameters of educational institutions.

As such, it is important to consider what subjectivities the becoming of a "child" and the becoming of a "teacher" make available. In current efforts to "get the right attitudes into teachers" in pre-service courses and to get rid of students with "attitudes" in some schools the scaffolding of the respective locations often remains submerged. Children are required to be dependent and teachers to manage this. The continuing efforts to reform both teachers' and children's subjectivities often do not attend to the ways in which identities are so deeply staked in "normalizing processes" - processes that give value to some ways of being through marginalizing others. The problems encountered through efforts at educational reform seem to go beyond our attempts to fiddle with this or that technique. While practical strategies are important for getting things done and are a part of every task undertaken the substantive changes that many reform efforts like the creation of professional development schools, culturally relevant pedagogies or feminist pedagogies are after remain elusive on a large scale. This is not through a lack of effort or a misdirection of energies. Subjectivities seem to bear the weight of history even when that history is not known to individual subjects. In re-forming teachers' and children's attitudes then, it seems cogent to examine how our discursive categories embody norms that set the stage for inequities. This needs to be considered as much a part of the problem as the ways in which inequities and "attitudes" become manifest.

Lastly, and related to the above, I wish to re-consider an assumed relationship between "care" and "child-centeredness". Currently, there

are many educational reform efforts dependent upon a notion of "good" teaching as "child-centered" teaching. Strategies which owe some homage to whole language, multicultural education, the analysis of

learning styles, feminist pedagogies and critical pedagogies for instance rely implicitly or explicitly upon a well-studied knowledge of one's students as central to the strategies' success. Further, child-centeredness is so embedded as a sign of sensitivity, care and "civility" that it is now difficult to imagine a teacher who is described as having a "democratic classroom" as not being a child-centered teacher. While acts of great love, self-sacrifice, empathy and anger at injustice have generated these movements it is important to question what the centering of the "child" decenters. At the turn of the nineteenth century it seems that the acts of rescue in constructing and centering the "child" contained moments of slippage. The normalization of "childhood" produced "others" whose protection was not guaranteed.

Questions arise in the present then as to which child is being centered in demonstrations that are thought to mark "civility", "progress" or "justice". Are there assumptions about economic, moral and intellectual characteristics which are posited in the subject, as though they are "natural" features? Similarly, what value-laden construction of groups, what alignment of characteristics, may be protected by projects of rescue that center the "child"? Which subjects can occupy the space of rescuer and rescued? And what are the boundaries of "care" that our new forms of rescue imply?

These are questions which a history of the present of the "child" bring to mind at the same time that we can note the failure of current protective measures - the rising number of cases of child abuse, homeless children, and school "dropouts" - the "not quite so ideal" realities of life that exist concomitantly with a belief in ourselves as "civilized". One has to wonder, despite the administration of "care" and the good intentions of educational reform, whether the place of "childhood" in our memories is as "natural", protective or innocent as Rousseau would have us believe.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Debate in childhood history exists over whether Ariés' social history of childhood (translated as *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*) is accurate in asserting that prior to the seventeenth century French cultures had no conception of childhood. The debate which crosses scholarship primarily in France, England and the US generally divides between those who agree with Ariés' contention based upon evidence of paintings, iconography, literature, games, pastimes, schooling and so forth (see Stone 1977; deMause, 1974) and those who accept that previous European societies did. have a conception of childhood (see Pollock, 1987, 1983; Hanawalt, 1993).

Archard (1993) argues that the debate has occurred primarily because of confusion over distinctions between "concept", "conceptions" and "sentiments" of childhood. While Ariés' book was translated into English as a discussion of the concept of childhood, Archard argues that his original text speaks of a sentiment of childhood. He concludes that while previous societies have had a concept of childhood that its particular modern form (as in related to the historical shift called "modernity") did become apparent around the seventeenth century. Thus, the sentiment, or a particularly modern conception of childhood seems to emerge at the same time that changes in the effects and technologies of power which Foucault identifies in relation to systems of sexuality and the family, prisons, sanity and so forth emerged in Europe.

2. "The old deluder, Satan" refers to what is called the "old deluder law" of 1647, the first general school law recorded (in what was to become US history) which concerned the compulsory provision of (but not attendance at) common schools in New England. The reason given for the

need for a school reads,

It being one chief object of that old deluder, Satan. to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded by false glosses of saint-seeming deceivers, that learning may not be buried in the grave of our fathers in the Church and Commonwealth... (quoted in Williams, 1937, pp. 80-81)

3. My focus is narrowed here primarily to the construction of blackness and whiteness as essentialized poles in educational discourse at the time. This certainly does not represent the vast array of configurations of ethnicities that were being "catalogued" in social science literature and popular parlance at the turn of the century. References to "Indians", "Orientals", "Southern and Eastern Europeans", "Jewish immigrants", "The Irish", "native whites" and "foreign whites" proliferated in this period of mass immigration to the continent, mass migration within and mass deportation to elsewhere. Conceptions of blackness and whiteness in educational literature today occupy such a strong grasp upon identity politics, educational and social explanations, and revisions of explanations that it seems pertinent to pursue the reasoning by which such constructions became accepted as a plausible way of explaining behavior and of organizing and practicing education in the first place.

What I am also not addressing at this point are the complexities surrounding different configurations of gender as they related to the construction of children and adolescents of different races and ethnicities. By the 1890's, the majority of elementary school teachers in all US states were female. Arguments over the creation and expansion of schooling for older children ("adolescents" or "youths")



frequently invoked a common sensical assumption at the time that men were more appropriate teachers of boys at these ages. This is certainly the view espoused by Hall in conjunction with educating some girls for robust procreation as the apex and reflection of their evolutionary status (Hall, 1901, 1902, 1911).

4. These constructions generated the formation of many oppositional interest groups in education who aimed to overcome or maintain the disparities associated with these positionings. This chapter is not focused upon the arguments that different groups employed in these debates but rather upon the discursive context of oppositional categories that made such debates plausible. For examples of the ways in which African American activists in education argued against the disparities in its provision and quality during and after the first crisis of modernity by utilizing what Bell (1980) refers to as the "interest convergence principle" see Du Bois (1918, 1973) and Woodson (1933). This gives some sense of the range of positions articulated within interest groups forming around racial categories in educational discourse.

5. "Teacher" in Child-study invariably meant "white teacher". The permeation of discourses of "nature" and "race" at the time not only positioned the way in which "teachers" could be perceived but also the way in which they could act or respond to such perceptions. The Handbook of the Wisconsin Child Study Society (1898), co-authored by teachers and which was sent to every teacher in the state is an example of how many teachers attempted to do their jobs well in relation to the ideas of the time. For example, the Handbook urges teachers to,

a) Ascertain the child's physical characteristics by individual observation, consultation with parents, and tests, and,

b) The mental and moral characteristics are to be ascertained by observation, consultation and language exercises.

Limb length, jaw angle and moral "virtues and perversions" could then be recorded on the worksheets provided and demonstrations of care could follow based upon the inferences made. The many teachers who joined the Child-study movement did not see categories of "race" as "bad" but rather as a common sensical way of explaining behavior and guiding work. It was normalized in a way which was seen to be positive and helpful for the individual child and for society at large. For a fuller account of how educational reform movements in the US, including Child-study, impacted teacher education see Herbst (1989).

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