Children and Childhood

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Introduction

If one looks at a photograph of the inside of a classroom in say, late nineteenth-century London, and compares it with a similar photograph depicting a Canadian residential school, we might easily be fooled into thinking that the educational experience of children, across national, colonial and racial divides, had much in common. But any apparent similarities belie radical differences in the experience of childhood in educational settings, according to the expression of colonialist power, ideologies of race, class and gender that reflected or otherwise more tightly defined concepts of childhood in the long nineteenth century. Guiding questions here concern how children derived their childhood, if they did at all. Were they bestowed it by those in authority? Were children complicit in their education or were they forced to participate in it? Was their education viewed as a means to achieve full adult participation in citizenry or as a means of control? To address such questions is to reveal the historical interplay among concepts of childhood, different visions of education, and the experiences of children.

The main focus of this chapter is on the link between a nineteenth-century "discovery" of childhood, requiring a certain set of rights and roles for children, and the development and spread of organized and legislated formal education institutions. This puts the onus on schools as "important sites of contact and exchange between different groups of people, and their ideologies" (Swartz 2019: 2). In addition to classrooms in formal schooling situations, in residential settings, and in religious settings, the consideration of less formal environments like playgrounds and exchanges among peers is crucial to form a more complete understanding of the concept of childhood and its intersections with race, gender, class, age and geographic location. It should be noted here that childhood was not really "discovered" in the nineteenth century, but rather a certain set of meanings, prescriptions and proscriptions – a certain concept of childhood -

became entrenched in this period. Nor, of course, was this the only concept of childhood in the nineteenth century: competing and sometimes clashing older and indigenous views of childhood were certainly present. The "modern" concept of childhood, still prevalent in many contemporary societies and enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), is an ideal that reserves for children a period protected from adult concerns, and allows them to develop through education and play. While the emergence of this concept might be thought to have unburdened children and to have provided scope for more agency, many real harms were done to children under its guise and not least through educational policies and practices, implemented in the interests of spreading an idea and ideal of childhood, that could serve broader political interests.

Changing definitions of childhood became associated with concepts of modernity and civilization. And conversely, as Bengt Sandin pointed out, "schooling in the West emerged as one of the main influences on the definition of childhood and on the lives of children and their families." (2014: 91) In other places in the world, education increasingly became one of the most important markers of childhood, whether children were "entitled" to it or not.
James Marten explained, "access to education became one of the hallmarks of a "modern" childhood;" though he adds that "education is also one of the most variable elements of the development of modern sensibilities about children." (2018: 71)
It is precisely this nexus that forms the core of this chapter. The survey offered here cannot hope for complete coverage or do justice to global differences and distinctions over time and place in a comprehensive manner. Instead, the aim is to offer an overarching appraisal of the ways in which apparently progressive or "modern" conceptualizations of childhood have been deployed to different ends according to differing political and ideological contexts, and the ways in which children's experiences have been affected by the educational settings in which they were caught, more or less. The chapter begins, therefore, with a brief account of the conceptual history of "childhood' in this period, and the perceived potential for the education of children accordingly. Thereafter, it surveys the metropolitan education of children, with a focus on the ways in which class and gender influenced notions of what children were and how they should be taught. These lines of distinction receive much greater emphasis in imperial settings, an analysis of which follows, where, in complicated and contradictory ways, racial ideology trumped the concept of

"childhood" as being intrinsic to children and young people. This section is followed by a closer case study of Canadian residential schools, exemplifying the vicissitudes of a concept of childhood that was made to serve a corrupt notion of civilization.

Conceptual History

Childhood has a definite history: its meanings, applications, and the experiences associated with it change over time. This history is central to understanding the history of education in the nineteenth century. The terms children and childhood cannot be understood neutrally. Who was included and excluded, and what made up their definitions, are an integral part of the political, social and cultural history of education and of young people. Who was considered a child and why? This is especially important because in the nineteenth century, at an ever-increasing pace, the only acceptable place for "children" was in school. Laws increasingly enshrined certain chronological age ranges as protected in formal schooling and from adult responsibilities. Yet many young people in the same age range were left out. Why was this? The multifaceted explanation comes from looking at fundamental categories of the history of childhood: class, race, ethnicity, gender and location.

Over several decades now, historians have problematized the seemingly neat categories of the child and of childhood. Although his periodization of the 'discovery' of childhood is now viewed as problematic, Philippe Ariès' *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (1960; Eng. *Centuries of Childhood,* 1962) is often still acknowledged as the seminal text in this field. Persuasive reasons why historians should stop relying on Ariès have been supplied by, among others, Colin Heywood. (2010) Significant shifts have taken place in what it means to be a child, an adolescent, and a young adult. Changes have come about through government legislation, education, private initiatives, scientific expertise, and mass media, and have significantly affected the meaning of childhood at the level of society as a whole. Educators (as well as reformers more generally) looked to childhood as an important stage in the lifecycle, informed by Enlightenment ideas, and especially by John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and their followers, who saw children as in need of nurture and development. According to Elizabeth Foyster and James Marten, parents in this period began to strive to "instill love and mold the

child's mind" (3). Moreover, these Enlightenment ideas led to increased attention to education and to child development with an emphasis on providing settings that would allow children's mental processes to flourish. In many places during the long nineteenth century, a particular concept of childhood was distilled down from its Enlightenment origins and, as it became culturally entrenched and dominant, it was politically or legislatively codified. Increasing emphasis on childhood as a time of protection and education led to the creation of national programs of schooling with increased funding. These formal educational initiatives were complemented by a rise in efforts informally to educate the young. Of course, this trend did not occur universally at the same rate or level of effectiveness in all places. Nor were all children deemed worthy of having a childhood, with the rights and privileges that that entailed. As Satadru Sen has stated, for example, "British experts in India […] generally saw native children as distorted mirror images of the children they imagined at 'home'." (2005: 3). Understandings of children as innocent and malleable became increasingly dominant in the nineteenth century, yet not all children were perceived to have these qualities equally. The judgment of colonial policy makers and the effect of colonial practices in general created a hierarchy of childhood, embedded within complex schemes of class, race, gender, sexuality, geography that determined and naturalized lines of inclusion and exclusion, within discourses of docility, plasticity and potential. Furthermore, as Rebecca Swartz points out in her new book on education, empire and race in the nineteenth-century British Settler Colonies of the Caribbean, Australia and South Africa, in its structure, its content and its increasingly racist logic, "Education was pivotal to the construction of racial difference in the colonies of settlement," impacting indigenous children and their families even when it was not directly available to them. (2019: 1) In many parts of the colonized world, there was a perceived need for more governmental intervention in education in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with debates as to whether the aims were mainly humanitarian or whether children were to be tools in the mechanisms of the colonial settler project. Either way, the conceptual delimitation of "childhood" had the effect of instrumentalizing children for ideological ends. This is not, however, to say that children were mere pawns. Children (and their families) used education as a means to their own ends where they could.

The modern concept of childhood, still largely familiar today, is clear: Childhood is a distinct time in the lifecycle set aside for developing, learning and playing, free from paid work,

responsibility and burden. A modern childhood is one which is protected, healthy and well provided for, both physically and emotionally. This, of course, is an ideal definition and did not represent the lives of many children in the nineteenth century (or later). Moreover, the ideal was rhetorically plastic, serving a variety of ends in different places. It was used as a way to enact legislation, to invest financially in children and to muster up support for non-governmental organizations. It was used by missionaries to fundraise and to convert youngsters. It was used to grant children more say in their own lives and educations, but also to limit, to coerce and to cajole. The concept of childhood could be deployed without regard for the implications for real children, and, as such, fostered mixed results in its influence on educational policies and practices. The extent to which actual children were captured by a working concept of "childhood" or, conversely, the extent to which their lived experience fell outside of it, should be a guiding question for historians of childhood and youth, and of education. As detailed below, the first education systems in the German states demonstrate the prevalence of this concept as does educational policy and practice in nineteenth-century Britain and its settler colonies.

Developing and Spreading Concepts of Childhood

In Western Europe and North America, narrowing definitions of childhood were often associated with increasing efforts to shape young people in the "best" way. Children's social and cultural upbringing, which had previously taken place primarily within families, communities and religious institutions, and, for lower-class children, also in workplaces, was increasingly assumed by educational authorities and states, and, conversely, by peer groups. In the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth century, a male elite was the main focus of education for children. As the nineteenth century progressed, gender became less of a factor in determining which children deserved a childhood. Girls, however, were mainly not entitled to the same education as boys, both in duration and in subject matter. The target of basic literacy for children, however, began to permeate class and gender boundaries, especially in areas where Christian belief required children to cultivate a personal relationship with God by reading the bible and religious tracts. Learning to read gradually became more systematic and there was a significant rise in literacy rates in the late nineteenth century in many parts of the world. [Eitler, Olsen, Jensen 2014: 4-5.]

The push for universal literacy coincided with a substantial increase in mass education, often conducted first by religious or other non-governmental institutions. Yet education remained a piecemeal affair in most of the world. Prussia established a series of educational reforms in the late eighteenth century, which were built upon in the early nineteenth century and subsequently became influential in other educational systems. In Britain at the start of the century, patchwork efforts by Sunday School promoters to create and expand day schools and the creation in 1811 of the (Church of England) National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor contributed to the provision of schooling opportunities in industrial towns. The 1833 Factory Act restricted children's employment in factories while the Children Act of 1908 (also named the "Children's Charter") extended state responsibility to cover all children in England and Wales, ended child imprisonment, restricted corporal punishment, instituted the first national system of juvenile courts and supported temperance efforts. (Olsen 2014: 140)

Education, mostly compulsory and free by the end of the nineteenth century in many places in the world, increasingly came under the purview of the state. The establishment of compulsory, universal education is an important result of the desire to shelter modern childhood from the world of adults. In England and Wales, a series of Education Acts, starting in 1870, consolidated educational efforts throughout the country, with compulsory education starting in 1880. The 1891 Elementary Education Act established that elementary education was to be free. The Education (Scotland) Act 1872 required compulsory attendance from the start. In British settler colonies and dominions, most provinces and states had instituted compulsory elementary education between the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century. South Africa was the exception (for more on this, see Swartz 2019). During the British Raj (1858–1947) there was no system of universal education in India, despite some attempts to establish compulsory primary education in some provinces. (Biswas and Agrawal 1986: 835, in Eitler, Olsen, Jensen 2014: 3-5)

As many scholars have pointed out, childhood in the nineteenth century was "bestowed" or not, based on gender, race, class, or political expediency and the means of bestowing it often took the form of access to education, or forced attendance in school. David Pomfret has shown how Britain as a colonial power had a different relationship to the childhood of its subjects than did

France, based not on the wellbeing of the colonial young people involved but rather on the different exigencies of maintaining and expanding their empires. As Pomfret explains, unlike in Britain where sentimental views of the potential of indigenous children increasingly dissolved, especially after the establishment of the British Raj in 1858, late nineteenth-century French colonial expansion "encouraged explicit appeals to sentimental ideals of childhood and the modern family." (2014: 194) Nevertheless, ideas of racial superiority and the infantilization of subject peoples coloured understandings of children and childhood in both these, and other, imperial settings. In British, French, Dutch and German colonies, these ideas were translated into apparatuses of coercion and control, through informal means, but also most visibly through formal sites of power like penal institutions and schools. As Ann Laura Stoler's seminal work reminds us, "Colonial powers created institutions, both "penal and pedagogic […] that were often indistinguishable" in order to "rescue young citizens in the making." (2001: 851)

Education systems that might be framed as emancipatory, therefore, had the potential to be experienced as such or as threatening to a similar degree. Education framed as "training," a commonplace in the first part of the nineteenth century, could be critiqued and experienced as a means of control. The interplay between these varied views of education, between the changing meanings of childhood, and the vicissitudes of experience within educational systems is important. Children were shaped by, and contributed to shaping, this interplay. Together with Karen Vallgårda and Kristine Alexander (2015: 12–34), I have elaborated the concepts of "emotional frontiers" where various "emotional formations" negotiate and clash.[1] Schools and

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[1] The concept of emotional formation was developed in our bid to understand how emotions are shaped in childhood and youth in different global contexts. 'Emotional formation' designates on the one hand the emotional codes or prescriptions that structure a given society, culture, or subculture, and on the other hand, the processes through which children learn and adapt these codes. The structure and the process are dynamically related: the structure is affected by the activities of individuals and collectives; those activities or practices are framed by the structural delimitation of meaningful feeling.

While "formation" refers to the culturally specific codes of affective comportment and expression, and the process through which the individual incorporates and embodies these codes, the concept of "emotional frontiers" designates the boundary between different affective formations or else of dealing with divergences or apparent contradictions within the same emotional formation. An emotional frontier may be perceived in various ways, either individually or relationally. An individual may be so habituated to traversing emotional frontiers that they do not notice them at all; or else the existence of a frontier might be registered through a sense of

other sites of children's education are contact zones where children confront gender, class, race, and other categories of difference, as well as negotiating the politics of belonging and potential.

As urbanization, mass culture and other potentially negative influences developed in the course of the nineteenth century, policy makers increasingly asked how to prevent degeneracy and educate the next generation to be useful citizens with "correct" political, social, imperial and nationalist outlooks. (for the German context see Bowersox 2013: 21, and Donson 2010; for the British context, see Olsen 2014: 4, 52). Useful citizenship was at the core of new views on education in both Britain and in Prussia. In order to shape the "right" kinds of children and to guide youthful energies and impulses, several reform movements took hold of educational thinking in the late nineteenth century. As Bowersox details, Germany was the originator, and major proponent of many such movements, such as *Reformpädagogik* (Reform pedagogy), *Kunsterziehungsbewegung* (art education movement), *Jugendbewegung* (youth movement) and *Lebensreform* (the life reform movement). (2013:14-15) Broadly, together these influential movements promoted experience, observation, discovery, exploration of nature and outdoor activity, and eschewed rote learning and practices associated with it. Prussia instituted educational reforms early on. As Jeff Bowersox explains,

> an influential, international circle of educators collected under the umbrella of "reform pedagogy" (Reformpädagogik) directed their attention to reshaping the practice of classroom instruction. They condemned mechanistic teaching methods, which they saw as an unfortunate consequence of their industrial society. Reaching back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi, and Friedrich Froebel, reformers called instead for a pedagogy "that starts with the child" (vom Kinde aus): teaching strategies must be tailored to each student and must embrace the unique qualities of childhood. (2013: 59)

While the motivation for creating such an innovative system was manifold, including the influence of building nationalism and political and social control, it was also based on Enlightenment ideas of the child. Enlightenment conceptions of childhood, the child, and education, and the Prussian education system, in particular, greatly influenced educational ideas and practices in the long nineteenth century. The reform education movement, as it played out across Europe, the Americas and some parts of India, among other places, was intimately tied to a

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unease, of a shift in emotional register that requires a conscious adaptation, or through the socially compromising experience of getting the emotional codes wrong.

particular conceptual understanding of childhood that evolved, in part, through its relationship to educational ideals and results. While changing concepts of childhood and youth drove education reform, they also provided an aggressive and confining logic of exclusion or restriction.

British education, though mandatory after the 1880 Education Act, was of varying effectiveness and brutality, depending on class, gender and geographical area. Robert Roberts, who was a boy in Edwardian Salford (England), later described his childhood in the slums in devastating detail. He wrote of a highly stratified existence, where everyone had to cross numerous class, gender and age-based emotional frontiers, which constantly informed life at home, at school, on the streets and in the workplace. Roberts described "appalling conditions" in his Church of England school (built in 1839), which had 450 students and eight, mostly unqualified, teachers (1990: 133). In this school, he wrote,

> the staff worked earnestly but with no great hope. The building itself stood face on to one of the largest marshalling yards in the North. All day long the roar of a work-a-day world invaded the school hall, where each instructor, shouting in competition, taught up to sixty children massed together. (1990: 134)

As a boy, Roberts recognized that this sort of environment was not conducive to academic success, yet he was one of the "bright boys" who was good at his lessons and wanted to stay in school. Because of a lack of support, he failed the exam to obtain a technical college bursary and needed to find work instead. Class, as with race elsewhere, could be a determining factor in deciding which children were entitled to a childhood.

This description of schools for working-class children is in marked contrast to the experiences of upper middle- and upper-class children. Schools for elite boys, such as the famous English public schools, have received much attention from historians, in particular for their fashioning of a distinct brand of masculinity pointed at colonial leadership, military prowess and a conceit of physical superiority as honed by the games ethic. The classical historiographical narrative is of a shift in focus among elite school children from forms of manliness connected to a Christian piety to a muscular Christianity expressed on the playing field. While this has been challenged in terms of the actual experience of elite children, and its importance reassessed in the light of the rise of middle-class imperial settlement, it remains true that the imperial future was often rhetorically

staked on the physical prowess and sporting ethics of elite boys. (for more on English public-school education, see Ellis 2010, Olsen 2014, Boddice 2009, Mangan 1981, Newsome 1961). Public boarding schools, through their sometimes brutal emotional and physical conditioning (Hamlett 2015), were intended to form and educate leaders in every sphere of endeavour and to produce men who felt that they were at the top of gendered, social, racial and imperial hierarchies. These hierarchical ideas pervaded all levels of societies in the metropoles and the colonies and profoundly impacted children, whether European (settler) or indigenous.

Colonized Children's Education

Educational ideas within European colonial regimes in the first third of the nineteenth century were predicated on the hope of universal potential: that education could transform and "civilize" the colonial subject. (Swartz 2019: 1) This civilization, of course, was borne out of specific European ideas of what an education to produce civilized future adults entailed. As Bowersox explains in the case of Germany, instruction was colonial in orientation and served to encourage children and youth "to think that they, as Germans, belonged among the colonizers and that they could promote the cause of progress at home and abroad when they grew up." (2013: 56) British children, and those in settler colonies, were taught much the same, with similar goals in mind. Focusing on the history of colonizing ideas around race and civilization points to a hardening of views in the latter part of the century. It was viewed as increasingly unlikely or even impossible to "elevate" other races to the level of the European and thus what was most required was control through education. These racist beliefs arguably did more to shape education policies in various locations throughout the Imperial world than did pedagogical theory.

As the nineteenth century progressed and the concept of childhood narrowed and became more entrenched, children's needs were differentiated from their parents' and adults' in general. This development ran parallel to an entrenchment of racial theory as biological rather than cultural. These two factors had major consequences for Indigenous people and children who were set apart because of their age, and who simultaneously became the focus of ideological chauvinism. These children's "childhood" did not fit the "dominant" mode. Sanjay Seth has argued that colonialism itself was viewed as an "essentially pedagogic enterprise." (2008:2). Rebecca Swartz has recently

encouraged scholars to take seriously the larger context of colonial education since this enterprise was a "pedagogic process in which Indigenous people were taught new ways of seeing and being." (2019: 5). As Edward Said famously wrote, students in India were not just taught English subjects but rather "the inherent superiority of the English race." (1993: 101) Educative ideals and practices were never neutral, but rather an integral part of a political agenda of cultural erasure, of European dominance, and of taught inferiority and quiescence. Furthermore, Swartz emphasizes the point made by scholars in many colonial contexts that childhood was viewed as the opportune time to form, through mandatory education, Indigenous peoples into the kind of citizens colonizers wanted to make them. (2019: 2)

In European metropolitan centres and among settler colonists, education increasingly became concerned with teaching children about their nation, their empire, and consequently, their own place in the world. Ideas about imperialism, social Darwinism, modernity, religion and science infused teaching and classroom material and were combined, confused and popularized into a sometimes heady mix. Education became entangled with discussions about modernity. Both the manipulation of the concept of childhood, and the education of children were of paramount importance to colonial powers, who understood that the child embodied potential futures: "nothing less than the future of the nation was at stake." (Bowersox 2013: 12)

In India, as Satadru Sen argued, "native childhood" came to be seen as "an oxymoron." The normative nineteenth-century model of childhood did not serve an age group, but a socially and racially idealized group. "Reformatories, boarding schools and authoritative texts," according to Sen, "were energized by the putative plasticity of the child, but they were also paralyzed by an articulation of difference that implied that native children were essentially small, perverse adults." (2005: 1) Casting young people as deviant, precocious, dangerous and not-quite children, was a prevalent mechanism for precluding a universal childhood from belonging to all children. (Olsen 2014) According to Sen:

> Childhood was thus an important ingredient in the making of empire, race and nationhood at a time when new meanings were attached to perceived distinctions between white and black children, girl and boy children, aristocratic and middle class children, 'westernized' and 'authentic' children, and between the offspring of the elite and those of the poor and provincial. One

> set was central (as future adults) to the colony and the emerging nation, while the other was relegated to the fringes. (2005: 2)

In Latin America in the early part of the nineteenth century, independence leaders spent a great deal of time and effort in creating an education system that would reflect their political goals. More specifically, early republican education and school policies in Colombia demonstrated the perceived need to manage the collective emotions of children (and via them, their families) through education. It was a desire to imbue children with a "unity of sentiment" directed at a prescribed political goal (Caruso 2015: 154). While the British government, via the Colonial Office, did not construct a uniform system of indigenous education, the space was filled by missionaries, local governments and organizations who saw value in the opportunity to shape children according to imperial ideals of Christian religious observance, cultural bearing, or profit. (c.f. Whitehead 2003 and Swartz 2019). Sen's understanding of the political clashes over children in the British Raj can be applied much more widely in other colonial and national settings.

Many colonial educators and missionaries believed that boarding schools were far more effective than day schools as the former removed children from the influence of their parents and communities. As Karen Vallgårda demonstrates, Danish missionary, Carl Ochs, the founder of one such school, made the link between the modern conception of childhood, children and education plain: "One is inclined to return to the circle of people among whom one finds more fruit of one's work, less evil, hypocrisy and deception than among the old, namely to the children. [With respect to] the generation which has grown up and has become old in heathenism, there is but little to do and in order for the following generations not also to become like it, the youth must be educated and properly raised" (fn 13, quoted in Vallgårda 2014: 42).

The Danish Missionary Society argued that Indian parents provided problematic education for their children, though they lauded "a universal 'mother's heart'" among Indian people. For the most part, however, Indian parents were viewed as inadequate and harmful, exposing children to "sinful" and risky talk and behaviour. They were portrayed as willing to kill or harm their children, motivated by their religion or the need to compel the children to work too hard, or else they were too lenient and indulgent. According to missionaries, as Vallgårda puts it, Indian

parents displayed “distorted affective dispositions,” and “either loved too much or too little” (2014: 43).

Although Danish missionary Sara Ochs, Carl Ochs’ wife, seemed to have been aware that the families’ material situation often necessitated children’s contribution to the household economy, she nonetheless interpreted what she considered children’s excessive work as a sign of bad parenting. As Vallgårda argues, the missionaries’ views on Indian parents and their children was one “where class prejudice intersects with religious and moral condemnation,” and where “the plea was not for the material support of poor Christian families, but rather for interventions in their parenting.” (2014: 44)

According to Vallgårda, missionaries could not remove children from their families by force. They waited for parents or guardians to sign over their children to the boarding school, mainly because of some emergency situation, not because of an overwhelming desire for their children to be raised in that setting. This finds echoes in the Canadian Indigenous Residential School example which will be discussed below. Once parents had signed over their children to missionary-run boarding schools, however, parents lost their authority over them and the children could not return home. (Vallgårda 2014: 45) Indigenous parents in Canada also did not have this choice and their children were forced to stay at school, away from their parents and their communities.

Canadian residential schools

Canadian residential schools operated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The last one closed in 1996.[2] The stated goal of these schools was to “civilize” indigenous children, to remove them from the “corrupting” influences of their parents, families and communities, and to forge new Canadian citizens out of them. The premise was that children were more malleable than their irredeemable parents. These boarding schools were the sites of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and cultural belittling and denial, giving children a uniform and a number in a concerted

[2] In recent years historians have contributed greatly to knowledge on the background and functioning of these schools and their predecessors, as well as their impact on children and on societies. (see, for example, Fraser and Mosby 2015; Fraser 2019; McCallum 2014; Milloy 2017 [1999]; de Leeuw 2009; Carleton 2017; Carleton 2011).

effort to strip away the individual. These practices have been described as "cultural genocide." (e.g. Miller 2006: 9) The Canadian government concluded a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 with several highly instructive reports. Many survivors of residential schools gave testimony and have cogently explained how this fusion of ideas of childhood, racism and nationalism/imperialism impacted them as individual children through their schooling. The legacy of this school system remains in the physical and emotional health and welfare of indigenous people. This system is not a blip in the Canadian national story but rather a foundational element in the British Imperial project and in the creation of Canada as a nation. It is the fusing of Enlightenment ideas about childhood and education, in their late nineteenth-century guise, with contemporary notions of racial hierarchy, nationalism and imperialism. Doris Young, who attended the Elkhorn residential school in Manitoba, testified under the auspices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

> Those schools were a war on Aboriginal children, and they took away our identity. First of all, they gave us numbers, we had no names, we were numbers, and they cut our hair. They took away our clothes, and gave us clothes … we all looked alike." (2015: 145)

Residential schools were not really about education, but the tight link established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between education and childhood enabled them under that guise. They were more accurately about control and re-forming indigenous children into Canadian subjects worthy of a "childhood." In so doing, their indigeneity and ties to their cultures, communities and families were stripped. In justifying the investment in industrial schools to Parliament in 1883, Canadian Public Works Minister, Hector Langevin, argued that

> if you wish to educate these children you must separate them from their parents during the time that they are being educated. If you leave them in the family they may know how to read and write, but they still remain savages, whereas by separating them in the way proposed, they acquire the habits and tastes—it is to be hoped only the good tastes—of civilized people. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015: 58)

In 1883, Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, made the goal explicit: "When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages. […] Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence." (Canada, House of Commons Debates (9 May 1883), 1107–1108 in Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015: 2) By 1920, Canada's infamous deputy minister of Indian

Affairs, Duncan Campbell Scott, had a certain confidence in the efficacy of the project in declaring: "Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic." (Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6810, file 470-2-3, volume 7, Evidence of D. C. Scott to the Special Committee of the House of Commons Investigating the Indian Act amendments of 1920, (L-2)(N-3) in Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015: 3) The Bagot Commission Report of 1842 and the 1879 Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds both concluded that residential and industrial schools, with children separated from their families, were the best ways to "civilize" indigenous children.[3]

The result through education was to be "the enforced acculturation" of Indigenous students, as Jim Marten has put it. (2018: 75) Marten discusses the situation in the United States, which shares a history with the Canadian residential schools system. Similar projects occurred in various colonial settings, where particular kinds of "enforced acculturation" were desired. In the later half of the nineteenth century, the United States provided a model for the Canadian system, complemented by developments in Britain to deal with "juvenile delinquents." The model for residential schools, both in Canada and the United States, was not the English public school of the elite, but rather the European and North American reformatories and industrial schools for the urban poor. These institutions were often violent places where students were physically punished with straps and meager food rations. (For more on industrial and ragged schools, see Gear 1999, Mahood 1995, Swartz 2019 and Mair 2019)

Residential school children crossed the starkest of emotional frontiers when they first entered the schools, but they repeatedly did so on the infrequent occasions when they saw their families or were allowed to return home for holidays. We are fortunate to have the recollections of residential school survivors who have directly addressed this issue. Children's indigenous emotional formations prior to their entry into school were fundamentally and intentionally re-formed. As Mary Courchene, formerly a student at the residential schools at Fort Alexander in Manitoba and Lebret in Saskatchewan, testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

[3] See Sarah de Leeuw (2009), "'If Anything Is to Be Done with the Indian, We Must Catch Him Very Young:' Colonial Constructions of Aboriginal Children and the Geographies of Indian Residential Schooling in British Columbia, Canada," *Children's Geographies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 123–140, for an analysis of the impact of these reports and more on the foundations of nineteenth-century residential schools.

> And I looked at my dad, I looked at my mom, I looked at my dad again. You know what? I hated them. I just absolutely hated my own parents. Not because I thought they abandoned me; I hated their brown faces. I hated them because they were Indians... So I, I looked at my dad and I challenged him and I said, “From now on we speak only English in this house,” I said to my dad. And you know when we, when, in a traditional home where I was raised, the first thing that we all were always taught was to respect your Elders and never to, you know, to challenge them. And here I was, eleven years old, and I challenged … my dad looked at me and I, and I thought he was going to cry. In fact his eyes filled up with tears. He turned to my mom and he says, … “Then I guess we’ll never speak to this little girl again. I don’t know her.” (2015: 154)

The extremity of this child’s negative feelings toward her parents, and by extension, toward her community, her culture, and the entirety of her life prior to entering school, is telling of the destructive effectiveness of this system in instilling a new self-understanding in students, predicated on a prescriptive emotional formation. Crossing the emotional frontier between school and home became exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The schools drilled indigenous children to police themselves to avoid their own languages and traditional cultural practices. In the above example, the father devastatingly no longer “knew” his daughter; the process of estrangement and alienation was a sinister and effective tool in ripping apart communities, families and individuals.

Agnes Mills, a former student at All Saints residential school in Saskatchewan explained: “I wanted to be white so bad, and the worst thing I ever did was I was ashamed of my mother, that honourable woman, because she couldn’t speak English.” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015: 154) Residential school students frequently express that residential schools made them feel ashamed of their families, their communities, their languages and their indigeneity. They tried to look, act and sound “white” to “fit” into European Canadian society at a terrible price. Such brutal practices and attitudes have led to premature death for many former residential school attendees, and lifelong trauma for survivors. As Jim Miller reported after a residential school reunion: many “spoke of wasting years and decades in alcohol, drugs, and violence before they managed to put their lives back together, confront the pain that had been driving them to harm themselves, and get on with the business of living.” (Miller 2006: 7-8)

Indigenous young people in Canada bore the brunt of imperial and national policies even before the country was officially founded. They supply a clear example of the ways in which a narrowing definition of childhood could be distorted to exclude. These young people were often considered not really to be children, but were not adults either. Racist settler understandings of the sensuality and cunningness of indigenous young people were mixed with ideas about their greater malleability when compared with indigenous adults. That malleability was to be harnessed through education to produce a more European/Canadian indigenous population in the next generation. The force of many of these policies is suggestively apparent in education policy. Residential schools are the clearest example, but not the only one. Nationalist agendas (often including the cultural genocide of indigenous people) permeated social and cultural life in many places globally. Though the rate of indigenous child removal to residential schools accelerated in the twentieth century, the premise and justification for the creation, continuation and expansion of these schools had an insidious nineteenth-century logic, fusing ideas about childhood, race, nation and colonialism. It is a telling paradox that indigenous children were recognized as children and therefore malleable, but also as not entitled to a childhood, with all the rights and freedoms that that entailed for white children elsewhere.

Conclusion

After the horrors of the First World War, the twentieth century was styled "century of the child." (Key 1909) Ellen Key's international bestseller was taken up as a rallying cry to make children the central focus of societies in the twentieth century. (Olsen, *Juvenile Nation*, 4) American activist Florence Kelley echoed others around the world in saying that young people had "a right to childhood." (1905: 3-57). The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, reinforced this "modern" view of a universal childhood. Children, "beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed," possessed rights as *children*. (Marten 2018: 77-78) It contained these clauses pertaining to education: "The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually; and "The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of fellow men." The ideas embodied in these clauses represent a refinement of the ideal of childhood and implied further reform in the education of children, irrespective of context. But, as the long nineteenth

century bore witness, ideals and promises of reform did not necessarily play out at the level of policy and practice. Many children were either excluded from modern ideals of childhood, or else these ideals served to justify and bolster educational regimes of coercion or oppression. Gender, class, race and location mattered in defining who was a child, who deserved a childhood and what the conditions of that childhood would be. Education – both at the level of policy and practice - is a crucial indicator of the formative power of ideals of childhood and their global impact on children.

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