

## THE MODERNIZATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOLS

THE MODERNIZATION OF  
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHOOLS:  
A GENEALOGICAL INTERPRETATION  
OF THE PUTMAN-WEIR SURVEY

By

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## Abstract

The analysis of public educational reform initiatives is an important area within the sociology of education. My work contributes to this area by utilizing a genealogical analysis to closely read British Columbia's 1925 reform text, the *Survey of the School System of British Columbia*, along with several other supporting texts. I incorporate an examination of the modes by which educational practices were problematized and contested, resulting in the casting of subjectivities and the deployment of certain effects. This investigation provides insight into dominant ideas, material practices and institutional arrangements at a particular time and place. It also provides a means for rendering the discursive practices of reform visible, and, consequently, subject to scrutiny. In turn, this provides insight into how we constitute and regulate ourselves as particular subjects.

I investigate the emergence of Progressive educational reform in British Columbia in the 1920s. I argue that the *Survey of the School System* was not simply a conservative document which reproduced inequality, but a problematizing activity with the ability to frame the educational debate, crowding out alternative interpretations and effects. This analysis allows for an examination of the *Survey's* claims to truth, as well as the rationalities it deployed. Based on legitimate scientific knowledge of psychology and eugenics, and bolstered by discourses of nationalism and government, new subjectivities of 'the developing child' and 'the adolescent' were constituted as racial and gender categories were normalized. The effects of this were far reaching as it informed the reorganization of schooling, curriculum and testing in the Province. Reform was therefore constructed out of a limited number of discourses with powerful consequences.

## **Dedication**

James M. Watson (1933-1992)

Thomas C. Hawtree (1908-1992)

This text is dedicated to the memory of two men who possessed the ability but were denied the opportunity of higher education. I am forever grateful for their struggle to create a better life for their children and grandchildren.

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K

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## Introduction:

### Analyzing Progressive Educational Reform

This study will examine, by way of a genealogical analysis of the Putman-Weir Survey, the discourses of Progressive educational reform as they arose in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British Columbia. It will reveal how these discourses made it possible for reform to happen by setting the parameters for change within the educational system. It is my position that a genealogical analysis of Progressive reform initiatives will extend our understanding of educational reform in British Columbia by revealing ‘the traces’ of discursive practices which helped to make the existing 1920s educational practices inadequate. These ‘traces’ frame and thus give the appearance of a self-evident set of institution arrangements while simultaneously constituting and regulating subjectivities.

This study begins with the general research question of “how was it possible for Progressive educational reform to take place at this particular time and place?” This was met with a premise that a ‘climate of problematization’ must first be created/suggested prior to any social change. “What was the problem within the B.C. educational system to warrant reform?” How was this particular view of education supported and legitimated?

This view silenced all other possible alternative ‘truths’ and ultimately created self-evident, unquestionable facts and assumptions about education. It was grounded in ‘nationalism,’ ‘governance,’ and ‘psychology’ and created knowledge about the educational system and the people who populated its hallways. These questions mostly stem from the concerns of discourse theory (Mills, 1997) and allow me to consider a textual analysis of the central reform text of the time, the *Survey of the School System*.

Ultimately, the aim of such an approach is not to discover who was right or wrong, who had ‘truth’ and who did not, but to understand how ‘truth’ was constructed and how this regulated what people could think and how they could act in regard to education. This is not to claim that a particular educational reform discourse determines everything, but rather that it creates parameters of possibilities and impossibilities by crowding out alternatives.

The importance of such an approach is that it challenges us to ask difficult questions about how things are done and how they have come to be. In other words, it questions the confines of ‘truth’ and order as it disturbs our use of words and categories while questioning the familiar. A comprehensive analysis of common and unexamined assumptions and practices can therefore subvert current understandings and allow space for alternatives and diversity.

Analyzing discourse is an important part of understanding how problems are subjects to solutions derived from its own “regimes of truth,” as well as how certain public educational reforms become legitimate. This type of analysis provides insight into

dominant ideas, material practices and institutional arrangements at a particular place and time. This, in turn, provides insight into how we constitute and regulate ourselves as particular subjects.

Ultimately what this analysis demonstrates is how educational reform is a political and contestable process that is based upon particular assumptions, 'truths' and rationalities. The process and its effects are therefore not fixed nor are they 'natural' outcomes, but are open to challenge and opposition. Undoubtedly, this analysis is political as it seeks to repoliticize that which has been taken for granted.

Based on this approach, I isolate a moment in the history of educational reform in Canada that was ripe for the constitution of new subjectivities and the moulding of reality into ever-changing discursive forms. I investigate and analyze the emergence of Progressive educational reform in British Columbia in the 1920s. The central text that ushered in this "era" of reform and reorganization of the public system in the Province was the *Survey of the School System*, which was produced by a Survey Commission. I begin this account by tracing my efforts and situating myself in the research process.

A Narrative of "Discovery"--or don't ever believe that this was a smooth and easy process.

My interest in educational practices seems to have 'always' been with me. Having spent the majority of my life in one form of educational institution or another, it seems

‘natural’ to take an interest in what I experience, fight with, enjoy, dread and ultimately where I have a great deal of ‘success’ and have managed to build a ‘place’ for myself. All of this has helped me to negotiate identity and self and it is what I take for granted everyday. It is here that my inquiry begins.

I initially set out to understand how and why educational reform occurs within contemporary society. In particular, I became quite interested in various efforts that sought to reform procedures of assessment. This interest was sparked by the fact that the Sullivan Royal Commission report on the education system in British Columbia<sup>1</sup> had, in 1988, made recommendations to de-emphasize sorting, grading and standardized assessment in the province (Barman and Sutherland, 1995). Here was a report commissioned by the “conservative” Social Credit provincial government that was advancing “progressive” ideas of reform. It seemed to be a very contradictory idea for a government that had earlier in the 1980s been characterized as initiating the “great school wars” (Killian, 1985) by cutting and slashing budgets at all levels of public education. The “progressive” turn in education was not to last, however, as the 1990s saw a growing “back-to-basics” movement in the Province. There seemed to be endless reports in the media that parents could not properly assess where their child stood in relation to others and the system because of the lack of formal grades and standardized assessment at the primary level. This “conservative” call for a return to testing and grades was exceedingly powerful. I wondered why this form of assessment was the only one that actually

“counted” for many parents, the media, and teachers. Why this form of assessment and not something else? Why assessment at all?

This re-examination of assessment led me to question other forms of testing in education. Of particular interest to me was intelligence testing. Ever since a friend in high school had been told that her Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) was 120, I had been fascinated with this “magical” number. 120 meant that she was very “smart.” If my friend was “smart” surely my number must be as good or better. Later as an undergraduate student I read work that criticized I.Q. testing as a fraud and as a tool of oppression (see Bowles and Gintis, 1976). The tests were said to be culturally biased toward white, middle-class children and discriminated against anyone who was different. The result was that the hegemony of the privileged was reinforced in a systematic way that effectively kept other groups on the outside. How was it that despite this telling critique, I.Q. was still so well received<sup>2</sup> and has such a grip on our “collective imagination?”

After several starts and many deadends, my work led me to the conclusion that in order to understand I.Q. testing in British Columbia it was first important to investigate when I.Q. testing was introduced to the Province. This led me to the early part of the twentieth century and to Progressive educational reforms that were introduced in the 1920s. Several accounts of this time and these reforms are available, but most of them address the question of *why* the reforms happened and what the results were in terms of either supporting or impeding the advancement of educational practices and individual

student development. However, these are not my concerns. I am more interested in the process of *how* these reforms were possible in the first place.

### Contribution

This study is situated in and thus contributes to the field of Education within the discipline of Sociology. Although the Putman-Weir Survey has been examined by other scholars, my contribution is unique since it utilizes a genealogical method to analyze this key reform document. My analysis reveals quite a different understanding than most of the existing literature. Rather than seeing the Putman-Weir Survey as a mechanism of social control which reproduced inequality, my analysis demonstrates that the *Survey* was a problematizing activity with the power to govern and regulate subjects. By focussing on discursive practices that are evident in the text, along with the process of problematization, my work adds to our understanding of educational reform in British Columbia as it ‘captures’ the ‘how’ of reform.

In addition, I examine the ways in which morality was a means of governing school pupils and inducing subjects to act in accordance with the aims of this report. What is quite interesting is that this report is full of contradictions as it teeters on the edge of change. For instance, the authors argue for educational reform as they yearn for a modern nation in the Province and yet are constantly tied to the past, to Empire and the building of ‘character.’ Uncertainty, idealism, change, nationalism and psychology among other



‘truths’ are all available to be read and yet no one has done so before. My work therefore complements the existing literature as it provides new insights into major themes and issues of the 1920s educational system in British Columbia.

Before examining this text, it is appropriate to discuss some of the history of Progressivism generally and in relation to public education in British Columbia. While not a complete history, the next section endeavours to inform and provide a bit of background so that the Progressive educational reform will be understood in context.

### A Historical Narrative

From the 1890s until the 1920s, North American society not only underwent enormous economic and social change, but was also witness to a widespread movement of reform. The social history literature debates who the “true” reformers were, what their actual purpose was, and what they actually achieved (Link and McCormick, 1983). Progressivism became the term used by most historians to describe reform efforts that sought to address problems caused by industrialization, and which sought to establish social order in a “chaotic” society. Link and McCormick argue that Progressivism in the U.S. was not a unified movement as many diverse people such as the “new” middle class of urban professionals, farmers, women, and business people may have come together on one issue, only to oppose one another on the next (1983, p.9). Also the objectives of the various reformers were diverse, ranging from measures for the regulation of business to

the elimination of political corruption, to the promotion of public hygiene, temperance and social welfare. Given this diversity, Link and McCormick recommend that rather than studying a unified movement, scholars should focus their attention on individual reforms or case studies by examining specific goals, rationales and results.

Despite this diversity, it is still possible to identify several common characteristics of Progressivism (Link and McCormick, 1983). Unlike many of the socialist movements of the day, progressives did not seek to dismantle or overturn the capitalist, industrial order. Rather, they sought to make it more liveable and more humane by improving or bettering the conditions of that order. Based upon assumptions of progress, many intellectuals, such as John Dewey, argued against social Darwinism and laissez faire capitalism in favour of the active, interventionist state which would protect society and its citizens from injustice and harm (Link and McCormick, 1983). Purposeful action would therefore create political and social advancement.

Protestant Christian morality is also cited as a common influence as many of the proposed reforms were often based upon the Social Gospel of the day (Link and McCormick, 1983; Barman, 1996). Concern with eradicating sin, while also uplifting the poor and downtrodden, was part of many social reform agendas. While not all progressives shared this religious belief, its ethos was part of the movement and is identifiable within many of the reform initiatives (Link and McCormick, 1983, p.24). In addition, belief in the knowledge and methods of science to improve the human condition was part of the movement. Gathering data on an issue, utilizing experts to analyze the data and to make

recommendations to government for appropriate action were based upon the assumption that science could find objective ‘truth’ and that humans could create solutions to problems. Linked to the idea that purposeful action could create progressive change, scientific method became the way in which progressives ‘knew’ and could act in regard to a certain issue.

While my analysis recognizes these same ‘truths’ and assumptions of Progressivism, it is different than these other discussions. For instance, rather than assuming that the reformers were simply observing and gathering objective data, I argue that they were problematizing society and ultimately contributing to a certain, narrow reality. By disassembling the very truths upon which Progressivism was based, we can come to another understanding of that ‘reality’ and of ourselves.

From the general social movement grew “progressive education” (Link and McCormick, 1983). Progressive education emerged first in the U.S. as “a many-sided effort to use the schools to improve the lives of individuals” (Fleming, 2003, p.1). These efforts included child-centered pedagogy and the application of the scientific method in the schools. Premised on John Dewey’s work, child-centered pedagogy focussed on the child and his or her interests or needs rather than the formal subject matter. Individual development was therefore paramount in this movement. The application of scientific method refers to new pedagogical principles that were derived from the social sciences and included scientific measurement or standardized testing and I.Q. testing. The first course on educational statistics was given at the Columbia Teacher’s College by Edward

Lee Thorndike in 1902. The American progressive education reform movement greatly expanded between 1902 and 1916 as standardized tests were developed for virtually every subject in American schools. Peter Sandiford, who conducted the testing for the Putman-Weir Survey, had studied under the direction of Thorndike at Columbia. Sandiford is credited with being “one of the principal intellectual conduits for the largely American ideas” into British Columbia in the 1920s (Fleming, 2003, p.5). The movement continued to expand with the establishment of research bureaus across the United States which ensured cooperation between school officials and professors. It is estimated that hundreds of state and city school surveys were conducted in the U.S. before the Depression of 1929 (Fleming, 2003).

Progressive reform movements were also present in British Columbia during this time. Jean Barman (1996) argues that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century British Columbia saw tremendous expansion of both industry and population. The “frontier” society was changing and this concerned various sectors including the largely Anglo-Canadian, Protestant middle-class and the mostly British working class. Conditions of life were being transformed as exploitation, labour struggles and the “social ills” of drinking, prostitution, crime and neglected children, were deemed to be a problem in crowded urban centres (Barman, 1996). It was during this time that “two parallel strands of reform emerged in British Columbia” (Barman, 1996, p.202). One strand focussed on reforming workplace conditions and the other strand the social conditions of everyday life.

According to Barman (1996) these movements were initially quite modest; it was only after the end of the First World War that the movements became more active and effective.

While the British Columbia workplace reform movement concentrated on improving the conditions of employment mostly through unionization and labour legislation, the middle-class social reform movement galvanized around the issues of temperance and suffrage for women (Barman, 1996). The one place that these two movements seemed to come together was around the issue of schooling. Barman argues that both were concerned with the overall welfare of children but for different reasons. The working class movement was particularly interested in providing equality of opportunity to their children through further schooling, and the middle-class social reformers were mostly interested in controlling potentially dangerous elements<sup>3</sup> and creating citizens through educational initiatives (Barman, 1988; 1996).

Prior to these reform movements of the 1920s, public education had garnered much attention and fostered a great deal of debate in British Columbia (Johnson, 1964; Barman, 1996). Formal education had existed in the urban centres of the Colonies<sup>4</sup> from 1849 onwards. However, it took until 1865 to establish the provisions of a common, non-sectarian public system. The Vancouver Island Legislative Assembly passed the *Common School Act*, but it was short lived due to the amalgamation of the Island Colony with the Mainland and due to a lack of adequate financial support. Despite this initial setback, the

public system was pursued as a way to create national sentiment and a prosperous nation (Barman, 1996).

Concerns with maintaining ties to the British Empire and the creation of a British community were thought to be facilitated by “proper” education (Johnson, 1964). Europeans of mostly British heritage were eager to secure their place and hence their domination of first the colonies and then the new Province (Anderson, 1991). Public education which taught nationalist sentiments was part of this construction. However, it was not until 1872 that a financially supported, permanent public system would be established and maintained.

One of the first acts of the new province of British Columbia was to establish a public school system. The first elected Legislative Assembly was formed in November 1871, and the new Public Schools Bill was signed into law by April of 1872. The original mandate of the new system was to provide “every child in the Province such knowledge as will fit him [sic] to become a useful and intelligent citizen in after years” (Johnson, 1964, p.45).

The *1872 School Act* provided for “the establishment, maintenance and management of Public Schools throughout the Province of British Columbia” ( British Columbia Legislative Assembly, 1872, preamble). This *Act* organized the formal structure of the provincial system, including three man elected school boards in each district and the provision of funds for those districts who could not afford teachers’ salaries, buildings

and equipment. The System grew steadily in these early years (Johnson, 1964), but did have to grapple with problems of regular attendance in the schools.

In 1876, the *Act* was amended to enforce compulsory attendance for every child between the ages of seven to twelve. Despite these efforts, by 1880 the average daily attendance of this age group was only about 53.8% (Urquhart and Buckley, 1983, pp.W67-93). By 1901, a further amendment to the *Act* raised compulsory schooling from seven to fourteen inclusive in cities. Enrollment increased and hovered around 86% (Dunn, 1980, p.27), but the average daily attendance was still only about 65% (Urquhart and Buckley, 1983, pp.W67-93). Although 1910 witnessed the breaking of the 72% average daily attendance mark, it wasn't until 1920 that regular attendance approached the 80% mark (Urquhart and Buckley, 1983, pp.W67-93).

In 1921, the age of attendance was raised to fifteen and attendance reached 82% by 1923. Despite this, less than 50% of those completing school to age fifteen went further to high school. Rigorous entrance exams and a predominately academic curriculum stopped many from going on with their studies unless they intended to write the matriculation for university. This resulted in very few high schools in the Province with only 67 existing by 1923, mostly in the urban centres. Of the total school population in 1923, only 9.7% were in high school grades. Although some schools and districts endeavoured to reform and accomodate individual needs with “experimental” work in teaching and curriculum, for the most part high school education was simply unavailable for the majority of students in the Province (Johnson, 1964).

Concerns over the quality of education, expanding the high school system and reforming the curriculum were also occurring in other places across Canada during this period (Sutherland, 1976). Sutherland (1976) argues that Canadian school reform began in the 1880s when two distinct groups of reformers emerged to advocate change. One of these groups wanted schools to become more humane places that were focussed upon the child and his or her needs. This group of reformers, throughout the 1880s and 1890s, argued that schools should shift their focus from a strictly academic concern to incorporate the welfare of the child and his or her family. They advocated the inclusion of such programs as temperance education and kindergartens to lend guidance and attend to the child. The other group which emerged at this time favoured practical, work-centred reform which would bring “practical, work skills” into the formal academic curriculum. Manual training, in various forms, appeared in many Canadian schools ranging from agricultural training to modelling in clay, drawing and working in wood for boys and sewing for girls (Sutherland, 1976, p.179).

Generally referred to as the “new education,” these two strands of reform began to converge by about 1900. Sutherland (1976) credits a Canadian reformer, James Wilson Robertson with linking the ideas of both strands of reform. Originally the commissioner of agriculture in Canada, he sought to reform schools in order to improve the quality of life for all Canadians, but for rural Canadians in particular. With the help and financial backing of Sir William Macdonald, Robertson organized the diverse school reformers into a movement (Sutherland, 1976, p.182). Known as the Macdonald-Robertson Movement,



these reformers promoted “practical” education such as agriculture, school gardens, domestic science, nature study, experimental science, pre-vocational work and physical education (Sutherland, 1976). By drawing on both strands of reform Robertson was able to link the needs and development of the ‘whole child’ to manual training as the character and intelligence of the child would be more fully developed in “doing” rather than only “hearing.” It was, according to this argument, only through training the hand, the head and the heart that children would be successful in the new era (Sutherland, 1976, p.181).

In 1910, Robertson was appointed chair of a federal royal commission that would examine the state of industrial and technical training in Canada and other countries. Extending its terms of reference to the limits, the final four volume report of the commission was delivered in 1914 and was “a thorough account of the current state of Canadian education at the time” (Sutherland, 1976, p. 199). Travelling across Canada, the United States and Europe to hear testimony and collect evidence, the Commission also stopped in British Columbia where, Sutherland reports, it was well received and enjoyed extensive press coverage. Although the report would be shelved due to the War, Robertson’s commission report “provided both a new program and a coherent rationale as to why it should be implemented...which gradually shifted opinion in English-speaking Canada to the view that their new society demanded a new kind of education” (Sutherland, 1976, p. 201).

In the years between the First World War and the Putman-Weir Survey (1914-1924), many school districts in British Columbia did incorporate several of the suggested

reforms as agricultural education, domestic science, physical education and school gardens became part of the curriculum at many schools (Johnson, 1964; Sutherland, 1976). There was, however, no consistency across the Province as urban districts were more apt to embrace the new education while the rural districts were not.

Manual training and home economics are generally taught only in the towns and cities. There are sixty-nine instructors for boys and fifty-four for girls. Agriculture is taught by special teachers in some of the high schools, while some 1,500 pupils in these schools are taking special courses in technical or commercial work. Medical and dental inspection are not universal but common in the more important city and town schools. (Putman and Weir, 1924, p. 20)

Progressive ideas and practices were therefore present in the Province but still restricted and largely left up to individual principals, schools and districts to implement. These reforms present an interesting contradiction. Premised on the assumption that “practical” skills would benefit rural children the most, these reforms were, for the most part, not adopted in these areas. It was the urban children and their teachers who primarily planted gardens and exercised.<sup>5</sup>

In British Columbia, there was no fundamental system-wide change to Progressive reforms until after the Putman-Weir Survey. Sutherland (1976) argues that the reason for this was because the initial reformers such as Robertson were mostly “well-educated laymen” (p.231) who were ‘outside’ the educational system. Once they persuaded school officials to incorporate many of the reform ideas, they lost much of their influence as the “school establishment took charge of making over Canadian education” (p.231). For

Sutherland, the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education is the best expression of prewar views on educational reform. However, it is “amateur” and unscientific. After the First World War, a shift occurred to the professional, scientific view of reform of which the Putman-Weir Survey is the best example (Sutherland, 1976).

Relying on aspects of the Progressive movement and on the latest in scientific theory, the *Survey* is a fascinating document that has much to reveal in regard to the expansion and reform of public education and how this was accomplished in British Columbia in the 1920s.

It is apparent that much has been written on the Progressive era of reform and school expansion. Explanations as to why it occurred range from economic and social upheaval ( see for example Barman, 1988;1996; Sutherland 1976; Bowles and Gintis, 1976) to individual initiative and vision (Wood, 1985). The narrative of progress from an amateur to a professional movement of reform is implicit in Sutherland’s work. Seeing the modernization of education as a seamless progression is questionable. Were there no problems? No dissent? How were people convinced that a “new era needed a new education system?” My analysis focusses (within limits) on how the process of reform and expansion of public schooling in British Columbia in the 1920s took place and was indeed possible.

Also while many histories, such as Sutherland’s, refer to the use of scientific theories and the assumptions of Progressivism, they do not always explore this fully. Often

written off as ideology, or as secondary to the *real* relations of history, my main interest lies in investigating the assumptions, rules and structures which produced this particular text of reform. Taking my cues from Link and McCormick (1986) that it is profitable to examine individual reform initiatives or case studies in detail rather than the movement as a whole, and from Sutherland (1976), Johnson (1964) and Hawthorn (1990) that the Putman-Weir Survey is by far the best example of postwar Progressive educational reform, I endeavour to analyze this document in order to contribute to our understanding and knowledge of Progressive educational reform in B.C. By concentrating on an analysis of the text and several supporting documents, it is possible to see how this reform was created in British Columbia.

### British Columbia's Progressive Reform

The British Columbia Department of Education announced in April 1924, that an educational survey commission ( similar to a commission of inquiry) would be conducted in order to investigate a broad range of educational issues in the province. The Department appointed two educational experts, Dr. J.H. Putman, senior inspector of schools for the city of Ottawa, and Dr. G.M. Weir, head of the Department of Education at the University of British Columbia, to be the survey Commissioners. Although officially entitled *Survey of the School System of British Columbia*, it would soon become known as the Putman-Weir Survey after its Commissioners.<sup>6</sup> Guided by a framework of nineteen

questions that focussed primarily on reforming the public school system, the Commission travelled 9500 miles throughout the Province holding 215 conferences, and inspecting 160 public schools and two normal (teacher) schools. This survey was, up until then, the largest single study ever conducted in Canadian education. It was also the first survey of schools ever conducted that used the Stanford-Binet I.Q. tests (Fleming, 2003). It is regrettable that none of the submissions are available for examination.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is still deemed one of the most important documents dealing with educational reform in British Columbia (Johnson, 1964).

Lauded as contributing “more to the design of British Columbia schools than any other single document in this century” (Hawthorne, 1990, p. 143) and as having “a very great influence in shaping the school system over the next thirty years” (Johnson, 1964, p.109), the *Survey* is a pivotal document for understanding Progressive educational reform in British Columbia as it introduced new ideas and affected change in the system (Johnson, 1964; Sutherland, 1976; Hawthorne, 1990; Barman, 1996). For instance, it introduced to British Columbia progressive reforms of enhancing ‘the whole child’ and sought to reorganize grades in order to accommodate the developmental needs of every individual child. It also advocated an expanded curriculum in terms of vocational and training courses, while encouraging the use of general taxation to support the school system (Mann, 1980; Hawthorne, 1990). However, it did so amongst loud opposition.

I examine the text of the *Survey*, along with several other supporting documents, in order to assess how the public education system was criticized, how alternative claims

to ‘truth’ were undermined, and how rationalities of development, progress and efficiency were privileged in the text, thus constructing certain forms of knowledge in its own right. As well, I investigate how scientific knowledge about such things as pedagogy, children’s development, and ‘race,’ amongst others, shaped the meaning of the *Survey* and constituted a certain educational reality.

Basically, this approach allows for the explication of the ways in which certain “regimes of truth” have colonized the avenues for imagining British Columbia as a community, education as a practice, and the young as ‘developing children.’ What were believed to be unquestionable facts and common sense knowledge are seen from this perspective to be historically constituted, transitory, contingent and contestable.

#### A Note on Stylistics and the Chapter Outline

By now you will have noticed my use of quotation marks. Before outlining the chapters let me just say a few words about the marks. Using single quotation marks such as ‘developing child’ or ‘race’ is to draw the reader’s attention to contentious concepts. By utilizing such marks I am signalling to the reader that this study aims to problematize this concept in an effort to offset the taken-for granted status of its meanings.

I also capitalize Progressivism to signal the specific set of discursive and institutional practices that it encompasses. It is not *merely* a set of ideas that reflects particular interests or conceals inequalities but is productive and effective. The use of

double quotation marks is to denote a direct quote or concept that another author has developed.

My examination of the *Survey of the School System* will take shape in the following five chapters. The next chapter is a theoretical overview of approaches to educational reform. Focussing on the “social control” and the “state formation” paradigms, I lay out the terrain of analysis offering a critique of Bruce Curtis’ work in particular. I then discuss the specific concerns of a genealogical perspective and the methods of analysis for this work.

Chapter two presents the broad outline of an analytical schema which illuminates some of the rules and mechanisms of Progressivism. In particular, I examine three regimes of truth in the form of governmentality, nationalism and psychology. All three are encoded in the text of the *Survey* and provide a grid against which it made sense. In addition, I explore two of the rationalities present in the *Survey*. With this chapter, it is possible to critically examine the text and discuss its many assumptions, its authority and its opposition.

The third and fourth chapters are an exploration of the modes of problematization both before the Commission was established and during the Commission as reported in the actual *Survey*. Before an educational inquiry can be called, there first has to be a reason to do so. Chapter three examines the position of the British Columbia Teachers Federation.

How representatives of the Federation criticized the public education system is explored in detail.

In chapter four, I further explore problematization as I examine how the Commission itself criticized educational practices as being inadequate for a “modern nation.” As it created problems and offered solutions, the authors of the report also sought to discredit its opposition, representing them as “reactionaries” who undermined the ‘nation.’ I examine how the opposition was represented and to what effect.

The purpose of the fifth chapter is to examine the constitution of new subjectivities and the consequences of the initiative in more detail. Understanding how educators and administrators sought to guide and influence children, and on what they based their efforts are of paramount importance if we are to understand the various ways in which 1920s subjects were constituted and regulated. In particular, I will examine habit formation, character building and the ‘developing child’ as outlined by the *Survey*. In the second half of the chapter, I analyze how the “dividing practices” of standardized testing both constituted certain subjects and were the effect of the psychological regime of truth. This last section examines the testing program of the *Survey* in some detail.

This genealogical interpretation is a critical impulse and the force of the critique lies in great measure in the capacity to subvert the logic of both texts and readers. While I do not claim to have a grand ‘truth’ or to know a better way to reform schooling, I do embrace this interpretation as a particular reading of reform texts. By utilizing this interpretation, I hope to engage in an empirical account of some of the contingent events



that allow us to think the way we do about educational subjects and as such, contribute to our understanding of a whole range of educational practices and relations.

I now invite the reader to continue and engage with the material I present.

### Endnotes

1. See *A Legacy for Learners: The Report of the Royal Commission on Education* (Victoria, 1988).
2. See for example Herrnstein, R.J. (1994) *The Bell Curve*.
3. Further discussion of Barman's social control thesis is found in chapter two.
4. After the 1858 gold rush, the British Crown terminated the Hudson Bay Company's grant to the Mainland and created the new Colony of British Columbia. Vancouver Island however, would remain under the Hudson Bay Company's control until its grant expired in May, 1859. The Island thereafter came under the direct administration of the British Colonial Office until 1866, when financial considerations caused the two colonies to be amalgamated into one administrative unit. By 1871, the Crown Colony of British Columbia had joined the newly formed Canadian Confederation (Barman, 1996; Johnson, 1964).
5. The causes of this could be numerous, including lack of funds, lack of teachers trained in these areas, and lack of support from parents, teachers and students (Sutherland, 1976).
6. Throughout this dissertation I refer to this one document as the *Survey of the School System*, the *Survey*, and as the Putman-Weir report or Putman-Weir survey.
7. After extensive searches at the B.C. provincial Archives and the Education Archives at UBC, I was told by an archivist that all the submissions had been lost.

## Chapter One

### Theory and Method

Analyzing educational reform in North America has yielded a great deal of insight into various social, economic and political processes. Organizational, structural, occupational and ideological changes in the wider society are often believed to be reflected in, or be the dynamic force pushing for, educational change (Wotherspoon, 1998). Social historians, as well as sociologists of education, have engaged in a debate as to the most telling and useful analysis in an attempt to capture the complexities of reform, both in terms of underlying impetus and the objectives of first establishing and then, reforming the public school systems across North America. Two paradigms have emerged in the debate.

First there is the social control paradigm existing in a variety of forms, which basically views the advent of reform as attempts to control unruly segments of the population through educational indoctrination. In response, Bruce Curtis (1983; 1988; 1992) has attempted to go beyond the paradigm of social control, arguing that rather than repressing and controlling “the unwashed,” educational reform “sought to build

political subjects, and in so doing also construct the state” (Curtis, 1983, p. 100). This second paradigm has come to be known as the state formation or moral regulation paradigm. The social control paradigm emphasizes coercion while the state formation paradigm emphasizes constructing supportive individuals through a variety of measures.

For Curtis educational reform was such a measure that could produce subjects. His analysis, however, is limited as there are other important aspects that can also be discussed in regard to educational reform. It is therefore possible to propose a third view of educational reform -- one which extends Curtis’ work and integrates a genealogical analysis. I argue that analyzing discourse is an important part of understanding public education reform and its ability to constitute problems -- seemingly “common sense,” technical problems -- which are subject to solutions deriving from its own regimes of truth.

Educational reform initiatives, policies, and commissions of inquiry, such as the work of Putman and Weir in British Columbia, provide opportunities to see this political process of the constitution of the ways in which we think about education. Part of this analysis, therefore, focusses on problematization and a reading of discourses which inform the logic of reforming public schooling and contribute to the articulation of educational imperatives at any given time and place.

In particular, I will examine Progressive educational reform as a discourse that had its own particular logic which was deployed through a set of regimes of truth. The regimes classified phenomena and produced effects which contributed to the moral regulation of

subjects. Progressive education in this thesis is therefore cast as a discourse or a system of representation with the power to shape and constitute “the real” (Kiziltan, Bain and Canizares, 1990), as well as being a reflection of other forces. In particular, my work seeks to illuminate the ways in which Progressive education prescribed and proscribed a very narrow vision of reality -- and to what effect. The emphasis is on the way Progressive educational reform intersects with a variety of discourses such as the imperatives of the state, capital, nation, and psychology, to create abnormalities and then conveniently provides remedies.

By drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and others, my analysis extends a growing literature of discourse or genealogical analysis in education (see for example Hunter 1994, 1996; Meadmore, 1993, 1995; Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998; Mayo 2000) to educational reform in Canada. This approach reveals the productive aspects of power and knowledge, while seeking to destabilize our understanding of “natural” or “normal” subjectivities.

This chapter lays out the theoretical terrain of my thesis by placing it within these larger debates and expanding on its insights for understanding educational reform. The first section outlines the social control paradigm in its various forms, including literature that deals directly with the Putman-Weir Survey. The second section discusses Curtis’ work in regard to educational reform and state formation. The final section in this chapter outlines genealogy and governmentality and how it is related to educational reform.

### Social Control and Educational Reform

In his 1983 critique of the existing literature on educational reform, Curtis points out that most of the Canadian literature has been situated in the paradigm of “social control.” Educational reform was viewed from this paradigm as an attempt to repress or control the masses -- whether they be the industrial working class, ‘the poor’ or ‘the criminal.’ Depending on what version of social control was being discussed, educational implementation, organization and reform can be seen as the instrument of the elite, or the bourgeoisie, as it sought to preserve its own interests and security.

As examples of the social control paradigm, Curtis discusses the work of Prentice (1977) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) among others. Prentice’s research on Upper Canadian educational development presented reform as a repressive process whereby school reformers such as Ryerson sought to control crime and poverty through educating the masses. Curtis argues that Prentice’s methodology of allowing the discourse of reformers to “speak for themselves” limited her ability to investigate political struggle and elevated a “minor” theme into a major explanatory principle. As well, her inability to deal effectively with contradictory statements of reformers leads her to see personality defects of individuals, such as Ryerson as the cause of these inconsistencies. Curtis argues that when placed in their structural context as state agents who were “agitating for state control over education” (Curtis, 1983, p. 101), their various inconsistent statements made perfect sense. Curtis faults Prentice’s use of reformers’ actual discourse which alone

cannot place “talk” into a proper context nor enable the researcher to understand the underlying meaning of the discourse.

Curtis’ point is well taken. However his reaction seems to downplay the role of discourse in actively organizing social relations (Valverde, 1991). Discourse analysis can indeed shed light on historical processes (see for example Valverde, 1991; and Riley 1988) as discourse and language are not divorced from the material and social context, but interact with historical reality in a dynamic way. I will discuss more of this analysis later in the chapter.

Curtis (1983) also places the work of neo-marxists Bowles and Gintis into the social control paradigm. Since their work has been of such influence in regard to the sociology of education, a more detailed account is appropriate. Bowles and Gintis (1976) closely follow a structuralist interpretation of the educational system in their classic text, *Schooling in Capitalist America*. They argue that one can best understand the development of schooling in the United States as a process of preparing young people for the social relations of production. “The educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system ... through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production” (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 131).

Schools condition students for the capitalist workplace in several ways. These include subjecting students to a hierarchical structure that replicate the organization of the workplace, by alienating students from one another through a system of rewards in competitive situations, by limiting student control of education, and by differentiating and

rewarding students supposedly on the basis of merit and achievement. Bowles and Gintis, in fact, argue that class, rather than ability, was a better predictor of success. Hence, “these institutions performed the necessary functions dividing, stratifying and fragmenting a labour force for the capitalist market” (Davies, 1994, p. 88).

In particular, the consciousness of students is shaped to support dominant relations, thus insuring the “perpetuation, validation, and smooth operation of economic institutions” (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 127). Minimal coercive force is therefore needed in society as schools are able to mould and reinforce class-differentiated individual personalities who would willingly become part of the capitalist mode of production. Through such preparation, workers are divided from each other, enabling the capitalists to exploit them in a systematic and “legitimate” way. Ultimately, critical thinking, personal development and individual fulfillment are curtailed in favour of the capitalist quest for profit. Schooling, according to Bowles and Gintis, therefore fails individual students and reinforces social inequality.

From the structuralist perspective the school system, although recognized as having “a life of its own” (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p.126), is, in the final instance, a functionary of capital (Davies, 1994). The school, as part of the state system, is therefore an integral part of the reproduction of class relations as well as legitimating the process of capital accumulation. This is further demonstrated in Bowles and Gintis’ historical analysis.



They contend that formal education in the United States underwent three major historical changes that correspond to changes in the capitalist economy. According to Bowles and Gintis, mass public education initially arose in response to the growing industrialization of the U.S. and its need for a disciplined wage labour force. They argue further that as the economy changed in the second and third phases of economic development in the United States, so too did the public schools.

During the second transition between 1890 and 1930, progressive educational reforms converged with the growing concentration of corporate capital and a diversified workforce to produce a bureaucratic education system based on standardization, testing and systematic control. The third phase involved correspondence between rapid expansion of post-secondary education and post World War II growth of professional and white-collar occupations needed to co-ordinate labour and capital under intensified control by State and corporate agencies. (Wotherspoon, 1998, p. 33)

Since the era of Progressive educational reforms is the main focus of my work, more detail of Bowles and Gintis' argument is in order. Following their main premise that schooling corresponds to economic change, they argue that between 1890 and 1930 the occupational structure in the U.S. was changing as corporate capital grew, and independent businesses and farming declined (Bowles and Gintis, 1977, p. 182). At the same time, labour organizations in the United States were becoming more militant with the introduction of scientific management and the intensification of the division of labour. In the midst of growing conflict, the ideology of Progressivism emerged and sought to reform schools in order to better attend to the individual needs and abilities of students.

Advocating Progressive reforms such as “child-centered pedagogy,” reformers sought to change educational practices by introducing such things as

... the comprehensive high school, tracking, educational testing, home economics, the junior high school, the student council, the daily flag pledge, high-school athletics, the school assembly, vocational education and guidance, clubs, school newspapers and monopolization of executive authority by superintendents and other professionals. (Bowles and Gintis, 1977, p. 181)

Bowles and Gintis argue that it was actually the changes in the economy which fueled the expansion of schooling and the implementation of these Progressive reforms, as future workers capable of being trained were needed, as were supervisors and experts to manage the changing workplace. As more students were enrolled and secondary schooling expanded, flexibility and diversity of curricula were also necessary as many students were not able to succeed in the uniform “elite” class of the day; hence, different streams were established to supposedly meet the individual needs and abilities of students. Standardized tests were touted as the most scientific and expert way to determine the child’s abilities and place them in the most appropriate stream. However, Bowles and Gintis argue that these reforms, rather than benefitting individual development, actually corresponded to the needs of capital to differentiate future workers on the basis of ability, independence and self-directed activity in the workplace.

According to Bowles and Gintis, no matter how well meaning the Progressive movement was, it simply reproduced stratification and bureaucracy as children from working class families were overwhelmingly streamed into remedial or vocational

classrooms. This made sure that worker mobility was stifled while the needs of capital for differently skilled workers was reproduced in the state system. Bowles and Gintis conclude that inequality, and not personal improvement, was the outcome of Progressive educational reforms in the U.S.

In this structural analysis, educational reform corresponds to changes in the economy and the need for different types of worker training. The ideology of Progressivism masked the contradictions of reproducing labour power while promising individual fulfillment. Schooling, for these neo-Marxists, is the instrument which sought to socially control workers and socialize them to accept “their place.” The public school system as a state institution is, in the “last instance,” determined by the needs of capital and acts in the best interests of the capitalist class as workers learned to accept “legitimate” forms of social control.

This research greatly advanced our understanding of educational structures and made sociologists seriously consider the importance of the historical development of schooling as a central though indirect aspect in the reproduction of social inequalities. However, Bowles and Gintis were also criticized for being “vulgar” economic determinists and for their inability to account for educational reforms that did not necessarily support capitalist relations nor reproduce ideology (Carnoy and Levin, 1985; Hunter, 1994).

In the literature on Progressive educational reform in British Columbia, the social control thesis, of how schools are the mechanism to control “unruly” or “problematic”

segments of the population, is also evident. For example, B. Anne Wood (1985) not only argues that the Putman-Weir Survey was a defense of the existing social relations of power, but that the testing program was a mechanism for social control. The standardized tests would measure differences among students and also inform policy. In particular, Wood implied that the I.Q. tests which were conducted for the Putman-Weir Survey, were a way of restricting and segregating 'Asian' students. While recognizing the racist motives of such testing, Wood was unable to support the claim that the test scores were ever used in the manner she implied. In fact, the push for segregated classes for Chinese students in the Victoria school district actually occurred before the *Survey* was even initiated (see Stanley, 1991).

Hawthorne (1989) concurs with Wood's assessment that education and in particular, intelligence tests were used as a way to solve and control perceived social problems such as poverty, feeble-mindedness and crime. However he also emphasizes, in the vein of Bowles and Gintis, how the tests used in the *Survey* were a strong mechanism of social reproduction that the provincial state wielded in its own interests (and one would assume the interests of capital), thus preserving the status quo of capitalist relations both ideologically and structurally (Hawthorne, 1989, p. 27).

Jean Barman (1988; 1996) provides a modified version of the social control thesis in regard to the reform of the educational system and the *Survey*. She argues that the Putman-Weir Survey incorporated the concerns of two very distinct groups of reformers in the Province. On the one hand, middle-class social reformers were concerned with the

quality of education and the welfare of children. This concern included not only their own children, but also the children of working class and immigrant families. Barman argues that part of this middle-class concern arose out of the labour militancy that the Province experienced after World War One. These potentially “dangerous” groups needed to be controlled and brought into the society (1996, p. 226) and education was the way in which this was to be accomplished.

On the other hand, Barman claims that the labour movement, which had been advocating workplace reform, also supported educational reform. “The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council’s brief echoed popular sentiment in its demand that there be ‘equal opportunities for education’ across the society” (Barman, 1996, p. 228). Barman argues that the *Survey* “incorporated many of the priorities of working people” (Barman, 1988, p. 44) as it opposed both military training, which the Vancouver Trade and Labour Council had denounced,<sup>1</sup> and high-school fees which limited working people’s access to schooling. She also points out that although differences existed amongst working people on the “degree to which the content of schooling should have immediate occupational utility, agreement existed concerning the necessity to encourage more children to remain in school longer” (Barman, 1988, p. 29). The Putman-Weir Survey concurred and endeavoured to restructure the system with this in mind.

As Barman argues, these particular positions were not unique to workers’ organizations alone, but rather coincided with the position of other middle-class social reformers such as the Victoria University Women’s Club who also spoke against school

fees in the interest of all children (Barman, 1988, p.49). In addition, Barman points out that it was middle-class business interests (supposedly those who would benefit most from extended schooling according to the Bowles and Gintis analysis) who actually led the opposition to progressive reforms, opting instead for cost-cutting and lowered taxation.<sup>2</sup> Barman states that intra-class conflict over educational reform was therefore more common than inter-class struggle.

Despite the fact that labour was allied with middle-class reformers and that other groups in society benefitted as much or more than did working people, Barman concludes that this should not be equated with workers receiving no benefit at all (Barman, 1988, p. 52). Nor should we conclude, she argues, that working people were merely passive dupes on whom education was imposed by capitalist interests that sought to reproduce inequality. Barman's main concern is to demonstrate that working class people and their labour organizations were actively engaged in community and educational reform. She seems to want to counter claims that those workers not involved in "revolutionary" activity and who "merely" opted for reform were somehow victims of "false consciousness." Instead she paints a picture of working-class reformers who formed alliances with middle-class reformers to improve life for their children.

The workers' concern was not social control but equality of opportunity for their children. In this sense, schooling should provide the "level playing field" that would allow all children, regardless of background, the opportunity to go as far as their ability would take them. The idea that education could democratize and create a just society was

certainly part of John Dewey's position which informed the Progressive movement in schooling. However, as Wood, Hawthorne and Barman all argue, the educational reforms proposed in the *Survey* and ultimately implemented in the provincial system, contributed to inequality rather than eliminating it.

These modified versions of the social control paradigm presented the reforms of the Putman-Weir Survey as ultimately conservative, supporting existing power relations and at least partially attempting to repress and control different immigrant groups and the working class, the potentially dangerous elements, through testing, vocational training, curriculum reform and grade differentiation. However, Barman in particular points out that this was not a straight forward matter and that not everyone involved with reforming the school system had the same goal of social control and repression.

Although Wood, Hawthorne and Barman all recognize the state as an important aspect of reform, none fully develop this idea. Hawthorne (1989) insists that we need to pay more attention to the role of the state and experts in B.C.; however, his version is of a two dimensional entity which merely acted in the interests of capitalism. While never denying the importance of economics for educational reform, it is but one of the elements in the process. Instead, many view the state as having some "relative autonomy" from capital, which leads to policies and actions that may not always support the reproduction of inequality or that may indeed only focus on political struggles and rule, thus building the state and consequently the nation. This was precisely the argument that Bruce Curtis made in regard to educational reform in nineteenth century Ontario.

### Educational Reform and State Formation

Arguing against the “social control” paradigm, Curtis (1983; 1988) points out that educational reform in mid-nineteenth century Upper Canada was not simply a matter of repression or neutralization, but rather “sought to reconstruct political rule in society by reconstructing the political subjectivity of the population” (Curtis, 1983, p. 100). By concentrating his analysis on moral regulation, state formation, political contestation and the actual content of the education reforms, Curtis moves beyond the simplistic, repressive model and adds depth to our understanding of the process of reform.

A central concern of Curtis’ work is how education became a means for the “making” of young people into “children” (1988, p. 16) who would be self-regulating subjects.

Educational practice was centrally concerned with political self-making, subjectification and subordination; with anchoring the conditions of political governance in the selves of the governed; with the transformation of rule into a popular psychology. (Curtis, 1988, p. 15)

Egerton Ryerson’s “pedagogical humanism” was one example that Curtis used to illustrate how rule was to be implemented through reason and moral conscience rather than through corporal punishment.

Rejecting the rote learning of English schools, Ryerson instead sought to teach each child to feel and to reason in a positive, uplifting manner. Individuals would behave



not out of fear of violence, but because school was a pleasurable experience that had instilled “habits, dispositions and loyalties of a sort congenial to the state and to representative government” (1988, p. 110). In this way, order was to be maintained and stability assured.

Christianity in nineteenth century Ontario also played a very important role according to Curtis, as it provided the discourse of universality. Membership in the “common Christianity” of Protestantism provided the language of the universal principles of behaviour towards the self and others that would translate into a common ‘nation’ and citizenship (1983, pp. 111-112). Curtis argues that the principles of tolerance, meekness and respect, would help people to govern themselves, reject violence and accept political authority and rule. Harmony among all members of civil society was the goal of Ryerson’s reforms with self-repression and rational administration the techniques of governance.

Educational reform sought to transform the subjectivity of the body politic. It sought to transform the nature of the individual’s relation to himself and others such that governance could proceed by dealing with sentiments and reason. It sought to make the individual a willing participant in his own governance, giving him a “Christian character” so that there could be a “Christian nation.” Insofar as this exercise succeeds, it appears to the individual only as the self he or she lives, as the elemental force of natural law. It may not appear as a form of governance at all. This is precisely its power. (Curtis, 1983, p. 114)

The focus of Curtis’ work is the moral dimensions of educational reform making it significantly different from the social control paradigm. Rather than arguing that a powerful class or that ‘society’ imposes forms of social control on the powerless, he

emphasizes how children were guided by experts and encouraged to be self-regulating. This is the crux of moral regulation where projects of reform seek to govern others through external regulation while promoting the governance of the self through internal constitution (Hunt, 1999).

Moral regulation involves the deployment of distinctively moral discourses which construct a moralised subject and an object or target which is acted upon by means of moralising practices. Moral discourses seek to act on conduct that is deemed to be intrinsically bad or wrong. (Hunt, 1999, pp. 6-7)

A set of moral values direct conduct toward some ideal state of perfection. In a way, the ideals are built into the subject positions helping people to identify with these subjectivities and strive toward them. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the emphasis was on the promotion and formation of ‘character’ which was often portrayed as “a set of external virtues (perseverance, honesty, etc.) to be mastered and incorporated into the self” (Hunt, 1999, p. 4). For Curtis, Protestantism played the role of providing the moral principles which individuals were to embrace enabling each to govern him or her self.

Throughout much of his work, Curtis has sought to find some common ground or place where it is possible to integrate “Foucaultian insights about government and self with a critical political economy of capitalism” (1997, p. 303). Following the work of Corrigan and Sayer (1985), Curtis attempts to explain state formation<sup>3</sup> and its effects on cultural transformation through the mechanism of moral regulation in educational institutions.

Moral regulation normalizes or makes natural what are, in fact, ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order.

State schooling became one of the institutions for training “the people” in the rituals and routines of obedience, thereby creating supportive subjects for a bourgeois society (Curtis, 1988, p. 366). Ideally, these individuals would willingly give up legitimate political activity to representatives, would respect the rights of others and would follow procedures. The identities appeared as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ premises for a specific social order and this political consciousness was typically referred to as “good moral character” (Curtis, 1992, p. 6).

Curtis argues it was professional men and men of property who possessed such character, but it would benefit the state if “the people” also possessed such qualities. This was the task of public schools, to instruct the subject on their rights and obligations and to understand the limits of democracy; “such was the ideological thrust of schooling” (Curtis, 1992, p. 7). On the one hand, schools legitimized existing inequalities and represented the bourgeois form of character as a universal good, thus “allowing men of property to speak for society as a whole” (Curtis, 1992, p. 7). On the other hand, schools also imparted democratic ideas and beliefs. According to Curtis, the inculcation of democratic beliefs ultimately presented power and privilege as natural and represented the particular interests of the powerful as universal.

For Curtis, political rule was reconstructed through the restructuring of political subjectivity. Ultimately, culture and rituals of obedience become ideological as they

masked social relations and reproduced the power and privilege in a bourgeois society. Similar to an Althusserian position where the Ideological State Apparatuses produced subjects who then reproduced the dominant power relations, Curtis allows the economic determinants to recede in favour of political ones. However, Curtis manages to go beyond Althusser's formulation by including contestation and opposition as an important aspect of his analysis. As well, he incorporates some of Foucault's work on the productive aspects of power and subjectivity. However, his analysis stops short of its potential to shed new light on educational reform, since he remains firmly rooted within the Marxist paradigm.

In attempting to find common ground between Marxist analysis and Foucault's work, Curtis seems to follow the general direction of other Marxist scholars who have regarded Foucault as providing insight and clarification into issues of individualization and power relations under modern Capitalism (Smart, 1985). However, as Smart points out, these readings mostly proceed from *within* Marxist parameters, assuming that the "founding assumptions of an existing Marxist problematic are not in question, and that an alternative form of analysis may simply be subsumed or incorporated" (Smart, 1985, p. 158).

Curtis (1997) implies that each perspective may have equal billing, so to speak, and yet his emphasis on the dialectic between "human agency" and structure (1992) and the ideological nature of schooling demonstrates that Marxist analysis remains at the core of his work. Rather than an integration of theory, there is instead an addition of some of the more interesting aspects of Foucault's work on subjectivity.

Despite these limitations, I argue that it is possible to further develop the analysis of educational reform in Canada by building on the strengths of Curtis' work in terms of extending the analysis to include aspects of discourse, problematization, and governmentality. The strengths of Curtis' position include contestation, the actual content of reform, his emphasis on moral regulation and his use of Foucault's understanding of productive power. Each of these aspects provides for a more indepth and complex understanding of educational reform. However, by moving away from the dominance of Marxist political economy we can utilize a genealogical analysis to explain aspects that Curtis does not fully explore and, in the case of problematization, simply takes for granted. This does not leave aside questions of the state nor of political economy, but attempts to explain aspects that Marxists, whether they advocate the social control or the state formation stance, do not. In order to fully develop my position and critique, it is necessary to discuss Foucault's work in greater detail.

### Genealogical Analysis

Although there is no coherent or integrated Foucaultian theory, there are important themes and ideas in Foucault's work that allow us to view ourselves in new and different ways. I propose to utilize several of the main themes found in his work in order to understand how Progressive educational reform in the province of British Columbia was possible. In particular, Foucault's genealogical analysis, his understanding of discourse,

truth, power and subjectivity and his focus on governmentality will form the locus of my analysis. It is important to recognize that Foucault's own ideas changed over time from "archaeology," in which an analysis of discursive structures dominated, to a genealogical emphasis on power and knowledge, to the government of others and of one's self in the governmentality literature (Mills, 1997; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983). "While there are certain common threads that run throughout his writings, the emphases and configurations change" (Knight, 2002). Therefore it is imperative to treat the work critically and to supplement it when necessary. I will not dwell on the nuances of change in Foucault's work but instead emphasize the importance of the themes mentioned above.

There are other scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser and Michel Pecheux whose work on discourse is also important and contribute to our understanding of language (Macdonnell, 1986). However, I choose to focus primarily on Foucault's work, with some modifications, for a number of reasons.<sup>4</sup> Norman Fairclough (1992) outlines two of the most important reasons for utilizing Foucault's work. The first is his emphasis on the constitutive nature of discourse. Foucault's argument that discourse plays a major role in creating social objects and subjects reveals the complexity of language and the contingent reality<sup>5</sup> we live in. It also points to discourse being a material force (among many) that constitute subjectivity.

The second important reason is the way in which discursive structures are defined by their relationship with other discourses. They refer to one another and are constituted in the process of reference. This means that discourses cannot be analyzed in isolation, but

must be understood in their social and historical context. Another reason that Foucault's work is central to my project is that he is concerned with theorizing power and as such allows us to see the complexity of power relations. His work in this regard has been very influential (see for example Curtis' work) and has made available a whole range of additional objects, relations and practices for consideration. In this sense his work has expanded our ability to see and to question our preconceived notions.

Foucault (1983) argues that his work was a "history of the present" or genealogy which began by investigating processes of discursive formation and manifestations of rituals of power. These are traced to see where they emerged, "took shape, gained importance and affected politics. In short this mode of analysis asks how certain terms and concepts have historically functioned within discourse" (Campbell, 1992, p. 5). Genealogy is not easily classified as a set of methodological rules that one simply applies to the collection and analysis of data. Instead it is a mode of inquiry that focuses on historically specific discourses that provide for individual and collective identities and questions the confines of truth and order. In terms of identities, the question is not whether a free-standing human being exists, but rather how it happens that *this* particular (and not *that*) representation gets constructed. What is understood about the self at any given period of time is a matter of local practice. In a genealogical approach, the question is not "Who is Man?" but rather "Which one?" (Shapiro, 1992, p.3). Let us further consider Althusser's (1971) remarks on subjectivity:

[Y]ou and I are *always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of [discursive] recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and...irreplaceable subjects. (pp.46-47)<sup>6</sup>

Cast in these terms, the arguably spurious dichotomy (i.e., “Is the subject constitutive or constituted?”<sup>7</sup>) dissolves. Rigid, polarized positions are no longer the only options. A discursive theory of subjectivity can emphasize the power of language and logic to “constitute” (produce, determine, shape) “subjects” (agents, identities, selves) without running logically to the most extreme and often exaggerated position (i.e., that there are no subjects, that individuals have no power). Rather the stance Althusser suggests is that “we” (individuals, people, agents) are situated in discourse (recognizable through its language), implicated in its operations, yet still concrete individuals. The move is not to say that we have no intentionality, but rather to reveal the complexity of the interplay between discourse and subjectivity. In this light, the challenge is not to debate whether “the subject” has been erased, but rather to “trace how power circulates and surprises, theorize how subjects spring from discourses that incite them” (Britzman, 1995, p.236). In this work, I therefore investigate “the kind of people education can make” (p.237).<sup>8</sup>

Foucault’s term for an examination of the assumptions and modes of thought characteristic of the “attitude” of modernity, which both undergird and limit present day practices, is “a critical ontology of ourselves” (Foucault, 1984). It is therefore an historical investigation of the limits imposed on thinking, being and acting. Therefore meaning,



modes of problematization, forms of rationality and mechanisms of power are read as “a grid of intelligibility of the social order” (Foucault, 1980a).

Generally, the approach endeavours to isolate the rules, assumptions, rationalities and modes of problematization undergirding contemporary practice. Modes of problematization are particularly significant for my work as I investigate how the reform discourse is saturated with the logic of various regimes of truth and rationalities which help to make the prevailing 1920s educational practices inadequate.

An important part of this genealogical analysis is about how problems are articulated and the solutions offered in accordance with the logic of the dominant discourse. For example, both Bowles and Gintis, and Curtis, assume that the needs of capital or of the state are somehow self-defining and that they emerge somewhere outside of social-discursive construction and contestation. This is highly problematic as it presupposes, rather than explores, the discursive articulation of the needs and imperatives of capital and/or the state. By analyzing modes of problematization, it is possible to come to an understanding of how the imperatives of capital and the state are discursively formulated and articulated to the imperatives of education at any given time and space.

Before policy is developed or action taken to promote citizenship or to train individuals with skills that will benefit employers, there has to be a problematizing activity<sup>9</sup> -- problems must be identified. Something is not quite right. Therefore, the problem must be found, solutions articulated and strategies of implementation discussed. As well, whose opinion counts, who can speak and who is heard are important aspects of this activity,

especially in regard to establishing discourses and any resulting conflict and struggle over meaning and practices. 'Truth,' in the form of moral ideals, therefore helps to identify what is going "wrong" and how it should be fixed. In other words, 'truth' as a moral and as a political concept makes it possible for power to be exercised.

Foucault is not the first nor only scholar to use the term "discourse." This concept is widely applied in a variety of disciplines (Mills, 1997) including linguistics, social psychology and sociology, indicating diverse definitions and analyses (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000). Within structuralist and poststructuralist theory, under which Foucault's work can be said to belong, the term "discourse" denotes a central concern with how language is a system with its own rules that has the effect of being able to constitute not only practices, but persons' ability to think and express themselves (Mills, 1997). This is a decisive break with other uses of the concept, such as the social constructionists who view language as a seemingly unproblematic reflection of reality (Loseke, 1999) or more traditional linguists who view language as being a transparent, expressive form of communication or a form of representation (Mills, 1997).

The poststructuralist position posits that discourses are material practices that play important roles in actively organizing social relations and meaning rather than merely reflecting an already material world (Valverde, 1991). For instance, Foucault argues that discourses produce things such as an utterance, a concept, or an effect and they constrain by attempting to confine and create parameters of practice.

Discursive practices are characterized by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices. (Foucault, 1977, p.199)

Discourses therefore help to create the frameworks in which we think and act at certain historical conjunctures. This is not a straight forward matter, however, as more than one discourse may come into play in any context and contradict the other. The result can be opposition and struggle. In addition, discourses are not fixed, but in a constant state of change. The key to this analysis is to examine the various structures, rules and sanctioned statements that are contained within any such discourse. This approach recognizes the materiality of discourse and its effects in its own right, as discourses may at times define and promote rather than only rationalize or reflect social arrangements and institutions (Goldberg, 1993, p. 95). A Foucaultian perspective therefore directs our attention to constitutive processes of definition and articulation, and “the means through which one version of objects becomes established and alternatives undermined” (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, p. 64).

This concern with language is not about ideology which is often analyzed from within a Marxist perspective as a mask that hides a deeper concealed truth of economic, social or political oppression.<sup>10</sup> Although there are several interpretations of the concept of ideology from within Marxism, the negative or restricted concept of ideology involves a distortion of ideas which mostly reflect the dominant social relations of production

(Larrain, 1983). However, ideas could also shape reality as they legitimate the existing class system creating political passivity in the subordinated class thus perpetuating dominant social relations (Morrison, 1996). I argue that while discourse incorporates legitimation as a dimension of its constitutive capacities, it is not ideological in the sense that it hides ultimate 'truths' or works on behalf of pre-discursive interests. Rather one cannot constitute something as real without simultaneously legitimating it as such.

In order to further understand the importance of discourse it is also necessary to discuss the link between discursive elements and effects of power, 'truth' and knowledge (Mills, 1997). First, I consider a contrasting position. Crudely speaking, a Marxist perspective generally asks *why* an event occurred while trying to establish who did what to whom. Typically, this analysis involves the history of relations between social classes and their struggles for power. The objective is often to identify the origins of power (Dean, 1994). For critical theorists in particular, the focus is on the actors who wield power in their own interest or in the interest of a certain class. These theorists investigate who is favoured in decision making and how this helps to create domination and subordination. Power is therefore considered to be an object that people use to support their interests over others (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 17).

Central to this perspective on power is that, over time, some classes and individuals have come to possess more power than others, repressing others in their wake. Power, when wielded from above, is therefore constraining and coercive. It is repressive and distorts the 'truth' while often limiting knowledge. Accordingly politics, and hence a

version of social justice, are often related to identifying those who have too much power, understanding how they acquired it and wresting it from them to bring about change. The crucial element in these accounts is the ‘truth’ of the facts. For Foucault, however, a different study of history is possible.

For Foucault, the concept of power is not a simple matter. It is neither an institution nor a structure, but a complex, diverse web of relations that continually shifts and changes, existing, as such, only in its effects and practices. In other words, it exists only when put into action (Foucault, 1983). It does not simply exist in institutions nor is it only violent and coercive; instead it exists within the social body and can be positive and productive. “Power is no longer simply ‘limit and lack;’ it is an energy that can illuminate and generate as well as kill” (Knight, 1992, p. 6). For example, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) demonstrates first how the subjectivity “criminal” was constituted by the discourse of punishment and then how criminality came to serve the production of “docile bodies” in a normalized, disciplined society. Here, the individual criminal is the effect of a powerfully productive discourse.

A genealogical investigation therefore centres on *how* an event, explanation or subject (referring to both individual and collective subjects) is constituted by power, ‘truth’ and knowledge. This is a decisive move away from looking for the underlying ‘truth’ of the facts toward an interest in understanding the movement and clashes of historical practices. Whether or not a discourse is ‘true’ is not the concern of this approach.

Truth is of the world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980b p.131)

The crucial element in this analysis is how facts, knowledge and 'truths' are constructed and what consequences result. Generally, the idea is to examine the discursive processes by which true and false statements become distinguished and how the 'truth' is institutionally sanctioned in order to produce effects.

Although genealogical analysis is also known as a form of "critical discourse analysis" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992) I have decided to avoid the use of this term since it is fraught with difficulties and means many things to many people.<sup>11</sup> Instead, I focus my efforts on a genealogy of educational Progressivism by reading the documents for evidence of statements<sup>12</sup> that are considered to be truthful knowledge. Rules, techniques and codes of disciplines such as psychology help to establish what is 'true' and 'false' and thus exclude certain knowledge. What is of interest in any regime of truth is what actually counts as truth, how other forms of knowledge are excluded from consideration and what effects are possible given these choices.

My genealogical analysis will also discuss rationalities which are generally defined as certain ways of thinking (Mills, 1997). Linked to regimes of truth, rationalities help to demarcate acceptable knowledge production. In other words, rationalities are organizing

principles or provide a logic of practice. For example, a rationality of developmentalism provides classifications of stages based on a supposed progressive, linear movement. If I were to utilize this rationality, I could produce knowledge that demonstrated stages of development, whether in a child or a civilization. It is in this production and classification that I create the very thing I speak of. Foucault argues that this form of analysis enables us to understand how certain ways of thinking and acting in regard to knowledge, help to create, and not merely reflect, reality.

Regimes of truth and rationalities help to impose order and create categories, thus limiting and excluding some knowledge and ‘truths’ while emphasizing others. Both help to produce our “vision” of educational reform while at the same moment narrowing our sight to only a few options in regard to what counts as educational reform. This form of analysis also argues that each statement leads to others. So, for example, if the “problem” of education is defined in a particular way, then there are only so many potential solutions. What counts as an educational “problem” in the first place is informed by the ‘truth’ and knowledge of, in this case, Progressivism.

Part of this analysis examines the content of the reform text for ‘truthful’ statements, but it also examines the conditions of the discursive formation by examining the background against which the *Survey* makes sense. Therefore certain local texts besides the *Survey* are examined as they helped to critique the British Columbia school system in the first place. This enables myself and the reader to trace the logic of reform.

Despite this approach's strength and ability to render practices of reform visible, there exist many critiques of this mode of analysis (see for example Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983; Taylor, 1986; Fairclough 1992; Mills, 1997). In regard to my work, I emphasize three critical points that build on Foucault's position by modifying and improving the complexity of his analysis. The first has to do with the apparent imposition of discourse onto persons without a full accounting of resistance. Although there is room for opposition in Foucault's work, it often appears that people are "victims" and structurally determined by discourses beyond our control. Many Feminist theorists have taken issue with this point in particular and scholars such as Dorothy Smith (1990) and Judith Butler (1990) have argued that discursive constraints are often negotiated and subjectivity is "performed" rather than simply imposed. This allows for the space of alternative, unstable constitutions of subjects rather than fixed entities.

Sara Mills (1997) also argues that we need to emphasize the various aspects of resistance that can be read in texts. For example, if we view femininity as a discourse then rather than seeing advice manuals for women as being an indicator of their oppression, we can instead view the manuals as an "indication of the scale of the problem posed by women and their resistance in being counselled in this way" (Mills, 1997, p. 88). By emphasizing the complexity of subjectification and resistance, these scholars (and many others) offer a modification to genealogical interpretation that focusses on contestation and the context of conflictual relations of any particular discourse.



While the first modification points to the importance of resistance, the second modification attempts to answer how it is possible that people are actually convinced to take on some of the various subjectivities constituted in discourses. The two points can be seen to complement one another as we can explore how is it possible to be divided from some identities and resist, while also being induced to identify with others. It is here that a genealogical approach can benefit from the Social Constructionist approach to rhetoric.

Social Constructionists examine what “claims-makers” say and do to convince an audience that troublesome conditions exist (Loseke, 1999). The Constructionists’ overriding concern is not whether a claim is true or false, but with *how* humans create meaning. In addition, they recognize that there is competition amongst various claims-makers who employ different strategies, such as creating “villains” and “victims.” A hierarchy of credibility is also discussed as a way that claims-makers can legitimate their views. Much of this sounds very similar to a genealogical approach, but Constructionists begin from a very different epistemological base.

According to Loseke (1999), Constructionists see themselves and their work as value-neutral and scientific and language as a “real” representation of the world. Language for Constructionists, therefore, reflects experience, rather than being viewed as a material practice which helps to constitute “reality.” Another difference is that for a Constructionist claims-making is individualized and attributed to personal motives or self-interest, rather than structure and context.

A genealogical approach does share the Social Constructionists' view that determining the ultimate 'truth' of a claim is not of concern. However, those utilizing genealogy are interested in how 'truth' claims are constructed within a discourse. How we critique an event or activity, and on what we base that critique, tells us a great deal about the ways in which we determine what counts as 'truth' and knowledge at any given time and place. Understanding the discursive processes of 'truth,' in turn, leads us to analyze relations of power that are constraining and productive at the same moment. This is a far cry from the Social Constructionist position that a hierarchy of credibility determines legitimacy or that individualized strategies simply produce types of people. Rather, a genealogical interpretation sees problematization as being informed by a complex array of discursive structures which are embedded in social and historical contexts.

Despite the differences between these two perspectives, a genealogical approach can benefit from the social constructionist methodology of the rhetorical dimensions of claims-making. According to Ibarra and Kitsuse (1993), rhetoric consists of constitutive techniques and processes of speaking and reasoning . Their particular focus is on the construction of social problems and, as such, how people become participants in any social problems discourse. For instance, rhetorical idioms are commonsense constructions of morality which endow claims of social problems with significance by incorporating particular values and calling forth images and symbols that evoke feeling (pp. 35-36). These idioms clarify an "ethos implicit in the claim. This is especially facilitated by each idiom's characteristic set of positive and negative terms, that is, the idiom's preferred

objects of praise and scorn” (p. 36). The rhetoric of discourse therefore encourages participants to be sympathetic to the claims being made and to structure their own claims along the same line and not others.

By incorporating an analysis of rhetoric from the Social Constructionist perspective, it is possible to address a missing component of genealogy; namely, an account of how subjects are induced to identify with their subjectivity and against those they are divided from. In other words, it is one thing to create the frame of possibilities and actions discursively, but it is another to persuade persons to “take up” or activate their subjectivities in particular ways. A central component of discourse is its constitutive capacity to not only divide and classify reality, but also its capacity to get us to embrace these categories as our own, making them real and effective. It is the rhetorical aspects of discourse that allow for this to happen (Knight, 2002). The Putman and Weir Survey uses several rhetorical devices to discredit their opponents while urging the reader to identify with their claims and the aims of the report. This will be further explored in subsequent chapters.

The third modification is based on Norman Fairclough’s (1992) argument that texts are open to various interpretations and that often their meaning is unclear and ambivalent. This is especially the case in media analysis when it is uncertain who is speaking as voices within the text become blended with that of other official documents (p. 110). He argues that by focussing on the contradictions, disjunctures and ambivalence of discourses, we get a better picture of the complexity of how discourses affect social

subjects. This extends my own analysis by being aware of instances of resistance and contradiction, and by remaining open to the various meanings that the text conveys. Not everything in a text is unproblematic nor transparent and consideration should be given to the silences as well as the present structures and utterances throughout the text of the Putman-Weir Survey.

These three aspects provide for a more critical approach and help to bridge some of the gaps left in Foucault's work. Though far from a complete overhaul of genealogy, the emphasis on resistance, rhetoric and textual ambivalence supplement the strengths of this approach and provide for a more complete and interesting assessment of the Putman-Weir Survey in British Columbia.

#### Governance of Others and of the Self

Another significant theme that runs through Foucault's later work is his concern with governmentality or what has become known as the 'governance of self' and the 'governance of others' (Foucault, 1991a). Governing is broadly defined as social actions that attempt to direct the conduct of persons.

'Government' did not refer only to the political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick. It did not only cover the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection, but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern,

in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. (Foucault, 1991a, p. 221)

Foucault argues that there is a wide range of people involved in the practices of governing which are directed at a wide variety of targets. Governing in this broad sense is therefore not restricted to state institutions but can be seen in other social institutions and agencies which engage in governmental activities. Examples include doctors who govern patients, sports teams that govern players, and schools that govern pupils. Sources of governing the conduct of persons are therefore diverse and are not always initiated by a dominant class, or state but can originate from all levels of society. At times these projects of regulation may combine state action and popular action in an attempt to influence behaviour,<sup>13</sup> and depending on a wide array of relations, the projects will have varying degrees of success and failure (Hunt, 1999).

From this perspective, government generally takes two forms. The first is instrumental or external action directed at the conduct of others and the second is the moral dimension where subjects are induced to strive for particular moral ideals and hence to participate in their own practices of self governance. Moral regulation not only constitutes subjects in the classificatory sense, but it also contains normative judgments that some behaviour and attitudes are normal and good while others are simply wrong. These deviant or bad behaviours/attitudes are also thought to result in personal and social harm. In this sense, people are encouraged to 'turn away' from this harm and 'take up'

morally correct subject positions themselves. Regulation therefore shapes experience but it does not exercise total control.

Regulatory or normalizing practices at work in social settings, compare, differentiate, hierarchize, homogenize, and exclude (Gleason, 1999, p. 8). It is in this sense that alternative definitions and behaviours are marginalized or silenced. As Gleason (1999) argues, the normal becomes socially acceptable through the work of such disciplines as psychology whose version of normalcy is supported by institutions such as schools and conveyed through informal channels such as popular advice in the media. Such regulatory practices are found throughout the text of the Putman-Weir Survey and will be examined in detail.

Also apparent in the *Survey* is how governance in the broad sense works within the state. What Curtis, and Corrigan and Sayer, refer to as state formation can be seen as the governmentalization of the state.<sup>14</sup> They have concentrated their analyses mainly on the changing institutional apparatus and framework of the state, but what they seem to miss is that the very logic of problematization with which the state was confronted had also changed from an imperative of territory to one of demography.

Foucault traced this emergence of governmentality from the sixteenth century onwards as he noted a marked shift in political treatises toward the rationality of the state and away from the traditional framework of sovereignty. Rather than being concerned with matters of the Prince and his relation to the state, a new “reason of the state” emerged which focused on the state itself and what it governs (Foucault, 1991a). The

concern became the more general problematic of government: a problematic which included government of souls, of families, of children, of oneself, and of the state (Foucault, 1983). Governmentality is therefore born out of this field and leads to an expansion and re-formation of the state as an apparatus or complex of institutions that strives to regulate, supervise and enhance the lives and productiveness of its population. Curtis did point out in his 1983 article that questions and problems about educational reform were inextricably connected to problems about who should rule and how they might rule in Upper Canada in the 1840s ( pp. 103-104); however, he did not take the next step of identifying and analyzing this as a process of governmentalization. His point about questions of rule is precisely what governmentalization of the state is all about. Curtis does not discuss problematization and therefore he does not account for the shift in logic which leads to the process of what he calls “state formation.”

Government acts in a calculated manner upon the activities and relations of the individuals that constitute a population in order to reach certain political and social ends. This made it possible to think of the security and prosperity of the state as the desirable objective of government by way of managing the population.

By the early nineteenth century, the ways in which the state could manage the population changed again as liberalism surfaced as a rationality of rule, which delimited the power of political authorities. Typical of these rationalities that are considered as liberal is the marking of the political sphere by referring to the natural rights of other domains such as the market, civil society and the family. In this sense, governmentality in general may be

understood as a problematization of how to govern, and liberalism as a problematization of the limits of government (Dean, 1994).

Many liberal theorists argue that “civil society” must be respected as a “natural realm of freedoms and activities outside the legitimate sphere of politics” (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 179). They also argued that this civil realm had natural rules and processes that must be allowed to operate free from political (state) intervention. Liberal doctrines thus constituted civil society as a place of “freedom” where subjects have rights under the law that political authorities should not transgress.

However, at the same moment as recognizing the existence of this independent realm, liberalism also sought to manage it without damaging its liberty. Political rule was therefore supposed to shape and nurture the very civil society that was to provide its counterweight and limit. This does not imply that the state simply disguised its domination of civil society; rather government developed intellectual and practical techniques in which it “acts at a distance” (Rose and Miller, 1992) to influence events in the social realm without breaching its autonomy. Civil society, far from being a sphere which was characterised by an absence of government, was actually constituted by this critique of government which sought to separate the state from the social, while seeking to align it with political aspirations (Barry et al, 1996).

Domains, such as civil society, are not to be dominated by rule but rather must be known and understood in order to nurture their functioning, thus leading to support for political objectives. It is for these reasons that knowledge and forms of expertise become



of particular importance in liberal strategies. Those objects of knowledge considered to be a problem for the exercise of power could now be identified and known. Hence, the state constantly identified difficulties such as madness, poverty, illness, crime, and delinquency in order to influence or “solve” the problem in relation to a desired political end.

From a close examination of the Putman-Weir Survey it is possible to discern the influence of governmentality in general as the state strives to manage the population and produce happy citizens for the good of the nation. It is also possible to see how liberalism influences the discussion of educational reform as Putman and Weir must be able to justify the expansion of the state school system into the domain of civil society. What this genealogical analysis allows us to see is how the ‘governance of others’ and the ‘governance of the self’ is a central part of the this 1920s educational reform initiative. With the moral regulation component we see how this ‘regime of idealism’ provided the values of conduct and invoked notions of the perfect state to which all people were encouraged to strive. With the governmentality of the state we see how modern forms of power conjoin to produce and organize the lives of citizens by way of the school.

### Conclusion

By drawing on the strengths of Curtis’ analysis of educational reform and reconciling these with the strengths of discourse analysis, and governmentality, educational reform is seen in a different light. The language of educational reform, the

‘truths’ and knowledge that it relies on, constructs and circulates, its questions and objections, and the forms of subjectivity that it constitutes are all of interest in this approach. Progressive educational reform is thus viewed as a productive system of representation, governed by regimes of truth which produced problems and solutions. It is also a space where various other historically specific discourses converge and are linked to various educational imperatives.

To bring these aspects of analysis together I examine one particular commission of inquiry into the state of education in British Columbia in the 1920s. The *Survey of the School System* contains within it conflicts, discourses, orientations and government. In trying to solve a variety of problems, from finance to grade reform to character building, the *Survey* constitutes a unified, conscious, sentient, essentialized subject in the ‘developing child’ and ‘the pupil.’ The *Survey* can be read as a text which contains several discourses that were in the midst of becoming dominant in the province and whose echos can still be heard today in the educational system. Although not originating with the *Survey*, it nevertheless draws on scientific discourses of psychology and eugenics to construct a particular subject of the ‘child’ whose needs must be met by the education system. As well, scientific knowledge interrelates with discourses of ‘nation’ and ‘race,’ helping to construct British Columbia as an “imagined” community with a population of subjects with a particular character and morality who may be governed.

Educational reform is therefore not simply a matter of the social control of dangerous masses, nor the ideological socialization and creation of individuals and groups

which support state formation, but rather it is a problematizing activity with intersecting discourses which are harnessed at the local level in order to create meaning. Knowledge or "regimes of truth" make possible what can be said and what can be done and, as such, "attempt to represent the world in factual terms so that certain kinds of practices flow 'naturally' from them" (Knight et al, 1990, p. 133).

Progressivism is not simply a middle-class ideology but a discourse that seeks out problems, creates solutions and constitutes normalized subject positions especially in regard to what a 'child' is, how he/she should be treated, his/her character built, and his/her best interests enshrined in the system to create happy, productive, managed citizens.

Having discussed the analytical strategies employed in this study, I turn now to an examination of the regimes of truth and the rationalities which saturate the text of the *Survey of the School System*.

## Endnotes

1. According to Barman, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council condemned military training as “a pernicious and deceitful method of imbuing the youth with militarist and jingoistic aspirations...” *Vancouver Trades and Labour Council* meeting, 4 August 1925 as cited in Barman, 1988 p.25.

2. Barman claims that this intra-class conflict between the middle-class reformers and middle-class business interests could be seen as ideological in nature.

3. State formation refers to “the centralization and concentration of relations of economic and political power and authority in society. State formation typically involves the appearance or the reorganization of monopolies over the means of violence, taxation, administration and over symbolic systems” (Curtis, 1992, p. 5).

4. As with any delimitation I end up excluding the diversity of analysis that these other scholars’ work could have provided. This is a choice that I must make given the vehicle of the dissertation and the discipline.

5. This position does not deny that “reality” in the form of a material world external to discourse exists. If the ice caps melt it happens independent of my will but how I interpret the phenomenon whether from Global Warming or from an Act of God is part of the discursive field that is available to me. We can only “know” through our use of language and discourse--“reality” is therefore always mediated and constituted. Foucault is also well aware that the “real” impacts on the way we think and act (Mills, 1997 p. 51).

6. I am drawing on Althusser’s anti-humanist elements, sidestepping the critiques of his efforts (e.g., the difficulties in re-theorizing Marxism, the tension between the view of history without subject and the necessity of class struggle as an agent/subject of social transformation, and conflicting readings of his notion of the State and ideology). For our purposes, I have substituted the term “discourse” for Althusser’s term “ideology”, on the grounds that his move was to re-think the relationship between “ideology” and subject, taking into account the productivity (“effectivity”) of systems of language and thought.

7. Henriques et al., 1984, p.95

8. This argument is a perfect example of the postmodern urge to subvert, provoke and unsettle the reader’s certainty. Winter (1992) writes, “[P]ostmodernist provocation seeks to prod the well-defended subject into recognizing its own constructed and contingent character” (p.798).

9. Problematizing activities and problematization are used here interchangeably. Both terms refer to posing questions about something. For example, Karl Marx problematized capitalism. He questioned this mode of production and identified problems with it based on a particular set of criteria (for example the needs of the proletariat among others). What genealogy is concerned with is how this type of activity happens. How is it possible to identify problems and on what basis? Genealogical analysis is also a form of problematization as it traces the historical lineages of practices in order to undermine their appearance of “naturalness,” thus providing space for alternative possibilities.

10. I acknowledge that the concept of ideology has changed over time and taken on what Larrain (1983) calls a positive aspect. Here I refer to the more orthodox version, where Ideology was defined as a system of attitudes, conceptions, ideas and beliefs that could distort or mask contradictory social relations when only the ideas and interests of the ruling class were represented in the system.

11. See Titscher et al. 2000 for a full discussion of the varied analyses across the disciplines.

12. A discourse is a “set of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalized force, which means they have profound influence on the way that individuals act and think” (Mills, 1997, p.62).

13. Hunt (1999) gives the example when the state makes cuts to welfare programs for the poor and the “respectable” working class has hostility against “welfare bums.” Another contemporary example would be the middle class women’s movement campaign against domestic violence and then the state creating a policy that directs the police to deal with these cases as serious crimes.

14. This point was developed in correspondence with Dr. Graham Knight.

## Chapter Two

### The Progressive Discourse:

#### Rationalities and Regimes of Truth

As discussed in earlier chapters, this study is an inquiry into the relations of power and knowledge as they animate in 1920s British Columbia's Progressive educational reform discourse. Cognizant of the limits inherent in such an enterprise, I will not, nor can I, attempt to tell the whole story -- the story of Progressivism's rise to prominence, and its processing of the educational world through its own epistemological apparatus so that all educational phenomena appear as its data. Aside from the limits imposed by space and scope, I would not presume to take on such a task. I also would not claim to occupy a privileged place "outside" of discursive production where I can describe and analyze the totality of educational reform in the Province. Rather this chapter is a discussion of certain elements which I call the Progressive problematic.

Further, I do not claim that this is an airtight conceptual framework which interprets and explains all Progressive educational reform. Instead, I carve out some

sections of analytical terrain and I begin to develop conclusions about the range of possibilities and impossibilities as they are delimited by rhetorical conventions. This chapter presents an initial, broad outline of an analytical schema which illuminates some of the rules and disciplinary mechanisms of Progressivism in British Columbia. My goal therefore is not to present the entire history of B.C.'s Progressive educational reform, but rather to isolate particular moments and examine particular texts in order to begin to understand how Progressivism became a legitimate form of educational practice in the Province. In so doing, I can begin to reveal that which has been taken-for-granted in the conventional telling of the story of reform.

### Introduction to the Problematic

The *Survey* was part of the Progressivist movement in North American education in the 1920s and 1930s. Two central principles of this movement can be identified: child-centred pedagogy<sup>1</sup> and a commitment to the whole development of each individual child (Mann, 1980). Connected with ideas of progress and modernity, this movement generally supported the position that individuals should progress and develop according to their abilities, and schools were seen as the vehicle for this self-fulfillment (Wotherspoon, 1998). Bowles and Gintis (1976) however, analyzed Progressivism as an ideology which developed as a response to changes in the economy and then covered up class inequality, thus perpetuating the capitalist system<sup>2</sup> while denying self-fulfillment.

Putman and Weir in the *Survey of the School System*, referred to Progressivism as a type of “educational thought” which advocated school innovation and advancement in order to educate the future citizens of the Province. Included in their list of innovations were the systematic use of standardized tests, efficiency of instruction, vocational guidance, expanded technical education and the adoption of junior high schools (1925, p.27).

Some of the literature (Mann, 1980; Hawthorne, 1989) that discussed the Putman-Weir Commission argues that the resulting reforms were ultimately conservative and reproduced inequality rather than bringing fulfillment and equal opportunity to individual pupils, thus resulting in “bad” reform. This is not my concern. Rather, by examining from a distance<sup>3</sup> (Shapiro, 1992), the discourse of educational reform in general, and Progressivism in particular, I highlight some of its sense-making devices to avoid the trap of the familiar debates. I examine how Progressivism as a system of reasoning, as a discourse, raised questions and focused on some problems while ignoring others.

By the term “problematic”<sup>4</sup> I mean a particular discursive logic which renders statements and practices intelligible. It is an epistemological apparatus which makes possible Progressivism’s power to define problems and solutions and to help constitute a certain educational reality. Without this apparatus, or grid, promises would be meaningless, rationality and irrationality would be indistinguishable from one another, and there would be no criteria for choosing among options.



As well, I am interested in how the opposition is undermined by this problematic. In attempting to establish its particular version of reality, it must contest alternative versions in an effort to become dominant. Ultimately, not everyone will hold the same beliefs about educational reform, but generally the idea that reform -- rather than for example revolution -- is the appropriate or taken-for granted way to change and improve educational institutions remains largely unchallenged (Cornbleth and Gottlieb, 1989). This study focusses on how Progressive reform became dominant at a particular time and place, as well as the 'truths' and knowledge it relied upon and the effects it had in terms of practices. The object of this analysis therefore becomes the relation between forms of rationalities and the practices to which they were linked (Dean, 1994).

In this chapter, I take apart some of the elements of Progressivism and examine the grid which lends meaning to the process of reform and within which Progressivism produced its subject positions. This leads to a discussion of its power to represent reality. Its effectivity lies largely in its ability to pass as rational and objective, while obligating alternatives to legitimize themselves on its terms (Henriques et al, 1984).

### Regimes of Truth and Rationalities

In examining the elements of the Progressive educational reform problematic, my work is informed by Foucault's analysis of how rationalities and "regimes of truth"<sup>5</sup> (also known as "regimes of practice" and "regimes of representation") are linked. He sought to

understand how rationalities were inscribed in practices and how forms of rationality permitted practices to justify a “way of doing things.” Among these are criteria for determining what is said and what is not said, the ways it constitutes its objects/subjects, their imperatives and the inevitability of its own solutions.

If I have studied ‘practices’...it was in order to study this interplay between a ‘code’ which rules ways of doing things...and a production of true discourses which serve to found, justify and provide reasons and principles for these ways of doing things. To put the matter clearly: my problem is to see how men [sic] govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth ( I repeat once again that by the production of truth I mean not the production of true utterances, but the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent). (Foucault, 1991b, p. 79)

As a system of discursive representation which performs to constitute and order reality according to a specific logic, Progressive educational reform “works” according to particular rules or regimes. Although it is possible to identify several different regimes within the *Survey of the School System*, I focus on three main regimes of representation that are of particular interest to me. These three regimes include Nationalism, Psychology and Governmentality. I also identify two important modes of rationality which are “efficiency” and “developmentalist.” These categories are effectively separated for ease of analysis, but what we shall see is that they are all closely intertwined and slippage from one to another often occurs. First, I outline the rationalities and then explain the regimes of representations in more detail. In the chapters that follow, both rationalities and regimes will be utilized to illustrate this form of analysis.

### Rationalities

Throughout the texts which I examine, it is possible to distinguish two dominant rationalities.<sup>6</sup> The first is what I have labelled as “efficiency.” During the early 1900s, efficiency was introduced into the educational reform discourse as a form of logic and rhetoric of the management sciences. According to Putman and Weir, efficiency not only referred to an elimination of waste and duplication, but also the most practical and productive way of achieving objectives (1925, p. 5). Efficient management required that goals be reached in the least amount of time.

Far from seeing efficiency as an ideology, as does much of the secondary literature, it can be viewed as an epistemological tool which constituted domains and subjectivities. At the heart of the rationale lies a set of classificatory techniques reflecting economy, statistical reasoning and mathematical probability. Its analytical method grounded in objective, positivist science, produced knowledge according to these assumptions. It represented reality in the neutral and natural terms of objectivist science and hence informed possible solutions to educational problems.

One such effect of this rationality of efficiency was standardized testing. It was portrayed as the most efficient method for gathering knowledge on a school population. The subject positions of “normal,” “gifted” and “abnormal” emerged from the practice and were informed by the psychological regime. Efficient educational practices therefore ordered and regulated the domain of 1920s schooling in a particular and narrow way.

These tests were considered to be highly effective techniques as they were presented as technically efficient and objective solutions to certain educational problems, thus eliminating other possible solutions. I will provide more detail of this in the following chapter when I discuss the history of Intelligence Quotient testing in the Province.

The other rationality that I discuss is a “developmentalist” rationale. Here I refer to discursive conventions which assume progression through stages of development whether in terms of historical time periods or individual growth. This rationality helps to constitute societies according to certain level or stages of development. For example, it takes for granted that societies will progress from “primitive” stages to more “modern” civilizations in a linear, predetermined fashion. This rationality also helps to constitute individualized, psychological subjects whose path toward a desired result is “always already” predetermined.

Whether we are speaking of the progression of a nation or of a pupil, it is ensured in advance by the classificatory mechanisms and indices used in the delineation of the desired result. For example, the pupil will necessarily be guided toward an “adolescence” stage as the Progressive educational discourse employs certain practices and principles of developmental psychology. As Walkerdine argues, progressive “pedagogic practices then are totally saturated with the notion of a normalized sequence of child development, so that those practices help produce children as the objects of their gaze” (1984, p. 155).

### Psychological Regime of Truth

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the discipline of Psychology has played a very important role in creating what might be thought of as our present “society.” Several critical histories of the role of psychology in the constitution of societal practices and subjectivities exist including Henriques et al, (1984), Rose (1985; 1996) and Walkerdine, (1984). These studies outline how psychology, as a discipline or human science premised its claims to ‘truth’ based on “the constitution of the individual as an object of science in certain historically specific conditions of possibility” (Walkerdine, 1984, p. 154). I acknowledge that psychology is a very diverse discipline <sup>7</sup> and, as such, it is difficult to generalize or to provide an overarching review. I do not want to recount the complexities of how psychology as a discipline managed to demarcate itself from medicine and biology (see Rose, 1985), nor how it managed to construct a set of criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of what counts as psychological knowledge (see Henriques et al, 1984). Since this work has already been done, I instead focus upon some of the principles and assumptions upon which developmental psychology has laid claim to ‘truth’ about ‘children.’

In the 1920s, ‘the child’ became the scientific object of psychology. Rose (1996) argues that developmental psychology was made possible through the advent of clinics and nursery schools. These facilities made possible the observation of large numbers of children by psychological experts who collected large amounts of data. This information,

in turn, allowed for the construction of *norms* or average standards for behavioural tasks and performances of children of a certain age. “It thus not only presented a picture of what was *normal* for children of such an age, but enabled the normality of any individual child to be assessed by comparison with this norm” (Rose, 1996: p.110). Psychologists created a continuous dimension of development by organizing the data collected on children of certain ages into “age norms” and then arranged these along an axis of time. This made it possible for individuals to be characterized as “normal,” “advanced” or “retarded” in relation to these norms and in terms of this axis of time. Rose (1996) argues that this entrenched “growth” and “temporality” as the primary principles of a psychology of childhood.

For Walkerdine (1984), child developmental psychology was first and foremost the scientific study of the “naturally” occurring “mind” in ‘children,’ something premised on an understanding that children had age appropriate mental capacities which could be assessed by reading a child’s responses to test questions and then comparing these to a norm. Intelligence for the first time had become visualized as a single number on an I.Q. test. Developmental scales of age appropriate behaviours, such as play, conversation, and personal habits were also used in order to perceive, record and evaluate individual children. These tests and scales were not merely a form of assessment, however.

They provide a new way of thinking about childhood and a new way of seeing children, one that rapidly spread to teachers, health workers, and parents through the scientific and popular literature. Childhood had been rendered thinkable by being made visualizable, inscribable, and assessable. (Rose, 1996, p.111)

This is not to deny that children change as they grow older, but the point is that only certain facts counted as a developmental accomplishment and most of these were (and are) expressed in terms of individual cognition (Walkerdine, 1984). How psychology produced such evidence and claims to ‘truth’ is what is of interest to me. Walkerdine warns that we must remember there are other ways to understand children besides those offered by the discipline of psychology. We must also remember that the ways we see, think about and act toward children or on their behalf are historically specific. This is not to imply that child developmental psychology is pure fantasy, but rather it is a created body of theory and practice in which there has been considerable material investment especially in regard to schooling.

For example, Walkerdine argues that psychology was a productive discourse of science which had positive effects in the form of practices such as child-centred pedagogy and the constitution of individuals, such as children, with certain capacities. She is not arguing that developmental psychology is flawed or that another more radical interpretation of the ‘developing child’ would help us to get to the “real” developmental process and capacities of the child. Rather she is arguing that it is developmental psychology itself “which produces the particular form of naturalized development of capacities as its objects. The practices of production can, therefore, be understood as productive of subject-positions themselves” (Walkerdine, 1984, p.164).

The practice of child-centred pedagogy is of particular importance to my project because it is one of Progressivism's core principles. Walkerdine (1984) claims that child-centred pedagogy is not simply an application of developmental principles of 'truth,' but rather is an institutional or administrative device which is saturated with developmental rationality and psychological 'truths' of mental capacities that may be known and ranked. The pedagogy was "centrally and strategically implicated" in the psychology itself as it provided for the classification, observation and monitoring of the developmental sequences. On the other hand, psychology as a science offered this pedagogy a form of legitimation based on 'the facts' of how 'children' developed. This pedagogy could therefore enhance or encourage<sup>8</sup> this 'natural' process and thereby meet the needs and/or interests of 'the child.'

Individual needs, in turn, were determined according to the developmental process and stage within which an individual might be placed. As I point out in chapter five, a subject's needs would change depending on whether the subject was classified as a 'child' or as an 'adolescent.' Also in chapter five, I will examine how psychological discourse and developmental rationality were introduced quite early into the British Columbia public system and how quickly they were embraced by many bureaucrats, teachers and school board trustees (especially by the Vancouver School Board). Although it is not exactly clear how the discourse and practices were disseminated from the academic discipline of psychology to the school system and the general population, both Rose (1996) and Gleason (1999) agree that psychology was conveyed through both the scientific and



popular literature. For instance, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) through its publication *B.C. Teacher* would have spread the knowledge of progressive education and the role of psychology in education and the *Survey* itself would have disseminated this knowledge throughout the province to both teachers and parents. The *Survey* was saturated with these theories and practices which effectively resulted in whole schools being rearranged, curriculum developed, and teachers trained.<sup>9</sup> In addition many educators such as Weir were being trained in the United States where psychology was already popular in education and as such may be credited with teaching some of these ideas in Teachers' Colleges.

Developmental psychology as a regime of truth provided the grid through which educators and others came to view children. In trying to understand educational reform we must examine psychology as its authority limits what thoughts or actions are possible in regard to children. In brief, because of psychology, 'the child' was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to imply that psychology totally determines what can be said or done about 'the child,' but rather it is usually involved whenever the entity of 'the child' is in question. How this happens in regard to Progressive reform is what this genealogical analysis offers and contributes to our understanding of educational reform.

Ultimately, it must be remembered that this knowledge of 'the child' is part of a complex grid for the discipline and regulation of children. Power is implicated as this discourse of psychology dominates and limits while also producing the varied subject positions of 'the child.'

### The Nationalist Regime of Truth

My use of the term “nationalism,” especially in regard to British Columbia, needs clarification. This was a regime of representation that was inscribed with the scientific knowledge of eugenics, and built upon the historical knowledge of having been a recent colony of the British Empire. Discourses of ‘race,’ ‘biology’ and ‘nation’ were intertwined to form this particular regime which, I argue, acted as part of the grid and helped to give meaning to the text of the *Survey of the School System*.

My argument is informed by the work of Benedict Anderson (1991) and Ernest Gellner (1983) who argue that nations are not natural entities, but are “imagined” creations. Homi K. Bhabha (1990) has suggested that ‘nations’ can be identified with the narratives or histories that nationalists use to construct an identity for themselves. National identity is therefore unstable as it changes through the negotiation of the meaning of national narratives and events. ‘Nations’ may also be viewed as imagined communities rather than only as countries or states. Consequently many groups who share an (imagined) history and culture, but lack a formal state structure, can be identified as ‘nations.’ It is this understanding of the ‘nation’ as a discursive representation that I use in order to analyze how 1920s educational reformers “imagined” British Columbia.

Kerwin (1996) argues that during the 1920s, British Columbia nationalists were engaged in negotiating B.C.’s place in the world. Some imagined B.C. as an integral part of Canada, while others “continued to imagine their community within the British Empire,

locating the province's history within the larger Imperial narrative" (p.10). Despite this struggle, they all seemed to agree that whether part of Canada or part of the Empire, British Columbia had its own unique identity and hence community.<sup>10</sup>

Historians and political actors alike trumpeted the province's unique pattern of settlement (around the Horn rather than across the continent); B.C.'s intense political isolation from Ottawa; and especially the province's geographical location between the Rockies and the Pacific. These factors forged a "distinctive British Columbia type," making the land's inhabitants "Canadians with a difference"-- hence, "the West beyond the West" had its own story, its own "narrative." For these reasons, the term "nationalism," rather than "regionalism" or "provincialism," seems to most aptly describe the dominant ideas of the 1920s. (Kerwin, 1996, p. 10)

Kerwin (1996) points out that these nationalists also "imagined" British Columbia in biological terms. The community was in essence a "living body" with traits such as blood and skin, whose health needed to be monitored. For Kerwin, these organic metaphors had profound implications for the ways in which past actors were limited in their thinking about racial and national issues. The "health" of the community therefore became a vital political concern for nationalists and reformers who targeted such "threats" to the community as venereal diseases, lack of social hygiene and "feeble-mindedness."<sup>11</sup>

Kerwin demonstrates how many of these ideas can be traced to Victorian discourses about the relationship between 'race' and 'nation.' Based upon the science of eugenics<sup>12</sup> and Social Darwinism, the British Columbia 'white' elite understood that a community could either improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations through selective breeding (Kerwin, 1996, p. 7). Purifying the 'white' race would thus

strengthen the ‘body’ of British Columbia. Continuity, ‘the future’ and (constant) improvement were therefore important aspects of this nationalism. Both Angus McLaren (1990) and Kay Anderson (1991) concur that the eugenics movement and the knowledge it provided were of great importance in post-World War One British Columbia. For instance, Progressive educational reform was also concerned with efficient mental testing and child-centred pedagogy which focused on the mental capacities of each individual pupil. How “feeble-mindedness” became a problem is therefore part of the background against which the *Survey* makes sense.

Putman and Weir dedicated all of the second chapter of their report to discussing the physical and social background of the Province. It included a brief discussion of B.C.’s early history which was devoted to European explorers, the Hudson Bay Company and the two British colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. They surmised that “the Union Jack now floats on the Pacific from Lat. 49 [degrees] N. to the Alaskan Coast is probably due more to the sturdy gentlemen adventurers of the Hudson’s Bay Company than to any rights of the British Crown established by prior discovery” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 24). Along with this story came the geographical rendering of British Columbia as a “sea of mountains” that caused great difficulties for travel and communication. The Province was also said to have an “abundance of moisture” on the coast and a wealth of resources, including minerals, lumber and agriculture.

However, Putman and Weir believed it was the unique mixture of ‘white’ settlers that “made” the Province. Beginning with the Hudson’s Bay traders and officials who

were characterized as “ a superior class of people, hardy, intelligent, and possessing great initiative” to the miners, the lumberman and railroad builders, who were “brawny men suited for pioneering life” ( Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 13), Putman and Weir re/constructed a history of strong (‘white’) men from Britain, other Canadian provinces and the United States who knew hard work, self-sacrifice and “stirring adventure.”

This romantic, historical narrative of challenge and adventure conveniently forgot that this Province colonialized an already occupied land and that more than ‘white’ people populated the area. “Orientals” and “Indians” were not, however, part of the “imagined” community of B.C.

Today the population of the Province -- omitting Orientals and native Indians --is more cosmopolitan than any other part of Canada. Its backbone is distinctly Canadian, but it has many types of native-born English, Scotch and Irish and a small minority either American born or strongly inoculated with American ideals. It has an English element holding the same social and political views that were held by the English squire of 1850. It has an English element which represents the finest and most modern English thought, and it has a small English element that is noisy and assertive and wants everything at the expense of the state. ( Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 14)

The concept of ‘race’<sup>13</sup> in the narrative of British Columbia as an “imagined” community in the first part of the twentieth century was therefore a central component of nationalism. The racial classification of being ‘white’ or ‘non-white’ was (and is) an important element in defining who belonged or was “inside” the community and who was an “outsider.” Questions of ‘race’ and racism in British Columbia have received considerable scholarly attention from historians and sociologists (see for example Ward,

1978; Roy, 1989; Creese, 1988; Anderson, 1991). While many of these accounts differ in regard to the “source” of racism,<sup>14</sup> all acknowledge that ‘whiteness’ was a primary symbol and criterion for being part of the Province. If you were not ‘white,’ then you were considered a “foreigner.”

The terms “foreigners” and “immigrants” were often used at this time to categorize “both Asian and certain European groups<sup>15</sup> [for example Italian and Greek] as non-British, and consequently as outsiders... Families recently arrived from the British Isles, by contrast, were insiders, and were readily accepted as citizens” (McDonald, 1996, pp. 206, 208). Kay Anderson’s (1991) study of racial discourse in the Province from 1875-1980 discussed how Europeans of British heritage socially constructed their place and hence their domination of the Province. By using the work of Edward Said (1978), Anderson demonstrates how settlers used British European discourse on ‘race’ to construct a collective identity in opposition to imagined communities of “foreigners” and “orientals.” These settlers brought with them a sense that their culture and institutions were superior to those they had designated as outsiders.

Eugenics gave scientific credibility to racial typologies and differences in behaviour and ability, while further supporting the separation of ‘races.’

In the minds of whites, “race” and “nation” became interchangeable idioms around which socio-political units were built and conquered. More bluntly affirmed than perhaps ever before was the exclusiveness of the insider community of whites and the boundaries of the nation that was seen to be their rightful hold on identity and power. (Anderson, 1991, p. 110)

Despite these claims of racial superiority, there was also considerable fear that the 'white' community faced destruction. Roy (1989) argues that what began as a concern of "demagogues and workingmen" over Asian economic competition soon became a "broadly held fear that became part of the provincial identity" (Roy, 1989, p. viii). Fears of being unable to compete for jobs and of being "swamped" by millions of 'non-white,' and in particular Asian migrants, left many 'white' British Columbians believing that the province's collective character as a land of 'white,' European based settlers was threatened and could be destroyed (McDonald, 1996).

This contradictory position of being "superior" and yet fearful at the same moment may indicate how difficult it was to actually build a 'white' British community. The hollowness of their imagined community and precariousness of their privilege may be reflected in their fear. Potentially, this contradiction may also indicate that the "outsiders" were not easily kept at a distance and that they may have resisted their marginalization (see Stanley, 1991). It could be that the more the 'whites' had to reinforce their place and community, the more elusive they were.

Nevertheless, the nationalist regime of truth about 'race' and 'nation' was an integral part of this production of British Columbia as a 'white' community, while at the same moment producing its "Other." This helps us to understand the relationship of power and domination of "the insider" over "the outsider" and how knowledge was utilized to create and legitimize racial superiority and inferiority. It is not my concern that eugenics has now been abandoned by science as "untrue," for at the time it was the 'truth' which

limited the actions and thoughts of people. It was also part of the grid which enables us to understand the *Survey of the School System*.

As we shall see in chapter four, nation, the status of insider/outsider and the power of eugenics are found throughout the Progressive text. In particular, discussions of “character” in children, the future of the ‘nation,’ and the separation of children according to ‘race’ for I.Q. testing, are of interest for this analysis as they reinforce and “naturalize” the concept of ‘race.’

### The Governmentality Regime

This governmentalization of the state is a singularly paradoxical phenomenon, since if in fact the problems of governmentality and the techniques of government have become the only political issue, the only real space for political struggle and contestation, this is because the governmentalization of the state is at the same time what has permitted the state to survive, and it is possible to suppose that if the state is what it is today, this is so precisely thanks to governmentality, which is at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality. (Foucault, 1991a: 103)

I originally discussed the importance of governmentality in chapter one. I will not repeat that entire discussion but venture instead to highlight several important elements.



The two elements of governmentality that I will utilize in my analysis of the *Survey* include the moral dimensions of educational reform and the governmentalization of the state.

“Conduct” or the “conduct of conduct” is a near approximation of Foucault’s work where governing is cast as “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon, 1991: 2). Government acts in a calculated manner upon the activities and relations of the individuals that constitute a population in order to reach certain political and social objectives.

Regarding state education, the question might be asked as to how children should be governed, their conduct shaped to “appropriate” ends, and their character built? What were the limits of governing the population of school children? In other words, what was within the competency of the family to decide and what was within the competency of the school to decide in regard to governing children?

Many of the Progressive reforms proposed in the 1925 *Survey* extended the influence and competency of the Department of Education into areas that had previously been constituted as ‘belonging’ to the family or to private business. School expansion in terms of free high schools was thus an issue because of the logic of liberalism which limited the sphere of politics. In order to redefine that sphere of influence, the inquiry needed to answer whether the changes were justified and rational according to certain ‘truths.’

Progressive reforms were proposed by Putman and Weir to address the problem that the school system was inadequate according to “modern standards” of the day. In

turn, these reforms aimed to redefine the sphere of the state in regard to the governance of children and problematized the legitimate limits of the state. Determining that the “modern nation” needed to have more high school graduates, Putman and Weir advocated the extension of schooling. Different modes of problematization, inadequacy and liberal government intersected at this time and place to inform the reform of state education in British Columbia.

In addition, it is possible to see how moral ideals of ‘character,’ nation and Christianity were incorporated to direct the conduct of children, pupils, teachers and citizens alike. Putman and Weir posit a state of perfection in education where moral subjects govern themselves through participating in the classroom, and ‘good citizens’ are supportive of educational reform which will help ‘the nation’ and bring the Province into the twentieth century. Both these regulatory aspects and the governmentalization of the state will be explored in the following chapters in greater detail.

### Conclusion

This chapter examined the ‘problematic’ of Progressivism and how it worked to represent educational reality. In particular, the rationalities of efficiency and developmentalism were explored as they enabled the *Survey* to justify a way of doing things. In other words, these two rationalities act as organizing principles for knowledge production for the *Survey*. In addition the three regimes of nationalism, psychology and

governmentality were discussed as they provide a grid against which the *Survey* makes sense. Each was encoded in the text and provided a measure or standard of truth that was utilized in attempts to produce British Columbia and its citizens. Questions of how children should be governed as well as the limits of state education were addressed by this Commission. Governmentality ensured that the state's prime task was to improve while managing its population.

The Nationalist regime invoked a past of adventure and Empire-building and thus helped to constitute British Columbia as an imagined community of 'white' people. By re/inforcing this narrative of the community, the *Survey* embraced the dominance of European settlers and further separated the "outsiders" as threats to the fabric and health of society. Rooted in the knowledge of eugenics, this regime also made it possible for 'children' to be classified according to 'race' and separated for I.Q. testing.

The Psychology regime, for its part, made it possible to think about children as individuals with innate minds and capacities who, with proper instruction and guidance, could grow into the ideal citizen. The effects of seeing children this way were enormous for public education and continue to influence how we think about and act toward 'developing children' (Walkerdine, 1984).

Although these regimes of representation do not originate with the *Survey*, they provide the background against which Progressivism makes sense of its problematizing activities. Each of these sets of rules demonstrates a particular aspect of the Progressive educational reform discourse's capacity to constitute the real. Each serves to cast

Progressivism in a veil of naturalness. Through the manipulation of community, conduct and subjectivity (identity), each regime performs to construct a universe where the necessity of Progressive reform becomes “common sense.”

The following chapters provide more detail of these regimes and rationalities in regard to how the public system was questioned and criticized by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and by the Putman-Weir Survey.

## Endnotes

1. Child-centred pedagogy refers to teaching methods which enhance the development and learning of the individual child by meeting his or her needs.
2. See chapter 2 for a full discussion of this.
3. This refers to stepping back from the main debates (i.e. is reform “good” or “bad”) and examining the debate itself--what is it based on? Time and distance seem to facilitate such an endeavour as the assumptions are more obvious and less natural.
4. I use the term problematic/ discursive logic rather than ideology to distinguish it from the more orthodox use of the concept of ideology. I do recognize, however, that many (for example Fiske, 1987) would use the term ideology to discuss these systems of representations. I find ‘problematic’ more helpful and less confusing.
5. Another way to distinguish regimes of truth from rationalities is that regimes of truth contain knowledge codes and rules which establish what truth is at particular times/places. A rationality on the other hand may be thought of as an approach to knowledge production.
6. A third rationality of bureaucracy or administration also existed. Since others such as Rose (1985) and Hunter (1994) have detailed the connection between schooling and this rationality, I have chosen to acknowledge it but not to extend my analysis to it as to do so would extend the scope of this project beyond its limits. Somewhere I must draw my own boundaries, so to speak.
7. Rose (1985) outlines the various types of psychologies of motivation, perception, cognition, and development, each with its own competing school (functionalism, behaviourism, and gestalt,) and object of study (humans, apes, and rats).
8. Walkerdine claims that developmental psychology was constructed around the twin poles of heredity and environment. Schooling therefore has a very important role to play in shaping or directing this process.
9. See Hawthorne (1990) and Johnson (1964) for further discussion of the changes to the school system resulting from the Commission.

10. This nationalist discourse is still evident today though in a different form. Recently I heard an advertisement announcing that we all know that BC is unique because of its beautiful scenery, wacky politics and way too much rain.
11. Also see the work of Mariana Valverde (1991) on moral reform in Canada.
12. See McLaren, 1990, for a detailed discussion of eugenics in Canada from 1885-1945.
13. 'Race' is a socially constructed category that is used to socially distinguish or represent groups of people. Most often these categories are used to establish and maintain insider/outsider status and to assure one group's dominance and power. These are not fixed categories but are permeable and unstable. See Anderson (1991) for a detailed discussion of the "problem" of race/culture/identity.
14. Most of the literature debates whether the issue of racism can be reduced to matters of the economy and class.
15. First Nations people were effectively excluded from this discourse as they were viewed as a disappearing race by this time and hence not an issue (Kerwin, 1996).

## Chapter Three

### Problematizing the Public System

The *Survey of the School System of British Columbia* is a text which embodies struggle, discourses, rationalities, “facts” and above all else, problems and solutions that are framed in a very particular way. The text which Putman and Weir’s commission produced represented the reality of British Columbia’s educational system according to certain Progressive dictates and in opposition to others, with particular consequences. However, before any commission of inquiry can be convened or any reforms proposed, some type of problem must be identified.

In order to trace the process of problematization, it is first necessary to examine the discussion of why the Survey commission was needed in the Province, how it was justified and who was credited with bringing “problems” to light. By all indications, the British Columbia’s Teacher’s Federation (BCTF) played an important role in criticizing the system and pressuring the Provincial government to “take stock” of education. First, I examine the material available in regards to the public announcement of the *Survey* and

then I examine some of the local text which illustrates the objections that the BCTF had in regard to the 1920s educational system.

### Establishing the Commission

Although it is not entirely clear why the Putman-Weir Survey was commissioned and supported by the Liberal government of John Oliver, there are several explanations in the literature. Jean Barman argues that governments in B.C. did not generally support reform initiatives, but in an effort to ensure their continued rule “the Liberals embraced social reform during and after the war years in order to garner votes” (1996, p. 203). She argues that the Putman-Weir Commission was set up in response to public pressure and concern over inadequate schooling in the Province (Barman, 1996, p.228). The announcement of the Commission was made only weeks before a general provincial election was called and could be seen as an election ploy. The Commission could also be viewed as an attempt to gain support from the middle-class and working class reform movements. Wood (1985) concurs that the set up of the Commission was purely a matter of electoral survival and not truly a commitment to reform principles. Wotherspoon (1995) does not directly address the issue of the election, but he does discuss the political pressure that the government was experiencing. He argues that the pressure to reform schooling in the 1920s was mostly coming from the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF). Wotherspoon states that the Commission was itself instigated due



mostly to pressure from the BCTF, “who had recommended actions such as reorganizing the school system, revising curricula, improving teacher training, and strengthening job and income security” (1995, pp. 132-133).

In light of these differing interpretations of why this Commission took place, it is interesting to look at media accounts of the actual announcement of the survey. The public declaration of the educational survey took place on April 24, 1924 at the annual convention of the BCTF (Anonymous, *Victoria Daily Times*, 24 April, 1924 p.1; Anonymous, *The Vancouver Evening Sun*, 25 April, 1924, p. 3). The BCTF convention was held in Vancouver over three days (April 22-24) with hundreds of delegates in attendance from all over the Province (Anonymous, *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 April, 1924, p.1). It was the Superintendent of Education, S.J. Willis, who notified the convention about the government intentions to conduct the review. “Jubilant” teachers responded with a “special vote of appreciation to the department for its final approval of the plan” (Anonymous, *The Vancouver Evening Sun*, 25 April, 1924, p. 3).

...S.J. Willis, Superintendent of Education of British Columbia, made the announcement that the Government had decided upon an educational survey of the Province. A commission would be appointed whose qualifications, he was sure, would satisfy the teachers and others interested, and the details of the scheme would be given out by Hon. J. D. MacLean, the Minister, in the course of a few days. (Anonymous, *Victoria Daily Times*, 24 April, 1924, p.1)

I find it curious that the Minister of Education himself did not announce the survey given that he was in attendance for at least one day of the teachers’ convention

(Anonymous, *The Vancouver Evening Sun*, 25 April, 1924, p. 3). If the survey was simply to “garner votes” then perhaps the Minister of Education or even the Premier (who was not even in the Province at the time), rather than a bureaucrat, would announce the survey. However, it is also possible that Willis was the best person to make the announcement in order to give the appearance of objectivity. It is uncertain and no evidence can be found to support either view. It is clear, however, that the Department of Education had been considering the issue for some time.

Arrangements for the educational survey which the Department of Education plans to commence this year will be one of the first matters to engage the attention of Cabinet when it assembles again after Premier Oliver’s return from Ottawa...It is understood that Dr. MacLean, who has had the question of an educational survey under advisement for a long time, hopes to get the investigation under way in time to allow the investigators to lay their findings before the Legislature in the Fall.  
(Anonymous, *Victoria Daily Times*, 25 April, 1924, p. 9)

These reports do not indicate that the Commission or the timing of it was viewed by the press as politically expedient. Considering that both papers are full of articles reporting on party nominations and speculation over the election date, it would not be difficult to make the connection.<sup>1</sup> Overall both papers devoted more space to the resolutions made at the convention, such as the BCTF supporting optional Bible reading and teaching in the public schools ( see for example *The Vancouver Evening Sun*, 24 April, 1924, p.1) than to the announcement of the survey.

Whether the timing of the Commission was meant to garner public support from teachers and the general public in an upcoming election, or whether the timing was a

coincidence is uncertain and the question remains open. What is clear from these press reports is the important relationship between the BCTF and the Department of Education. The BCTF convention was the backdrop for the announcement. The teachers were “jubilant” and held a special vote of recognition for the Department, and the Minister and the Superintendent were in attendance, indicating the importance of the BCTF. This is not to say that the Department of Education and the BCTF were always in agreement, but at this time relations appeared to be good. Later Putman and Weir would credit the BCTF with playing a major role in the survey movement.

Foremost among the organizations supporting the survey movement was the British Columbia Federation of Teachers, which as early as April, 1922, had passed a unanimous resolution requesting the Department of Education to undertake the a survey of the whole educational system of the Province. The attitude of the Teachers’ Federation was not one of hostility towards, or dissatisfaction with, the departmental administration of the school system, but was based on the ground that “the common business practice of occasionally ‘taking complete stock’ in order to keep up to date and progressive would be beneficial if applied to the tremendously important business of education.” To the teachers of the Province, therefore, is due the chief credit for initiating and launching the survey movement, which, soon after its inception, was strongly endorsed by other educational, civic, and service organizations. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.1)

Given its relationship with the Department of Education and its important role in initiating the reform process, the BCTF’s reasoning and critique of the system are worth examining. My questions are not overly concerned with why the survey happened, but rather with how it happened. What struggles, discourses, and rationalities are apparent in the official documents of the organization? How did they frame what they saw as

problems in the system, on what assumptions did they base this and what solutions did they offer? My goal is not to present the entire “history” of the problematizing process nor to present a complete overview of every position in the BCTF. Rather it is to discuss particular moments when reality was being moulded into certain discursive forms.

### The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation

In 1922, the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation asked: “What is wrong with education?” Utilizing the Progressivist problematic, the BCTF answered this question by representing the reality of British Columbia education according to particular dictates and in opposition to others. In examining the written text of two representatives from the BCTF,<sup>2</sup> I am able to explore how “natural” problems of the system were constructed, which invoked “common sense” solutions. I am also able to analyze how the BCTF sought to counter alternatives to Progressive reform by constructing their own authority as experts in the field. This chapter therefore uses an analysis which asks questions of how problematization processes worked at this time. It also asks how different regimes of truth and rationalities aimed to produce a certain reality.

These research questions are quite different and perhaps complimentary to questions of *why* the BCTF were engaged in these struggles. Terry Wotherspoon’s (1995) analysis, which relies on Curtis’ state formation paradigm, will first be examined in order to demonstrate the differences between the approaches and the contribution of this

analysis to our understanding of how power and knowledge were wielded to constitute education in British Columbia.

First established in 1917, the British Columbia Teacher's Federation was crafted from a variety of local teacher's associations in order to "promote and improve public education in the province and seek improvements in the welfare and status of teachers" (Wotherspoon, 1995, pp. 128-9). Wotherspoon (1995) argues that the BCTF was dominated by well-educated urban men who sought to raise the professional standards and character of teachers in the Province, but who also acted as advocates for improved working conditions and wages.

In the sociology of education, analyses of the development of public teaching in Canada revolves around these two contradictory processes -- professionalization and proletarianization (Wotherspoon, 1998). On the one hand, teachers are seen to be experts, striving for autonomy and self-regulation. On the other hand, teachers are seen to be controlled by the state, under increasing pressure and workload while struggling for improved wages and working conditions. Wotherspoon argues that, in fact, both processes occurred as the realities of educational systems were both complex and contradictory.

Using a version of Curtis' discussion of education and state formation, Wotherspoon further argues that teachers in B.C. played a fundamental role in the moral/subjective formation of individuals as they focused on habit formation and citizen

development. This role expanded in the 1920s with educational reform efforts aimed at stabilizing socially diverse populations and in response to changing demands for labour power (1995, p. 130). The individual subject was now to be infused with a morality that would support the industrial order and the corporate state rather than a purely Christian doctrine.

Accordingly, the position of teachers within the system changed as their value was now assessed by pedagogical expertise and rationality rather than personal qualities (1995, p. 134). This led to increased formal training and competency, greater autonomy and an enhanced status for the teaching profession. However,

teachers' autonomy and expertise were circumscribed by a rationality centered within corporations and the state, defined and organized in the interests of capital to coordinate regulation of production processes with labour and commodity markets. With the new rationality, the individual would not be regarded as a totally self-sufficient entity, but rather as a subject carefully cultivated in accordance with harmonious social goals. The corporate state's role was to coordinate this new individualism in a setting sheltered from the baser motives of industry, unions and other overtly political forces. (Wotherspoon, 1995, p. 134)

Despite these limitations, Wotherspoon argues that at this time, the leadership of the BCTF continued to actively pursue their professionalization agenda by embracing Progressivism. He argues that the "BCTF leaders saw an immediate appeal in harnessing educational progressivism for the advancement of the teaching profession, just as progressivism sought to activate teachers as agents of the wider agenda" (Wotherspoon, 1995, p. 134).

In supporting this progressive movement, the BCTF also sought to reform the educational system. Stressing scientific principles of schooling and teaching, the BCTF joined with Putman and Weir to emphasize teachers' expertise, hence shifting the relationship between teachers and school administration.

The promotion of science and progressivism in British Columbia emphasized a significant shift from school *inspection*, which stressed evaluation, reporting and close personal scrutiny of teachers, to a *supervisory* relationship oriented to educational development and professional growth. (Wotherspoon, 1995, p. 133; emphasis in the original)

In his analysis, Wotherspoon provides us with a reasonable explanation as to *why* the BCTF would be interested in the survey and in Progressivism. It was basically in their professional interest to try and establish their own expertise and autonomy. However, according to Wotherspoon, teachers were also subject to the the rationality of the corporate state which worked on behalf of capital to stabilize the population and meet changing demands for labour power. Progressivism, while supporting teachers' professionalism, also managed to meet the imperatives of capital and the state, a feat which took place in the "sheltered setting" of the apolitical sphere of public education.

Wotherspoon's analysis of the educational reforms of the 1920s in B.C. only presents part of the picture, however. He appears to take for granted that Progressive reforms in "the last instance" were primarily in response to economic needs. Although this may have been part of the problem being addressed, it is not enough to simply say that diverse populations needed to be stabilized and changing demands for labour power

needed to be met. There was more happening, such as issues of the 'nation', 'the child' and the inadequacy of educational practices to meet the demands of a modern, Progressive Province. These are not minor issues since they saturate the text of the *Survey* and articles from the BCTF official publication. Also these issues are not simply an ideological ruse to cover the demands of capital. The demands of capital actually became part of the Progressive attempt to build and produce a prosperous, happy population.

In trying to understand the educational reforms of the 1920s, we can expand our search by examining what people were saying, how their truths were constructed and how they legitimated their actions. We must not ignore processes of problematization and contestation, but integrate them in our analysis in order to have a broader understanding of the complexities involved in constituting educational reality.

By asking *how* education was being critiqued and by examining the discourses being used at this time and this place, we can better understand how the Progressive view of education established ways of seeing and categorizing the world in opposition to alternative views. Further, by asking the question of "*how* did this happen," rather than only "*why* did this happen," I am examining unexplored ground of contestation and problematization which points towards critically investigating the very political and contingent ways in which we invent ourselves. Therefore, despite the fact that Wotherspoon and I examine the same historical "event," we are asking very different questions which can compliment one another and help to provide us with a greater understanding of the processes of educational reform in the province of British Columbia.



The remainder of this chapter examines several local texts written by Harry Charlesworth and Norman Fergus Black from the BCTF who sought to problematize the B.C. educational system in the 1920s.

#### The BCTF's Call for a Survey: 1922

At the BCTF 1922 annual convention, Mr. Harry Charlesworth, President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and General Secretary of the BC Teachers' Federation, addressed delegates regarding the topic of "What is Wrong with Education" (1922, p. 12). He ventured that this question could not be answered by any one individual, as department officials, teachers, parents, and community organizations (such as the Rotary Club, the Daughters of the Empire and the Kiwanis Club) all expressed a common concern for educational problems. In order to address the problems and provide for the improvement of education in the Province, Charlesworth called for the "active cooperation of all these bodies who are so interested, so that something practical may be accomplished for the general advancement of education" (1922, p.13). By working together, they might avoid the "useless duplication of effort which will result in a loss of energy" (p. 13), while putting aside jealousy and narrow-mindedness and avoiding self-glorification so that individuals and associations could ultimately reform the system in "the best interest of the child" (1922, p.13). He continued:

We should make the child the centre of all our considerations, the cornerstone of our architectural structure, and if we work unceasingly for any movement which will be for the benefit of the child, without the slightest fear of personal criticism or personal abuse, we shall receive our reward in the ultimate success of our objectives. (1922, p.13)

The Progressive discourse and its view that ‘the child’ and his or her needs, based on the ‘truth’ of developmental psychology and its practice of child-centred pedagogy which sought to foster individual growth and social responsibility, is found in Charlesworth’s notion of working for the benefit of the child. For Charlesworth, this meant that the child’s very life, whether for work or for leisure, was to be enhanced by the school. The whole child must be educated both in practical and in academic terms and not just with a “smattering of one or the other” (1922, p.18). Although not fully elaborated upon in this speech, a number of Progressive assumptions and reforms associated with the movement such as junior high schools (1922, pp.17-18) were apparent. This Progressivist discourse would also inform the *Survey* and help to constitute the various subject positions found in that text.

In order for Charlesworth to accomplish his goal of working for the benefit of ‘the child,’ he first recommended that educators and interested organizations had to “enlighten the public on educational matters” (1922, p. 14) and thereby mould public opinion. He believed that it was the duty of these parties to tell the public how education was a “tremendously important factor of national life”(1922, p. 14). In fact, he argued that Canadians should follow the example of American educators who actively sold and

advertised the benefits of education to the 'nation.' Charlesworth reasoned that this type of campaign would generate great enthusiasm, something that might help to persuade the public to support educational policies and reform.

Charlesworth argued further that all of the interested parties mentioned above, must be ready "to refute any criticism which is false and destructive, and to welcome that criticism which is just and constructive"(1922, p.14). Contesting "unjust criticism" and "half truths" about the education system was essential if the public was to truly appreciate the benefits of public education and its place in the 'nation'(1922, p.16). This was of particular importance in regard to school finance and expenditure, for Charlesworth claimed that the most often repeated criticism throughout the province was that "[e]ducation costs too much" (1922, p.14). In order to contest this, Charlesworth recommended questioning those who make such statements.

"How much does it cost in your city?" And they often cannot tell me; but they have heard that it costs too much, and so they repeat it. Worse still, when I ask even those who know how much it costs, "How is it spent?" ninety percent will fail to answer again because they do not know. You will find very few who have the slightest conception of what you are talking about if you ask this question, and yet all are agreed that expenditures can only be judged wisely by the returns which come from them. Educational returns cannot be tabulated like the returns from fisheries, and forests or mines, and other such assets ... If they could we would hear no criticism whatever concerning education. (1922, p.14)

According to Charlesworth, the greatest return of public education was the contribution it made to the 'nation.' Whether a child would be competent, social, self-supporting, cultured or ignorant depended upon his or her education. Working for the

common purpose and good of the community was the lesson of schooling, without which democratic government was impossible (1922, p.15).

Were the schools which produced Lloyd George, Marshal Foch or Edison, costing too much? We should remember that our schools are engaged in producing men and women who will be just as important to the world of the future as are the men whose names I have quoted to the world of today. (1922, p.15)

Charlesworth tapped into the “imagined” community, and the ideal of what British Columbia could become in the future if all the children were taught to be productive citizens who contributed to the common good.

Have you ever thought and realized that a school is a nation in miniature and that you can teach in the school all the practical citizenship that you require? There you have children from all kinds of homes, children with various kinds of home training, all assembled in one room and all treated just the same, all being taught the great lesson of democracy, namely the cooperation of all for the common purpose and good of the community which in this case is the school. Unfortunately, when people get out of school they do not keep up the value lessons they have learned but proceed to develop groups...for the promotion of selfish interests with little or no thought for the welfare of the community. Then I call your attention to the work that education has done among the Doukhobors. Show me anyone who has visited a Doukhobor school. Reflect what that movement must mean ultimately for the Province. I will not say that there is some value in the money spent. Also consider education for the Indians. See the difference between the Indian who has been to school as compared with the one who has not been schooled ...We all know what splendid results have been attained by these schools ...These schools can be and ultimately will be ... a place where the health of the nation is safeguarded. (1922, p.15)

In this narrative, education was both linked to, and, helped to create the ‘nation’ as a community. According to Charlesworth, not only did the school teach citizenship and

promote the common good, but it also assimilated “group orientated” peoples like the Doukhobors and the Indians.<sup>3</sup> Despite these attempts at assimilation, these groups remained as “outsiders.”

Charlesworth also linked education to the political economy, arguing that despite the expense and the taxes, education was by far the best investment for the ‘nation.’ He worked at laying out the long-term benefits for people who seemed to only focus on the immediate taxes they paid out of their pockets. Education, the ‘nation,’ and the economy were all dependent on one another in this “imagined” Province of the future. In working to establish B.C.’s place in the world, Charlesworth also called on the names of “great men” to mark the school’s importance, implying that only through school does one develop greatness, morality and social responsibility, and these, it would seem, were what the ideal or imagined ‘nation’ needed.

Charlesworth continued by discussing other criticisms of the educational system, such as at what age children should be allowed to leave school.

Now a question which is coming up very much at the present time is this: People are beginning to talk about the limit of state education ... There are people who think that our state Education is being carried too far, and that State education should cease at the age of fifteen. I am not going to discuss this because it is a big question and we haven’t time to discuss it ... All I want to do just now is to bring to your notice some of the things that are being said. (1922, pp.17-18)

This is quite interesting, considering that only a year before (1921) compulsory attendance had been increased to the age of fifteen for the entire Province. Apparently some people

believed that the state should only provide public schooling to grade nine and that any high school courses should be paid for by the family of the pupil. Charlesworth was noting that despite this recent extension, there was still “talk” about additional state education. He continued the discussion by endorsing the expansion of public secondary schools, arguing that without mass high school education, poor children would be “handicapped” as they would not be able to afford it. The debate over the limits of state education were apparent in 1922 and would continue with the *Survey*.

Regardless of whether the complaint was about age limits or about curriculum content, Charlesworth claimed they had one thing in common: “The trouble with all these criticisms is just these: a failure to understand the meaning of education” (1922, p.18). He argued that whether for work or for leisure, education was the foundation upon which boys and girls built their later lives and as such it must draw out the best of a person within the community (1922, p.18). The problem was therefore not the petty squabbles of money or at what age a pupil could leave the system, but whether or not education enhanced the very life of ‘the child.’

Education as the very foundation of the good life and for the future of the Province is an excellent example of what Foucault meant in regard to modern forms of power. Power is not coercive and threatening people to conform to socially acceptable forms of subjectivity but instead they are being enticed to identify with the educated subject who “build” their very lives upon this foundation. The very “best person” has his or her very life enhanced by education and organized in a positive and productive way within the

community. Charlesworth and others perceived that the system was failing. It was inadequate in this regard and needed to be reformed.

For Charlesworth there were three main problems. First, education needed to be improved to meet the needs of 'the child' and enhance his or her very life. The current system was failing to do this which constituted the core problem. The second problem was that educators and their allies did not take enough time nor care to promote the contributions that education made, despite its failings, to the 'nation.' This left a public open to "lies and half truths" and made it important for the public to get "on side" to support the aforementioned reforms and create a community consciousness. Finally, these "lies and half truths" were based on a different (and for Charlesworth an incorrect) understanding of education than that of the Progressive reformers. Those who claimed that education "costs too much" did not understand the returns of education to the community in terms of citizenship, and stability. They did not see all the benefits that would be conferred on individual boys and girls, nor on the community in which those children grew. Education, in this competing discourse, was instead a frill, a fancy at best tolerated or at worst an "ailment" to be "got through as quickly as possible" (p.20). It did not share the Progressive vision of enhancing individual lives while constructing social responsibility.

This opposition posed a barrier to reform and stood as a reminder that there was not simply one way to view the role or place of education in the community. In effect, those who viewed education as being too expensive and having little value provided an

alternative political interpretation. According to Charlesworth little more than ignorance and greed informed this opposition and interpretation, things which ultimately undermined the 'nation.' Here we see the use of rhetoric and moral regulation in an attempt to label this alternative understanding of education as deviant and socially harmful.

In order to address the problems of the system as well as the claims of the opposition, Charlesworth proposed that a survey of the educational system of the province be undertaken by experts in the field.

These particular criticisms are so contrary that I feel there is only one way of meeting them, and that is by having a survey made of the whole of our educational system; a survey which will be made by experts who will take all of these points of view and these criticisms and investigate them to find what value there is in them: who will recognize our situation and our problems and will make recommendations that will be about a solution of these difficulties ... I claim that decisions of great moment should be made by experts after hearing the criticism of laymen. If you want a diagnosis made of your medical condition, you surely go to the medical practitioner to make it ... you go to your medical man and let him give you the solution of your difficulty ... but in the difficult field of education many people without training and with little knowledge of school problems imagine they can get up and tell what is wrong and how to put it right. (1922, p.18)

By claiming that education, like medicine, was a specialized field that needed diagnosis to treat what ails it, Charlesworth invoked the powerful legitimacy of scientific knowledge. Only experts can diagnosis problems and offer solutions. Only experts can judge the 'truth' of the opposition's criticisms, based not on greed and ignorance, but on science and training. A survey of the system by experts would therefore be rational and objective as it would assert what was true and real in the field; by consequence, it cast the opposition as irrational and unable to compete.



What this tells us is that it was not simply a straight nor uncontested road to reform. Instead, what we often take-for-granted in education circles today, that education is a good thing and that people and the community can only benefit from it, was in the process of being constituted and sought to sideline the opposition. Even current reform debates seem to never question the value or place of education, but rather its content, implementation and outcome. It is important to emphasize this struggle over discourse as it points us toward analyzing power relations. By using the Progressive problematic to address the question “what is wrong with education,” Charlesworth had problematized the educational system of the day in British Columbia. Like a person putting together a puzzle, he carefully assembled for his audience the various pieces that would lead them down a logical and perfectly sensible path toward an inescapable conclusion: difficult problems existed in the system, which needed to be examined by experts in the field before solutions could be offered. A survey would gather knowledge of the workings of this system in order to better manage it. This, in turn, would enhance the lives of children and finally lay to rest unfounded criticisms by the irrational, uneducated opposition.

Before an educational inquiry could be called, there first had to be a reason to do so. Mr. Charlesworth outlined the argument for such an inquiry, and, in so doing openly questioned the public school system, connected the imperatives of education with those of the ‘nation’ and of capital, cast the subjectivity of the child and used the rationality of science to forge meaning. He also recognized that many stood in opposition to reform and

viewed education in an entirely different light. However, he believed that the opposition must be overcome for what was at stake was the very future of the 'nation.'

Charlesworth made it clear that the system had problems that needed to be addressed by a variety of interested parties. Reform, it would seem, was not to be imposed but rather developed in consensus with those in both the political and social sectors. However, educational experts were a necessary part, -- acting as 'objective' guides -- to the process. Before this group could begin the real legitimate work of reform within certain rational boundaries, they first had to counter an alternative view of educational problems -- a view which did not place the child and his/her interests at the centre of the system and which did not see education as a natural good. Once the 'true' place of education had been established it would be much easier to win public support for necessary changes. If education was so vital, if it insured the continuity of community, of the 'nation' and secured the future for 'the children,' then how could anyone be against it? Once education's place was secured alongside the 'nation' and capital, then it was only common sense to see the problems and the solutions that presented themselves.

Charlesworth therefore helped to establish a particular view of public education. This speech outlines Charlesworth's view, based on the Progressive Problematic, of the positions, the contestation and struggle which existed before the Commission was established. It also made the argument for why a Commission of inquiry was necessary as it identified several problems that needed to be investigated. The Commission, as it turned

out, would continue to work within the boundaries of Progressive reform, while elaborating on the subjectivity of ‘the child’ and further undermining the opposition.

### Efficiency and Scientific Management

After Charlesworth’s speech, the 1922 BCTF convention passed a unanimous resolution requesting the Department of Education to undertake a survey of the whole education system. It was not, however, until the 1924 convention of the BCTF that the Department of Education in British Columbia announced that it was prepared to proceed with the survey. In the meantime, the BCTF continued to build its arguments about the necessity of a survey commission, further questioning the public system and constituting the BCTF’s role as educational experts.

For example, in 1924, Norman Fergus Black, Ph.D and teacher at the Connaught High School in New Westminster, wrote a series of articles for *The B.C. Teacher*<sup>4</sup> on school surveys. He explored such things as the origin and meanings of surveys, along with a history of the 1915 Saskatchewan Survey, answers to questions arising from such surveys and an examination of rural school problems in need of reform. Of particular interest for this analysis was how Black expanded the BCTF’s problematization of the public system by raising the issue of efficiency and the educational efficiency expert.

As several scholars (Mann, 1980; Barman and Sutherland, 1995; Wotherspoon, 1998) point out, Progressivism and scientific educational management “converged” during

the 1920s and 1930s. Whether discussing teaching methods or financial expenditures, the “Progressive era” of education embraced the efficiency regime of scientific management. This apparent contradiction Wotherspoon argues could be explained in that they both held a “vision of a better society produced through the intervention of State authorities and scientific expertise” (1998, p. 22). Wotherspoon’s work could be easily expanded to analyze efficiency as a rationality, thus enabling further insight into how issues of efficiency were being used to question the operations of the public education system. Often, efficiency is a rationale or a mode of knowledge production which constitutes domains and subjectivities. When it is used as a standard of knowledge production, we can examine it to help us understand the classification of phenomena and produced effects which contributed to the regulation of society. Black’s articles were an articulation of why and how efficiency should become the standard or the rationale for measuring the performance and the costs of educational practices. He used it to question the system and to argue for the inclusion of expertise in the Commission.

As Charlesworth’s speech questioned the educational system by establishing the “needs of the child” as the central problem that had to be addressed by reform initiatives, Black’s articles highlighted the element of efficiency in Progressive education. Therefore what we see is a certain logic and rhetoric of the management sciences being developed in the educational discourse in British Columbia.

... since 1900 efficiency has become, to an extent it never was before...a popular watchword, a religion, an inspiration and (at times) a bit of verbal claptrap. Merchants, manufacturers and business men in general suddenly

realized that offices might be running at a loss, no matter how busy they were, and that self-preservation demanded the elimination of such loss ... unnecessary overhead expenses, vagueness of purpose, the retention of old things simply because they were old or the adoption of new things merely because they were new -- all these and many other similiar business follies were seen to have something in common; they all assured inefficiency. The kind of business they promoted was the business of the bankruptcy courts. Consequently, costs and policies were analyzed and scrutinized with a new zeal, with a view to making business move with the minimum of friction and in a straight line -- recognized in practice now, as in theory, always to be the shortest distance between two points. From the offices down town the movement spread to the schools. (Black, 1924a, p.105)

Black defined efficiency as the solution for the failings of capitalism. Business failure or bankruptcy can be seen as the problematic side effect of the ‘natural’ mechanisms of the market, but here it gets problematized as the result of irresponsible business people, who were either overly sentimental or all too willing to jump on a “bandwagon” of new fads. Without proper diligence and regulation, the ‘natural’ follies of humans would assure inefficiency. Many teachers and administrators were often characterized in a similar way, as bringing in frills just because it was new rather than efficient. The parallels helped Black to link the problems of capital to the problems of education.

Schools were costing more than ever before ... whence all this increase? Were the schools worth it? Was there a lurking extravagance somewhere? Wasn't somebody being paid too much?.. Was the efficiency of the schools being handicapped by traditionalism, or, on the other hand were they cluttered up with new fangled fads? In school administration, were the same sound business principles in evidence that had been found essential to the best results in other concerns? (Black, 1924a, p. 105)

By casting reality in this way, similar problems can only rationally lead to the same solutions: efficiency practices. The solution offered for both business and education was zealous application of analysis and scrutinization of costs and policies by an efficiency expert. In turn, these solutions to articulated problems quickly became imperatives. In other words, efficiency, once a solution, was now cast as being essential if capital or education was to survive, improve, and thrive. Efficiency experts would assure that this would happen.

These experts, according to Black, were most familiar with educational statistics and sought facts about educational systems rather than mere opinions. Characterized as leaders in their field, they were

... fitted by special training to speak to Mr. Business Man not in vague generalities of earlier educational leaders, but in terms of concrete results and dollars and cents, that a wayfaring man, though not an educational expert, could easily comprehend. (Black, 1924a, p. 106)

In his April 1924 article, Black provided further arguments for the inclusion of educational expertise in any school commission. He reviewed several education surveys that were conducted in other parts of Canada, the United States and Britain and concluded that

... effective commissions have probably been those that included members who were educators by profession and others representing the standpoint of intelligent laymen ... [however], outside expert direction...helped local school men to get into personal touch with the facts elicited by the survey, with the way an expert goes about the task of getting at such facts, and with the means found by experience to be the most effective in bringing educational data advantageously to the knowledge of the general public. It will be seen that a real educational survey calls for skilled and experienced

guidance not likely to be available in each and every corner of the educational world. The technically trained expert is needed. On the other hand, if the survey is properly conducted, it will produce within the province or state or city concerned, a permanent force of competent local leaders with a first-hand knowledge of the best present-day methods of testing educational efficiency. These men will do the follow-up work necessary if the findings of the commission are to effect permanent reform. (Black 1924b, p. 174)

Black's extensive knowledge of other surveys helped him to argue for the inclusion of efficiency in any inquiry into the system of education in B.C. Efficiency would become one of the rationales of the Putman-Weir Commission as it used its classificatory techniques that reflected statistical reasoning and mathematical probability. Using an analytical method grounded in "objective" positivist science, it thus produced knowledge according to these assumptions. This rationality also helped to constitute problems and subjects which were comprehensible when viewed through the lens of scientific knowledge, and which could be expected to respond to rational management in predictable, foreseeable ways. Standardized testing, a technique of the efficiency rationale, was portrayed as the most efficient method for gathering knowledge on a school population and for managing it. Chapter five will further examine the use of standardized testing in British Columbia, by investigating the history of the I.Q. test and its impact in the *Survey*.

### Conclusion

Charlesworth's speech, and Black's articles in *The B.C. Teacher*, were examples of how the public education system in British Columbia was being problematized before the *Survey*. These certainly do not represent the full range of possible versions of problems in the Province; instead these representatives of the BCTF provide a focus or a place from which to construct this analysis and they lay the groundwork for understanding the *Survey*. The writings of these two men give a picture of many of the crucial issues being discussed in the 1920s. While not officially endorsed as the BCTF position on the problems with education in the Province, these texts can be assumed to outline some of the debate in regard to what was wrong in education and what survey commissions could provide for the Province. Also given that Charlesworth was the General Secretary of the BCTF and Black held a PhD at this time, I assume that their arguments were central to the discussion and provided a great deal of moral weight to the problem of education. Nowhere in the *B.C. Teacher* publication during this time period did I find open disagreement or dissenting voices in regard to the two positions presented above. This dissent, no doubt, existed but could not be found in the documents.

Since the BCTF is commonly credited with playing an important role in the initiation of the Survey Commission, it is important to examine the objections and questions raised in its official publications. Charlesworth and Black use Progressivism and efficiency to justify having a commission, and to provide a standard of 'truth' by which to judge and problematize the public educational system. Common sense, technical problems



were constituted in this way and were then subject to solutions deriving from their own regimes of truth.

In addition, both Charlesworth and Black argued that educational expertise was needed if the survey was to be successful and useful. The BCTF obviously has a stake in this as it was promoting itself as local expert educators who, alongside specially trained educational experts, were equipped to fix the problems of the system and to guide the Department of Education in “much needed reform.” Charlesworth and Black provide insight into the process of problematization that was occurring in the 1920s in British Columbia. The following chapter picks up on this theme of problematization by examining the Commission’s report.

## Endnotes

1. There is at least one other article in *The Vancouver Evening Sun* that does make a connection between other announcements and the election. See for instance the article of 15 April, 1924 (p.4) that discusses highway construction and offending a certain riding if one route is chosen over another.
2. The written texts were found in the magazine *The B.C. Teacher*, a monthly publication (except July and August) of the BCTF and referred by it as the “official organ of the B.C. Teachers Federation”. Charlesworth’s article was chosen because it was the reprint of the speech he gave at the 1922 BCTF Convention where he first called for the Survey Commission. Black’s articles appeared in the magazine, starting in January 1924, as a series dealing with School Surveys and why B.C. should undertake such a task. These were chosen as they were the most comprehensive statement of the BCTF’s position. Although not truly a random or representative sample, these do, I believe, adequately represent the BCTF’s position.
3. Considering that the Province did not have jurisdiction over Indian Education, it is interesting that Charlesworth raises this issue. Assimilation into the community of whites in terms of individual values and the work ethic are assumed. The Doukhobor schools he refers to would erupt in violence and problems in the years to come. Many Doukhobor parents did not want to be assimilated and instead wanted their children to be taught Russian. In the 1950s children of the Sons of Freedom, a sect of the Doukhobors, were taken from their parents and interned for many years in order to be educated, assimilated to create “community”. The irony is a sad chapter in the history of B.C. The law suits over this treatment are still not settled.
4. *The B.C. Teacher* was the official publication of the BCTF.

## Chapter Four

### *The Survey of the School System of British Columbia:*

#### Modernizing the Schools and Quelling the Opposition

The British Columbia Department of Education announced in April, 1924 that a provincial educational survey, the first of its kind in the province, would be conducted in order to investigate “a wide range of matters relating to the academic, professional, financial, and administrative aspects of the system” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 1). Apparently the educational system was somehow not quite right and an investigation was warranted. The teachers of the province and their representatives, the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF), were credited on the very first page of the report with having launched the survey movement in the province which was “strongly endorsed by other educational, civic and service organizations” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 1).

The initiative was not deemed to be hostile toward the Department of Education. Rather it was portrayed in the report as an effort to “take stock,” keep “up to date” and be “progressive.” It would seem that the existing system, though good, was not modern. The

implication was that it was rapidly becoming “out of date” and therefore “out of touch” with the wave of educational Progressivism in the rest of North America. The other implication was that the current practices of pedagogy, curriculum, and courses were somehow inadequate.

As we saw in the last chapter, not being Progressive was defined as a problem for people such as Charlesworth and Black, as it implied inefficiency and a lack of child-centred attentiveness. Therefore rather than attack the Department for the job it was doing, the strategy became how it might come to “improve” the system based on the ideal principles of Progressivism.

I now move the analysis from how the BCTF problematized the educational system to how problems and solutions were defined in the report itself. In addition, the survey report, while establishing educational reality within particular parameters, sought to undermine its opposition -- how they accomplished this is one of the main discussions of this chapter. First, though I examine some of the mainstream literature.

Although the Putman-Weir Survey has been touted as playing *the* major role in shaping the British Columbia schools system until the 1960's (Barman and Sutherland, 1995; Johnson, 1964; Wotherspoon, 1995), there has been very little analysis in regard to its content and impact. There are, however, a few notable exceptions, including the works of Johnson (1964); Wood (1985); Barman (1988; 1996); Barman and Sutherland (1995); Hawthorne (1989; 1990); and Wotherspoon (1995). Wood's and Barman's analyses

especially pay close attention to the background of the Commission, its conception and what interests were served by its work.

For Wood, the survey was launched by a desperate provincial government seeking support from “middle-class urban reformers and the English gentleman farmers of the Okanagan Valley and Vancouver Island” (1985, p. 150) in order to win the 1924 provincial election. Despite denouncements from “right-wing property owners” who opposed the costs of education in general and the *Survey* in particular, Premier Oliver opted to appoint expert Commissioners who were known for their advocacy of the “new education” or Progressive educational reform<sup>1</sup> (Wood, 1985, p. 149).

Barman (1996) argues that the provincial government had actually assured the outcome of the inquiry by appointing Putman and Weir. Indeed, the Commissioners were criticized for their lack of an open mind and their preconceived notions of reform (Wood, 1985, p. 153). Wood further argues that, despite the wide variety of opinion in the province in regard to the direction of educational policy, the Commissioners “subtly shaped” opinion in the actual hearings through their tactics of questions and attitude. “In effect they were mobilizing middle-class, family-oriented voters to support the cause of the progressive school reform movement” (Wood, 1985, p. 153). Wood therefore denies any claim the *Survey* had to objectivity and instead charges that the Commissioners were biased researchers who were on a “propaganda mission” (1988, p. 151).

Both Wood and Barman introduce the complex political and social relations that surrounded the Commission’s set up, hearings and recommendations. There are, however,

several limitations to their analyses. For instance, Wood's pronouncement of the Commission's work as "propaganda" is problematic for several reasons. First of all, it implies some type of intentional ideological ruse designed to trick people into believing bias rather than true science. This position assumed that "truth" could be achieved through objectivity rather than examining how scientific rationality played a role in creating a dominant discourse and legitimacy of practice. Instead of assuming that what was really at stake in the Putman-Weir Survey was 'truth' (reality) versus propaganda (not real), my analysis concentrates on how the *Survey* came to construct a particular type of "reality." Rather than simply dismissing the bias of the Commissioners, I am interested in the political process of how this system of representation rather than another was deployed and contributed to the regulation of society.

This does not discount Wood's observation that politicians were opportunistic in their use of education and its reform for purposes of re-election. This actually confirms the logic of the governmentalization of the state as its imperative was the constant improvement of the welfare of the population. By consenting to the Commission of inquiry, the Provincial premier was looking for support from committed reformers while governing according to legitimate terms of liberal government since the inquiry was to survey and improve the education system. Premier Oliver may have acted in accordance with his own interests, but his practice was prescribed by how one should govern and therefore could be understood as legitimate -- it was what the state should do -- even if one might disagree with the monies spent or the commissioners appointed.

Barman's argument that Premier Oliver "largely predetermined the commission's outcome by opting for middle-class reformers as opposed to, for instance, representatives of provincial pressure groups" (Barman and Sutherland, 1995, p. 412) is unconvincing since it does not fully explain why one was preferable over the other. Was it simply a matter of the Premier "rigging" the Commission? Is it simply a matter of a few men imposing their will on the bureaucracy and the provincial education system? Perhaps it is more complex than this? Instead, it is possible to see that the logic of Progressivism was "at work" in the Province before the Commission was established. As discussed in the previous chapter, educators (and now bureaucrats and politicians) used the Progressive Problematic to inform many decisions, create problems and offer solutions. Perhaps, given the most up-to-date educational knowledge, it only made rational sense to many people to act according to this discourse. This did not occur without contestation, however, as the opposition had to be discredited in order for Progressive educational practices to become dominant.

Although the Problematic, with its emphasis on child-centred pedagogy and development of the whole child (Mann, 1980; Barman, 1996), was similar to other versions of Progressivism developed in North America, it also had local meaning and represented the 'nation' of British Columbia in a particular way. Rather than merely bias or ideology, Progressivism can be read as a discourse, a form of reasoning which permitted the Commission to be constituted in the first place. It was a discourse that incorporated several regimes of truth while producing new subjectivities and practices.

The next section examines how the Progressive Problematic saturated the text of the *Survey* itself, as we continue to explore issues of problematization and contestation.

### The Survey: Progressive ‘Truth’

The British Columbia Department of Education provided nineteen items<sup>2</sup> which the Survey Commission was to investigate. However, rather than the “wide ranging” investigation of various aspects of the system that was promised, what we see is a narrow and particular view of the educational system. On the one hand, many of the categories provided for investigation were specific to the local circumstances and financial problems in the Province. On the other hand, many items that were seen as “problems” were produced by the Progressive Problematic. The nineteen items can be roughly categorized into six areas. The first three categories are the result of the standard of Progressivism, while the last three categories were primarily produced by local issues and concerns in the Province.

The first category deals with the expansion of state education and poses questions such as to what extent free education should be provided and whether junior high schools were advisable in the larger districts. The second category has to do with curricular issues and asks questions about what types of courses, such as manual training and domestic science, should be developed and when they should be implemented. Also included under this category is improving and extending the course of study for high schools in the



Province. The third category examines items directly related to pupils. The first item under this category looks at how achievement and intelligence tests could evaluate pupils in the schools and whether or not pupils should be promoted to grade nine without departmental examinations. The second item was how greater emphasis could be placed on the development of 'character' in pupils.

The fourth category incorporates several of the items under the heading of administration and asks how to improve administration in the Department including school inspections, and whether municipal councils should take over the administration of schools from school boards. The fifth category broadly deals with staffing issues and questions how it is possible to retain male and/or rural teachers, improve the efficiency of normal schools and when supervising principals should be appointed. The final category has to do with money issues and includes making taxation more equitable, making school boards lay aside sums of money every year for building funds, and reducing the cost of education while maintaining efficiency.

Although some influence of Progressivism can be found in the last three categories to be investigated, these aspects were primarily constituted from local circumstances. However, in regard to the first three categories, Progressive logic is primarily at work, attempting to ensure that reality would be constituted in specific, recognizable ways as only certain problems were produced. This permitted Progressivism's conclusions and interventions to make sense and to appear as rational and inevitable. By revealing its power to re/present reality, I subvert its "naturalness" and its claim to discovery. In this

chapter I limit my analysis of the influence of Progressivism to the first category of school expansion and to how they would discredit their opposition. Also I outline in this chapter the partial intersection of local concerns with Progressivism by discussing the last three categories in more detail. The issues of curricula and the evaluation of pupils are examined in greater detail in chapter five.

### School Expansion and Progressivism

Within the Progressivist Problematic was the rationale of developmentism. This rationality contended that any society progressed through various stages of development, each more advanced or modern than the last. Being Progressive and hence modern was a preferable place to being “primitive” or undeveloped, as modernity meant improvement. Given these assumptions, Progressive educational reform problematized many school practices that had ‘evolved’ in a previous era. Practices of evaluation, curricula, and pedagogy needed to be evaluated against the criteria of “being progressive.” This was what the BCTF meant by “taking stock” of the educational system.

Neither the BCTF nor the British Columbia Department of Education created this problematic. However, both the BCTF and the Department were consistent with the conceptualizations of the problems of educational reforms already put together in different places in North America.<sup>3</sup> The “sameness” of Progressive reform elsewhere is therefore not a surprise, although circumstances and meanings shaped the course of reform locally.

Generally, the ‘truth’ of progress problematized all previous educational practices developed for a “pioneer society.”

The early design ...was intended for other and more primitive days when pioneer conditions were more prevalent and there was little complexity in our social organization. British Columbia, however, has outgrown the primitive stage in its educational thought and aspirations, and happily no one is more keenly sensitive to the need for adaptation of the system to meet modern conditions than are the educational officials entrusted with its administration. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 6)

Imagining British Columbia as a modern province enabled educators and bureaucrats alike to see “old ways” as problematic. The “primitive” past was simply inadequate. However, in questioning the existing practices of education, other problems were created, especially for the state. For instance, the very first problem submitted to the Commission by the Department of Education was the problem of the limit of government in regard to state education. How far could the Department legitimately expand state education without transgressing the “natural” rights of other spheres of society such as the family? Should the Province provide free high school or should pupils and their parents be made to pay a tuition fee? If all public high schools in the Province were free (at the time some were and some were not depending on the district), then accessibility would be increased, drawing more of the population into the field of education for a longer period of time. If the Department provided free high schools, then mass secondary education was possible, but individual family autonomy in deciding the matter for their children would be diminished. If school expansion was to proceed, then educational reformers needed to justify this action.

Mandatory attendance was only enforced until age fifteen, at which time the majority of students did not continue with their studies. Attendance in and of itself was not a problem, but for Putman and Weir it was a problem given the demands of a modern society. The complexity of modernity, including the changing demands of the labour market and of the economy, the obligation of the state to ensure the welfare of its citizens and the limits of individual cognitive learning powers were the “truths” used to extend the limits of government and the state by providing free high schools. Putman and Weir’s discussion of this problem and solution nicely bring together these various elements.

It, therefore, obviously becomes the duty of the state to provide good schools, well-trained teachers, a curriculum adapted both to the needs of the environment in which the child lives and to that in which he [sic] will make his contribution as a citizen. Such a curriculum will obviously be somewhat comprehensive and expensive, in comparison with the curricula of half a century ago, for the simple reason that the modern social environment has become much more complex than it was in the Victorian era. The demands made upon the school and upon the pupils are, therefore, correspondingly increased. Since human beings have not appreciably increased their learning powers, at least within recent decades, the only solution is to extend the length of the school course; hence the necessity for modern high school education for the masses, whereas merely an elementary school training was considered the indispensable minimum a generation ago. This transformation is but a natural incident of the social evolution of the century, and, notwithstanding the wails and criticisms of certain taxpayers, there would appear to be little prospect of the schools reverting to the simpler organization of the mid-Victorian age, unless society is also ready to revert to the comparatively primitive social and industrial conditions of the earlier period. The school is rightly regarded as an indication of the stage of social progress attained by any particular civilization... (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 57)

Given all this, it only seemed rational to extend modern high school education for the masses. Progress and social evolution were only “natural,” complexity was inevitable,

and our psychological learning powers were limited; therefore it was logical to make high school education more accessible. In 1923, only 9.7% of the school population was in high school grades and this did not bode well for progress (Johnson, 1964). By providing free high school education, the sphere of public education would expand to include and manage more of the population for a longer period of time.

Also of interest in this analysis is the reference to the British monarch Victoria which marked, in this example, the “eras” of time. A “natural,” taken-for-granted reference separated insiders from outsiders: British and non-British. This British standard marked civilizations, reinforcing the connection to Empire and securing the Province in its “imagined” place. This imagined community of civilized British Columbians could legitimately expand its education system and take its rightful place in the modern world. How could anyone be against this “natural” process? But many people did oppose this expansion.

Although opponents were never identified by name, they were described as wanting to revert to a simpler and more primitive mode of living and were reported to have supported a heavy high school fee of between \$100 and \$200 rather than universal access (Putman and Weir 1925, p. 68). Subsequently labeled as “reactionary” and “conservative,” they reportedly had seven main arguments <sup>4</sup> against free high schools, most of which can be summarized by saying it was not necessary nor useful for the majority of pupils.

Putman and Weir conceded that not all pupils would be able to profit from high school instruction due to lack of “intellectual ability and heredity” (Putman and Weir,

1925, p. 66); however, children of average ability would make up the majority of high school pupils and to exclude them from the individual benefits of learning academic as well as spiritual and moral values would be unjust. In addition, they argued that “in later life they [high school pupils] will probably exert the great steadying influence in our political and social organizations” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 67). Although this might be interpreted by contemporary social historians as supporting the “social control paradigm,” it is secondary to Putman and Weir’s determination to equate free high schools with the ideals of the modern age in Canada. “The free high school ... is a necessary corollary of free, compulsory state education and is consonant with the ideals of most enlightened Canadian communities” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 67).

Opponents of free high schools also reportedly argued that “the home” should be responsible for certain activities and functions which the “frills and fads” (such as free universal high schools) were taking over. In other words, the family should be responsible for financing high school education if parents and pupils wanted it. To this, Putman and Weir flatly stated that, “[t]he aim of the schools has never been to usurp the duties and the functions of the home” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 68). The matter was rather one of progress and pragmatism for the Commission. The modern age demanded more from children, thus state education needed to be expanded -- to think otherwise was “old fashioned.” Progress and development therefore provided the rationale for the expansion of state education; redefining the limit of the public sphere.

Several of the other nineteen items that were crafted by the Department of Education also dealt with modernizing, expanding and improving educational practices

including curricula and courses at the elementary and high school levels, evaluation of pupils, and organization of the grades. Several of these will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

### Other Problems: B.C.'s own 'Truth'

Although the Progressive Problematic permitted a narrow view of education to gain prominence as it crowded out other problems, options, and solutions, it did not simply determine every item that was examined nor how it was dealt with in the *Survey*. In other words, not all of the problems outlined in the Department of Education's terms of reference were the product of the Problematic. As mentioned earlier, there were three general categories that were to be investigated by this Commission, including staffing, money items and administration. I examine the first two in greater depth.

The three issues (items xiv, xv and xvi on the list--see endnote 2) regarding teachers were only partially constructed by this logic as these also dealt with unique "truths" of the Province. These "truths" included the division of urban and rural school districts which the Province created through differential funding arrangements. The sixteenth item, the efficiency of the normal schools,<sup>5</sup> could, however, be attributed to the Progressive Problematic as part of an overall process of problematizing past practices.

The other two exceptions on this Departmental list were the items of money and administration. The issue of money, including taxation and cost, were partially questioned by the Progressive Problematic and partially by particular provincial circumstances of

educational finance that aroused public criticism. Listed as the second and third items for investigation, the Department first recognized that taxation needed to be made more equitable between municipal and rural districts, and that the cost of education to the state and to local districts needed to be materially reduced while maintaining or increasing the efficiency of the schools. In order to understand how these issues were problematized, it is first necessary to explain the divisions of the districts and their funding arrangements.

By 1924, British Columbia had divided its school districts for purposes of administration into two main classes: municipal and rural. It further subdivided these according to attendance levels and school funding arrangements. For example, municipal districts had three classes. The first class included schools with more than one thousand pupils attending for the school year; the second class district had between two hundred and fifty and one thousand pupils attending daily; and finally the third class had an average daily attendance of less than two hundred and fifty pupils. Each district had an elected board of school trustees that provided and administered educational services (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 510).

Rural districts were further divided into three classes: the regular class of schools with at least twenty children between the ages of six and sixteen with assessable property and sufficient income for school expenditures, as well as Assisted Districts with and without local assessment.<sup>6</sup> All the Rural districts had elected school trustees while the Assisted Districts also received additional financial help and more supervision from the Department of Education (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 510). All types of districts received government grants for teachers' salaries as well as for equipment, libraries, and night



schools. However, in the city districts all other expenses were met by a school rate (tax) which was included in the local tax levy.

Professor S.E. Beckett of the University of British Columbia, who was hired by the Commission to investigate the state of education finance in the province, argued that these categories of districts and arrangements of finance were not that out of the ordinary as similar examples could be found throughout North America. However, he also argued that, due to a combination of causes unique to the Province, public attention was focussed on the financing of education in the province. These causes included:

the period of rapid expansion followed by the collapse of land values beginning about 1913 and intensified by war conditions; the resulting failure of the large amount of unimproved real estate to continue to be revenue producing at a time when certain and increasing revenues had become more and more necessary; the burden of ill-considered expenditures during the previous period of expansion coupled with not a little use of ill-advised methods of municipal financing--these and other conditions combined to concentrate public attention on the need for general municipal economy and hence to throw a spotlight on the growing costs of education. (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp. 511-512)

Beckett argued that economic conditions and poor management made school expenditures and taxation a problem. This is only part of the picture, however, as the criticisms of school expenditures from the unnamed opposition were not a straight forward economic matter of too much money being spent. Rather, the opposition claimed the problem lay in *the way* school boards spent money on “frills” and “luxuries” such as high schools:

The outcome has been a somewhat confused mixture of impressions and opinions which have become articulate in different quarters in vague criticisms of educational policy and methods of school boards as

extravagant; in the opinion that virtually free secondary education especially in the advanced grades was unwarranted; that there were too many “frills”, forms of education more resembling luxuries that could not be afforded and that results did not warrant; that sources of revenue were not justly divided as between Province and municipalities; that the Provincial Government should assume the entire cost of education; or at least of secondary education; that the municipal council which has to provide the money should have effective control over the expenditure of the school board; and that the taxation system was inequitable. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 512)

The criticisms of school expenditures reported in the *Survey* were mainly in response to issues of Progressivism such as free secondary schools, and new courses and curriculum. The argument was that these types of reforms cost too much. This opposition problematized costs by linking them to possible (and actual) reforms.<sup>7</sup> Generally, the criticisms were informed by a “traditional” or what the *Survey* might label as “ultra-conservative” or “conservative” reasoning whereby schools should be “basic,” costs lowered and fees maintained or imposed, depending on the district. For this particular opposition, the only changes that would suffice were the lowering of costs and the renegotiation of financial arrangements between the Districts and the Province.

This opposition posed a barrier to reform and stood as a reminder that there was not simply one way to view the role or place of education in the community. In effect, those who viewed education as being too expensive also attempted to undermine Progressive reform and thus provided an alternative political interpretation. The Commission addressed these criticisms on its own terms by first dealing with the issues of cost and taxation and then by discrediting the opposition’s stance.

The Commission proposed a “simple” solution for matters of taxation by arguing that only the implementation of “an equalized valuation of real property applicable throughout the Province” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 4) would effectively deal with the problem. Beckett also recommended that the state-issued school grants be expanded beyond teachers’ salaries to include enrollment, thus ensuring adequate support for all districts (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 525). Beckett argued further, on the basis of his investigation that the costs of education were rising due to salary and enrollment increases rather than “frills and fads,” thus refuting opposition claims. However, if the people of the Province wanted the best, most efficient school system, they would, according to Putman and Weir, have to pay for it:

For the most part, efficient education is demanded, even insisted upon, but there is widespread demand that it must be provided at a lower cost to the property-holder than at present...there is marked unanimity in the protest against school costs, but little unanimity of opinion as to how these costs may be reduced without imperilling the quality of instruction and the general efficiency of the schools. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 5)

The elimination of waste was thus supported as a reasonable objective, but if the school as the “great social enterprise” was to achieve its objective of educating future citizens for worthy participation in life, it would cost money. Efficiency as a rationale was not simply cost cutting but also practically and productively achieving goals. It was about managing the process to produce desired objectives.

Problematizing the public system in British Columbia at this time relied on the Progressive Problematic with its various regimes of truth and rationalities which “made”

educational practices inadequate. However, unique circumstances, such as district organization, funding arrangements and taxation, were only partially attributable to the Problematic. The next section examines the opposition to progressive reforms in greater detail.

Classes of Public Opinion or how to tell those we like from those we do not like

Having investigated and offered solutions to these economic issues of taxation and educational costs, Putman and Weir sought to discredit their opposition, just as Charlesworth of the BCTF had done. They would also utilize the “truths” of Progressivism and science to undermine, discredit and divide their opponents. Those who complained about “frills” and educational costs were ignorant, greedy and ultimately undermined the ‘nation.’

In certain instances the noisy and irresponsible critic of modern movements in education finds much to rail at in the field of educational finance. Ignorance and dogmatism usually go hand in hand and constructive criticism is precious as it is rare. Fortunately, the irresponsible type of critic belongs to a relatively small minority. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 5)

Putman and Weir argued that mere opinion could not form the basis of educational policy as many (especially their opposition) of those who offered an opinion on educational problems were simply mired in “prejudice and local self-interest.” Given the importance of education to the ‘nation,’ only the scientific evidence gathered by trained educational experts, such as Professor Beckett, could help to form policy and educational practice. The Commission’s use of “science” to legitimate its reforms also aimed to

discredit its opponents. As well, the categories that Putman and Weir formulate to discredit their opponents are rhetorical devices. They use rhetorical idioms which construct the various positions on reform in both positive and negative ways. This is a clear attempt to induce the reader to identify with the aims of the report and against the opposition and will be explored in more detail.

Attempting to discredit their opposition, Putman and Weir divided their opponents by categorizing their public submissions into a continuum of “five main divisions for purposes of comment and comparison” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 24). These five classes of submissions (not all of which were labelled as oppositional), consisted of a) Reactionary and Ultra-conservative; b) the Conservative Class; c) the Moderate Class of Educational Opinion; d) Progressivism; e) Radicalism (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp. 24-27). Importantly, those who made submissions had no voice or say in how the Commission categorized and represented their “opinions.” These categories therefore tell us a great deal about the Commissioners, but very little about those whom they sought to categorize, as they were effectively lumped together, stereotyped, and ultimately silenced.

Despite admitting that the divisions were not mutually exclusive, Putman and Weir constructed these categories based on what they argued was an objective analysis (1925, p. 24). Three main Progressivist assumptions were applied as the criteria to classify the submissions. The first was whether or not the submission recognized the need to modernize existing educational practices and to what degree. The second was whether or not the submission supported free education or wanted to impose school fees. The third, though not equally applied, was how the submission viewed the objectives or purpose of

education. After each submission had been assessed on the basis of these criteria, it would be placed in one of the five categories along the continuum.

The first category, “reactionary and ultra-conservative” consisted of the opposition which the *Survey* wanted to discredit the most. It received the most attention in the report. None of it was good. Although it was characterized as a “distinct minority,” its numbers and influence were obviously viewed as significant. The submissions that were placed in this category were characterized as arguing against modern or Progressive reform by extolling what Putman and Weir referred to as, “the fetish of the ‘little red school house’ of the nineteenth century or earlier, while the slogan adopted appears to be ‘Away with the frills and fads and back to the three R’s’ ” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 24). Supporters of this view also reportedly favoured charging fairly large high school fees, excluding those students from high school who did not show intelligence and progress in their studies, and excluding certain subjects from the curriculum. Putman and Weir argued that those who supported this view had demonstrated “much loose thinking” as they never clearly identified who or what precisely should be excluded (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 24).

Part of the “reactionary” argument for exclusiveness rested upon the belief that too many students were being prepared for “white-collar” work, leaving an insufficient number to perform “manual tasks and menial service.” Putman and Weir argued against the exclusion of future manual or service workers from a high school education by rhetorically aligning their Progressive position with the needs of a modern civilization, business and democracy:

... it is surely obvious, both from the viewpoint of the employer and the employee, that a high school education, of a practical or vocational turn, would prove an asset to the future plumber, bricklayer, miner, farmer, lumberman, or other labourer ... In the increasing complexity of our modern civilization a high school education is rapidly coming to be recognized as a necessity for the achievement of success and not a mere luxury. In an autocracy, such as Prussia of ten years ago, the process of class selection (and subjection) might solve the problem of occupational placement ... but it is no longer fashionable to extol Prussian standards ... Democratic thinkers believe, rightly or wrongly (the Survey believes rightly) in ... “equality of opportunity”...within the limits prescribed by intelligence, moral worth, industry and aptitude. The great majority of the citizens of British Columbia will no doubt agree with the view...that ‘A square deal in adult life is not worth much unless there is a fair chance during childhood’. This doctrine of the “square deal” is essentially British. (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp. 25-26)

Characterizing their opponents as elitest, Putman and Weir also strategically claimed that these people extolled values similar to the Prussians, “the enemy” whom the Empire had defeated only seven years before in the Great War. This quickly became a patriotic, almost militaristic defense which sought to secure the place of Progressive reforms as democratic and British: perhaps a metaphor for everything that was deemed good, right and victorious. Again, reform of the public schools, when presented in this light, was simply the right thing to do. And the opposition was simply wrong and obviously bad, almost like the enemy that had been defeated. This strongly moralistic language could invoke emotion and compel many to identify with the reformers and the aims of the report. After all, wasn't the Great War all about civilization and Empire?

Putman and Weir continued with their scathing attack by further characterizing the critics as “cynical materialists” and “amateurish educational diagnosticians” who were “dangerous” if given their way, and whose “clamour” was out of proportion with their

importance (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 26). The Commission declared that “the pious ejaculation of ‘being old-fashioned enough’ is but a disguise to conceal ignorance and mental inertia under a veneer of assumed respectability” (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp. 42-43).

Putman and Weir also linked the class of “reactionaries” with “traditional” objectives in education. Traditionalism, Putman and Weir charged, was informed by “functional or faulty psychology” which supported traditional objectives for education. Simply stated, this position assumed that

there may be a transfer of training or improvement from one field to another without specific exercise in the latter. In British Columbia, for instance, a more comprehensive study of history was frequently urged before the Survey as efficacious in improving the memory and judgement, not merely the memory for history but for things in general. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 40)

Such courses as Latin were therefore highly regarded by the traditionalists. Latin was said to improve all faculties of the mind, such as memory, reasoning and imagination. The Commission labelled this theory as the “formal discipline doctrine.” This ‘truth’ reportedly became the rationale for many who opposed Progressive reforms, as it supported the view that the existing basic academic program in the schools was completely adequate and in no need of reform. In British Columbia, this view or “doctrine” had previously been used in the system to determine the basis and limitations for the curriculum.

New subjects of study have been added in spite of its influence and in opposition to the formal disciplinarians, whether among teachers or laity, who are inclined to attack the inclusion of such subjects as domestic science or manual training in the same category with the time honoured



classics and mathematics. The influence of this doctrine is also evident among large numbers of the ratepayers who regard education chiefly as learning out of a book. If the teacher drills incessantly on the formal parts of grammar and arithmetic or the facts of history and geography, he [sic] is in their opinion, a good teacher. It is also this doctrine of formal discipline that the reactionaries and the conservatives in educational thought chiefly appeal as a buttress of their conservatism. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 42)

It would be irrational and unwise to change, as it might invite “trouble and unrest” according to this position. The unrest and trouble were not specified, but the traditionalist logic and the knowledge they relied upon were quite clear, despite the attempts to undermine them. I do not doubt that those who opposed Progressivism on this basis did not see themselves as following “doctrine” or would necessarily call themselves “traditional,” but I have no evidence of this. These terms were “loaded” in the sense that they were used by the Commission to further discredit its opposition. The Progressive reform position was reinforced as the normal and the conservatives as deviant and misinformed cynics. The rhetoric is exceedingly clear.

The other problem, according to Putman and Weir, was that this theory which the opposition relied upon had been scientifically disproven and was therefore only creating an “intellectual torpor” which needed to be swept away in the face of the constantly changing needs of modern life. As evidence, Putman and Weir examined Professor E.L. Thorndike’s study of whether studying Latin and mathematics over French or physics improved individual intelligence in order to discredit the traditionalist position and support their own Progressivist position.

Twenty years ago the brighter students in our secondary colleges and universities specialized largely in classics and mathematics. A false process of reasoning established a causal relationship where none existed, and

assumed that the study of these branches of culture made the students more clever. At the present time the more able thinkers are studying the sciences, possibly owing to economic reasons. Obviously it would be a similar fallacy to assume that sciences possess an inherent mental disciplinary value superior to that alleged to be derived from the study of classics. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 41)

Their science was poor, their values elitist, even Prussian in nature. They were undemocratic, cynical and even dangerous. They also created stagnation and undermined the ‘nation.’ The “reactionaries” were indeed a difficult bunch who resisted the Progressive Problematic and offered an alternative view of education, psychology and ‘the pupil.’

This contest of ‘truths’ demonstrates the different educational realities and knowledge that existed in the Province at this time. It also demonstrates the struggle it took for Progressivism to become dominant as the Commission went to such lengths to discredit an opposition which existed both in the schools and in the public at large. Changing the basis on which educators had for years been making decisions about pupils and practices was no easy feat.

The Commission was challenging the opposition (which up until this point had been the dominant discourse of education) based on the standards of the Progressive Problematic. The opposition, if it wanted to continue the debate and remain legitimate, had to “answer” on the Commission’s terms. Opponents had to argue that they are indeed democratic, British, moral and have adequate scientific evidence. Those holding alternative views were now obligated to legitimize themselves on these terms. As Progressivism came

to colonize the educational space in the Province, alternative ideas had very little room. Demonized and discredited, the “reactionaries” were dismissed.

Putman and Weir’s second category of submissions, labelled the “conservative class,” was characterized as less extreme and reactionary than the first category. These submissions did not pay “mystic homage” to the past, but they did consider it “unsafe to cut themselves too hastily from its moorings” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 26). Also against “frills” in the school curriculum, they couldn’t agree amongst themselves as to what constituted a “frill,” although they often mentioned household science, manual training, art and music. They also supported a “moderate” high school fee to stimulate an appreciation of high school by the students and their parents. Despite these “shortcomings,” they at least agreed to some modification of educational institutions in light of modern standards. This raised their standing, according to the Progressivist criteria, above the “reactionaries.” Painted as more moderate, less dogmatic and somewhat rational by Putman and Weir, this “conservative” class recognized modern circumstances, and therefore the report treated them considerably less harsh and critically; for this class there was no incantation of nationalism, democracy, and “the British way.”

The third class of public opinion was labelled as “moderate.” Here was a good, rational grouping of people if ever there was one. The rhetoric of this category creates the image of morality and moderation inducing people to align themselves with its claims.

The exponents of moderation in educational expansion and practice have no fetishes nor retrenchment slogans so far as free high school education or the subjects of the school programme are concerned. They insist, however, that the curriculum is somewhat old-fashioned and in need of expert revision. The middle or junior high school and vocational education, within

reasonable limits are regarded with considerable favour. It is contended, however, that caution and prudence should be exercised in the development of our educational institutions and that close scrutiny should be applied to all expenditures of a possibly extravagant character. This class asks for reasonable economy in school expenditures...apparently [this class] constitute a majority of the citizens of the Province. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 27).

Most citizens were therefore reasonable, cautious, prudent and recognized the importance of expertise. This group was everything the first two groupings were not. The Commissioners did not need to convince or critique this group, the majority (which always carries the day in the best British Parliamentary way) of citizens was naturally inclined this way and thus supported moderate Progressive reforms within prescribed limits. “The good citizen” was therefore cast as “no true citizen advocates extravagant expenditure for school or other purposes” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 34). Moderate citizens were therefore conceived as better, normal individuals, as the very ideals of the nation, civilization and Empire were intrinsic features of these subject positions. Only elitist cynics would not want to be moderate. Interestingly, as long as “opinion” bowed to expertise and was not at cross purposes to Progressivism, it suddenly became legitimate. This was based strictly on moderation and majority rule with no mention of scientific investigation or gathering of data being called for to test this “mere” opinion.

Putman and Weir also associated this class of “moderate” opinion with a composite view of modern and traditional educational objectives (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 35). These objectives included patriotic ends of instruction, individual development, specific habit formation and the development of character, which will be discussed in

greater detail in the following chapter. These composite objectives nevertheless contrasted with the traditional aims of the “reactionaries,” particularly in the type of values that this imagined nation should contain:

The development of a united and intelligent Canadian citizenship actuated by the highest British ideals of justice, tolerance, and fair play should be accepted without question as a fundamental aim of the provincial school system. Such an aim has stood the test of time and its application in the daily lives of the British peoples has enhanced the good name of the British Empire. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 38)

Appealing to both “Canadians” and those who aligned themselves with the British Empire, the composite position offered something quite different from Prussian elitism. Putman and Weir argued that the vast majority of submissions contained both traditional and modern objectives (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 35). Moderation seemed to be a very contradictory place where the best of both worlds could be embraced; hold onto the Empire but move forward into the future.

Putman and Weir labelled a fourth class of public opinion as “progressivism.” This class was associated with the majority, “moderate” position as “[t]he more moderate school of thought ... also sanctions some of the above [progressive] “innovations” in our schools, but within more restricted limits” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 27). Progressivism apparently only needed some limits to its enthusiastic, innovative plans of reform. Putman and Weir argued that “the great majority of this class are not owners of property,” thus explaining why people associated with this class of opinion apparently lack a sense of prudence. By implication, the “moderate” majority were owners of property which had tempered their opinion, making them more responsible and more practical.

This class of public opinion was also linked to what Putman and Weir called “modern educational objectives.” This position portrayed quite a different understanding of who the pupil was, and what would benefit him or her.

Education is life, not a mere preparation for life consisting in the memorization of facts and principles and the mastery of formal curriculum. Furthermore, life is real throughout and no artificial distinctions between the so-called preparation period of childhood and the alleged realization period of adult life should be set up. Many academic schools with their traditional curricula and formal methods of instruction have consistently ignored the admonitions of such educational philosophers as Rousseau, Dewey, and others, with the result that failure is written across the record of their activities. Such modern types of school organization as the junior high school have come to the rescue in their attempt to put a little more life in education as well as more education in life. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 44)

The modern practices and objectives of the progressives would therefore ‘truly’ educate and prepare pupils for a *successful* life. This was very different from the rote learning and approach of the traditional “reactionaries.” This quote illustrates the central concern of the modern Progressive movement -- the fostering of life itself, through the care and growth of the population.

The rationality of government is at work here as the school, and indirectly the state, seek to organize pupils’ very lives, governing them toward certain identities and ways of being. This illustrates Foucault’s point that modern forms of power can be positive and productive, operating primarily through the organization of life rather than through coercion and the threat of death (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983).

The final class of public opinion was labelled by Putman and Weir as “radicalism.”

An even smaller group of ratepayers than the “reactionaries,” it was argued that this class resembled its extreme opposite in some ways:

Each aims at demolishing, to a large extent, and reconstructing many features of existing educational institutions, but this course is advocated from entirely different points of view. The materials and methods of reconstruction are also radically at variance. The exponents of the radical school of educational reform look to the future for the promise of a new era of greater opportunity, and, as one means of ushering in this halycon period would revolutionize the educational programme from top to bottom. The reactionary school turns just as ardently to the past, as an era of educational self-sufficiency, and by a process of devolution (or excision) would simplify the educational programme, academic and administrative from top to bottom. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 27)

Those in the “radical” class were reported to have argued that the curriculum needed to become even more attuned to modern needs through such things as economic studies so that people might “protect themselves against the wiles and intrigues of the ‘interests’” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 28). Discredited by association with “the reactionaries,” Putman and Weir paid little attention to “the radicals.” If members of this class had communist or socialist leanings, it was never mentioned and the “red scare” never invoked. Obviously Putman and Weir did not perceive them as a threat, since they had little impact on public opinion or on the proceedings.

In wrapping up their discussion of classes of public opinion, Putman and Weir clearly favoured the moderate position, reinforcing its connection to Britain, stability, wisdom and efficiency:

The stabilizing factor is obviously to be found in class (c), representing the moderate group of educational opinion. The adherents of this group,

roughly, fifty per cent of the taxpaying body cannot be easily stampeded by extreme viewpoints from either quarter...Wise expenditures must be applied in accordance with sound educational objectives chosen to satisfy real social needs rather than to secure fanciful innovations. The limits of the public purse are recognized as the factor governing educational expansion, since no self-respecting people who profess to pay their way are entitled to a better system of education than they can afford to support ... At the same time it is just as readily conceded that cheap inefficiency in public education is less economical in the long run than more costly (for the immediate present) efficiency. Since majority rule is paramount in British communities, when the “moderates” move forward educationally, the financial interests must pay their share. Nor will the latter object, unless in cases of an indifferent or absentee “aristocracy” if the wisdom of the investment is clearly established ... the opinion is confidently advanced that those who have amassed their wealth in the competition of modern commerce and industry should be among the first to admit that the demands of our complex civilization with its numerous and intricate contacts --social, national, political, economic, and international -- cannot be adequately met by the traditional school organization designed for the more primitive social groupings of a generation ago. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 28)

The logic behind the expansion and reformation of state schooling therefore becomes obvious. Putman and Weir argued that they were addressing “real social needs” to modernize school practices in order to ready future citizens for the rigours of tomorrow. These “real social needs,” however, were constituted by the Progressive Problematic of evaluating past educational practices as insufficient for modern conditions. However, the composite educational objectives associated with “the moderates” were made up of both traditional and modern aims which seem contradictory given the justification for reform initiatives. Character development, patriotism and Empire were rooted in British tradition and yet were not abandoned despite modernization. There are two possibilities that may explain this.



The first could be that the discourse of nationalism was so completely dominant at this time that it had to permeate the text in order for officials and ordinary citizens to support any educational reforms. This is a plausible explanation given that the Great War had only ended seven years before and could be used as a rallying point. The other possibility is that the “imagined” nation of British Columbia was so precarious, and so problematic that it needed to be reinforced in schools. If patriotism and community were ‘natural,’ then why emphasize them so much? This text could therefore be an indication of the scale of the problem posed by some people in British Columbia in the 1920s, who simply did not act in accord with the values of this “imagined” community. The continuation of British tradition hardly seems modern, and yet this contradiction was embraced by Putman and Weir. Exactly why remains an open question.

By constructing the categories of public opinion in this way Putman and Weir utilized rhetorical devices to discredit their opposition and to associate Progressivism with everything deemed good and right and just. This is a clear attempt to induce the reader to identify with the aims of the report by persuading them of the morally correct stance of the Progressive, moderate and modern approach to schooling in the Province.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrate that Progressivism is not simply an ideology of the middle-classes, but rather is a discourse which helped to justify both the Commission inquiry, and the modernization and expansion of the Provincial education system. This

Progressive Problematic saturates the text of the *Survey of the School System*, and can be read as regimes of truth and rationalities, which permit a narrow view of education and its problems to gain prominence. In addition, local ‘truths’ are found in the text and create its own unique set of problems and solutions. Together, the ‘truths’ of Progressivism and the local Provincial ‘truths’ help to characterize the educational practices of the day as inadequate and in need of reform.

Viewing Progressivism as a discourse reveals the complexity of the language to reflect and constitute a certain reality. However, in order for the analysis to provide more insight into the ascendancy of the Progressive view of education, it is important to include a discussion of the struggle and conflict which surround its emergence. I am limited in this endeavour because the only available record is the text of the Putman and Weir Survey itself. Nevertheless, what this analysis reveals is that considerable effort was made to categorize, divide and discredit certain types of public submissions that were seen as hostile to the Progressive Problematic.

Framing its opponents in a certain way helped Putman and Weir to categorize and justify their own efforts of reform. These justifications, however, are often contradictory and unclear. These categories were also rhetorical devices that utilized morality in order to compel the reader of the *Survey* to identify with the aims of Progressivism. This, in turn, might lead to further support for Progressive reform that would modernize the schools and help to organize and regulate the very lives of future citizens. The following chapter further explores the constitution of subjectivities in the text of the *Survey*.

## Endnotes

1. This was less than successful as the Premier lost his own seat in the election.
2. The following are the 19 subjects and/or questions set out as the terms of reference for the *Survey*.
  - i. The scope and limits of state education. To what extent should free education be provided by the Government and local authorities? Should tuition fees be exacted from pupils attending high school?
  - ii. How can the incidence of taxation for school purposes be made more equitable (a) in municipalities; (b) in rural districts?
  - iii. How can the cost of education (a) to Government; (b) to the local districts, be materially lessened and at the same time the efficiency of the schools maintained or increased?
  - iv. Improvement in the courses of study of elementary schools.
  - v. Should manual training and domestic science be taken up in elementary schools? If yes, in what grade should they be started? Should these subjects be made obligatory in the elementary and high schools of (a) cities of the first class; (b) cities of the second class? Should a supervisor of domestic science for the Province be appointed?
  - vi. The value and use of achievement and intelligence tests. Should pupils be promoted from grade eight to grade nine without departmental examinations of any kind? If not, what should be the nature of the examinations to be held?
  - vii. What should be the enrolment at a school before a school board is justified in appointing a supervising principal?
  - viii. Would any great advantage be likely to result from placing the administration of schools in the hands of municipal councils instead of boards of school trustees as at present?

ix. Should school boards in cities and district municipalities be empowered by statute to lay aside a definite sum of money yearly as a building fund?

x. Improvement in the course of study for high schools: (a) Would there be any decided advantage in adopting the unit system in vogue in American high schools? (b) Is it advisable to extend the course to four years?

xi. The household science course (high school) and its relation to the University of British Columbia.

xii. Is it advisable to establish junior high schools (grades seven, eight, and nine) in the larger districts?

xiii. How can greater emphasis be placed on the development of character in pupils attending the public schools?

xiv. How can a greater number of men be induced to enter and remain in the teaching profession?

xv. How can a greater number of successful experienced teachers be induced to accept and retain positions in rural schools?

xvi. How can the normal schools be made more efficient?

xvii. How can inspection of schools be made more effective?

xviii. How can the general administration of the Department of Education be improved?

xix. Any other important matters that may be brought to the Commission's notice by public bodies.

3. Norman Fergus Black discusses in his 1924 articles the various other surveys of the school systems, most of which dealt with progressive reform. No doubt the bureaucrats in the Department were also aware of these surveys. Mann (1980) also discusses how the *Survey* was part the North American Progressive Movement in education. Barman (1996) adds that this was a time when the works of Dewey and Hughes were known in the province.

4. The seven arguments were as follows: 1) payment of tuition fees for all high school pupils except in cases of poverty; 2) no free high school education, in any case, after the age of sixteen has been reached except under a scholarship system; 3) the state has discharged its primary duty to the citizens of the Province by providing free elementary school; 4) free high schools means special privilege to those who are least in need of it; 5) many pupils will never be able to apply their training in any useful way; 6) high school education will be more appreciated by its recipients if a heavy fee is charged; 7) only a small section of the community require or can make use of more than elementary school education.

5. "Normal school" was the name for the place where teachers trained to become teachers. In Ontario this is now referred to as "Teachers' College" while in B.C., depending on the degree, training occurs in a Faculty of Education or in a Professional Development Program (PDP).

6. In addition there were districts in the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway Belt which were assisted by the government because of earlier legislation that provided for such funding arrangements.

7. This was different than what Charlesworth had addressed in his speech where his opposition mostly criticized how much they paid in taxes and placed little value in education itself rather than focussing on the particular types of reforms or ways that money was spent .

## Chapter Five

### Subjectivities and Effects

While “the young” have always been identifiable by their physical size and age, the meanings these differences have been given are not universal. Present-day Western beliefs that children are dependent, vulnerable, require segregation, and require a delay from responsibility represent a particularly modernist shift in views of the young. Even more recent are notions of having a normal childhood. Childhood today is often perceived as a universal, stable category bound by norms of development and ways of assessing deviations. (Baker, 1998: p.117)

Having discussed how the British Columbia school system in the 1920s was problematized, we can now further examine the casting of subjectivities and the deployment of effects. Although aspects of this have already been discussed earlier, this chapter examines the constitution of new subjectivities and the consequences of the problematization in more detail. Understanding how educators and administrators sought to guide and influence ‘children,’ and, upon what ‘truths’ they based their efforts, is important if we are to understand the narrow range of available ways to think about and act toward ‘the child.’

Here I return to Curtis' discussion of how educational reform sought to transform the subjectivity of the population by producing new habits, dispositions and loyalties that were congenial to the state. This "popular socialization" or "construction of the public" is a significant part of the analysis of sociologists and social historians regarding educational reform. Scholars such as Bowles and Gintis, and Curtis, have focussed upon how the subjects created by educational practices benefit the state and/or capital production. However, Curtis improved upon the neo-Marxist position by recognizing that political power and discourse also made an impact upon the production of the subject. For Curtis, humanistic pedagogy sought to develop particular capacities for moral behaviour in children and the common discourse of Christianity provided principles of behaviour such as tolerance, meekness, charity and respect. These aimed to create subjects who would respect political authority, reject political violence, and create harmony among members of all social classes.

In order to provide further insight into the constitution of subjects, I build on the strengths of Curtis' work, and examine how the Progressive Problematic cast certain subjectivities that conformed to its own 'truth.' In particular, the Problematic drew upon the knowledge of developmental psychology to *understand* reality, and, more importantly, to *constitute* it. As we will see, certain aspects of a common Christian morality and national character remained as elements in the subjectivity of 'citizen,' but a new subject in British Columbia emerged in the 1920s with 'the developing child.'

According to developmental psychology at the time, ‘the child’ would pass through a series of stages which were premised on his or her individual capacities and needs. Given this knowledge of developmental stages, certain effects were created. For instance, it was rational to construct educational practices to conform to and enhance this process of development. It was also efficient to measure these individual capacities with a new method of evaluation which could “know” the child instantly -- the Intelligence Quotient test. In the second half of this chapter we will discuss the use of this test in the *Survey*. First, however, we consider the discursive production of various subjectivities in the text.

#### On the Discursive Production of the Individual Subject

Foucault’s work has dealt with “three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects” (Foucault, 1983: 208). This chapter is primarily concerned with the mode that he labels “dividing practices.” An example of these practices is the school examination which will be discussed in more detail in the second half of this chapter. Within this each person is treated as an object to be moulded by particular practices or techniques and to be studied and known. This creates certain identities or types of individuals such as ‘the criminal,’ ‘the pauper’ and ‘the child.’ Human beings are then acted upon as if they were these types and they come to know themselves and others



in this way. Power and knowledge thus converge to invest and objectify human beings as subjects:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him [sic] by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1983, p. 212).

The other mode that will be discussed in this chapter is how human beings turn themselves into a subject. How do they govern themselves and how are they induced to “take up” these positions? Discussed in terms of moral regulation, the *Survey of the School System* contained several different instances of seeking to govern through external regulation while promoting internal constitution (Hunt, 1999). The use of Christianity to inform moral values and ‘proper’ behaviour of children is apparent, along with the use of the regime of nationalism to create a patriotic, British/ Canadian citizen. However, these appear as secondary concerns when compared to the discussions of ‘the developing child.’<sup>1</sup> It could be that this has to do with ‘the developing child’ being a new subjectivity that Putman and Weir needed to fully explain in order to rationalize the far-reaching reforms they were proposing. The moral citizen may have been more familiar, more traditional, and ‘natural’ to their audience and thus needed less explanation. Nevertheless,

a discussion of moral character is of interest before launching into the analysis of the “natural” child.

### Habit Formation and Character

British Columbia schools in the 1920s placed great emphasis upon character building. I argue that this was not simply done to reproduce support for the capitalist order or corporate state, but as a complicated, contradictory process of subjectification. Just as other practices were questioned and evaluated based on whether or not they were “modern,” the Department of Education, in its initial list of educational issues submitted to the Commission, problematized the issue of character (see page 152 #xiii). The Department saw the teaching of character as somehow inadequate and sought ways to enhance its development in pupils in the classroom. This section examines how this happened.

Wotherspoon (1995) claims, just as Curtis had, that the moral/subjective formation of individuals was an important productive effect of education as it focused on habit formation and citizen development. This role, he argues, generally expanded after World War One, with educational reforms aimed at stabilizing socially-diverse populations and responding to changing demands for labour power. He argues that “the previous moral emphasis on *habit* formation was supplanted by a more flexible concern for the human

subject in a changing industrial world” (Wotherspoon, 1995, p. 130). The individual subject was now to be infused with a morality that would support the industrial order and the corporate state rather than a purely Christian doctrine.

Wotherspoon argues that, in British Columbia, this took the form of political and economic leaders and education system officials trying to establish harmony between the individual and the social order. He argues that Putman and Weir stressed progressive principles as essential to individual development and social harmony and he quotes the following section of the *Survey* to support his position: “Any well rounded system of education, while emphasizing individual development, should stress in greater degree the paramount duty and importance of harmonizing such development with social needs and obligations” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 38 as cited in Wotherspoon, 1995, p. 132). While capitalist interests and the state were more than likely the beneficiaries of such an educational objective of harmonious, responsible subjects, this reasoning is only part of the picture.

Wotherspoon neglected to see that concern for habit formation in the *Survey* did not simply disappear to be replaced by a “flexible concern” for the subject. In fact, the Commission placed great importance on the aim of specific habit formation and development of character. “On this aim, in the opinion of the Survey, all other objectives should be made to focus. If the child is to be enabled to ‘see life steadily and see it whole,’ nothing less will suffice”(Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 43). External virtues were to be mastered and incorporated into the very self so that the pupil could self-govern. This

emphasis on habit and character formation was strengthened and supplemented by patriotic values which Putman and Weir attributed to British ideals:

The development of a united and intelligent Canadian citizenship actuated by the highest British ideals of justice, tolerance, and fair play should be accepted without question as a fundamental aim of the provincial school system. Such an aim has stood the test of time and its application in the daily lives of the British peoples has enhanced the good name of the British Empire. The moral and patriotic aim is undoubtedly more important, if less measurable, than the other objectives of instruction discussed in this .... It is both cultural and practical, traditional and modern, the keynote of past national progress and the foundation for future advancement. Any well-rounded system of education, while emphasizing individual development, should stress in greater degree the paramount duty and importance of harmonizing such development with social needs and obligations. The development of the intellect for the service of others as well as of self, the enriching and refining of emotions, the purifying of the sentiments, the appreciation of one's duties to one's fellow-men and the body politic -- these aims of education are neither ephemeral nor ornamental. No complete system of education can afford to neglect these moral and spiritual values which are basic in any true estimate of life (Putman and Weir, 1925: p. 38)

The moral and patriotic aim of education emphasized the community and obligation of the individuals to themselves, their fellows, and to the body politic. Further on the Commission wrote that the fixed habits of social value that 'a child' should learn by age twelve were "obedience, order, correctness of speech, promptness, courtesy and some regard for cleanliness of person" (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 78). With the exception of Putman and Weir's inclusion of personal hygiene, they differed little from Ryerson's objectives of common Christianity for a Christian nation as identified by Curtis. Putman and Weir acknowledged this continuity, as the objective was thought of as both "traditional and modern." Despite the quest for modernity and reform, Christianity

continued to play a central role in providing the ideal moral values that were to direct the conduct of children.

As spiritual and moral values remained as central components, nationalist or patriotic values were added to the list of how a subject of this imagined British/Canadian community should be. Justice, tolerance and fair play were the rule of conduct for citizens in this nation. The *Survey*, therefore, had embedded into it the meaning of being a moral and patriotic subject in B.C. in the 1920s.

Putman and Weir emphasized the role of the teacher and his or her instruction in creating habit and character in pupils. The Commission regarded the moral personality and good daily example of the teacher as one of the main ways to inculcate this objective. It considered “that religious faith and conviction constitute the supreme motive power and the greatest incentive in guiding the impulses and desires of youth along worthy lines” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 53). However, Putman and Weir did not support any type of denominational or sectarian teachings in the public classroom. In the end, they decided, that since it was too difficult for the various faiths to agree on any fundamental or common tenets that could be included in the classroom, they did not recommend biblical instruction be included in the curriculum at that time. This left the main source of moral instruction in the classroom to the teacher:

The personality of the teacher, the many subtle and indefinable influences of daily social contacts in the classroom and on the playground, are also powerful, though less tangible means of moulding character. Specific habits, of a somewhat measurable type, can be deliberately developed through the interaction between teacher and pupils working in the common

medium of the school organization. The by-products of ideals, attitudes, appreciations, and spiritual values are of much greater importance, though less tangible in character ... (Putman and Weir, 1925: pp. 43-44)

This is very similar to Ryerson's humanist pedagogy, as identified by Curtis, where the teacher led by example and made school a pleasurable experience for pupils.

Wotherspoon (1995) seems a little eager in his idea that as the emphasis on morality changed, teachers were valued because of their pedagogical expertise rather than their personal qualities. Apparently in 1925 teachers' personal qualities and morality remained at the center of the system as specific habit formation and character building were, in the Commission's view, the most important objective of education. Teaching character and habit was therefore one educational practice that was not significantly changed, as Wotherspoon asserts.

Not surprisingly, the Commission believed that habit formation and character building were both a traditional and a modern objective for public schools. The internal contradictions and tensions of the *Survey* are thus apparent. Given that the justification for the Commission and for educational reform was clearly about modernizing the system, it still could not break free from traditional solutions. Moral teaching and habit formation continued as the core of educational rationale. Perhaps this can be explained by Ian Hunter's (1994; 1996) argument that state schooling was designed, from its beginnings in eighteenth century Prussia, to provide "for the mundane social training of national

populations” (Hunter, 1994, p. 132). In seeking to transform its population, the Prussian state borrowed educational practices from existing independent Christian schools.

It [Christian schooling] contributed the organizing routines, pedagogical practices, personal disciplines and interpersonal relationships that came to form the core of the modern school...When we look at the core structure of the modern school, we see a carefully crafted formative milieu that first appeared in the Christian schools of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The classroom is a space of ethical supervision and problematization of a teacher who embodies moral authority and pastoral care. (Hunter, 1996, p. 160)

In B.C. schools in the 1920s, the moral authority of the teacher appears to have been firmly entrenched.

Rather than a smooth process of implementing new ideas and practices, Progressive reform in the Province can be viewed as an internally contradictory discourse that continued traditions and yet embraced new, modern ideas. The familiar taken-for-granted traditions remained as new subjectivities emerged. Therefore the *Survey* can be read as a composite, full of contradictions and plural forms of knowledge that were in the process of being moulded. It reveals that this process was not without complications, debates and inconsistencies.

### Psychology and the Developing Child

The psychological regime of truth is a very important part of the *Survey*. This section examines this regime in more detail, focussing on its knowledge and subjectivity production. By investigating the various elements that constitute a particular subjectivity, it is possible to repoliticize what is taken for ‘natural.’ It is also possible to view psychology as a productive network of power that helps to constitute reality.

In 1924-25, the psychology of childhood was still a relatively new discipline (Rose, 1996) and yet it heavily influenced the *Survey*.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the *Survey* devoted an entire chapter to supporting the argument that “school organization should adapt itself to child development” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 76). This is an example of how the regime of truth is closely tied to the rationality of development. Each developmental stage consisted of “norms” or standards of behaviour which children were thought to achieve at certain ages. The standards were based on average abilities or behavioural performance of a particular task or activity (e.g., talking, stacking blocks, reasoning) formulated from child study projects (Rose, 1985). Developmental psychology presented a picture of what was *normal* for children of certain ages, and then assessed the normality of any individual child by comparing the child with this norm (Rose, 1996, p. 110).

By classifying individual difference as stable and predictable forms of developmental tasks/activities, childhood became visible and manageable making



intervention possible (Walkerdine, 1984; Rose, 1985, 1996). Child-centered practitioners aimed to promote and realize each individual's formation and self-development. They embraced changes in pedagogy that allowed for the 'natural' inclination of children to develop and grow in accordance with the norms established by psychology. Supporters of this perspective, such as Putman and Weir, believed a suitable environment and curriculum would tap the 'natural' abilities of 'a child's' reasoning and curiosity at certain ages. This was a specific historical practice which helped to constitute humans as individual subjects and as the objects of knowledge and intervention. Developmental psychology provided the procedures, theories, language and knowledge that rendered the world of 'the child' thinkable. It conceptualized the tasks, activities and relations which make it possible to think about children growing in a series of stages that follow a norm. This enabled 'the developing child' to become an object that could be enhanced and managed. Individual problems could now be explained in psychological terms. If a child was not developing 'normally,' then individual intervention such as counselling or tutoring was now possible. System-wide problems, such as drop-out rates, could also be explained: the psychological needs of children were not being met. The system therefore had to become more child-centered and accommodate the needs of child growth and developmental stages. Although there was (and is) some disagreement within the discipline as to what, exactly, the developmental stages consisted of (Walkerdine, 1984), Putman and Weir discussed three major stages: infancy, childhood and adolescence, to support their position on reform. Infancy was believed to take place from birth until five or six years of age.

It is the period of helplessness when the child is learning to walk, to talk, and feed and dress himself [sic]. Biologically it is a period of rapid growth. Mentally it is a period of marvelous progress. The child of seven has learned to walk, to dress and feed himself and to safeguard himself in large measure against accidents. He has mastered a language and can use it without being conscious of any linguistic limitations. Starting at birth as a bundle of possibilities and without any sense of being distinguishable from his environment, he has achieved emancipation. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 72)

According to the *Survey*, the education of the infant was the responsibility of the family and occurred in an informal way in the home. Although Putman and Weir acknowledged that kindergartens and infant schools existed in other parts of Canada, but at the time the matter of establishing such schools in British Columbia was beyond the scope of the survey and thus dismissed by its authors (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 75).

The second stage, childhood, could be divided into “early” childhood of six to nine years of age and “later” childhood which consisted of ten to twelve or twelve and a half years of age. This stage, characterized as a period of slow but steady progress and maturity, resulted in “hardening, toughening and stability” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 72). Putman and Weir claimed that children’s endurance in this stage was evident in the exploitation of children aged seven to twelve who had worked in the English cotton-mills for twelve hours a day (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 73).

While the infant examines everything to find out what it is, the child wants to do something with it. Action, play, and hand-work were therefore very important elements of this stage. In fact, the Commission argued that children at this stage were

essentially constructive and inquisitive. These instincts are fundamentally scientific and lead the child to discover the why and wherefore of things. Left to themselves children of seven to twelve will in their play activities recapitulate the history of the race. They will in turn live in make-believe caves, tents and houses. They will be Eskimos today, wandering Arabs tomorrow, and something else next week. They will travel with reindeer, on the backs of camels, on horses, on railway trains, in automobiles, or by aeroplanes, according to the idea that is for the time the dominant one. In fine weather they would if allowed, go almost naked and dress in skins when it is cold. They will eat roots, chew bark, and roast meat and potatoes over an open fire. They love to trade and barter. They will spend days in building a store and stocking it with make-believe goods. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 73)

Baker (1998), in her study of the history of American public schools, argues that this type of discussion of childhood was premised on social Darwinist assumptions about “racial evolution.” Moving from infancy to childhood and to adolescence marked the transition from the “savage” to the “civilized” as passing traits of the child were to measure the history of the evolution of human beings. Schools were expected to facilitate the child's evolution to the next stage. There was a clear linear progression presented in the above quote, as child development traced the history of humanity. It was therefore evident that “Eskimos” and “Arabs” were considered to be less civilized, thus re/constituting the dominant place of the ‘white race’ and capitalism. This again reinforced the civilized, Progressive Province.

Children’s sensibilities at this stage, especially in later childhood, were often “unsympathetic, hard-hearted, and even cruel” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 73). Boys at this age were ashamed to show emotion, hated to be called “sissy,” cared little for their

appearance or cleanliness but were loyal, hardened and hero-worshippers. Masculinity and the behaviour of boys were therefore constituted as tough but loyal. This norm or standard of masculine behaviour was obviously valued in the *Survey* which measured both girls and boys against it:

If girls and boys from seven to twelve are allowed to play together without restraint, they show little difference in interests and viewpoint. They become good pals and take each other for what they are, forgetting all sex differences. Little boys from seven to eight will enjoy dolls as much as little girls will. They give up such play only when some older child makes fun of them...The so-called hoydenish, tom-boy girl of ten or eleven who plays more with her brothers and her brothers' friends than other girls is probably a more normal-type child and has had a richer childhood experience than her sister who has played exclusively with girls and met boys only on formal occasions at mixed children's parties. (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp. 73-74)

Even though the argument acknowledged that sex differences at this age were of small consequence and that it was only the “conventions” of society and elders that separated girls and boys, the *Survey* still managed to situate boys as the standard of behaviour. Girls who acted like boys were seen to have a more ‘normal-type childhood,’ and a richer life if they interacted more with boys rather than only with one another. No mention, however, was made of boys having an inadequate or problem childhood because of exclusively playing with other boys. The text of the report clearly contained gender discourses of masculinity and femininity. These discourses informed evaluations of behaviour and helped to fix a normal understanding of what gender meant for children; in

this way the discourses also helped to re/constitute the gendered child: boy/girl (Butler, 1995).

Childhood was therefore defined as a boy's domain of play, growth and learning. It was a time, according to the *Survey*, when “mental development goes hand in hand with his physical. Action and interpretation are inseparable. Every experience is a challenge to his understanding” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 77). The Commission advocated using this knowledge to enhance and direct children's ‘naturally’ occurring abilities in order to more efficiently and effectively train them. Practices and procedures of power relations and knowledge therefore inscribed children as individuals with particular capacities and abilities which could be made visible through measurement. In turn, childhood became a particular space and time occupied by these individual beings.

Given that different stages of development had different norms of behaviour and ability, it made sense to create stages of schooling which corresponded to these developmental stages. For the child between the ages of six to twelve, the elementary stage was appropriate so long as it enhanced the ‘naturally’ occurring abilities and sequence of experiences that the child would be having out of the classroom. A formal education had to take into account a child's social education of being a member of a family and a part of other groups, having a constructive nature which required hands-on work, while maintaining a child's ‘natural’ interest in the world.

The ideal school for this childhood period is one that supplements these informal out-of-school experiences by planning a series of controlled and directed experiences not wholly different in kind from the informal,

growing out of them, closely linked to them, and using them as apperceptive centres for the interpretation of a wider and ever wider world. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 78)

Elementary schools ideally created twelve year olds who had acquired “several valuable skills, some necessary social habits, many abilities to do, and a great fund of loosely-organized information about the world...” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.79). Adequately prepared to move to the next stage of development, children moved into adolescence, where they were eager for new experiences, logical thought and deeper insight (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.79). The Commission charged that the schools must be prepared to meet these needs in order to keep pupils in school and prepare them for their place in society.

Adolescence, thought to begin at age twelve and a half or thirteen and end at age seventeen or eighteen, had an “early” period, from twelve to fifteen, and the “later” period, from sixteen to eighteen. According to the *Survey*, here youth experienced great physical, emotional and mental change. “This period is in such marked contrast to that of childhood that it is often spoken of as a ‘new birth’” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 74). Adolescents were to recognize the reality of the future, seeing themselves as potential citizens and parents able to take on new idealistic, social and altruistic values. Intellectual development and maturity are especially important at this stage as,

the powers of reason assert themselves and the process of rote-learning becomes more and more distasteful...Just as childhood was the time for drill upon correct forms of speech, correct spelling forms and number combinations, so this is the proper period for rationalizing every bit of

school-work that can be shown to depend upon reason...To put it briefly, childhood has been largely a time for sharpening the tools -- reading, writing, spelling and numbers. It was also the period for forming habits of order, diligence, obedience and punctuality. Now, with adolescence, comes the need for subjects which have a content value -- science, history, language, and literature -- and the need not so much for forming additional habits as for a careful examination of the basis of each action. (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp.74-75)

By contrasting these two periods of development -- childhood and adolescence -- Putman and Weir demonstrated that the organization of schooling was illogical given what they “knew” about children and adolescents. In 1920s British Columbia, the law required that children attend school until fifteen years of age. However, elementary schools only provided courses for children up until the age of fourteen. With only a year left to attend, many pupils were “abruptly” tossed aside by the elementary school to complete their final year at a secondary school. However, the Commission argued that this “bad” system resulted in the “tragedy” of thousands of boys and girls being “thrown into a new environment where they fail to make satisfactory adjustment and from which they escape after a single unhappy, inglorious, and unprofitable year” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 76).

Most pupils, according to the *Survey*, dropped out of secondary school after only one year, clearly because “the course of study neither suits them nor interests them” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.76). Putman and Weir blamed this system failure on schools not adapting their organization and curriculum to the ‘natural’ development of children:

Common sense suggests that if from twelve to fifteen we have to deal with types in many ways so different from those of six to twelve we ought to have a different environment, a new attitude, and perhaps a new programme of work...They need an intermediate school that will carry

them not from twelve to fourteen years, but from twelve to fifteen years, when the school-life of more than fifty per cent of young people comes to an end. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.77)

The *Survey* proposed that to accommodate the developmental needs of the twelve to fifteen year old pupils, the province of British Columbia should establish middle or junior secondary schools. “But the really important thing is the recognition of the adolescent span of development as one needing a rather sharp differentiation in programme and outlook from what went before” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.80). Part of this differentiation included vocational training for those who would not be going on to university. Testing would dictate whether a pupil was equipped for university or vocational school; this would then allow for different streams to satisfy individual abilities and ambitions. I.Q. tests and other standardized tests, discussed in the next section of the chapter, became the “gatekeepers” of the streams.

Putman and Weir argued that most of the pupils who would leave school after the age of fifteen “should make an easy, speedy and satisfactory vocational adjustment” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 79). The other remaining students who would continue on with their studies should, after the three years of the middle school, be able to tell what type of mind they possess. In other words, pupils should know whether they would take courses of an academic and literary nature, a scientific nature, or of a purely technical nature:

We are therefore justified in saying that the adolescent or middle school ought to enable its graduates to find themselves, vocationally, within a



short time after leaving school, and will show the other half three or four large fingerposts which, while not pointing toward specific vocations, do definitely point out broad highways that have different vocational possibilities. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.80)

Regardless of whether one stayed in school or left it at the age of fifteen, Putman and Weir advocated vocationalism in the middle school curriculum to build on the child's "constructive nature," while providing a practical education in solving life's problems through "hand-work activity." This was one way of meeting the needs of every adolescent through effective education (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp.79-82). In the long run, they hoped to retain more pupils by providing free high schools and by making education more applicable to the changing world while also directing the individual pupil toward social progress and betterment:

Real education has to do with action and all action implies conduct or behaviour. The sum of the behaviour of an individual in his life. A person really well educated cannot behave badly nor can we say that a person who habitually behaves well--that is, meets every life situation in a way it ought to be met--is not well educated. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.81)

In addition, if a pupil had some success at the middle school they might be more inclined to stay past the age of fifteen, hopefully to find further success at the secondary high school. With the Commission advocating an extension of free high schools, accomodating the needs of pupils at every stage of development seemed only rational. By linking school organization and curriculum to the developmental stages of children's growth, the *Survey* sought to improve the education provided, and the child him or

herself. “Better” education -- which met the needs of pupils -- would keep pupils in school longer, giving more time to direct them toward appropriate streams, and, ultimately appropriate work and citizenship as adults.

The Progressive Problematic could be found throughout the text of the *Survey*. Psychology, one of the dominant regimes of truth, helped to constitute the subjects who were to populate the terrain of British Columbia schools. Cast as individuals with innate capacities, these beings passed through stages of development which marked them as constructive, inquisitive, tough, interested and overwhelmingly masculine. The games that were played and the experiences of those of a particular age were fixed as ‘truth’ and reflected the progress of the “savage” into the “civilized” man. These were the new subjects that were created at this time. They were also expected to be moral, having values which reflected both Christian and British ways of life in this imagined place called British Columbia.

Since ‘the developing child’ was seen as scientific ‘truth,’ it only made sense to adapt the school to meet the needs of this population at every stage. The reorganization of schools, including curriculum and pedagogy, was one of the deployed effects of this Problematic. Given that psychology attributed to children at various developmental stages certain mental capacities, it became possible to measure and to compare these capacities. The next section discusses how examinations, as “dividing practices,” create subjects,

connecting this to standardized and I.Q. testing, and tracing its emergence and use in the Province.

### Examinations

In his work, *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault examined the emergence of the examination as a technique of power. Although he discusses various forms of examination, including the medical and the military, the main concern here is the school examination. The chief function of disciplinary power was to train the “moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements” (1979, p.170). It thus “makes” individuals through a variety of techniques. These techniques, or “means” of correct training, are found at the heart of the modern educational system. In particular, Foucault argues that hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in the examination were the simple but effective instruments of disciplinary power.

The exercise of disciplinary power entailed observation which coerced individuals. By becoming clearly visible, subjects could be known through observation of their activities and conduct. Foucault states that details of surveillance first were specified and integrated into French parochial schools as the number of pupils increased and disorder and confusion followed (1979, p.175). In order to help the teacher, a series of “officers” selected from the pupils observed and recorded the conduct of fellow pupils to detect who

had committed an offense. The monitors thus became part of a hierarchy of authority in the classroom. This established an integrated system of power in which individuals were distributed in “a permanent and continuous field” (1979, p.177). This left no shade in which to hide, so that each pupil could be known in his or her individuality, and their conduct could now be corrected.

The second technique that Foucault identifies, the normalizing judgement, is a continuous system of small rewards and punishments through plus and minus points for correct and incorrect behaviour. This was first used by the Brothers of the Christian Schools from the 1680s onwards (1979, pp. 180-181). Hoskins summed up Foucault's argument thus:

This constant economy of points for lateness and promptness, inattention and obedience, insolence and politeness introduces the principle of ‘normal’ behaviour, as bad and good behaviour become categories given an objective status according to the number of merits and demerits amassed. (Hoskins, 1979, p.136)

Behaviour therefore existed along a continuum, distributed between positive and negative poles, thus making it possible to quantify, rank and distinguish each individual in relation to the other (Foucault, 1979, p.181). This differentiation was not about judging the acts of each, but rather judging each individual in their very nature, “their potentialities, their level or their value” (Foucault, 1979, p.181). The truth of the individual was thus revealed and known.

School authorities constrained individuals and urged them to conform in order to achieve rank and thus value. Those who behaved badly were defined as “abnormal.” Subjects were therefore homogenized into categories while being individualized at the same moment:

In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual difference. (Foucault, 1979, p.184)

Foucault’s third technique of disciplinary power combines the first two in the examination. Before the eighteenth century, examinations tested apprentices on their competency (Foucault, 1979, p.186). However, they developed into a permanent feature of schooling since they facilitated “a regular means of testing performance and keeping students ‘up to the mark’” (Hoskins, 1979, p.137). Examinations were also one of the few mechanisms that allowed an exchange of knowledge; “it guaranteed the movement of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil, but it also extracted from the pupil a knowledge destined and reserved for the teacher” (Foucault, 1979, p.187). The Brothers of the Christian Schools came to examine their pupils every day of the week in order to measure and to judge on the basis of examination marks. Pupils were now ranked, ordered and observed through the examination. This permitted more efficient teaching. “The age of the

‘examining’ school marked the beginnings of a pedagogy that functions as a science” (Foucault, 1979, p.187).

Hoskins (1979) provides another example of the emergence of examinations in England's universities. He states that Oxford and Cambridge devised the first written examinations in England between 1750 and 1810. Before this, oral examinations at Cambridge existed but were rarely used, being applied mainly to those who had not performed well in the previous year (Hoskins, 1979, p. 143). By 1772, however, more and more students sat in oral exams, including those who previously would have been excused from them, owing to classes of students being rank ordered based on their previous year's performance. Hoskins writes, “after 1750 the list of those in the first two classes, the Wranglers and Senior Optimes, had been put into a rank order instead of being left undifferentiated, and the increased competition for glory and recognition may have impelled more candidates to continue” (Hoskins, 1979, p.143).

With increased student participation came increased problems of evaluation and differentiation. To aid the examiners, pupils wrote many exam answers, although any faculty member could call any candidate aside and question him orally for as long as he pleased. The faculty's evaluation was then passed on to the college Moderators.

Evaluations were thus qualitatively defined with Moderators and College Fathers being called upon to agree on a list of the top twenty-four candidates. However, as Hoskins (1979) reports, problems of partiality arose among the examiners.

As a solution, in about 1792, William Farish, one of the moderators, suggested that marks should be assigned for individual questions. This was, in retrospect, a most momentous step, perhaps the major single step towards a mathematical model of reality...The science of the individual was now feasible, for the principle had now been articulated that a given 'quality' could be assigned a quantitative mark. It was therefore possible both to weigh up the individual and to compare him to others. (Hoskins, 1979, p.144).

The examination therefore became an important technique by which we were constituted as individuals and as populations. How "well" or how "poorly" pupils performed on an exam marked them, valued them, and made an impact upon how they saw themselves and others. The percentage one receives on exams and on tests would come to be seen as a measure of the person's academic worth (Meadmore, 1993). Many come to know their scholastic identity partially based on these marks, but many often fail to see the mechanism which 'made' them. This was not simply a matter of controlling pupils, but of creating pupils, correcting their conduct, and influencing them toward certain desirable, conforming ends.

Examinations therefore could be seen as one of the means by which it was (and is) possible to measure and socially map a given population. However, examinations and testing practices did not simply represent reality, but rather quantified it and problematized it (Hunter, 1994). In particular, the emergence of psychological testing of intelligence and achievement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought a new form of normalizing and means of acquiring knowledge of, and problematizing, the school population.

### Standardized Testing

The dividing technique of standardized testing, usually in the form of intelligence and achievement tests, classified individual humans by calculating their capacities and conduct to manage their individual differences. Existing as a form of examination, standardized testing presented a new efficient means for differentiating and normalizing individuals. Psychology, as a relatively new science of the individual in the late nineteenth century, claimed the right to produce and circulate theories of intelligence and individual differences which led to developing tests to measure these differences (Meadmore, 1993).

Psychologists, such as Spearman in England and Binet in France sought a way to clearly and efficiently measure the distribution of intelligence in a population. Breaking with previous psychology models of experimentation and the relation between the mind and body, early twentieth-century intelligence testing was concerned with the classifications of the behaviours and abilities of individuals with respect to social norms. Its objective was not the formation of general laws of consciousness, but differences amongst individuals in a population (Rose, 1985, p.114). Tests rendered individuals knowable by establishing a hierarchy of similarity and difference which allowed educators to ascertain what each individual shared or did not share with all the others in the population. These tests also allowed for individualizing observation to make visible, and then fix, a vast array of behaviour and mental processes into stable and knowable



categories. However, the new form of normalization created, through the use of the normal curve differentiated standardized testing from examinations.

Galton's theory of the normal curve argued that all qualities in a human population varied according to a regular and predictable pattern. Normalization and standardization became linked as the tests allowed for the collection of data on a large number of subjects that would construct norms or a standard based on the average abilities or achievement of children of a certain age (Rose, 1996).

Intellectual abilities could be construed as a single dimension whose variation across the population was distributed according to precise statistical laws; the capacity of any given individual could be established in terms of his or her position within this distribution; the appropriate administrative decision could be made accordingly. The intellect had become manageable. Difference had been reduced to order, graspable through its normalization into a stable, predictable, two-dimensional trace. (Rose, 1996, p.110)

The seemingly endless variety of ability and intellect which emerged in the universal public systems had, according to Rose and Hunter, created administrative problems of management and efficiency. However, the tests gave administrators a means by which to classify and manage ability in both 'abnormal' and 'normal' children. The early twentieth century testers such as Binet created tests that were in fact pedagogical tasks of behaviour. This brought "the normative structure and administrative requirements of the classroom into the heart of the emerging intelligence metric" (Hunter, 1994, p. 117).

According to psychology, I.Q. testing would give an accurate picture of the child with a single number. This made a pupil's behaviour visible and permanent and able to be

categorized as either normal or abnormal. Also those objects of knowledge considered to be a problem for the exercise of power, for example “the feeble-minded,” could now be identified, known and excluded. Rose (1985; 1996) therefore argues that standardized tests, rather than simply being repressive tools of social control, were new techniques of the nineteenth century which sought to create and govern individual differences in order to expand and increase both individual and social efficiency. The psychological regime thus provided the language and techniques to produce and regulate individuality rather than repress it. In turn, this regime became part of the grid upon which the *Survey* relied.

#### I.Q. Testing in The *Survey*

The notion that we could conceive of pupils as having mental, cognitive or intellectual capacities inside their heads was a new conceptualization of the subject developed primarily within the discipline of psychology. In a very short period of time,<sup>3</sup> these techniques arrived in British Columbia via the expertise of psychologists and educators trained in educational measurement and child-study.<sup>4</sup> The development and circulation of psychological knowledge, however, did not simply depend upon the particular motivations of individuals, but rather was promoted within educational circles as an efficient scientific means of managing the everyday problems of a growing educational system (Kliebard, 1986).

As early as 1911, the Vancouver Board of School Trustees (VBST) acknowledged individual differences in terms of mental qualities which had to be accommodated:

We must recognize that the mental qualities of children are not all the same any more than the physical qualities, that the same care should be exercised in adapting mental work to the capacity of the pupil as there is in adapting physical work to the strength of the individual (VBST, *Vancouver Annual Reports*, 1911, p.12. Hereafter known as *VAR*)

By imposing and enforcing compulsory education on all school-aged children, the schools were filled “with numbers of recalcitrant children who were ill suited to the rigours and disciplines of school, and unable to fill the role of subject in the pedagogic technology of the normal classroom” (Rose, 1985, p.126). Those children who were unwilling or incapable of achieving the norms of behaviour and pedagogical expectations of the school were now “a problem.”

As the numbers of children in the system steadily rose, the references to “problem children” also become more frequent in official documents. Classified as slow, defective, feeble-minded, imbecile and/or retarded<sup>5</sup> (British Columbia Department of Education, 1911; 1920 *Annual Reports of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia. Hereafter known as the BCAR*); (*VAR*, 1917; 1918; 1919) these children were viewed by school officials as an impediment to the functioning of the normal classroom by affecting the progress of other children.

The most logical step seemed to be to begin with the retarded pupils, who in every system constitute a drag upon the average and superior students. After a survey of a number of schools in which the retarded were determined, we selected those incapable of further academic advancement,

and segregated them in special classes, where we have provided for them special instruction fitted to their needs and mental capacities. (*VAR*, 1918, p.45)

Beginning in 1911, the Vancouver School Board established “auxiliary” or segregated classes for “mentally defective children” (*VAR*, 1917, p.20) who were “diagnosed” or classified as such, by school teachers and principals (*VAR*, 1918, p.45). These classes endeavoured to train, discipline and care for those who might be able to earn a living. Authorities regarded many “retarded children” as being able to govern themselves in a limited way, but they never expected them to be fully independent individuals. Those who could, however, were expected to contribute to society.

In the Domestic Science departments, they are working harmoniously with the Science teachers, and giving the girls training in practical housework. At the same time our Manual Training instructor is working with the boys in carpentry, teaching them to form correct decisions and use good judgement, perseverance, neatness and honesty. (*VAR*, 1918, p.50)

Despite the development of classes and curriculum, Vancouver School Board psychologists regarded the identification of “defective children” as not very accurate or scientific. The District had relied upon the opinion of teachers and principals to identify “feeble-minded pupils” from 1911 until 1918. However, Martha Lindley,<sup>6</sup> the first clinician in the District, explained that her clinic could provide for a more careful diagnosis than the earlier form of identification. As a trained expert, she would observe children at work and at play for up to a week and then apply appropriate tests, assuring the Board that her

work was not a “fad,” but rather a scientific endeavour which was reliable and up-to-date (*VAR*, 1918, pp.45-46).

To diagnose or identify “mentally defective children” scientifically rather than relying upon opinion, a handful of B.C. psychological clinicians and a few interested school inspectors administered I.Q. and other standardized tests. This resulted in the exclusion of “abnormal” individuals who were unable to perform the pedagogical tasks of the modern universal classroom (*VAR*, 1918). The application of these tests happened only in the major urban centres of Vancouver and Victoria.

By 1924, the testing of pupils expanded province-wide with the *Survey*, identifying “defective pupils” and also generating data on the “normal” school population. In this way, predictions of school performance and life outcomes could be made for “normal pupils,” who were streamed accordingly (Hawthorn, 1990). By administering group standardized tests and I.Q. tests, normal pupils could be differentiated and thus ranked according to individual differences. These tests therefore became an efficient way of knowing a population in order to manage it (Meadmore, 1995). The use of standardized tests were changed in a few short years from diagnosing the pathological to ranking the normal (Rose, 1985).

Putman and Weir selected Dr. Peter Sandiford of the University of Toronto, the leading exponent of intelligence testing in Canada in the 1920's (Wood, 1985), to conduct the testing programme of the *Survey*. In all, he examined 17,000 pupils using both standardized intelligence and achievement tests developed in the United States, and local

“BC Tests” that were reported to be “objective” but not standardized “in the sense that one could say what the normal achievement of a pupil of given age or grade should be” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.437). The American standard tests were believed to be better than any other available. Sandiford argued that Canadian schools and Canadian children were similar enough to the those in the United States that a “valuable comparison” was indeed possible, especially since Canadian standards did not exist at the time.

Scholars, such as Hawthorne, argue that these tests pulled Canadian education more fully into the “American philosophical orbit” (Hawthorne, 1989: p.7). However, it was not simply a matter of being “captured” by American ideas, but rather it was a complex set of scientific ideas and the need to address material problems that brought standardized testing into British Columbia. Canadians, such as Sandiford and Weir, learned these ideas in their studies in the U.S., and when faced in B.C. with particular problems of a system that needed solutions, they used what was available to them and what was touted as the most scientific and efficient way of achieving particular ends. In attempting to sort, normalize and know a diverse group of pupils and thus make them citizens, Canada and the United States shared a similar problem of universal education (Thorndike, 1997) and thus a similar solution.

The *Survey* reported that the tests were very efficient as “for the time that it took to administer the test (thirty-two minutes) it gave a wealth of valuable information about pupils” (Putman and Weir, 1925: p.438). The regime of psychology had thus made it possible for the development of such tests and the rationale of efficiency<sup>7</sup> justified their

application and helped to solve administrative problems of sorting large numbers of individuals into streams proposed by Progressive reasoning. In turn, this effect of psychology also helped to produce the reality of the individual pupil. It individualized by attributing a number (I.Q.) to each pupil and yet it totalized by classifying all pupils into “gifted,” “normal,” or “retarded” categories. These categories influenced educational practices as the knowledge was used to direct pupils towards the form of education “best suited to their abilities.” The diversity of thousands of individuals could be reduced to a small number of capacities, abilities and a single number (I.Q.).

The present-day emphasis placed on achievement and intelligence tests is another indication of the increased valuation placed upon the human material to be educated...The central aim of the testing process is the evaluating of intelligence or “ability to learn”, with a consequent application of the educational programme best suited to the various gradations of pupil intelligence. The scientific discovery of mental and educational deficiency, for instance, is an obvious prerequisite to the application of adequate remedial treatment. This fact is evinced through the establishment of special classes both for the dull and gifted, opportunity-classes for the handicapped, and other agencies of organization such as rotary and junior high schools. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.62)

Once the individual had been fixed in a category, the appropriate treatment or intervention in terms of an educational programme could be prescribed. Testing was therefore not viewed at that time as a mechanism of social control, but as a practice of enhancing the uniqueness of the individual child and was thus concerned with improving the chances of happiness for individuals. The move toward “streaming” or differentiated educational programmes (academic, vocational, and remedial) did not simply reproduce

inequality in the interest of capital, but rather supported and enhanced this new form of subjectivity. Inequality became one of the effects of this practice.

The technique of testing also brought new problems to light. There are two in particular that I wish to address here: the problem of the provincial (non-standardized) exams and the problem of equality of opportunity in the rural areas.

Characterizing the provincial examinations as “Prussian” in origin rather than British in spirit (Putman and Weir, 1925: p. 259), the *Survey* sought to discredit the provincial exam system in favour of accreditation and reorganization based on psychological principles. In particular, it roundly criticized the grade eight examination or matriculation examination which determined who would go on to high school. Although the *Survey* outlined many problems with the exams -- such as teachers teaching to the exam, rigidity and formalism, as well as evaluating teachers and schools based on the number of “passes” obtained -- the most urgent problem appeared to be the number of failures on the provincial or matriculation exams compared to the supposed distribution of intelligence in the population.

[There was] a somewhat large percentage of failures (32.30 per cent) on the grade eight examination for 1923-24. According to studies in the distribution of intelligence we should expect about twenty-five per cent of the elementary school pupils to have less than normal intelligence. It should be remembered, however, that a process of selection has been operating in the lower grades. The subnormal children seldom get beyond the intermediate grades and, in the opinion of the Survey, a smaller percentage of subnormal pupils are found in grade eight than the percentage of failures would indicate. (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 266)



The Commission viewed the provincial exam failure rate as being too high and concluded that this resulted in the exclusion of many 'normal' and 'gifted' pupils who ought to have been eligible for high school -- a definite problem for a system aiming to expand. Psychology and the intelligence tests problematized the provincial examinations as being unreliable, making them a poor instrument for meeting the individual needs of pupils. Putman and Weir argued further that no scientific justification existed for examining children in grade eight since the age of fourteen represented "no critical or even important stage in child life" (Putman and Weir, 1925, p.266). Indeed, they argued that the system should stop concentrating on the exigencies of flawed entrance exams, inadequate traditional curriculum and the "educational reputation of principals" and start emphasizing the individual needs of the pupils. To do this, they argued, the educational system needed to recognize psychology facts and principles by organizing middle or junior schools which would foster adolescent development.

The *Survey* concluded that such important matters as high school entrance should therefore not be decided by a flawed, provincial examination system. This did not mean that the provincial examinations had no value altogether. Instead, the *Survey* conceded that written examinations had some merit for "ascertaining whether the candidate has particular qualifications or not -- e.g., can read French, can solve problems in arithmetic, etc." ( Putman and Weir, 1925, p.267), but despite this, it recommended that the grade eight exam should finally be eliminated.

Another problem which testing brought to light was the idea of “equality of opportunity.” Sandiford was surprised to find that although rural pupils performed well and received overall higher IQ results than urban pupils, they did not go on to high school as often.

The results seem to point to the fact that the numerous high schools provided in urban areas attract, by custom or otherwise, pupils from a lower level of intelligence than the rural high schools do. The rural pupil passes on to high school only when his intelligence is more markedly above the average than others in the community...this higher intelligence is not developed to its utmost; there is far from equality of educational opportunity in all parts of the Province. ( Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 451)

Sandiford argued that the tests further demonstrated that many rural pupils had a latent and undeveloped intelligence due to the poor skills of many young and inexperienced rural teachers. This was also linked to the examination system as he believed that teachers in these districts spent more time with the “duller” pupils in order that they pass the exams and that average students did well on their own and thus were less well taught.<sup>8</sup>

The tests thus had constructed a new social problem -- the underachievement of rural pupils -- by creating knowledge about the student population. Administrative power and psychological expertise used this knowledge to measure reality and found that it fell short of the optimal social training of the population (Hunter, 1994). The *Survey* outlined some of the solutions to this problem: better, brighter teachers; better, more efficient instruction; and reformed school organization based on psychological principles.

I.Q. tests also contributed to the re/constitution of subjects according to racial categories. Much of the literature on this matter argues that the Putman-Weir Survey testing programme was a racist and classist document that drew unfounded conclusions. Hawthorne (1989) argues that Sandiford's "surprisingly thin" empirical foundation led to "exceedingly bold" interpretations. In fact, declaring that immigration from Continental Europe lowered the average intelligence of the population Sandiford encouraged professionals "on the whole more intelligent than others" to have large families (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp.458-9). Clearly a supporter of the eugenicist movement (Wood, 1985) and a "self-proclaimed social Darwinist" (McLaren, 1990, p.62), Sandiford expected to find results that would support the "superiority" of the 'white' race and in particular, professional classes (Wood, 1985). Sandiford's faith may have indeed "biased" his analysis (Hawthorne, 1989), but this does not mean that a better analysis, stricter objectivity, or a more valid and reliable test would produce an unbiased understanding of 'true' intelligence of racial groups.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the central concern is not whether a truth claim is true or false, scientific or ideological, but rather how it is produced, circulated, and used.

Instead of assuming that an a priori subject with a racial identity existed and that eugenicists were simply irrational or ignorant about the true value of each race, this analysis seeks to understand some of the ways in which human science and measurement socially constituted racial identity and informed racist practices and arrangements in institutions. This is not to suggest that the *Survey* suddenly brought racism to British Columbia. Rather, the ability to discuss and measure the intelligence of different racial

groups only made sense because of the dominant regime of nationalism and eugenics in the Province:

Classification, then, could claim to provide an objective ordering. The subjectivity of aesthetic taste and judgement, of empathy and aversion, was applied to this objectification of human subjects. The full weight of eighteenth-century science and rationality, philosophy, aesthetics, and religion merged to circumscribe European representations of others. This reduction of the human subjects to abstract bodies had the objectifying effect of enabling their subjection to the cold scientific stare of Europeans and their descendants. (Goldberg, 1990, p. 302)

A classification system of racial categories was used in the testing programme of the Putman-Weir Survey. Sandiford pointed to the “racial data” gathered by the American Army Alpha Tests as evidence of important differences in the mental capacities of different racial groups. Sandiford argued, “What is important for the people of British Columbia to know is whether the person of English, Irish, Scotch, Japanese or Chinese racial stock is likely to exhibit the higher mental capacity” (Putman and Weir, 1925, pp. 460-461). He also added the category of “Scandinavian” to the mix of groupings being tested. He never fully explained why it was important for the people of B.C. to know this information. Perhaps, at the time, there was no need for an explanation as it seemed self-evident.

Rather than comparing all these categories of people at once, however, Sandiford, without explanation, segregated the analysis of Japanese and Chinese pupils to the back of his report. He claimed that little difference existed between the Irish, English and Scotch, with slight advantage to the Scotch. The Scandinavians, by contrast, made “regrettably low scores” (Putman and Weir, 1925: p. 461). There was no discussion of any social

disadvantages of children who did poorly on I.Q. tests. Rather I.Q. scores ranked and ordered racial classifications and thus normalized race.

Sandiford tested the Japanese and Chinese pupils using different I.Q. tests based on performance rather than language. He concluded that “the Japanese are superior to the Chinese and both are greatly superior to the average white population. The superiority is undoubtedly due to selection” (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 508). Basically he argued that only the “smartest” people of these ‘races’ immigrated as they possessed the qualities of “cleverness, resourcefulness and courage” ( Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 508). This argument should logically apply to all immigrants regardless of ‘race,’ but this was not the case. Rather only the intelligence of “Oriental immigrants” was explained through this process of selection. Following this logic, would he argue that only the “duller” European, ‘whites’ immigrated? No mention of immigrant selection is associated with the ‘white’ racial categories as they were not considered “immigrants,” but “Orientals” were outsiders and alien to the imagined community of British Columbia, and thus they were constituted as “immigrants.”

But from the political and economic standpoints the presence of an industrious, clever and frugal alien group, capable so far as mentality is concerned, of competing successfully with the native whites in most occupations they mutually engage in, constitutes a problem which calls for the highest quality of statesmanship if it is to be solved satisfactorily.  
(Putman and Weir, 1925, p.508)

“Oriental” pupils were thus ranked higher than the average ‘white’ population.

Performing well on these tests, however, did not bring reward but rather risk, fear and

threat to the racial order of British superiority. Patricia E. Roy (1995) states that some observers in B.C. thought the “yellow peril” was the threat of “yellow intelligence” rather than any wars or invasions from the East.<sup>10</sup>

The intelligence tests, by presenting data in conjunction with an already present racist discourse, helped to construct both positive and repressive moments of what it meant to be English, or Scotch or Japanese in British Columbia in 1925. As Baker argues, “[t]he data gave race what appeared within the discursive context to be objective, material, and natural qualities” (1998, p. 126). This discourse represented “the Oriental” through the deployment of certain stereotypes by means of which thousands of individual human beings in several distinct cultural settings were reduced to a small number of racial traits and types. While stereotypes characterized British groups, theirs were rarely dehumanizing, or repressive.

As a technique of psychological technologies, intelligence testing gathered knowledge or evidence which normalized racial differences. The groupings were taken for granted as ‘naturally’ occurring phenomena just waiting to be measured and ranked. Often the tests were criticized by scholars such as Hawthorne (1989) for being racist, but rarely was the racial category itself questioned. Scientific racism and the classification of population groups by intelligence was an integral part of the educational survey of British Columbia. It established truth claims about racial groups and circulated this knowledge throughout the Province by way of the report.

The data the testing programme produced contributed to the constitution of scholastic and racialized subjects in the province. This efficient means of categorizing and ranking individuals therefore played a productive part in creating collective and individual identities and left thousands open to intervention by experts as decisions about their educational programs and life chances were formulated. Touted as the best way to understand every child in his or her individuality, standardized testing aimed to enhance and to manage and thus to ensure the formation of socially and economically trained citizens who would contribute to economic prosperity, the social security of the state, and hence their own well-being.

### Aftermath

After the release of the *Survey of the School System* in 1925, testing was soon “championed and promoted by provincial administrators, principals and the British Columbia Teacher's Federation” (Hawthorne, 1989, p. 9). It became the most efficient and convenient means of measuring both individual and school performances ( *BCAR*, 1927-28, p. 34) and was utilized to determine school entrance, homogeneous groupings, junior and secondary promotions and educational programmes or streaming (Hawthorne, 1989).

Administrators in Vancouver and the Bureau of Measurements, created at the recommendation of the Commission to replace the small Psychological Department that had mostly sought to identify retarded children (*VAR*, 1927), especially welcomed the

ease and convenience of classifying pupils through testing (Putman and Weir, 1925, p. 426). The newly- appointed Director of the Bureau, Robert Straight, undertook to greatly expand the previous work of the Department in order to “aid principals in classifying pupils” (*VAR*, 1927, p. 54) and thus put them in a better position to give advice concerning a pupil's future education (*VAR*, 1927, p. 64).

In the very first year of its operation the Bureau administered more tests in the city of Vancouver than the Putman-Weir Survey had managed for the whole Province only two years earlier. Standardized group intelligence tests were given to all first grade pupils (3,872 pupils) as well as those promoted to junior (approximately 1454 pupils) and senior high school (indeterminate number of pupils). In addition, objective curriculum tests of arithmetic and English, along with standard achievement tests in arithmetic, were given to all pupils promoted to senior high school. As well, a standardized silent reading test was given to all pupils in grade three to nine inclusive which amounted to 13,695 tests (*VAR*, 1927, pp. 53-65).

Testing was now embedded within the largest district in the Province. Although the Bureau suffered a set back in 1932 as staff were dismissed due to the lack of funds, its importance and work was restored the following year as standardized testing again became a priority of the Province. Afterward the Bureau continued to flourish and grow as it became the supplier of standardized achievement and intelligence tests to inspectors and school boards in other parts of the Province (Fleming and Conway, 1996).



The provincial Department of Education also set up a bureau of educational research in late 1938. Remaining a small operation until 1946 when it became established as the “Division of Tests, Standards and Research” (*BCAR*, 1946-47, p. Y140), the provincial bureau can be seen as a direct outcome of the *Survey*'s initial research and Progressive agenda. Fleming and Conway (1996) argued that the provincial bureau (along with its educational measurement expert C.B. Conway) was proposed as the solution to on-going problems of modernization and efficiency. The Department hoped that Conway's “statistical expertise and experience in developing standardized and other forms of tests promised the beginnings of a more rational and enlightened system for evaluating and managing the performance of provincial schools” (Fleming and Conway, 1996, p. 295).

As Inspector Albert Sullivan wrote in 1926, “[a] school cannot be said to be well organized unless its pupils are properly classified” (*BCAR*, 1926, p. R28) and testing remained the technique for proper classification and hence school management. A process that had begun 13 years earlier, continued to dominate educational relations as it was one of the few techniques available for the management and normalization of the school population.

Standardized testing in the province of British Columbia, after its initial slow emergence of identifying “problem” children, soon became commonplace and eventually became a permanent feature of the system. Its dominance was constructed out of scientific knowledge and the ability to efficiently classify and normalize large numbers of children.

This chapter has attempted to map out certain issues in the relay from the constitution of problems to the casting of subjectivities to the deployment of effects within the *Survey of the School System*. Educational reform was a solution to the problem of inadequate educational practices that left children disinterested and unprepared for modern life. Psychology came to define what it meant to be a child in the sense of what capacities and abilities a child of a certain age should possess to be 'normal'. How psychology produced these evidences and claims to truth is what is of interest to discourse analysts. We must also remember that the ways we see, think about and act toward children are historically specific.

The I.Q. test was the consequence of seeing children as possessing innate capacities that could be measured. As Rose (1985) argued, the greatest advantage of standardized tests was their ability to efficiently summarize an individual's behaviour and adaptation to pedagogical norms into a single number. Not only did this allow for serial ranking and comparison but judged and fixed individual pupils, ultimately valuing them as particular scholastic subjects. In turn, it problematized other areas of practice and contributed to individual scholastic identities.

None of this is to imply that child developmental psychology is pure fantasy or the subjects mere illusion, but rather that psychology is a created body of theory and practice. The subjectivities discussed here were created by material practices, enhanced by institutional arrangements and perhaps embraced by individuals as 'self.' Understanding how educators and administrators sought to guide and influence individuals and on what

they based their efforts is of paramount importance if we are to understand the various ways in which we are constituted and regulated. By investigating how we 'make' ourselves, we repoliticize the process and understand that it is not 'natural' or 'pre-social' and thus can be challenged and re/constituted.

## Endnotes

1. I refer to the length and depth of discussion of each. An entire chapter in the report is devoted to the 'developing child' while morality and citizenship is throughout the text.
  2. Both Putman and Weir were well acquainted with child psychology through their own studies and research. Weir acquired his Ph.D from Queen's University in 1918 after studying education at the University of Chicago (Mann, 1980). Putman was a leader in the child study movement in Ontario. Previous child studies had taken place in the U.S. in 1911, only a few years earlier.
  3. Francis Galton first argued in 1883 that "the simple act of comparison of the respective amount of a particular quality or attribute possessed by two members of a group enabled the mathematization of difference" (Rose, 1996: 109). Qualities were therefore thought to vary in a population in a regular way and this could be represented by the normal curve. By 1905 the Binet-Simon scale, which was premised on this "law" of statistics, was first presented in France. By 1908 the scale was introduced to the United States by Goddard and later modified by Terman, Yerkes, Thorndike, and Otis to name but a few of the psychologists involved (Thorndike, 1997). In 1916-17 psychologists were testing American army recruits (hence the Army alpha and beta tests). In 1918, the first intelligence tests were being given in B.C. and by 1925 the testing programme of the *Survey* was using a modified version of the Army Alpha test.
  4. The child-study movement developed in the U.S in the 1890's and early 1900's. It sought to reform schooling in terms of psychological stages of development and child-centered pedagogues (Kliebard, 1986).
  5. There appears to be several different scales in use in regard to the classification of mentally "defective" children. None, however, are specified and terms are often used interchangeably and casually. The closest scale I could find in the documents was in the "Mental Hygiene Survey of the Province of British Columbia". It should be noted that the psychiatric scale and the psychology scales may be different, although it would seem that there was an exchange of ideas as seen at the Vancouver Board of School Trustees.
- Feeble-mindedness seems to be an overall term referring to mental deficiency but not insanity (which is a separate term). Within the general term of the feeble-minded I have summarized the following scale ranging from lowest (or worst) to highest (or best):

- imbecile
- low grade moron
- medium grade moron
- high grade moron
- psychosis
- markedly neurotic
- neurotic
- borderline
- pronouncedly backward
- markedly backward
- backward

(see Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, 1920, pp. 16-19)

6. Lindley had been working for Henry H. Goddard at the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys in New Jersey prior to being appointed to the Vancouver School Board's Psychological Department in 1918. Goddard had brought the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test to America in 1908. Lindley used the Goddard or Terman revision of the Binet-Simon I.Q. scale in B.C. (McLaren, 1990, p.92).

7. The rationale of bureaucracy also justified the tests as mass educational needed mechanisms to sort and track children. I do not discuss this rationale but do recognize its existence and its importance. Others such as Rose (1985) and Hunter (1994) discuss this rational in great detail.

8. Teachers and their pedagogy in rural districts were thus problematized. Sandiford in other sections of the report brings forward other teacher/pedagogical problems by claiming that normal school pupils are of a relatively low intelligence, especially women teachers (Putman and Weir, 1925: 509). Although teachers were an important aspect of the system, it is simply beyond the scope of this work to include all aspects of subjectivity. Thus I have chosen to exclude this particular topic in favour of pupils.

9. As Hunter (1994) argues, intelligence and its indicators are historically constituted through specific discourses. There is no evidence for a transhistorical "general" intelligence as many eugenicists argued. Instead the notion of intelligence in western culture is measured by pedagogical tasks of behaviour. As Binet and Simon insisted their test only measured adaptation to such behaviour for administrative purposes and not some

potential ability to learn or inherited pre-disposition to make money (which many eugenicists argued was a indicator of intelligence).

10. This stereotype persists in B.C. as very recently someone I know tried to make the argument that “those Asians took all the seats at “our” (meaning white) universities because they're so smart and devious. How can “our” kids compete?”

## Conclusion:

### Ways of Seeing

Imagine, if you will, just for a moment, what you believe a space craft from another planet would look like. Typically when I ask this question, people respond with “flying saucer” descriptions from popular culture representations. The space craft from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, or the Enterprise from *Star Trek*, play predominantly in people’s talk<sup>1</sup>. I then ask if anyone has ever seen such a craft. Mostly the answer is no. I ask if they are actively looking. No, again. Would you know a space craft if you saw one? Most are unsure, but generally believe that if they saw a huge flying disc with many lights, they would identify it as a flying saucer. What if an alien space craft did not look like these descriptions at all? What if they looked like cans of soup or candles or books or socks? Then we have probably missed the aliens everyday of our lives simply because we weren’t looking for something different. Our narrow understanding of “alien” and of “space craft” kept us from “seeing,” so to speak.

In other words, there is a dominant understanding of what a space craft should look like and anything else is not an option for most people. The very words “flying saucer” denote its characteristics. Considering alternatives is possible but not something that most people would venture to do. As well, I only have words like “flying saucer” or “sock” to speak to you with, and you recognize these for the meaning they have. If by chance, I saw something different, I might say that we have no words to describe what we actually saw and you would not have anything to relate to. I may never be able to identify the object as a space craft because it was not how I thought it should be. Such is the problem of limited language. Such is the problem of educational reform.

What?

Let me explain. By narrowing our vision of educational reality, educational reform initiatives leave very few options for us to think about. Alternative views are crowded out, opposition is discredited, and what was an endless array of possibilities in terms of who we are, is reduced to a few aspects and shoved into tiny categories of what it means to be a teacher or a student or what it means to be smart or retarded or average. There are other ways to be, but it's difficult to imagine those alternative ways of being in education as I don't have the words. Instead of looking at ‘socks’ and ‘soup’ for aliens I wait for the Enterprise to arrive; anything different and it just doesn't count. Hence, I still test my students, I make judgements and I normalize according to certain understandings of what these subject positions mean. Anything different and it just doesn't count. Given my subject position as “instructor,” to do anything else would mean that I was not doing my



job. The rigidity of meanings, of subject positions, is confining but ultimately contestable.

The mere fact that I question it is a place to start.

How we came to understand what it means to be a student, or a teacher and what testing “tells” us is derived from past practices partially constituted by Progressive reform. Many of these Progressivist assumptions and understandings are still influencing educational policy in the Province. For example, recently an article appeared in *The Vancouver Sun*

discussing the problem of “drop-outs” from high school. First the problem was identified.

The most difficult year for children at risk of dropping out of school is grade 8, after they leave the relatively cozy world of elementary school and enter high school--an environment many researchers say is totally out of sync with their needs. ‘Dropping out really starts after you make the transition from Grade 7 to Grade 8’ said Kim Schonert-Reichl, associate professor in the University of B.C.’s educational, counselling psychology and special education department...Some people believe the troubles are hormonal or a result of “stress pile-up,” which occurs because they are going through puberty while also moving to a new school, contending with increased peer pressure and adjusting to new family dynamics, she said. (Steffenhagen, 2001, p. A3)

Although some interesting new aspects have been added to what students face as they make the transition into adolescence, including family dynamics, hormones and peer pressure, underlying this statement is the assertion that the student is an individual with innate capacities and needs. This is premised on developmental psychology which argues that ‘the child’ passes through a series of stages, and that his or her needs change as he/she enters puberty or adolescence. These needs were not being met, thus explaining

why many students drop-out as they pass into grade eight. This is the same argument, augmented somewhat as the discipline has changed, which Putman and Weir gave to explain the same problem in 1924.<sup>2</sup>

The recent newspaper article then went on to described the proposed solutions to this problem.

In Victoria, where graduation rates are consistently lower than the provincial average, the school board recently approved a massive and expensive restructuring to establish middle schools for grades 6 to 8 in the hope that will lead to increased student accomplishment...Victoria believes middle schools will provide education and structures more appropriate to the 11-13 age group. They hope it will also ease the transition to secondary school because students will be one year older. (Steffenhagen, 2001, p. A3)

It was therefore rational to construct educational practices to conform to and enhance this process of development by meeting the needs of this age group and hence increase graduation rates. The solution is the same that was first offered by Putman and Weir. Given the way in which we understand education, the beings who populate its terrain and the administrative role it has to manage and normalize that population, there are only a few options available.

Government in education operates by continuous problematization. If for example, schools are to create the conditions for modern citizenship only to have some students fail, rebel and become violent, then they have failed. What should we do to intervene and how is it that we can even begin to think that we can or should intervene? There are very limited solutions and thus such things as “codes of conduct” are enacted only to “criminalize” students further. Tests are administered, counselling offered. Perhaps the

schools should become more strict? Less strict? Have uniforms? No, have student involvement. The wheel goes round but nothing new is offered. Schools are fought over as the place to equalize all children, to fulfill their unique potential and/or to have them become contributing members of society. It is the training ground for skills/behaviour and ideas -- big and small. It is the place where we all get to know ourselves and one another as particular types of people. The purpose of education might shift from one reform initiative to another, but the foundations of what the public school is about, and who populates its hallways, remain colonized by discourses of psychology, nationalism, progress, government and development.

In order to transform our educational practices, we first need a comprehensive unpacking of common and unexamined assumptions if we are to subvert our current understandings and allow space for alternatives and diversity. This is not an easy thing as we have limited ourselves to only a few different versions of what constitutes a “flying saucer” or student or teacher and we have not dared to venture far from the legitimacy of developmental psychology or of progress, but we might if we want to change things.

I do not offer any utopian vision of what that should look like. No blueprint is available. Nor do I believe that opening up the space will solve the problems once and for all. It won't. But we can start to repoliticize ourselves, ask hard questions and understand that beings are living out the contradictions of a multitude of realities, many of which

come into conflict with one another and thus create opposition and resistance. This is why discourse matters.

My dissertation has thus focussed on a moment when the new subjectivity of ‘the developing child’ appeared and was linked to educational practices in British Columbia. The Progressive Problematic of the 1920s ushered in an era of modernity. It became the basis for a mode of problematization based on inadequacy. Educational practices of the “pioneer era” were no longer adequate. The past was always underdeveloped and thus had to be “made up to date.” Although the *Survey* fought hard against alternative or traditional understandings of education, tradition remained at its core, thus creating internal contradictions and tensions as it argued that schools should enhance stages of development in order to produce citizens with British character for the community of British Columbia.

I argued that the Progressive Problematic was a problematizing discourse with the power to define and constitute real subjectivities. Based on legitimate scientific knowledge of psychology and eugenics, and bolstered by discourses of nationalism and government, new subjectivities of ‘the developing child’ and ‘the adolescent’ were cast. The effects of this were far-reaching, as it informed the reorganization of schooling, curriculum and testing in the Province.

I have argued that, by reconciling aspects of genealogical analysis with the “state formation” paradigm, I am able to examine texts and events in a new light, asking

questions of *how* did that happen rather than only being concerned with *why*. It also allows for the investigation of what counts as ‘truth’ at any particular time and place, as well as how the field of objects becomes narrowed and alternatives excluded. Widening the arena of investigation thus gives us greater insight into how we constitute ourselves as human beings.

Thus my contribution is two-fold. First of all, I sought to add to our knowledge of the Putman-Weir Survey by undertaking a genealogical analysis of the documents. As far as I know, no one has interpreted this important text in this manner and thus some important issues and insights of how reform worked and was possible in the Province have never been fully investigated.

Secondly, I have analyzed the Progressive Problematic as it emerged in British Columbia through a genealogical analysis of the *Survey of the School System* and supporting documents. Although others have analyzed this Commission before, my interpretation is quite different as I focus on problematization, contestation and discourse. Rather than taking educational problems for granted, this analysis has studied the social constitution of these problems. Rather than seeing the range of policy solutions offered in the text as self-evident, I have interrogated the constitution of that range. And, finally, rather than seeing reform as an ideology or as the product of great men’s visions, I argued that a grid of social regularities constitute what is seen as a problem and what is socially legitimized as a solution. This analysis thus contributes information about the process of

the social constitution of educational reform and the interplay of power, knowledge and ‘truth’ in the shaping of a particular reality.

I have demonstrated throughout my work the relay from the constitution of problems to the casting of subjectivities to the deployment of effects. Reform was constructed out of a limited number of discourses with powerful consequences. We saw in chapter three how Progressivism arrived quite quickly in B.C. and that it informed the initial debates about what was wrong with education. The BCTF was the strongest supporter of this initiative and openly lobbied for the Survey Commission to be struck by the Department of Education. Ideas of efficiency and the ‘whole child’ were thus in circulation and helped to critique the public system.

In chapter four, I continued with the analysis by examining how the Progressive Problematic made existing educational practices suspect and inadequate. This process of establishing dominance and limiting the field of possibilities continued with the Commission’s attempt to discredit the opposition. Unable to represent themselves, the “reactionaries” were demonized as dangerous to the nation. Others who were more in line with the Problematic were not as harshly treated.

Finally in chapter five, I discussed the various subjectivities which were cast. The *Survey* outlined the defining characteristics of what it meant to be a ‘child’ or an ‘adolescent’. Based primarily on the psychological regime of truth, the *Survey* established the parameters of types of subjects and what they were like and how they should act. It normalized and circulated the knowledge throughout the Province. It informed educational

practices and treatment of ‘children’--given that they had needs, the school had to accomodate these needs through curriculum changes, junior high schools etc. In addition, I also analyzed how gender identities were cast and ‘racial’ categories constituted in the Province.

Also given that children had certain mental capacities, they could be subjected to standardized tests (an effect of psychology), catergorized and streamed. In particular the use of I.Q. tests proved to be most useful for the government and normalization of large numbers of pupils. By building on the state formation paradigm, I believe that my analysis adds to our understanding of educational reform. It examines different aspects and issues and in so doing gives further insight into the making of reform initiatives.

### Limitations

There are two main limitations to my work which stem mostly from the medium and the historical context of the *Survey*. First, my analysis concentrates on official documents for representations of the opposition, while the *Survey* reveals potential resistance and the precariousness of ‘white,’ elite rule in British Columbia. It is limited because of the lack of oppositional voices. At one time these dissenting voices on educational reform would have been audible through document submissions or transcripts of proceedings or interviews, but given that all submission documents for the Commission have been “lost” and it is almost eighty years since the Commission toured the Province,

those voices cannot be included. The only way we “hear” them is through the Commission’s rendition of the different categories of opposition. Since Putman and Weir expend so much time and effort to quell this opposition, I can conclude that educational reform was not a smooth nor easy process. It had many opponents who had to be discredited in order for Progressivism to take hold.

While examining more contemporary texts has the potential advantage of accessing alternative and dissenting positions through interviewing, it is often more difficult to see these contemporary discourses as they have become so ‘naturalized.’ By having some distance from past texts such as the *Survey*, it can be “easier” to see discourses such as eugenics because this form of “science” has (for the most part)<sup>3</sup> been superseded by other forms of knowledge and classifications. The problem with historical work is that access to texts may be restricted or lost altogether. How the Commission limited and shaped the opposition and what effect the opposition had on the Commission remains an open question. Despite this, my analysis can be seen as a starting point for understanding the logic of problematizing the system, for the productive and constraining power relations in educational reform, and for the influence of many different discourses evident in education that have had long term consequences in the Province.

The second main limitation is that my analysis is, for the most part, restricted to examining discursive structures rather than actually examining “real” practices by subjects. Discourse constructs subject positions such as the ‘developing child,’ but how that is or was lived out and affected the consciousness or subconscious of any one person is



unknown. I can assume from other scholars' work such as Meadmore (1993) or Bowles and Gintis (1976), that being labelled as 'smart' or 'dumb' in schools and through testing has a great impact on individuals. From my own experience and the experience of people I have known, their scholastic identities were often shaped by tests, "success" in schools and streaming. I can also assume that the parameters of nationalism affected the very being of those who took their place for granted, while those on the "outside" and subject to exclusion and questioning of "where are you from?" have had to live a different and violent reality. However, whether this was actually the case for people living in British Columbia in 1924/25, including teachers, parents, bureaucrats, administrators, and students remains an open question. I cannot assume anything about the individual impact that the Putman and Weir Survey Commission actually had. This is perhaps something that could be further investigated through teachers' writings and student memories, if any still exist.

What I do know, and what my analysis has contributed to the field of educational reform, is that complex power relations and the Progressive Problematic created a framework of what counted as educational problems and solutions. It was based on a few powerful discourses of psychology, eugenics, governance, and nationalism. In turn, the Putman-Weir Survey affected the educational structures, policies and practices of the Province for years to come (Johnson, 1964; Hawthorne, 1990). How could it not affect those subjects whose very thinking and ways of acting were prescribed by the frame? This

remains an open and intriguing question for another analyst to explore. My work therefore stands as a beginning rather than as an end point.

## Endnotes

1. Although the “flying saucer” image is the most frequent response, other “shapes” are also discussed (mostly rectangles or box-like shapes). Regardless, the representation is usually large, hulking machines with many lights.
2. See chapter 5 for the full discussion of this link.
3. Here I refer to the work of Phillip Rushton or Herrnstein (1994).

## Appendix One: Data Collection

After an extensive literature review, I began to collect documents that pertained to the Putman-Weir Survey. I first contacted the British Columbia Provincial Archives for information and any text documents they might have. I was told that they had a copy of the report itself but that no submission documents remained. I also searched various libraries and archives in Vancouver, B.C. These included the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, the Vancouver School Board and the University of British Columbia. Working at the Education library at UBC proved to be most successful. Library staff provided invaluable assistance and allowed me to copy the entire *Survey* text. They also had a fairly complete collection of the *B.C. Teacher* magazine.

I searched through the magazine starting in 1920-1926 for references, articles, and letters that either discussed Putman-Weir in particular or school surveys and scientific measurement in general. In addition the UBC Education Library also housed a collection of annual reports for the British Columbia Department of Education (the Provincial archives also had copies of these documents) and annual reports from the Vancouver Board of School Trustees. I collected many documents from this time period (1910-1925) and logged many hours at UBC.

Later when I was searching for the media coverage of the announcement of the Survey Commission in 1924 I used the extensive newspaper index and archive at UBC. First I chose the two main local papers in B.C. at the time, *The Vancouver Evening Sun* and the *Victoria Daily Times*, and searched for survey information two weeks prior and a week after the announcement. Again I collected several articles and got an overall sense of the way the papers were discussing the impending election.

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