INTEGRATING CONCEPTS OF CHILDHOOD AND THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION

R. L. Schnell*

The University of Calgary

The present paper attempts to integrate evidence and theories from history of childhood and family life into the study of history of education by emphasizing theoretical coherence and the development of skills of historical analysis and synthesis. After explicating a constructionist theory of history which establishes interpretation as the central aim of historical inquiry, three models of childhood by deMause, Erikson, and Aries, are analyzed, compared, and used to interpret historical data. The development of the common school is then interpreted in terms of the emergence of childhood as a social category and the changing nature of the family as an institution.

A problem arising out of the proliferation of academic specialities is how and to what extent they can be integrated into traditional programmes offered by faculties and departments of education. Often, new and exciting developments within scholarly fields are inadequately incorporated into courses for intending teachers. Reasons for limited success are, of course, extremely varied. Leaving aside the personal failures of skill, judgment, and intellectual power in pedagogical practice, the most notable difficulty centres on the students' question as to the 'relevance' of such academic work to their careers as teachers. Knowledge that enables historians of education to see formal educational institutions and activities as part of societal and historical configurations in which they are both actors and acted-upon is frequently seen by students as interesting but more properly part of a general or liberal education rather than of their professional training.

On the face of it the history of childhood and family might appear to offer similar prospects for history of education; however, its principal strength is the initial attraction for students and the almost universal assumption that children and family life are necessarily related to schooling. As a result, students enrolling in such courses are largely well-disposed and reasonably motivated. The principal problems in the development of courses are connected to the nature of the work being done in the two areas.

* Requests for off-prints should be sent to R. L. Schnell, Educational Foundations Department, The University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4.

Childhood history is usually identified with the use of psychological models and particularly with psychoanalysis (16)   Such an identification gives rise to several problems   First, many studies are more clearly historical psychology or psycho biographical rather than historical investigations using psychological concepts and data (10)   Secondly, there is the esoteric nature of some studies with their emphases on such topics as the childhoods of Hitler and of members of the SS   While interesting, such topics are obviously peripheral to the central concerns of teacher education (34) Finally, the inclusion of psychologically based history requires a minimal understanding of the dominant psychological theories used by historians

Family history presents quite a different set of problems   Historians of family life have relied heavily on newly developed demographic and statistical techniques that require careful and laborious mining of census and other sources of demographic data   An increasingly common form of family history is the historical community study with an emphasis on fertility and mortality rates, patterns of inheritances, and household composition (17)   As a result of these studies, historians have begun to out line patterns of family life, sensibilities, affection and social behaviour (48) A related historical field is the study of institutions serving or incarcerating children and youth, for example, juvenile and family courts, houses of refuge, reformatories and orphanages (47)   All these studies are — to quote a recent reviewer — 'events in search of an interpretation (42)'

An adequate incorporation of childhood and family history into the history of education requires that the essential characteristics of each speciality be retained while the locus of the study be the school, the formal expression of modern society's educational effort   Additionally, the pedagogical expression of that integration, the course, ought to be the result of a consistent historical theory

THE PARADIGM A CONSTRUCTIONIST THEORY OF HISTORY

This essay proposes to argue the following   As history of childhood and family life can add a new and 'relevant' dimension to the history of education, a theory of history which can most appropriately incorporate the two new areas initially ought to be elaborated   Following this introductory statement of theory will come an explication of an approach designed to best suit education students   The approach will demonstrate how this theory of history allows for the integration of childhood, family life, and schooling by use of models and interpretations   Finally, through the analysis of these models and interpretations, a comprehensive

integration of the three concepts will be attempted. The interpretative focus of this approach should serve to enhance intending-teachers' understanding of the historical processes involved behind their roles as teachers, the manner in which concepts have structured their relationships with students and the meaning of mass schooling for children and youth in modern societies.

This proposal for incorporating history of childhood and family life in educational history as part of teacher training rests on several assumptions. The point of historical inquiry is not the reconstruction of past experiences but the construction of historical knowledge and, more specifically, historical interpretations (33). Past experiences have given rise to historical documents, the monuments of the past, that provide us with whatever evidence we have about other times and societies. Although the mass of documents is immense, and in some instances overwhelming, it is obviously a limited representation of lives, institutions, and societies. Turning documents into history is done by historians who come to their work with certain 'interests,' i.e., with concerns arising out of their own lives. These 'interests' not only occasion the topics that occupy historians but fashion the assumptions about life that give these topics their particular form and meaning. In that sense, the statement that the present helps us to understand the past has meaning.

This leads us to a consideration of the major elements of historical activity, that is, evidence, assumptions, concepts and logic. Evidence is a necessary prerequisite for any historical interpretation since it is the raw material out of which historical knowledge is constructed. Historical documents as evidence require the transforming power of the human mind to bring them into existence. What constitutes evidence, an historical fact, is not its being but the meaning attached to it; however, the historian must in some way justify his evidence by reference to the monuments of the past that contained its possibility.

Assumptions are a crucial part of the historical enterprise without which no work could progress. The assumptions are frequently general perspectives on life, e.g., that societies are composed of small groups of doers and masses of passive recipients of their actions, as well as certain views on the subject matter of inquiry, e.g., that there are 'real' motives that can be discovered and that these motives are usually, if not always, sordid and self-seeking (3). Although the examination of assumptions is usually the concern of the philosopher of history, no historian can avoid the significance of assumptions in his work or in that of others.

Closely related to assumptions are the concepts used in determining, selecting, and then ordering historical evidence into coherent propositions The centrality of concepts is fully in keeping with the historical theory being explicated here   Concepts are the means by which we are able to give point and meaning to our reality They are key elements in the activities by which a given society, social group, or historical period makes sense of its reality   As a result, concepts are crucial for two reasons first, if we are to understand the mentality and sensibilities of any time or place, we must comprehend the dominant concepts or at least those that are part of our historical investigation, and secondly, since we too are participants in a living time and place with their own concepts, we must be aware of these, if our work is to progress coherently

In this manner, historical inquiry as the construction of historical know ledge is further understood as the active role of the mind in structuring our social and physical reality (36)   This is not to deny the existence of a reality independent of human cognition but rather to affirm that reality is comprehended and dealt with by an active intervention of human mind and will and that the primary means by which we come to know and handle reality are through concepts (18)   Given the central function of concepts in ordering reality, historians must attend to them and be aware of their cultural and historical conditioning and their indispensibility

The final formal condition of adequate historical inquiry is logical consistency in constructing historical statements and interpretations Although historians are particularly careful to avoid errors of logical inference and category confusion, a central problem in much historical writing is related to the matters of assumptions and concepts   Historians need to be aware of the possibility of contradiction inherent in assumptions and concepts and of assumptions and concepts having biased the argument before it can be properly examined   From what has been said earlier about assumptions and concepts, it is obvious that their use is an essential part of any historical inquiry and that they will be temporally and culturally conditioned   To say this, however, does not justify the arbitrary selection of assumptions and concepts   Historians must justify their choices and analyze the assumptions and concepts they employ   Although there is no absolute standard by which assumptions and concepts can be evaluated, it is often possible by rigorous examination to determine the attitudes behind them as well as the logical consequences of holding them   The explication of such matters can often serve as a counter balance to the unexamined, capricious or arbitrary entertaining of assumptions or use of concepts   In particular, it exposes the foolishness of the statement that since assumptions

are 'value judgements' we are free to assume anything we like just as long as we state our preference in these matters. While we may assume certain things to be so, we must also be willing to accept the logical consequences of such assumptions. If any historian would claim freedom to disregard such consequences and thereby exhibit a flagrant contempt for logic, what he is engaged in is clearly not an action of public discourse and other historians would rightly deem his work as outside the boundary of historical enquiry.

What occurs in the historical enterprise is that historians, because of their 'interests,' come to consider certain problems or issues or themes which can be understood as having existed in some past time (36). Relying on concepts and assumptions that help structure their perceptions of their world and the possibilities of the past, historians seek to construct out of the raw materials of history, first historical facts and then historical interpretations. The interpretation is the major result of historical inquiry — linking together historical data in a narrative that has point and meaning. The quality of the interpretation is determined by its strength or integrity when subjected to critical examination in the areas of evidence, assumptions, concepts and logic.

Given the reciprocal nature of these elements, no significant historical interpretation is without flaws and thus we are concerned with relative strength rather than with an absolute condition. Although some interpretations are better than others, no interpretation can be taken as definitive but rather as the most convincing now available. Thus, the axiom that each generation writes its own history, that revision is inevitable, can be understood as the result of different 'interests,' assumptions, and concepts as well as the 'discovery' of new evidence.

With the constructionist theory of history, there are entailed certain principles in the proper organization of history courses. First, any history course ought to be an example (paradigm) of the historical enterprise in action; secondly, the central elements of the course are evidence, assumptions, concepts and logic; thirdly, since the point of historical inquiry is the construction of historical interpretations, students must be trained in the analysis and the construction of interpretations; and fourthly, the course as a paradigm of an interpretation facilitates the acquisition of historical skills needed for analysis and construction of interpretations.

The approach to history I have described is in accordance with a constructionist theory of history. Following this approach, I wish to

consider a history of education which effectively incorporates childhood and family life history as well as acknowledging the importance of psycho history and certain human sciences, e g , psycho analysis Such a history of education — employing the concepts of childhood, family, and schooling — is basically an historical interpretation, namely, that the rise of the common school is essentially linked to major societal changes in modern western nations and that such changes, particularly those involving children and family life, are inadequately understood if the role of compulsory schooling is neglected Since the primary emphasis is on schooling and its relationships to other major institutions, consideration of childhood and family is limited to those aspects that are relevant to the interpretation

MODELS OF CHILDHOOD de MAUSE, ERIKSON ARIES

In a recent survey of psycho history courses and programmes in American universities, George M Kren reported that in history of childhood courses, which generally emphasize the psycho analytic approach, the most commonly used works are those by Lloyd deMause, Erik Erikson, and Philippe Ariès (31) The importance of these scholars to the historical study of childhood is in keeping with the present state of historical research and writing In quite different ways, the three men represent the major models of childhood and no adequate understanding of the field is possible without an examination of their ideas (44)

It is my position that the theories of deMause and Erikson are inadequate for any convincing historical interpretation that links childhood, family, and schooling, while it is possible to construct an interpretation of the rise of compulsory schooling by an extension of the argument of Aries However, given the state of scholarship, it would be an intellectual as well as a pedagogical mistake not to examine the other models of childhood Knowledge of the deMausean and Eriksonian models is moreover essential to a fuller understanding of how identical evidence can be variously interpreted

Although children and families are potentially powerful foci for under standing other times and cultures, historians are faced with the problem of organizing diverse and often apparently isolated historical evidence in such a way as to demonstrate its significance It is no surprise, then, that historians seeking to reconstruct what it meant to be a child or family member in a specific temporal and cultural setting are attracted by models that promise to organize and interpret scattered data Such models connect essentially private experiences to public events and institutions and

postulate a dynamic relationship between children's lives and adult behaviour. We will now turn to the three models identified in George M. Kren's remarks: the psychological models of Lloyd deMause and Erik H. Erikson and the historical one of Philippe Ariès (46).

Lloyd deMause: Psychogenic Theory of Childhood

Among those studying childhood history, the most vigorous case for the centrality of childhood experience for understanding public events has been made by Lloyd deMause, who asserts that 'the central force for change in history is neither technology nor economics, but the "psychogenic" changes in personality occurring because of successive generations of parent-child interactions (11).' In his 'psychogenic theory of childhood', deMause claims that there is a psychological equivalent of biological evolution that has produced a series of child rearing modes and corresponding historical adult psycho-types (15). Child rearing is characterized by a 'psychic gap' between anxiety ridden parents and demanding children. The intensity and nature of adult anxieties create specific historical 'modes' of child rearing: infanticidal, abandoning, ambivalent, intrusive, socializing, and helping. The mechanism for the expression and relief of anxiety is a 'regression-progression' process by which adults are able to regress to the ages of their children and, are, thus, provided a second chance to relive and more satisfactorily resolve their own childhood conflicts through their children (13). Over a succession of generations, the 'psychic' distance is reduced allowing for increased empathy (improved treatment), a new set of anxieties, and, consequently, a new mode of childhood.

The rise of the 'empathic' reaction in the 18th century marked a new era in childhood since it was accompanied by a significant reduction in adult anxiety which allowed parents to identify, understand, and attempt to meet the needs of children without excessive fear. With empathy came modern western attitudes and practices of child care — early toilet training, repression of children's sexuality, pediatrics, use of psychological control, and schooling — designed to control and direct the development of children.

In support of psychogenesis, deMause cites the recent developments in psychoanalytic theory, particularly the formulation of psychoanalytic small-group process theory, and the new 'radical empiricism' of psycho-history, with its emphasis on 'actual evidence of childhood and adolescent experience ... [and] of adult motivational patterns (12).' With regard to the second source of historical evidence, deMause and his associates have been exceptionally active in building up a considerable body of interesting studies suitable for courses in the history of childhood (24, 30).

Erik H Erikson Developmental Theory of Childhood

In a series of papers and books, Erikson formulated a psycho social theory of personality development which attempts to explain how individuals confront and come to understand their worlds   In his most popular work *Childhood and society* (19), Erikson explicated an epigenetic theory of human development in eight stages oral sensory, muscular anal, locomotor genital, latency, puberty and adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and maturity   Predetermined to traverse a series of life stages − each with its own characteristic conflict, crisis, and potential growth − the human organism confronts not a hostile environment but people and institutions who are in principle ready to initiate him into a living cultural process in which there is no fundamental gap between the human life cycle and human institutions because they have evolved organically together (21)

The genius of the Eriksonian psycho social theory is the claim that the developmental stages hold universally, that is, without exception in time and culture   The possible universal applicability of the stages and Erikson's insistence that he is studying the lives of normal people largely explain why his theories have attracted the attention of historians (43)   With a relatively stable schedule of psychological development, the historian must determine the specific cultural conditions that allow for progress and regression, and for integration and retardation as the individual moves through the stages (20)

Although Erikson has done relatively little to apply his theory to the kinds of data available to historians of family life and childhood, his claim that life stages are linked to institutions suggests the possible extention of the model to historical study   While the psychological schedule of development is predetermined, the social aspect of the theory allows for cultural and temporal variation   Specific cultural conditions facilitate the emergence of specific personality traits − whether progressive or retarded − and also a failure to integrate at a particular stage would result in a specific personality type   Consequently some historians have come to understand the characteristic patterns of behaviour within a given social group in terms of the interaction of human organism and institutions (25, 28)

It is with the study of Eriksonian theory that the personal experiences of students can become particularly relevant   Since Erikson clearly constructed his psycho social theory out of his clinical and field observations, it is on these grounds part of the students' world   As such, an examination of his ideas has the potential of 'disturbing' students− without any

encouragement for them to express themselves therapeutically. Also, the personal, private experiences of students and instructors are relevant to comprehending Eriksonian theory because they provide the illustrative examples that give life to theoretical abstractions. The pedagogical use of personal experience in this case is related to the cognitive objectives of historical understanding.

In history of childhood, one is not compelled to structure historical material around Eriksonian developmentalism any more than around deMausean psychogenism. Rather, once the Eriksonian model has been introduced, it is possible to place some data used by deMause and his associates into it. Such a procedure demonstrates graphically the importance of assumptions in interpreting historical evidence and provides an initiation into historical analysis by examining the logical and practical consequences of assumptions.

Philippe Ariès: Cultural-Relativist Theory of Childhood
Students are now ready to tackle a sophisticated cultural relativist model of childhood, which requires detailed classroom analysis because of the conceptual nature of the material.

Organizing his historical investigation around ideas related to family life, Ariès chose 'childhood' as the central concept. He argued that the concept of childhood was unknown in medieval society, that is, there was no recognized specialized age period that required its own institutions and practices or that was seen as having its own unique values, characteristics, privileges or restrictions. Once children began demonstrating the conditions of adulthood, i.e., reason, concentration, and sufficient strength, they were quickly inducted into adult roles – occupational by apprenticeship and domestic service, social by family service or intellectual by schooling (1).

The crucial element in his thesis is that our world is socially constructed, that 'reality' is ordered and given significance by man, that concepts are the means by which we turn reality into actuality. Such a view is fully compatible with the constructionist theory of history.

For a full appreciation of the use of concepts in Ariès' work students must engage is some conceptual analysis. In particular, the concept of 'childhood' must be carefully emptied of all but its essential meaning. In this case, the criteria of 'childhood' are dependence, protection, segregation and delayed responsibility. The development of each criterion is evidenced historically and separately although these distinctions have a

heuristic purpose only   Each criterion in fact includes the others under the concept 'childhood '

Having completed their conceptual analysis, students can read Ariès with increased understanding with respect to the connections between childhood and family and the function of religious, social, and intellectual sentiments in shaping institutions and processes serving children and adolescents   For example, although the criteria suggest an unique status for children, one of privilege, they also more importantly demonstrate a central motive or reason underlying the 'discovery' of childhood, that is, 'rescue '

The four criteria make manifest that 'childhood' has built into it a central core of control alongside substantial improvement in the lives of children, that is, although the concept allows for the development and encouragement of specifically childish attributes it also demands the conformity needed to foster childhood as a new social category   Particularly, the criteria signal the kind of rescue to be attempted, namely, one from the contamination of adult society

In rescuing children from adult society, in ensuring children a childhood, the proponents of 'childhood' brought about a series of revolutions in western society   Dependence meant not only that children must be with drawn from adult society and from an early initiation into meaningful labour, but also that the 'weaknesses' of children must be emphasized and made into absolute, although temporary, disabilities   The duties and responsibilities of life had to be portrayed as particularly onerous and damaging to children, thereby achieving the final separation of children from the socially useful   Since children were to be rescued from the evils of adult society, they became the object of special legislation, regulations and institutions that would protect them (38)   Ariès demonstrates these processes by relating childhood to educational institutions, to the growing tendency to interpret the need for protection and segregation from adult society into an imperative for continual organizational refinement of scholastic life and to the increasing reliance on effective psychological techniques (7)

Because the middle classes, who sought effective secondary education, were the first to embrace the conditions of childhood, we have often under estimated the usefulness of the concept in understanding the rise of popular elementary education in the nineteenth century and its extension into secondary and tertiary levels in the twentieth century (37) Aries established

that the concept of childhood is linked to the changes that transformed schooling by the nineteenth century. Although the changes were universal in that they turned schools into children's institutions and worked for substantial reduction in the freedom of older students, the concept would have only limited impact on society as long as extended schooling was experienced by only a small segment of the society. Thus, while Ariès demonstrated the triumph of the concept of childhood (and also adolescence) among the elite, we are left with a sense of incompleteness. His failure to consider the establishment of systems of popular schooling missed an opportunity to comprehend the full significance of the concept of childhood.

Before extending Ariès' argument into the realm of popular education, we must examine the major interpretations of the rise of common schooling in the nineteenth century.

INTERPRETATIONS OF COMMON SCHOOLING

The rise of the common school has been subjected to various interpretations: Whig, social control, social conflict, and anxiety. Although each interpretation is a plausible and partially adequate explanation, each remains incomplete and unsatisfying. The persistent Whig interpretation sees the common school as an unconditional good, the inevitable result of reformist crusades in a society committed to progress (9). A more recent interpretation has found the Whigs standing on their heads and has set them right side up. Thus the social controllers see the common school as the final middle class instrument to socialize, indoctrinate, and mollify the 'lower orders' and apparently the middle class young too (29). In both themes, schooling is seen as the centre of the educational enterprise – either total hero or total villain in the story (41).

A third interpretation – more popular with British historians of education than their North American counterparts – is that of social conflict, which includes elements of both the Whig and social control models (49). Social conflict theorists see the struggle over the provision and nature of government-provided education as the attempt of the rich and powerful to restrict the liberating force of education in the face of an aggressive and self-conscious working class (32).

A fourth and most recent interpretation has been born not surprisingly out of the twentieth century pre-occupation with psychological explanations for human motives, behaviour, and consequently institutions. In two perceptive articles, Barbara Finkelstein has made skillful use of the deMausean

psychogenic theory in developing an anxiety model (22, 23) The 'anxiety model' promulgates a view that anxiety plagued parents, unable to rescue their children as totally as they desired, required an ally in the process of control and rescue and in the extension of childhood for longer periods of time   The common school was, of course, eminently suited for such a task

The descriptions of the four interpretations are far too brief as they stand but to ponder their strengths and weaknesses, their consistencies and contradictions, would prevent us from proceeding with the point of this paper — the development of an historical interpretation that by linking the concepts of childhood, family and schooling is able to incorporate the new specialities of childhood and family history into the history of education (45)

COMMON SCHOOL AS THE MOST ORDERED OF RESCUES

In extending the explanatory power of the concept of childhood to the rise of the common school in the nineteenth century, we first recall that organizational concepts such as childhood are not ideas that we can employ whimsically but rather are the means by which our world is constructed

Childhood and adolescence made progress slowly, being most rapidly accepted by the middle classes in western nations for several reasons   First, the traditional forms of education and socialization, apprenticeship and service, were viable as long as the life for which they were initiatory remained relatively stable (35)   The two ends of the socio economic continuum remained faithful to the old forms for quite different reasons The 'nobility,' by definition, possessed the best possible life style in their societies and at the opposite end of the continuum, the urban and rural labouring classes, clearly occupied the least desirable stations in life   In both social and occupational terms, the necessary training for such classes of people was amply provided by apprenticeship and domestic service and there was no social or political imperative to provide, much less to compel, schooling for the lower orders

The middle classes occupied a much different situation (2)   Suspended between the best and the worst of the social strata, they needed educational forms that promoted flexibility and social improvement   While the traditional forms of training were marked by stability and habituation, schooling with its concentration on abstraction and language offered the scope for future choices (27)

In the case of the middle classes, the four criteria of childhood — segregation, protection, and prolonged economic and psychological dependence — coincided nicely with their existing preference for extensive and full-time instruction (6). Consequently, the concept of childhood, and later of adolescence, was functional to the middle class way of life. What was socially and occupationally functional in a concrete historical situation for the children of some social groups would become in time a concept that effectively defined social and moral reality for all children.

The central role of the middle classes in the promotion of common schooling is a commonplace in all the major interpretations of nineteenth century education and the fact that the middle classes were the first to assimilate childhood as part of their social reality gives us a key with which to unlock the meaning of those campaigns.

Specifically, once the concept of childhood had been assimilated, the socially conscious among the middle classes saw their social reality as including childhood. With childhood as a normal part of society, with childhood as a moral requirement, social reformers were confronted with an anomaly within their social world, namely that some children either rejected or were denied a childhood.

The campaigns for popular education can be understood as the working out of the middle class mentality that had come to see childhood as an essential and normative aspect of its world image. The world of the middle class reformers demanded that every child have a 'childhood.' Since schooling was identified with childhood, the triumph of childhood required universal schooling (50). And because childhood was a moral imperative, the reformers could not rely upon the goodwill of individuals and needed to invoke the power of the state to make schooling compulsory (40).

The social groups still without a childhood were variously identified as the poor, the lower orders, the 'dangerous and perishing classes,' the labouring classes and the common people. Their children were still largely independent, not segregated, exposed to drink, crime, neglect, and hard labour, and made to assume responsibilities early. If these children were to be made 'normal,' that is, to conform to 'the true position of childhood,' their conditions of life had to be radically altered (5). For those children without parents or with unfit parents, the reformers created refuges, asylums, orphanages and, later on, adoption and fostering (39). For those children deemed guilty of or prone to activities deemed unfit for children, they established reformatories, the term 'delinquent,' juvenile courts and

laws   For normal children with parents, the common schools became the
means of including *all* children (including girls) in the middle class concept
of childhood   In this way did the middle class mentality manifest itself
in social reality

The common school, the physical expression of popular education,
represented the final institutionalization of childhood   Before the nine
teenth century, the concept had gained mastery only among the elites of
western societies, and then only for sons and on a voluntary basis   The
common school advocates preached a gospel of universal childhood in which
all children were called to dependence protection, segregation, and delayed
responsibility   The nineteenth century pedagogues saw their theories and
methods as means of achieving this and their works can be usefully
examined to illustrate their convictions concerning child rescue

The world of the common school by incorporating the criteria of child
hood brought the benefits of childhood to all who systematically attended
it   Common schools functioned as assimilators of cultural, ethnic, and
class differences by providing a common social reality – a childhood for all

The intrinsic worthwhileness of childhood is crucial to an understanding
of some of the difficulties inherent in the interpretations of common
schooling   Undoubtedly the propertied classes were anxious about the
security of their persons and their property in the face of a growing urban
mass and the industrialists were eager to have a disciplined and skillful
work force but nevertheless such objectives could have been achieved by
means other than common schools (4)   Also, much of the moral and
psychological regimen of these schools did not differ significantly from that
provided in schools for the children of the higher orders (8, 51)   Unless one
wants to argue that the elites were consciously offering the same social
sedative to their children that they were feeding the rest of the community
to keep it docile and subservient, we are forced to conclude that the school
promoters were seeking to extend what they perceived to be a good to *all*
children and that they were not simply the imposers – under cover of
democratic rhetoric – of social and psycho political controls

The grasp of childhood on the middle class mentality also provides us
with another way of viewing the optimism of the Whig interpretation
Given the value of childhood and the belief that schooling was the surest
way to its beneficient spread, Whig historians have gloried in every instance
of its refinement, improvement and increased availability   Additionally,
those who saw popular education as the instrument of social and political

liberation were forced to cast their educational prescriptions in terms that recognized the moral imperative of providing all children with a childhood (26).

Barbara Finkelstein's theory of anxiety as the motivating force behind the middle class support of popular education in the nineteenth century comes closest to identifying the basis of the common school campaigns; however, rather than seeing the middle-class anxiety as psychological, we can more usefully identify it as essentially social, that is, as arising out of a perceived discrepancy between the moral imperative defined by childhood and social reality.

The common school kept all children compulsorily segregated for a good portion of their time from the harsh rigours of the adult social and moral world. As a legal imperative and a physical entity, it provided protection for the young. It rescued them by insisting that all children participate in a way of life common to them all — childhood. It insisted on longer and longer periods of dependence upon the adult population — dependence that was psychological, economic, and physical. Children of all strata were to be reduced to the same dependence — as absolute for the middle class child as for the child of the labouring masses. Thus, the dependence of childhood was irrelevant to objective social conditions. Although the most fulsome expressions of such childish dependence are found in the writings about the reform of juvenile delinquents, there is no doubt that much of common school theory and practice was based on these sentiments. Furthermore, the common school promised a period of delayed responsibilities from the world of adult crassness and demands.

The common school, by embracing all of the conditions of childhood, became the quintessence of childhood experience. It guaranteed a childhood to *all* children and ultimately prevented any children from not partaking of the four necessary conditions. Childhood was based on 'rescue' and so was the common school. How more ordered could a rescue be than that which rescued all children who by chance or by will were excluded from any or all of the criteria of childhood and which, better yet, rescued the majority of children before the fact by placing them in institutions in which the conditions of childhood were fostered.

CONCLUSION

Ariès' interpretation regarding the role of the concept of childhood in transforming western society into its present form can be usefully extended

to comprehend the full meaning of the promotion and establishment of common schooling in the nineteenth century Seeing 'childhood' as a dominant assumption of the middle class ideology provides us with a clearer understanding of the drive to institutionalize all children into a universal 'childhood' and offers us the means of reconciling opposing opinion on their motives and the effects of such schooling The concept of childhood offers an organizing principle by which we are able to relate diverse evidence and interpretations

Committed to the proposition that good historical instruction requires extended interpretations, I have argued a systematic relationship including childhood, family, and schooling Students come to recognize such a relationship through the major models of childhood, their assumptions, evidences, and logical consequences Likewise, the major interpretations of the rise of common schools are subjected to the same analysis and synthesis Finally the constructionist view of history permits us to incorporate the compatible elements of the models of childhood and family and the inter pretations of common schooling into an interpretation of the common school as the ultimate expression of 'childhood' — indeed, as 'the most ordered of rescues '

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