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The production of reason and power: curriculum history and intellectual traditions

THOMAS S. POPKEWITZ

Curricula are historically formed within systems of ideas that inscribe styles of reasoning, standards and conceptual distinctions in school practices and its subjects. Further, the systems of reasoning embodied in schooling are the effects of power. That power is in the manner in which the categories and distinctions of curriculum shape and fashion interpretation and action. In this sense, curriculum is a practice of social regulation and the effect of power. The question of what is curriculum history is also a question about the politics of the knowledge embodied in disciplinary work. Two enduring assumptions of the Enlightenment inscribed in contemporary educational history and research are explored. One identifies social progress as tied to an evolutionary conception of change. The second relates to the epistemological assumption that inquiry must identify the actors as causal agents who bring or suppress social change. Both of these assumptions are, I argue, grounded in a particular doctrine of modernity and the effects of power. The essay argues for an alternative conception of intellectual work and its relation to social change. It does this through viewing intellectual work as a strategy for destabilizing the conventions of 'reason' that limit the consideration of alternatives.

I will begin in an unorthodox way by talking about how I became involved in the problem of history and then talk about the particular kind of history in which I am interested. (My tribal card is not that of an historian). Let me be biographical for a moment and say that I majored as an undergraduate in history, but my doctorate related curriculum issues to a sociology of knowledge in the political sciences. It may be in that intersection that I recognized the importance of a social science of schooling that is historical in quality. You might say my interest is historical sociology or social history. I think neither of these labels, however, does justice to what I'm interested in. I say this because the Anglo-American traditions by which we define either social history or intellectual history tend to be organized according to chronological sequences and implicit teleologies that, at points, are only partially adequate for understanding the issues of change and power that operate through schooling.

My concern with history is to understand how the current problems of schooling, defined as school reform, become constituted as they are: How is it that we think about reform as we do? How is it that we pose problems of school knowledge, children, teaching and evaluation as we do? These questions take the sociology of curriculum knowledge as a central problematic in the study of schooling. It makes the categories, distinctions and

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differentiations of schooling into historical and social monuments that can be interrogated as embodying social patterns of power and regulation.

Now I recognize that these two paragraphs provide both a thumbnail sketch of a far-ranging argument and intellectual mouthfuls, so I will back up a little. To do that, I first seek an understanding of history as an activity that does not merely construct interpretations from the data examined. I argue that history is a theoretical activity which constructs its object of research through its distinctions and categories of historical phenomena. Our ‘scientific’ training often fails to include discussions of how the reasoning of science consists of historically constructed principles of classification and ordering. I then proceed to discuss the study of curriculum. I view curriculum as a particular, historically formed knowledge that inscribes rules and standards by which we ‘reason’ about the world and our `self' as a productive member of that world. The rules for ‘telling the truth' in curriculum, however, are not only about the construction of objects for our scrutiny and observation. Curriculum is a disciplining technology that directs how the individual is to act, feel, talk, and `see' the world and `self'. As such, curriculum is a form of social regulation.

I explore the effects of curriculum through what I call a social epistemology of schooling (Popkewitz 1991).¹ My use of epistemology is to give reference to how the systems of ideas in schooling organize perceptions, ways of responding to the world and conceptions of `self'. The social in epistemology emphasizes the relational and social embeddedness of knowledge, in contrast to an American philosophical concern with epistemology as a search for universal knowledge claims about the nature, origins and limits of knowledge. (See Toulmin 1972 and 1988 for a discussion of science that relates to my usage of epistemology.) Making the construction of knowledge central to historical study raises questions about the relation of methodology, intellectuals as a social group, and social change.² Issues of the intellectual and of power are considered in the final sections.

Making the object: historical studies as discursive practices

In the best of our intellectual traditions, we realize that there is not one tribal view of history, but that history is composed of different traditions of interpretation and, implicitly, purpose (Toews 1987, Novick 1988, Lloyd 1991). But to enter into a discussion of a historical tradition is to do more than consider different interpretations of similar data. History, in its modern senses, involves procedures that construct objects through conceptual lenses. By construction, I mean how the categories and distinctions of historical reasoning have the 'effect' of making phenomena into a field of social data. This does not mean that 'things' in the world do not happen, but that the linguistic practices give expression to what is conceived as 'data' and fact in research.³ The rules of disciplinary study re-make the 'things' of the world into 'data' that are to be interpreted and explained—there is no voting 'behaviour' or 'school achievement' until one asks
questions which assume these 'things' of the world.\textsuperscript{4} Further, our reasoning about the world is never a 'pure' philosophical question but part of social and power relations (Henriques \textit{et al.} 1984, Shapiro 1992).

I use two brief illustrative examples to orient my consideration of historical narratives as systems of reasoning that construct historical 'data'.

The first example is that of the pyramids in Egypt. It was not until the late eighteenth century that the pyramids were made into objects of inquiry. To ask about these stones first required a self-reflectivity by which people could ask about how knowledge and institutions are socially constructed rather than theologically given. Prior to this time, the pyramids were blocks of stone standing unnoticed in a desert (Bloch 1963). In the early eighteenth century the pyramids were places that people passed and where they wrote graffiti. The pyramids did not become 'facts' of a disciplined history until Europeans began to ask questions of them, first as exemplars of a civilization and, later, as artifacts of the graves of those who could afford to have such burials.

The interpretations of the Egyptian tombs were made possible through a particular 'modern' vision. 'Modern' here refers to a particular structuring of knowledge associated with social transformations of the past few hundred years.\textsuperscript{6} The modern 'vision' entailed the visioning of the artifacts of Egypt as part of particular abstract systems of relations. The histories positioned the pyramids into a narrative of a global history in which the particularities of Egyptian time and space were placed into a more general, evolutionary notion of development about, for example, Western societies.

To place Egypt within a cosmology of a 'Western Civilization', as this mentality about history often does, embodied a particular 'reflectivity' that enabled one to 'see' a past in relation to a present and future. The historical explanations of the tomb art and cultural organization, for example, expressed implicit theories about social differentiations that were carried into the interpretations of the Egyptian past. The artifacts of the tombs were re-contextualized and placed within systems of time/space in which Egyptian history was conceived as part of a progressive chronology and hierarchical structure of social development. Through such historical constructions, the individuals of the tombs could be 'seen' as inhabitants of systems of social relations, such as class, socio-cultural development, and aesthetic gazes of 'art'.

The categories of historical interpretation that placed events in a secular chronology were inventions of the nineteenth century (Williams 1981). The structuring of historical reason 'made' the tombs appear as part of the universal flow of social and human development rather than as stones and places for graffiti. The histories of the pyramids were seen in an evolutionary relation to the distant places of Egypt and Greece, and then of Rome and a greater Europe.

Related to the construction of Egyptian history was the invention of 'fact'. Historical 'fact' as a foundation for history does not appear until the nineteenth century when positivism was introduced into the study of the past (Topolski 1976: 113; see also Stoianovich 1976). Positivistically speaking, documents and social objects were to be viewed as containing information that served as the basis of observations similar to the 'facts'
that occur in natural sciences. The more numerous the observations or the more ‘triangulation’, the more reliable the research.

As we historicize the placement of the Egyptian pyramids into a narrative about development, we recognize that historical interpretations are not just about positivistically conceived ‘data’. The making of the tombs as historical ‘data’ embodied profound and complex sets of relations, not the least of which is how reason (and its opposite, nonreason) was constructed. Historical reason embodied a new epistemological space that visioned the world as organized structures that have links and functions related to one another in an emergence of successions.

To put this construction of historical ‘reason’ in some perspective, we can compare three views: Herodotus’s notion of history as a chronicle to describe the cycles of Truth that appear in the past; the Church's practices in the medieval annals which chronicled divine intervention and providence; and contemporary ways of ordering of time and space as sequentially describing relationships among people and events. In the contemporary reasoning, history is no longer a compilation of factual successions or sequences but a mode of reasoning that requires empirical evidence and reflectivity about the order for society. The changes in the meaning of history are not a progression in human understanding but changes in principles of classification and reasoning that are socially constructed.

The second illustrative example of the ‘making’ of historical data is the commonplace of schooling that names the child as a ‘learner’. The child as learner has become so natural in the late twentieth century that it is difficult to think of children as anything else but learners; yet in a sociological sense, the ‘making’ of the child-as-learner involved particular transformations in the social reasoning that we now associate with modernity. The category ‘learner’ emerged in the past century as part of a system of ideas whose consequence was to revise how schooling was reasoned about and how the individuality of the person was to be accounted for. The categories of ‘student’ and ‘pupil’, for example, did not exist in the early nineteenth century when talking about schooling. The child was called a scholar. The late nineteenth century invention of the pedagogical category of the ‘student’ and, later, ‘learner’ reconstructed the ‘child’ as an object of the teacher’s scrutiny. The early nineteenth century teacher who saw children in relation to the prophetic task of ‘professing’ Christian faith was replaced with an object of teaching that was calculable and rational. To make children ‘learners’ is to introduce a modern conception of childhood. The categories of learning ‘make’ the modern child into someone who gives attention to the study of things in the world rather than one who relies on transcendental faith. The attentiveness given by the teacher was thought to be measurable in secular, scientific ways. The modern child is also seen by ‘others’ and understands him or herself as a rational, ‘problem-solving' and 'developing' person.

The effect of transformations in institutional relations, technologies, and systems of ideas was to change how identity is to be ‘seen’, understood and acted upon. The immediacy of the face-to-face interactions were reformulated in modernity through professionalized systems of knowledge. As Giddens (1987) argues more generally, the modern ‘self’ lives within a
social field where the immediate practices are continually repositioned within abstract systems of ideas. The systems of generalized and abstract ideas enable individuals to interpret and define their relationships. The new, abstract and generalized systems were to guide individuals as they organized everyday practices. The `modern' child is an example of this transformation; the child has become someone no longer related to conceptions of time and space bounded in one's community. A child can now be seen in accordance with universal traits irrespective of the child's geographical place.

One can read much of modern curriculum theory as systematic attempts to re-vision the identities of children through the mediations of abstract, generalized systems of ideas. The child is defined as someone who has an observable competence and achievement. Individual identity is classified through universal stages of development, psychological categories of the `self' and rational measures of achievement. The classifications seem timeless and universal with no apparent basis in any particular locality or concrete relation of time and space. Historically the concept of learner was a schema of rationality by which children are to be measured and assessed, such as for the development of personalities or stages of cognition. At the same time, concepts of `childhood' introduce new systems through which the child is supervised and subjectivities constructed (Baker in press.)

The expert systems of modernity, according to Giddens, have become a major form through which trust and security are mediated in daily life. However, there is a recursive quality to those formations: the modern school child is the person who learns to be a `citizen', who has abstract responsibilities related to the governing of the state, who has `potential' as a worker, who learns cultural skills and sensitivities for future `use', and who is `self' monitoring in affective and cognitive development. These different systems are brought back into face-to-face interactions to determine individual competence and achievement.

My brief discussion of the construction of an 'Egyptian' past and individuality as 'learning' is to enable us to recognize that narratives of the past are more than merely interpretations of data. Our principles for classifying and `reasoning' about school knowledge embody theoretical presuppositions about how the objects of study are constituted in time and space. The study of historical `data' (and of the social sciences as well) requires attention to how `facts' are themselves constructed. This construction embodies accepted strategies for organizing questions, and the concepts (implicit or explicit) that shape and fashion how empirical data are managed and ordered as objects of inquiry. Research embodies dispositions towards what is to be looked at and how that looking is to conceive of the `things' of the world.

The examples of the Egyptian history within a cosmology of European narratives about development, and a discursive `history' of the learner have a further purpose in this essay. They are illustrative of a problematic in the construction of historical narratives that I wish to discuss. They are examples of two forms of reasoning about historical knowledge. One is a historical narrative that considers how people and events change over time. Much American intellectual history is constructed in this manner. The
biographies of John Dewey and Edward Thorndike provide two examples in which ideas are described to explain changes in how actors perceived events or how events shaped what actors perceived (Karier 1986, Joncëich 1968). A different form of historical reasoning, and one which I give focus to here, is a conceptual mapping that tracks shifts in how the categories, distinctions and differentiations of schooling change over time. For the sake of the argument of this essay, we can associate the former narrative of historical events and people as an historicist tradition tied to the philosophy of consciousness. The latter tradition I call a social epistemology and is associated with the 'linguistic turns' in social theory and philosophy. While multiple in emphasis, the 'linguistic turn' refers to a focus on language as a constitutive element in the construction of social life and 'identity'.

**Historical traditions: the philosophy of consciousness and the linguistic turn**

If we think of history as constructed forms of reasoning, two particular systems of classification and rules of knowledge can be placed in relation to each other. One is historicist, one the linguistic turn. Historicism and the philosophy of consciousness privilege the texts of events as 'real' and positive elements from which intent, purpose and will can be ascertained. The use of extensive identification of sources of 'data' through footnotes in historical texts stand as testimonials to the 'reality' being portrayed and the scientific discipline in which knowledge is excavated from the 'data'. The historicist tradition has dominated the construction of social science and history for at least the past hundred years.

The focus on actors and events in historical narratives is related to the philosophy of consciousness. The concern with actors as purposeful agents was a radical invention of the Enlightenment. Historical practices no longer relegated social organization and change to transcendental forces, such as God. But with the philosophy of consciousness, a particular doctrine of modernity emerges to form rules for the Enlightenment project (Foucault 1984). The philosophy of consciousness gives sovereignty to actors and agency to humans in explanations of change in those structures. It views the world as linked structures which function in relation to one another in a succession.

Progress (or its denial) is a central motif in the epistemology: progress is conceived as the rational outcome of human thought and reason as applied to social conditions (Kantian and Lockean), or as the identification of contractions from which a new synthesis can be organized (Hegelian and Marxist).

The historical identification of actors and the chronological ordering of events from positive data is viewed as the precursor of any meaningful change. The past, the present and the future are seen as the products of human action in a socially constructed and developmental world. Sometimes there is a hero or heroine. Sometimes there is talk about structural
causes of events which limit progressive change, such as structures of race, class, or gender. People are seen as purposeful actors who produce change through their actions—sometimes willfully, sometimes with unintended consequences. To position historical actors in the construction of knowledge about the past, it is believed, enables the actor in the present to become a purposeful agent of change.

The historical relating of actors to change produces a particular cosmology of progress. History written according to the philosophy of consciousness tells of the past so that the present can be understood and the future re-ordered and controlled. Actors are privileged as the causal agents in the interpretations of social change.

The epistemological privileging of actors is part of the doxa of American social science and history. Historical narratives, for example, tell of the evolution of social institutions (such as schools) as the movement from evil to good, or the possibility of that good. Since the late nineteenth century, historical narratives of the USA posited the nation as a 'New World', that is, as a frontier (spiritually as well as materially). The 'New World' was more than geographical; it was a representation of an exceptional society in which the millennial world will be found. The history of education, as well, was a developmental sequence. For example, there are biographical histories of educational researchers who are viewed as contributing to institutional development (Joncich 1968), narratives of a progressive education (Cremin 1962), and stories of an increasingly inclusory educational system, such as a women's history of education that tells the story of increased literacy for women during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (Sklar 1992).

The philosophy of consciousness also adheres to critical studies of schooling. Critical studies tell of the struggles for school control and its eventual progressive possibilities. There are descriptions of the efforts of differing groups who are marginalized but who vie to speak authoritatively about what should be learned in schools (Urban 1982, Reese 1986, Noble 1991).

Critical studies also maintain epistemological assumptions about progress, but that progress is tied to Hegelian assumptions of uncovering contradictions, although that progress has different interests than those of reformist traditions. The Hegelian notion of contradictions is to produce a new synthesis. That synthesis is related to a millennial vision where there will be an eventual replacement of previous and present historical configurations. In current discourse, words like 'empowerment', 'agency' and 'resistance' signify an historical view that invests power in the actions of people as they struggle to change their world for the better. As with reformist traditions, a foundational assumption is that progressive change cannot occur without knowledge that first identifies the actors who will bring about or prevent that change.

As part of a questioning of the assumption about progress, we need to historicize the philosophical assumption that posits actors as an *a priori* assumption about change. The focus on actors is, in part, related to the emergence of positivism within nineteenth century German historicism. German idealist conceptions of history were being challenged by the
emergence of the social sciences. To regain a legitimacy for historical studies, a scientific outlook was established. Historiography gave positive attention to the 'facts' of the past. These 'facts' were to be located in specific documents that gave historical narratives a specific, concrete location in a regular time and space.

The exploration of the evolution of human purpose and intent involved a systematic scrutiny that illuminated all of life's concrete forms. The methodological strategies of historicism privileged the physical place in which an action occurred. Time and space were perceived as containing a particular concreteness through a rational ordering of events and people's thoughts. Each event belonged to a precise and unique social context. Social realities were determined by putting the single events together into an unfolding pattern.

The main goal of historicism was to objectify all social life; reality was explained 'as it really happened' through ordering singular events or thoughts of individuals. Events and actors were placed together through a chronological ordering of concrete practices in time. With facts as the guiding force, the historian was to interfere as little as possible in writing the 'facts' of history.

In contrast the historical tradition that I speak to in this essay is one that focuses on how systems of ideas change over time and how that change is related to issues of power. This study of history has been variously called semantic, genealogical, conceptual or a social epistemology. While the rest of this essay discusses the assumptions and priorities of this history, we can briefly speak of it as pursuing a 'linguistic turn' which focuses on the discursive patterns through which schooling is constituted. The concern is with how the systems of ideas construct, shape and coordinate social actions through the relations and ordering principles they establish. Canning (1994) argues, for example, that central in the 'linguistic turn' is a scrutiny and re-examination of language as not only describing and interpreting the world but as constituting social practices and identity. The ordering, disciplining and regulating through discursive rules becomes centrally important as schooling embodies an authorized knowledge of the world and the child's 'self'.

From a comparative sense, we can think of the historicist tradition as one which does not break the text. The ideas of texts are treated in a rational sequence explaining life—such as how different curriculum theorists proceeded to write about schooling as a sequence which has its own internal logic that unfolds in the historical narrative. In one sense, the text of the historicist is sacred—as it is in much intellectual history.

Within the tradition that I want to speak about here (of a historical social epistemology) the assumption of text (and its a priori assumption of actors and events) is broken. Attention is directed to patterns of ideas through which the objects of the world are constructed, with ideas constructing rather than 'merely' representing those objects. Historical studies exist in order to understand how the categories, distinctions, and differentiations employed define the important, the 'real' and the actor. The difference between the linguistic turn and historicism is, as Canning (1994) comments, one of a difference between studying Blackness rather
than Blacks, gender feminism rather than women, and homosexuality rather than homosexuals.

From this perspective, we can explore schooling through the relation of its systems of ideas which enable its objects to be understood, thought about and acted upon. My earlier discussion of the historical shifts from a teacher who 'sees' teaching as internalizing Christian sincerity, to the teacher who views the child as a 'learner' is an example of such an epistemological focus. The different systems of ideas 'place' the child into epistemological spaces through which competence, achievement and salvation are understood and acted upon. But the viewing of language as constitutive of the world is not only to understand 'texts', but to view the rules of 'reasoning' as located in an amalgamation of social conditions in which the classifications are constituted (Crary 1990). It is for this reason that I talk about a social epistemology.

At this point, I return briefly to the argument of the philosophy of consciousness. In that argument the actor makes history. When the actor is absent, a determinist world is introduced that has no possibility of change. My argument challenges that view of theory and change. My focus is on our forms of reasoning and principles of ordering that construct the agents of observation and scrutiny. A seeming paradox is thus introduced as we move issues of agency and actors from the centre of the analysis. The actor is paradoxically re-introduced, but not by looking for the agent in the narrative of inquiry. The agent is introduced through destabilizing the conditions which confine and intern consciousness and its principles of order. Making the rules for 'telling the truth' contingent, historical and susceptible to critique is to create a greater range of possibility for action through dislodging the ordering principles that define our subjectivities. I will return to these issues after a discussion of curriculum and power.

**Curriculum as the constitution of social regulation**

A study of the social epistemology of schooling and curriculum poses certain questions about the social construction of knowledge, although my use of the social construction of knowledge is very different from that of educational constructivist psychologies which fail to take into account the historicity of ideas. What is learned in school, I argue, is not only about what to do and what to know. Learning about spelling, science, mathematics or geography is also learning dispositions, awarenesses and sensitivities towards that world. My emphasis on curriculum knowledge is to link our ways of talking and reasoning in schools—the forms by which we 'tell the truth' about ourselves and others—with issues of power and regulation.

The idea of regulation may produce a strong reaction as it 'hits' a sensitivity (derived from the Enlightenment) which places a high value on individual initiative and human purpose in giving direction to social affairs. My concern with regulation, however, should not be read as disregarding these Enlightenment sensitivities. Reason and rationality are central to social efforts to improve our human conditions. But we cannot assume reason and rationality are a unified and universal system by which we can
talk about what is true and false. Nor does my concern with regulation impute evil or suggest some transcendent good through overcoming control. My strategy of inquiry is to make reason and rationality the object of inquiry; that is, to explore the particular systems of ideas and rules of reasoning that are embedded in the practices of schools.

In light of these concerns, I ask how we might approach a history of curriculum that focuses on knowledge as a problem of social regulation. At the same time, my strategy has two other foci: to construct an historical inquiry of curriculum that makes problematic the assumptions of positivism and the philosophy of consciousness; and to engage in a self-reflective stance towards the relation of intellectual work to social movements.

**Curriculum as systems of regulation and discipline**

Curriculum (or the broader concept of pedagogy) exists within an institution called schooling that is a relatively recent invention of Western society. I say 'Western society' because there are examples of learning and curriculum in the Islamic Midrash and the Jewish Yeshiva which suggest other forms of social relationships around which to organize institutionally transmitted knowledge for the young (Gerholm 1987). Curriculum, then, can be viewed as an invention of modernity that, I will argue, involves forms of knowledge whose functions are to regulate and discipline the individual.

The idea of curriculum has been one of a particular organization of knowledge by which individuals regulate and discipline themselves as members of a community/society (Lundgren 1983, Hamilton 1989, Englund 1991). Since at least the Protestant Reformation, schools have been institutions that relate the state, civil (and religious) authority and moral discipline. The reforms introduced by Martin Luther made education a 'disciplining' mechanism important to the Reformation (Luke 1989). The German reforms of the sixteenth century not only educated the masses along humanistic principles. Curriculum inscribed certain rules through which the individual should reason about the 'self' and discipline the actions to be taken. The inscriptions were not done through brute force, but through the principles that ordered the symbolic systems by which one is to interpret, organize and act in the world.

Childhood and literacy became institutionalized as strategies to confront social disorder through privileging standards of religious, and social and moral values. The Jesuits of the sixteenth century recognized the disciplining qualities of pedagogy as part of the counter-reformation (Durkheim 1977). They developed classroom practices that reinterpreted the humanist and secular literature of the counter-reformation to assert the values of the Catholic church. Their strategy was to read texts without historical contexts so as to insert Catholic moral precepts into pagan literature. The schools were expected to promote true faith, service to the state and the proper functioning of the family.

We can think of the mass public schooling of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a continuation of the disciplining and
regulating project of the Reformation. But mass schooling was also a break in the systems of knowledge by which individuals were to become productive members of society. US modern mass schooling, for example, was the product of multiple trajectories. It encapsulated moral tenets that joined the emerging tasks associated with the modern welfare state and a universalized, civil religion associated with Protestantism. Industrialization, urbanization, immigration, the new political organizations associated with democracies, as well as intellectual thought that combined utilitarian and pragmatic themes—all were part of the transformations inscribed in schooling. The curriculum of the late nineteenth century American school was an outcome of a transformation that linked the governing patterns of society and the inner governing `mentali ties' of the individual. The school was an institutional form located within the changing patterns of governing.

Michel Foucault's (1979) notion of `governmentality' is helpful here. It focuses on the new principles of regulation that were embodied in pedagogy. In the nineteenth century, Foucault argues, there occurred a new relation between state governing practices and individual behaviours and dispositions. If the state was to be responsible for the welfare of its citizens, the identity of individuals had to be linked to the administrative patterns found in the larger society. In multiple social arenas, the art of governing occurs as new institutions of health, labour, education and mental structures appear alongside the emergence of the new social welfare goals of the state.

In certain ways, the production of new governing patterns was made possible through the concept of `childhood'. Drawing on histories of `childhood', Baker (in press) explores how a late nineteenth century American discourse of childhood embodied a notion of the child as `rescued' from the effects of a modern society. That notion of `childhood-as-rescue' inscribed certain binaries (two 'things' that stand in opposition to each other)—`whiteness/blackness and 'male/female'. The binaries were not explicit but rather implicit in the ways that the texts told what was to be `known' and acted upon as `childhood'. The notion of rescue and its binaries did not stand alone; the linguistic ordering was part of a scaffolding of ideas. That scaffolding involved other sets of ideas which gave a position to the idea of `rescue', such as classifying groups through population reasoning, conceptions of `culture' as `a biological nature' and a view of `civility' that privileged a particular Protestant view of individuality that was English-speaking and male. The effect of the scaffolding was to exclude by drawing linguistic maps that placed the later categories in the binaries (black; female) as `non-educable' as they existed outside of `reason' and salvation.

Central to the art of governing were the social sciences. Science was seen as part of the Enlightenment heritage by which society could progress. The social sciences were an important invention of the nineteenth century as the `social question' of modernity becomes prominent. As did the physical sciences for the natural world, the social sciences were to describe, explain and give direction for solving `the social problem'. But the systems of ideas in the social sciences were not `merely' ideas to think about and to
use to interpret social life; the concepts were recursively brought into social practices.

We can describe at least three dimensions through which the social sciences inscribed the art of governing—the governmentality that Foucault spoke about. First, in certain instances, moral and political concepts were brought into the social sciences and re-classified as those of science through the rules of disciplinary expression. State concepts of poverty and race in the USA following the Second World War, for example, were brought into disciplinary theories about social welfare systems. At the same moment, particular concepts in social science have become relocated into the social 'commonsense', such as Marx's concept of 'class', Weber's concept of 'bureaucracy', and Freud's 'ego'.

Second, systems of scientific ideas have dis-embedding/re-embedding qualities. Research, for example, does more than describe the world. It has the potential of relocating particular events of social life into more general systems of relations as a consequence of concepts and generalizations of science (Bledstein 1976, Wallenstein 1984, 1990, Popkewitz 1991). (We sometimes forget that research concepts and theories are often strategies to rationally order and interpret everyday life in a manner that is different from commonsense.) When we speak about ourselves as 'caring' or 'analytic', of our schools as 'democratic' or 'bureaucratic', of the need for 'human capital', and of a 'practical reasoning', we recursively locate our personal relations within abstract generalized systems. To call our actions as those of a 'citizen' in a 'political democracy', a 'consumer', as part of a 'caring' culture is to place our immediate practices within the principles of abstract systems of knowledge.

Third, the governing practices of social science relate state practices and individual consciousness. Here, the invention of statistics (a French term for state arithmetic) provides an example of the double movement of reasoning. Statistics was a state strategy of the nineteenth century. Applying a calculus of probability, the state reforms and the policing of health and wealth constructed social groupings and interests by reference to statistical aggregates of populations. Population reasoning divided people into specific units that could be calculated, organized and reflected on through the administration of the state, such as controlling epidemics and crime (Hacking 1991).

Population reasoning as social thinking produced new forms of individuality. Its 'reasoning' is one in which the person is defined normatively in relation to statistical aggregates which ascribe a 'growth' or 'development' of a person that can be monitored and supervised. Such reasoning, however, is not only of state science and administration. It has become a part of the commonsense systems of classification about children learning, school achievement and the social/psychological attributes that are deemed causal to school failures.

I have connected pedagogical knowledge, state practices, social science and population reasoning in order to consider the production of regulatory patterns. The curriculum reforms at the turn of the twentieth century were social technologies to govern how children are to understand who they are and what they are in society. The curriculum changes that Kliebard (1987)
so artfully explores were a part of a visioning/re-visioning of social commitment, and of individual service and faith. Diverse as the ideas of John Dewey, G. Stanley Hall, and David Snedden were, they had in common the attempt to bring professional, scientific knowledge into the school as a way of regulating children's thinking, their social and physical development, and teachers' views of competence.  

The introduction of scientific problem-solving was joined with and re-visioned a pastoral image that dominated American thought. The curriculum 'theories' combined modern, scientific notions of the 'rational' citizen with a view of democracy and participation that was rural in character. Thus, at one layer the central questions about schooling were about how instruction could construct a 'new' individual: Should schooling be about character training? Should curriculum be about producing a socially more efficient citizen and worker? About enabling children to develop more effectively? Or, was school about reconstructing the society through enabling students develop a more critical understanding of institutions and social issues?

At a different layer, the different curriculum theories of American schools at the turn of the twentieth century were struggles about how individuals should regulate themselves ('come to understand' and 'participate intelligently') within new sets of relations and institutions that included the state, bureaucracies, commerce and work. The issues about 'child development' or social efficiency were not only about what knowledge is to be taught. The modern school and its curriculum was a break in the systems of knowledge through which individuals were to regulate and discipline 'selves'. Whereas the previous world sought its truth in divine providence, the 'modern' pedagogical knowledge took certain religious views about salvation and combined them with scientific disposition towards how truth and self governing was to be sought. Instruction was organized scientifically to focus on the social/psychological processes in which individuals acquire dispositions, sensitivities, and awarenesses as well as the learning of 'information'. For example, new psychologies of problem-solving, measurement and child development embodied distinctions and differentiations that were to regulate not only how information was formed about schooling and how problems were described but also the discursive systems that embodied categories of personal competence and achievement. The language of the child as 'learner' placed faith in the rational individual as the locus of change (Thomas et al. 1987).

How does history come into the equation of what we study as school practice and reform? At this point, my reply would seem obvious. What is constituted as teaching, learning, and school assessment is not merely 'there' or negotiated by those who work in schools. The different curriculum foci inscribe ways of thinking and reasoning about community and self. The historicizing of the ways in which the objects of school (teaching, learning, administration, curriculum) are constituted and change over time is important not only to an understanding of the past, but it also has important consequences in contemporary school reform. The rules of expression, differentiation and regulation cannot be assumed but must be historicized.
Knowledge as disciplining technologies

The notion of regulation, as I argued earlier, is not meant to ascribe good/bad or moral/evil distinctions when talking about schooling. It is to recognize the sociological premise that all social situations have historically embedded restraints and constraints. Even to say that one is going 'to act alone' is a statement that occurs within structuring principles. While a strong faith in individuality exists in American folklore, to speak of the individual is also to invoke a theory of society that defines individuality (Popkewitz 1983). At this point, then, I proceed to explore further the notion of regulation embodied in curriculum.

We can think about curriculum as creating regulation at two different layers. One, schooling defines the boundaries of what is to be known. This is the Spenserian question: What knowledge is of most worth? Information is selected from a great array of possibilities. The selection of curriculum shapes and fashions how social and personal events are organized for reflection and practice. The selection processes operate as 'lenses' which define problems through the classifications that are sanctioned.

A different layer of regulation, and for me one that is constitutive for understanding schools, is that the selection of knowledge entails not only grades achieved and the certification given. School practices are politically sanctioned ways for individuals to organize their views of 'self'. That is, schooling is the primary institution of the state concerned with upbringing and labour training (Meyer 1987). The implications of this sanctioning can be understood through feminist scholarship over the past decade which has located how discursive practices are not only representative of things in the world but are important elements of power relations (Lather 1986, Weedon 1987, Fraser 1992).

Schooling is strategies and technologies to direct how students reason about the world-at-large and the self in that world: along with learning concepts and information within science, social studies and mathematics are problem-solving methods. The methods to effect school knowledge establish the parameters for how people are to inquire, organize, and understand their world and 'self'. The Walkerdine (1988, 1990) studies of the cognitive development of children, for example, focused on what seemed noncontroversial—the teaching of mathematics. She explored how children's learning of mathematics as control over a calculable universe embodies norms which relate teaching to rationalities that are tied to issues of gender and social class differentiation.

A relation between cognition and emotion is established as the performances and discourses of schooling inscribe hopes and desires (such as what are 'manly' or 'feminine' occupations or how one is to act and feel in a kitchen, a workroom, or a mathematics classroom) as well as distinctions about movements which are to characterize one's walking, talking and interactions with others. In the instance of gender, the discourses and performances of schooling normalize distinctions about what girls are to do well as compared to boys. The discourses of pedagogy, following Luke's (1990: 5, 18) studies of classrooms, 'operate not as an abstract set of ideas to be transposed into, inside of, or within mind/
consciousness', but as a material series of processes that inscribe attributes of subjectivity into the social body. Models of literacy in schooling display particular postures (correct way of maintaining one's body when reading), silences, gestures and signs of "being in" the lesson that encode particular ways of acting, seeing, talking and feeling of the student.

In light of the above, we can view the systems of ideas in schooling as social technologies. By social technology, I mean an ensemble of methods and strategies that inscribe principles to action and reflection. For example, the organization of contemporary curriculum at the end of the nineteenth century has produced certain social technologies through its ordering principles of knowledge. Much of the sociology of the period maintained concepts of social control which explicitly recognized the relation of institutional patterns and individual development (Franklin 1986, Ross 1991). Psychology was introduced into mass schooling as a technology for the re-structuring of how individuals were to be seen, defined and evaluated (O'Donnell 1985). The psychologies provided technologies to organize classroom didactics, instructional materials and the time-slotting of school subjects around which children were to 'learn' (Goodson 1987, Popkewitz 1987). Examples include the organization of teaching through lesson planning, the establishing of a hierarchy of objectives in a basal reading series, and administration of achievement tests to assess school success/failure as social technologies.

To summarize: curriculum inscribes rules and standards by which reason and individuality are constructed. The rules and standards produce social technologies whose consequences are regulatory. The regulation is not only what is cognitively understood; it produces sensitivities, dispositions and awarenesses. To interpret present reforms—to consider changes in contemporary schooling—I will argue, requires an examination of the continuities and breaks in the classifying principles of knowledge that are embodied in educational reform.

**History and social epistemologies**

I turn more directly to the methodological consequences of curriculum history as a social epistemology. This entails, first, examining curriculum knowledge as an object of research. I argue that the 'linguistic turn' re-fashions our assumptions about social change. My interest is to understand how systems of ideas change and regulated through the organization of school knowledge. With knowledge as the centre of inquiry, the assumptions of the subject and actor in the philosophy of consciousness are also radically altered. Historical change is viewed as one of breaks in the structuring of knowledge rather than as an evolutionary process of universal progress.

To think of historical change as rupture has an important consequence beyond that of how historical narratives are constructed. In the final sections, I explore the politics of knowledge and intellectual work. Too often the literature on intellectual work makes a quick leap from what is studied to what people need to do to produce change. This is a conse-
quence, I argue, of the *a priori* philosophical assumption of progress in the formulations of theoretical knowledge. Intellectuals are placed in a position of being both prophets and oracles. In contrast, a potential implication of the reconstruction of history as breaks in knowledge systems is to remove progress as an *a priori* philosophical formulation, but, in doing so, without necessarily losing site of commitments to social change. To foreshadow my argument, the strategy for historical study in this essay is not to do away with the subject or with purposeful action, but to change the manner in which the subject is brought into history to produce change.\(^{27}\)

\[A \text{ 'linguistic' turn and the decentring of the subject}\]

The 'linguistic turn' in social science and history can be viewed as a recasting of modernist doctrines associated with the Enlightenment project. It 'decentred' the actor and agency from the centre-stage of interpretation. The focus becomes how discursive 'spaces' are constructed to organize and produce subordination; for example, on the construction of 'Blackness' rather than Blacks, 'gender' rather than women, 'childhood' rather than the child, and the construction of 'teacher' rather than teachers. The shift in foci occurs, I argue, without giving up the Enlightenment recognition of a world that is socially constructed, or eliminating reason as central to social change.\(^{28}\)

The movement to discourse considers language as systems of ideas and 'rules' of reasoning that organize and direct an individual's participation in the world. The languages of schooling are not just words and sayings. The rules and standards of speech are social practices. Historical attention is given to how the categories, distinctions and differentiations of systems of ideas change over time to construct the 'subjects' of our practices.

Making knowledge a central problem of historical studies has been provocatively labeled 'the decentring of the subject', to mark the departure from the actor-centred subject of the philosophy of consciousness. The (re)moving of the subject is to understand how, at different historical times, people are made into subjects through a weaving of different social practices and institutional patterns. For example, Riley (1988) explored how the concept of 'women' has moved over the past few hundred years from its placement in religious spaces as a 'soul' dominated by the church to social spaces that re-visioned women through their bodies and sexuality. The concept of 'women' is historicized to take what is seen as unproblematic—women as the subject to be observed, scrutinized and practiced—and to make the constitution of that subject a centre of analysis; that is, to understand how particular forms of knowledge are privileged in particular social relations and historically defined power relations.

To make the subject into an historical construction that is interrogated is central to Foucault's (1980: 117) argument about history as genealogy:

One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself... to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call...
genealogy...a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc. without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs its empty sameness throughout the course of history.

I have called this approach to social study a social epistemological approach in the study of educational reform (Popkewitz 1991). Epistemology provides a way to consider how the distinctions and categorizations that organize perceptions and the conceptions of `self' are historically formed. Concurrently, an epistemology that is social takes the objects constituted as the knowledge of schooling and defines them as elements of institutional practices, formed historically through power relations that structure coherence in the vagaries of everyday life. I use the phrase social epistemology as a means of making the knowledge of school curriculum in social practice accessible to sociological inquiry. It emphasizes the relational and social embeddedness of knowledge. While I sometimes use the concept of `discourse' interchangeably with social epistemology, it is done more as a literary device, although discourse theories tend to de-emphasize the historicity of language systems.

This approach to history has been popularized in the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970) although I use Kuhn advisedly here because of his idealistic conception of change. Kuhn studied in what can be called an epistemological tradition that is tied to French and German history and the philosophy of science (Canguilhem 1976, 1978, 1988, Bachelard 1984, Kosseleck 1991; see also Tally 1990) and was brought to the study of social sciences through the work of Michel Foucault. Kuhn, the European philosophers of science like Bachelard and Canguilhem, as well as Foucault entail a shift in focus from the intentions of people to the structures of knowledge itself.

One part of the `linguistic turn' is to recognize that when we `use' language, it may not be us speaking. Our speech is language historically formed and then brought into the present. It is, to borrow from Bakhtin, overpopulated with the intentions of others. For example, a contemporary commitment in some educational research is to talk about `voice' of teachers and students. The `wisdom' of teachers' practices become authorial and `authentic'. Yet when we interrogate the acts of teachers' writing and speaking historically, we find nothing `natural' in talking about school as `management', or teachers' `voices' and `wisdom'. The discourses in which `voices' and the `wisdom' of teachers' are inscribed embody patterns of `reasoning' constructed prior to teachers' entrance to the scene of schooling. The different discursive strategies occur within an ensemble of symbolic and non-symbolic practices, technologies and institutions that emerge over time and which are the effects of power.

Recent studies of rhetoric and science enable us to consider how even the seemingly `objective' academic languages that we speak may not be our own. Further, the principles of scientific discourses are active elements in the constructions of the world, not `merely' descriptive of action and purpose. For example, writing in seemingly academic style is often associated with placing a string of references at the end of a sentence, such
as prescribed in the style manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). Referencing in this manner is to adopt a strategy about knowledge developed in behavioural psychology during the 1920s. That strategy was part of the legitimating practices of behaviourism through inscribing in science the assumption that scientific knowledge was cumulative and sequential (Brazerman 1987).

We can pursue the pedagogical discourses of teachers as also expressing particular historical relations about schooling through the systems of reasoning applied. The teachers in a study of urban and rural schools used a particular population reasoning to classify children of colour and poverty (Popkewitz in press). The children were defined as having particular attributes in need of remediation—the child’s ‘learning style’ that is ‘field-dependent’, who learns only ‘by doing’, and whose parents are on welfare or whose mother is an ‘unwed mother’. The population reasoning inscribed in this speech is not ‘natural’ to the teacher; rather it is an historically formed reasoning related to the problem of ‘governmentality’ and the discipline of the ‘self’ discussed earlier. The practices of population reasoning in teacher discourses positioned the children of colour as the anthropological ‘Others’ who were normatively different.

The analysis of discourses of teaching and teacher education enables us to understand how discourses change over time to inscribe intent, purpose and direction in the practices of schooling. Fendler’s (in press) study of the changing meaning of ‘the educated subject’, for example, provides a way to understand how our reasoning about ‘teacher thinking’ and the ‘wisdom of practice’, two contemporary slogans about school reform, are the effect of power; they are not emancipatory. Fendler argues that the concept of an ‘educated subject’ is not a constant entity nor one which can be studied solely as a ‘philosophical’ idea that is stable over time. It is a concept that has changed as the systems that regulate the person have shifted within changing social circumstances. Exploring conceptions of the ‘educated subject’ in ancient Greece, in medieval and modern times and in the contemporary discourses of American educational reform, she identifies discursive breaks in the substance of what makes an educated person, the obligations and justifications of the person who is ‘educated’, and the means and goals of that education. Further, she maps the changing relations of concepts of the ‘educated subject’ to social and political conditions in which that ‘educated person’ is constructed.

The analysis calls attention to radical shifts in the forms of disciplining and governing the ‘child’ in contemporary school reform discourses. When examining contemporary school didactics and teacher education reforms in the light of Fendler’s analysis, we are able to identify new relations of knowledge and power. The new ‘educated subject' embodies new ‘technologies of the self’; that is, drawing on Foucault and feminist theories, a re-visioning of the teacher and the child as objects that are systematically classified, legislated, standardized and normalized. Fendler argues that the new technologies of pedagogy move institutional norms, directly into the subjective space of the individual as the reforms seek to change the capabilities and dispositions of children. What is rhetorically signalled as ‘teachers' wisdom' in contemporary research, we can reason from Fendler’s
genealogy, is an effect of political rationalities brought into the pedagogy through which children and teachers are to think and act in the world. The desires, dispositions and capabilities of the child in school, Fendler argues, is 'mutually constitutive with society' rather than different.

Why move to an epistemological history rather than maintain the assumptions of the philosophy of consciousness? One could argue that focusing on the intent and purposes of social actors provides an important social as well as scientific commitment. It places people and their social worlds in history. To remove people from history is to make the world seem deterministic and outside the possibility of intervention.

In fact, efforts to remove the actor have been viewed as reactionary within the dogma of the philosophy of consciousness. Not to have a visible actor—groupings of people and individuals—in narratives of social affairs is made to seem anti-humanistic (and even anti-democratic). It is not uncommon to hear people react to stories about schools by asking, 'Where are the people in the story?' The assumption is of a world in which salvation can be found only by identifying a priori who will do the good works. One might even say, 'Yes, we can understand that discourses do construct what it is possible to say and think, but it is people who do that construction'.

My argument is not to deny that discourses are spoken by people or that at different times, there are different discursive rules that may compete with one another. Rather, my argument is that discourses are historically constructed over time and through a weaving of multiple historical trajectories which have no single, pre-ordained directionality. Further, while the argument about the centring of human purpose and actors might seem an appropriate analytic argument, the sociological consequence of this intellectual stance has not always been empowering. Without getting too far ahead of my argument, the practical consequences of an unquestioned centring of a subject entail multiple issues of power that are hidden in the rhetoric. Butler (1992) argues, drawing on feminist and post-colonial literature, that the centring of the subject is a particular invention of Western philosophy. When the subject is taken uncritically as the locus of struggle for knowledge about enfranchisement and democracy, scholarship draws from the very models that have oppressed through the regulation and production of subjects. Such a strategy is both a consolidation and concealment of those power relations. For example, feminist scholarship has helped to problematize the concept of 'women' in a manner which allows us to understand that the qualities we associate with gender are historically constructed 'attributes' formed in power relations. Where the agency of individuals or groups are made to seem as natural, there is a tendency to lose sight of how the agendas and categories which define oppositions are historically formed. The systems of relevancies are taken for granted.

Such feminist arguments are important in this analysis. The historical conception of discourses as the amalgamation of multiple transformations is important. It provides a way to locate the inscription of power and regulation in schooling and curriculum that is obscured within the traditions which privilege the intent and purpose of actors.
The decentring of the subject is not to quiet social action by removing the actor or to remove commitments formed as part of the Enlightenment project. The strategy of decentring the subject, I believe, is itself a product of the very self-reflectivity produced through the Enlightenment. The decentring of the subject has its own sense of irony: there is an acceptance of the need to construct knowledge that can enable people to act intentionally, but this insertion occurs in a different location than that argued in the philosophy of consciousness. Action is reinserted by questioning the givenness of the subject through exploring its historical constructedness. The subject is made into a dimension of the questionable and of 'insistent contest and resignification' (Butler 1992: 7), not as a foundation of research that is taken as the unquestionable. Constructing histories about how our subjectivities are formed (making the agendas and categories of the subject problematic) can provide a potential space for alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not articulated through the available commonsenses.

Decentring progress: from evolution to a history of breaks

My focus on the categories and rules of reasoning leads to a second structuring principle of an historical social epistemology: change is not in the evolutionary progression of events or in the past efforts of people to influence those events. Change is in disrupting, as Butler (1992) suggests, the ways in which our forms of reasoning and identities 'consolidate and conceal power relations'. The history of science provides one example of a view of change as embedded in the structuring of knowledge. Kuhn (1970), for example, talked about revolutionary and normal sciences as issues of power as well as knowledge (Toulmin 1972, 1988). Kuhn considered an historical change that did not involve intent and the practice of individuals, even though individuals and particular practices were part of his narrative about science.\[^{32}\] 'Revolutionary science' involves different sets of rules and standards about truth – what is to be studied, why and how – from that of normal science. New questions (and sets of relations) are generated about phenomena for which older paradigms are inadequate. Further, the distinction between how truth is told in normal and revolutionary science, is not cumulative; rather, it involves ruptures in belief and cognition that occur within particular historical conjunctures. These ruptures did not occur easily as the new structures of knowledge challenged the imputed realities of scientists. 'Evidence' from empirical studies was not sufficient to produce paradigmatic shifts.

But we must go further than Kuhn in thinking about conceptual changes. How people tell the truth about the world is part of and expressive of social transformations by which relationships with the world and our 'selves' are established. Foucault (1975), for example, locates the birth of modern medicine in changes to what was made visible and what was expressed about disease. In the eighteenth century, Foucault (1975: 5) argues, the spatial configurations of disease and the localizing of illness in
particular pathologies replaced a classification system that dominated medicine. The latter saw the primary problem of medicine as the 'envelopments, subordinations, divisions, resemblances' rather than as disease that is localized in organs. The new way of 'seeing' enabled a clinical gaze that saw particular tissues as related to pathologies of individual organs rather than as related to the functioning of the organism as a whole. The new configurations of a medical gaze occurred alongside of and were made possible through the development of the teaching hospital and other institutional places in which medicine was practised.

The history of medical practices was not a chronological one of a progressive advancement, or of a serial progress; it was of a time that 'goes at a thousand different paces, swift and slow, which bear almost no relation to the day-to-day rhythm of a chronicle or of traditional history' (Braudel 1980: 10). We can turn, as well, to the later Wittgenstein (1966) who provided a way of understanding historical change as multiple rates developing across different institutions at different times that come together in what can be called a historical conjunction. Wittgenstein likened historical change to a thread made up of many fibres. The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some fibres run its entire length but in the fact that many fibres overlap. To focus on 'the day-to-day rhythm of a chronicle or of traditional history' of actors is to lose sight of the long term transformations and their significance.

A social epistemology gives attention to the plural and unstable patterns in which schooling is constructed. The set of relations that become schooling—in its forms of expression and performances—exists across different dimensions of time and space and provides examples for organizing cases and recognizing shifts in what was previously seen as continuous. Mass schooling, for example, was a nineteenth century invention which emerged from different movements within society that, at a certain level, worked autonomously. Overlapping with changes in classroom teaching were the creations of institutions for teacher education (normal schools), the rise of the modern university, the formation of social sciences, and the emergence of the discipline of psychology. These multiple arenas of social practice occurred in conjunction with the modern American welfare state which assumed the governing functions in the new institution of mass schooling. Interpretations of mass schooling, therefore, need to account for the multiple intersections of knowledge constructed in these varied arenas. It is in the conjuncture of the nineteenth century practices that the assumptions of currently favoured words—such as 'professionalism', 'subject matter teaching', and teacher's 'voice'—need to be placed and their implications derived.

To that end we can explore social epistemology in the curriculum histories. Hamilton (1989) seeks to understand how particular words such as 'class' and 'curriculum' came about and changed over time in relationship to the social, economic and cultural conditions in which those words existed. Hamilton (1989) argues, for example, that Calvinist influences in Britain were brought to the USA to emphasize instructional systems with well-ordered forms of social organization that could provide more efficient systems of moral supervision and labour organization. He argues, further,
that there is a close relation between changing pedagogical discursive practices, changing conceptions of labour processes, and changing assumptions about the individual and the state. Englund (1991: 5), also pursuing this tradition, distinguishes between consensus historians in which there is one approach and one answer to a given problem, and an epistemological curriculum history in which there is an 'ongoing, never-ending struggle of the social epistemology of school knowledge and a closer analysis of differences in interpretations and how the content changes'. This struggle, Englund continues, 'takes place at several levels, those of public debate, syllabuses, teaching materials, and concrete teaching'.

From these examples of historicizing school knowledge, a social mapping is drawn of the epistemological changes in the practices of schooling. This is to enable an understanding of the prior rules and standards by which, and the conditions in which, truth is told about teaching and children in schooling, and how these rules change over time.

The historical concern decentres particular actors in order to interpret how social practices and subjectivities are constituted.

Regional study instead of context

This essay began with the distinctions between the historicism of the philosophy of consciousness and a social epistemology in the study of schooling and curriculum. In this distinction, I suggested that historical change can be understood as the breaks and ruptures through which systems of ideas construct the objects of schooling. In this final section, the notion of a 'regionalized' history is introduced.

At first glance, the idea of a regional history may be misread as a study which is specific and located in a particular geographic place, such as the study of schooling in New England or 'case' studies of a reform effort. Our interest in region, however, is not of that type. A region here is not a geographical place. It is a discursive field which positions how the child and teacher are known and know the world. The child as 'an adolescent', 'a learner', a 'personality' with or without 'self-esteem', a member of social classes such as an 'at-risk' child or as a medical problem of 'growth' - all position the child within a region that constructs the child as an object and subject. The concept of 'region' enables us to consider how particular linguistic practices relate in a field that makes possible the scrutiny, observation, and 'self-reflection' of the person. The classifications produce a 'space' to define competence, achievement and well-being of the child.

A discursive region or field of the child crosses the institutions of schools, medicine, social welfare, law, psychology and cultural institutions related to family. The 'identities' transcend particular institutions by means of the categories applied and have no relation to any geographical place in which the child is located. The child is assigned to particular discursive spaces from which action and competence are to be judged.

But the placing of the 'child' into a discursive field is not only pedagogical. It embodies and inscribes political rationalities. If we take Hultqvist's (in press) study of the changing patterns of 'reasoning'
embodied in conceptions of childhood in Sweden, the discursive positioning of the child as a ‘thinking’, rational, and acting subject is, at the same time, the political rationalities of the Swedish state that are inserted into the world as a practice. Using the pre-school child as a vantage point, Hultqvist explores how the school and similar social welfare activities contribute to producing children and young people as subjects of particular ways of living. Comparing the concept of ‘the child’ in Swedish welfare models of the 1930s and the 1940s, and educational psychology and didactics in the 1970s, he argues that there appears a new ‘decentralized’ child who is to be self-motivated and self-governing. The discourse of the ‘decentralized’ child is part of contemporary ‘decentralization’ of the social welfare state and a wider reconstitution of governing practices that include pedagogy and social science in the 1990s. Hultqvist’s studies are histories of the present through which we can locate the reasoning about the child and the teacher within broad historical process of governing of the ‘child’.

The significance of the idea of region (or discursive field) is that it enables a focus on how different discourses constructed in physically different locations weave together to define individuality. The histories that Foucault writes, for example, are not global histories of discipline or power. They are histories of the construction of subjectivities that invade particular institutional patterns but are not reducible to those patterns. His studies of the prison and the criminal, the asylum and the insane, the medical gaze, and bodily desires in the history of sexuality are examples of the constructions of discursive regions through which individuality is defined in multiple institutions of modernity.

Through the concept of ‘region’ we can more finely locate the foci of a study of schooling. It is a study of how the discursive systems of ‘ideas’ that place the subject and subjectivities into particular regions change over time. We can think of the central actors of the modern school (the teacher, the child, the student, the behaviourally disabled child, and the school curriculum) as objects whose construction over time has formed a region that classifies and orders how the person and the world are apprehended. These regions, however, change in relation to complex patterns of institutions, technologies and ideas. Hamilton’s (1989) study, for example, involved understanding how the linguistic formations occurring in France, England, Scotland, and the US re-visioned the child within concepts of ‘class’ and ‘curriculum’ as classificatory principles. A consequence of the categories and distinctions was to provide social technologies by which the objects of schooling could be scrutinized, observed and supervised.

The field of region is illustrated in a recent study of educational reform in Iceland (Johanneson 1991, 1993). From the 1960s, Icelandic educational reform has been a key link in the State’s project towards the modernization of schools. The modernization entails a rationalizing of the organization of schools and the Icelandic College of Education. But that organization involved more than establishing organizational linkages and personnel hierarchies. The modernization embodied a re-classification of the knowledge through which schooling was apprehended.

The re-classification and re-ordering were evident in the debates about the school curriculum. Underlying the curriculum reforms in biology and
social studies, for example, were particular sets of beliefs from which the school subjects were formed. Inscribed in the 'new' curriculum knowledges were dispositions about historical progress, scientific reasoning and child development, and democratic concerns about how schooling could produce a more just society. Johanneson studied 'pre-reform discourses' that emerged in the early twentieth century when Iceland was still under Danish rule. The curriculum knowledge gave focus to an elite form of knowledge (which was phrased as developing 'excellence'), to a congregational pedagogy and storytelling, Christian studies, nationalism and an objectivism which sought to define categories of the world as unambiguous and unchangeable.

The post-World War Two reform movement in Iceland replaced the 'pre-reform' discourses with professional discourses of reform. The professional discourses competed with the 'pre-reform' discourses. A new social studies curriculum, for example, drawing on American discussions of the late 1960s, was used to argue for a modern, progressive school and a professionally competent teacher. Johanneson explored how the discursive themes moved among different agencies and institutions: the teacher unions, the Icelandic College of Education, the Icelandic University, the Ministry of Education, the Icelandic Institute for School Development and Evaluation. The discursive reconstitution to occur through the educational reforms organized what was looked at as 'educational' and how that looking conceived of the 'things' of the world. Johanneson explores how these sentiments were inserted into the educational field to legitimate a particular professionalization of progress and of educational expertise.

We can think of Johanneson's mapping of Iceland as a way to locate changing power relations in the field of education through shifts in the discursive field. The mapping of the epistemological practices explores changing boundaries about what is to be authorized as reason/nonreason with respect to the objects of schooling. It also maps certain changes in the regulatory principles of subjectivity that tie various institutions.

The notion of region is part of a strategy that does not privilege a notion of chronological time and physical place, such as occurs in the strategy of historicism in the philosophy of consciousness. Region is a way to move from the positivism that tied social space to a geographical context and towards a notion of the discursive fields through which subjectivities are formed and power deployed. The regional focus of competing discursive practices of educational reform enables an understanding of how particular rules and standards of truth cross particular institutional patterns and are not reducible to those patterns. The historical concern is the construction of rules of formation through which the 'actor' is made into an object of scrutiny, and how those rules change over time.

**Conclusions**

My argument in this essay has moved through different layers of the problem of constructing an historical narrative. My initial move was to focus on curriculum as a problem of power produced through the
production of rules and standards of truth. To do curriculum history as 'social epistemology' is to ask about what counts as evidence, the rules by which truth is established, and the effects of having some things count as evidence and truth while other things are de-authorized and made false (e.g. Wickham 1990: 41). But, as I argued, such a history is 'more' than studying the rules of 'telling the truth'. Curriculum deploys power through the manner in which and the condition on which knowledge is selected, organized and evaluated in schools. To do history is to 'see' shifting true/false divisions in a society as related to power relations rather than as a direct result of the existence of a given reality.

The historical studies enable us to understand how a certain normativity and selectivity is introduced into problem-solving about schooling in the present. The reasoning about 'childhood', 'curriculum', and 'the educated subject' in contemporary reforms are not part of some prior grand design or structure but emerge from different social trajectories that come together in the modern school. Further, a social epistemology enables us to consider how the distinctions and differentiations of schooling construct a normativity whose effects are governing systems of inclusion and exclusion, an important contribution as we seek to construct more democratic societies and schools. Finally, the histories are of the present, enabling us to understand how the rules of contemporary pedagogy and teacher education reform emerge and link political rationalities with the 'reasoning' that constructs the objects of schooling and its reform—what is defined as the child to be taught.

I can, at this moment, consider certain criticisms of a social epistemology that have appeared in the criticism of 'the linguistic turns' in social theory and history. One is, to de-centre the subject and to remove a notion of 'progress' within a philosophy of science is a nihilistic relativism that would be incapable of furnishing norms, and would eradicate political activism through its denial of the subject. My response, which draws on Butler (1992), recognizes a certain Western ethnocentricism in the argument assuming the centred subject as an unquestionable universal category. The strategy that claims that all inquiry must focus on the subject as the only legitimate theoretical and political strategy for change is itself a political act of disquieting. It asserts that there can be no political opposition to specifying the subject prior to the act of inquiry or informed critique. This stance of an *a priori* subject in theorizing, Butler (1992: 4) argues, 'becomes an authoritarian ruse by which political conflict over the status of the subject is summarily silenced'.

In response to such criticism, I suggest that social epistemology is a political as well as a conceptual practice. Embedded in the philosophy of consciousness is a particular social position of the researcher. This position is one of an oracle who is to bring change and progress to the world. This role of prophecy is not necessarily one of personal intent but of the epistemologies that order and characterize the discourses about disciplined knowledge (I discuss this more fully in Popkewitz 1991: ch. 8). The social reformist traditions in social science and history, for example, practise this tradition of 'prophecy' in the identification of universal developmental patterns in schooling – to learn from history so that future planning can
gain from the hindsight of the past. The promise is that efficiency and rationality will produce social progress. In critical sciences with Hegelian assumptions, the rule of prophecy and redemption is also present, but its purpose is to identify the repressive functioning of the present in order to move social practices toward some universal synthesis that produces the good. What is labelled the good is also called the progressive.

In both instances of the philosophy of consciousness, but in different ways, intellectuals position themselves as capable of identifying the future significance of present interpretations. This intellectual strategy establishes social scientists and historians as the legitimate and authoritative figures for the design of social affairs. I consider this assumption about progress in the sciences and histories of education to be dangerous in a democracy. Historical examples of intellectuals as experts in the service of the democratic ideal are filled with their own contradictions.\(^\text{38}\)

One can consider the intellectual tradition in which I place a social epistemology as an attempt to alter the relation of disciplinary knowledge, the researcher and the public spheres in which people struggle to make their world better. To understand change as ruptures and breaks is to question any inherent teleology in the knowledge production of intellectuals. Since there are no patterns of progress to discover, there is no privileged role of the intellectual in bringing about that progressive world.

But to consider historical change as epistemological breaks does not mean that political action is preempted. Political action occurs through making problematic `the subject' that has been so central to modern scholarship and its regulatory effects. This does not negate or dispense with such a notion. The strategy of historicizing the subject (`decentering') is one which reinserts humanity into social projects through making the governing systems of order, appropriation and exclusion visible and confrontable. It is to ask about the processes of construction, political meaning and the consequences of talking about the subject as a requirement or presupposition of theory (Butler 1992: 4). The paradoxical task of placing ourselves into history is that we may, collectively through our actions in the present, poke holes in the causality that organizes the constructions of our `selves'. And, in that process, there is the possibility of opening new systems for our collective and individual lives.

The stance towards a social epistemology is to recognize the politics of knowledge as part of the reflective conditions of the production of knowledge. An historical sensitivity to how we construct our subjectivity is part of the epistemological vigilance that Bourdieu et al. (1991) speak about when they urge the need for reflexivity in the methods of study. Focusing on a social epistemology is a theoretical strategy that `sees' power as pervading the conceptual frameworks that construct the objects of inquiry, including the subject position of the critic, the theoretical moves that establish its foundational assumptions, and the assumptions that are excluded or foreclosed. The study of history is the study of the objectification of those elements which historians consider to be objectively given.\(^\text{39}\)

Finally, my interest has been to link questions of sociology, psychology and history to the study of schooling. The study of the subject and subjectivities of schooling requires that we take seriously what social
linguistic theories have been telling us for at least the last 70 years. The discourses constructed about education in policy-making, reform reports, and documents from other institutionally legitimate positions of authority are not 'merely' languages about education; they are part of the productive processes of society by which problems are classified and practices mobilized. There is no distinction, as many would like to believe, between theory and practice, or between the 'real world of schooling' and university practices about schooling; what we have are systems of relations in which power is deployed. Nor should we be unreflective about the subject position of the critic and the epistemologies of progress that inhere in the educational community.

Acknowledgements

This discussion is derived from my attempt to develop an understanding of the reform movement of the last decade in the USA; a work in which I sought to make the current categories and distinctions of school and curriculum change sensitive to both historical and sociological questions (Popkewitz 1991). In writing this argument about history, I wish to thank Barry Franklin, Tomas Englund, Christina Florin, Jodi Hall, Ulla Johannson, António Nóvoa, Migual Pereyra, Lynda Stone and the Wednesday Group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for their conversations about the ideas in the essay.

Notes

1. I will use 'discourse' and 'discursive practices' within this essay as alternatives to 'social epistemology'. This should be seen as a literary device, as my preference for the term 'social epistemology' is related to my wish to historicize schooling which most discursive theories tend not to do.
2. I use the notion of intellectual as a social grouping that has increasingly been associated with issues of power, the state and governing in modernity. See Bauman (1987), Foucault (1988a, b), Giddens (1990), Ross (1991).
3. I recognize that there are accepted historical techniques for interrogating the tracks of the past. My discussion here recognizes the importance of discipline in systematic inquiry, but also emphasizes that this discipline involves communal rules that are socially constructed and influenced by how the objects of inquiry are theoretically constructed. See my example about the Egyptian tombs later in this section.
4. People vote and children do things in school but these acts become interpretable and, thus, data only when questions are asked about their functions and implications.
5. My intent here is not to colonialize historiography as a European invention but to focus on a particular form of Eurocentric narrative that inscribed Egyptian artifacts within a larger cosmology of development.
6. The notions of 'modern' and 'modernity' refer to a particular constellation of technologies, institutions and systems of ideas that are different from previous constellations. The notion of modern, however, is viewed as a sociological concept rather than an evolutionary notion.
7. I borrow the notion of commonplace from a famous essay in education by Joseph Schwab (1969), but intend to make the commonplaces problematic, rather than natural and essential, to schooling.
8. My use of modernization here is related to social histories which have located a change in the ways in which people thought about phenomena after the seventeenth century. It is not meant to imply a notion of progress but to suggest that a certain type of self-reflectivity on the human condition that is different from previous schemas which maintained a transcendental view of the human condition. This modernization also contains a change in how individuals are located in time and space, producing different everyday patterns of communication than found in traditional communities which I will discuss below. This discussion is drawn, in part, from the theoretical discussion of Giddens (1989).

9. This competition involves many nuances and distinctions which are beyond the scope of this paper. I also recognize the limitations of the setting of dichotomies to make comparisons, but do so because the limitations of space require certain juxtapositions of arguments about historical narratives. I focus on the relation of the philosophy of consciousness and the 'linguistic turn' in the following discussion to place, as best I can, the argument within what I consider substantive intellectual issues about disciplinary knowledge rather than examining the particular differences within 'paradigms'. My citations throughout the text provide the reader with 'sources' to explore further the arguments made.

10. I use 'linguistic turns' to recognize multiple arguments and movements within literary studies, feminisms, philosophy and history. I wish to thank Lynda Stone for reminding me of the plurality of strands that exist within the social sciences and humanities. See Butler (1992), Shapiro (1992), Dean (1994) and Chartier (1988).

11. For a more general discussion of different historical traditions, see Popkewitz (1986). I use 'a' linguistic turn to give a particular reading to a diverse literature.

13. For a general discussion of Utopian thought, see Manuel and Manuel (1979).

14. To historicize, as we use the term, is to place knowledge and social practices in the context of struggles—to classify, order and define the objects of the world. In contrast, Historicism, a view of history which dominates American historical studies and is assumed in ethnographic studies, focuses on the actor and events of the world as the ultimate cause of social change.

15. I appreciate the help of Professor Miguel Pereyra of Granada University, Spain in drawing this to my attention.

16. It is interesting to note that positivism became a directing force in historical studies prior to the development of the social sciences as we now think of them. It is also ironic that much critical science, while rejecting the disinterest of science, maintains the historicist traditions of facts and texts.

17. One could ask why use social epistemology rather than the other terms to describe the historicist tradition being discussed. My reason is relatively simple: it is the relation of the social and the epistemological that I want to emphasize through the discussion of knowledge and power.

18. While most of my discussion will draw on the linguistic turns in the social sciences and history, there is also discussion in psychology. For example, Sampson (1993) argues that if we think about sexuality, for example, we can realize that its meanings are intertwined with cultural systems. Contending that the divisions of male vs. female are genital, chromosomal, or hormonal misses the point that these characteristics are discursively selected in a manner that links sexual boundaries to matters of reproduction, a strategy that has historically kept women in their 'proper' place.

19. I use the words 'community' and 'society' as distinctions that are of historical significance. Community involves time/space relations that are local. Society involves more abstract conceptions of self as a citizen of a nation, as a worker, or as a member of an ethnic group within some larger sets of relations. As abstract notions of society are made part of one's definition of 'self,' the meaning and relationships in which communities are defined is changed.

20. While discussions of learning and socialization in the USA tend to structure out these considerations of deeper issues of upbringing, philosophically, at least, Marxist pedagogical discussions understood this relationship of cognition and affect with political-moral responsibility (Mikhailov (1976), Ilyenkov (1977)).

21. For a discussion of the secularization of religion into civics, see Bellah (1968).
22. The word ‘police’ (and I assume later, ‘policy’) was used to ensure a downward continuity between the ruler of the state and its populations. In the Middle Ages, governing was an extrinsic activity: the power of the Prince was to protect his geographic principality, with the question of regulation of souls left to the Church in preparing for an afterlife. By the nineteenth century, the meaning of governing involved a state as regulating and coordinating practices of individual behaviours and dispositions. The ensemble of institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics that define people as populations becomes paramount to the art of governing. The idea of social contract is made into a way of defining the mutual pledge of rulers and subjects.

23. These appearances of institution are an historical conjuncture rather than emerging from a grand design. It is the coming together of the multiple developments in multiple arenas of social life that forms what I will later call a break or rupture.

24. There was debate in the early social sciences about how to reason about the world, of which statistical reasoning was only one part. Also early statistical reasoning about social problems involved ethnographic discussions as well as groupings of people according to population thinking. What is important for me is that population thinking is very much a part of current definitions of social problems. In my current research on urban and rural teacher education, teachers continually classify the problems of schools and teaching through population reasoning.

25. It is important to note that most of the discourses about schooling and curriculum were pragmatic, although there was a difference between the instrumental pragmatism of behaviourist psychology and the writings of Dewey.

26. I think that it is important that many European countries do not have the word ‘curriculum’. It is a word that emerged within particular state traditions in which the patterns of governing involve strong relations between official governmental agencies and professional associations of a civil society, such as Britain and the USA.

27. Nor am I denying the political implications of intellectual knowledge production, but to recognize actively that its politics is in knowledge production. I explore this issue more fully in Popkewitz (1984, 1991).

28. Reason, however, is itself revised. It is seen as a pragmatic intervention in the world rather than as a search for universal principles about the world (Rorty 1989, Cherryholmes 1993).

29. I should note that Foucault rejects the use of the term ‘epistemology’ in his work, but his reference is to a philosophical tradition which treats epistemology as a search for the essential rules of knowledge. My use of epistemology as a socially constructed practice is related to Foucault’s notion of ‘regimes of truth’. I place greater emphasis on the relation of epistemology to other social practices.

30. One might argue here that my movement from epistemology to the work of people re-inscribes a philosophy of consciousness. The movement to a subject may also be noted earlier in my use of ‘I’. These uses of a subject, however, do not re-introduce a subject as in the philosophy of consciousness. Rather, as Butler (1992: 9) argues, it is ‘to position the subject with the grammar that authorizes it. The writing is mine, or an author’s, through its replaying and resignifying theoretical positions that constitute us and by which we work through the possibilities of its convergence and the accounting for the possibilities of those that are systematically excluded. The inclusion of “I”, therefore, is to recognize “the transfer point of that replay” in which I am constituted through material practices and discourses that produce me as a subject.’

31. One needs to read current literary theory and feminist scholarship, as well as critiques of post-modernism in education to realize how political a question this privileging the subject is.

32. While reference to Kuhn appears in discussions of ‘constructivist’ science education, it is a very selective reading that ignores the epistemological social and political questions that Kuhn raises. Kuhn appears only as an ‘icon’ to legitimate a psychology of mental structuring.


34. I discuss professionalism and the concern with research on ‘subject matter teaching’ in Popkewitz (1993).
35. Hamilton avoids any discussion of theory although it is clear from his references and method that theory, as an epistemological orienting and framing of questions, is integral to the problem of the study itself. Englund is much more acknowledging of the intellectual debts inscribed in his work. Others who contribute to this discussion are: Barry Franklin (1994) on special education and Ivor Goodson (1987) in his pioneering scholarship on the school subjects.

36. There are continual references in the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu to the notion of region as a site of symbolic power.

37. I am using the notion of region and field interchangeably here. They provide metaphors that signal complex sets of relations through which the objects of the world are known. The notions of region and field also provide a way to consider the location of various discursive systems that interact and change over time.

38. For a discussion of the relation of reformist traditions and critical traditions as part of particular European conceptions of ‘sameness’ and ‘Otherness’, see Young (1990, 1995). He argues that the universal projects of these traditions need to be understood in relation to nineteenth century colonialism.

39. The radical potential of this tradition is in its combination with the neo-pragmatic traditions appearing in recent scholarship. Neo-pragmatism provides a strategy to help us rethink the contingent qualities of knowledge and social practices as we engage in public struggles to construct new possibilities. But the social epistemology that I speak about in this essay and the neo-pragmatism of recent scholarship should not be collapsed into one. They represent different moves about social change and interpretation: a destabilizing move and a move to develop a progressive programme of action. (I want to thank Fazel Rizvi for a conversation that helped me understand this relation.) Each move, though, requires the other. The construction of historical knowledge as breaks and ruptures helps to destabilize existing discursive fields and their power relations, and, at the same time, removes the intellectual as the oracle of social progress. With a destabilizing strategy, neo-pragmatism provides a defensible position from which to consider the practices of public debate (for the latter in education, see Cherryholmes 1988, 1992). Intellectuals participate in these public debates through the production of knowledge as part of their politics, but at the same time, the contingent and non-progressive qualities of their knowledge provide them with no privileged location.

References


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