The Creation of National Cultures through Education, the Inequities They Produce, and the Challenges for Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT: This essay compares and contrasts the educational movements of three nations—the United States, Mexico, and the Soviet Union—established according to Eurocentric cultural values. In each country, mass education was undertaken to help produce an assimilative national culture during formative periods characterized by instability. In two of these nations, the U.S. and Mexico, this foundation eventually required an accommodation to address multiculturalism. This latter-day perspective is designed to recognize, respect, and appreciate a variety of cultures. This essay examines the ways in which these two oppositional goals—monoculturalism and multiculturalism—have intersected in schools.

KEYWORDS: Multicultural education, educational history, inequity, national culture, standardization

Western state-planned education systems have historically served as a medium for national unification. In the schools of many nations indebted to Eurocentric conventions, the curriculum emphasizes the national history, literature, language, arts, STEM legacy, and other features of culture steeped in longstanding national traditions. Through this immersion in culture and history, stakeholders seek to inculcate in their citizens a sense of affiliation, patriotism, nationalism, and loyalty. These feelings provide the social cohesion required for a nation to function as a whole and promote its sustainability. As the rare common denominator of most of a nation's citizens, schooling takes on an important role in the socialization of diverse people in to a *body politic*.

And yet, a nation is usually made up of many peoples representing different cultures. Therein lies the conundrum: In the formation of a whole new nation composed of disparate people, whose culture predominates in the institution of schooling? In foregrounding one culture, whose worldview and accompanying structures and processes are suppressed or adapted to fit the dominant worldview and set of practices instituted in the name of a national identity? How does a country foster a sense of

unification while also honoring multiple traditions and multicultural identities? How do nations shaped by a colonial legacy or other political heritage establish a culture based on one set of historical values, and also respect and dignify the cultures of the land's original peoples, of those who feel they are on the margins of those values, and of those who immigrate to join its population? And from the point of multicultural education, how might such institutions, when they have been designed for conformity and stability, be challenged to diversify their ways and means of educating their diverse students?

Chakravarty (2001), focusing on multicultural education in India, finds that Western approaches to nationhood tend to promote monoculturalism at the expense of multiculturalism:

> the constitutional obligation to grant cultural rights stands in direct opposition to the obligation of the Western model of the modern nation-state to build a civil society in which the civic culture of modern nationalism prevails over ethnic diversities. Genuine cultural pluralism cannot be viable in this framework. Extreme centralization and a tendency towards an increasing concentration of power at the Center have served to generate disintegrative forces. Ethnic resurgence has thus been fueled by developmental distortions, unequal distribution of resources, marginalization of cultural groups and perceived discrimination by majority powers. (p. 60)

My essay thus may speak more to Western societies grounded in Eurocentric worldviews than in cultures originating elsewhere in the world. In this essay I look at an educational paradox in Western schooling that remains in search of a solution. This problem follows from the tendency of nations to foster in students a national identity grounded in a dominant culture through education, while also making space for people from outside that culture. To do so, I will feature three national education systems, each emerging from very different European societies, yet each faced with this same challenge: The US, Mexico, and the Soviet Union. I focus on these three because my career interests and travels have led me to histories of all three, the reading of which raised for me the questions I inquire into in this essay.

Each country examined was part of a global movement to institute mass education, a phenomenon that began in the 1800s. Mass schooling, argue Meyer et al. (1992), "made sense in so many contexts because it became a central feature of the Western, and subsequently the world, model of the nation-state and its development" (p. 129). They continue:

> As an institution, Western mass education involves the following features: (1) It focuses on the socialization of individuals for membership in society. (2) It aspires to extend membership to all individuals within the society. (3) It articulates a secular vision of progress, in which action and achievement take place in this world, not in some transcendental cosmos. (4) It sets forth an increasingly standardized curriculum. . . . (5) And it putatively links mastery of the curriculum with personal development and the latter with the progress of the nation-state. (p. 131)

Anderson (2006) found that the colonial era of the 1800s, when the mass education movement began worldwide, "dialectically engendered the grammar of the nationalisms

that eventually arose to combat it" (p. xiv). He defines feelings of national affiliation as "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). The question of whose imagination provides this sense of community is at the heart of any consideration of multiculturalism and its challenge to state-mandated education designed to promote conformity.

The assimilative function of mass education has been challenged by different movements designed to promote cultural diversity, often under the banner of multiculturalism (Banks, 2019), in spite of fierce defenses upholding the monocultural tradition (e.g., Schlesinger, 1992). Mirel (2002) finds that in the US,

> the shift to more inclusive and, to a degree pluralistic, nationalism occurred primarily during the 1930s and 1940s. This change was due primarily to the challenges of the Great Depression and World War II and the growing assertiveness of second generation, native-born ethnic Americans. These factors, in turn, paved the way for the eventual success of the Civil Rights Movement, which encouraged an even greater inclusiveness in the U.S. and its schools. (p. 143)

This timeline is specific to the U.S. multicultural movement. In Mexico the 20th century was also a time of upheaval, often in response to fears of communism (Carr, 1983) and other threats to the *status quo* (Ignacio Taibo, 2019). The Soviet crackdown on dissidence did not provide much space for alternatives to the Stalinist monocultural emphasis (Snyder, 2012). The Eurocentric roots of each movement are thus more complex than such a broad continental orientation would suggest.

Gorski (1999) continues the narrative of US multicultural education, relating how,

> By the middle and late 1980s, other K-12 teachers-turned-scholars including Carl Grant, Christine Sleeter, Geneva Gay, and Sonia Nieto provided more scholarship in multicultural education, developing new, deeper frameworks that were grounded in the ideal of equal educational opportunity and a connection between school transformation and social change. In order to move beyond slight curricular changes, which many argued only further differentiated between the curricular "norm" and the marginalized "other," they built on Banks's work, examining other structural foundations of schools and how these contributed to educational inequities. (n. p.)

These activists created a robust field of scholarship designed to transform schools away from their founding mission and toward a more inclusive society, including its educational system (Gerstle, 1997). However, this effort teeters atop of what I have called the *deep structure of schools* (Smagorinsky, 2020): the institutionalized curriculum and assessment, dress codes, codes of conduct, approved speech genres and social languages, conventions for interaction, composition of administration and faculty, physical arrangement of schools, hidden curriculum, and other structural factors that organize the educational process according to a specific value system, one grounded in Eurocentric rationalism and white codes of conduct.

I will address the establishment of mass education in three nations in the order of their founding. First, the United States, building on the urging of leaders including Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, Noah Webster, Robert Coram, and George Washington,

undertook a mass education program led by Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and others in the mid-1800s (Finkelstein, 1990; Kaestle, 2001; Mann, 1848). This era was characterized by tremendous turmoil due to the rapid expansion of the nation's lands via purchase and conquest and the simultaneous infusion of European immigrant populations whose languages and customs were tied to their places of origin. To Mann and his contemporaries concerned with finding the ties to bind a newly expanding nation, mass education could serve as a homogenizing medium, one that would take these disparate people and form them into good Americans.

Later in the century, Porfirio Díaz led Mexico on a modernization project designed to bring the nation into a stable, competitive, industrial society. Toward that end he expanded the railroad system to create better networks and opportunities, improved the groundwork for conducting business both internally and internationally, and mechanized the nation to bring it into the Industrial Age. This effort included an educational dimension designed to socialize Mexicans to participate in this economy and thus develop into a unified people.

Finally, in 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution helped to bring down the Russian Romanov dynasty and bring about the Soviet Union. This case departs from those of the U.S. and Mexico in that the new society was not a foreign colonial imposition, and was not designed to promote capitalism or entrepreneurship. Rather, the new Soviet government served as a revolutionary experiment that replaced the monarchy with a society that promised equality. In this brand-new nation, mass education was included in the plan to rapidly evolve a "New Soviet Man," a citizen wholly devoted to Stalin's brand of communistic, Marxist rule across the new nation's many ethnic groups, time zones, and cultural traditions (Snyder, 2012).

Each of these initiatives was important at the time of inception. The world was in flux in many ways in the 19th century, and into the 20th, with seismic shifts affecting global stability. The world as we know it was still in formation, and formative times are volatile and unpredictable. It is not surprising then, that governments turned to mass education to promote stability, a national character, a national language, and other factors that take a collection of diverse people and form them into a functional whole. I next review how this process has occurred in three nations, and how the consequences of this initial institution of mass schooling have continued to this day.

Mass Education in the United States

In 1848, Horace Mann justified the need for mass public education in the U.S., saying, "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery" (n.p.). His notion of school as an equalizer refers to his belief that, regardless of how they enter school, students will emerge from their education on equal footing. Through education, the most abject of upbringings can be overcome by literacy, numeracy, and perhaps most importantly, socialization to an "American" way of being. Toward this end he proposed a national system for mass education that held everyone to the same standard. Eurocentric

values underpinned his notion of the ideal toward which all should aspire, regardless of their origins, serving as the cauldron for a U.S. "melting pot" in which all people gravitated to a social norm, at least in theory (Smith, 2012). These values included a limited view of what kind of person should be afforded this opportunity: white males.

Mann's belief in the need for Americans to become more American had deep roots in American philosophical life (Smagorinsky, 2021a). Gerstle (1997) reports that the French immigrant Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (1782) wrote shortly after U.S. independence that "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." Gerstle continues,

> John Quincy Adams declared in 1819 that immigrants "must cast off the European skin, never to resume it." Frederick Jackson Turner rhapsodized that "in the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics." (p. 524)

Gerstle (1997) proceeds to eviscerate this romantic view of the likelihood that newcomers can easily shed their cultural histories and take on a new national identity, that they will willingly become part of a new national monoculture. For the purposes of my essay, what matters is that these beliefs permeated the leadership class of the new nation and in turn influenced the formation of U.S. mass education in the mid-1800s.

Mann's understanding matched the pervasive belief in society, at least among the white men who ran everything, that the U.S. was a man's world, and a white man's world at that. Although most attention to slavery is focused on the South, slavery persisted in New York through 1827, and New Jersey through 1865; and Northern industries benefitted from the products of Southern plantations (Ross, 2018). Many of the North's great abolitionists were not integrationists; the extension of freedom did not include a concomitant effort to intermingle the races (Potter, 1977). Women were subordinate, denied privileges including voting rights, land ownership, and other opportunities. The original inhabitants were victims of policies that belied the liberatory promise of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862:

> Beginning in 1863, the Lincoln administration oversaw the removal of the Navajos and the Mescalero Apaches from the New Mexico Territory, forcing the Navajo to march 450 miles to Bosque Redondo—a brutal journey. Eventually, more than 2,000 died before a treaty was signed. (Black, 2013, n. p.; cf. Harris, 2016)

The perspectives of these societies were never included in the founding vision of U.S. schooling, admission to which was not available to non-white, non-male people on the continent.

Mann offered his view of public schooling as a great social equalizer at a critical point in U.S. history. In 1848 the U.S. was concluding a war with Mexico whose outcome greatly expanded the nation's western and southwestern territories, producing the present-day states of Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Texas, and western Colorado. There was no public education for African-descent people throughout the nation. Native people were faced with educational inequities as well, only granted citizenship to the nation established on the lands they had occupied for 12,000 years in

1924. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, through the Indian Act, they were subjected to forced attendance at residential religious schools designed to efface their cultures, suppress their languages, and assimilate them to white ways.

Mann's faith in public institutions was grounded in their socializing potential. These institutions included public schools, which many saw as a vehicle for transforming unruly white boys, often from immigrant and working-class backgrounds, into disciplined members of an emerging national society. This goal was as much oriented to socialization as it was to learning academic subjects. Schools could help students view themselves as Americans, and learn how to act American, at least according to a Eurocentric understanding of the nation. Regardless of origins, they would all speak the same version of the same language and learn the same rules of conduct, both of which would prepare them to participate in a capitalist democracy, albeit one providing limited access. The goal was to *change people to fit the system*, rather than changing the system to fit the people, as multiculturalists often believe should be the case (e.g., Sleeter, 1992).

The socialization of diverse people into the social stream provided by the dominant culture, however, remains a major purpose of schooling. This mission benefits the people who institute the system while claiming that it enables upward mobility. From the perspective of the assimilated, however, such imposition of dominant values can be patronizing, colonizing, and antithetical to their cultural ways, means, and ends (Helland & Lindgren, 2016).

This vision of the possibility for schools to serve as equalizers across the spectrum of U.S. people has come in conflict with the 20th century movement to accommodate cultural diversity, which has prompted fierce opposition from those who defend the *status quo*. Multiculturalists reject the notion that homogenization to a single, dominant culture produces a greater civilization. Gravitating to dominant norms, they assert, benefits those who establish those norms more than it does those who must accede to them. Mann and his contemporaries would be easy to critique because of this colonizing intent. Yet the perceived need of their day to promote a national identity, and the more recent belief held by decolonial educators that schools should enable multiple identities to flourish (e.g., Fujino et al., 2018), are quite different. If the muting of divergent voices undermines democracy, as argued by Boler (2004), can systems designed to promote conformity ever achieve a socially just education? How do nations use schooling to promote unity at the point of origin, and over time relax the dominant culture's hold on schooling to accommodate greater diversity?

The U.S. now is caught in culture wars that reflect these conflicts. The tensions between preserving traditions—and in education, "tradition" typically refers to the priorities of white middle/upper class people—and recognizing other possibilities have become contentious. The U.S. has always structured opportunity inequitably, with schools being symptomatic rather than exceptional. Many attribute these problems to capitalism (Klees, 2020), although as I'll review, the case of the Soviet Union suggests that communism alone is a dubious solution. These inequities helped to launch the multicultural movement's genesis in the Civil Rights movements of the 1950s. Yet this demand for broader acceptance of people is loudly contested by community members who view the advancement of a minoritized culture as a threat to their social stability, and by implication, their place at the top of the hierarchy. Schools in the U.S. have never met the dream of a

society in which opportunity is equalized through the socializing effects of school. They now face continued conflict over whether schools should be monocultural or multicultural in a pitched battle for control over lives, schools, and society.

Mexico: Porfirio, Vasconcelos, and Mass Education

Like the U.S., Mexico is a North American nation whose original inhabitants were subjugated by a European colonial power. At the time of the Spanish invasion in the early 1500s, the region's dominant people were the Aztecs. The Aztecs developed an advanced society through their discoveries in mathematics, art, astronomy, medicine, agriculture, and technology, and also developed one of the first education systems in human history. These advantages enabled them to impose a lengthy, brutal subjugation over the many societies that surrounded them. The Spanish Conquest overthrew their regime in part by forming alliances with people oppressed by the Aztecs, and via advantages imported from Europe: technology, weaponry, disease resistance, and an extraordinary means of speedily traversing vast areas: the mounted horse (Diamond, 1997; Krauze, 1997).

The Spaniards dominated Mexico, or "New Spain," for three centuries of colonial rule. The political regime was modeled on that of Spain, one that was hierarchical and reflected Eurocentric notions of a civilized society. Alongside Catholic dominance, Mexico was governed by Enlightenment ideology that placed its faith in reason and scientific and technological advances to solve their problems. Meanwhile, education, available largely to those born into advantage, was characterized by Christian evangelizing more than formal learning. There was no formal mass education system, but more of a haphazard collection of schools serving local needs. Mexico was typical in this era in lacking a comprehensive and compulsory education for its citizens (Soysal & Strang, 1989), and in grounding whatever education there was in religious training (Curran, 1954; See Gayol et al., 2020). After three centuries of Spanish rule, much about their presence was reviled, and the people revolted to produce a new nation through the Mexican War of Independence, which ran from roughly 1810-1821.

The early 1800s were tumultuous throughout the continent. In the U.S., the War of 1812 pitted the U.S. against an alliance of British and Native Americans. The subsequent Louisiana Purchase from France greatly expanded the lands controlled by the U.S. government, in spite of the fact that the people who had lived there for thousands of years resisted their claim to the death. The Mexican War of Independence was one of several wars of independence fought against Spanish rule in its global colonies. These insurrections followed the French invasion of Spain during Europe's Napoleonic Wars, which curtailed European presence on the continent, especially in Spanish-dominated Mesoamerica and in Haiti, where the French were expelled. The 19th century was one of continual turmoil, conflict, and change.

Even with independence, Mexico remained under Spanish cultural influence, despite being populated for the most part by original (about 60%) and *mestizo* (of mixed race) people. The caste system continued to favor the Criollo, those with the purest

Spanish blood, the lightest complexions, and wealth-based access to education. The political and social revolution bypassed education. Education was local, sporadic, inconsistent, and micromanaged. Meanwhile, the territorial aggression of the U.S. created tensions at the ever-shifting border (St. John, 2012), which included the loss of Texas to the U.S. in 1836. A decade later the U.S. declared war on Mexico, producing a two-year conflict in which half of their lands were lost to their dominant neighbor to the north (Henderson, 2007).

The 1800s were thus unstable in Mexico following independence, making the century volatile, as it was worldwide. The national administration of Mexico was precarious, and the economy struggled to the point where the European collection of debt resulted in the installation of Maximilian of Habsburg as Emperor of Mexico in 1862, while the U.S. Civil War raged to the north. His term ended in his execution two years after his appointment, whereupon Benito Juárez, the Zapotec and first non-Spaniard elected to the presidency, returned to power. He served through 1877, a point at which Mexico was blessed, or cursed, with the rule of Porfirio Díaz. The Porfiriato ran through 1911 when his long rule was deemed dictatorial and he was removed in the 10-year Mexican Revolution.

The Porfiriato did much to create a national infrastructure to bring Mexico into the modern Industrial Age. He instituted free compulsory education, among many other reforms that included railroads, a national bank, a Naval Academy, and facilitative trade policies. If the prosperity of the wealthy is the measure of a successful political term, then he was a remarkable success. However, his policies did little to benefit those of the lower socioeconomic strata, perpetuating the inequities that he inherited.

Porfirio's consolidation of power, he hoped, would produce political unity, which in turn would promote national unity. Among his means for producing that uniformity was a mass education system that he hoped would result in what might today be called Mexican cultural literacy à la E. D. Hirsch (1987) or a common core curriculum: "If all Mexicans learn the same thing," he is reputed to have said, "they will tend to act in the same way." They did not, however. Indeed, enough resisted his rule to start a revolution and send him and much of his family into exile in Paris, where he died in 1915.

When Álvaro Obregón Salido became president in 1920, he created the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) in 1921 and named José Vasconcelos Calderón to lead it. Vasconcelos had an ambivalent relationship with the continent's original people. On the one hand, he is known as the father of the *indigenismo* philosophy, which he articulated in *La Raza Cósmica*, an essay published in 1925. He idealistically imagined a "fifth race" that would emerge on the continent that would embody all of the races of the world, producing a new civilization called Universópolis. His conception was designed to repudiate social Darwinism and biological racism, yet also was tinged with an ethnocentric sense that this fifth race would be characterized by a European bias, an underlying belief that infiltrated his view of schooling as a unifying mechanism.

Vasconcelos was similar to Horace Mann in many ways. He hoped to produce a new, "modern" *mestizo* people, a plan that required the assimilation of Mexico's many cultural and ethnic groups to a Mexican norm based on Eurocentric high culture. This

mestizaje ideology, he and other leaders hoped, would provide an initial stage, a starting point from which a broader homogenization would be undertaken as people "developed" from their original traditions toward the Eurocentric ideal. Assimilation was the end game in Mexico, as it was in the U.S.

As with the U.S., however, forcing the assimilation of all to the culture of the elite not only does not change who they are, it perpetuates their status as outsiders lacking the cultural capital to advance according to someone else's priorities. Manrique (2016) argues that there was a eugenics element behind the homogenization of Mexican society in a European image that was biased in racial/ethnic and gendered terms, given its positioning of original people and women as subordinate. The Mexican effort to stabilize its many people into a national identity resulted in a colonial regime perpetuated through the vehicle of school. The current goal of producing an equitable Mexican society through education (Gayol et al., 2020) thus comes up against the purpose that has been instituted since the inception of schooling.

Disturbing the stability of established systems is difficult, as Cohen (1989) argues in noting that Deweyan progressivism is a relatively recent invention, but the authoritarian tradition it challenges has been built into education for millennia. (See Cole, 2005, for a Sumerian classroom built with hard-installed stone seating organized for a lecture, perhaps one where young Gilgamesh learned his lessons.) Once established, an institution is very difficult to change. Institutions designed for conformity and stability reject efforts to disrupt them, and are built on resilient infrastructures that are hard to shift.

The (R)Evolution of the New Soviet Man

The initiatives I've reviewed so far came many decades into the formation of colonial societies on established lands and their people in what is now called North America. I next review a nation that was formed wholly new, and that included an education plan in its formative blueprint to produce a devoted citizen and force an accelerated evolutionary path through which an advanced human form would emerge. That nation was the Soviet Union, built on the rubble of the Russian Romanov dynasty's centuries of imperial rule, and founded on principles established by two 19th century visionaries: the Prussian expatriate economist Karl Marx and the British evolutionary scientist Charles Darwin. Using a Marxist framework and the assumption that institutions could shape and accelerate evolution, the Soviets embarked on a grand experiment to transcend capitalism's inherent injustices and build a society absent the class differences that follow from economic inequities and power differentials.

Like Mexico and the U.S., the Soviet Union was formed during a period of turbulence. Following a lost war to the Japanese, a Russian Revolution broke out in 1905, yet was defeated by the Romanovs. A tumultuous Europe broke into a Great War in 1914, lasting through 1918 and involving 32 nations globally, including most of non-Scandinavian Europe. In the midst of this international conflict, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution removed the Romanovs from power, resulting in several years of civil wars to fill the power vacuum, ultimately resulting in communist rule under Lenin in 1922. His brief

term was characterized by illness from which he died in 1924, followed by the ascension of Stalin to the role of Secretary General and later Premier, both of which he undertook with dictatorial urgency.

The Soviet government faced the formidable task of educating millions of adults and children who previously had no access to schools. Many of these people were physically damaged by the many years of war they had suffered, including children requiring a special form of education unfortunately using the Germanic term "defectology," a name that belied the approach's emphasis on inclusion, empathy, and social support (Vygotsky, 1993). It also produced "pedology," a developmental approach to education involving the study of the character, growth, and development of the child. It was more a research problem than a teaching problem. Pedology was less concerned with pedagogy and classroom practice than overall school organization and students' developmental progression through it. This approach was later deemed bourgeois and crushed by Stalin, with luminaries such as Vygotsky diminished in influence. Indeed, they were threatened with extermination because of their departures from the party line (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991).

Education, as it has been historically, was ideologically undergirded. Wertsch (1999) concludes that

> the fervor and rigidity with which the goals of [Soviet] history teaching were stated are striking, suggesting that the balance between socializing loyal citizens and providing dispassionate analyses of the past was weighted heavily in favor of the former. Second, the sons and steadfast ideological fighters who were to emanate from this instruction were to be loyal to the Soviet Union—not to Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, Georgia, and so forth. In this respect, the goals of history instruction were very ambitious. They were part of the larger attempt to create Homo Sovieticus, or at least a "socialist type of personality" (Smirnov, 1973) that would no longer be susceptible to long-standing national identity claims. (p. 268)

This account of the educational goals of the Soviet Union echoes Mann's (1848) vision for mass U.S. schooling, although in a very different sort of society. Both sought to create a national citizen aligned with established socio-economic goals and structures, one who transcended national and cultural roots to fit in with a new society. Both appeared to believe in the manifest destiny of their cause, one to U.S. world dominance, one to the evolutionary pinnacle of human development. To Stalin, mass education provided the means by which to shape a society whose adult population was winnowed of undesirables by his deadly policies (Snyder, 2012). The Soviet blueprint required the immediate eradication of capitalism and the institution of communism as a vehicle for promoting social equality, ironically overseen by the totalitarian Stalin.

It further required a new sort of person to emerge in very short order, shifting Darwin's notion of evolution to more of a revolution. The newly evolved human was known as the *New Soviet Man*, a devoted communist who was advanced and enlightened beyond the possibilities offered by capitalism and its inherent inequities. Vygotsky references Trotsky[1] approvingly as asserting that

> Man will make it his purpose to master his own feelings, to raise his instincts to the heights of consciousness, to make them transparent, to extend the wires of his will

> into hidden recesses, and thereby to raise himself to a new plane, to create a higher social biological type, or, if you please, a superman. (in Van der Veer, 2020, p. xvi)

To realize Marx's vision of a society without economic disadvantage or advantage, everyone considered to be bourgeois had to go, by death, expulsion, or forced labor or imprisonment. Everyone who was left needed to be educated properly so that they could be shaped by an ideology that promoted the proletariat at the expense of the bourgeoisie.

Relatedly, the Soviet Union, while principally Russian, required the socialization of many and varied people into a national identity. At the point of founding, there were well over 20 ethnic groups, speaking about 130 languages. The huge nation spanned 11 time zones, encompassing many people whose lives had no intersection in a world in which the radio was barely available; severe paper shortages compromised other forms of communication outside one's immediate physical community. Many people lived in isolated communities with little access to the outside world, yet needed to become Soviet. Toward that end the government undertook diagnostic expeditions to assess the evolutionary status of remote peasants (deemed low), a process documented by Luria (1976) and critiqued by many for its ethnocentric bias (e.g., Smagorinsky, 1995).

Van der Veer (2021) relates how Stalin responded to the problem of integrating the groups, cultures, and nations into a Soviet identity by emphasizing that local cultures were allowed as long as they followed communist ideology. Stalin promoted a policy of *korenizatsiya* (nativization), through which local languages were allowed as an initial phase of incorporating their people into Soviet society as defined by the Party. This process resembles Vasconcelos's *indigenismo* philosophy of drawing on established cultures as a foundation for assimilation. What mattered was the effacement of bourgeois inequity and social hierarchies, and the evolution of the New Soviet Man:

> the whole idea of establishing individual differences went against the prevailing ideology. The creation of a new man, if you wish a superman, presupposed a malleable substance. It was the communist society that would create this new superman regardless of his individual talents and penchants. (Van der Veer, 2020, p. xxxi)

History finds that the New Soviet Man never evolved as planned, and the Soviet Union itself collapsed in 1991. The fate of Soviet communism is perhaps indicated by the fortune amassed by current Russian president Vladimir Putin, who is estimated to be among the world's wealthiest people and who is living the plush life of the privileged bourgeoisie (Lockett, 2020).

Soviet schools thus were designed to indoctrinate children and youth into a communistic frame of mind. A nation born of revolution in turbulent times and bent on inventing a whole new national culture based on revolutionary assumptions used education as a socializing mechanism that elevated the workers to the highest social standing and considered economic advantage to be a moral failure. Ultimately, that society collapsed due to a host of factors that Kalashnikov (2012) situates within the era's more widespread overthrow of socialistic and communistic regimes, and that he classifies as following from economic, nationality-based, political, and systemic problems. Its history has since been revised many times over; as Wertsch (1999) wryly references, an old

adage states that "Nothing is more unpredictable than Russia's past" (p. 268), a phrase that could characterize revisionist history around the globe (Smagorinsky, 2021b). This shifting narrative makes it difficult to trace historical consequences, particularly for outsiders. What does seem evident is that the Soviet regime's mass education program followed a similar pattern to that of the U.S. and Mexico, minus a multicultural backlash that was not available in such a repressive society, one that attempted to establish and accelerate the establishment of a Marxist monoculture through the banishment of the resistance and through mass education (Daniels et al., 2007).

Discussion

In this essay I have reviewed the institution of mass education in three nations, each for the purpose of using schools to construct a national citizen, each to advance a national ideology imposed from the top by social engineers determined to shape its citizens' psychology to conform to a worldview. This movement to establish a national citizen through education has produced an institutionalized approach to education that has relied on the deep structure of school to produce a proper member of society.

My effort in this essay has been to demonstrate how deeply these values and perspectives are built into schooling, and how difficult it is to undertake even small shifts in turning this battleship slightly toward a different destination. The deep structure of schools, and of schooling as a national institution, are by design well-entrenched, making multicultural education difficult to implement. As the current times indicate, *status quo* resistance to multicultural education is powerful, with predominantly white parents in the U.S. taking over school board meetings to protest the smallest concessions to the value of lives other than their own, and doing so successfully and with political support (Jenkins, 2021; National School Boards Association, 2021).

The tendency among progressives is to respond to this stonewalling with accusations of white supremacy, as reported by Battison (2021) and others. Undoubtedly racism is a factor, given statements made by white citizens such as the Loudon County, Virginia parent and founder of the advocacy group Parents Against Critical Theory, who described Critical Race Theory as "anti-white. It takes a negative position against the United States" (reported in Oliphant & Borter, 2021). Challenging white supremacy is interpreted to be an attack on the nation, a point often made by President Donald J. Trump during his presidency (Reno, 2019).

Yet this perspective is deeply embedded in the founding of schools. Education has historically glorified the nation and its heritage, or at least the heritage installed at the founding of the system; or most likely, the heritage embodied in national mythology (Lassiter & Crespino, 2010; Loewen, 1995). Those who fear being *replaced* (Hamilton, 2021) by people they consider inferior assert that perpetuating national mythologies built into textbooks and curricula is "academic" and not ideological, that different versions are "revisionist," and that it is unpatriotic to undertake a critical view of national history. Simply providing a better argument based on principles of inclusion, diversity, and equity does little to displace such a monolithic epistemology, engrained from the outset of schooling

in the presentation of academic disciplines, rules of propriety, and other aspects of learning in school.

The problems are deeply emotional. In spite of the Eurocentric value on reason, the arguments against multiculturalism are difficult to support rationally, and rely on the passions of people defending their heritage as the optimal way to be a national citizen (see Haidt, 2012). These passions are upheld by the deep structure of schools at both the building and institutional levels, which in turn gives substance to those emotions. Advocating for multiculturalism thus requires more than asserting the goodness of equality and evil of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. It needs to address how schools came to embed a dominant culture into their founding, use it to socialize newcomers and outsiders to their own ways, incorporate standardizing measures to ensure conformity, and fend off criticism by appealing emotionally to patriotism, tradition, and history as written by the winners (or, in the case of the Civil War, by the losers).

If I had a solution to the challenge of building multiculturalism into the deep structure of schools, I'd be almost as wealthy as Vladimir Putin. I have taught courses in which students inductively interrogate issues of human diversity and inclusion (described in Smagorinsky, 2011, Smagorinsky & Johnson, 2021, and other publications). Current longitudinal research on a subset of those teacher candidates finds that their efforts to teach inclusively are often thwarted by rigid, stubborn school structures and their administrative agents. I am as frustrated as anyone that school institutions are determined to fend off change toward inclusion. Until those structures change—a major point of critical race theory (Stefancic & Delgado, 1995) that has rallied conservatives against multiculturalism—the built-in monoculturalism of schools will remain largely intact, embedded in their deep structure and the broader mandates for standardization from policymakers.

The people currently opposing multicultural education are not singular speakers defending their homes and families. Rather, they are products of a history that continues to write itself according to the script that it has inherited. This historical dimension requires attention and understanding in order for advocates for pluralism to penetrate the edifice of schooling they hope to transform.

Notes

[1]Van der Veer—whose authorial credit follows from his editing and translation of Vygotsky's text—uses the spelling Trotskiy, one of many variations in the transcription of Eastern European names to the English version of the Latin alphabet.

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