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The Creation of the Modern Child
Education, Social Change, and the Discovery of Normality in Urban Sweden 1850-1910

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The debate

Around 1900, children were at the centre of a national debate. Children and young people in the streets were seen as a source of anxiety, and police records were filled with notes about delinquent and morally depraved children. The high degree of employment among women, while working-class children were allowed to grow up on the streets of the cities, was regarded as a real threat to fundamental social values. The bourgeoisie complained about the negligence of working-class parents. The family -- the very foundation of society -- was said to be on the verge of breakdown. The social problems also highlighted the need to counteract new forms of culture. Film and cheap fiction, such as the Nick Carter books, had to be combated. The growing generation should not be lost to values and ideals that were foreign to established society.

Thus, a struggle to save the children from detrimental environments was waged around the turn of the century and as a consequence there was also a debate about what children and childhood were really all about. The church, charity organizations, popular movements, and private "child-savers" took an intense interest in children and young people. The interest was shared by a large body of opinion in the bourgeoisie and other established groups, whose concern for the moral and material conditions of poor children was expressed in voluntary actions or through the work of various philanthropic societies. Their efforts included issuing milk to poor children, visits to summer camps, the foundation of children's hospitals, leisure activities, and so on. Every child was ideally to find a home in an idyllic milieu with no class differences or social problems. Childhood was to have a place for play and organized schooling for all children. The children had to be rescued from the obligation to be useful. A useful child was by definition a used child. In her book *Pricing the Priceless Child* (1985), the American sociologist Vivianne Zelizer discusses the conflict between economically useful and emotionally valuable children in a number of examples from the USA at the turn of the century. Her arguments are relevant for an understanding of developments in Sweden. The conflict between the different childhoods, according to Zelizer, was evident in matters of insurance, in cases of adoption, and in questions concerning payments made in the event of a child's death.

There was a corresponding development in the matter of adoption. Children's labor was traditionally valued in economic terms, which both determined the price and influenced the choice of gender to adopt -- boys of working age were preferable to girls. The new view of childhood opposed this valuation of the usefulness of children. In Sweden the debate about the auctioning of poor children and orphans led to a prohibition. In reality the practice had ceased, but the ban reveals a new attitude. Now children had to be taken care of for their own sake, not for their usefulness. This new view of childhood is illustrated in Astrid Lindgren's book *Rasmus and the Vagabond*. The story is about the despair of a little
orphanage boy because no one wants to adopt him. The adults who came looking for children wanted only girls with curly blond hair. Boys like Rasmus with straight brown hair were of no interest to them. If the novel had been about the state of affairs a few decades earlier, Rasmus -- the makings of a good farm-hand -- would probably have been the first to be adopted. (Compare Anne of Green Gables from 1906, where the elderly couple really wanted a boy to help out on the farm.) The difficulty was not just a literary invention. In 1920 the superintendent of a child welfare office in a small town outside Stockholm complained that it was hard to find parents to adopt boys. They did not have enough girls to meet the demand.\(^1\)

The favorable picture of the child as an emotionally valuable person had its negative counter -- the threat. This was not just the working -- useful -- child; as Hugh Cunningham and Harry Hendrick show, there was also the threat of children growing up outside the control of parents and authorities.\(^2\)

I know of no picture where this is better visualized than one published in the primary school reader of 1893. Under the heading "What will become of the child?", the picture shows what happens to children who go to school and what happens to those who end up on the streets. Children without a proper schooling wind up leading a sorry life, resulting in deprivation and alcoholism.\(^3\)

The problem

Why was the debate so intense around the turn of the century? What made the conflicts about a proper childhood so heated in these years? These questions are of great importance because the debate around the turn of the century had such momentous consequences. The battle for (or about) the children -- the struggle to create the century of the child, as Ellen Key put it\(^4\) -- was eventually to concern local and state authorities. In many cases the operations came under municipal management or state control. The debate was in fact the start of a major movement to incorporate children in the new institutional context that typifies the modern welfare state, based on the concepts created by modern medical and pedagogical science. Different professional groups -- doctors, teachers, clergy, psychologists -- declared themselves specially competent to give parents advice and

\(^1\) Gena Weiner, work in progress, Dept of Child Studies, Linköping.
\(^3\) B. C. Rhode, Läsebok för folkskolan (Stockholm, 1892).
\(^4\) Ellen Key, Barnets Århundrade (1900).
instruction about child-rearing, on child welfare committees, in reformatories, child welfare offices, and the like. The boundaries between public and private in the matter of child welfare and child-rearing were changed in the years around the turn of the century. It increasingly became a public concern, not just a private matter for the parents. That is not the history with which I am concerned here. The causes behind the discussion should be sought not only in the new scientific attitudes to children (which were ideally suited to the views of the new professional groups), and not only in the change of norms. I want to show that the increased interest in the development of school was an expression of the institutionalization of childhood which had already occurred through the development of a partly comprehensive educational system. This development, however, is ambiguous. It was not just a question of more children going to school; it was more a matter of which children went to school and how schooling and the system of education were interpreted and perceived at that time.

Primary education in the towns was dominated in the latter half of the nineteenth century by the question of how the children of the working class could be brought to school, and later also by a discussion of the need for a school for all social classes. The former question centered around the nature and scope of child labor. Apart from these issues, there was a large number of other separate questions about the internal work of the school, as well as about schooling as social policy. The task of the educational system was defined in terms of both social policy and traditional education. The former was far from being the least important. These issues -- child labor legislation, the need for a school for all classes and the social policies associated with education -- will be examined or outlined in this text, since my thesis is that these are the central processes and debates which created a new understanding of the nature of childhood.

We need to start by sketching the background to the growth of general education in Sweden, with the emphasis on conditions in the towns.

The background

Let me first begin by describing the school system that developed in Swedish towns during the period from the mid-seventeenth century.

Queen Christina's school ordinance of 1649 was a distinct break with earlier tradition. Yet the reform was not nearly as radical as it appeared on the surface. There was in fact a clear continuity with a very old way of viewing the role of the school. The upper classes in the seventeenth century avoided as far as possible sending their children to the public schools. The children in the public schools spent too much of their time trying to earn a living, whether by singing in the streets or begging. The schools were dominated by children from the lower classes in the towns. There was no tuition or discipline in the schools, according to a disgruntled citizen in the latter half of the seventeenth century. The bourgeoisie and the nobility distanced themselves socially by keeping their children away from the public schools. However, the private schools and the privately employed teachers did not only recruit children from the upper classes. In some seventeenth-century schools it was possible, for example, to find the children of craftsmen. The number of children in private schools was roughly the same as the number in public schools. In 1694 Stockholm had no less than 165 schools/teachers and 1051 pupils. The private schools also had girl pupils. The main skills taught in the private schools appear to have been reading, writing, and arithmetic. 

The eighteenth century saw no change in the fundamental relationship between private and public education as regards the recruitment of the pupils, even though we may assume that the extreme poverty characterizing the public schools was relieved to some extent. Bourgeois groups and officials demanded a reform of the school system, and that the older children should be kept off the streets. The new statutes for the school system which were introduced at the start of the nineteenth century were intended to meet these demands. The consequence was the establishment of a parallel school system, at least as an ideal. The workers and the lower classes were to send their children to paupers' schools, free schools, or the like, and later to the public elementary school, whereas the grammar school and the more practically oriented secondary school (known as apologistskola or borgarskola) should be the preserve of children of the well-off citizens. It was not until the middle of the century at the earliest that this segregation could be realized. Tuition in the paupers' schools gave boys from the lower classes the knowledge that was required for admission to the

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grammar schools and secondary schools. At the same time, the number of private schools was very large. Donation schools and charity schools for the lower classes were generally equivalent to public elementary education. The proportion of poor children in different types of paupers' schools was very large -- up to half of all the children aged 7-14 attended these schools with no functioning compulsion. The schooling of many children was clearly related to the possibility of eking out a living by going to school.\(^7\)

The new school system did not only satisfy the needs of the bourgeoisie or the upper class. To begin with, there was obviously an interest in education among the laboring classes, whose concrete need for knowledge concerned, for example, the theoretical qualifications required for some crafts, and especially for commercial occupations. The upper bourgeoisie must have been particularly interested in preparing the boys for the upper schools and the universities, as well as for the special technical education that was slowly emerging.\(^8\) There was good justification for private alternatives to the public schools, which often had an antiquated syllabus. Throughout the history of the secondary schools, we can follow a discussion about the need to adjust their curriculum to the kind of knowledge demanded by society. Private tuition was also demanded for the girls, regardless of whether the schools were intended to prepare them for home or for gainful employment. There is good reason here to bear in mind that school qualifications in a technical sense were not always sought after. It is anachronistic to equate the need for knowledge with the need for such schooling. As they do today, the schools then played the same role of conveying social and cultural competence which the parents could not always be expected to provide. Bourgeois citizens with aspirations to climb the social scale, as well as the established bourgeoisie and the upper classes may have needed private instruction to instill the necessary cultural and social attitudes and skills. Nor is self-evident that working life made high demands of education. It was traditional, for example, that men embarked on a career in officialdom or the military with no real preliminary training. This was especially true of the more prestigious positions in the army and the civil service.\(^9\)

The elementary school statute of 1842 was not very ambitious as regards the tuition of either the poor or the well-off. The minimum demands were not very stringent to begin with, and they could be relaxed even more in the case of education for girls. Children who lived far from school could also be exempted, as could children whose parents were able to instruct their own children and who were known to live a life of morality. No attendance ages are stated, but children were supposed to have started school before the age of nine.

\(^{7}\) Ibid., pp. 175-227, 246-262.

\(^{8}\) See, for example, the list of educational institutions in *Kungl. befallningshavarens femärsberättelser för Stockholm, 1835*, and the list of private schools in *Överstyrelsens för Stockholm stads skolor årsberättelser 1873, 1877-1919*.

and finished before they started confirmation classes. Private schools were permitted, but they were under the supervision of the church minister and the school board. The aim to provide schooling for poor children is seen in the directive that the poor relief authorities were obliged to ensure that no one was prevented by poverty from attending school. The parents faced the threat of having their children taken away from them if they did not see to their education. Parents who had the financial means were obliged to pay for their children's schooling if they were asked to do so by the school board.\(^{10}\)

We see, then, that school was not free for everybody. Those who could afford to risked having to pay for their children even in the public schools. In many places, the authorities also demanded school fees for some children. In some cases, by all appearances mostly in the big towns, it was clearly stated in the local elementary school statutes that the schools were intended for the children of the working class, whereas the well-off citizens could pay for their children or send them somewhere else.\(^ {11}\)

Church authorities asserted in various contexts that the schools should not be reserved for a particular social class. Regardless of how the decisions were implemented, the schools in the towns were primarily intended for the working class.\(^ {12}\) Moreover, the threat to demand school fees probably made many parents choose to pay for private tuition. It was not until the revised School Act of 1882 that it was decided that school education should be free for everyone. At the same time, the statute was changed in a number of other respects. One was that attendance should be between the ages of seven and fourteen, with the possibility of leaving after the age of twelve, provided the minimum educational level had been attained. Working children aged 12-14 were expected to attend school at times decided by the school board. The working day for these children was limited to six hours according to the 1881 ordinance on child labor.\(^ {13}\) So children were not supposed to be working. It is in this context that we may start looking for a changing concept of childhood. Let us therefore turn to the development of an urban school system.

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10 School statute of 1842 Årsböcker i svensk undervisningshistorik (ÅSU).
11 Gunnar Thunander, Från fattigskola till medborgarskola (Malmö, 1946), pp. 345-397; Joh. Ohlander, Göteborgs skolväsen i gamla dagar och i våra (Göteborg, 1923), pp. 75ff. These findings are also based on my own research in progress into the school system in Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenburg, and Norrköping, 1840-1910.
12 Ibid.
The Urban Schools

The development of school in the towns in the period after 1842 involved a massive institutional and educational process of change. The internal work was consolidated by the establishment of a functioning school administration and a decidedly hierarchical organization which was in large measure created to facilitate supervision of school attendance. The inspectors of the city schools were hired to head the school administration and to supervise the schools, the teachers, attendance, and so on. The authorities grappled with the difficulties of creating effective sanctions at a local level, without the support of national legislation.

The school authorities in the towns evidently found it difficult to get the children to school. This is illustrated in the discussions of the school boards in the towns. There were complaints that the children did not come to school or only did so irregularly. Many children started school at a late age, while others left before the stipulated leaving age. These complaints led to the organization of the urban parishes into amalgamated school districts and the appointment of school inspectors in the countryside and in the towns. In some places, such as Norrköping, the city was organized into districts, each with a member of the bourgeoisie whose duty was to convince children and parents of the need to attend school. This is said to have had limited success. Attendance varied according to the age and gender of the child. A commission held in Stockholm in 1855, under the leadership of the well-known school reformer Siljeström, emphasized the problems of poor school attendance. In the proper school ages, between seven and fourteen, Siljeström found that less than half of the children attended school.
Table 1. Children as a percentage of the population in Stockholm 1852 distributed according to age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>45.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>44.4</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>30.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Siljeström & Richert, Kommittebetänkande 1855.

It is perfectly clear that the urban school authorities had aspirations and demands of school far exceeding the code that applied to the nation. In this respect there are distinct parallels to development before the passing of the Elementary School Code in 1842, when there was a fundamental difference in the scope and nature of the school system in the towns and in the countryside. After 1842 the capital Stockholm and the cities of Göteborg, Norrköping, and Malmö issued local codes according to which children were to attend school from the age of six or seven up to twelve. Steps were also taken to provide organized primary school teaching before elementary school proper began (so-called småskolor for children aged 7-8) with female teachers, concentrating on teaching the youngest children to read and write. School could not build on the teaching of reading in the home, as the national code had decreed; this must also be taught in school. The authorities also took steps to provide essential instruction for children who had left school. Sunday schools and continuation schools were arranged for working children. A royal circular of 22 April 1864 also decreed that the school councils were responsible for ensuring that children who had left school maintained their knowledge. This circular from the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs must be seen in connection with the parliamentary debates of 1862-1863 on the problems with working children and the regulations concerning education which were introduced then.
and renewed in the Freedom of Trade Ordinance of 1864, stipulating also the responsibilities of the employers to see to the education of minors.

In the cities dealt with here -- Stockholm, Norrköping, Malmö, Göteborg -- there were difficulties in making employers respect the laws and give the older children the opportunity to attend classes. In Norrköping and Göteborg meetings were held with employers to discuss the problem, but without result. In Malmö the legislation of 1864 was published several times in the newspapers, urging employers not to take on minors and to respect the needs of school. According to a Norrköping textile manufacturer, it was impossible to let children between twelve and fourteen attend classes without causing grave production problems; no children under twelve were employed.

The measures were not very successful. We can observe, for example, that although the number of older children registered in the schools between 1852 and 1870 was increasing, a large number of the children had already left school at the age of eleven.14

Children aged 12-14 increased less rapidly than the children between seven and eleven, in spite of the increasing population. Moreover, at the beginning of the 1870s children left school at an earlier age than before.15 It can also be noted that the school attendance of girls was increasing more rapidly than that of boys. An important difference between the girls and boys can be pointed out. The girls typically started their schooling later than the boys but stayed longer in school. The reasons for this were stated fairly clearly in various reports by the inspectors. The girls started their school later as their labor was needed at home, tending the smaller children, and when they were older they could not find jobs as easily as the boys.16 In other words, the boys left the schools without bothering too much about their grades and must have been on the streets or in different forms of employment.

This development occasioned concern when immigration to the towns was rising at the same time as the declining mortality made the cities grow. At the same time, it was obviously difficult for the authorities to prevent children from leaving school once they attained the minimum level of knowledge, and -- perhaps to an even greater extent -- to make the children that had recently arrived in the cities with their parents come to school. There seems to be a rise, not in the number of children working in factories, but in the number employed outside school -- or just in the number of children outside school.

Child labor was not confined to industrial work but comprised many different activities, from minding children to hawking things in the streets. The registrers of the police in

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14 Överstyrelsen för Stockholms folkskolor årberättelse 1870; Bisos Befolkningsstatistik 1870; Statistisk redovisning från Stockholms kommunförvaltning
15 Överstyrelsen för Stockholms folkskolor årberättelser, statistics over school leaving ages 1870-1880.
16 General complaint in the Överstyrelsen årberättelse 1860-1880.
Stockholm, Norrköping, and Malmö during these years were filled with records of children selling things in the streets as well as stealing apples and coal down by the railway and other petty thefts. It was primarily children aged over twelve that were felt to be the problem, a problem that seemed to be dramatically increasing from 1864 on.

**Diagram**

The figures tell us little about the actual level of crime. In fact it seems as if the reorganization of the police patrol system in Stockholm, Malmö, and Göteborg made the city authorities aware of the problems of the street children in their lower teens. A large number of children over the age of fourteen were also taken in by the police. The criminal code of 1864 made it clear that children below the age of fifteen were minors and should not be dealt with as criminals. The decline of the age groups over fifteen after 1872 must be understood not as a consequence of a lesser frequency of petty crime but of an awareness that those above the age of fifteen should dealt with according to the penal codes. The difference between children above the age of fifteen and those below became clear to the policemen on the beat. They were not all children. Some should be regarded as adults. This was also the time when the police started reporting children under fifteen to the schools as well as to the local police headquarters, so that they could be warned and whipped.

The authorities' demands and expectations of school bore the stamp of a highly negative view of conditions in working-class families. On the one hand they condemned working-class "indolence" and "lack of discipline," while on the other hand they felt compassion for the harsh conditions prevailing in working-class homes. In both cases the same conclusion was drawn: children had to be separated from the injurious environments of home and street and the unsuitable environments of work and factories. School was the instrument to achieve this. The consequences of poor education were of the utmost political importance. The elementary school board in Göteborg formulated its goals in 1865 as follows:

The constantly increasing immigration from the countryside, of which the majority comprises poor laborers, should not fail to call upon every effort on the part of society to counter the perils which would otherwise derive from this source. What is required to forestall the threat of a proletariat from this quarter is, first and foremost, that the elementary schools take in the growing children from the families in question in order to

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17 SFS 1864:11.
communicate to them good and honest knowledge, obedience to law and justice, love of God and one's neighbour.\textsuperscript{19}

But this was easier said than done. The children's attendance was highly irregular. It varied according to the need for the children's help in the home and according to their chances on the labor market, or even more seriously, children left school altogether when either they or their parents considered it suitable. The children who started work did not worry excessively about retaining their knowledge by attending continuation school. A new circular about the registration of children in continuation schools was issued on 15 October 1869.\textsuperscript{20} How were these problems conceptualized in the political debates? What was said about child labor and schooling?

"The school's present weak authority over parents and children"

In both of the parliamentary houses the educational question had a central place in the discussion about what was the very problem of child labor during the 1860s and 1870s. It was also obviously the case that the regulation of working hours for children was now viewed not only as a health issue but in equal measure concerned the possibilities of educating children. In addition, the question could be presented as a need for general legislation for all factories as a result of the fact that the demand for knowledge applied to more children than those working in insanitary conditions. The significance of the education question is also shown by the fact that the discussion referred primarily to "young people," including minors up to the age of eighteen.

A motion about child labor was proposed in the Upper House in 1875 by F. F. Carlson, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs (whose portfolio included educational affairs). The question was raised at the same time in the Lower House by A. W. Staaff.\textsuperscript{21} Both motions mentioned the consequences of labor for the children's health and the need for a more rigorous examination of children's knowledge on their entry into working life. Different arguments were emphasized. Staaff described conditions in the cities. Pupils often left

\textsuperscript{19} Berättelse rörande Göteborgs stads folkskoleväsende 1865 (Göteborg, 1866), p. 19.

\textsuperscript{20} The difficulties are underlined by the fact that the authorities did not exactly know how many children there were in the towns. Registration was imperfect and mobility high. For Stockholm the establishment in the early 1880s of the roteman system (with a person responsible for each ward) meant a more effective registration of schoolchildren, who could thereby be more efficiently supervised and controlled.

\textsuperscript{21} Motioner FK (Motions to the Upper House) 1875, no. 19 (F. F. Carlson), Motioner AK (Motions to the Lower House) 1875, no. 126 (A. W. Staaff).
school without the prescribed degree of knowledge, "which should now be unconditionally required of every member of society." The causes were the poverty of the population and the need for "quick gain," as well as the attraction of the numerous jobs as a way of allowing children to contribute to the support of the household. It was admittedly true, said Staaff, that the Freedom of Trade Ordinance of 1864 made employers responsible for ensuring that children were receiving schooling, but "how shall this be achieved when the children are put to work from early morning until evening?" He wondered if it was possible to expect the necessary "strength and inclination" for study after a hard day's work. For all those children who lacked the necessary skills in reading and writing, "for which daily exercise is required," an occasional hour's teaching on Sundays was of little help. The situation was "of a pernicious and profoundly far-reaching nature for the population of the large towns and cities, and of no little significance for the future of our native country."  

The importance of the matter demanded as comprehensive and effective regulations as possible, and "also changes with regard to working hours." It was not enough to append to previous legislation a provision for certificates of the minimum elementary school education. Parliament should request the government to restrict working hours and to prohibit the employment in shops, crafts, and factories of children without the necessary knowledge.  

F. F. Carlson referred in his motion in the Upper House to foreign legislation -- the foremost models coming from Denmark and England -- and to conditions in the large factory towns. He also referred to the law of 1864, pointing out its weaknesses. There were no regulations about the length of the working day or sanitary conditions, and "it is left to employers to decide the days and hours when factory children can enjoy schooling." Further regulations were called for. In view of the increased number of young workers he felt that conditions "in the large factory towns appear both to show the necessity for guarantees for the enforcement of the existing law and to call for new legislation."  

F. F. Carlson supported his argument by referring to reports from the school authorities in Stockholm, Norrköping, and Malmö. The elementary school inspector in Stockholm had presented material to show the great number of children under twelve who had left school during the period 1872-1874 to work in factories and craft workshops. In addition, he was able to present details of working hours for those pupils who attended continuation schools and catechetical schools. The school board in Göteborg deplored the children's long working hours and the consequences for "health," "languishing strength," and "spiritual development." The elementary school board in Göteborg had already appealed to the

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22 Motioner AK 1875 no. 126, p. 23.
23 Ibid.
24 Motioner FK 1875, no. 19, p. 25.
government for a change in the 1864 Freedom of Trade Ordinance regarding the stipulations about the education of factory children. The school board in Malmö had also expressed a desire that the 1864 legislation should be co-ordinated with the regulations of the elementary school code,

and that irrespective of age, no children may be employed in factories other than those who after attending the minimum teaching have received a leaving certificate from the school. For it has been found that a great multitude of children, as soon as they reach the age of twelve, disappear from the elementary schools not only in the towns but also in the surrounding localities, although they have often failed to acquire even primary school knowledge.26

In Norrköping the school council had tried to achieve an agreement with employers to allow children to attend continuation school on Wednesday afternoons. The efforts of the school council had been unsuccessful.27

F. F. Carlson concluded that the consequences of this development were so obvious that they scarcely required any comment. "Physical weakness and the seeds of life-long illness must be thus incurred, and no less a threat is the vulgarity which otherwise results when the door to education is closed." It was necessary to promulgate "regulations concerning the length of the working day, concerning daily teaching for the children, concerning the sanitary conditions in the factory and the supervision which the state should exercise in this respect." In conclusion, F. F. Carlson appealed to the government to draw up a statute regulating the use of young people in factory work.28

The motions were passed on for consideration by committees. The chairs of the two committees were occupied by F. F. Carlson and A. W. Staaff. Barbro Hedvall points out that it appears as if there was some consultation between the two committee chairmen, since their two motions concluded in virtually identical wording.29 It is moreover obvious that the Lower House committee had been influenced by the arguments put forward in the Upper House by F. F. Carlson, since there was a consideration of foreign legislation, and an illustration of the argument by reference to conditions in Swedish towns. The temporary committee of the Lower House emphasized the duty of state and local government to work on behalf of an increase in educational standards. It was a fundamental demand that no child should lack that "little measure" of knowledge encompassed in the minimum

26 Ibid, p. 29.
27 Ibid.
requirements of the elementary school. It was claimed that current legislation was often ignored. Not only were children under twelve employed, but the continued teaching was also highly unsatisfactory. The children's long working hours made proper teaching impossible.

That no small number of the urban population thus grows up without acquiring other than in a highly imperfect manner the most essential general knowledge is an experience which finds support from the observations which the clergy have been forced to make when preparing young people for communion. It is also not infrequently evident that many children of both sexes have not had any instruction, or at least only very incomplete instruction, for several years, occasionally not since the age of nine or ten.\textsuperscript{30}

The Lower House committee therefore found it desirable to introduce a regulation about the degree of a child's knowledge on employment, and, so that knowledge would not remain at this low minimum, "there is also a great need for a restriction of working hours, adjusted to suit the different ages." The physical well-being of the children now had to be given greater consideration than before. In addition, the state was to introduce effective supervision to ensure that the regulations were observed.\textsuperscript{31}

In the Upper House committee the education problem was further underlined. Industry had developed vigorously and the number of minors employed had doubled in the preceding ten years. Since working hours were not restricted, the provisions of the 1864 Freedom of Trade Ordinance, to the effect that children should regularly attend Sunday school, did not have the intended effect.

It is in the nature of things that a previously deficient education cannot be successfully made complete; not even what has previously been learned can be maintained, and the consequence is that a significant part of the population is growing up in a serious state of vulgarity (råhet).\textsuperscript{32}

The school boards in the factory towns had not been able to cope with the child labor problem with the aid of current legislation. The factory owners had not been able to meet the demands of the school boards, not even in isolated cases, on account of the risk of losing in competitiveness against other, less scrupulous employers. It was therefore necessary that

\textsuperscript{30} Bib. till Riksd. pr.1875, 8 saml., 2 afd., 2 band, 14 häft. no. 21, quote on pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Bib. till Riksd. pr.1875, 8 saml., 2 afd., 1 band, 4 häft. no. 4, p. 4.
no children should be allowed, at least not without the authorization of the relevant school board, to be employed as shop assistants or factory or craft workers, unless they have been duly certified to have learnt the minimum requirements prescribed by the Elementary School Code. A foundation would thereby be laid, upon which could be built, with some hope of success, a continued education limited to a small number of hours per day. It is further considered necessary that there be rules to determine how many hours a day a minor may be kept at factory work. . . . This would be a way to remedy not only the complaints that have been heard, that monotonous and strenuous work with long periods between breaks hampers or disturbs physical development, but it would also provide an opportunity to obtain tuition during a certain part of the day. 33

The problem of industrial welfare thus had different components. The demand for certificates of education meant a more distinct coordination with the elementary school code's minimum knowledge requirements. Changes in working hours were advocated primarily with reference to the need for education, but in large measure also for health reasons. As regards the need for education, the Upper House motion for the first time made a clear distinction between children aged 12-14 and young people aged 14-18. In addition, the committees proposed legislation to apply to all factories and craft occupations. This stance was also influenced by the more general problem of school and education, although in the debate it was mostly the conditions of factory children that were emphasized.

The motion was taken through the parliament, very skilfully negotiating potential shoals. There was, for example, no discussion of any concrete proposals which might provoke objections from the various interested parties. The formulation of a statute was left to the government and a committee of inquiry. The success of these tactics naturally depended on the positive attitude of the government. 34 F. F. Carlson's place in the government guaranteed this. It was probably also important that the legislation was expected to apply to all spheres of business. It was stated in the committee proposal that in other countries this had meant a breakthrough in gaining the approval of employers. This suggestion thus disarmed the criticism which had greeted the proposals in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, to the effect that they would have negative consequences for some factories and businesses. The only concrete suggestion in the motions and committee resolutions was the stance adopted on the issue of schooling, the demand for certificates of education and continued teaching. It was this which justified the age distinction as well. All other questions were left to a committee of inquiry. A proposal to inquire further into the matter was passed by acclamation in both houses. 35 The debate, however, was not without interest.

33 Ibid.
34 Hedvall, pp. 160 ff.
35 Ibid.
In the Upper House, industrialists questioned the need for a reduction in working hours, while rural interests were doubtful about the examination of children’s knowledge. Reverend Rundgren from Norrköping was also against a reduction in working hours, but in favor of a more comprehensive examination of knowledge. Those who supported the motion included educationalists, clergymen, doctors, a few farmers and a few public officials, the publicists S. A. Hedin and Lars Johan Hierta, Granlund the coachbuilder, Wedberg the wholesaler, and the two Göteborg businessmen Aron Philipsson and Peter Hammerberg.  

The debate in the Lower House was more extensive. An estate owner named Ehrenborg, for example, argued that compulsory schooling was impossible to implement, and in any case the factories were a far better moral and physical environment than the workers’ homes. This was guaranteed by the owners' magnanimity and concern for the children. It was appropriate, however, to restrict working hours so that children could attend school, but this could be achieved by amending the legislation already in effect.  

Ehrenborg’s speech received a reply from A. W. Staaff, the proposer of the motion. He refuted the criticism of the formal procedure and went on to discuss the core of Ehrenborg’s argument, that certificates of education were unnecessary. Experience from the elementary school pupils of the capital -- Stockholm -- and from those children who had gone out to work had convinced him that it was absolutely essential not only to reduce working hours but also, if knowledge were to be maintained, to demand certificates of education.

We should also see to it that it should no longer be possible for children to desert school so early that they know nearly nothing. My original intention was not so much to speak of a specific measure of minimum knowledge which could be expected as that some knowledge, however slight, ought to exist.  

The committee, however, had already decided that it was most suitable to express the expected degree of knowledge in terms of the minimum elementary school requirements. Staaff claimed that these requirements should not be any deterrent. If children started attending school at the age of eight, seven, or even six, then by the age of twelve, thirteen, or at the latest fourteen they should have managed to get through the work required. . . . Now it is obvious that every demand must be qualified, . . . there is always some elasticity in this minimum. To take Christian knowledge, for instance, or even reading, it is clear that it is only at a more advanced

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37 AK pr. 1875:39:IV, pp. 5-6, quote on p. 8.
38 Ibid, pp. 9 ff., quote on p. 10.
age that they can show any real insight in the former or true skill in the latter; but at the age mentioned they ought to be at least reasonably well acquainted with and trained in these subjects. I do not think that this is asking too much. 39

He also challenged the view that legislation had become too strict, adding: "I would further emphasize that something must unconditionally be done". The house was not to have exaggerated fears about the implementation of the law. His Majesty's government was free to establish the conditions and "grant exemptions where particularly pressing circumstances may dictate". 40 The house approved the motion that the matter be further investigated. 41

There is no need to follow the debate further. To be sure, some time was to pass before the law came into force. A committee of inquiry first examined the matter and reported its opinion, after which the royal ordinance was sanctioned. This then prohibited in 1881 child labor in factories for children under twelve. It also restricted working hours for children aged 12-14, for whom it required organized school attendance. It is obvious that the school question, here as in the parliamentary debate, had a guiding influence on the classification of children's age groups. It was declared that children under fifteen, whether working in factories or in crafts and other trades, were obliged to "avail themselves of teaching" at times determined by the school council, after consultation with the employers. The demand for education thus applied not only to child factory workers but also to all children in towns. Practically nothing new was said about the issue after the parliamentary decision to set up a committee of inquiry, although the differences between the committee's proposal and the wording of the final statute are rather interesting. The daily extent of teaching, for example, was not regulated by the ordinance, although the committee had suggested that the children should be taught for two hours a day. Nor did the ordinance heed the committee's suggestions for proper measures to supervise and enforce the statute. 42

Thus, we can observe that the knowledge that was expected appears to have been relatively modest. Nothing more than the minimum elementary school requirements was even hinted at. Knowledge of the catechism was what was demanded. Even when the rhetoric spoke of the need for educated, enlightened workers, in the new industrial world the arguments boiled down to demands for the most basic and rudimentary requirements of the Elementary School Code. The conclusions drawn by previous historians about the need for educated workers thus seem to find little support, not only in the Elementary School Code of 1842 but also in the debates of the 1870s. The demands for knowledge did not envisage any development of school education, aspiring only to attain the lowest expected

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid, p. 11.
41 Ibid, pp. 18-19.
school standards. When the question first came to the fore, the problem was formulated as a need to strengthen the weak authority of the school over children and parents. The same can also be illustrated from arguments used in later debates, as should be clear from what has been said above. The pattern is well known from earlier years. The debate about elementary school education and the Elementary School Code itself are examples of legislation which was ultimately a critical questioning of families' ability to look after their children in a satisfactory way.\textsuperscript{43}

At the same time, however, the Elementary School Code did not provide a particularly powerful weapon for the authorities to use against "contumacious" parents. Compulsory school attendance was formulated as the amount of knowledge children were obliged to be taught; no particular ages were stated between which children were expected to attend school. It was expected that the minimum knowledge would be acquired before children attended church confirmation classes. The parliamentary debate shows that this weakly formulated rule brought problems when the authorities sought to impress the importance of school attendance upon working-class parents and children. The lack of clear age limits in the Elementary School Code made it difficult to demand school attendance up to the age of twelve.

It is evident that the representatives of the countryside argued most vehemently against any legislation which would link the employment of children with certificates of elementary school knowledge. It is even more evident that the advocates of legislation took their examples from urban settings. When parliament finally decided to set up a committee of inquiry, it was with reference to conditions in Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö, and Norrköping, as these had been presented to the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs in special pleas from the respective school authorities. A. W. Staaff was not only rector of one of Stockholm's inner-city parishes but also a member of the school board. Jöns Rundbäck's arguments in parliament may also be seen against an urban background. Although he represented the Farmers' Party and a rural constituency, this was on the borders of the city of Göteborg. The constituency included the Gamlestaden textile mill and a timber-yard. C. H. Rundgren similarly represented not merely the clergy's interest in general education but also the school council in Norrköping, of which he was chairman. The same applies to Swartz, the industrialist from Norrköping, who also had a seat and a vote on the school council. Dean Sonden of Jönköping probably had a similar position.

Among those in favor of legislation we may also note representatives of finance and industry from Göteborg, as well as a group of members of parliament from Stockholm that included L. J. Hierta and the bank director A. O. Wallenberg. The list could be made longer and more detailed, but it will suffice here to observe that the regulation of minors' working hours was manifestly supported by urban representatives.

\textsuperscript{43} Sandin, \textit{Hemmet, gatan, fabriken eller skolan}, ch. 6.
In addition, this support coincides in part with the support from public officials pointed out by Hedvall. The officials were often based in urban settings, and it may be suspected that the political life of the towns was the decisive factor, probably combined with a critical and conservative attitude to industrialism. This point corresponds with the fact that child labor and its relation to the minimum school standards was sometimes expressly defined as an urban problem, and even more specifically as a problem for the large factory towns. This correspondence has its corollary in the fact that the demand for certificates of education was vigorously opposed by rural interests. In any case, it is perfectly clear from the analysis of the parliamentary debates that the political discussion was more and more about the interests of the urban schools and the problems in larger cities.

In the bourgeois estate the problem of the cities had been emphasized early on in the debate. Swartz expressed the opinion that children usually had sufficient knowledge at the age of twelve or when they left school, but

in a city like Norrköping it happens not infrequently that people from the countryside move in with their children, with the very motive of harvesting an income through them, because the children have already reached or will soon reach the age when they can be put to work.

If children went to school for a shorter time up to the age of twelve, their lack of basic skills meant that teaching was completely wasted. The lacuna could scarcely be filled after the children had left school. No extra tuition could be permitted by the employer, and the working-class children hardly ever attended any catechetical examinations.

Other speakers in favor of regulating working hours pointed out the generally poor control the urban schools had over attendance. It should perhaps be underlined that all the industrialists who spoke in the debate declared that they did not employ children under twelve, referring to the Factory Ordinance. They also claimed that the education provided by the factory schools ably met the expected standards. This was questioned by several speakers, who said that the teaching in the factory schools was unsatisfactory on account of the children's exhaustion. Those who spoke against regulation maintained that the factory at least offered the children an environment that was better than what they had at home.

A consequence of this debate was to establish once and for all the need for a proper, well organized schooling and a clear definition of school ages. This was to range from the age of

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44 Hedvall, pp. 146 ff., pp. 162 ff. A closer analysis of the attitudes to the labor law will be discussed in a later study.
46 Ibid., pp. 612 ff.
seven all the way up to the age of confirmation at fourteen. Thus the traditional age for leaving childhood and becoming a youth was confirmed by the educational system. But the gap between the school leaving age and confirmation had to be filled. Minister Rundgren's argumentation as it was developed in the early stages of the debates may be of interest in this context.\footnote{For a general survey of how this question was handled in the parliament see Hedvall, pp, 138 ff.} According to him, some kind of regulations were made necessary by the industrial development in Sweden. To begin with, it was not so easy to catch up on neglected education after the age of twelve; moreover, twelve-year-olds who had attended school needed continued instruction if they were to retain their knowledge. The law must be clear on these points, said Rundgren,\footnote{Ibid.} who urged that

as a condition for starting employment there should be prescribed a certain measure of knowledge of religious truths, which can be inspected so that the state may be sure that the young citizen is not totally ignorant in this respect. A certain knowledge at the age of twelve can, if it is forgotten, easily be relearned.\footnote{Ibid, p. 343.}

A modicum of knowledge was to be required before children were allowed to work. Since the Elementary School Code had certain minimum requirements of the knowledge of school leavers, these should be prescribed as the level of basic knowledge required for starting to work. School legislation would thus be coordinated with labor legislation. In this way there would be less conflict between work and school in factory towns. Children's education would not be neglected if people knew that it was a necessary condition for getting a job.\footnote{Ibid.}

A strong helping hand would thereby be given to the school's present weak authority over parents and children. The conflict between work and school . . . would be diminished. . . . The employer who needs young labor would also be given an interest in the work of the school, and children would come to understand that not only physical but also intellectual development is necessary to enter the ranks of the employed.\footnote{Ibid.}

At the parliamentary sessions of 1859-1860, Rundgren once again brought up the relationship between work and school. He emphasized the danger of families choosing "to sacrifice their children's education for immediate gain; the employer has no less a
temptation to ignore the spiritual well-being of someone else's child with an eye only to his own temporal interests."

Thus the explanation for child labor legislation as well as the newly defined age limits must be sought in the social development of the towns and in the establishment of influential school boards. It was at its core a problem of solving a social conflict in towns and proposing an administrative solution. The renewed school law of 1882 defined the compulsory age for schooling in the same way as the child labor law of 1881. The development of a normal plan for elementary education in 1879 also gave content to a full six years of schooling and to a continuation school for the school dropouts. This then reflects the development of the educational system but, as has been pointed out, the new age limits were not a result of a development of the minimum of expected knowledge -- which as we have seen was very limited -- as much as a way of making sure that the children could be obliged to stay in school. The ages for schooling were defined in relation to the Penal Code of 1864 and the traditional age of confirmation. In this way childhood was clearly defined as meaning that children did not work and did not get up to mischief on the streets or have to help out at home. And as a definite consequence a set number of years was defined as the time when the children ought to be in the schools. The problems to solve was naturally the realization of this ambition.

Creating a school for all children

The issue of child labor in relation to the educational system and traditional age definitions was scarcely settled before yet another issue came to the fore -- the question of the elementary school as a school for children of all classes. Fridtjuv Berg's brochure proposing a comprehensive school (bottenskola) was published in 1883. He argued that a school for all social classes was needed. The reason was twofold. Children attending different forms of school were brought up to suspect and hate other classes; a common school for all would create community and understanding between the different classes, bridging social gaps. The other reason was that it was important for society that children of all social classes were given the opportunity to go all the way from the first form of a common school to higher education. Children's gifts should be cultivated. The parallel school would be replaced by a comprehensive school.

There were several consequences of the demand for a comprehensive school. All children would go to the same school, and the school would be held together in an organic whole so that the move to higher classes would not be so problematic. Children who lived in abnormal moral or intellectual circumstances would be cared for through special

reformatory measures. Continuation schools and upper elementary schools would be available for children who had left elementary school, and intermediate schools would be established for children who had the intellectual requirements for going on to higher education. Tuition should also be changed in the direction of a more civically minded curriculum, intended to teach citizenship.\textsuperscript{54}

The demands for a comprehensive school were not new. Ideas of a similar kind had been put forward by earlier school reformers such as Siljestrom. So how can we explain the breakthrough of the idea of a comprehensive school and the demands for civic education as a political platform? The platform was supported by groups of teachers, including the union of elementary school teachers (Sveriges allmänna folkskollärareförening) and had its political base in the liberally minded middle class.\textsuperscript{55}

Let me present the alternative interpretations in a somewhat simplified and polemical fashion. If we follow Tomas Englund, the liberal point of view was only concerned with the national and civic education of the working class, and was a consequence of demands made in other contexts for education for citizenship.\textsuperscript{56} According to Jan Larsson's argument, it a way of diverting and controlling social conflict.\textsuperscript{57} If we follow Christina Florin, the comprehensive school idea was merely an expression of the teachers' struggle for professionalization.\textsuperscript{58} If we follow Gunnar Richardson and Åke Isling, the commitment grew out of an altruistic desire for democracy.\textsuperscript{59}

There is yet another interpretation with its starting point in a social change which ran parallel to the debate, but which also preceded it. Was elementary school a school solely for the working class when the debate flared? Had bourgeois children begun to attend elementary school? Were middle-class parents perhaps willing to send their children to it? Could this middle-class participation in elementary school explain the increased interest in a comprehensive school and the reforms that actually were implemented to provide closer links between elementary school and higher forms of school? It had been maintained for decades that middle-class involvement in school was the only way to guarantee any

\textsuperscript{55} Gunnar Richardson, \textit{Kulturkamp och klasskamp} (Göteborg, 1963), pp. 273-288.
\textsuperscript{56} Tomas Englund, \textit{Samhällsorientering och medborgarfostran i svensk skola under 1900-talet} (Pedagogiska institutionen, Uppsala, 1986), chapters 1-4, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{59} Isling, \textit{Kampen för en demokratisk skola}
development in school. This involvement depended in turn, it is claimed, on middle-class parents sending their own children there.\textsuperscript{60}

It should initially be pointed out that this debate really got started after the renewed school law of 1882. This law made it clear that the schools should be free for everybody, including the children of the well-off. Free education for everyone!\textsuperscript{61} Also for people of means.

Let me pose the problem in a new way. Perhaps the whole discussion was about how elementary school -- the catechetical school of the working class -- could also be conquered and colonized by the middle class for their own children. What interest did the middle class and the better-off working-class groups have in elementary school and a comprehensive school founded on it? The question can be analyzed, at least in a preliminary fashion, and discussed on the basis of an analysis of the relation between private and public tuition.

Where did all the schools go?

Let us examine how the distribution of children in different schools changed at the end of the nineteenth century. Where did the middle class send their children? The annual reports of the Stockholm Elementary School Board contain statistics for all the forms of school, showing how many boys and girls of each age attended them. These reports provide the data for my analysis.

We can begin by observing that day schools with paying pupils (infant schools and religious schools are not included) declined sharply in number in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1868 the inspector of elementary schools reported 100 such schools. By 1910 there were only 27 left. The average number of pupils in each school was 27 in 1868 and 233 in 1910. There was thus a dramatic concentration of pupils in larger private schools, while the total number of pupils increased. The small and medium-sized schools disappeared.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{60} Isling, \textit{Kampen för en demokratisk skola}, pp. 146-148; Richardson, \textit{Kulturkamp och klasskamp}, p. 274; for a later argument of this kind see also Florin, \textit{Kampen om katedern}, p. 93. Cf. also the discussion that preceded the discontinuation of the first form of the grammar school in 1869 in Anna Sörensson, \textit{Svenska folkskolans historia} III (Stockholm, 1942), pp. 165-168, as well as the general discussion on pp. 168-185.

\textsuperscript{61} The extent to which school fees were actually charged is naturally a relevant question, but it cannot be discussed here.

\textsuperscript{62} See also Table 2. These schools do not include donation schools, reformatories, religious schools, charity schools, and the like. According to Richardson, \textit{Kulturkamp och klasskamp}, p. 238, the proportion of children in private schools
If we look at the number of pupils in private schools in relation to the total number of pupils in elementary schools, however, we see that the proportion of pupils in private (fee-paying) schools fell from 14.7% in 1870 to 10.2% in 1900. A corresponding tendency is documented from Malmö, where the proportion of pupils in private schools was 21% of all pupils in 1876 but only 5.3% in 1910. In relation to the registered population aged 7-14 in Malmö, the number of pupils in private tuition fell from 18% in 1876 to 5% in 1910.

If we are to find an answer to the question that heads this section, we must go further. It is important to find out when the decline took place and how the recruitment of boys and girls of different ages was influenced. Let us once again consider developments in Stockholm.

We can begin by noting a close connection between the decline in the number of boys in private (fee-paying) tuition and the increase in the proportion of boys in grammar schools in 1868, 1870, and 1880. Let us compare 1870 with 1900.

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fell until 1890 and then began to rise again slightly. The aggregated statistics on which Richardson bases his statement did not distinguish schools financed by fees from the various charitable schools. These all go under the term "private" schools. The data can therefore not be used to analyse the development of private schools in the strict sense of those financed by fees, or at least they cannot be used for detailed analysis. The decline was probably largely due to a reduction in the number of donation schools and the incorporation of charitable schools in the elementary school system. This explains the decline in the proportion of private schools observed by Richardson, and the corresponding increase in the number of pupils attending elementary school.

63 Överstyrelsen för Stockholms stads årsberättelser 1868 and 1909; Bisos Befolkningsstabeller

64 Årsberättelser för Malmö folkskolor; Bisos Befolkningsstabeller.
Table 2. Boys in private tuition and grammar schools in Stockholm in 1870 as a percentage of the population, distributed according to age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1870</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>private</th>
<th>grammar school</th>
<th>total</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Sources: Överstyrelsen för Stockholms folkskolor årsberättelse 1870; BiSOS Befolkningsstatistik 1870; Statistisk redovisning från Stockholms kommunförvaltning.

Table 3. Boys in private tuition and grammar schools in Stockholm in 1900 as a percentage of the population, distributed according to age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1900</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>private</th>
<th>grammar school</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>7.4</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See Table 2.
To begin with, the proportion of boys in private schools was much smaller in 1900 than in 1870, with a particularly noticeable decline among the younger age groups. The increase in the proportion of children in the grammar schools in 1900 was not accompanied by as clear a corresponding fall in the percentage of children in private schools as we saw for 1870. There must therefore have been a transfer of pupils from other forms of school.

A look at the figures for elementary school suggests that it was from here that pupils moved to grammar schools. It can be observed that in 1870 there was no great difference between the percentages of boys and girls in elementary school. Nor was there any change between the proportions of children in the different age groups which would correspond to an increase in the number of grammar school pupils. Between the nine-year-old and ten-year-old group the proportion of boys in elementary school fell by 6.5 percentage points, while the share of pupils in private tuition fell by only 1 percentage point. No comparable change can be found for the girls, who had no chance of continuing their studies at grammar school. If we compare the change for boys between the ages of ten and eleven, we see that roughly equal proportions came from private schools and elementary schools to the grammar schools. This suggests that the main foundation for boys' further study at grammar school was the education received at primary school.

Table 4. Boys in private tuition, grammar schools, and elementary schools in Stockholm in 1870 as a percentage of the population, distributed according to age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>41.9</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>48.3</td>
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</table>

Sources: Överstyrelsen för Stockholms folkskolor årsberättelse 1870; BiSOS Befolkningsstatistik 1870; Statistisk redovisning från Stockholms kommunförvaltning.
Table 5. Boys in private tuition, grammar schools, and elementary schools in Stockholm in 1900 as a percentage of the population, distributed according to age.

1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>boys</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10.8</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See Table 4.

As for the proportion of girls in private tuition, there was a significant decline between 1870 and 1900.

Table 6. Girls in private tuition in Stockholm in 1870 and 1900 as a percentage of the population, distributed according to age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is interesting, however, is not just the general decline but also the fact that the decline was greatest for the younger age groups. At the turn of the century it was the older children more than the young ones who were sent to private schools.

This analysis shows that elementary school education was increasingly seen as an alternative to private tuition in the period 1870-1900. The tendency was strongest for the younger age groups.

The decline was greatest between 1870 and 1880, as Table 7 shows. This means, in other words, that the tendency to send children to elementary school instead of to private tuition preceded Berg's pamphlet advocating a comprehensive school. The tendency is clearly seen when one considers the proportion of pupils at private schools in the age groups 7-9 and 10-13, but much more noticeable for boys than for girls.

Table 7. Boys attending private school as a percentage of all the boys in Stockholm in age groups 7-9 and 10-13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-13</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Girls attending private school as a percentage of all the girls in Stockholm in age groups 7-9 and 10-13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-13</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Calculated on the basis of Överstyrelsens årsberättelser för Stockholms stad and population data from BiSOS. The figures for 1890 and 1900 also include a small number of private schools apart from those financed by school fees.

We have already noted that it was the small schools that declined. The Stockholm school board presents details in its annual reports which can be used for a discussion what subjects that were taught in the small private schools. A preliminary analysis shows that many of
schools which vanished mostly taught scripture, Swedish, arithmetic, reading and writing, and handwork. Yet there were also schools teaching, for example, foreign languages, which closed during this period. Mostly, however, the schools that closed down were ones teaching elementary skills. The schools that remained had a broader syllabus. The distribution of pupils of different ages was also more even in the schools that survived, whereas the pupils at the small schools were generally younger. The development described here can also be seen in Malmö, where the years 1882-1909 saw a heavy decline in the number of schools with a syllabus equivalent to the lower classes of the elementary school.65

We can make the preliminary assumption that the pupils switched to the public school system and that elementary schools became an alternative for those groups who had previously sent their children to private schools. There is reason to suppose that many of these schools recruited their pupils from both the working class and the bourgeoisie. The workers who could afford to pay for private tuition must have belonged to the more prosperous group of workers. One may also assume that they wanted and were able to distance themselves socially from public education. Mostly, however, the private schools must have recruited their children from the bourgeois strata of society. In Malmö the elementary school inspector noted in 1885 that the better-off social classes had begun to send their children more often to "the public schools instead of the private ones."66

There is good reason to take another look at the transfers between the schools. We may start with the preliminary thesis that bourgeois and better-off working-class parents began to see public education as an alternative to private schools. This argument receives support from the fact that transfers from elementary school to grammar school also occurred throughout the period, and that the trend was growing. More and more boys changed from public to private schools. Table 8 shows development in Stockholm. Dr Stenkula, the inspector in Malmö, observed that more and more pupils were leaving elementary school for upper schools. He regarded this development as a consequence of the fact that more of the better-off children went to elementary school.67

65 Thunander, Från fattigskola till medborgarskolapp. 386-389.
66 Quoted by Thunander, Från fattigskola till medborgarskolapp. 386.
67 Ibid.
Table 9. Pupils in Stockholm leaving elementary school for grammar school, expressed in numbers and as a percentage of all pupils at grammar school in the age group 9-11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Överstyrelsens berättelse and the sources used for Table 8.

Elementary school -- for the working class or the bourgeoisie, or for both?

One preliminary conclusion can be drawn. Elementary school began to become a school, if not for all social classes, then at least for more than the working class. Elementary school education was also a basis for further study. Can this be part of the explanation for the interest the liberal bourgeoisie had in creating a comprehensive school -- a school for all classes? Was the comprehensive school issue perhaps a concern for the children of the bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy, who wanted an education for their children that was efficient and not too expensive? From such a standpoint it is possible to justify far-reaching demands for a new curriculum -- civic education -- and a general rise in the standard in the schools. In addition, public education was perhaps reaching a level where it could be compared with the tuition in the average private school. The large quantitative development of the school system in the cities went hand in hand with an improvement in quality. From the 1860s, the elementary school inspector C. J. Meijerberg did great work and inspired much fear in his efforts to improve conditions in the school. One element in this was the creation of a competent corps of teachers. Christina Florin shows in her dissertation that the primary school teachers in Stockholm were exceptionally well qualified. All had been trained as elementary school teachers. The improvement in tuition must have had an effect on recruitment to the public school system from bourgeois groups, even before the debate about a comprehensive school.

From this point of view, the trend towards a comprehensive school cannot be described as the result of the state's restrictive and negative attitude, or any desire to curb the freedom of the bourgeoisie to choose an education for their needs. On the contrary. It was the bourgeoisie's own choice. They turned away from private schooling and made the elementary school into a school for their own class. A new ideology could be justified, and

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Florin, Kampen om katederna pp. 60-62.
the world could be explained to all social classes in bourgeois terms. The debate perhaps confirmed a development that was already in progress. In this way we can understand the possibility of switching from elementary school to grammar school which was discussed in 1894. Parliament decided then to request that the government should allow the first class of the elementary school to serve as a basis for admission to grammar school. 69 When the secondary school was created and municipal intermediate schools were established in the reforms 1905 and 1927, the urban middle class no longer felt the same urgent need for a comprehensive school from which their children could go on to other education. The bourgeoisie were now able to use the early classes of the elementary school as a basis for secondary school. In other words, the bourgeoisie's problem was solved and they largely lost interest in this issue.

Consequently, the interest in a comprehensive school and civic education was perhaps not just an altruistic expression of democratic aspirations, and not just a logical consequence of demands raised for other stages of school. The teachers themselves -- as representatives of the lower middle class -- ought to have been interested in elementary school as a comprehensive school for their own sake, for their own children's education. Individual self-interest and the collective goal of professionalization went hand in hand. The social arguments -- concern for the lower classes -- at the same time created a notion that comprehensive school was a project for the whole of society. As such, it could be supported by the growing labor movement. Moreover, the project as a whole also called for national unity.

At the same time, one must drill deeper into the issue and ask why the interest in comprehensive school was nourished by relatively well-established groups in society. Is it possible that the development was a result of the fact that the bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy could no longer afford private tuition for their children?

The evidence that can be adduced for a change in the conditions of the bourgeois family are relatively vaguely related to the concrete school debate in Sweden. International researchers into the family have long claimed that the bourgeoisie had smaller families toward the end of the nineteenth century. This has been explained as a breakthrough for more deliberate family planning and a status-oriented lifestyle. 70 In this context a link has been sought between a changed family structure, that is, a smaller number of children, and increased costs for education at the end of the nineteenth century. Smaller families were one way to offset the increased expense of an education to guarantee social status and a career for boys and girls. In Sweden a cross-sectional study by Rolf Ohlsson has found that the lower bourgeoisie had much smaller families in 1890 than in 1820. A similar decline has

69 Svenska folkskolans historii II, pp. 181-185.
70 J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood (London, 1954); Elmroth, För kung och fosterland pp. 166-186.
been observed in Norway.\textsuperscript{71} It is reasonable to assume that the same can apply to Stockholm. There is reason to suspect that the increase in the number of children in public education and the decline of the private sector corresponded to a change in attitude to public education, which had its roots in the inability or reluctance to pay for tuition in private schools. In this case, the explanation for the comprehensive school debate should also be sought in the internal social transformation of the bourgeoisie (and perhaps also of the labor aristocracy). The choice of cheaper education was a second way to offset the costs of having children.

The cost of education was indeed used in the educational debates around these years. In the debates about the introduction of term fees for the grammar schools, this was described as a problem for the middle class. This debate is described by Gunnar Richardson, who shows how junior officials, craftsmen, merchants, and freehold farmers would have been hit hard the introduction of fees. The fee for a pupil in the upper classes (90 kronor) was equivalent to about 15\% of an elementary school teacher’s salary.\textsuperscript{72} According to one statement in the debate about grammar school fees, the middle class paid 60-70 kronor annually to the unmarried women and widows who ran the infant schools. A girl attending elementary grammar school cost about 100 kronor each year (and 100 kronor extra for piano lessons).\textsuperscript{73} This would have meant considerable costs for large middle-class families. Richardson argues that the debate was really about the economic interests of the middle class:

a reform of this kind would in many cases have a very noticeable economic effect on the middle class, especially the urban middle class, who were already paying enough in school fees for their daughters, and who were by far the biggest parent group.\textsuperscript{74}

Richardson does not draw the same conclusions as regards the debate about comprehensive school; there he puts the emphasis on the middle class’s social commitment on behalf of the working class.\textsuperscript{75} So let me take the issue one step further. The comprehensive school issue could also have arisen out of the economic problems of the bourgeoisie. This seems likely on the basis of the changes in recruitment to the different schools in the urban school

\textsuperscript{71} Rolf Ohlsson, unpublished paper presented to the Department of Economic History, Lund University, 1970; Ida BlomsSynd eller sunt fomus[Oslo, 1986].

\textsuperscript{72} Richardson, \textit{Kulturkamp och klasskamp}, p. 215; for the entire debate see pp. 205-218.

\textsuperscript{73} Fredrik Andersson, quoted in Richardson, \textit{Kulturkamp och klasskamp}, pp. 207-208.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 217.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., pp. 271-288.
system, of which I have given this preliminary sketch. A new school-oriented type of childhood had been created amongst better-off families as a way of adopting to urban environments. This fact - the school for all classes as a fundamentally middle-class project - had consequences for the way the program launched by F. Berg in 1883 was realized.

... for all children but not for the delinquents, the morally depraved, and the handicapped

In the 1860s and 1870s, the national debate was about how to get the children of the working class to school and develop the school system to include all ages up to the age of fourteen. This was not explained in relationship to the developmental needs of the child but rather as a result of the ambitions to control the urban environment and to bring children's schooling and the school ages into closer accordance with the protective legislation and the regulations in the penal code. The debate in the 1880s was largely about the need for and appropriateness of a comprehensive school for all classes of society. The arguments were primarily political and practical. This debate mainly concerned the cities, but a debate in these terms eventually had consequences for the way rural schools were handled. In the 1880s, however, these were perceived as a separate problem.

In the 1890s a partly new debate began develop but it had its roots in the changes that had taken place earlier. These changes were largely to be about the internal conditions and administrative development in school. We see in this debate the consequences of having children from different social classes attending the same schools. To understand these we must look closer at the program for a comprehensive school -- a school for all classes as it was developed by Berg and others. How was it possible to have the laborer's child in the same school as the better-off children? Was it really the case that all children should go to this new school? The school administrators clearly saw this as a problem. The inspector in Malmö commented on these issues in a short report on education and orphanages in foreign countries written during the very first years of the 1880s.

Public school cannot select its pupils. It has to accept them as they are when they are sent to it, and to keep them no matter how they shape up. School has no more right to turn away the intellectually disadvantaged than the depraved. On the contrary, it is the duty of school itself to seek out and gather up all those children, regardless of which category they belong to, who do not come to school of their own accord. Anyone who has had anything to do with public school knows how harmful this circumstance is for the success of the school's work, how the ungifted children impede the progress of the
The objective of creating a school for all classes not only required reconciliation within the nation -- a new national curriculum -- but also absolute essentials such as improved tuition, smaller classes, better teacher training, new teaching materials, and the weeding out of all pupils who were, according to bourgeois values, socially maladjusted and intellectually handicapped. Thinking of national citizenship in terms of an organism easily led to the development of a code common to all the social classes, in which everyone has his or her given role. The nation consisted all of Swedes, though at different stations in the social system.

A large number of social programs was developed for the lower class children in the schools. We can see the development of programs for feeding hungry children; programs to improve the hygiene of the individual child, such as school baths on Saturday afternoons while their clothing was fumigated against vermin of various kinds. The argument was put forth that one could not expect better of parents if sending their children to the schools involved the danger of them bringing home disease and vermin, and that hungry children created an unruly school environment. The afternoon play of children who had no parents at home to take care of them was to be organized. Holiday camps for the poor children were also founded to get the children off the streets during the long summer vacations, and more classes were introduced to fill out the spare time of the otherwise idle children.80

At the base of all this one can find a different type of school than in the mid-nineteenth century. Toward the turn of the century the requirement of the school law of 1882 began to resemble the reality. Both boys and girls began their schooling at the age of seven and finished the year they turned fourteen. Thus the differences between boys and girls that could be noted, for example, during the 1860s and 1870s, were reduced to the point of elimination. Deviation from this new normality was easily detected and could be described and measured. The fact that children from different classes were seen in the schools together made the differences even more clear. In an address to the philanthropists of Stockholm, the organization for children's summer camps made a point of the fact that the visible difference between children of different classes would make the heart of the mother in the better-off family bleed, and hence make her willing to give money to the poor.81 The children of the poor became visible not only from the pulpit and as an item in the registers but also as an overt contrast to all other children. In this project the teachers and philanthropists began to try to transform the children of the poor into children of the nation, national subjects in the new Sweden. For this purpose teachers, doctors, and philanthropists toward the turn of the century could take advantage of the techniques of the newly emerging medical and psychological sciences. The children in the schools and at the summer camps

80 Inspectors' reports from Stockholm, Malmö, Norrköping, and Göteborg
began to be described and measured in all manner of ways. The stated objective was to find out the effects of the policies developed to help children. The classical image became the picture of the child before he/she was helped and after. This "before and after" paved the way for a medical and psychological definition of normality based on a childhood without physical labor, with a middle-class type of family, and with standard -- normal -- educational achievements.

But these demands for normality had other implications. For the family and gender roles, too, this process must have had palpable consequences. The new demands on the children also involved demands on the families and most of all on the women. It was made clear that it was the mothers' responsibility to send clean, healthy children to school, at the right time. Working children and working women were now seen as a threat not only to the sustenance of the adult men but also to the view of childhood, womanhood, and family that had been established among the higher social classes and through an institution that represented that childhood. It was important to create a childhood, a long childhood, and for that purpose a home-oriented mother was essential. The men were expected to be able to provide for the whole family, wife and children alike. The ideal of motherhood which was so strongly emphasized in the national and nationalistic sentiment at the turn of the century corresponds to this development of a new childhood -- a non-useful child, dependent on a breadwinning father and a caring mother. This is the view of the normal family that was described in the government report on delinquency and languishing morality in urban Sweden during the late 1890s. And it was also the ideal that was delineated by Ellen Kay as well as conservative thinkers and the leadership of the social democrats. This caring element was partly a consequence of the need to adopt to the requirements of the institutionalization of childhood. Thus, a new view of the family was created at the same time, and a new normality, a new childhood which did not always agree with reality, but

82 Ibid; Överstyrelsens berättelse 1880-1910.
83 Underdånigt betänkande och förslag till ordnande af folkundervisningen i vissa städer avg. 6 dec 1895 (Stockholm, 1896); Betänkande och förslag ang. av den av kungl. Maj:t den 16 okt 1896 tillsatta kommitten för utredning av frågan om åtgärder för beredande av lämplig upphistoran dels åt minderåriga förbrytare dels och åt vanartade och i sedligt avseende försommade barn I. Betänkande och förslag ang. minderåriga förbrytare behandling (Stockholm, 1898); II. Betänkande och förslag ang. vanartade och försommade barns behandling (Stockholm, 1900); Maria Sundkvist, work in progress. Dept of Child Studies, Linköping; see also Agell,....
which could at least be measured against it and then -- if it did not live up to standards -- be dealt with and reformed, a useful child being by definition also a used child.

**Summing up**

What then is the answer to the question with which we began? Why did such a great debate arise about children's conditions? The reason can be found in the development within the framework of school which preceded the legislation on child labor and the development toward a comprehensive school. To begin with, the debate about child labor, and the social problems in the towns, meant that the school authorities were forced to define the ages between which children were supposed to go to school. This definition was not only established in the local statutes of the towns but was also raised to the national level. Many years were to elapse before the rural schools found it worth the bother of even trying to come close to the ages stated in the statutes. The decision meant not only that ages for school attendance were clearly stated but also that there was now a norm against which it was possible to measure deviations. The 1882 statute also made it possible to establish a more highly developed system for control of school attendance. The only problem was that, for a long time, there were so many deviations from the norm. Many children avoided school or absconded. Until there was a more fully developed system of national registration, it was not really possible to supervise the children who should have been attending school. Children were no longer allowed to be useful. They were no longer allowed to help out with practical tasks in the home or on the streets. They were regarded as idle if they did not go to school. Childhood took on a new meaning for these children.

At the same time, the middle class began to send their children to the public schools -- to schools for the people. For these groups, education was an important but burdensome way to reproduce the family. These groups had already created a new childhood, and they wanted an education for their children. Private tuition was far too expensive. Yet they could hardly accept a school which was characterized by bad social conditions -- big classes, poor hygiene, and study of the catechism. In the struggle for a new content in school, their forces could be combined with those of the elementary school teachers, who had the ambition of establishing themselves as a profession. Towards the turn of the century, most children therefore attended the comprehensive schools at some stage of life. The different childhoods met in school and were made even more obvious. This drew attention to the different conditions of children, and teachers and philanthropist, and later doctors, began to work together on projects to normalize the childhood of the working class, according to the model that had been established among the upper classes. The reinforcement of motherhood
as the appropriate female role and of breadwinning as the male role corresponds to the development of this new child.
The Department of Child Studies

Linköping University hosts an interdisciplinary Institute of Advanced Study known as the Institute of Tema Research. The Institute of Tema Research is divided into five separate departments, each of which administers its own graduate program, and each of which conducts interdisciplinary research on specific, though broadly defined, problem areas, or "themes" (tema in Swedish, hence the name of the Institute). The five departments which compose the Institute of Tema Research are: the Department of Child Studies (Tema B), the Department of Health and Society (Tema H), the Department of Communication Studies (Tema K), the Department of Technology and Social Change (Tema T), and the Department of Water and Environmental Studies (Tema V).

The Department of Child Studies was founded in 1988 to provide a research and learning environment geared toward the theoretical and empirical study of both children and the social and cultural discourses that define what children are and endow them with specific capacities, problems, and subjectivities. A specific target of research is the processes through which understandings of 'normal' children and a 'normal' childhood are constituted, and the roles that children and others play in reinforcing or contesting those understandings. The various research projects carried out at the department focus on understanding the ways in which children interpret their lives, how they communicate with others, and how they produce and/or understand literature, language, mass media and art. Research also documents and analyses the historical processes and patterns of socialization that structure the ways in which childhood and children can be conceived and enacted in various times, places and contexts.

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