

The *Cardinal Principles* Report Revisited

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Scholars looking back on the impact of the *Cardinal Principles* (Commission 1918a) report generally agree that the comprehensive high school model was widely adopted in the United States in so far as the scope of secondary course offerings was broadened to serve a wider portion of the age cohort than had historically been the case (Krug 1972: 53, Kliebard 1986: 151, Cremin 1988: 646). It is at this point, however, where scholarly agreement about this historic document seems to end. Curriculum historians such as Tanner and Tanner (1990) and Kliebard (1992) recommend a periodic revisiting of the original texts of foundational documents of the curriculum field. A review of the historiography of the *Cardinal Principles* report reveals several recurrent issues that emerge from varying interpretations of that seminal document. These interpretations can be classified around the issues of social efficiency, tracking, and the common school ideal. It is useful to examine the validity of these interpretations vis a vis the text of the report and the subsequent implementation of the report's recommendations and the ramifications of these interpretations for the role of the comprehensive model in educational policy and practice.

Social Efficiency: Economy or Competence?

The *Cardinal Principles* report has often been criticized for advancing a factory model of schooling designed primarily to fit students into the industrial order in the name of increased economic productivity and efficiency. According to the late educational historian Edward A. Krug (1964: 249-50), for example, social efficiency was "the management, and even the restraint, of individual behavior on behalf of the group." "Education for social control," Krug (1964: 250) continued, involved "the production of habits and beliefs consistent with desired kinds of behavior." Krug (1964: 276) implied that social efficiency, the vocational movement, and the comprehensive high school were three aspects of one movement when he wrote:

It was largely under the banner of social efficiency that school men began to talk of industrial education as only one part of a comprehensive school program. Social efficiency reinforced the growing dislike of separate high schools of commerce or manual training. It demanded what was first called the 'cosmopolitan high school,' where pupils from all classes would

come together, if not in their classrooms, at least in the social life of the school.

Krug discounted the fact that educators resisted the dual system in part because it would distort industrial education into serving the narrow interests of business and would ultimately exacerbate class differences. Krug (1964: 387) characterized the conception of society set forth in the *Cardinal Principles* report as "democracy as the age of social efficiency saw it." Krug (1964: 393) summarized the gist of the *Cardinal Principles* report as "clearly an argument from [sic] one version of social control, although it was milder in tone than some other versions in existence at that time." In a synopsis of the rise of the comprehensive high school in the beginning of his second volume of *The Shaping of the American High School*, Krug (1972: 3) noted:

the school would equip each young citizen to function in a society whose touchstone would be orderly and efficient management. The institution favored for this purpose was the public high school: not the allegedly narrow, academic school of the past, but a comprehensive high school housing a variety of curricula and enrolling youth of diverse abilities and interests.

At the beginning of volume II, Krug (1972: 4) also commented that "education for social efficiency had no precise definition. It represented," he continued, "a style of thought and action for which interpretations could be developed." Yet in an earlier discussion of the social studies commission report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, Krug (1964: 354) referred to the proposal for common study of civics as a "version of the doctrine of social control, closer in spirit to Lester Frank Ward than to Edward Ross and David Snedden, but social control nonetheless." But he made little effort to clarify the various meanings of the term social control. Social control meant significantly different things for Ward, Ross, and Snedden (see Tanner & Tanner, 1990). Not only did Krug ignore important distinctions in meaning, but his repeated rejection of the term implied that no form of social control is acceptable.

Related to Krug's neglect to clarify definitions of social control was his treatment of Dewey's possible influence on the *Cardinal Principles* report. Krug (1964) gave little credence to the possibility of Dewey's influence on the report.

Ascertaining Dewey's influence on the report, however, could shed light on efforts to determine the version of social efficiency advocated by the Commission. Earlier in his book, examining the idea of social efficiency in the first decade and a half of this century, Krug (1964: 255) concluded that Dewey depicted the public schools "more as an agency of social service than as an agency of social control." Indeed, in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1966: 98) maintained that "school facilities must be secured of such amplitude and efficiency as will in fact and not simply in name discount the effects of economic inequalities, and secure all the wards of the nation equality of equipment for their future careers." Dewey (1966: 99) continued,

A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social change without introducing disorder.

Dewey devoted a chapter to a consideration of "Natural Development and Social Efficiency as Aims" of education. Here he reconstructed the definition of "social efficiency" into one suited for an industrial democracy. Critiquing the popular conception of social efficiency, Dewey (1966: 118-19) admonished, "The error is in implying that we must adopt measures [in the schools] of subordination rather than of utilization to secure efficiency. The doctrine is rendered adequate when we recognize," he continued, "that social efficiency is attained not by negative restraint but by positive use of native individual capacities in occupations having social meaning." He insisted that "a democratic criterion requires us to develop [individual] capacity to the point of competency to choose and make its own career" (p. 119). It is apparent that Dewey's conception of social control and the conception of social efficiency presented in the *Cardinal Principles* report are in the same vein. Dewey likely did enjoy a direct influence on the *Cardinal Principles* report, particularly in its embrace of the comprehensive model and with respect to its democratic conception of social control.¹

Kliebard (1986: 115), like Krug, painted the *Cardinal Principles* report with a broad social efficiency brush, suggesting that it was a response to "social efficiency educators leading the way in calling for different forms of secondary education for different kinds of youth." Also citing the divisive effects of tracking, Kliebard implied not only that the comprehensive high school embraced social efficiency in its narrow sense, but also that tracking was a key component of the initial design (see also Kliebard 1992).

James and Tyack (1983: 402) claimed that the authors of the *Cardinal Principles* report "were enthusiasts for what was often called 'social efficiency' (which meant preparing different kinds of pupils for different kinds of social destinies). . . ." In a summary of twentieth century reform reports, James and Tyack (1983: 402) noted that the authors of the report "reflected Dewey's interest in using secondary education as an instrument for transforming the everyday lives of citizens in an industrial democracy," thereby implicating Dewey in the social efficiency movement. They characterized the *Cardinal Principles* report as "a classic statement of the possibility of a new form of social engineering," and claimed that the report "seemed to relegate traditional academic subjects and pedagogy to the scrap heap." Further, according to James and Tyack (1983: 403), the language of the report was characterized by "a rhetoric of scientific management and social efficiency" and that the report was part of a larger movement to "justify the enlarged power to which professionals aspired." These authors saw the report as serving to further the bureaucratization of schooling by educational "experts" who "saw differentiation and specificity of training for social adjustment as the key to progress."

James and Tyack, like Krug and Kliebard, neglected two aspects of the *Cardinal Principles* report which together call into question their depiction of the report as lying in the vein of social efficiency.² One is the emphasis throughout the report on the vital unifying function of the comprehensive high school. The other is the report's numerous statements which in effect reject the narrow social efficiency or "social engineering" function that James and Tyack purport. "Democracy sanctions neither the exploitation of the individual by society, nor the disregard of the interests of society by the individual," declared the Commission (1918: 9).

In his interpretive history of *The American School, 1642-1990*, Spring (1990: 205) held that the *Cardinal Principles* report "reflect[ed] the strong influence of social-efficiency rhetoric, and attempted to shape the high school to meet the needs of the modern corporate state." Spring acknowledged that the report sought to provide a "differentiated curriculum" through the comprehensive high school as opposed to through "separate academic and vocational schools." On the specializing function, Spring (1990: 206) claimed the following:

The specialized and differentiated curriculum of the comprehensive high school was to train each student to perform a specific task that would benefit society. Within the context of this argument, democracy was viewed mainly as a means of social organization that would allow each individual to do what she or he is best able to do for the good of the social whole. Education was supposed to fit the individual into a social position that would enable him or her to make a maximum contribution to society. The report stated in bold type that "education in a

democracy . . . should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward even nobler ends.¹

Spring seemed to attempt to turn the language of the report against itself.

"According to the report," Spring (1990: 206) continued, "the second component of democracy, or social efficiency, is unification." In this statement Spring implied that the *Cardinal Principles* report conceived of democracy as a form of authoritarian social control, rather than in terms of the reconstructed idea of emphatically *democratic* social control advanced by Dewey and others. Regarding the unifying function, Spring (1990: 207) concluded, "Thus, the twentieth-century solution to building unification and cooperation through education was to provide extracurricular activities in the high school." Here Spring overlooked the role of curriculum "constants" in promoting social interaction and unity and ignored the report's powerful qualitative emphasis on unification. Additionally, Spring contended, in effect, that efforts to achieve social unification ended in 1918, ignoring latter efforts directed at that end. For Spring, then, the comprehensive high school was designed as an instrument of authoritarian social control that advanced the special agenda of capitalism and was bent on preserving a narrow social-economic determinism. "In this context," he concluded, "the development of human capital meant selection and training for a specialized task and socialization for a society based on cooperation." (Spring 1990: 211). Spring downplayed the emphasis the *Cardinal Principles* report placed on putting the individual in control of his or her occupational destiny in order to portray the comprehensive high school as a tool of capitalistic manipulation and coercion.

Again, this interpretation is inconsistent with the spirit and intent of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education as reflected in the text of the *Cardinal Principles* report. Further, Rubinson (1988), comparing the development of secondary education during the early twentieth century in the United States and Europe, found the effects of economic class on the emergence of the comprehensive high school model to be minimal. He suggested that efforts on the part of "the business classes" to impose on the schools measures that would serve their class interests at the expense of the interest of the working class (such as opposing compulsory schooling laws, promoting separate vocational education schools, limiting access to academic studies to middle class students) "failed because they were defeated in electoral politics, in which working class groups were supported by professional educators and middle class reformers" (Rubinson 1988: 541). Rubinson (1988: 542) concluded, "Although schooling was a class issue, the political system in the United States limited the expression of class interests,

and schooling came to reflect the interests of professional educators more than those of any other group." In short, the comprehensive model, which sought simultaneously to unite and serve students of different backgrounds, abilities, and aspirations under one roof, prevailed over the dual system of education that characterized European school systems.

Ravitch (1985: 73) also cast the *Cardinal Principles* report in the shadow of a narrow, deterministic conception of social efficiency. As she put it, "The controlling principles in this readjustment were social utility and efficiency." She lamented that the *Cardinal Principles* report "conferred respectability on vocational, technical, socio-personal, and other sorts of new courses—at first in addition to, and later [sic] instead of, the academic subjects" (p. 73). Ravitch (1985: 147) saw no public mandate in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, which provided secondary schools with funds to support vocational and technical studies. She characterized the *Cardinal Principles* report as "antiacademic."

Ravitch (1985: 126, 145) claimed that "by the time of World War I, social efficiency was widely accepted as the chief goal of education, and this consensus emerged full-blown in the *Cardinal Principles of Education Report*." She claimed further that "the report gave a powerful boost to proponents of vocational education, curricular tracking, and useful subjects; it disappointed those who wanted all children to have a liberal education and reinforced the belief that academic studies were only for the college-bound elite." Later she noted that "the committee did not intend to limit access to higher education; on the contrary, it believed that those who took a vocational curriculum should also be eligible for college admission" (Ravitch 1985: 126, 147).

At this point it is useful to review closely what the *Cardinal Principles* report said, actually, with respect to "social efficiency."³ Contrary to the allegations just discussed, it seems that the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (1918a) made calculated use of a contemporary catchword in an effort to widen its meaning as a slogan, by employing it according to its conventional (versus contemporary) definition. Throughout the report, the term "efficiency" was frequently used interchangeably with the word "effectively." In addition to its economic associations, "efficiency" commonly means *competence*. For example, in a discussion of organizing curriculum in the secondary school, the report on one line stated that a director should be charged "to organize that curriculum and maintain its *efficiency*" (emphasis added). In a concluding statement on this same concern, the report insisted that "the various curriculums are *effectively* organized . . ." (emphasis added) (p. 27). Similarly, the term was used to mean competence or effectiveness in two other places: discussing the purpose of democracy in seeking mutual fulfillment of the individual and society (p. 9); and the advantages of a Principal's Council (p. 28).

Further, it is significant that in no less than three instances, the term efficiency was coupled with the word *intelligence*:

The problems arising from these dominant phases of life are closely interrelated and call for a degree of intelligence and efficiency on the part of every citizen . . . (p. 7)

Each of these objectives required for its realization not only the training and habit formation that the child may secure, but also the intelligence and efficiency that cannot be developed before adolescence. (p. 30)

No other single piece of legislation [requiring at least eight hours of school attendance per week for 14-18 year olds] could, however, do more to raise the level of intelligence and efficiency and to insure the welfare of democracy. (p. 31)

In these cases, the term efficiency was clearly tied to the developmental capabilities of youth and was used in the sense of competence, not economy.

The term "vocational efficiency" appeared three times in the report (pp. 10, 22, 30). For example, "The unworthy use of leisure impairs health, disrupts home life, lessens vocational efficiency, and destroys civic-mindedness" (p. 10). The use of the term vocational efficiency is best understood in the context of how the report defined the aims of vocational education:

Vocational education should equip the individual to secure a livelihood for himself and those dependent on him, to serve society well through his vocation, to maintain the right relationships toward his fellow workers and society, and, so far as possible, to find in that vocation his own best development. (p. 13)

Efficient—read competent/effective—vocation was meant to be good for both the individual and society.

Raymond Callahan, in his famous study of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (1962), extensively documented the preoccupation with principles of scientific management on the part of American society at large and recorded in detail the devastating effects of its impact on educational practice. He referred to the impact of the efficiency movement on the schools as "An American Tragedy in Education." Callahan (1962: 244) noted that during this period, "the record shows that the emphasis was not at all on 'producing the finest product' but on the 'lowest cost.'" Significantly, no discussion of the *Cardinal Principles* report appeared in Callahan's thorough study. Callahan was certainly aware of the Commission and its report—he served as dissertation advisor to the only historical study of the Commission (Simmons 1960) which was completed two years prior to the publication of his book. It seems that, unlike the larger efficiency movement which Callahan condemned, in the

Cardinal Principles report efficiency was chiefly concerned with "producing the finest product," i.e., with educating citizens for a fulfilling life in a democratic society.

Tracking: The Comprehensive Curriculum Compromised

Allegations of "social efficiency" in the comprehensive high school are often tied to allegations that the *Cardinal Principles* report spawned the practice of tracking in the secondary school. Jeannie Oakes (1985), for example, in her otherwise incisive treatise on tracking, attributed the origins of tracking to the comprehensive high school model. She described the need to educate the new secondary school population and concluded that:

The solution ultimately settled upon was the comprehensive high school—a new secondary school that promised something for everyone, but, and this was important, that did not promise the same thing for everyone. Gone was the nineteenth-century notion of the need for common learnings to build a cohesive nation. In its place was curriculum differentiation—tracking and ability grouping—with markedly different learnings for what were seen as markedly different groups of students. (Oakes 1985: 21)

A few pages later, Oakes (1985: 33) noted that "while specialization would be achieved by the differentiated curricula, unification for the attainment of common goals—Americanizing, if you will—would be achieved through the *experience* of attending common schools." Throughout her discussion, Oakes portrayed the comprehensive high school, as outlined in the *Cardinal Principles* report, as modeled largely on an industrial or factory design. She identified three "elements" of the comprehensive high school that would "be addressed to unification—the teaching of the 'mother tongue' and social studies; the 'social mingling of pupils through the organization and administration of the school'; and extra-curricular participation to develop a feeling of being part of the whole" (Oakes 1985: 34). While slightly contradicting her earlier statement quoted above, Oakes acknowledged some attention paid to the unifying function of the comprehensive high school. Lost in Oakes' account, however, was the qualitative emphasis, the urgency the report placed on the imperative of the unifying function as well as the role of "curriculum constants" in achieving unification.

In order to ascertain the role of the comprehensive high school in fostering the practice of tracking, it is necessary to explore the origins of this practice in secondary schools. Oakes (1985: 3) defined tracking as "the process whereby students are divided into categories so that they can be as-

signed in groups to various kinds of classes." "Tracking, in essence," Oakes concluded, "is sorting—a sorting of students that has certain predictable characteristics." Implicit in this definition is the notion that students are sorted by someone other than themselves, though Oakes was careful to note that "sometimes, but rarely in any genuine sense," students sort themselves (p. 3). That is, under this scenario, the school operates as some antidemocratic force set on determining students' destinies. The implication of Oakes' tying the comprehensive high school to this conspiracy is that the comprehensive model was explicitly designed for this express purpose. The origins of the miseducative practice of tracking cast doubt on this contention and are best traced by beginning with the rise of vocational guidance.

Origins of Vocational Guidance

Vocational guidance emerged during the hey day of the vocational education movement. The work of Frank Parsons is usually cited as the first significant attempt at vocational guidance (Krug 1964, Brewer 1918 1942, Barry & Wolf 1962). In 1910, the First National Conference on Vocational Guidance was held in Boston; at the 1913 NSPIE convention the National Vocational Guidance Association was born. Krug (1964: 243) recognized the egalitarian possibilities of vocational guidance and associated its rise with growing support, during the early part of the second decade of this century, for the comprehensive high school.

Early advocates of vocational guidance were interested less in fitting students to or for a specific line of work than in enabling the individual to self-select his or her career path and to pursue it with a degree of self-determination. For example, Brewer (1918: 62) characterized Parsons' approach to vocational guidance as "educational" and noted that for Parsons, "the person being counseled was to *learn*, not merely be told what to do." Parsons (1967/1909: 4) himself exclaimed, "No person may decide for another what occupation he should choose but it is possible to help him so to approach the problem that he shall come to wise conclusions for himself." Despite statements such as this one, Parsons' ideas of vocational guidance can easily be read in the narrow sense of vocational guidance. His language sometimes seemed to reveal the narrower position when, for example, he saw vocational guidance as helping individuals at "Fitting into the Chosen Work" (p. 246), though even in this case, the work was chosen by the individual student. His use of the term "adaptation" smacked of Social Darwinism, as well (p. 113). Yet Parsons rejected narrow training for specific occupations and called for a wider educational vision of preparing for a career. He warned of "the evil of unbalanced specialization," and maintained that, "Science declares that specialization in early years in place of all-round culture is di-

sastrous both to the individual and to society" (p. 161). He also expressed a keen interest in the individual as responsible citizen. As Parsons (1967/1909: 105) forcefully put it:

No matter how successful a man may be in business, no matter how much money he may make, nor how honest and efficient he may be industrially, if he is not a good citizen, fully alive to all his civic rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities, he is no more than half a man at best. A man who exerts himself only to get his bread and butter, and not at all for the social good, has not developed much beyond the oyster stage of civilization, although in outward appearance he may resemble a real human being.

Parsons saw the individual not as a semi-skilled, simple-minded cog in the industrial machinery, but as an "all-round," reflective, independent and socially responsible citizen. Bloomfield (1915: v), in a summary of the new field compiled in 1915, put it this way: "Vocational guidance is not a scheme of finding jobs; of forcing vocational decisions upon children; of naively adjusting human 'pegs' to 'holes'; or of narrowing the range of service open to the fit." In Brewer's *History of Vocational Guidance* (1948), guidance as self-determination on the student's part appeared as a consistent theme. He emphasized that vocational guidance originated "with an eye to both individual success and social well-being" (p. 2). Exploring the causes that led to the rise of vocational guidance, Brewer (1948: 3) identified four factors: "first, the division of labor; second, the growth of technology; third, the extension of vocational education; and fourth, the spread of modern forms of democracy." He emphasized that of these causes,

The first three made necessary some care for vocational adjustment; the fourth, democracy, set up an ideal requiring attention to guidance-in-the-strict-sense—offering not advice but counsel, and allowing for self-determination: freedom, within certain limits, to make ones own decisions. (Brewer 1948: 3)

Given these causes and conditions, Brewer (1948: 7) concluded that "it was no accident that vocational guidance was started in the United States of America." Vocational guidance began as an effort to put individuals in control of their futures, rather than under the control of someone else.

A democratic conception of vocational guidance was presented in the *Cardinal Principles* (1918a) report, as well. The report stressed that, in a democratic society, with respect to career choice, "the individual choose that vocation and those forms of social service in which his personality may develop and become most effective" (p. 9). According to the report, vocational guidance would provide opportunities for the individual to "explore his own capacities and aptitudes, and make a survey of the world's work, to the end that

he may select his vocation wisely" (p. 13). Finally, the report reiterated, "Through a system of vocational supervision or guidance he [the pupil] should be helped to determine his education and his vocation. These decisions," the report emphasized, "should not be imposed upon him by others" (pp. 21-22). Additionally, the report required that the school program remain flexible enough so that when a student changed his or her career direction, a corresponding change in curriculum could easily follow. "When such a pupil has found a curriculum better adapted to his needs," the report continued, "he can be transferred to it without severance of school relationships and, what seems to him the sacrifice of school loyalty" (p. 25). This conception of vocational education was elaborated in the report on *Vocational Guidance in Secondary Education* (Commission 1918b) as well.

Vocational guidance developed concurrently with the comprehensive high school model and, as an important aspect of the educational program of the comprehensive high school, was meant to act as a vital function of education for life in an industrial democracy. It should by now be clear that neither the design for the comprehensive high school nor initial conceptions of vocational guidance sought to fit students into society in the narrow sense of economic efficiency and social determinism. Further, neither vocational guidance nor the comprehensive high school advocated, endorsed, or "legitimated" the practice of tracking in the secondary school. On the contrary, both developments set out to discourage and overcome such an effect.

Origins of Tracking

Yet the practice of tracking emerged in the schools during the decade following the release of the *Cardinal Principles* report. The origins of tracking in the secondary school are murky, since surprisingly little effort has been made to look closely into its development. It seems that tracking was the result of the convergence of two developments contemporary to the rise of vocational guidance and the comprehensive high school model: the invention of group (standardized) testing and the efficiency movement. Chapman's (1988) study of Louis Terman and the testing movement shed a new and illuminating light on the origins of tracking in the secondary school. Though not intended as a history of tracking per se, Chapman's discussion of tracking in its unequivocal connection to the rise of standardized testing is the best account available on the origins of the practice in public schools.

To begin with, Chapman (1988: 45-46) ascertained that methods of classifying students for various reasons dated back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. From his account, it seems that the rise of group testing, precipitated by World War I and university psychologists eager to ply their trade

beyond the halls of academia coupled with the vulnerability of a new generation of aspiring educational administrators to the seduction of dominant business values (qua scientific management/efficiency), combined to foist the use of group testing for sorting students by intelligence, interest, etc. upon the schools. A third force, the twentieth century fascination of the American public with attaching a number to any value, seems also to have been a factor behind the use of tests to funnel students into tracks.

The need to examine thousands of recruits during World War I in order to place them where they could most benefit America's role in the Great War afforded university psychologists the opportunity to apply experimentation with intelligence testing to a population theretofore inaccessible (DuBois 1970: 60-61). Army psychologist Louis Terman led the way in contributing the knowledge of psychology to the war effort. Prior to World War I, intelligence tests were typically administered to one or a few subjects at a time, the tester closely observing and evaluating the performance of the subject. The sheer volume of wartime recruits required the efficiency of group tests, and psychologists hurriedly set about producing such tests. Indeed, it was in the testing of recruits during World War I that the multiple-choice format question first came into wide use (DuBois 1970: 73). DuBois (1970: 68, 67) noted that not only was the testing movement accelerated by World War I, but that the very nature of the psychologists' work was transformed by the experience:

Before World War I psychology was largely an academic discipline; thereafter it became more and more a profession. The conspicuous success of the program engendered confidence in measuring new variables and applying the results not only in schools and child guidance clinics but also in vocational counseling and in the selection of industrial personnel. . . . psychologists now saw that their methods for measuring individual differences could be refined and extended into new areas.

Interestingly, Chapman (1988: 69) noted that during the war strong objections to group testing were often encountered from military personnel.

Chapman (1988: 76-77) documented how after the war there was a concerted effort on the part of politicians and psychologists to promote actively the use of group testing for classifying school students. Initially, educators were not behind this movement. While progressive educators had endorsed the use of test scores to unlock talent and optimize personal-social potentialities, the social-determinism of the post-World War I testing movement emphasized narrowing opportunities. Terman himself led the campaign to introduce testing to the schools and advocated the separation of students into differentiated groups. For Terman, homogeneity was the answer to a host of problems facing the school, and testing was the solution to the problem of determining ho-

mogeneous groupings. His efforts to impose a blatant tracking system on the schools were forthright and calculated.

Apparently succumbing to the lure of efficiency and an obsession with numbers, many school administrators saw testing and tracking as their tickets to professional prestige. Chapman (1988) actually skirted this issue. It is interesting that he did so because he cited Callahan's study as influential to his, but stopped short of developing the connections between Callahan's thesis of administrative vulnerability and his own findings on testing and tracking. Through case studies of the use of testing to introduce tracking in Oakland, San Jose, and Palo Alto, Chapman illustrated how this development was a top-down phenomenon. At the same time, however, Chapman recounted that not all school and educational leaders readily accepted these new practices and that, indeed, many educators—administrators and teachers alike—opposed their spread.

In addition to the role of professors of psychology in promoting the use of standardized tests and the willingness of many school people to use the new tests to sort students and ostensibly solve problems of differentiation, Chapman (1988: 5, 174) identified a third factor in the equation that produced the testing-tracking scheme, i.e., the fact that "the tests reflected widely shared values of the Progressive Era." He summarized the matter in this way:

For some the tests were appealing as well because they confirmed widespread assumptions about the superiority of Nordic Europeans, the inferiority of the masses thronging to America from southern and eastern Europe, and of blacks migrating into cities in the North and West.

It must be stated that these attitudes—or prejudices—hardly represent "progressive values" (p. 175) in any historical sense of the term. A great weakness of Chapman's study is his generally vague and often—as illustrated here—misleading usage of the term "progressive." More accurately, it is fair to say that the use of test scores rationalized widely held prejudices of "old immigrants." Although Chapman failed to view it more broadly, the point is that, as usual, the schools were profoundly influenced by the socio-political milieu. Additionally, the contemporary preoccupation with scientific management principles led school administrators to embrace test scores as "scientific" and "efficient," thus enhancing their professional reputations. Furthermore, cultural historians point out that Americans have been fascinated with numbers. Speaking of the manifestations of this trend during the 1920s, the late cultural historian Warren I. Susman (1984: 141-42) observed that,

The mechanization of life generally, when combined with the mounting effort to rationalize all aspects of man's activities, produced a particular middle-class delight in what could be measured and counted. (How fitting, then, were statistics on the "home run," with both numbers hit and distances traveled by the ball.) American could delight in the data that Ruth and other players provided. Athletic records provided a means of measuring achievement—success—in sports as such statistics did in other aspects of the mechanized and rationalized life. Most especially, salary figures also assisted in judging success.

Social historian Michael Kammen succinctly described this phenomenon as an "American propensity for precise calculation" (see Shoemaker 1983: 5). It seems that the proliferating use of standardized test scores during this era was a further manifestation of this tendency. Indeed, Chapman's (1988: 128, 148) acknowledgment of the "widespread public confidence" in testing and his observation that "although early exploration in mental testing began in Europe, the United States quickly took the lead in producing tests for school use," corroborate Susman's hypothesis. Chapman (1988: 148) continued, "Between 1900 and 1932 the United States produced half of all mental tests, with Germany second, Great Britain third, and France fourth. The mental tests produced elsewhere were largely translations of Binet's and Terman's tests." Further, Chapman (1988: 150) observed that the "creation of achievement tests began before the war and increased dramatically throughout the twenties" and that they were used to group students homogeneously. He concluded that "the heyday of intelligence testing peaked in the early twenties, with achievement testing receiving greater attention later in the decade and into the thirties." Clearly, the use of testing to track students was influenced in powerful ways by widespread social passions and prejudices which, as usual, impinged on school practices in ways contrary to the wishes of many educators and ultimately contradictory to cherished democratic ideals.

Tracking, or the segregating of students, is inimical to the spirit and express intent of the comprehensive high school as conceived by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. The *Cardinal Principles* report did not advocate tracking. As mentioned above, throughout much of her discussion, Oakes attributed the comprehensive design to an industrial model. In fact, it was the overwhelming efficiency movement that dominated the schools during the decade following the release of the *Cardinal Principles* report that reduced the "specializing function" of the comprehensive model to the divisive practice of sorting and tracking.

The Common School Ideal

Some scholars have accused the comprehensive high school, as per the *Cardinal Principles* report, of abandoning the American common school tradition. Oakes (1985: 21), again, maintained that, with the advent the comprehensive high school, "gone was the nineteenth-century notion of the need for common learnings to build a cohesive nation." Ravitch (1985: 126), again, claimed that the report "disappointed those who wanted all children to have a liberal education," referring to the common curriculum proposed by the Committee of Ten. In another example of this criticism, Lazerson and Grub (1974: 39) maintained that the incorporation of vocational education into the comprehensive high school "served to break down the common school ideology and the practice of a common educational system for all pupils" and held vocational education and the comprehensive high school responsible for vast differentiation and ultimate segregation of students.

In fact, the *Cardinal Principles* (Commission 1918a) report advocated a powerful, purposeful "unifying"—i.e., common—component in the school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Thus, the report that allegedly abandoned the common school ideal maintained the following:

The ideal of a democracy, . . . involves, . . . unification whereby the members of that democracy may obtain those common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought feeling, and action that make for cooperation, social cohesion, and social solidarity. (p. 21)

The school is the one agency that may be controlled definitely and consciously by our democracy for the purpose of unifying its people. (p. 22)

. . . the secondary school must play an important part [in developing] the common knowledge, common ideals, and common interests essential to American democracy. (p. 22)

In short, the comprehensive school is the prototype of a democracy in which various groups must have a degree of self-consciousness as groups and yet be federated into a larger whole through the recognition of common interests and ideals. (p. 26)

The report recognized and welcomed a wider population into the secondary school and went so far as to suggest that colleges do the same (p. 25). Referring to the secondary school of the past, the report noted that "when there was but little differentiation in the work within the secondary school, and the pupils in attendance were less diversified as to their heredity and interests, social unification in the full sense of the

term could not take place" (p. 23). In summary then, the recommendations of the *Cardinal Principles* report stood squarely at the heart of the common school ideal and, in fact, expanded the reality of a common schooling experience to a vastly wider portion of the student population, to students for whom secondary education would have in the past been a virtual impossibility.

The Cardinal Principles Report Today

It is useful to reexamine the *Cardinal Principles* report for several reasons. As a foundational document in the history of U.S. curriculum, the report should periodically be revisited to reevaluate and reaffirm its historical significance. It may be that an over-reliance on secondary descriptions of such a seminal document may sacrifice historical accuracy to the nuances of scholarly interpretations as well as to the vagaries of popular dissemination.⁴ Inasmuch as the report presented the blueprint for the comprehensive high school model, which has been implemented both in the U.S. and in other countries (notably Sweden and the United Kingdom), the report should be revisited to determine the extent to which the practical application of the model squares with its original configuration.⁵ So it is that while educational scholars have misrepresented both the intent and the provisions of the *Cardinal Principles* report, educational policymakers and practitioners have overlooked the critical unifying function as they exalted the specializing function of the comprehensive high school model (Wraga 1991, 1994). A reexamination of the report is also useful to determine whether its recommendations are any longer meaningful for contemporary educational practice. Indeed, three contemporary issues in U.S. education seem to make such a reexamination particularly timely.

Recently many educators in the U.S. have come increasingly to recognize the miseducative effects of tracking (e.g., Boyer 1983, Goodlad 1984, Oakes 1985). The growing acknowledgment of tracking's shortcomings has led to calls for alternatives to the practice ("Untracking for Equity" 1992, "Alternatives to Tracking" 1989). Probably due in part to allegations that tracking is inherent to the comprehensive model (discussed above) and to a tendency in the U.S. to take the comprehensive ideal for granted, the comprehensive high school model has been overlooked as a possible solution to the tracking problem. This solution may be found in the complementary nature of the specializing and unifying functions of the comprehensive model. In order to effect the specializing and unifying functions in concert with each other, the *Cardinal Principles* (Commission 1918a: 23, emphasis in original) report outlined the following components of the macrocurriculum: "Constants, to be taken by all or nearly all pupils." "Curriculum variables, . . . to be determined for

the most part by vocational needs, including, as they frequently do, preparation for advanced study in special fields." "Free electives, to be taken by pupils in accordance with individual aptitudes or special interests, generally of a nonvocational nature." When student programs are planned to include experiences in all of these curriculum components, it is possible to involve students in specialized studies without completely isolating them from their peers with different aptitudes and interests. That is, the genuinely *common* learning experience provided through curriculum constants would serve to mitigate the potentially divisive effect inherent in specialized courses and programs. A curriculum that aims to provide for specialized needs and at the same time unite a diverse student population must include experiences in curriculum constants, variables, and free electives for all students.

Curriculum constants such as the heterogeneously-grouped classroom and social mingling in cocurricular student activities can go a long way toward enhancing interracial attitudes in particular, and toward uniting diverse students in general (Slavin 1979a, 1979b, 1985). "Common" learnings must not only be common, but must *happen in common*; association is a prerequisite to community. Problem- and issue-focused common learnings courses like the Problems of Democracy course can contribute significantly to developing the desirable mindset for citizens in a democratic society (Aikin 1942, Cornbleth 1982, Wraga 1993). Together, these provisions will foster "those common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought, feeling, and action that make for cooperation, social cohesion, and social solidarity" (Commission 1918a: 21). These arrangements can also respond to the growing concerns about multiculturalism in education and the imperative for providing equitable educational opportunities for an increasingly diverse society and student body.

Finally, the comprehensive ideal explicated in the *Cardinal Principles* report offers a powerful lens for examining the educational and social ramifications of the variegated strategies grouped under the widely heralded general rubric of "school choice" (Wraga 1992). Many school choice proposals call for establishing specialized schools that would cater to a narrow segment of the educational "market" (Chubb and Moe 1990). School choice plans that would separate students by background, interest, ability, or aspirations fly in the face of the comprehensive ideal of uniting a diverse student population while at the same time serving individual needs. Such inherently separatist arrangements should be assessed from the perspective of the socialization purposes served by the unifying function of the comprehensive high school model as explicated in the *Cardinal Principles* report.

Conclusion

Prevailing historical interpretations of the *Cardinal Prin-*

ciples report should be reexamined in light of the complete text of the report and the social, political, and educational developments in which its recommendations were initially implemented. Such a reexamination can clarify the spirit and intent of the report and enable scholars and policymakers to assess the pertinence of the comprehensive model to addressing social and educational dilemmas our nation currently faces. It may also be that a reexamination of other foundational documents of the American curriculum field would yield useful insights into educational policy and practice that similarly could shed light on current curriculum problems and issues.

Notes

1. Additional evidence points to Dewey's influence on the report, as well. By 1902 Dewey had outlined several of the fundamental characteristics of what the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education later termed the comprehensive high school. These included providing an education for all youth, whether vocation- or college-bound, under one roof which, through appropriate curricular and activity provisions, would encourage social mingling that would foster common understandings. For several years immediately preceding the release of the *Cardinal Principles* report, Dewey was a vocal opponent of a dual system of secondary education and an advocate of what he had earlier called the "wider high school." The striking resemblance not only between Dewey's proposals and the substance of the *Cardinal Principles* report, but also between the wording of the report and some of Dewey's writings, together with the wide currency of his ideas at the time and the inclusion of several avowed Deweyans (among them at least one former student—Kilpatrick) on the Commission, though perhaps circumstantial strongly indicate more influence on Dewey's part on the report than commonly allowed by many educational historians (see Wraga 1991, 1994).
2. Interestingly, in his widely recognized study, *The One Best System*, Tyack (1974) never discussed the comprehensive model per se. Indeed, the *Cardinal Principles* report did not appear in his references. Yet Tyack (1974: 191, 279, 190) did touch upon matters of a diverse student body, unification, and a "comprehensive system" of schooling.
3. See Hlebowitsh (1992) for a provocative discussion of another important document of the curriculum field and Saxe (1991:251) for a similar discussion of a foundational document in the field of social studies.

4. It may be that the proclivity of some contemporary scholars to depict the *Cardinal Principles* report as a manifestation of coercive, antidemocratic social control despite important evidence that strongly suggests otherwise, discussed above, belies a latent presentism in recent historical scholarship about education in the United States. It is almost as if these criticisms of the *Cardinal Principles* report (and of the comprehensive model) have been reified into a historical truth. This phenomenon could be, to borrow Kliebard's (1992:161) language, an example of "uncritical acceptance of fundamental ideas and ways of thought inherited from past curriculum leaders [read: historians]." Kliebard (1992: 161) warned that "the presentism embedded in what is actually a commonly cited history results in an obfuscating, rather than an illuminating, effect on curriculum issues."
5. See Tanner (1979, 1982) and Wraga (1991, 1994) for discussions of the comprehensive high school in U.S. education.

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