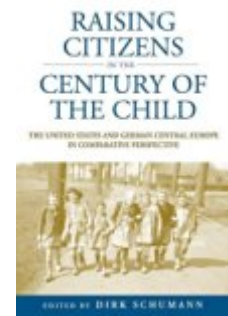


Dirk Schumann, ed. *Raising Citizens in the "Century of the Child": The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010. 256 pp. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84545-696-2.

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## Century of the Child - Century of the Nation

This is an inspiring book for any social scientist analyzing childhood. It extends historical analyses, such as those by Jacques Donzelot (*La Police des Familles*, 1977) or Detlev J.K. Peukert (*Grenzen der Sozialdisziplinierung*, 1986), that have been made for the nineteenth and early twentieth century showing the strategies by which social reformers used to change the conditions of growing up. The reformers at that time longed for a more orderly and efficient society, and therefore set their goals far beyond children's actual conditions. Such analyses as we find in the aforementioned books pointed primarily to efforts of social disciplining of children and youth according to the utilitarian and authoritarian models of socialization and social order. Dirk Schumann and the group of authors which he assembled extend the time horizon of analysis up to the present day, and also show a broader scope of goals, aims, and strategies which may be found in reformers' efforts to shape childhood institutions. This is already implicated in the title's first part: "Raising Citizens." For Schumann, citizenship is not a static category but refers to practices "which define a person as a competent member of society" (p. 2). Citizenship is also the conceptual framework which this book uses "for linking the formation of the subject through child-rearing and education to the development of political systems and state institutions" (p. 2).

In eleven chapters, specific episodes in the twentieth century in Germany and United States are analyzed to link child rearing ideas, strategies, institutions, and poli-

cies to political situations and goals. The programs of the United States Children's Bureau, educational advice literature in Germany, discourses around American kindergartens and their programs, collective education in the Bohemian Lands, German parents' effort for a democratization of schools—these are some of the many topics which are presented in this conceptual framework. In all the chapters the politics of forming citizens is the red thread of analysis—the editor deserves praise for this conceptual consistency of the collection.

The book sheds light on a variety of strategies intended to shape conditions and institutions of childhood. The range of practices expected from the above-mentioned "competent member of society" varied during the twentieth century in United States and Germany, according to social groups and political situations. Therefore, the almost unique concentration on utilitarian functionalizing and disciplining of young people, which characterizes still the analyses of Donzelot or Peukert, becomes softened. Other societal goals which motivated the shaping of childhood institutions, kindergartens, schools, and families deserve our attention.

Ellen Berg reveals for us internationalism in American kindergartens during the First World War in her chapter, "Linked with the Welfare of All Peoples." While Berg highlights the concern about national identity and the "Americanization" programs in kindergartens that were intended to create reliable American citizens and

to integrate immigrant children into American life, she also finds a progressive internationalism. This theme was related to the question of how Americans should relate to the world after the war, and encouraged visions of world citizenship. Language acquisition, American patriotism, and home economics lessons were elements of the Americanization programs. The international program, on the other hand, offered specific stories which were recommended to teachers—for example, a discussion of Esperanto was intended to instill in the children the attitude “that every race has contributed imperishable gifts to mankind” (p. 92).

Dirk Schumann in his chapter (“Asserting Their ‘Natural Right’”) presents highly interesting material on parental attempts to democratize educational institutions in Germany after the Second World War. German parents contributed in this way to undermining the authoritarian legacy of German history. Astonishingly enough, parents’ protest and their actions in favor of more democratic schools did not start in the late 1960s, but were already present in the 1950s. However, parents’ power in school affairs remained minor and this is also why a re-confessionalization of the public school system became possible after the war, although most parents preferred nonconfessional schools.

Most contributions in this book concentrate on episodes when national interests outweigh children’s rights. And that is why the voices urging more discipline for children retained prominence over those favoring a loving and warm environment. National interest evidently implies a strict and even harsh education, so that even a mother’s love often attracted suspicion and was considered a danger to male youth. This was true for United States, where “the growing domination of American mothers of the ‘mom’ type is the immediate menace to our security” (p. 127), as a magazine in 1945 informed its readers and pleaded for a higher degree of fathers’ influence. Rebecca Jo Plant (“Debunking Mother Love”) presents convincing evidence of such devaluation of female love. The “momism” critique waned only in the 1960s and 1970s, and Plant attributes this development to the easing of Cold War tensions (p. 134).

The idea that too much love weakens youth and German fortitude also appears in Carolin Kay’s chapter, “How Should We Raise Our Son Benjamin,” on child rearing advice books in early twentieth-century Germany. Mothers were instructed to be loving, but firm and to subjugate the child’s will to their own through strict behavior. *Affenliebe*, or spoiling the child, was a terrible

mistake (p. 113). A popular advice book, *Wie erziehen wir unseren Sohn Benjamin*, recommended slapping the baby, if necessary, as young as five or six months. The author of this incredible but successful advice book, Adolf Matthias, made reference to the French-German War in the second half of the nineteenth century and concluded, “We must protect our most precious gift, so that everywhere and always we will remain a vigorous people ready to defend ourselves” (p. 113). Other voices in the advice books of this time spoke in favor of a more liberal education and accepting the child as an “independent small being” (p. 116). The majority, however, tended to recommend discipline, and there was constant complaint about parents being too soft and lenient.

Public interest in the child has long been linked to the interest of the “nation”; efforts to shape childhood started with the birth of nations and have been enhanced with rising nationalism. Such is the argument of Sonya Michel in her chapter (“Children and the National Interest”) and she refers to the history of childhood in several countries of Central and Eastern Europe. “Prior to the emergence of nation-states, much of the child welfare that existed was organized under local private and often religious auspices.” This inextricable linkage of the public interest for children to national interests—“whether for good or for ill”, as Michel says (p. 44)—may well explain the focus on discipline, while love, a nurturing environment, and even fun remain secondary or suspicious.

Another property of such efforts to shape childhood is made apparent by many of these authors: they are the distinctions drawn between groups of children—white children and black children, middle-class children and working-class children, immigrant children and autochthonous children. Most efforts to shape childhood institutions and to change or preserve childhood conditions clearly distinguish between these groups, address either the one or the other, or address them in different ways. They value groups differently, taking them to be either an opportunity for national progress, or primarily a threat to it. Michel brings this point forward sharply when she explains American discourses on family and children’s future (p. 30). We find it as well in Katharine S. Bullard’s “Children’s Future, Nation’s Future,” on the United States Children’s Bureau. The Bureau operated with a clear white, middle-class bias. We might add the obvious fact that the treatment of children could not very well escape the fact that some groups, like women or African Americans, were excluded completely from (full) citizenship for a long time.

While this book assembles contributions about developments on both sides of the Atlantic—the United States and Germany—it is not a strict comparison and the presentation of important processes and programs concerning childhood in the twentieth century necessarily remains fragmentary. But the range of topics that are presented in this way allows insight into many constellations of “raising citizens,” so that we can consider the linkage of child-rearing and education to the development of political systems in many variations. The various chapters taken together convey evidence for the main idea of the book: twentieth-century childhood is a political, and especially, national affair. It would be interesting to continue this analysis to important processes of today. The current discussions and initiatives

on early childhood education and the far-reaching links to societal development might become transparent if examined as a part of nation-making. The assumption of national interest as a main motor in efforts concerning childhood might need some modification because today international organizations play an important role in this development, too. We might also wonder why advice books prescribing more and stricter discipline have become fashionable bestsellers again in today’s Germany and how this is linked to contemporary political currents or to the differentiation of groups of children. Taken together this is an inspiring book and required reading for historians and as well as sociologists working on childhood.

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