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Reading Analysis: "Healthy" Children and "Healthy" Schools

The "experts" examined in the readings each define the healthy/normal child differently. In "'Through No Fault of Their Own': Josephine Dauphinee and the 'Subnormal' Pupils of the Vancouver School System, 1911-1941" Josephine Dauphinee is deemed a progressive woman for her segregation of "slow" children. However, she deems that they need to be sterilized and essentially hidden from society. Others also saw low functioning children as a hindrance to the "normal" children in the classrooms. These experts firmly believed in eugenics and it was the basis of their decision making when it came to low functioning children.

In "'The Rising Generation': Laying Claims to the Health of Adolescents in English Canada, 1920-70" the "experts" did not support eugenics and their approach to health was gendered. Comacchio notes that the experts of this time period blurred the lines between mental health and physical health, so it is essential to question their methods and findings as mental health and physical health are two very different concerns.

Lastly, "Race, Class, Health: School Medical Inspection and 'Healthy' Children in British Columbia, 1890-1930" focused on the issue of health and cleanliness as it pertained to minorities in society. The article describes a middle class, white society that was determined to keep themselves distanced from the lower class, racialized minorities. Throughout history this was done in many ways, however it never occurred to me that it was done through sanitation and health as well. The minorities had to be to the standard of white society to fit the standard of "normal".

All of these articles have a common thread and that is to hide or contain those deemed abnormal in society so as to not contaminate the "clean", middle class, Anglo-Canadian image that society wished to put out. While it may have been progressive at that time to have separate schools for lower functioning students, it was not done out of compassion. It was a way to hide them from the public eye. The definitions of a healthy/normal child was another way the public school system attempted to reform society and influence the students to be what they saw as proper members of society.

In modern schooling, we still have separate classes or schools for lower functioning or special needs students, but now it is more of a tool to enhance their lives and their education. There is also still evidence of "healthy/normal" children as seen by the experts in these articles if you look at lower class schools compared to middle class or upper class, private, schools. The children that attend the private schools would not be allowed to attend if they were not "healthy" or sanitary. Children from lower class families sometimes do not have the access to amenities and must go to school in whatever condition they are in. But this does not mean that they should be segregated or looked down upon because of it in the school system.