A socio-political understanding of education and citizenship: Canadian-Portuguese youth, alienation, and the educational process

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Abstract. My aim in this study is a critique of the logic inherent in functional models of education. Here, I will sketch out a phenomenology of critical thinking, which will help account for both the enthusiastic support of critical thinking courses and the determined opposition to them by certain political and market-place forces. I will argue that education should be more than just learning a skill, or fitting people into an economy. As a representative group to reflect on, recent community discussions on alienation amongst youth of Portuguese ancestry in our contemporary Canadian education process will guide my theoretical investigations of a general loss of self-determination, which produces false consciousness and low self-esteem. These reified states of mind will be analyzed through Marxian and phenomenological categories. I will ask, ‘what is the nature of the relationship between thinking, language, and education’ (as a humanizing process)? This question receives its classical analysis in G. W. F. Hegel’s understanding of ‘moral education.’ More recently, it has been re-stated and re-examined in the writings of Emile Durkheim, Irving Goffman, and Henry Giroux. Each of these thinkers, from the perspective of his conceptual framework, is clarifying the inter-related meanings of thinking, language, and education, in the context of what it means to be a ‘Human Being.’ This leads to an exploration of the socializing and humanizing dimension of the educational process.

Keywords. Moral education, alienation, dramaturgy, critical collective consciousness, Canada

In today’s society there is much talk surrounding the climate of what it is and how it is we educate our youth. I hope to continue the conversation of what it is we claim education does for the nation by offering some insight into the ethos of modern Canada and how this shows itself in the constraints and freedoms our education system offers our young. For the purpose of this paper, my background reflection is on Portuguese-Canadian youth who have been highlighted as one of Canada’s least educated immigrant communities. According to the Toronto District School Board, just 17 percent of the children of Portuguese immigrants have a BA or higher level of education—the lowest number amongst second-generation Torontonians (Presley & Brown,
We must therefore begin with questions around culture and environment for this specific community and the challenges they face in and around the education process.

Here, I will put forward that the ‘good’ citizen or ‘social agent’ must be shaped and shapes his or her identity from the social narratives in which they find themselves. My intent is to challenge the term postmodern, which is everywhere yet nowhere at once. We call on it in times of convenience (the classroom, our subjective taste in art . . . ) but can it sustain a sense of the moral actor as we prepare our young in the realms of education and critical reasoning? I argue that without sound reasoning and understanding, our youth become lost in systemic irrationality that will follow them even as they attempt to engage in critical thought and/or a university education.

Education is a moral issue that must engage our attention and deserves our critical energies. How we understand education plays a part in the form or the arguments designed to persuade us towards moral commitment or action. This study will focus upon the important task of formulating clear moral premises around education policies. I make the claim that the market approach to education will deaden and threaten critical thinking skills that are essential to discussions on freedom and justice in a democratic society. I argue that promoting the moral and ethical dimensions of the education process is a responsibility we have in relation to our communities, our society, and ourselves.

Ethos in my work will develop a specific relationship to the state of education in the modern world today. That is, it will concern itself with the nature and purpose of public education as an ethos of Canadian culture and how it perceives itself in the realms of past and present narratives. Tensions between education as “functional” and education as “critical thinking,” inform our discussions on what vision animates education—both sides of the debate arguing that they produce a desirable kind of person/society.

My aim in this study is a critique of the logic inherent in functional models of education. Here, I will sketch out a phenomenology of critical thinking, which will help account for both the enthusiastic support of critical thinking courses and the determined opposition to them by certain political and market-place forces. I will argue that education should be more than just learning a skill, or fitting people into an economy.

As a representative group for this particular paper, an analysis of alienation amongst youth of Portuguese ancestry in our contemporary Canadian education process will guide my theoretical investigations of a general loss of self-determination, which produces false consciousness and low self-esteem. These reified states of mind will be analyzed through Marxian and phenomenological categories. I will ask, ‘what is the nature of the relationship between thinking, language, and education’ (as a humanizing process)? This question receives its classical analysis in G. W. F. Hegel’s understanding of ‘moral education.’ Subsequently, this topic has continued to be re-stated and re-
examined, for example, in the writings of Emile Durkheim (1956, 1965, 1977, 1983, among others), Paulo Freire (1970), Henry Giroux (1983, 1989; Giroux & Purpel, 1983, among others), Irving Goffman (1959), and Antonio Gramsci (1971). Each of these thinkers, from the perspective of his conceptual framework, is clarifying the inter-related meanings of thinking, language, and education, in the context of what it means to be a ‘Human Being.’ This leads to an exploration of the socializing and humanizing dimension of the educational process.

Theoretical orientation and methodology
My analysis of education as a moral issue has been informed by both the functional perspective and critical pedagogy within the tradition of the sociological discipline. I have also gone outside these orientations in order to strengthen and develop arguments. Marxist, as well as a type of Weberian interpretative theory (see, for example, Weber, 1968, 1981), have aided in a more fully rounded account of the capabilities of a critical pedagogy that understands its roots. An understanding of education within its philosophical setting also infuses much of my work. Arguments around dialogues of education as exemplary (lived and represented) or as instrumental (‘truth’ seeking) play themselves out as I continue to reflect and write in this area. I will attempt to write from this collective achievement of theoretical interpretations. For better or worse, we all have background texts that we draw on, and we continue to pursue matters, such as education, that hold some sort of value and complexity for us.

My research on the breaking down of modern and post-modern rationalities, in order to grasp the kinds of educating we are doing, is essential to understanding the unhappiness, that is, the cost to personhood that we all face and feel at the national level of social membership and citizenship. Hence the methodology used is a natural extension of my theoretical orientation. Here, using textual or content interpretation, I will reflect on and illustrate the substance of the arguments in these texts, as well as how these arguments get constructed. Text analysis is a type of dialogue between the authors as created and extended by how well I can interpret and ask the right sorts of questions. My aim is to sketch out a phenomenology of critical thinking which will help make visible my own assumptions and biases. How I am reading these authors is essential to how my arguments will be understood and developed logically.

The economy of education
This section of the paper considers models of education (market place and functional) that serve and cater to the goals of a capitalist economy. First, the working definitions of these models must be addressed in order to continue the illustration of the disparities between the whole notion of critical thinking and professional accreditation requirements. Market-place demands on education are premised on notions of the business model as efficient and based on skill
and competency. That is, an implicit trust in competition as the best form of strengthening and delivering a better education system. This, of course, undermines education as a process of learning to think creatively and alternatively. In the market-place model, education is about exchangeability of labour—and people are simply commodities. As John F. Witte (2000) argues:

What would a pure education market produce? On the demand side, with families paying full costs, the total investment in education is likely to fall and, given various estimates of willingness to mortgage future incomes, fall substantially. Second, with demand being heavily dependent on income (which also conditions ability to borrow against future income), investment would be uneven between families and highly correlated with income. (pp. 201–202)

To consider the implications of market-place mentality on education is to ask about what being human means to us today. Concepts of freedom, rights, and happiness all compliment the ethos of democratic citizenship. The idea of an education system that merely reproduces workers offends our very notion of ‘personhood’ and education comes to be viewed as ideological manipulation. Namely, our subjectivity is constructed as compliant to the needs of the dominant market system in place.

Education as competitive behaviour creates personhood—but it is one that is insecure, divided, lacking in critical consciousness, and reformulated as items of consumption. The moral consequence of a market-place education model is, of course, *estrangement*. Namely, our inability to self-recognize will be played out not only in the arena of education as a socializing process, but also in how we perform at home, work, and in every identity formation institution in which we participate.

Here we can begin to ask about what kind of citizen emerges from an education system that views itself as a corporation. We must ask ourselves to reflect on a society where “student” and “product” become interchangeable terms. In our modern, capitalistic societies, we have come to accept the dominant language of privatization and ownership in the material world as the norm. This ‘norm’ produces subjects that are regulated by access to commodities as their lifeline to freedom. ‘To have’ or ‘not to have’ marks us as belonging or not belonging to the ‘good’ life. This shaping of consciousness is amplified in an education system that begins this type of thinking early on in the life of the individual and in the ethos of social perception. As the corporation/school raises the child, happiness becomes the means to consumption (including “the grade” as a thing to possess, not the end result of interacting and maturing with the subject matter at hand). Barlow and Robertson (1994) put it this way:

The commercialization of the classroom and the corporate intrusion into the education system are working very well. They are producing a generation of children who, as Ralph Nader describes them, are “growing up corporate.” They are treated—and often see themselves—as consumers-in-training, pre-workers, future entrepreneurs. Such children ask few questions and do not challenge the culture of competitiveness. (p. 85)
The wants our children have in an education system styled on the free market are 'wants' that usually go without a need or reflective act. They look at education but are not engaged with it. This surface understanding of what it means to “get an education” inevitably fails the majority of our youth as the corporate model of who is educated defines them and they willingly accept these labels without the creative and critical skills that would allow them to engage with and challenge this exploitation.

The promise of modernity lies in its appeal to the rights of the individual: as human beings, we would like to assume that we are all unique individuals. To some extent this may be true, but at the macro-sociological level, we understand that our identity is also shaped by the surroundings and community in which we cohabitate. Our education system is a continuation of this larger ethos and we as critical educators aim to see a progression of meaningfulness that is constantly re-examined and engaged with by our youth. However, within a market model of education we see a regression in critical and alternative thinking skills. The reduction of critical inquiry and construction of limited ways of seeing normalizes what is considered ‘education.’ It is the ‘massaging over’ life that Nietzsche discusses in his works. That is, it dis-invites critical reflection and mass-produces a type of thinking that does not reveal the complexity of human life.

The complexity of human life is part of the ethos revealed to us in an education system that is tied into the whole of existence (the integrity of education). It is in the gift of ‘becoming human’ that education shows its true significance. An education, not founded in the functions or market of reproducing the system, but founded in the humanness of allowing every avenue of reflection and debate to be left open to its social members. Dottin, Armstrong, Cummins, Edmisten, and Fritz (1990) clearly illustrate this concern:

It is not possible to discover the full value of academic freedom without asking about the value of intellectual freedom to inquire, express ideas and debate spheres of communication and education. Since these trends occurred once before in our century, we should ask about the ultimate effects they have had on intellectual freedom in general and academic freedom in particular. Since these trends culminated in fascism we should ask what formulations were given to intellectual and academic freedom at the time. How were these freedoms construed? What value was placed on them? This will clarify the nature of the choice before us today when we decide how much we value academic freedom. (p. 2)

And,

The extreme orientation toward careers and making money in today’s society, with extreme consequences for what is offered as education, makes it hard to believe that education has often been a very different kind of activity. In the western world there have been academies, from the earliest times dedicated to the Greek ideal of character formation and human excellence (arête). The goal for the cultivation of judgment is the ability to temper one’s judgments (sophrosyne), always seeking relevant evidence. With this conception, education becomes a many-sided process of development, cultivating the many sides of human beings so that they can appreciate
considerations that have a bearing on fundamental choices as well as on immediate practical decisions. The goal of this educational process is directly at odds with the goal of restricting education to vocational and technical preparation. It is in the interest of people who prefer democracy to choose the more traditional educational ideal over the ideal that has prevailed recently in a period distinctly more materialistic and nationalistic than others. (p. 11)

Here we recognize the urgency in revealing the dangers of a market-based approach to education. Not only is the idea of ‘what is education’ at stake, but also the very core of bringing up aware and caring citizens is in crisis. How is it that this functional model of education operates? Clearly it seduces through its numbing of the population by dis-inviting us from the ability to think as it ‘wows’ and ‘dazzles’ us with education as entertainment and/or a stroll through the market to buy what we can and forget/not see the rest.

This reformulation of education represses any imagination that might allow for challenging the order of the day (capitalism). Since we are ‘born into Capitalism,’ seeing the possibility of other becomes impossible when even the institution of education constructs this as unavailable or unreasonable. How do we as educators get students interested in being critically aware members when the world around them constructs this way of thinking as deviant or strange? The urgency here is to hold onto the traditional and democratic roots of ‘what it means to educate’ and allow these to challenge the modern narrative of education as a stepping stone for your place in the market economy. If, as Barlow and Robertson (1994) write, the only goal of education is about raising the future workforce, we as a society all lose. This type of corporate culture will eventually create an ethos dripping in the rights of the one over the rights of the group, extending well beyond the classroom boundaries. We will also come to feel this egotism at every level, and on every corner of human interaction:

Schools are being pressured to train students into this corporate culture, indoctrinating them in individual competitiveness and loyalty to company policy. Many are applying the TQM model to the school. Says Doug Noble: “Above all, high-tech corporate interest in education reform expects a school system that will utilize sophisticated performance measures and standards to sort students and to provide a reliable supply of such adaptable, flexible, loyal, mindful, expendable, ‘trainable’ workers for the twenty-first century. This, at bottom, underlies the corporate drive to retool education and retool human capital. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 89)

This corporate pressure also produces youth who passionately defend what they are involved in—trying to get the high-paying job—and neglects the type of thinking that will allow them to understand why they did not get that job or the leisure life promised.

If how we ‘see’ is regulated and the education process is a part of how we come to see, reflect, and understand, then we clearly need to challenge a model of education that privileges the bottom line. The market model of education deliberately constructs narratives of efficiency and success by appealing to the
capitalist ethos of competition and aggressiveness in getting ahead. As capitalism is generally publicly approved, the use of its ideas to run our education system is generally unchallenged. We ‘approve’ a system that values hard work and dedication by the individual. We ‘approve’ a system that regulates itself in order for the rest of us to get on with the pleasures it can afford. We do not think about those who do not succeed in this system as anything but people who are ‘not trying hard enough.’ This type of regressive thinking is precisely what we cannot afford to approve of for the sake of our future society. What we have ‘afforded’ to live with these past decades cannot continue as more and more of our youth are becoming bored with life, with the social, and the meaninglessness they cannot express in the Capitalist language we have offered them.

So what does the corporate model offer the realm of education? By treating education as a commodity, it offers our youth the false hope that maybe this commodity will give them some meaning or purpose in life. As Marx (see, for example, 1967, 1989; Marx & Engels, 1996; Fischer, 1970) and countless others have shown us, commodity consumption cannot satisfy our search for meaning and happiness in life. If we offer this as a viable means to understanding existence, we end up with a generation that is unable to express their values and desires in anything but a capitalistic language. This can lead to an incoherence and imbalance between what they are feeling and seek to express and a mode of expression that is limited in challenging and questioning the boredom and/or anxiety they feel in our culture. They learn to see education as the folder they bind their essays in, rather than the meaning of the words written in it. They learn to barter and negotiate for their final grade, rather than feel the human growth and maturation of working towards a final grade.

The ethos built in a market-based education system cannot sustain the overall social ethos of empathy and communal engagement that a traditional form of education offers its citizens (not consumers or products). This traditional form of education is deeply rooted in the making of the political citizen: today’s youth as engaged with and interested in the future of civilization:

Democratic action also involves cooperation and the citizenship role. The essence of the cooperative relationship is two-way communication; it is possible only when individuals have purposes in common and recognize the need they have for each other. When a cooperative and collaborative attitude exists, a group becomes active and pours its efforts into problem-solving activities. In both training and educational activities, people “... learn from experience that interdependence exists and that they are part of it. And thus they have consciousness of their citizenship role. (Dottin et al., 1990, p. 54)

For this reason the cultural formation of consciousness must be taken up in an ethos of progressive education. Namely, education as rooted in our multiple histories but always with its sights on the multiple possibilities for the
future. This entails a clear understanding that an education system formulated through the eyes of capitalism alone will invite our youth to participate enthusiastically in seeing themselves as mere images or surface appearances. They will treat what it means to be human as the appearance of things, rather than search for essence (the goal of the search, not the essence found or lost, as the true purpose of educating oneself). This in turn helps facilitate the order of consumption—where the ‘appearance’ of things takes on cultural appropriateness. Thus, we have to ask how our youth can take themselves seriously when they inevitably buy into these produced images of themselves, even as they are aware of buying into them, and so the cycle continues.

Our difficulty as educators lies in challenging our students to see that the ‘norm’ is not ‘natural.’ We at least still have our traditional sense of education as the making of the ‘moral human being.’ Our biggest challenge is in de-normalizing capitalist language in the classroom. A market-based education system will not allow for this type of challenge, as it is a significant partner in state control. As a tool for popularizing the status quo, it cannot be critical of the power that feeds it. Corporations and governments working together to control the plights of their future workforce create market-place education. This legitimating of the status quo is a real danger to the future of creative and critical thinkers, as they are up against the power of hegemonic rule as it disseminates into the larger society:

Survival of the fittest is the message, but for public consumption, right-wing education reform must be couched in the language of excellence and achievement. This strategy promises to be just as effective as the efforts of the conservative alliance to manipulate our political consciousness and economic policies. Business has worked hard to convince Canadians that their interests are our interests; business invested a great deal in having the public see the deficits as the only issue of economic importance, and to convince the public of the inexhaustible opportunities presented by the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. And while many Canadians are distrustful of, if not hostile to these political motives of business, we seem unprepared to regard their sudden interest in the reform of schools with similar skepticism. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 122)

This legitimization of business practices as the best tools to run our schools runs throughout our narratives of how best to bring up our young. These narratives are further legitimimized in mass media regarding the education system that encourage passivity and/or uniform responses contained in the language of efficiency and free-market analysis. With little time spent on engaging these issues, we as a society learn little from this lack of activity. Like an education system steeped in market allusions, our own understanding of this takeover of mind/education is no longer active and engaged, as we simply channel the reproduced language and imagery of the status quo.

My intent here was to highlight and connect the type of interrupted learning that comes from the functional or market-place model of education. Being critical is not part of the construction of a docile workforce. To do so
would be to destroy the very idea of market-place education from within. Note that the real danger of a market-styled education is the representations of the everyday life that this type of learning generates onto the larger society. This omnipresent and continual legitimization of market discourse in all spheres of life leads to our inability to think along any other types and levels of imaginings. As our youth are ‘sold’ on education means getting a job or education is about survival of the “most fit,” we leave them with little access to the comprehension of education as a lifelong journey that may include a particular career, but is so much more as we call on it to aid us through very human struggles throughout our lives. Education as developing character—one that can think and read beyond the surface or functional understandings of social institutions—can allow for a, dare I say, happier and more aware population, even in our darkest moments.

Re-thinking the value system inherent in a market-place education is essential in making an argument against it running our educational institutions as a whole. What is at stake is the capacity for an ethos rich in human compassion, reason, and the ability to think clearly in times of trial and urgency. As technology further enhances our travels into the global (literally and metaphorically), we must encourage education as a human right, that is, humanity’s right to access its own understanding of freedom and humaneness. Control over what is learned and how it is learned (in the name of advancing capitalism, for example) can only end up turning on itself as its forced compliance weighs heavily on the human need to figure things out for themselves.

Much of the arguments and theoretical positionings above can be dramatically illustrated in the levels of educational attainment in Canada’s Portuguese populations. This re-thinking of neo-liberal or market-place education is paramount if the Portuguese population is to increase its educational attainment levels at the post-secondary (college and university) level. Statistics collected by various sources show that compared to all other European groups in Canada, thirty-three percent of the Portuguese have not completed their high school degrees (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009, p. 9). Interviews done within the Portuguese community itself reveal their market-style mentality towards education. That is, that their own youth are “not working hard enough at school to get the jobs” or are “already working,” hence do not need higher levels of education (Abada et al., 2009, p. 9).

It is this cultural and general resistance to education as citizen building, as critical thinking and engagement within society at large, that needs to be addressed as a systemic problem in the Portuguese-Canadian population. This is not to negate the relevance of education as “skill acquirement,” but to generate multiple voices of education beyond the all too dominant narrative of educating our youth towards a “job.” The dominance of the economic narrative leads to a weakening of the other purposes of education, which at times become lost in the individualistic and capitalistic dreams for a “better
future.’ This, too, can hurt our youth as they become aware of the capitalist dream that market-place education promises but on which it fails to deliver (the process of alienation that will be considered later on in this paper).

The problem of “resistance” is at core here. What exactly is the resistance to? And what is the resistance in relation to? Is this resistance part of the working-class “hard worker” identity? These questions about the Portuguese and their educational attainment are at the heart of the problem here in Canada. In analyzing this relationship, we will come to understand the resistance as a symptom of the “immigrant imagination.” In Canada, the prevalent narrative of “immigrants as building this nation” is at the heart of this resistance. Although not consciously discussed, the hegemonic values of ‘real Canadians vs. immigrant Canadians’ still informs the Portuguese in Canada in terms of their views towards an education for ‘work’ as opposed to an education for critical thinking or enlightenment. Here, the prevalent narrative of the “hard working immigrant” comes to dominate the ethos of Portuguese-Canadians. Yes, we are Canadian citizens, but we are the ‘worker’ type of citizens that helped build (and they use the term literally) this nation. “The phrase ‘the hard-working Portuguese,’ while regarded by many as external validation of both Portuguese struggles to overcome discriminatory obstacles, and cultural values of perseverance, sacrifice and hard work, is in fact a negative commentary on the Portuguese-Canadian community” (Pacheco, 2004, as paraphrased in Pereira, 2011, p. 8). Further, as Pacheco argues (as cited in Pereira (2011):

It has become part of the Portuguese individual’s and community’s cultural, racial and ethnic identity and values—despite being an observation and sentiment originating from and projected by the dominant class. In other words, the dominant class has defined Portugueseness in this way, and the Portuguese community in Canada has both appropriated this identity and is constrained by it. (p. 28)

The hegemonic narrative remains that as immigrants (even if we are second and third generation) the goal is to “use” education as a stepping stone to get a job. Education as more than its market-place value becomes seen as a luxury by the Canadian who still sees themselves as an ‘immigrant.’ Adding to the Canadian economy, as a labourer, is the preferred model and story to which the average Portuguese-Canadian subscribes. Again, the problem is not having pride in being a labourer; the problem is that this narrative becomes the dominant voice or ‘only story’ passed down to our youth about education and the Portuguese in Canada.

On family and becoming social members
Historically the family has been located as the place for learning and experiencing the fundamental relationships of caring, of learning that there is an “other.” Family begins as the oral place, or as the first appearance of morality, but its close connection to the economy means that we cannot leave moral teachings simply up to that one dimension of the many aspects social
life. Moral education must play a comprehensive role in a world that is no longer neatly divided into private and public spheres of action. For more than a century and a half, sociology has sought to bridge the connection between the reality of the family and its conceptualization, between the immediate existential experience of the family and the attempt to bring its reality into a systematic account with sufficient analytic rigor. Simultaneously, social sciences theories, as well as philosophy proper, have generally shied away from any in-depth attempt to conceptualize family as an object of thought. As a result of these two structural constraints—that is, the social sciences’ and philosophy’s at times abstract formulations of the family—the family is conceptualized simply as a structural response on the part of social institutions. The nature of a discipline’s questioning is crucial to knowing how its body of knowledge is constructed. The purpose here is not to ‘overthrow’ existing lines of questioning and replace them with new and improved models. Rather, I seek to open us up to different questions, and, more importantly, to argue for an exploration of the deep connections between the family as a concept and the general social and mental formations found at the heart of humanity. Religion, philosophy, and literature provide us with multiple sources for the investigation of the family. Although the latter disciplines generally do not engage in positivist investigation of processes, statistics, and institutions, studies carried out within their purview should not accept an inferior status. Culture is not a simple adjunct to family. Family is, from its very source, a cultural phenomenon. To ignore culture is to concede a significant victory to positivism, which argues that all such non-empirical material is easily distilled by a sophisticated empirical social science. Yet, I will argue that family is on the functional margins of human existence only in a metaphorical sense. In reality, family is at the center of the most serious and self-defining questions within social and political theory.

Family is a transitive property from an original differentiation (Hegel, 1998). Humans in a state of nature live in a state of family. Family is defined in both Roman and Common Law traditions as a re-enactment of the state of nature. Such a state is seen by most of the great theorists, from Hobbes to Hegel, as a lawless world of disorder and anarchy. When rules and orders enter human history, so do altered notions of the family. This entrance of rules and orders (morality, laws) displays a basic legal structural element at the heart of family and shows social members how to understand it. G. W. F. Hegel put morality, the mind, at the center of much of his social theory. In Hegel, the family’s original place of teaching what is moral is linked to what helps shape our social mind or ethos as a community. Family is a necessary process in Hegel’s social theory. It is a linking between nature and society. In the logic of his system, the family ties ‘abstract right’ into morality. It also binds divine and human law and gives rise to various forms of “collision of duties,” between private or familial senses of right and their public counterparts. This is so because Hegel is an essentially logical thinker who deeply believes in the
intimate and immanent connection of reality and concept. Existence and logic must be intertwined and reconciled.

In Hegel’s system, family functions as a basic force of differentiation. The ‘simply being’ of consciousness will face various and repetitive challenges to its existence. Through this process it comes to know itself and it comes to terms with reality as well. These clashes drive the dialectical logic. Family, by its very nature, is a tearing of the social as well as a mending of it. It begins as a capturing of the ethos of society and its laws. The founders of states were lawless men who created an order of heroic construction. They were, in essence, criminals by the law of the family. For Hegel (1998), the conflict between human and divine law plays a crucial role, as specified in an important section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

This moment which expresses the ethical sphere in this element of immediacy or [simple] being, or which is an immediate consciousness of itself, both as essence and as the particular self, in an ‘other’, i.e. as a natural ethical community—this is the Family. The family, as the *unconscious*, still inner Notion [of the ethical order], stands opposed to its actual, self-conscious existence; as the element of the nation’s actual existence, it stands opposed to the nation itself; as the *immediate* being of the ethical order, it stands over against that order which shapes and maintains itself by working for the universal; the Penates stand opposed to the Universal Spirit. (p. 268)

This logic of the law of the family is based on an earth-bound, elemental, communal life. The gods that dominate are the dark forces of death and the land. This law is based in a duty to the family and its intimate gods of hearth. Violations bring avenging powers upon the assailant. Blood must be shed in vengeance for filial piety. The individual, as a separate substance, does not exist in this reality. The pure force of the ancestors, blood relations, and the earth are of prime importance and overshadow any real subjectivity. This is the world of the Greek Furies who sought their vengeance against Orestes in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. Orestes had murdered his own mother and had thereby committed the heinous sin of spilling familial blood. Despite the fact that Orestes was avenging the death of his own father, Agamemnon, the Furies or Eumenides saw his sin as unforgivable. They dogged him and drove him to the point of insanity.

Orestes seeks refuge in Athens and is given a trial presided over by Athena. The Furies prosecute their case while Apollo defends Orestes. The crime is committed via Orestes’s transgression. Yet, he seeks a different order wherein the execution of the head of the state, in the person of Agamemnon, is seen as a crime of the highest kind. The founding of a new law, a human law, brings with it a criminal accusation. The heroes of ancient Greece are criminal founders who re-define the entire structure of law. The court and jury decide Orestes’s case. The gods of the old world succumb to the rational world of the legal procedure.
Hegel, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, provides us with a logical narrative of the movement whereby the human and divine laws mutually indict one another. His account is based around Sophocles’s *Antigone*. Polynices and Eteocles are brothers that have killed each other on the field of battle. They, along with Antigone, are the offspring of Oedipus. Creon, the siblings’ uncle, sees Polynices as a traitor. He orders that the remains of his nephew be put on display and that the dogs should be allowed to feast on the body. Polynices has been condemned through life into death. His body will be dishonored in death for the dishonor he showed in life towards the state of Thebes. He has been accused and condemned as a criminal without any measure of mercy or regard. Antigone responds with outrage and calls the condemnation of Polynices through life into death a criminal act. The laws of filial piety and the honour due to the dead have been violated. Polynices must be properly buried. Creon, however, refuses, whereupon Antigone takes matters into her own hands. She is a sister and, therefore, indicative of the feminine quality that rules in the realm of divine law. Creon is the representative of human authority and is masculine. These two allegiances set up a “collision of duties” (Hegel, 1998, p. 279) in which two great systems of consciousness come into conflict. Both are outraged and regard the other as being in the wrong:

> Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his own authority. For the commands of government have a universal, public meaning open to the light of day; the will of the other law, however, is locked up in the darkness of nether regions, and its outer existence manifests as the will of an isolated individual which, as contradicting the first, is a wanton outrage. (Hegel, 1998, p. 280)

Family duties emerge as a product of conflict. Society is, in a very strong sense, made up of various and overlapping ‘collisions of duties.’ The clash between divine and human law, the feminine and the masculine, sets up a basic differentiation wherein morality and law develop via a track of contradiction and conflict. Ethical action is essentially criminal because there must be a moment of transgression wherein an old order is replaced with a new one. Antigone knew of the public proclamations against moving the body of Polynices, yet she openly and brazenly broke these human laws. Here, for Hegel, family guilt resides at the very heart of founding a new legal order. The feminine concerns of the hearth are to be overridden by the demands of the state. The family is criminalized and the feminine is excluded from the order of the state. It is not that these primal elements disappear; it is simply that they are sublated, preserved, yet overcome, in a larger public order. Yet the dead have rights, and they exact their vengeance on Creon by taking his son. Despite this, the state has arrived in the full light of day. From now on, it will seek to be a superstructure of considerable strength in the social body. Further, law, as fully humanized, will be its instrument of dominance.
This state seeks to equalize individuals before its absolute power. The Roman concept of *aequitas* expresses this idea of a universal form of right embodied in abstract legal procedure. This abstract individuality, however, threatens the ethical soul of humanity:

> Just as previously only the Penates succumbed to the natural Spirit, so now the living Spirits of the nation succumb through their own individuality and perish in a universal community, whose simple universality is soulless and dead, and is alive only in the single individual, qua single. (Hegel, 1998, p. 289)

Individuals are alienated from a common ethical life. In this type of society, abstract concepts of personhood reign in law and social relations. The laws of the family and the gods have been overcome, yet abstract concepts of personhood remain without content. This basic delimitation of ‘common’ in ethical life is what founds the body of law, according to Hegel. It also lies at the heart of his political theory. Family is present as motivating force for social conflict. If forces values into conflict and within this fire of confrontation, society and consciousness mutually intertwine in their creation of each other. Between divine laws, which come from ancient and deep sources, comes the upstart of a human law grounded in rational procedure. The worst violation of law is no longer upon the body of filial piety but upon the corpus of the state.

This historical trace of law and family using Hegel is linked to present writings on the place of family and moral education today. The value of the family under a framework of education as a moral issue is essential to an ethos of integrity that becomes represented in the larger legal and political worlds. How education is modeled has lasting effects on all social aspects.

In the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman (1959) presents us with a theory of social interaction. He labels this theory the ‘dramaturgical.’ The author’s approach is to isolate the event, to remove it, in a sense, from its extraneous conceptuality and to give us ‘forms’ of everyday life. The individual creates these ‘forms’ and it is his or her interactions and agency that Goffman is attempting to address. These include concepts such as the ‘group,’ ‘actor,’ ‘audience,’ and ‘shopper,’ et cetera. These concepts can be called forms because they are not empirically associated with isolatable individuals but are general characteristics abstracted from reality and yet are used to help us better understand the social world. These forms are paraded before us in the guise of performers; the stage provides us with a formalistic epistemology. From this, we can see that Goffman stands within a specific theoretical and methodological tradition in sociology. His approach often is reminiscent of Weberian “ideal types,” but it is to Simmel, and his formalist sociology, that Goffman is most indebted in the development of his own theories and methodology. I will examine the connection between Goffman and Simmel in order to locate the family and its performances on educating its young. Let us start by examining the strands of thinkers that can be seen in Goffman’s text. Goffman mixes the language of Weber and Simmel and creates something that is uniquely his. His
reading of these two thinkers is present through Weber’s social action theory and his ideal types and in Simmel’s formal sociology, micro sociological view, and in his in-depth analysis of the dyad and triad.

Max Weber (as quoted in Wallace & Wolf, 1980) says of social action: “in action is included all human behaviour when and insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it,” and further: “Action is social insofar as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course” (p. 238). A relationship to Goffman can definitely be drawn out. First, Weber places an emphasis on the subject’s or social actor’s interpretation of the situation (verstehen). We learn the ‘interpretation of the situation’ early on in the private sphere of the family as connected to a larger ethos of the social. Verstehen allows us to enter the realm of family matters and brings forth, and makes possible, a better understanding of the motivations, desires, and goals of the social subject. For Goffman, this is seen in the importance that he places upon the performer’s desire to ‘define the situation.’ He brings us through the mind of the performer and tries to give us an insight into the motivation, desires, and goals of social life (i.e., family domains). Each situation is defined in terms of an ‘audience,’ a ‘performer/team,’ and ‘performance.’ Once this is done, Goffman shows us how the individual actors deal with the ‘performance.’ This involves an analysis of a subjective set of categories that can only be understood and analyzed from a verstehen-like perspective.

An example would be Goffman’s general analysis of the ‘performer’ that we can here think of as family members. The ‘performer’ is interested in avoiding embarrassment, in controlling the situation, at least in terms of his/her ‘definition of the situation.’ Where this ‘definition’ comes from is our concern in educating a populace that can think critically and creatively. We know, as Goffman shows us, that the actor will try to avoid inconsistencies in their performance and will present an image of him or herself that is ‘good’ or to their advantage. Our concern as to what education means today in its entirety starts with how ‘the good’ is created and educated as early as in the family structure. As in Goffman’s work, we can only accomplish this by placing ourselves in the role of the actor (family members), which we attempt here to understand in regards to what is education. This will allow us a certain understanding of psychic motivations that have real social consequences. Such an endeavour, on the part of Goffman, is analogous to Weber’s attempt to enter the ‘mind set’ of the Protestant. This type of understanding of the ‘mind set’ is crucial to understanding the family and what models of education the young are being offered early on in life. The ‘performer’ is concerned with controlling the impressions of others, and, to this extent, he or she is governed by the reactions and indications ‘given off’ by others. Both Weber and Goffman present a ‘reflective’ personality; both of them place a high emphasis upon the idea of seeing oneself through another.
Weberian ‘ideal types’ are also present in Goffman. The author uses this method of abstraction, coined by Weber, to construct ‘ideal’ actors, as we are attempting to do so with family membership. As a result, the ‘performer’ is taken out of a temporal and changing environment and presented to us as a synthetic type that establishes commonalities between all ‘North American family’ actors. This idealized actor is both non-existent and yet present in everyone. Therefore, the actor (in the idealized sense) seeks to define the situation, maintain this definition, and to ‘come off’ well in the interaction. These are not necessarily identifiable in every interaction; in a determinant fashion they are what Goffman considers to be the ‘essential’ or fundamental commonalities that are most likely to occur in a social situation. These are essential characteristics understood as abstractions. As we create the ideal family member type, we relate to Weber’s reconstruction of various actors in speaking about Protestantism and capitalism. For example, Benjamin Franklin becomes the capitalist ‘ideal type’ because he possesses certain characteristics that Weber extracts from a content analysis of one of his works that are essential to the capitalist actor that was to emerge. A ‘capitalist’ is not identifiable to Weber, as he or she must be re-constructed in this ideal, abstract sense. The personal, ‘real life,’ of Franklin is disregarded in favour of the essentialities that he represents. Therefore, Weber creates the ‘ideal type’ of capitalist that allows him to posit a theoretical understanding of an historical agent. Similarly, Goffman creates the ‘performer,’ the ‘audience,’ the ‘team,’ etc., as we create the family, as conceptual tools that allow us to posit an understanding of the social world and its various actors.

Georg Simmel is also present throughout Goffman’s text. Simmel posits ‘social types,’ similar to Weberian ‘ideal types,’ which allow one to extract essentials from a setting and to theorize and make connections with other settings. In Simmel, I called this ‘formalist’ sociology. Once we have established essential commonalities that define the interaction, we are able to compare these to other social settings, from the family to the economy. Therefore, one can say that social life has rules, it has structure, and it is in such a perspective that we can see Goffman emerging. Goffman is concerned with the rules that govern interaction, or the ‘performance’; this includes moral teachings, but also strategies of control. Through it all, Goffman suggests that actors follow certain rules that are ultimately defined by their roles and the social setting. It is essential here that the early social setting of the family has the capacity of bringing up rational and thoughtful human beings.

The micro sociology of the family is what interests us when using Goffman’s and Simmel’s work. Simmel is interested in the *countless minor syntheses* and Goffman is interested in the “arts of impression management” and the role of the everyday actor (Goffman, 1959, p. 238). Both of these perspectives are concerned with the ‘low level’ of interaction. They are concerned with the subjectivity of actors, which is how meaning is attached to
action. For Simmel and Goffman, this is the major focus. The individual, as social actor, is re-captured in these two theorists. For them the concern is not the organization of society at a macro level, but the negotiation, re-casting, and interpretation of that social world through the eyes of the actor, which distinguishes them from Weber, who is concerned with both the individual and the structural or micro and macro levels.

Goffman presents us with the myriad of social life in its entirety. The social reality is not lacking; it is present from the very inductive nature of the author’s recollections and examples. Yet Goffman does choose to concentrate on certain aspects while downplaying others. What can one say about such concepts as ‘class,’ ‘privilege,’ and ‘status’ in Goffman (in our reading of the family)? Goffman does not analyze these concepts as determinants or influences upon social life. Goffman does not elaborate on the role of the class-based social actor. His perspective seems to take all interactions as analyzable from a ‘dramaturgical’ perspective. But this is incomplete, since many interactions are based on factors that are extraneous to ‘maintaining the definition of the situation.’ Goffman fails to ask whether certain roles inherently involve, by their social definition, power or control over others. It should be clear that the ‘privileged have more access to the tools that go into Goffman’s notion of ‘impression management’ if we consider such things as the maintenance of appearance. One can say that in our daily life the ability to appear tidy and neat, made accessible with a certain amount of wealth, is directly related to privilege. Also, could one not say that privilege allows one to define the situation with more force than someone at the opposite end of the economic scale? It is very unlikely that social interaction could be as uniform as Goffman claims, when it is clear that in our society many roles and socio-economic relationships are constructed through the operation of the ‘cash nexus.’ With such a scenario it would be highly unlikely that all would possess the same and equal ‘tools’ that would allow them to define the situation. It is in analyzing the place of critical education from as early on as the institution of the family that we see the importance of this in order to understand how defining the situation is linked to our own thinking abilities.

Such a criticism of Goffman could be incorporated into a refined theory. It is possible that one could speak about power, class, or privilege relationships and how they work themselves out in a social situation. For instance, how does a child behave in front of his or her parent when there is a power differentiation, which is inherent in the roles? To truly understand such a situation, one must be able to analyze the subjective meanings of power and privilege and their effects upon the social setting. We must be able to understand how much a social actor is affected by his or her privilege, or lack thereof. Such an approach would help us to re-define Goffman in terms of an intersection between the micro and macro levels of the family’s role in education, without leaving the micro sociological realm.
Erving Goffman presents us with an interesting theory of social life. Goffman’s connection to Weberian ‘ideal types’ and the concept of verstehen can be used in thinking about family and its role in educating its young. Goffman’s use of ‘social types’ and his use of Simmel’s general micro sociological methodology are clearly identifiable, for the latter gives Goffman a particular epistemology that looks at ‘forms’ that occur in everyday human interaction. They both post the belief that rules are followed in social life and that these rules can be used, in a sense, to understand the familial interaction, and, in fact, the whole social realm. Contextualized in terms of individualized ‘life experience,’ we can involve an examination of ‘discrepant roles’ within the family structure and how its young engage with the larger social world. Goffman and his ‘dramaturgical theory’ allow for such an endeavour. His material is pliable and applicable to many social phenomena. Therefore, a Goffmanian analysis that enters such realms as the family and education does yield some interesting results. Here, the human element may be able to look at personal responses to these realms and understand the ability of individuals to act and ‘define their situation’ outside, and in contrast to, the monolithic theoretical realms of ‘social constructionism.’

As we turn the above classical theories into their application on Portuguese-Canadian youth and education today, much of the importance of the family’s influence on children and their pursuit of higher learning is evident in the extensive research done in this area since the 1970s (see Board of Education, 1970, 1976; Desforges, 1989a, 1989b; Erikson, 1968; Maslow, 1973; Piaget, 2002, Piaget & Bärbel, 1951/1975, just to name a few). In “Ethnic Differences in Educational Attainment,” Abada et al. (2009) demonstrate differences in educational attainment in Canada’s ethnic groups and “suggest that race/ethnicity has become a salient factor in educational stratification” (p. 1). When looking at second-generation Portuguese, the authors argue that these differences are largely attributed to differences in human capital endowments, with parental education being one of the main factors that play into the educational attainment of Portuguese youth in Canada (p. 5).

Clearly, the family is an influential agent of socialization that imparts values and beliefs to its young. The fundamental problem is normativity. Within Portuguese-Canadian families, how can this cycle of ‘education for a job’ begin to be questioned and re-evaluated without feeling like an ‘outsider’ at the kitchen table? For many post-secondary Portuguese students, the educational journey can start to feel alienating as they become ‘different’ in their thinking from their families while the family remains rooted in the immigrant experience, as illustrated by an excerpt from Andrew-Gee’s (2012) article, which included interviews with Portuguese-Canadians in “little Portugal”:

Back in the seventies . . . the Portuguese in Canada were poor, and focused on financial stability above all else. There was a logic to dropping out—mortgages to be paid, food to be put on the table. “Now, I don’t really understand why,” Gomes said.
“Things aren’t as bad as they used to be.” Still, he said, with a dark chuckle, “it’s the same attitude: work first, knowledge later.”

When balancing the normative value system at home and the challenges of pursuing higher learning, Goffman’s examination of ‘discrepant roles,’ discussed above, figures largely on Portuguese youth in Canada. The strain that Portuguese students feel due to perceived notions of ‘education as work-related vs. education as cultural capital’ being incompatible, begins with the familial claim to practical authority, that is, the Portuguese family account of the normativity of ‘what’ purpose education should serve. Informal sanctions, like feeling alienated from one’s culture, roots, and customs, begins competing with attaining an education beyond the boundaries of ‘work-related’ knowledge. For these Portuguese students, higher education and family-inspired economic goals are inherently linked. These appositional goals can then push up against each other as the pursuit of education becomes seen as “taking up too much time: time is money.” This of course can happen in all ethnic groups; however, when the individualized “life experience” becomes a generational pattern, the Portuguese-Canadian family needs to become aware of knowledge patterns that can hurt its future generations in Canada. The focus for this type of change must come from the leaders in the Portuguese community. Different voices (academics, church leaders, business leaders, and the like) must speak up and own up to their own experiences and success as set in the larger context of Canadian values (Libertucci, 2011).

As stated earlier in this section, when looking at ancient family models, family duties emerge as a product of conflict. The Portuguese-Canadian family is no exception. Future generations will have the benefit of the conflicts and struggles that many Portuguese youth face today as they push up against normative family values. The roles of leaders within the Portuguese community today must be to continue the re-evaluation of limited versions of the educational process; to offer the language and imagination of seeing the Portuguese community embrace education as a democratizing process in Canada and the constructing of citizenship and action, beyond the construction of the hard-working immigrant. The next section will delve into the community and the democratic model of education in general, before offering what this looks like when illustrated through the Portuguese-Canadian experience.

**Community and the democratic model of education**

The intimacy of the dialectic between theory and practice is reduced to an opposition between theory and complexity, on the one hand, and practice and clarity on the other. This is the mark of a vapid, pragmatic, anti-intellectualism whose leveling tendency occludes the role of language in constructing theory as a historical specific practice that makes politics and praxis possible as part of an engagement with the particularities and problems of a given time and place (Giroux, 1989, p. 133).
Any discourse around the concept of education remains a sense-making experience about the world we live in. In the above quotation, Henry Giroux brings to light that education is interested in the development of a given society, namely, the raising of a critical collective consciousness. Giroux raises the educational process above theories of individualization because it is the collective achievement of memory that allows for society. Here, it can be said that we build pedagogy around this collective achievement. Like the many authors who ground themselves in history (or the debt to our ancestors), Giroux is re-telling a story that owes itself to our cultural memory. For better or for worse, we have background texts that we draw on, and we continue to pursue matters, such as education, that continue to hold some sort of value and complexity for us. Education, then, continues to hold a necessary ideal that although re-shaped and interpreted differently from generation to generation, continues to persist as a place where solutions can be worked out.

Education is not about the “Good,” ethics, or morality. These might have a place within the whole but they enter from the outside—the society. By insisting that education is a process—a maturity process—we are better able to deal with its multiplicity; namely, our ability to learn to deal with a language of uncertainty and lack of absolutes (such as a one “Truth” or the “Good”). The dynamics of education must remain in their incompleteness—never allowing for final Truths. Hence, education must remain a creative process, which must be continuously revised, since all types of pedagogy are variations on consciousness and society. Here, I would like to consider some meaningful insights into the nature of pedagogy, while working with some of the writings of Henry Giroux and Emile Durkheim. Although these works will necessarily lead me back and forth to other texts, I hope to draw these thoughts together with some of my own thoughts (noting that these are still very raw) on education as a form of seductive theory. Briefly, that what we call education is essential to humankind because it is part of the soul’s struggle to move from the particular to the plurality of life experience. Education plays itself out in our human desire for knowledge—a desire that is temporarily achieved yet never finalized.

Education as practical includes the practice or actions of teaching. This type of action requires an orientation towards a “scientific” or “progressive” labeling in order to use the ideas of teaching as cause and effect. If teaching is to produce useful ends, then practical pedagogy must teach causal reasoning. Durkheim talks about the social forms of social structures (organization) and social practice (progress). His use of practical education conveys a commitment to the social that claims to be what religious concerns are not—an overcoming of traditional and moral accounts, even accounts on the possibility of knowledge itself. Durkheim is interested in education as a way of participating socially in a number of various relationships. Since education is an articulation of a social process, a discourse about pedagogy must reveal the idea that we as social agents are indeed typical of our teaching compositions; “far from there
being one education universally valid for the whole human species, there is, so
to speak, no society in which different pedagogical systems do not coexist and
function side by side” (Durkheim, 1956, p. 116). Even for Durkheim, the
practice of education or the language of pedagogy is more than just empirical
or descriptive detail. These so called facts, which are used in order to carry
practical knowledge from group to group, are observed as accepted relations or
‘facts’ about the world. However, they become transformed and used in
metaphorical and symbolic language as they are transferred from practical
discourse to a more reflexive or theoretical approach to education.

As Durkheim starts to revise his own cultural and sociological system,
education as a life process is observed in its everyday practical applications.
However, it is not complete without its symbolic or reflexive grounds of
investigation (theory). Durkheim started with the current social conviction that
education necessarily leads to a better and more advanced community (primitive
v. European). From here, he becomes more reflexive and imagines a world
where conscience can organize a system of ideas and practices that, in turn,
organize our sensual experiences. Consequently, states Durkheim, we can
communicate and build social universals in order to live in an organized
community. Thus, Durkheim starts with a practical point of view regarding the
need to pass on and teach the language around social facts, knowing that social
life cannot be expressed through empiricism or idealism alone. Social life must
include the creative tension that exists between these so-called opposites (and it
must carry the metaphorical language of the unconscious) in order to develop a
collectivity.

Education as a discourse that is creative and reflexive, approaches wisdom
through an understanding of the limitations of knowledge and the active, self-
critical living of this understanding. For Giroux, consciousness raising is how we
invest theory all the way through with a commitment to recognition; one of
cultural, political, moral, and ethical importance. Here, our uses and mis-uses of
language can be seen as the tensions that exist between our notions of the
“ideal” and “real” worlds. Giroux (1989) writes:

Privileging practice without due consideration of the complex interactions that mark
the totality of theory—practice and language—meaning relationships is not simply
reductionistic but also a form of theoretical tyranny. Theory, in this sense, becomes a
form of practice that ignores the political value of “theoretical discourse” within a
specific historical conjuncture: that is, rather than examining the language of theory
as part of a wider historical moment of self-examination, the language and politics of
theory are merely reduced to an unproblematic concern with clarity rather than with
the problematizing of certainty itself. (p. 133)

Language is seen as a process of reasoning (as is education) that must
remain open and incomplete—hence, theory is always in tension with the so-
called real. What remains essential to education and its use of language is its
communicable characteristic in the social as a desire for locating what is
common to humanity. Both Durkheim and Giroux treat education as a cultural
relation that makes us aware of our senses—aware of ourselves as psycho-social beings that are constantly articulating our relationship to the world. Education, as both practical and theoretical, relates the nature of our sociality. It demonstrates how we all participate socially in a number of various relationships—this necessarily includes and requires the tension between these many ways of knowing.

Through very different styles, Durkheim and Giroux come to very similar grounds on education as interactive; both are aware that we must come back to our own active roles as participating members in a community. Being an educator means interaction and communication—it means continuously being aware of our place in the collective. Durkheim’s language centers around education as essentially social, and both he and Giroux agree on the importance of the individual’s experience as expressions of our social membership:

Thus it is important that students come to grips with what a given society has made of them, how it has incorporated them ideologically and materially into its roles and logic, and what it is that they need to affirm and reject in their own histories in order to begin the process of struggling for the conditions that will give them opportunities to lead a self-managed existence. (Giroux, 1983, p. 38)

In all, both writers are contributors to a continuous discourse called education, in fact, both are using a reflexive language (a seductive discourse) in order to further the structure of “truths” as grounded in collective histories.

At this point, it is important to keep in mind that education as a concept is practiced and theorized by both Durkheim and Giroux. It is not only something to reflect on, but a way of living—a way of existing as a human being. For both authors, education is a maturing process that is experienced day to day (within or outside educational institutions) and is meant as a way of pursuing a fuller life; namely, a self or soul that strives for its full potential within the boundaries of its given time and space. No one today could live the life of an individual in Durkheim’s society nor could we become a social being of any other past social milieu:

There is, then, in each period, a prevailing type of education from which we cannot deviate without encountering that lively resistance which restrains the fancies of dissent. . . . Now, it is not we as individuals who have created the customs and ideas that determine this type. They are the product of a common life, and they express its needs. They are, moreover, in large part the work of preceding generations. The entire human past has contributed to the formation of this totality of maxims that guide education today; our entire history has left its traces in it, and even the history of the peoples who have come before. (Durkheim, 1956, p. 66)

Giroux, too, felt that education was more than just the ideas of the day. Like all other social concepts, the art of teaching has a history or grounding that is revised and re-valued by every new generation (at one level or another).
It is something to partake in as an active individual in search of self, therefore recognition of what it means to be social.

Through education the collective conscience is formed and when enlightened, offers the opportunity for reflexive language to express its struggle with the everyday practical routine that is in danger of falling behind the times as society changes. As noted by Giroux (1983):

The point is that critical theory needs to be reformulated to provide the opportunity to both critique and elaborate its insights beyond the constraints and historical conditions under which they were first generated. It must be stressed that the insights critical theory has provided have not been exhausted. In fact, one may argue that we are just beginning to work out the implications of their analyses. The real issue is to reformulate the central contributions of critical theory in terms of new historical conditions, without sacrificing the emancipatory spirit that generated them. (p. 41)

Reflexive theory, then, is not a better way of communicating the social, but rather, it needs and implies practical work as a course of action. Hence, there is no primary or secondary level of importance in the use of practical or reflexive pedagogical discourse—they are inter-related as is the relationship between the student and teacher (one necessarily implies the other in order for their functions to exist).

All philosophy, sociology, biology, etc. originated and is carried out in the service of education. In turn, all these disciplines start as practical concerns and teachings in the hopes that they will inspire a social commitment or continued interest. For Giroux, this means that many of these proposed values have to be subjected to their own negation or an antithesis of their proposed teachings. Consequently, the educators of these perspectives have also to be aware of their social settings and the types of students before them. The individualistic nature of education, therefore, is a consequence of the educator’s need to reveal themselves selectively according to the needs of their students. Individualism in education, however, is not in opposition to the belief that education is necessarily social. All education begins with restraint, but when done well, it carries that education to a sublime interpretation of the self in the social. It places the individual in a social position that requires a practical education intertwined with a reflexive theoretical grounding. In sum, the educator trains the student in the art of being a member of society, and training always involves authority and discipline.

We see that for Giroux, education is a way of existing in the world that requires creativity and reflexive consideration. Consequently, the work of education is never finalized although it has many intended solutions. In order for us to enjoy education, namely, to be interested and interesting teachers, we have to enjoy ambiguity. To reach the point where pedagogy can be taught reflexively, necessarily involves a measure of uncertainty—a need for an eye to contemporary relevance. As teachers then, we do not spout social theory as objective facts, rather, we experience theory by being both practical in our
instructions and reflexive in our thoughts. As members of a community, we use what we have been taught and pass on to the next generation what we have continued to call valuable. Practical and theoretical talks around the topic of education include what we value as knowledge; hence how this knowledge is passed on helps determine our ability to participate as active members of the community. In brief, education is the practical instruction on membership received from day to day, and it is also the thoughtful reflections of our time and place that become the reigning philosophy serving the recall and representation of epochs gone by.

In the foreword of *Education and Sociology* (Durkheim, 1956), Talcott Parsons writes,

> Constraint in the earlier period was interpreted as either the pressure of the non-social environment or external coercion by others. It was in his [Durkheim's] writings on education that he first stated that there was another possible interpretation, namely, that constraint should be by ‘moral authority,’ and this clearly meant through the internalization of norms. (Parsons, 1956, p. 10)

It is this type of constraint (i.e., in education) that allows socialization its place in the collective conscience. Here, both Durkheim and Giroux agree that the rules in the educational process of humankind must be adhered to first and reflected on later if socialization is to take place. The rationale of education is somewhat like a pruning of the individual; the task of the educator, then, is to prune the instincts of their students, cutting some back in order that others might receive more light and nourishment. The understanding being that eventually the student will internalize the force of education and come to discipline him or herself.

Constraint and sublimation as seen in education are related through a presupposed faith that rests on the external social force of moral authority. Durkheim is correct in stating that education relies on an internalization of norms, since it is through this *initial* internalization that the rules of socialization are first passed on. Our sociability is the first lesson we learn as human beings:

> each society, considered at a given stage of development, has a system of education, which exercises an irresistible influence on individuals. It is idle to think that we can rear our children as we wish. There are customs to which we are bound to conform; if we flout them too severely, they take their vengeance on our children. The children, when they are adults, are unable to live with their peers, with whom they are not in accord. (Durkheim, 1956, p. 65)

From here, a reflexive use of language in education can take us beyond the notion of rules as constraining into an understanding of rules as acceptable forms of socialization: it is “in the nature of society itself that we must seek the explanation of social life . . . what renders these latter facts particularly illuminating is creating a social being” (Durkheim, 1956, p. 54). The
sublimation of rules, then, opens our minds up to the possibility of transforming and educating ourselves even while living within boundaries and rules.

Education as a form of social organization is a logical extension of the social contract. The general implication of the social contract is grounded in civil agreement, which is carried from generation to generation (as is education as a social issue). Yet, education is more than just being aware of our rights and the law; it is also a lesson on the all-important outcome of the recognition of each other's rights, and moreover, a reciprocity that enables the capacity of having rights. Hence, education has both moral and legal implications: it unites us as members of the same community. Like a practical version of the social contract, practical education deals with pragmatic concerns. Here, the individual is regarded as lost in the social upheaval; thereby, our desires and fears are seen as the pillars for social contract building. This is the type of social contract or educational practice that deals with the legal and political implications as primary. Moral and ideal implications are treated later under a reflexive language:

Authority in this view becomes a mediating referent for the ideal of democracy and its expression as a set of educational practices designed to empower students to be critical and active citizens. In other words, the purpose of schooling now becomes fashioned around two central questions: What kind of society do educators want to live in and what kind of teachers and pedagogy can be both informed and legitimated by a view of authority that takes critical democracy and active citizenship seriously? (Giroux, 1983, p. 45)

In sum, by using a more reflexive language in education, we note a more interpretive understanding to so-called societal rules. Rules (as reflexive), are regarded as a form of neutral authority that can decipher the limits of right and wrong acts (as the need arises). Hence, like a social contract, which can only be grounded in theory, education as a theory is created as a guideline for the stages on life’s way—not denying the legal and political implications that give rules their authority.

Education seeks the consent of its members. The authority or rules to which one must first adhere are demands that one must internalize first and reflect on later for a clearer understanding. The educational process must reflect that individuals are different in their attitudes, goals, and values. Here, the educational process is for Giroux and Durkheim a spelling out of our humanity; namely, our desire to see ourselves one way and not another. Practical rules make the boundaries known to us. They highlight what came before, but they also point to a sublimation of these rules in order for change to take place. Hence, changes in the educational process are viewed as necessary, and for this reason, the sublimation of its rules is not viewed as a resolution of errors but rather, as a demonstration of their course with human nature.

As human beings, bound to a community both morally and politically, we are still characterized by our freedom. Education is an expression of our freedom even if framed by the rules we use in order for reciprocity to take
place. Our privileged status as rational beings comes from our moral relations with one another in a political society. We build and bring down the rules and boundaries that define community. The educational process does not stop once one has left the institution but continues in all our efforts as social beings: “human beings not only make history, they also make the constraints; and needless to say, they also unmake them. It needs to be remembered that power is both an enabling as well as a constraining force, as Foucault (1980) is quick to point out” (Giroux, 1983, p. 38).

It is difficult to imagine an education that does not initially start with individual experience. Communicating this experience to the whole is served through education as a concept; whence it builds on our sociality:

To the egoistic and asocial being that has just been born it must, as rapidly as possible, add another, capable of leading a moral and social life. Such is the work of education, and you can readily see its great importance. It is not limited to developing the individual organism in the direction indicated by its nature, to elicit the hidden potentialities that need only be manifested. It creates in man a new being. (Durkheim, 1956, p. 72)

The individual starts as a member in a given community, has his or her experiences, but is always part of a collective that holds rules, symbols, and rituals. Through education, theorizing about the social builds on the history and knowledge that will be passed on from group to group. Individuals, says Durkheim (1956), never communicate with the natural world—we need the mediation of social concepts:

individual personalities emerge from the social mass in which they had, until then [the Renaissance], been thoroughly immersed; minds become diversified; at the same time historical development accelerates; a new civilization is formed. To meet all these changes pedagogical reflection arises and, although it has not always been maintained at the same level, it was no longer to become completely extinguished. (p. 106)

Hence, rationality is a result of educational reflection, a social construct that represents life, and not a causal factor that only accounts for objective or empirical observations. It is education that makes intelligible the representations in the development of the collective.

Durkheim goes on to say that social narratives move beyond the storytelling of individuals. They offer a form, that is, a typification of experience that may begin with an individual’s experience but is later subjected to social typification and becomes an example of socialization. These social narratives represent the reflections, subjective interpretations, theories, and concerns of a certain time and place. The creation of this narrative—education, for example—is a way of formulating, relating to, and experiencing life. The values placed on education are reflections signaled by the values we place on our social existence. When these narratives are told and re-told as time goes on,
a certain worth has been placed on the areas that interest us most. In other words, education is an active representation of life, of values, and of a living knowledge that is aware of its own ambiguity:

As soon as we have fully grasped the infinite variety of the systems of thought which man has thus developed from the raw material of basic human nature, we realize that it is impossible to say, at any particular point in history: here is manifested the essence of human nature; here we can see how it is constituted. For the immense wealth of what has been produced in the past is precisely what makes it illegitimate for us to assign a limit in advance to what man is capable of producing in the future; or to assume that a time will come when man’s capacity for creative innovation being exhausted, he will be doomed merely to repeat himself throughout all eternity. Thus we come to conceive of man not as an agglomeration of finite specifiable elements, but rather as an infinite flexible, protean force, capable of appearing in innumerable guises, according to the perennially changing demands of his circumstances. (Durkheim, 1977, p. 328)

Education as a theoretical process must be thought of as a continuing discourse that speaks between different times and places, a relationship of patterns that allows today’s language the ability to understand yesterday’s culture. Consequently, education as a form of communicating the self and society does not disappear from one generation to another. It is built upon, at times forgotten, only to be remembered at a later time under a different value system:

One can foresee, then, what sociology, the science of social institutions, contributes to our understanding of what pedagogical institutions are or to our conjectures on what they should be. The better we understand society, the better shall we be able to account for all that happens in that social microcosm that the school is. (Durkheim, 1956, p. 131)

Hence, our own production of culture comes from an already established tradition. If there ever was a day one, we would probably think of a state of nature or a natural world. From this natural world, a social division became apparent as the world that we exist or communicate in. Just as our individual bodies have existence (a soul), the social, too, has existence (a soul), an energy or force that continues to grow and change by inheriting the values of every generation that lives and dies.

The need to stop consuming knowledge and actually create a problematic for the self is what seductive educational discourse is meant to convey. In a word, it is an opening that allows one to become active rather than passive in the production of knowledge. Only in reflection and in recognition of social desire can education become an art that represents and helps transform the ideals of the community. The social grounding for education, then, becomes the need for self-knowledge in order to know what it takes to become a member. Education as “practical” starts with the social structures and practices in use. It demonstrates how an individual becomes a member of society by
letting them in on the history and customs that they will need to know in order to survive in the external world. Since communication is the basis of community, education becomes the primary tool for instruction.

Education as a seductive theory, then, is one that is conscious of its inter-generational knowledge and the need to collect our place; namely, to desire who we are. As teachers, we give away who we are as a way of circulating what we know, only to receive a transformed version in return—different perspectives. Education thus is never finalized; it remains a way of relating to the world that can only be experienced as we experience social life. Both Durkheim and Giroux confirm that critical self-knowledge can only be gained by living the life of an active member. It is through critical, active education that Giroux’s individual can become who they are meant to be. As well, it is through seductive or reflexive education that we can pursue and maintain a language for a kind of knowledge that cannot help but return to its own ambiguity.

Hence, we return to education and its desire, its power, as relating our sociability. Our relation to education, as a seductive discourse, maintains the necessary tension between the individual and the social, between a practical and reflexive language, and between the seducer and the seduced. This tension is not in opposition, rather, it is a constant ordering and re-working of the soul in order to become who we are (knowing that this may only be finalized at death). For this reason, society continues to exist; continues to re-work itself by struggling with the necessary rules and boundaries it places upon itself. What remains constant is an endless seduction of education; one that moves towards a social spirit that cannot be annihilated:

All of production, and truth itself, are directed towards disclosure, the unbearable “truth” of sex being but the most recent consequence. Luckily, at bottom, there is nothing to it. And seduction still holds, in the face of truth, a most sibylline response, which is that perhaps we wish to uncover the truth because it is so difficult to imagine it naked. (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 181)

What we desire, what we wish for, cannot be put into a logic of cause and effect. Education—as the seduction of pedagogy—is the maturity of human inter-relations, which help affirm our existence (even if all we can say for certain is that our fate is death): society, we know, continues to exist. It is seduction that helps human inter-relations even if we are aware that knowledge will change and that education can lead to error. By playing with meanings, seduction (as the grounds for an artificial interpretation of language and symbols), recognizes the possibility of desire as present right down to our linguistic constructions.

Education as seductive, then, does not allow for a total and final description of life. Both Durkheim and Giroux are aware of the need to be seduced in order to re-learn or even to desire to learn. The truth, our desire to know, always needs an ‘other’ as reader—as seducer, structures of intersubjectivity are interpretations of our ways of knowing. For both Durkheim
and Giroux, education is possible because we are part of a shared language. A seductive pedagogy, then, must resist its own “truth” in order to see beyond itself; to see us as social beings who are struggling with pleasure and unpleasure—our resistance to the unknown. In all, these understandings take place in a cultural psyche; in human inter-relations that remember and forget as people re-work what has already been said and done. It is this diversity of weights, of choices that makes life bearable—the mistake is to suppose that the social is not seductive. Educations, the experiences of life (past and present), are not to be seen as stepping stones to preferred states in the present or future; these are its immediate rewards. Learning, like living, like loving, must be its own reward.

Here lies the challenge for Portuguese-Canadian students. Do they see themselves as citizens within the larger context of Canadian civic life and cultural opportunities? Or do they see themselves as immigrants, or the children of immigrants, here to better their “individualized experiences?” There are multiple replies to such large questions but all have to do with the models of education and socialization our youth have access to: and along with this access to democratizing education, is a conviction or belief in it as just as valid as any economic or market-styled educational process. When the 2001 Census Data reports that 93.8% of Portuguese in Canada do not have English/French as their mother tongue and did not speak English/French with parents until the age of 15, and even more telling, that 40.8% felt out of place in Canada by age 15, subscribing to a democratic model of education and their place in Canada beyond the workforce becomes a major hurdle for this group (Abada et al., 2009, p. 13; see also Ornstein 2000).

David Pereira’s research takes a cross-section of the Portuguese-Canadian community as he considers male youth and their attitudes towards educational attainment through perceptions of masculinity. Pereira writes:

As the first exploration of masculinity among young men of Portuguese heritage in Canada, the importance of this study is clear. Participants’ personal understandings of masculinity were frequently in conflict with how they understood constructions of masculinity in their community, which caused significant internal tension for some participants. Power, control, sexuality and gender relations emerged as main dimensions of masculinity that informed the various ways these young men relate to other men and women, as well as how they relate to education and their community. (2011, p. 103)

This type of research is paramount in looking at the grass-roots issues that exist within the Portuguese-Canadian culture before connections to a communal validation of education as a liberating and democratic process can begin to excite our youth. There cannot be a ‘top-down’ imposition of the value of education as more than just becoming a ‘good provider,’ unless the very youth we are trying to reach can recognize ‘the good’ as encompassed in the ability to challenge fixed perceptions of issues such as ‘what is a man/woman,’ ‘what does it mean to be Canadian,’ etc. We risk alienating our
youth even further from an understanding of education as moving us beyond our limited social experiences if we do not first allow them to consider their own positioning as part of a larger human concern.

This need to educate so that individuals can situate themselves within the larger context is part of the ongoing challenge, their resistance to a perceived loss of ethnic heritage, in the Portuguese-Canadian community. The young men in Pereira’s study are representative of this larger problem: the problem being that inter-generational knowledge is becoming stagnant in the Portuguese-Canadian community. It only makes sense to them that education should be about the immigrant/individual being able to take care of himself, his family, etc. It only makes sense that becoming ‘too educated’ may distance me from the ethnic roots I love and am familiar with. Too much thinking about the larger world around me is not “useful” to what I “do.” It does not bring wealth, recognition, or praise. As one Portuguese young man, in Pereira’s study, said:

At the end of the day it didn’t make any difference. I was the first in literally my entire family to go to and complete university. And I thought, if I’m the first, I’m like hello, I’m the first, I gotta get some kudos here. But no, there was never, I don’t think my dad was ever proud of me for completing university, especially since I didn’t get the typical $100,000 job that you’re supposed to get at the end of university, which he thinks I should have right now (2011, p. 48).

Conclusion

This analysis hopes to provide insight into the possibly dangerous long-term effects of social and policy implications modeled on a functional treatment of education. By insisting that critical and creative inquiry is a distinctly human endeavour, I hope to keep the approaches to education policy open and free to public expression. Education as a moral issue is my way of thinking about how practical problems in our everyday lives cannot be satisfactorily addressed by market-place mentality. Arguing for education as a moral concern for all of society is an approach that I believe can be used by all people interested in relating sound thinking to better ways of acting in a democratic society.

The Portuguese-Canadian community is but one group of many ethnic groups in Canada that reflect and encompass the need for an educational system that encourages learning beyond its monetary value. Such a model only further reproduces the hegemonic discourse that urges ‘the immigrant’ to work hard, and they, too, will become a ‘real’ Canadian one day. This is a form of alienation that Portuguese-Canadians must overcome, but first they must become aware of it. Here is the catch: this awareness comes from insisting that democratic forms of education be the model for all Canadians, not simply a luxury after the money has been made. Democratizing education includes activities that urge humans to come together to organize their world in new ways. Ideas are not the ‘dross of history’ or meaningless expressions of abstraction that hide the reality of economic control; they are the material from
which our sense of reality, our common sense is made. The ‘way things are’ just seems ‘natural,’ ‘normal,’ and ‘mainstream.’ We generally do not question these ideas and values and simply assume them to be our own. However, Portuguese-Canadians must ask, when these ideas and values benefit others more than they benefit them, is the hard-working immigrant a worn-out narrative that keeps the Portuguese in their ‘place’? It is not easy to name or see the ideas that alienate us from our potential; hence the urgency in making sure that the educational model in Canada does not become a ‘business’ that is in the ‘business’ of making sure we produce workers, not aware citizens.

Educating our social membership, our citizens, our people, is a humanizing process. The authors I draw upon in this study all have ideas on or assume what it means to be a ‘Human Being’; we need to keep this type of debate alive and well. I will make the claim that the market approach to education will threaten critical thinking skills, namely a type of human existence that is essential to our notion of democracy; the rule of the people. Promoting the moral and ethical dimension of the education process is one of the responsibilities we take on as “free” human beings. Educating continues to hold a necessary ideal that although re-shaped and interpreted differently from generation to generation, continues to persist as a place where solutions can be worked out. This, in brief, is my intention—to continue the conversation.

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