Education as Normalization:
Social Sciences and Power in Modern Governance

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Lynn Fendler, Ph.D.
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI USA

Background Pieces

Fendler, L. (2018). Educationalization. In *International Handbook of Philosophy of Education* (pp. 1169-1183). Springer.

Fendler, L. (2006). Why generalisability is not generalisable. *Journal of philosophy of education, 40*(4), 437-449.

Presentation Overview

History of the Social Sciences

- Psychology
- Bell curve
- Educationalization
- Alchemy

Technologies of Normalization

- Three theories of power
- Governmentality

Recent Trends

- Big data
- N of 1
- Diversity
- Materialisms
- NRT

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1. History of the Social Sciences: Characteristics

- Progressive Era (1880s-1920s)
- Dual agenda: Neutrality & Advocacy
- Efficiency (e.g., assembly line)
- Risk management by actuarial tables (generalizability)

	UK	US
Compulsory schooling	Elementary Education Act 1880	1852-1917 By 1918 every US state
State control of schools	Conservative Education Act 1902 (also 'Balfour's Act')	1850s (Massachusetts Horace Mann)
Psychology in universities	1883 Society for Psychical Research founded 1897 psychological laboratory at Cambridge	1883 at Johns Hopkins (by a student of Wilhelm Wundt) 1892 APA founded
Assembly line manufacturing	1853 Leiston Works steam engines	1867 Chicago meat packing

Invention of Psychology
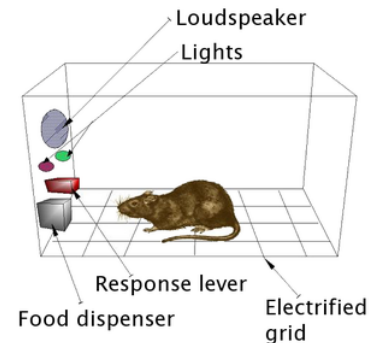
Wilhelm Wundt (1832 -1920) University of Leipzig

Edward Thorndike (1874 -1949) Teachers College, NYC

- Rats
- Idiothetic & nomothetic research
- Sampling and inference

Learning by Generalization

Loudspeaker
Lights
Response lever
Food dispenser
Electrified grid

Psychology, Eugenics & IQ Tests: Generalization of Human Abilities

Alfred Binet (1857 -1911) Paris

Lewis Terman (1877 -1956) Stanford, CA

Francis Galton (1822 -1911) Birmingham

Henry Goddard (1866 -1957) New Jersey

History of the Bell Curve

Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874) Ghent

Educationalization

The belief that schools can solve social problems

Technologies of Progressive Era efficiency:

- Scale up based on statistics
- Standardize based on psychology
- De-emphasize ethics and aesthetics

Marc Depaepe (2013) *Between Educationalization and Appropriation.*
Leuven University Press.

Alchemy of School Subjects

When subjects are brought into schools, those subjects are transformed by:

- Psychological theories & beliefs (e.g., developmentalism)
- Timetables
- Curricula & Standards

Tom Popkewitz (2004) The Alchemy of the School Mathematics Curriculum: Inscriptions and the Fabrication of the Child. *American Educational Research Journal, 41* (1):3-34.

2. Technologies of Normalization

Three Theories of Power

Dominance

Marxian structural theory in which power is vested in institutional positions. Normalization by coercion.

Hegemony

Gramscian theory in which power is constituted by repetition and dispersion. Normalization by consent.

Governmentality

Foucaultian theory of power where power is exercised by the self on the self (democracy). Normalization by learning.

Governmentality and Normalization

We exercise power in discourse by what we say & do.

Discursive technologies of power include surveillance, knowledge (generalizations about what is good and what is true), and risk management (pastoral power).

We normalize ourselves according to what we learn.

Governmentality =   The government of the self by the self.

3. Recent Trends Away from Generalization

- Big Data
- N of 1
- Diversification of voices
- New Materialisms
- Nonrepresentational Theories

Big Data

With big data: Diminished need for sampling or generalization (inference from a particular sample).

Research methodologies based in inference and generalization are being replaced by other kinds of algorithms and modeling (e.g., AI; Digital Humanities).
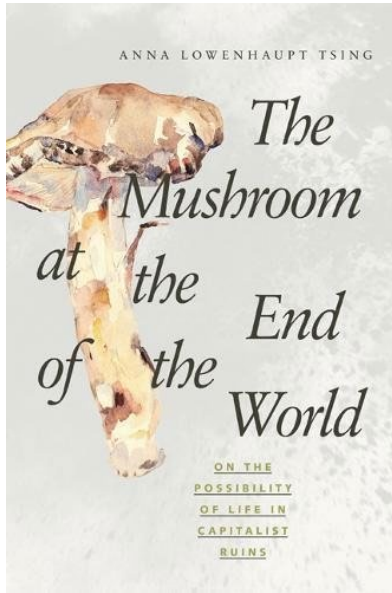
N of 1

- Precision medicine
- Narrowcasting
- Personalized advertising

These technologies are not based in the same kinds of generalizability.
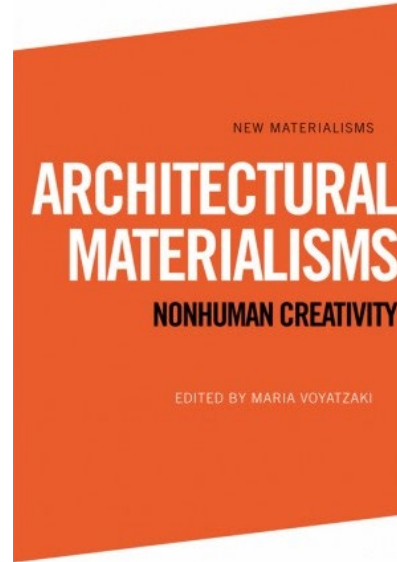
Diversification of Voices

- Indigenous & marginalized epistemologies; intersectionality.
- Alternative publication venues.
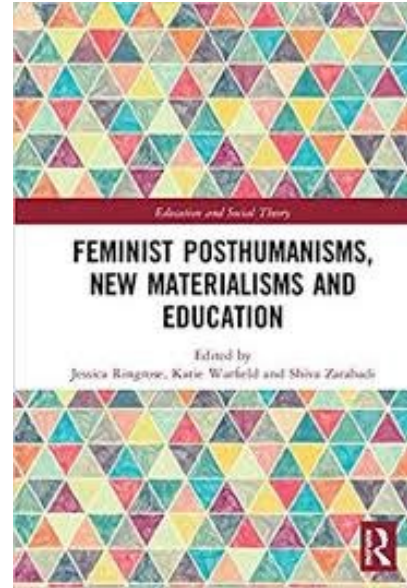- Scientific & philosophical challenges to generalizability, objectivity & universal truths.
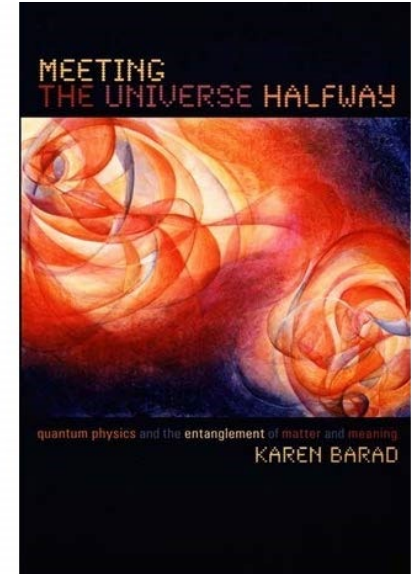
New Materialisms

Anna Tsing (2015) The Mushroom at the End of the World. Princeton.

Maria Voyatzaki (2018) Architectural Materialisms: Non-human creativity. Oxford.

Shiva Zarabadi, Katie Warfield (2018). Feminist Posthumanisms, New Materialisms and Education. Routledge.

Karen Barad (2007). Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning. Duke UP.

Nonrepresentational Theories

- Developed by geographers in the UK.
- Influenced by Deleuze and Foucault.
- Focus on affect (not efficiency).
- *Expérience* (experiment & experience).
- Everything on the same plane of immanence.

beliefs, atmospheres, sensations ideas, toys, music, ghosts, dance therapies, footpaths, pained bodies, trance music, reindeer, plants, boredom, fat, anxieties, vampires, cars, enchantment, nanotechnologies, water voles, GM foods, landscapes, drugs, money, racialised bodies, political demonstrations. (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 14)

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Summary

■ Education has been shaped by social sciences.

■ Social sciences have deployed generalization as a technology of knowledge creation and learning theories.

■ Societies turn to schools to solve social problems, i.e., educationalization ⟹ normalization by learning.

■ Some recent trends move away from generalization.

■ Newer epistemological trends call for new strategies to identify and critique emerging limits of thought.

Three Take Aways

- Generalization and educationalization are technologies of normalization.
- Education and research have been shaped by the "cult of efficiency."
- We are freer than we feel.

fendler@msu.edu