

Patty Smith Hill and Democracy  
in the Kindergarten Curriculum

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**The Kindergarten Curriculum**

The Kindergarten Today

The house corner; the block area; the sand/water table; the game table; the easel: these are some of the areas of study and learning in the kindergarten classroom. The journal of a student teaching supervisor provides a look at how some of the areas and activities formerly labeled as "play" and considered to be less significant than "work" have been blended to be included as learning experiences:

Circle time is purposeful. The children take turns reading the daily message. The rule seems to be that no one can help the child unless the child points to the word and looks at them. That is the signal that the class can help. Children are invited to read. If they decline, it is all right. "Perhaps, next time," Lois [a pseudonym] suggests. Lois reminds them that the schedule is changed and thanks them for being patient. One boy is asked if he needs to sit alone for awhile. He shakes his head.

Lois then reminds the class of the science experiment they are doing with their snails. She shows the class printed sheets with the words light and dark on them. The word "light" has a red dot sticker by it. The word "dark" has a blue dot sticker. In rows next to each category are several stickers of the appropriate color. Lois asks the children who completed the sheet to come up and tell the class how they conducted their experiment, what they watched for, and what the results were. The final question she had for each was "which one has more or less and how did you figure it out?" It fascinates me to hear how each child explains it in a unique way.

The children are not given a choice as to where they will spend the work time. Lois has it planned. These four at the housekeeping corner, two more at blocks, two at the computer,

five to the table for the science experiments, two more to construct homes for their snails so that they can do light and dark observations, two boys go to the library, four children play table games and three children go to woodworking.

Lois first dismissed the children to the block areas so that she could talk about the masking tape that she had placed on the floor in that area. The tape was supposed to represent a city and where and what the children should be building on it. When the students gave suggestions on types of city buildings that they could build during this meeting, Lois took notes. (Later she copied the sheet over and displayed it in the block area for the students to refer to when building.

Kindergarten has not always looked this way, of course. There were many people involved in the early kindergarten movement; kindergartners, they were called, who influenced the course of the kindergarten curriculum. No American, however, was as influential as Miss Patty Smith Hill of Louisville, Kentucky, a bright, energetic young woman who was to change the American kindergarten curriculum forever, fusing it to the elementary school as the essential initial experience in public education.

Patty Hill described the kindergarten curriculum of her day as based on the romantic-idealistic movement in Germany, characterized by the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Krause, and strengthened in America by the idealism of the Transcendental School in New England (Hill, 1909). In practice, teachers in American kindergartens wholeheartedly embraced the pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel (1897), the German philosopher who had founded many kindergartens in Europe. Froebel's methods brought to life the belief that humanity was becoming more civilized as time progressed, and that this process would be enhanced by the resolution of the conflict between instinct and duty. The goal of public education was essentially to help the masses to accomplish this resolution

in their own lives. The beginning of the transfer of the derivation of motivation, the impulse as it was called then, from instinct to duty was the training children received in Froebelian kindergartens.

### The Kindergarten at the Turn of the Century

A kindergarten taught by a Miss Emma and Miss Julia in the church basement of a "prairie town" in the United States of the late 19th and early twentieth centuries was described in this way:

In those days, one's chief responsibility in kindergarten, as in school, was to learn to do as one was told. There was a white circle painted on the floor. There was a locked cupboard to which Miss Julia kept the key. One sat on the white circle while Miss Emma told a story embodying some spiritual "lesson" and one did not squirm or ask questions. One sat in a little red chair, "hands folded at the edge of the table," when Miss Julia unlocked the cupboard, placing in front of each child The Gift, while Miss Emma explained precisely what was to be done with it. Richard might aspire to a pattern of his own design on his pegboard. Kathleen might feel more like clay modeling than paper weaving. Margery might prefer cutting paper doll dresses from her blue paper to folding it into a geometric form. But in the kindergarten one did as one was told, all except David who blew into tantrums of outraged dignity and thwarted ambition and was finally refused as a kindergarten pupil by Miss Emma (Amidon, 1927, p.506).

Patty Smith Hill's reaction to a similarly critical student during circle time was quite different from Miss Emma's. As an educator, Miss Hill was resolved to listen to her students and to learn from them. In a 1927 interview, she stated,

When I look back on my long experience in teaching, I am always grateful for what I have learned from the children. If one is not absorbed in administering "a system," one can learn so much in a school room!

There was little Howard, for instance, back in the first Louisville kindergarten. Howard could always manage to say what he meant. Every school room ought to have one child who is able to express to the teacher what others only feel. We were sitting in the traditional kindergarten circle, the children and I. In those days it was part of a good kindergartner's job to get over to the children 'the topic of the day.' I was earnestly holding forth looking to the right and left, to the front, and to the children on each side when Howard lifted his face to mine. 'Say, Teacher,' he demanded, 'who are you talking to anyhow?' At once I realized what artificial nonsense the whole performance was. In the circle I was not talking to anyone. I was just spraying my ideas over a group of children, who had to listen whether they wanted to or not. The circle as a 'symbol' was disbanded then and there. After this I did my talking with individual children and little groups who came to discuss matters of genuine interest. As soon as we ceased to make a rite of it, it was easy to get exchange of ideas and vigorous discussion among little children. This was an enormous gain in reality and directness, but given our small, spontaneous groups as working units, I found myself asking: How can we develop social consciousness in children of this age? (quoted in Amidon, 1927, p. 508)

How, indeed, can one develop social consciousness in children?

### A Childhood Filled With Commitment

There is a lot to learn about fostering the development of social consciousness from the story of Patty Smith Hill's childhood. Born in the Reconstruction South in 1868, Miss Hill was the fourth child in a family of six: two boys and four girls of an educated, influential, but very non-traditional family of Louisville, Kentucky. The children were encouraged to be independent thinkers who worked hard for others as well as for themselves. It was written many years later that each of the Hill children, as they matured, "undertook some big piece of work and thirty

years after the father's death Louisville people began to say that Louisville, like Rome, was built on seven Hills" (Chaffee, 1925).

Patty Smith Hill's father, W. W. Hill, who, as a Presbyterian minister was not eligible for service in the Civil War, "opened a college for the daughters of the South near Louisville, Kentucky, as his contribution to the reconstruction years" (Bailey, 1931, p.5). Dr. Hill, a graduate of Princeton University, believed that higher education should be available to women as well as to men so that they could be prepared to live an independent life. Reminiscing in 1925 about her childhood, Miss Hill related that, though her family was financially well-to do, the Hill girls were encouraged to pursue a profession. "This was a radical thing everywhere fifty years ago, particularly in the South. My father had a horror of girls marrying 'just for a home' and he said that the only way to avoid this catastrophe was to prepare every young woman to 'stand on her own feet' economically. For this reason from our earliest years sisters and brothers alike discussed together and with our parents the type of work we wished to pursue when we were grown" (Amidon, p. 507).

Patty Hill's mother was, it seems, a perfect match for a man who held such beliefs. She was a writer for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* who had grown up on a pre-Civil War plantation. She valued literacy and human dignity, and as a young girl had taught all the captives who labored on her family's plantation to read and write. She had attempted to be admitted to a nearby college, The Center College, but was refused formal matriculation because she was a woman. She was tutored privately by professors from the college, but never was allowed to earn a degree.

Professor Hill's mother believed that children should be free to play and follow their own pursuits as well as learn the value of hard work.

My mother's philosophy of life was a happy one. She said children should have every pleasure that there was not some good reason they should not have--a radical point of view in those Puritanical times. . . We children each had our own small garden. We were also allowed to play with hammer and nails. We used to work for days making playhouses, and our home was always

open to other people's children. My mother used to say, she'd rather have other people's children at her house than to have her children at other people's houses. Then she'd always know what was going on. Our home was always hospitably open. The cook was told that what was good enough for us every day was good enough for company, so that if a guest came at the last moment, just an extra plate was all that was necessary. And we hardly knew what it was to sit down without guests." (Chaffee, 1925, p. 1-2)

Patty Smith Hill later attributed much of her philosophy and its success in classrooms to her upbringing in a home with an atmosphere of freedom where play was valued as much as work. She viewed her parents as role models whom she followed in the way which suited her most. She recalled that by the time she was eight or nine, she knew what she wanted to do when she grew up, though she had never heard of kindergartens. "When I was about eleven, someone told me about a foundling's asylum, and I decided that a whole houseful of babies would be the finest thing in the world, and I went as far as to ask my mother to help me take charge of one when I grew up." (Chaffee, 1925)

#### Mentors

There were other people to whom Patty Smith Hill attributed her success and ability to have such a deep impact on education. One was her first kindergarten pedagogy teacher, Miss Anna E. Bryan, the director of a kindergarten training school in Louisville. Miss Bryan had studied in Chicago and opened up the training school the year that Patty Hill turned eighteen. She entered as one of Miss Bryan's first students. "I was the youngest in the class, but from the very beginning, Miss Bryan would say, "Do not follow Froebel blindly. I want to see what you, yourself will do" (Amidon, 1927, p.507). The free interpretation of Froebel's philosophy was unheard of in kindergarten circles in America at that time, and one wonders if Miss Hill would have so persistently questioned the Froebelian Gifts and Occupations if she had not had the encouragement of the courageous Miss Bryan.

Miss Bryan appointed Patty Smith Hill head teacher of the demonstration kindergarten in her training school the year that Miss Hill graduated. Patty Hill was a masterful teacher who

inspired those around her, especially the children, to think creatively and independently. She believed that she was actually following Froebel's teaching, since she interpreted him as constantly searching, "sending out material to mothers and teachers urging them to criticize it after experimentation. Those who came after him did not have this fresh and adventurous spirit. In their hands his incomplete experimentation grew into a cult. The purpose of the kindergarten movement ceased to be a progressive scheme of education and became a 'system'" (Amidon, 1927). Many educational leaders of the day were emerging as advocates of the Froebelian 'system' so decried by Patty Smith Hill: Elizabeth Peabody, William T. Harris, and Miss Susan Blow, a national leader in kindergarten and a lecturer at Teacher College, who would later become an intellectual adversary and close personal friend of Miss Hill.

Miss Bryan and Miss Hill experimented with different methods in their campus school kindergarten in Louisville, deciding that children would rather build houses and doll beds with Froebel's Gift of rectangular blocks, rather than the square dictated by the followers of his system. The two women travelled together to the NEA meeting of 1890, where Miss Bryan presented a paper titled "The Letter Killeth," a critique of the dictation-like, systematized method of teaching children to draw so commonly practiced at that time. Miss Hill illustrated the talk with drawings and students' original work, revolutionary techniques in the kindergarten of the 19th century. That summer they went to study with Francis Parker at the Cook County Normal School in Chicago. "Whenever there was anyone that either Miss Bryan or I could study with, we did so" (Chaffee, 1925, p.4). They studied with G. Stanley Hall of Clark University in 1895, after receiving a questionnaire from him which was obviously critical of the traditional techniques. She later reported, "While a large number of kindergartners responded to Dr. Hall's invitation, at the close of his first class only two students remained for the exceedingly strenuous summer course he proposed - Miss Bryan and myself. This gave us a rare opportunity, as we had the whole summer for uninterrupted study under Dr. Hall and Professor Burnham. Here we were introduced to the new child study movement, to the necessity for

changing materials, curricula, and methods in the light of new knowledge about both physical and mental health" (Amidon, 1927, p. 508).

Even as she was spending her summers studying with many of the leading Progressives of the day, among them John Dewey, William James, and Dr. Luther Gulick, she was adapting the Progressive philosophy to kindergarten methods. Miss Hill had worked with the poor children of the ravaged southern states of the Reconstruction era. She was deeply moved by the malnutrition, child labor, and high death rate among children of poverty. She had developed a life-long commitment to democratic ideals and the importance of self-determination in activity, especially in childhood, as a means of empowering children to overcome social and economic disadvantages. As she put it, "Even tiny children have a right to 'Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'" (undated interview)

In 1893, Miss Bryan went to Chicago to study with John Dewey, leaving Patty Smith Hill as Principal and Supervisor of the Louisville Kindergarten Training School. That year, Miss Hill went to mount an exhibit on her new kindergarten methods in the Education Building at the Chicago World's Fair. By then, more than 3000 visitors had signed the register as guests who had observed her kindergarten in Louisville, among them, Colonel Parker, Dr. Jenny B. Merrill, Supervisor of the kindergartens of the New York City Public Schools, Miss Caroline T. Haven of the Ethical Culture School, and Mr. Milton Bradley, the first manufacturer of kindergarten materials (Fine, undated).

The exhibit at the World's Fair drew a great deal of attention to Louisville and Patty Hill. She became a leader of the kindergarten movement, was a prominent lecturer at the meetings of the International Kindergarten Union, and was appointed by that organization to head the Liberal Committee of the Committee of Nineteen in 1904. By 1905, when Dean James Earl Russell invited her to accept an appointment as lecturer at Teachers College, she had travelled all over the United States, and twice to Europe, speaking on her progressive ideas and methods for teaching young children (Jammer, 1960).

She had become a strong voice, not only for children, but for their teachers as well. Her in teacher education curriculum at the Louisville Training School included many academic subjects. She strongly encouraged the development of attitudes which would promote independence in teachers rather than dependence on the methods of others. It was only through the study of children, she felt, that teachers could know how to react to them in their classrooms, and it was only through independent thought that each teacher could develop a program suited for her particular children (Hill, 1901). Late in her career, she summed up her ideas on teachers this way:

There are two great divisions of teachers, you know, cookbook teachers and checkerboard teachers. A cookbook teacher sits down every evening, measures out so much arithmetic, so much spelling, so much music, according to a pedagogical recipe and next day spoon-feeds it into his pupils. He calls the process education. But suppose he were getting ready for a game of chess or checkers. Would it do any good to take the board the evening before and figure out the campaign--first this move, then that move? When he sat down with his opponents, he would find that the vital factor had been entirely omitted from his calculations: the reaction of the other mind. I tell my students that that is our main concern as teachers - the reaction of the other mind. Of course cook book teaching is easier. But the other kind - well, from the child's point of view the other kind offers possibilities of real adventure. And for the teacher it is a lot more fun (Amidon, 1927, p.509).

It is easy to see why Russell persevered in persuading Miss Hill to leave Louisville to seek her fortune in New York City, though she was very reluctant to do so.

### The Teachers College Years

#### James Earl Russell

Of all her mentors, the last was one of the strongest and had the most profound effect on Patty Smith Hill's life and work: James Earl Russell. Russell was aware of the two opposing views in the kindergarten movement,

and already had a major proponent of the traditional methods as a lecturer at Teachers College, Miss Susan Blow. Patty Hill had attended Teachers College in the summer of 1905, and received an invitation from Dean Russell to lecture there that fall. She impressed everyone with her open-mindedness, sincerity, and dedication so much that Russell asked her to extend the leave she had taken from the Louisville kindergarten to a full year, offering her an honorarium of \$20.00 per lecture (Russell, 1937). When she demurred at the low pay and the prospect of an extended absence from her job, Russell replied:

I have your letter of January 29, 1905. You perhaps will think of the old saying concerning the camel, who, if he gets his head in, crowds in his whole body. Perhaps I did that. But you should take it as a compliment that we are so anxious to extend your period of residence, and at the same time attribute the scaling of salary to our unavoidable poverty. Nevertheless, I have telegraphed you that, womanlike, you may have your own way (February 2, 1905).

Thus began a friendship which lasted through the rest of Patty Smith Hill's career. Russell gave Miss Hill the opportunity to experiment with her ideas in the kindergartens of the Speyer School and the Horace Mann Schools. He encouraged her to carry on her work, and served as a sounding board for her complaints, as well as an advisor in her dealings with her enemies. She had come to Teachers College as a "radical" who was too unorthodox for many kindergarten educators. Sometimes she did not feel up to the task.

Russell recounted the story of his offering Miss Hill a full-time appointment in a 1927 letter:

When it became necessary to reorganize our Kindergarten Department, I found that there was sharp competition between two schools of thought. Miss Blow and her disciples adhered very religiously to the formal interpretation of Froebel's philosophy and practice. Miss Hill was one of the two or three prominent leaders of the more liberal wing. My plan at first was to have both sides presented in Teachers College, as it is

part of my policy to see that no one mode of thought is here represented to the exclusion of the others. Consequently for some time, I tried to drive the team abreast by making provision for both parties to present their case.

This he did first by having the two women share a course of lectures which were open to the public in January of 1906. Each lectured her point of view every other week, alternating with the other (Jammer, 1960). The prospect of facing the impressive and powerful Miss Blow, who had been the Chairperson of the Traditional Committee of the Committee of Nineteen in 1903, almost caused Miss Hill to decline Dean Russell's invitation. She had already encountered Miss Blow in her activities in the International Kindergarten Union. In fact, The Committee of Fifteen had become the Committee of Nineteen in 1904, when it became obvious that there were two opposing points of view in the kindergarten movement. [The Committee later split into three groups, with Miss Blow chairing the Conservative Committee, Miss Hill, the Liberal, and Miss Wheelock, the Liberal-Conservative, which issued their final reports in 1913 (I.K.U., (1913).] Dean Russell's reply to Miss Hill indicated the intensity of her concern at facing the formidable Miss Blow on a weekly basis:

Dear Miss Hill:

I can hardly believe that your present mental condition is other than temporary stage fright. Otherwise, how can you explain the apparent despondency of an able-bodied young woman at the head of the graduate department in her subject in the leading Teachers College of the world when she thinks of the specter of one who is a master of the same field but who has at best a few months or a few years in which to work? . . . But it is still worse than even this. The younger woman occupies not only the headship of the department but has a permanent appointment; the specter to which I refer has merely a temporary lectureship contingent on gifts received (Jan. 11, 1906).

Miss Hill replied to that letter in the affirmative, with a vow to enter upon her new work with enthusiasm and determination to make it a success if the possibility was in her power (Jan. 25, 1906). She and Miss Blow lectured their views every other week. Miss

Hill later found it amusing. "The same group of students were exposed to diametrically opposed points of view on different days. It's a wonder the class survived!" (Amidon, p. 508)

#### Miss Hill's Play Room

From the beginning, Patty Smith Hill, with the continuous blessing and encouragement of Dean Russell began a process of change and experimentation which never ceased during her tenure at Teachers College. Her first students, mostly kindergarten teachers and supervisors from the New York area, had been staunch advocates of traditional ways and the students of Miss Blow. Patty Hill's methods were sometimes too liberal for the New York audience. Dean Russell, seeing this, allowed Miss Hill to establish a "play" room at Teachers College in which Miss Hill, along with Miss Luella Palmer, could experiment with their new methods with children who had not attended traditional kindergartens. They recruited children from three to seven years of age with no previous school experience and set to work designing materials and a curriculum suited for the children they had, and not for an ideal of what someone thought children should be (Hill, 1906a; Palmer, 1906).

Miss Hill had studied with Dr. Luther Gulick in 1898, in what she called the first school of play in America. It was there that she had started to experiment with different size blocks to see if the children, like she and her brothers and sisters, enjoyed building structures large enough for them to play inside. Her own childhood had an effect on her work long after she left Louisville. She recounted:

I looked back on my own childhood when my sisters and I tried to make houses big enough to get into but the available materials were not suited to our purposes. We tried placing boards on top of barrels but the construction was so shaky that we were compelled to lie down after creeping 'upstairs.'...We worked on this scheme twelve or thirteen years before we devised our present set of blocks which schools all over the world are using (Amidon, 1927, p.509).

Because the New York crowd was so conservative, Miss Hill dared not call her first Speyer School Play Room a kindergarten in the beginning.

Gradually, however, her reputation grew, and her ideas gained acceptance. She led the move toward abandoning Froebelian materials and developing materials based on activities relevant to the child's experience. She maintained, however, that true to her interpretation of Froebel's experimental attitude toward his philosophy, she "kept the Froebelian attitude and spirit". She never adopted Montessori's methods, feeling that they were too rigid and artificial for American children (Amidon, p. 509).

#### The Child as Autonomous Learner

One of Miss Hill's ideas which revolutionized teaching in the kindergarten was the notion that young children had minds and personalities of their own: that they were unique individuals with interests and needs which were important enough to be heeded. She could not see the connection between Froebel's Gifts and Occupations and the children's taking pride in their work. In her study of young children, she saw that children of two or three cared little for their products, but those who were four, five or six, cared a great deal. Why, then, should the product be dictated to the child, when the child has ideas of his/her own?

Show a boy of five the kite fold which, when completed, will form one of a series to be pasted in the flat in a scrap book; then show him the same form made of tough paper and sufficiently large to experiment with in the wind. Ask him which he prefers to make, and you will see whether products are of importance. Also, watch the difference between his passivity and eagerness in the two cases (Hill, 1906b, p. 11).

Miss Hill was very vocal in her belief that young children had personalities and that they were capable, with the right teaching, of being taught to think for themselves. A teacher who knew her children, could help each child to develop his or her own individuality. She encouraged teachers to keep detailed records of children's behavior, even during free play so that they might know each child as a person. She encouraged parent interviews as a means of getting to know each child's personality and temperament so that the teacher could also know that the child has a life outside of school. In this way, she could develop the

curriculum most suited to each child.

#### The Child as a Social Learner

Patty Hill did not merely acknowledge the young child's individual needs. Based on years of observation, she knew the importance of the child's social needs as well. In addition to her child study, she attributed the philosophical basis for her ideas to Froebel, writing in her part of the Report of the Committee of Nineteen that Froebel believed that the organization of the subject matter, the curriculum of the kindergarten, grew out of the social life of the child (I.K.U., 1913).

She told of how she fostered cooperation through the use of large blocks too heavy to handle alone, and how children worked together to solve problems in their play. A true sense of purpose, she said, came from the child's own life, and not from the purposes set out by the teacher in her lessons:

A group of six year olds taught me about this many years ago. They worked for a week over a model of a Fifth Avenue bus which they built with blocks. They criticized, discussed plans, and improved the model with undiminished enthusiasm, till they were satisfied. We had to learn through these children what real concentration is when a job challenges their interest. It is astonishing the difference between attention which is only a response to the teacher's demand and the concentration inspired by enthusiasm for a job (Amidon, p. 509).

Miss Hill firmly believed that young children could learn democratic principles only if they were involved in democratic group situations. She also believed that these principles could not be learned unless they were experienced in a meaningful context: that of the child's own interests (Hill, 1915). She fostered independence and leadership in much the same manner as it had been for her as a child growing up in Louisville, and later as a woman apprehensive about coming to Teachers College to continue her work. She advocated allowing children the freedom to choose their own means and ends, yet also allowing for aid and encouragement if they needed it.

Jack taught me about this. Jack was in Miss Garrison's group,

here at Teachers College. A canary bird had been given to the children. When Miss Garrison carried the cage into the room, they all crowded about her, admiring and asking questions. The cage was finally placed in the window, and the children scattered to their various occupations. Presently Jack tugged at Miss Garrison's sleeve. "What's the bird's name?" he asked. "I don't believe he has a name." "Then I will name him," said Jack. "I will name him for myself: Jack." "But Jack, does the bird belong to you?" asked Miss Garrison. "No, he doesn't." "To whom does the bird belong?" "I suppose he belongs to all of the children in this room." "Well, then, who has the right to name him?" "I suppose all the children ought to name him," Jack answered slowly. "Miss Garrison, please call the children together to name the bird!" Miss Garrison waited a moment and then suggested, "But Jack, you are the one who wants the bird named. Can't you call the children together?" It was a big undertaking for a five-year-old. Jack hesitated, uncertain how to organize a "town meeting," but convinced of the need of one. Finally he went from one group of children to another saying, "Our bird hasn't a name - come on, let's name him. You can nail that afterward - let's name our bird right away." Jack persuaded Leland and Margot and Sally to help him arrange chairs. They placed them in a big circle, "so we can all see each other," with a seat for Miss Garrison. But when all the chairs were occupied, it was Jack, not the teacher, who began to hold forth. The group entered into animated discussion, Jack insisting that Jessie mustn't talk till Emily was through and that everyone must be quiet when Harold, who stuttered, began to talk. At last a name was chosen, the big circle broke up and the children returned to their sewing and carpentry and painting. But Jack had taught us something about kindergarten organization that we needed to know: the

small, spontaneous group is the natural unit for work with little children. A common interest is the only basis for calling together a large group. Given such an interest, a large group can function simply and spontaneously, and through it the children gain experience as parts of a social whole (Amidon, 508-509).

Patty Smith Hill held forth with her beliefs and wrote, and spoke frequently in the two first decades of this century on the value of making the interests of the child the central motivating force in classroom activity. She knew that young children, in their play, imitated adult behaviors and work activities, and encouraged them to engage in all kinds of occupations in the kindergarten classroom: carpentry, cooking, gardening, and painting, and though the products may not have been perfect, she saw social value in their exposure to all kinds of labor (Jammer, 1960). Respect for all occupations would, she asserted, help to reduce the divisions between social and economic classes. The kindergarten, as the first formal stage in education, was the first place to begin formal lessons in this process (Hill, 1912).

#### The Importance of Play

Patty Smith Hill believed that, for the child, play was learning. She had observed many children, and though she made a distinction between free play and directed play, realized through her observations that, for children, all play was valuable. Free play developed initiative, self-reliance, and freedom, while directed play helped the young child, who was rather "fragmentary," to grow less impulsive and more focused (Hill, 1906b). She advocated a balance between the two, with free play as a time for the teacher to observe children and to promote the development of democratic ideals. More and more, she departed from the blind acceptance of European methods and materials, espousing the development of a truly American method of schooling young children, using American materials and activities as the basis for learning (Hill, 1913).

She was appointed Head of the Kindergarten Department at Teachers College in 1910, and moved her play room to the Horace Mann School Kindergarten. Students came from all over the country and the world to

study kindergarten methods and supervision with Patty Smith Hill. She was able to report, at the time of her retirement in 1935, that there was kindergartner trained in her methods in every state of the Union, and many countries around the world (Chaffee, 1925; Amidon, 1927; Fine, 1936/nd). In order to continue the development of a truly American kindergarten, she advocated that every city maintain at least one experimental kindergarten for research and development (Hill, 1915).

There was a danger in developing a truly American kindergarten, however. This country and its schools were founded on a Puritan ethic which valued work and devalued play as idleness. This ethic also implied an acceptance of the inherent drudgery in work and enjoyment in play. She wrote

As long as we limit work to ends which authority considers sufficiently valuable to impose upon willing workers, secured through processes which are unendurable to them, and limit play to the pleasant processes which result from whim or caprice, there will necessarily be a battle in adjusting the motives of play and work in elementary education. Not only does such a conception of work apply more directly to drudgery, but such a conception of play is inadequate to explain the serious significance of play in the period of prolonged infancy. So long as we regard work as activity leading toward an end imposed by authority, and play as whimsical indulgence inactivities leading toward no end of worth to the child or society, the battle will wage between the kindergartner and primary teacher (1906b, p. 4).

Though Patty Smith Hill and the conservative movement in the kindergarten avowed a debt to the teachings of Froebel, her major points of departure in kindergarten curriculum and teaching were in the value of play, the acceptance of the child as an autonomous individual with needs and interests and the ability to be self-directed, and the belief that democratic principles could be modeled in the early childhood classroom and that they could be learned through the experience of the child, rather than through the dictates of adult authority (Hill, 1907; 1925). She was indeed a radical.

#### Other Innovations of Patty Smith Hill

Her years of labor at Teachers College were rewarded with honors and worldwide acclaim as a leader of the Progressive Education movement in America. In 1922, the trail-blazing Patty Smith Hill was the third woman promoted to full professor at Teachers College. In 1929, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Columbia University by Nicholas Murray Butler, again, one of the few women to be so honored. In his speech, Butler said of Miss Hill, "Year in, year out, Dr. Hill is answering the age-old question of Epictetus, 'What constitutes a child?' In the spirit of Froebel, she is finding new ways and means to make the child the father of the worthwhile man" (quoted in Fine, 1936). She continued to write and lecture, and students continued to come to New York to study with her and her colleagues, including the aforementioned Miss Garrison, who had been a student in the famed Blow - Hill Lecture course of 1906 (Jammer, 1960). On her retirement, Miss Hill was pleased to announce, "We have people in charge of kindergarten work in almost every teacher-training school in the country and the world. In the 47 years that I've taught, I've seen the whole thing change. I don't believe there's a normal school in this country without one of our graduates substituting the new ideas for the old" (undated interview).

With the onset of the Great Depression, Patty Smith Hill became an even more strident voice in the call for universal pre-school education, and the coordination of the kindergarten curriculum with that of the primary grades. She also advocated parent education so that there could be greater coherence between the values of the home and the values of the school. With great vision, which we can only now appreciate, she said, "Never has the kindergarten been more needed than in modern life, with its limited home space for play, its out-family mother employed in the mills, the factories, and mines, and in other commercial enterprises. These conditions were serious enough, but when the wave of unemployment swept the whole country, the dangers of neglect were multiplied a hundred-fold" (undated interview).

In her retirement, she opened the Hilltop Community Center in a building donated by Jewish Theological Seminary on 123rd St., one block from Teachers College. There, doctors provided by

the New Deal provided health care for the neighborhood children and their parents. Teachers, again provided by the government, with the help of an experimental teacher training program at Teachers College administered by Miss Hill and Dr. Agnes Snyder, provided education on furniture donated by the Salvation Army. Miss Hill had a vision of the Center being the focal point for all positive activities in the economically poor and ethnically and racially diverse neighborhood (Fine, undated). Miss Hill stated, "Whether the mother is economically employed or in search of a job, the New Deal has a grave responsibility in setting leaders to work to create a new code for the protection of young children, a code for which we will include in its plans proper and increasing care of pre-school children of all classes of society whether they are found in large cities, small villages, or rural communities" (Fine, undated).

Patty Smith Hill worked at the Hilltop Community Center as a volunteer until her death in 1946 at the age of 78. Children in kindergartens all over the world encounter her every day in their singing of "Happy Birthday," a song she co-authored with her sister, Mildred, from a folk melody. This was in keeping with her philosophy of following the natural rhythms of the music of the child's culture and language. They also encounter Miss Hill when they do large motor movement and play in rhythm bands; when they paint freely at the easel; when they play with large blocks; when they choose their own activity centers; when they visit the school nurse for a school physical; when they drink from water fountains or from separate cups; when they use paper napkins at snack time; and when the custodian come into their classroom to wash the floor at night (Vitae of Patty Smith Hill). Though the memory of Miss Hill does not loom large in our minds, it certainly has been a large enough part of our early childhoods so that we, as William F. Russell, the son of James Earl Russell, and Dean of Teachers College at the time of Patty Smith Hill's retirement can also say, "Miss Hill brought me up!" (quoted in Fine, undated)

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