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RELIGION AND AUTHORITY
IN COLONIAL EDUCATION

“Come over and help us,” a Native American is depicted as saying while standing as the central figure on the seal of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay, 1629. This figure is holding an arrow in one hand and a bow in the other; a band of leaves covers his midsection.¹ Undoubtedly, English colonists sincerely believed they were bringing a superior civilization to a “heathen” and “uncivilized” people. This seal symbolized the feelings of cultural superiority that the English brought to the soil of North America.

To the surprise of colonists, Native Americans did not rush to accept the offer of religious and cultural conversion. Native Americans responded by offering food and aid, which made it possible for Europeans to survive and expand, while Indians experienced the catastrophic effects of European-introduced diseases. For Native Americans, the primary problem presented by the European invasion was physical and cultural survival. Frequently, this meant warfare or finding a means of protecting cultural traditions while adapting to the social and economic changes brought by Europeans.

For English colonists, the cultural resistance of Native Americans was an affront to the teachings of Christ and a hindrance to colonial expansion. Motivated by sincere religious convictions and a belief in the superiority of English culture, European Americans engaged in an educational crusade to turn “heathen” and “uncivilized” Indians into models of Protestant and English culture.

It is my hypothesis that the educational crusade for the religious and cultural conversion of Native Americans contributed to the nineteenth-century vision of the public school as the primary means for ending crime, poverty, and social and political conflict. There was little difference in the minds of nineteenth-century Protestant public school advocates between “savage” Indians, unrepentant

criminals, the rebellious poor, and the “heathen” Irish-Catholic immigrants. In fact, the English and Protestant sense of cultural and moral superiority originally developed during the twelfth-century English invasion of Ireland. Many English colonialists likened the “savage” Indian to the “savage” Irish.²

The 1629 seal of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay also symbolizes to many historians the colonial dedication to education and the establishment of schools. Traditionally, the educational policies of the Massachusetts Bay Colony are considered the precursors to the development of public schooling in the United States and to the belief that public schools could end crime, eliminate poverty, provide equality of opportunity, improve the economy, train workers, and create social and political stability. This belief in the power of schooling set the agenda for educational discussions through the twentieth century.

Therefore, I am beginning the story of the American school by focusing on the educational policies of the New England colonies. This discussion will provide a necessary background for understanding the development of public schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN COLONIAL SOCIETY

Colonial education illustrates some important social functions of education. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, education in colonial New England was used to maintain the authority of the government and religion. People were taught to read and write so that they could obey the laws of God and the state. In addition, education in Puritan New England, with its emphasis on individual conduct, bore the seeds for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century view of education as a panacea for society. This view can be traced to the Protestant Reformation, one result of which was an emphasis on individual instruction for the development of piety, with the goal of creating “the good society.” Whether or not education can create the good society continues to be an important question.

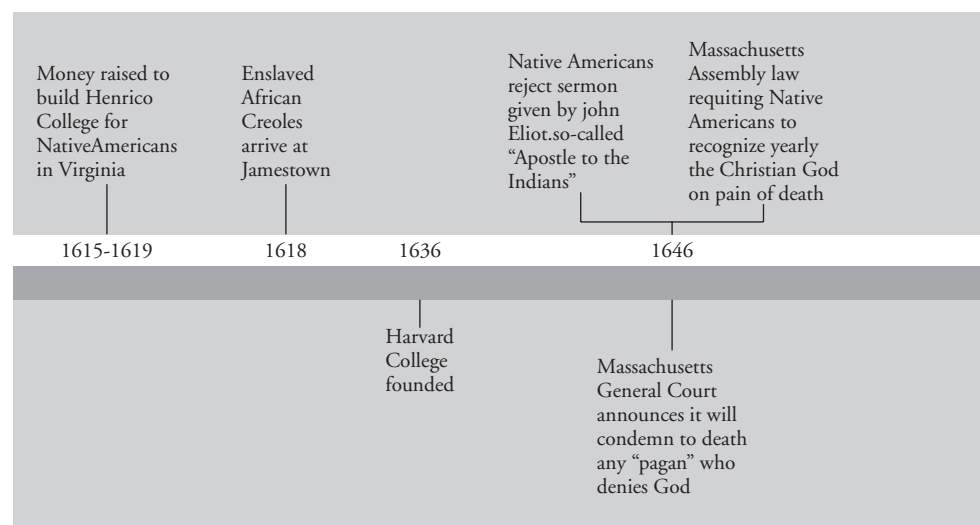
In addition, education in the colonies helped to maintain social distinctions. For many, the learning of Latin and Greek in grammar schools or with tutors and attendance at a college were a means of maintaining or gaining elite status. For others, attendance at an academy was the key to social mobility. From the seventeenth century to present times, there has been a continuous debate over the role of the school in creating social classes and providing for social mobility.

Also, education was increasingly considered a means of improving the material prosperity of society. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some colonialists and Europeans believed that scientific research would improve the quality of life for all people. They believed that the key to scientific research was freedom of thought and the freedom to pursue any form of inquiry. In England, the quest for intellectual freedom resulted in the establishment of academies that, eventually, were transplanted to the American colonies.

The concern about the advancement of science and intellectual freedom raised issues regarding the control of education. As I will discuss in this chapter, some people argued that intellectual freedom could be achieved only by separating schools from religious organizations that were supported by governments. It was argued that government-supported church schools primarily taught obedience to God and the state, and consequently limited freedom of thought. Others argued that any control by government over education would result in despotism over the mind and a limitation of free inquiry because government officials would always use education to support their own power. The concern about freedom of thought sparked debates about whether or not education should be secular and controlled by government. Similar debates about the role of education in providing material benefits to society and the control of schools continue to present times.

Colonial education also illustrates the relationship between education and concepts of the child and family. Throughout the history of education, concepts

TIME LINE OF COLONIAL EDUCATION



of childhood and youth have played important roles in determining methods of instruction. A child who is thought of as being born good is treated quite differently from one who is considered to be born evil. The authoritarian quality of colonial education reflects an authoritarian family structure and a belief that the inherent evil of childhood needed to be controlled.

The effort to change Native American cultures was a prelude to future debates about multicultural education. The issue would gain added importance with the seventeenth-century arrival of enslaved Africans. Schools would continue to play a leading role in attempting to unify indigenous and immigrant populations.

In summary, these themes in colonial education continue to the present:

Education is still considered, by some, as a means of preparing children to obey the authority of the government.

People still think that education can function as a social panacea by eliminating crime, immorality, and poverty.

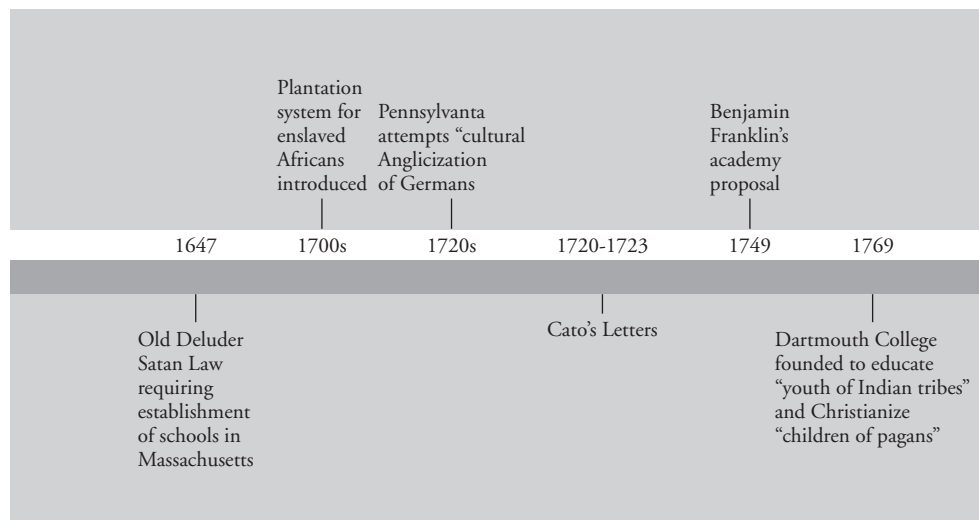
Education is still considered, by some, as a means of maintaining social-class differences.

Many people still believe in the power of schools to provide social mobility.

Debates continue about the potential of government-operated schools to inhibit intellectual freedom.

Multicultural education remains an important issue.

My discussion of these themes in colonial education will begin with education's role in maintaining authority and social differences in colonial New



England. This will be followed by an examination of educational policies and efforts to educate Native Americans. Throughout this chapter, I will be relating these themes to different historical interpretations of the colonial period. A goal of this book is to help readers understand the importance of a historian's interpretation of our images of the past. Different historians have emphasized different themes in interpreting the development of colonial education.

AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL STATUS IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

When the Puritans settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s, they believed they were creating a model religious community. Early Puritan leader John Winthrop told his fellow colonists in 1630, "We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."³ Their goal was to create the good society, which meant a well-ordered religious society that would win God's approval and be used as a model by the rest of the world.

The importance of religion in New England colonies has led some historians to emphasize the Protestant nature of colonial education and the effect of that legacy on the development of public schools in the nineteenth century. The following paragraphs discuss some of the differing interpretations of the meaning of colonial education for the future.

Historian Carl Kaestle argues that the Protestant-Calvinist nature of colonial education strongly influenced the development of public schools in the nineteenth century.⁴ As a result, Catholic groups in the nineteenth century rebelled against the Protestant quality of public schools and established their own school system, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Catholics referred to public schools as Protestant schools. Even in this century, after Bible reading and school prayer were banned by the U.S. Supreme Court, many religious groups continue to protest the loss of traditional Christian morality in public schools.

Ellwood Cubberley argues that colonial schools were eventually transformed from instruments of religion to servants of the state.⁵ "The first schools in America were clearly the fruits of the Protestant Revolts in Europe," Cubberley wrote. And of all the Protestant groups that settled in colonial America, according to Cubberley, "the Puritans [Calvinists] who settled New England contributed most that was valuable for our future educational development."⁶

In contrast to Cubberley, Rush Welter argues that the religious and authoritarian qualities of New England schools cannot be found in the public schools of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He believes that there is no continuity of development between colonial schools and public schools in the nineteenth century. He argues that the public school movement of the nineteenth century resulted from a desire to educate citizens for a democratic society. Welter finds little in colonial education that contributes to a democratic theory of education, and he views colonial education as a “false start from which it was necessary to turn away before education could become a key principle of democratic faith.”⁷ According to Welter, colonial education was oriented toward teaching respect for authority and maintaining the existing social and religious order. This orientation was contrary, in his opinion, to the later educational emphasis on preparing citizens for independent democratic behavior.

Merle Curti, in *The Social Ideas of American Educators*, identifies two distinct schemes of education in the colonies. One served the elite, which included merchants, planters, clergy, and lawyers. The other scheme served the rest of the population. In the southern colonies, he argues, the class system was most in evidence; there the children of the rich were educated by private tutors or attended private schools while other children received only a minimal education. In New England, the class distinctions began in the reading-and-writing schools: the children of the elite attended private dame schools, and the children of the poor attended the town schools. The sharpest distinction was between children in apprenticeship and those attending grammar schools and colleges. The majority of boys were placed into apprenticeship, but the sons of the elite were sent to grammar schools and on to college.⁸

Although differences in historical interpretations of colonial education exist, no one denies the important role of religion and authority. Within the context of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's attempt to create a model religious commonwealth, education was considered essential to maintaining religious piety and social stability. The purpose of teaching reading and writing was to ensure not only that individuals read the Bible and religious tracts, but also that they became good workers and obeyed the laws of the community. These educational goals were explicitly given in the earliest colonial law regarding education, the Massachusetts Law of 1642. This law opens with a general complaint about the neglect of parents and masters in the training of children in learning and labor and calls for the appointment of individuals to investigate the ability of children “to read and understand the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country.”⁹

The religious theme received even greater emphasis five years later in the “Old Deluder Satan Law,” enacted in 1647 in Massachusetts. This law became famous because it required communities to establish and support schools. Specifically, the law required any community having at least fifty households to appoint a teacher to provide instruction in reading and writing and any community of one hundred or more households to establish a grammar school. The law opens with the famous words, “It being the chief project of old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures It is therefore ordered”¹⁰

Several important points about these two laws should be noted. The first is the reference to masters and parents. In both the colonies and England, some children were apprenticed to a master for seven years. During the apprenticeship, the master had the responsibility for ensuring that the apprentice learned to read and write. The shortage of labor in the colonies often led to a shortening of the apprenticeship period and to the neglect by masters and parents of their obligation to provide instruction. Both laws were intended to correct this neglect. Second, both laws made a distinction between instruction in reading-and-writing schools and in grammar schools. Unlike reading-and-writing schools, grammar schools primarily provided instruction that prepared their students for college and for leadership positions.

When historians argue that colonial schools perpetuated the existing social order, what they have in mind are the implications of the distinctions among apprenticeship, reading-and-writing schools, and grammar schools. Merle Curti argues that colonial education as an instrument for preserving existing economic and social arrangements was rooted in European traditions. In England, for instance, the sons of the nobility were educated in the well-endowed public schools, while the well-to-do middle class studied at the local grammar schools. The vast number of children of the poor were apprenticed, and the minimal instruction they received in reading and writing was for the purpose of maintaining religious conformity and the power of existing authority.

In New England as well as in the other colonies, Curti argues, the identity of interests between the dominant religious group and the ruling authorities was even closer than in Europe, which resulted in education serving to protect the existing authority structure. As was stated earlier, the minimal instruction in reading and writing given to apprentices was solely for the purpose of teaching religious conformity and conveying an understanding of the laws of the colony. In Curti’s words, “Apprentices were taught to respect their superiors and the sons of their superiors who were conning Latin verbs and acquiring the other requisites of the culture and polish that characterized the class to which they belonged.”¹¹

To understand Curti's argument, the history of reading and writing instruction and the development of grammar schools must be examined. The primary content in colonial reading and writing instruction was religious and moral, whereas the grammar school emphasized the teaching of Latin and Greek as part of a Renaissance conception of the educated person.

Both reading-and-writing schools and grammar schools were products of an educational revolution that had swept England in the sixteenth century. This revolution embodied the emphasis of the Protestant Reformation on the individual's responsibility to know the word of God and learn proper religious behavior. Reading-and-writing schools, often called petty schools, concentrated on the teaching of reading, with some teaching of writing and ciphering. This instruction took place in a variety of settings including households, churches, and schools. Instruction was conducted by means of a hornbook—a piece of wood with a thin layer of horn on top bearing the letters of the alphabet and a brief prayer. A majority of these schools were conducted by a single master or mistress.

A popular form of the petty school in the colonies was the dame school for neighborhood children. The dame school was often conducted in the kitchen or living room of the teacher's home. These schools primarily gave instruction in reading and writing, whereas writing schools provided a more advanced level of instruction in writing and also instruction in arithmetic and the simple elements of merchants' accounts. Instruction in these schools became a prerequisite for admission to grammar school.

The content of instruction in the petty schools was primarily religious and authoritarian. The best example of this is *The New England Primer*, which became the most popular text for primary instruction.¹² The content of *The New England Primer* reflects the strong religious and authoritarian nature of colonial education. It opens with the alphabet and a guide to spelling. This section is followed by the short statement, "Now the child being entered in his letters and spelling, let him learn; these and such like sentences by heart, whereby he will be both instructed in his duty and encouraged in his learning." The authoritarian context of the child's duty is presented in the first lines of the following verse, which the student was required to memorize:

I will fear God, and honour the KING.
I will honour my Father & Mother.
I will obey my Superiors.
I will Submit to my Elders.

After that verse comes “An Alphabet of Lessons for Youth”—an alphabetic listing of statements containing religious and moral maxims that the student was required to memorize:

A wise son makes a glad Father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his Mother.
Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.
Come unto CHRIST all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and He will give
you rest.

That list is followed by the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, a section called “Duty of Children towards Their Parents,” a list of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and a list of numbers. Numbers are introduced with the statement, “The numeral letters and figures, which serve for the ready finding of any Chapter, Psalm and Verse in the Bible.” After the section on numbers comes a long exhortation given by John Rogers to his nine children in 1554 at the time the entire family was burned at the stake. The *Primer* ends with the Shorter Catechism.

A catechism is a series of questions with a set of correct answers. The child was required to memorize both the questions and the answers. The catechism in *The New England Primer* provided lessons in the basic tenets of Protestant faith. It opens with the question “What is the chief end of Man?” This question was to be answered, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” The next question is:

Q: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A: The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only Rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

The catechism then proceeds to take the student through a series of religious lessons to a final question on the meaning of the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer.¹³

After reading *The New England Primer*, it is not difficult to understand why a historian like Rush Welter would consider colonial education a false start on the road to a democratic education. The content of colonial education emphasized not only submission to authority but also a particular method of instruction. Students were required to memorize the entire text. The method used to teach reading and writing was not one that taught individuals to give direction to their own lives, but one by which individuals would learn to submit to the laws of

religion and the government. Students were not asked to analyze and give their opinions about religious texts; they were taught to accept official interpretations as correct.

It is important to understand that at this point in the history of education, this method of instruction and the content covered were part of a worldview whose adherents believed the good society could be achieved only through obedience to the word of God. In other words, educational practices were consistent with the philosophy and organization of society at that time. It is also important to understand the continuity in history. For example, in the nineteenth century the most important schoolbook was Noah Webster's spelling book, which has many of the characteristics of *The New England Primer*.

The grammar school provided a strikingly different type of education than the reading-and-writing schools did. The purpose of the grammar school, in contrast to that of the petty school, was to educate the leaders of society. For instance, the typical goal of the grammar school was stated by the Hopkins Grammar School at New Haven in 1684 as "[the education] of hopeful youth in the Latin tongue, and other learned languages so far as to prepare such youths for the college and public service of the country in church and commonwealth."¹⁴

Historian Lawrence Cremin, in his monumental study *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607–1783*, links the development of grammar schools to the Renaissance ideal of the educated public leader. During the Renaissance in the sixteenth century, intellectual leaders began to argue for the proper education of future leaders as the means of creating the just society. Foremost among these thinkers was Desiderius Erasmus, who in the early sixteenth century wrote a treatise titled *The Education of the Christian Prince*. This work calls for the education of a just and wise prince through the study of the Scriptures and the selected works of Plutarch, Seneca, Aristotle, Cicero, and Plato. Of great importance to the development of grammar schools is the emphasis on the study of classical Greek and Roman writers, which would, it was believed, lead to the development of civic character and be a preparation for leadership.

Cremin argues that it was a logical step for the middle class in England to see the type of education proposed by Renaissance writers such as Erasmus as a method of enhancing the social status of the middle class. This argument highlights an important distinction between education as a means of conferring status and education as a means of confirming status. In the education of a prince, the status of the prince is to be confirmed by the type of education he receives. If the middle class receives the same type of education, it enhances its social position and confers an improved status.¹⁵

Confirming social status means that education is used to maintain the already existing status of a person. *Conferring* social status means that education improves the social status of the individual.

Therefore, the grammar school became an important institution in England and the colonies for conferring status on the middle class. This represented a great shift in the role of education, one that would have lasting results. First, by conferring status, education assumed the role of providing a degree of upward mobility. By the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of individuals began turning to education as a means of enhancing their social status. In modern times, this role for education was born with the grammar school. Second, grammar schools represented a direct threat to aristocratic control because their existence suggested that individuals could be educated to rule. An issue of concern to aristocratic leaders is the source of a society's leadership. The suggestion that an educated leadership might be superior to an inherited leadership opened the door to the consideration of republican forms of government. The argument that a systematic study of Greek and Latin authors would produce superior leaders in government and church contributed to the rapid expansion of grammar schools in England in the sixteenth century. By the time of the settlement of North America, grammar schools had become an established part of the educational landscape in England. In the colonies, as was previously mentioned, the Massachusetts Law of 1647 required the establishment of a grammar school in every town with one hundred or more households. By 1700, thirty-nine grammar schools had been founded in New England.

The typical grammar school provided a seven-year education with major emphasis on the study of Latin and minor emphasis on Greek and Hebrew. The schools were divided into eight forms and concentrated on the study of Latin grammar, Latin conversation and composition, and Latin readings. In addition, students studied Greek and Hebrew grammar and Greek literature. Cremin writes, "As a rule, mornings were devoted to grammar, afternoons to literature, Fridays to review and the testing of memorization, Saturdays to themes and Sundays to catechizing and other religious exercises."¹⁶

It is important to remember that the purpose of the classical education in the grammar school was to provide instruction in the wisdom of the Greeks and Romans as preparation for civic and religious responsibilities and leadership. Another step in this preparation was to receive a college education. It is significant to note that after the American Revolution, many leaders, including Thomas Jefferson, began to view American colleges as the source of republican leadership; this idea had its roots in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century educational arguments.

In 1636, the Massachusetts Bay Colony established Harvard College. Its founding is described in a pamphlet, *New England's First Fruits*, published in London in 1642: "After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had built our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, rear'd convenient places for God's worship, and settled the Civil Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance Learning, and perpetuate it to Posterity."¹⁷ To advance learning, the colonists accepted money and books from John Harvard for the founding of Harvard College.

New England's First Fruits states clearly that the purpose of Harvard College was to ensure an educated ministry for the colony. It was feared that no replacements would be forthcoming for the religious leaders who had led the colonists from England. In the words of *New England's First Fruits*, there was a "dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust."¹⁸ Thus the goal of Harvard College was to guarantee continuity in the social organization and leadership of the colony.

Studies of the occupations of Harvard graduates in the seventeenth century confirm the role of the college in educating religious and civic leaders. Roughly half, or 180, of the 368 Harvard alumni completing their studies between 1642 and 1689 became clergymen. The next largest group of alumni, 42, became public servants—governors, councillors, judges, and permanent government officials. Twenty-seven of the alumni became physicians and 13 became schoolmasters and college tutors. Occupations for 68 of the alumni could not be determined, and 27 died at a young age. The remaining alumni were classified as merchants, planters, gentlemen, soldiers, mariners, and miscellaneous.¹⁹

After reviewing the purposes and history of reading-and-writing schools and grammar schools and the establishment of Harvard College, one can understand historian Merle Curti's argument that the educational system in New England was designed to protect existing authority by providing a class system of education. Reading-and-writing schools, which the majority of the school-going population attended, provided an authoritarian education and taught only the skills necessary to read and understand religious and civil decrees. Grammar schools and Harvard College trained society's future leadership by providing an education in the classics. It is important to understand that the latter type of education provided knowledge that was ornamental but not necessarily useful. In other words, education in the classics became a means of conferring and identifying social status.

Education in colonial New England must be understood in the context of a group of people struggling for survival in an unknown wilderness. The colonists faced many problems and experienced labor shortages that blurred social-class

lines. The different forms of schooling were not a closed system in which all individuals below a certain level of social status were excluded from attendance at a grammar school. Nor was education the chief and only means of improving one's position in society. In fact, when dealing with education from the perspective of the twenty-first century, one always faces the problem of attributing too much importance to its past social role. What is described here is only the early beginnings of a system that rapidly increased in importance and size during the nineteenth century.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL DOMINATION

A similar development occurred in the settlement of Pennsylvania, but with a major clash between German and English settlers over language usage. In many respects, the problems encountered in Pennsylvania foreshadowed conflicts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries over which language should be used in the schools. Pennsylvania is also a good example of how colonial policy viewed education as a means of establishing the superiority of one ethnic group over another. Here the language used in the schools was thought to be the means by which one ethnic group could gain cultural ascendancy.

William Penn, the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania, actively recruited the oppressed from England and continental Europe to settle in the New World. The original settlement of English Quakers and Anglicans was followed by a large German settlement of religious minorities, including Mennonites, Dunkers, and Amish. The Amish and Mennonites would be in conflict with civil authorities over the issue of schooling through the twentieth century. Groups of other religious minorities from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Germany also settled throughout Penn's colony. By 1766 Benjamin Franklin estimated that the colonial population of 160,000 consisted of one-third Quakers, one-third Germans, and one-third religious minorities from a variety of places in Europe.²⁰

Major differences existed between English control in New York and in Pennsylvania. In New York, the English attempted to Anglicize the administration of the colony while allowing diversity in cultural and social institutions. In Pennsylvania, the English embarked on a policy of "cultural Anglicization."²¹ This policy was directed in particular at the Germans, who caused the greatest fears among the English settlers. A letter to John Penn in 1727 warned him about German immigration: "At this rate you will soon have a German colony here, and perhaps such a one as Britain once received from Saxony in the fifth century."²² Concern was so great that the Pennsylvania Assembly passed a law in

1727 requiring all male German immigrants to swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown.

The great fear was that the culture and language of the settlers would become German. As a result, proposals began to appear that would prohibit German printing houses, the publication of German government documents, and the importing of German books. Of great importance were the recommendations for the establishment of English-language schools. These were viewed as a means of countering and suppressing the expansion of German culture.

Benjamin Franklin was a major proponent of English-language schools and opponent of the expansion of German culture. He played a significant role in the establishment of charity schools, which were to be used for Anglicization. The schools originated as religious institutions for educating the poor German children of the province. Appeals for funds for the schools spread to London, where in 1753 an enthusiastic supporter of the endeavor, William Smith, proclaimed: "By a common education of English and German youth at the same schools, acquaintances and connections will be formed, and deeply impressed upon them in their cheerful and open moments. The English language and a conformity of manners will be acquired."²³

In early 1755 the first schools were organized and a press was purchased from Franklin. Immediately the German community attacked the schools for giving a false picture of German culture. This attack caused the failure of the schools. At their peak in 1759 the schools served only 600 to 750 children, of whom two-thirds were German. By 1764 the effort was considered a failure.²⁴

This brief history of the attempt to Anglicize the Germans in Pennsylvania illustrates a continuing theme in American educational history: The use of the school as a means of spreading a particular culture has resulted in tensions between organized school systems on one side, and immigrant groups, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and African Americans on the other. In the nineteenth century many of the religious tensions caused by the Catholic perception of the public school system as Protestant could also be considered a result of cultural differences.

Although the Germans in Pennsylvania eventually did become Anglicized, they retained their own separate German schools and churches throughout the colonial period. The result was an educational system in the colony that relied on a combination of apprenticeship, private schools, and schools operated by the different religious denominations. The attempt to Anglicize the German population through charity schools was one of the first attempts in America to use education as a means of cultural imperialism.

The educational goals of many of the religious schools in Pennsylvania and New York were similar to those of the schools in New England. Memorization, submission, and authority were all emphasized in the instruction and the curriculum, and *The New England Primer* was used throughout these colonies. However, the pattern of development of the educational system in Pennsylvania and New York was distinctively different from that in New England and the southern colonies. New England placed an emphasis on the establishment of town schools to assure the perpetuation of religious values and obedience to the government. The southern colonies displayed little interest in the development of educational institutions except for private schools and tutors for the planter class.

These regional differences were a function of England's colonial policies. The most lasting of these differences was between the North and South. Throughout the nineteenth century the South lagged behind the North in the development of government-operated systems of education, and in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries the regions continued to be divided on the issue of segregated education. Not until the 1950s and 1960s did the major differences between the educational systems of the North and South begin to fade.

THE IDEA OF SECULAR EDUCATION: FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ACADEMIES

As Native and African Americans came under the domination of European colonizers, the idea of secular schooling was becoming popular among the English. The concept of a secular school free from religious control emerged from concerns with political freedom and the scientific revolution. Concern with political freedom was central to the American Revolution. The belief that the maintenance of a republican society requires freedom of thought and beliefs became embodied in American political life in the words of the First Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits Congress from making any laws that would abridge freedom of speech and the press. Both of these intellectually revolutionary concepts were also related to new developments in science and technology that promised to enhance the quality of human existence.

The text of *Cato's Letters* defines freedom of thought and speech as a right that can be abridged only to protect the freedom of others: "Without Freedom, there can be no such Thing as Wisdom; and no such Thing as public liberty, without Freedom of Speech: Which is the Right of every Man, as far as by it he does not hurt and control the Right of another." This one limitation on freedom, they

declared, “is the only Check which it ought to suffer, the only Bounds which it ought to know.”²⁵

In linking freedom of thought to human progress, the authors of *Cato's Letters* argue that humans in their original state of nature contented themselves with “the Spontaneous Productions of Nature,” but these “spontaneous” supplies proved insufficient to support increasing numbers of humans. The next step was “to open the bosom of the Earth, and, by proper Application and Culture, to extort her hidden stores.” The differing degrees of prosperity that existed among nations are considered largely a product of different levels of advancement in the state of learning, which allowed the more advanced nations to enjoy greater productivity. Wisdom and art, the authors argue, promote prosperity, which in turn provides full employment, economic well-being, and a general elevation of the spirit and culture of a people. If the advancement of wisdom and learning fails to occur, unemployment will come and result in human misery. In describing the conditions that produce human misery, they write, “People, in most countries, are forced, for want of other Employment, to cut the Throats of one another, or of their neighbors; and to ramble after their Princes in all their mad conquests . . . and all to get, with great Labour, Hazard, and often with great Hunger and slaughter, a poor precarious, and momentary subsistence.”²⁶

The equation made in *Cato's Letters* between freedom of ideas and the good life is this: Freedom of thought and speech promotes wisdom, which in turn provides the basis for prosperity and the elimination of the crime that grows from hunger and poverty. Within the framework of this argument, tyranny must be avoided because it hinders the growth of wisdom, prosperity, and social happiness. “Ignorance of Arts and Sciences, and of everything that is good, together with Poverty, misery, and desolation, are found for the most part all together, and are all certainly produced by Tyranny.”²⁷

The arguments in *Cato's Letters* and in Molesworth's writings give an entirely different perspective on the nature of schooling and the role of schooling in society. In the context of their arguments, if education took place in an environment free of ideological restraints, particularly those of religion, it would be the source of material benefits for society. These arguments reflect the scientific revolution that emerged in the seventeenth century as the result of work by individuals such as Francis Bacon.

Bacon was one of the first people to see in science hope for the progress of humanity. During his life as a barrister, essayist, and scientist, he envisioned a utopia made possible by the use of the scientific method. In his book *Novum Organum* (1620), he argued that scientific experimentation would unlock the

secrets of nature and usher in a golden era. His utopian novel *New Atlantis* describes a society in which the central institution is a College of Six Days Works, devoted to the scientific study of nature.²⁸

Bacon's early arguments were accepted by intellectuals such as Molesworth and the authors of *Cato's Letters*. In the eighteenth century this group of English political thinkers, scientists, inventors, and early industrialists was known as commonwealthmen. The scientists and inventors in the group included Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Erasmus Darwin, Samuel Galton, and Joseph Priestley.²⁹ All of these persons had contact with other intellectuals in Glasgow and Edinburgh and interacted freely with members of the leading philosophical societies in England.

This group of intellectuals took the argument for freedom of ideas one step farther than would their counterparts in North America. They objected to government-provided systems of education as a threat to intellectual freedom. English historian Brian Simon has written about Joseph Priestley and this group of intellectuals: "In common with . . . all other dissenters, Priestley was adamantly opposed to education becoming a function of the state. Should it do so, it would not achieve the object he desired, on the contrary, it would be used to promote uniformity of thought and belief."³⁰ Joseph Priestley used specific examples to show the negative results of government-controlled education. For instance, he often referred to the attempt at Oxford University to discourage the reading of John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*. Priestley believed that any group that gained control of the educational system could greatly increase its power over the rest of society. He argued that education should encourage free inquiry and inspire the love of truth, and that state-endowed education would be more committed to instilling a particular set of religious, moral, or political principles than to training the mind for the free use of reason.

Historian Caroline Robbins summarizes Priestley's ideas about state-provided education as follows: "The chief glory of human nature, the operation of reason in a variety of ways and with diversified results, would be lost. Every man should educate his children in his own manner to preserve the balance which existed among the several religious and political parties in Great Britain."³¹

In England, the institution through which the advocates of intellectual freedom expressed their beliefs became the dissenting academies established in the latter half of the seventeenth century. These academies served as refuges for non-conformist ministers and others dissenting against the major religious and educational institutions in England. Their growth was a direct result of the closing in 1662 of Oxford and Cambridge to non-Anglicans. The dissenting

academies became centers of intellectual and educational innovation as they promoted science and rejected a strictly classical curriculum. In fact, the academies introduced English as the language of instruction.

Although various types of academies served numerous purposes, many of the academies accepted the idea that science and politics were suitable subjects for the curriculum and that freedom of inquiry should be encouraged. Some academies were run by individuals; others were operated by religious denominations. The variety of schools and the commitment of most of them to intellectual freedom made the academies an important source of educational innovation in the eighteenth century. In England they were considered an alternative to older forms of higher education. When the academy idea was introduced into the colonies, it served as a model both for newly established colleges and, in the nineteenth century, for the development of the high school.

In conclusion, the intellectual revolution that fostered the importance of freedom of ideas had two significant consequences for schooling: First, it led to a different concept of the purposes of education and institutional organization. Within this framework, education was viewed as providing the intellectual tools, scientific knowledge, and inventions required to create a better society. Second, this intellectual revolution attacked the notion that the primary purpose of education was to bring people into obedience to a church or government.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND EDUCATION AS SOCIAL MOBILITY

The academy movement in North America was primarily a result of the desire to provide a more utilitarian education than classical grammar schools provided. The North American academies were modeled after the English dissenting academies, but unlike those in England, they were not a response to exclusion from other educational institutions, nor did they place as much emphasis on intellectual freedom. In North America these institutions served two needs: They provided a useful education, and at the same time they transmitted the culture required for entrance into the middle class. In other words, they were institutions that could provide social mobility for the average citizen. They were often called people's colleges.

The academy movement spread rapidly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1855 Henry Barnard reported the existence of 6,185 academies in the United States, with a total enrollment of 263,096. As in England, the academies in North America were varied in curriculum and organization. In general, a mixture of public and private control and financing was used. Often, small towns

would provide financial support to local academies under the control of a private board of trustees. The curricula of the academies tended to be flexible and adaptable to the needs of the student, although, of course, this varied from institution to institution.³²

One of the earliest and most famous plans for an academy was Benjamin Franklin's *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania* (1749). Ironically, the institution established to carry out his plans, which eventually became the University of Pennsylvania, failed to teach his curriculum, but nonetheless it became a widely discussed model for other academies. Franklin's model academy embodied his life experiences and education. A famous phrase from his academy proposal states, "it would be well if [students] could be taught every Thing that is useful, and every Thing that is ornamental: But Art is long, and their Time is short. It is therefore propos'd that they learn those Things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental."³³

Franklin's life was a model for getting ahead in the New World. He was exposed early in life to the major types of educational institutions that existed in the colonies. Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston in 1706 and at the age of eight was sent by his father to grammar school to prepare to be a minister. His father, who became financially unable to carry through with this plan, later withdrew Franklin from the grammar school. He was sent to a school for writing and arithmetic and was made an apprentice to his brother in the newspaper trade. Eventually he rebelled and left Boston, going to Philadelphia in 1723 to pursue his trade of printer.

Although his life in Philadelphia demonstrated the opportunities available in the New World for upward mobility, Franklin's ability eventually to become an internationally recognized scientist and statesman was dependent on his self-education. The "useful" elements in Franklin's education were the skills he learned in his apprenticeship and through reading. The "ornamental" elements were the knowledge and social skills he learned through reading, writing, and debating, which provided him with the culture needed to advance in the world. A main source of his ornamental education was the Junto, a club he organized in Philadelphia. The Junto met every Friday evening, and its members were required to prepare questions dealing with morals, philosophy, and politics. Every three months they had to write an essay and defend it to the other members. As Franklin wrote in his *Autobiography*, the purpose of the club was "mutual improvement."³⁴

Mutual improvement and self-education were also Franklin's reasons for founding the first subscription library in America. He recommended to the

members of the Junto that they place all their individually owned books into a common library for the benefit of all members. Out of this grew the idea of a subscription library, to which library members would pay a fee for expenses and the purchase of new books. Franklin believed that these libraries improved the general culture of the average citizen:

These libraries have improved the general conversation of the Americans, made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps have contributed in some degree to the stand so generally made throughout the Colonies in defense of their privileges.³⁵

The academy Franklin proposed was an institutionalized version of both his formal schooling and his self-education. The academy proposal was a model of an educational system that would confirm status on the middle class and confer status on those wanting to enter the middle class in eighteenth-century North America. Certainly, Franklin's *Autobiography* can be considered a guide to social mobility in the world as he knew it.

The educational content that Franklin proposed reflects the influence of the radical English writers who did so much to spark the American Revolution. His plan includes the study of English through reading *Cato's Letters* and the writings of the English radical Algernon Sidney. It should be noted that *Cato's Letters* had been published only a few decades before the publication of Franklin's proposal, but in his proposal Franklin refers to the work as a classic.

Franklin placed a great deal of emphasis on the teaching of style in both writing and speaking. Proper style, for Franklin, included writing clearly and concisely and "pronouncing properly, distinctly, emphatically, not with an even Tone, which under-does, nor a theatrical, which over-does Nature."³⁶ It was style in writing and speaking that would allow an individual to move through the social world with grace.

According to Franklin, the substance behind the style would emerge from the study of history, which in its broadest sense would be the vehicle for learning the "most useful" knowledge. In Franklin's words, "But if History be made a constant Part of their Reading . . . may not almost all Kinds of useful Knowledge be that Way introduc'd to Advantage, and with Pleasure to the Student?"³⁷ For Franklin, history was a vehicle for teaching morality, oratory, geography, politics, philosophy, human affairs, agriculture, technology, science, and invention. The teaching of history, combined with the teaching of style in writing and speech, would provide the "most useful and most ornamental" in learning.

Franklin's proposal heralded the beginning of the academy movement in North America. Although academies came in many forms and were governed by a variety of public and religious groups, they were all considered to be distinct from the classical grammar school. Unlike the grammar schools, the academies were conceived as institutions to provide a practical education. This is best exemplified in the wording of the constitution of Phillips Academy, founded in 1778. It states that the founding of the academy was "for the purpose of instructing Youth, not only in English and Latin Grammar, Writing, Arithmetic, and those Sciences, wherein they are taught; but more especially to learn them the great end and real business of living."³⁸

Over the years the identity of the academies fluctuated: They were sometimes considered to be small colleges, and at other times high schools. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, academies had established a primary identity as institutions providing a secondary education. Also by the end of the nineteenth century, they had become identified as institutions for educating the elite. This view of the academy had not yet emerged in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

A direct contribution by the academy movement to the development of high schools in the United States was made in 1821, when the English Classical School was founded in Boston. At that time, most academies were country boarding schools. A group of parents in Boston complained about having to send their children outside the city to attend an academy or—the only alternative—to Boston Latin School, where a traditional grammar school curriculum was taught. The city responded to the complaints by founding the English Classical School, which offered a curriculum typical of academies of the time, including English, geography, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, history, navigation, and surveying. Within a few years, the school was renamed English High School and became the first high school in the United States.

The history of dissenting academies in England and academies in North America demonstrates the interrelationship among politics, the organization of society, and education. The dissenting academies, born in the midst of revolutionary talk that quickly spread to the North American continent, were institutions reflecting the new spirit of science and industrial development. Transplanted to the New World, they became institutions for teaching what was considered useful knowledge and for providing social mobility. A real irony of history is that by the late nineteenth century the academies in the United States served primarily to confirm the social status of elite members of society.

THE FAMILY AND THE CHILD

A popular interpretation of historical change in the United States is to view it as a process of institutional expansion and contraction. In this framework, the institution of the family is portrayed as contracting while other institutions assume roles once performed by it. In terms of the history of education, this means the school has assumed tasks previously performed by the family as educational responsibilities have shifted from the parents to the schoolteacher. In addition, changes in commonly held concepts of children and of women have had a fundamental effect on the organization of education. Changes in the concept of childhood provided a basis for the belief that the proper education of children could create the ideal political and social world.

In *American Education*, Cremin interprets educational history mainly as a shifting set of institutional arrangements wherein the family had the basic responsibility for education. Cremin writes, "The household remained the single most fundamental unit of social organization in the eighteenth-century colonies and, for the vast majority of Americans, the decisive agency of deliberate cultural transmission."³⁹ In frontier areas, he argues, the family often assumed the functions of both church and school, whereas in more settled areas it shared these responsibilities with other institutions.

The importance of the socializing role of the family in colonial life is highlighted in John Demos's study *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*. Demos ascribes a variety of functions to the colonial family. First, it was a business; work was a natural part of family life, and most households were self-sufficient. Second, it was a school; parents and masters were required by law to attend to the education of their children. Third, it was a vocational institution; it transmitted skills for earning a living. Fourth, it was a church; family worship supplemented the work of formal religious institutions. Fifth, the family was a house of correction in which idle and even criminal persons were sentenced to live as servants. And last, the family was a welfare institution that functioned at various times as a hospital, orphanage, old people's home, and home for the poor.⁴⁰

Within this broad-ranging institution was a strict hierarchy, with the father at the top and the children at the bottom. The colonial family operated on a simple premise: "He for God only, she for God in him." This meant that women were to bow to the God in men, and men were to assume the spiritual care of women. In legal matters, the married woman was at the mercy of her husband; she was without rights to own property, make contracts, or sue for damages.

Although women were dependent on men, they still had to assume responsibility for their own individual salvation, and in order to do so they had to learn how to read. This created an ambivalent situation regarding the education of women. The education of women was undertaken purely for purposes of religious control, but, ironically, even though women were considered the weaker sex with regard to intellectual capacities, they not only assumed responsibility for teaching reading within the household but also functioned as neighborhood teachers in the dame schools and, during the summer, the district schools of New England.

In general, the education of women was limited to basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, but their role as teachers in the family and in dame schools foreshadowed their dominant role as teachers in public schools in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This role of teacher opened the door to further education for women and provided a career for them that became an important stepping-stone on the road to greater equality and rights.

Children in the colonial family were in a position of complete subordination to their parents. The requirement to honor one's parents extended even into adulthood. This is best exemplified by a statute of the Plymouth Colony that stated, "If any Childe or Children above sixteen years old, and of competent Understanding, shall curse or Smite their Natural Father or Mother; he or they shall be put to Death, unless it can be sufficiently testified that the Parents have been very Unchristianly negligent in the Education of such Children."⁴¹

Of major importance to the family was the economic function of the child. In a world where most families were financially self-sufficient, each new pair of helping hands was welcomed. After infancy, the colonial child usually helped with agricultural chores during the summer and attended school in the winter. Between the age of seven and puberty, children were fully integrated into the workforce. Many times, the family would apprentice out to another family boys over the age of seven. The economic value of the child to the family was clearly demonstrated by the requirement that if the boy left home to work he was expected to pay for a substitute for his labor. Often families considered the child's value during the winter to be no more than the cost of providing board, but during the summer months the child's labor was considered essential. It is not surprising that families would resist child labor laws in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, given the deep roots of this traditional view of the economic worth of the child to the family unit.⁴²

The primary responsibility of colonial parents to their children was to raise them to live according to God's commandments. This meant caring for their

physical and spiritual needs. Parental strictness was required because of a belief that all children at birth shared in the common sins of humanity. This belief is best exemplified by the alphabet in *The New England Primer* that begins,

A in Adam's Fall We Sinned All
B Thy Life to Mend This Book Attend.⁴³

The "Book" referred to is the Bible, which was presented as the source of correction of the Original Sin in which all children were believed to have been born.

The emphasis in child rearing was to prevent children from leading a life of sin. In other words, parents had an obligation to make sure their children were good. What this meant is expressed in the following verse from *The New England Primer*:

Good Children Must
Fear God all Day
Love Christ Always,
Parents Obey,
In Secret Pray,
No False thing Say,
Mind Little Play,
By no Sin Stray,
Make no delay,
In doing Good.⁴⁴

This attitude toward children can be understood more clearly by contrasting it with other concepts of childhood that began to be popularized in the eighteenth century. For instance, French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that the child is born good and that the greatest danger in childhood is corruption by the outside world. He popularized this concept of childhood in his book *Emile* (1762). *Emile* is Rousseau's plan for the ideal education of a child. To provide Emile, the protagonist, with the best education, Rousseau isolates him from society until the onset of adolescence and places him in a country home under the supervision of a tutor who allows Emile to discover what is necessary and useful for living. The concept of education that permits the child to learn through experience and discovery was a major departure from schooling that emphasized memorization and subordination to authority.⁴⁵

A major contrast exists between colonial ideas about child rearing and Rousseau's theory that moral education should not take place until the child has

reached the age of social reasoning—adolescence. Rousseau calls this negative education, by which he means that learning is to be a product of experience, not moral and verbal instruction. According to Rousseau, during the early period of their development, human beings are incapable of reasoning about morality and social relations. Thus it is important to avoid placing a child in situations requiring moral choices before she or he is old enough to handle them with her or his own powers of social reasoning. Rousseau felt that books are a great plague in childhood. He meant by this not that children should not be taught how to read, but that learning to read should be attached to experience and necessity. For example, Emile receives invitations to dinners and parties but cannot find anyone to read them to him. These experiences lead Emile to learn how to read out of self-interest and necessity. Rousseau's method of teaching reading avoids moral instruction; it is not based on a sense of duty or on a belief in an abstract good. For Rousseau, learning and knowledge are tools to be used by the individual—not tools enabling society to use the individual.

Emile demonstrates how a theory of childhood can influence actual child rearing and instruction. The colonial concept that the child is born in a state of sin required restraining children from doing evil and subjecting them to authoritarian instruction to assure a godly life. According to Rousseau, however, children are born in a state of goodness and need to be protected from the sins of the world and allowed freely to develop their basic good nature. Rousseau's concept of childhood means more freedom for the child and a more permissive form of instruction.

Emile heralded the beginning of a romantic concept of childhood that, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, sparked educational trends emphasizing instructional techniques that would allow the free development of the child. In modern times, the major rival to this concept is the idea that the child is born as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) and is completely molded by the environment. In this theory of childhood, which can be traced to the eighteenth century, can be found the roots of modern behavioral psychology.

The book most closely identified with the origins of the concept of the child as a blank slate is English philosopher John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). For Locke, the adult is primarily a product of his or her education in the world, and this education is a result of rewards and punishments received during childhood. Consequently, Locke argues, the most important factor in education is the development of correct habits, which depends on proper manipulation of rewards and punishments. Locke writes, "I grant, that good and evil, reward and punishment, are the only motives to a rational creature; these are

the spur and reins, whereby all mankind are set on work and guided, and therefore they are to be made use of to children too.”⁴⁶

According to Locke, the most powerful reward for children is esteem, and the most powerful punishment is disgrace (as opposed to corporal punishment). In a sense, Locke calls for the manipulation of parental love as a means of shaping the character of the child. He also expresses concern about children learning bad habits from other children, and he warns parents that sending their offspring to school might lead to such contagion.

Locke’s solution to the influence that children exert on one another in school is to have teachers who are able both to teach subject matter and to shape proper habits. He advises parents to keep their children out of school until they find a school “wherein it is possible for the master to look after the manners of his scholars, and . . . show as great effects of his care of forming their minds to virtue, and their carriage to good breeding, as of forming their tongues to the learned languages.”⁴⁷ In one sense, this echoes the traditional view that the teacher is responsible for the virtue of students. In another sense, however, Locke envisioned what we might call the modern concept of the teacher—a teacher who is given responsibility not only for imparting subject matter but also for consciously shaping character. For Locke, the child is viewed not as being either good or evil but as a person to be molded for the future.

Locke’s concept of childhood, like Rousseau’s, led to the rejection of traditional methods of instruction. Locke criticized what he called the ordinary method of instruction, which fills the mind with rules and precepts that are not understood and are quickly forgotten, and he considered memorization to be the poorest method of instruction. Locke advocated instead that the child learn through performance until the object of the lesson is mastered: “By repeating the same action, till it be grown habitual in them, the performance will not depend on memory, or reflection, the concomitant of prudence and age, and not of childhood; but will be natural in them.”⁴⁸

Locke’s concept of childhood greatly influenced the development of public schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The concept of the child as a blank slate allowed educational leaders to believe they could create the good society through the proper molding of children. Nineteenth-century common school reformers such as Horace Mann specifically rejected the Calvinist view of the child born in sin for a concept of the child as a lump of clay that can be shaped for the future. This new concept allowed school reformers to dream of creating the perfect school—one that would produce the perfect political citizen, the perfect moral person, the perfect worker.

The romantic view that children are born good had the most influence on nineteenth- and twentieth-century dissenters against the controlling power of the public school. One model of education in the twentieth century, the “free school,” called for opposing this power by encouraging the natural unfolding of the child. The romantic concept of childhood also played a role in the development of adolescent psychology and child study.

These concepts of childhood have never been so distinct in real life as they are in a historian’s conceptualization, but they do provide a basis for understanding the effects of different concepts of childhood on the organization of education. The colonial view of childhood created an environment that was controlling and authoritarian. Major changes in education occurred with the rejection of the idea that the child is born in a state of sin and therefore must be controlled and made submissive. The viewpoint that the child is neither good nor evil and is a product of the environment allowed educators to view the school as a panacea for social, economic, and political problems.

CONCLUSION

What distinguishes education in pre-Revolutionary America from that in post-Revolutionary America is the concept of service to the broader needs of government and society. After the American Revolution, many Americans began to believe that a public system of education was needed to build nationalism, to shape the good citizen, and to reform society. In other words, education in the post-Revolutionary period was brought into the service of public policy.

Before the Revolution, education served mainly to prepare an individual to live a godly life and to confirm and confer status. The major goal of education was to ensure that the public knew how to read the Bible, religious tracts, and laws. Status was confirmed by the classical education of the grammar school and college through the teaching of a particular cultural style and body of knowledge.

Although the colonists thought education was important, they did not believe the creation of an extensive and well-organized system of education was necessary. Not until education was viewed as a government function, as opposed to a family function, did organized systems of schooling appear. This occurred when government leaders began to see education as a useful tool for governing society. The closest any of the colonies came to creating a system of education was in the town schools in New England. However, even though these schools were established

according to law, they were never organized into an educational system. The middle colonies contained a diversity of religious and private schools, and the southern colonies for the most part neglected the education of the general public.

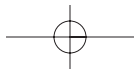
The forces behind the changes that took place after the Revolution were in evidence in the pre-Revolutionary colonies. The academy movement stimulated thinking about education serving the practical needs of humanity as well as religious needs. Changing concepts of childhood made it possible for educators to dream of schools as institutions for creating the perfect society. And, more important, the general population began to realize the value of learning as a tool for gaining independence, not just for instilling subservience. For instance, Benjamin Franklin believed the rebellious spirit of the population was a result of the wide availability of libraries. In fact, the political tracts read by the colonists were instrumental in setting the stage for the American Revolution. As the history of schooling in the colonial period demonstrates, education can be brought into the service of either authority or independence.

And, of course, the educational efforts to change the language and culture of non-Europeans would extend into the future. The attempt to change languages and cultures would eventually include not just Native and African Americans but also Mexican, Asian, and Puerto Rican Americans.

NOTES

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4. Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780–1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).
5. Lawrence Cremin, *The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1965).
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9. Reprinted in Ellwood Cubberley, ed., *Readings in Public Education in the United States: A Collection of Sources and Readings to Illustrate the History of Educational Practice and Progress in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1934), p. 16.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

11. Curti, *The Social Ideas*, pp. 23–24.
12. Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The New England Primer* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1962).
13. All the quotes from *The New England Primer* are from the edition reprinted in *ibid.*
14. Quoted in Cremin, *American Education*, p. 186.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 58–79.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
17. Reprinted in Cubberley, *Readings in Public Education*, p. 13.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Cremin, *American Education*, pp. 220–221.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 260.
23. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 261.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
25. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 96.
26. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 306–309.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
28. Cremin, *American Education*, pp. 94–96.
29. Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).
30. Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education, 1780–1870* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960), pp. 34–35.
31. Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, p. 350.
32. TheodoreSizer, ed., *The Age of the Academies* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1964), pp. 1–48.
33. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 70–71.
34. L. Jesse Lemisch, ed., *Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and Other Writings* (New York: New American Library, Signet Classics, 1961), p. 72.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
36. Quoted in Sizer, *The Age of the Academies*, p. 71.
37. Quoted in *ibid.*
38. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 77–78.
39. Cremin, *American Education*, p. 480.
40. John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 183–186.
41. Reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 100.
42. Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 1–38.
43. Ford, *The New England Primer*. Pages are unnumbered in the reproduction of the original work contained herein.
44. *Ibid.*
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5

NATIONALISM, MULTICULTURALISM, AND MORAL REFORM IN THE NEW REPUBLIC

Educational developments after the Revolutionary War set the stage for the formation of the common or, as it is now called, public school. Revolutionary leaders worried about stabilizing the political system and maintaining the loyalty of European Americans. Obviously, citizens needed to be taught about the workings of the newly created government. In addition, former English colonists, particularly those who remained loyal to England during the Revolution, had to be persuaded to shift their allegiance from the English government.

The diversity of backgrounds of European Americans—including Anglo-Americans, French Americans, German Americans, and Dutch Americans—and the presence of Native Americans and African Americans created a major crisis for post-Revolutionary leaders. Could the United States survive as a multicultural society? Did the survival of the new nation depend on the creation of a single, unified culture?

Those living in the twenty-first century might not consider the 1790 origins of the U.S. population shown in Table 5.1 as representing a diverse white population. However, most Europeans in the 1790s lived rather insular lives and cultural differences were well defined. In addition, religious differences were extremely important, particularly between Protestants and Catholics. Missing from the table are statistics for the Native American population, which was not included in the first census. Enslaved Africans were counted but their national or regional identities were not noted.

Table 5.1 National and Linguistic Stocks in the United States (Whites Only) in Percentages

English	Scotch	Irish Ulster	Irish Free State	German	Dutch	French	Swedish	Unassigned
60.9%	8.3	6.0	3.7	8.7	3.4	1.7	.7	6.6

Source: Adapted from Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Perennial, 2002), p. 68.

An important thing to note in Table 5.1 is that the overwhelming majority (60.9 percent) of those classified as “white” were of English ancestry. The other English-speaking groups were Scotch (8.3 percent) and Irish (including Ulster and Free State, 9.7 percent). This meant that almost 80 percent of the free white population in 1790 arrived in North America speaking English. Of course, this English-speaking statistic of 80 percent would be reduced if we had accurate statistics for languages originally spoken by enslaved Africans. Also distorting the picture is the lack of statistics on the populations of Native American tribes.

The overwhelming Protestant nature of the population is also highlighted by Table 5.1. Those Irish from Ulster were primarily Protestant and in the United States were called Scottish-Irish to distinguish them from Irish Catholics. Many immigrants from Germany, Holland, France, and Sweden were also Protestant. Therefore, Protestants made up more than 75 percent of the population.

Another picture of the national and linguistic stock of the United States emerges when slaves are included. According to the 1790 U.S. Census, as shown in Table 5.2, slaves made up 16 percent of the total population of the United States, not counting Native Americans. As shown in Table 5.2 there were large variations between states in slave populations, with Massachusetts and Rhode Island having no slaves and Vermont having .002 percent as compared to Virginia (39 percent), Georgia (35 percent), and Maryland (32 percent). Frequently, New York and New Jersey are overlooked as slave-holding states, but according to the 1790 census, 6 percent of the populations of both states were enslaved.

Therefore, in the 1790s the overwhelming percentage of the U.S. population came from English-speaking and Protestant stock, with 16 percent of the population being denied any political rights because of enslavement. The largest percent were Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Most post-Revolutionary leaders rejected the idea of a multicultural society and advocated the creation of a unified American culture. This new American culture would be formed around Protestant Anglo-Saxon traditions. In addition, Anglo-American culture (I will be using the term *Anglo-American culture* to refer to the American culture) had to be distinguished from

Table 5.2 1790 Census: Slaves as a Percentage of Total Population by Nation and District

Locality	Slaves as a Percentage of total Population
Nation	16%
Vermont	.002
New Hampshire	.11
Maine	None
Massachusetts	None
Rhode Island	1.3
Connecticut	1.1
New York	6
New Jersey	6
Pennsylvania	.9
Delaware	15
Maryland	32
Virginia	39
Kentucky	16.8
North Carolina	26
Georgia	35

Source: Calculations in table based on statistics in “Schedule of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States, taken according to ‘An Act Providing for the Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States,’ pass March the 1st, 1790,” *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. Phillips, George-Yard, Lombard Street, 1793), p. 3.

the culture of England. Leading the efforts to create a dominant Protestant Anglo-American culture was Noah Webster, often called the “Schoolmaster of America.”

Creating a dominant Protestant Anglo-American culture meant winning the loyalty of citizens. An important source of loyalty is patriotism, or “love of your country.” This form of patriotism involves an emotional attachment to symbols of the country. The use of education during the post-Revolutionary period to promote feelings of patriotism was not unique to the United States. Leaders of many European countries, particularly Prussia, had realized the importance of encouraging feelings of patriotism as a means of unifying the citizenry and building military strength. The ultimate end of patriotism was to strengthen emotional ties to the country so that the common citizen would be willing to die in military service to the government.

Methods of teaching patriotism included studying national literature and language, singing nationalistic songs, honoring the flag, and participating in patriotic exercises. In the United States, Noah Webster combined his effort to

create a dominant national culture with the promotion of patriotism. Webster's spelling book, with its nationalistic themes, replaced *The New England Primer* as the major school text in the post-Revolutionary period.

Another theme that appeared in post-Revolutionary educational literature, and has been debated up to present times, is how to establish a balance between freedom and order. On the one hand, the rhetoric of the American Revolution stressed the idea of freedom; but on the other hand, strong religious and political feelings caused many citizens of the new republic to worry that uncontrolled freedom would lead to a decadent and chaotic society.

For many Americans, the balance of freedom and order was to be achieved through education. They argued that individuals could be allowed to be free if they were educated to be virtuous. In other words, freedom could be allowed if controls over behavior were internalized within every citizen. Stated in a different manner, freedom meant freedom to do good and act virtuously. Educational proposals by post-Revolutionary leaders such as Noah Webster emphasized the importance of educating citizens to be virtuous and thus to exercise their freedom in a correct manner.

A debate also took place about the type of knowledge needed by citizens of the new republic. Most writers on education realized the importance of an educated citizenry but differed in important ways in their definitions of the nature of that education. Two major positions on this issue emerged during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One argument was that all citizens should be educated to read and write so they could form their political opinions outside educational institutions. This position was taken by Thomas Jefferson in his various writings on education. The other position was that educational institutions needed to teach basic principles of a republican form of government. This position was held and argued by many post-Revolutionary leaders and later common school reformers.

The differences between these two positions are important. The first position relegates the shaping of political opinions to the free marketplace of ideas and places faith in the ability of individual citizens to form their own political beliefs. The second position posits that a single institution is necessary to form correct political ideas. This particular argument entangled the schools in a continuing debate over who should define the political beliefs to be taught in the schools.

Also, educational writers in the post-Revolutionary period were concerned about the sources of leadership for a republican government. Many Europeans believed that political leadership emerged from an aristocracy. In the new republic, however, educational institutions were frequently considered to be a means of

selecting and educating future leaders. This belief gave schools a pivotal role in the political and social process. Education was given the task of consciously selecting talent. By the twentieth century, the selection process had broadened to encompass occupational as well as political concerns, so that selection became one of the most important social purposes of education.

Besides the political concerns sparked by the Revolution, Americans began to organize institutions for the moral reformation of society. It was believed that crime and poverty would end with the reformation of prisons and the establishment of charity schools. Central to this discussion was the acceptance of the idea that a person's character could be reformed. As I will discuss, faculty psychology contributed to the idea that society could be reformed by schools.

The educational debates sparked by the American Revolution continue to the present. For instance, most governments use schools to teach patriotism. The problem is that nationalism and patriotism were among the greatest sources of war in the twentieth century. Although most people feel positive about their own

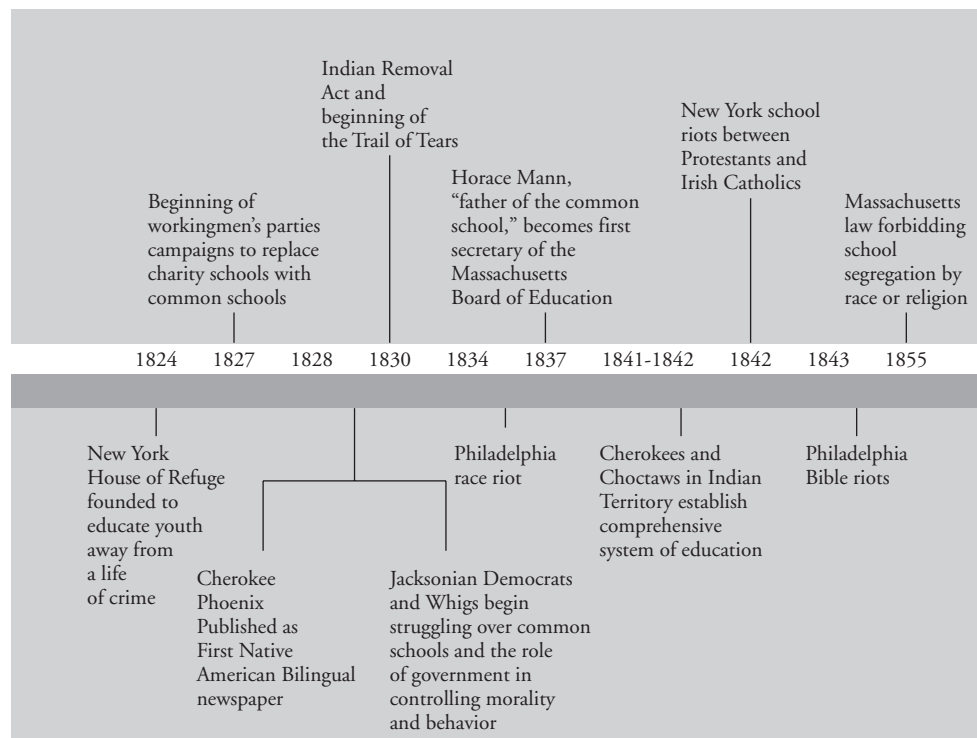
TIME LINE: MULTICULTURALISM, NATIONALISM, SOCIAL REFORM, AND THE COMMON SCHOOL

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government's schools teaching patriotism, they resent similar teachings in other countries. For instance, many citizens of the United States objected to the nationalistic and patriotic teachings of school systems under Nazi and Communist control, while applauding the use of the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of nationalistic songs in U.S. schools.

Also, the debates over freedom and order and methods of educating citizens are reflected in present-day discussions as to the social role of the school and who should determine the content of citizenship education. Can mass education be a means of maintaining social order? Can mass schooling reform society? Should schools simply provide the tools, such as reading, that will enable people to form their political opinions outside the context of a school? Or should they impose a political education on students? If the schools impose a political education, who should determine its content? These are important questions when we are considering the role of schooling in the political life of a country.

This chapter will consider the important debates and institutional changes that foreshadowed the development of the common school system and the modern



system of higher education. In summary, the major educational concerns during the post-Revolutionary period were:

- Turning a multicultural society into a single-culture society dominated by Anglo-American values
- Creating nationalism and loyalty to the new government
- Controlling freedom through citizenship and moral education
- Determining the best method for educating future citizens
- Using moral education to eliminate crime and poverty

NOAH WEBSTER: NATIONALISM AND THE CREATION OF A DOMINANT CULTURE

Noah Webster worked hard to create a dominant Anglo-American culture. A prolific writer, he constantly combined efforts to create a dominant culture and build nationalism. An important part of his legacy is a standardized American dictionary of the English language, an American version of the Bible, and his famous spelling book. The wide use of Webster's speller and dictionary throughout the United States created a lasting mold for the American language.

Webster also made a political contribution to the development of the American common school system. Between 1815 and 1819 he served in the Massachusetts legislature and worked actively for a state school fund. One of his speeches to the legislature captures the flavor of what he believed would be the result of a system of common schools:

I should rejoice to see a system adopted that should lay a foundation for a permanent fund for public schools, and to have more pains taken to discipline our youth in early life to sound maxims of moral, political, and religious duties. I believe more than is commonly believed may be done in this way towards correcting the vices and disorders of society.¹

One historian claims that Webster's activities in the state legislature initiated the movement for common schools that culminated in Horace Mann's work in the 1830s.²

Born in Connecticut in 1758, Webster began his early career as a country schoolmaster. While teaching in 1779, he conceived the idea of developing a new system of instruction. In 1783, he completed one spelling book, the first of three

volumes in a series titled *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*. In 1784, he completed a grammar book, the second volume in the series, and a reader, which was the third. In 1785, he packed his bags and rode through the country as an itinerant lecturer, selling his instructional system.

Both his salesmanship and the content of his textbooks proved successful. One-and-a-half million copies of the speller had been sold by 1801, 20 million by 1829, and 75 million by 1875. The speller became a model used by other spelling book authors. Its extreme popularity was demonstrated by the publication in 1863 of a Civil War edition in the South that was adapted “to the youth of the Southern Confederacy.”³

Webster believed that in addition to teaching reading and writing, his texts should produce good and patriotic Americans, develop an American language, and create a unified national spirit. As his biographer Harry Warfel states, “This unified series of textbooks effectually shaped the destiny of American education for a century. Imitators sprang up by the dozen, and each echoed Websterian nationalism. The word ‘American’ became indispensable in all textbook titles; all vied in patriotic eloquence.”⁴

Webster believed that moral and political values had to be imposed on the child: “Good republicans . . . are formed by a singular machinery in the body politic, which takes the child as soon as he can speak, checks his natural independence and passions, makes him subordinate to superior age, to the laws of the state, to town and parochial institutions.”⁵

One method used to instill proper political values was the Federal Catechism, which appeared in the early versions of Webster’s spelling book. The inclusion of a catechism in a spelling book was not an original idea. *The New England Primer* contained one, but it was mainly religious in content. However, a catechism with political content was probably Webster’s original idea. The use of a catechism required children to memorize questions and answers, which perpetuated an authoritarian method of instruction.

The content of Webster’s Federal Catechism reflected his own concern that the new republican government should remain primarily a representative institution and not become democratic. For example, the Federal Catechism contains the following question and answer to be memorized by the reader:

Q: What are the defects of democracy?

A: In democracy, where the people all meet for the purpose of making laws, there are commonly tumults and disorders. A small city may sometimes be governed in this manner; but if the citizens are numerous, their assemblies make

a crowd or mob, where debates cannot be carried on with coolness and candor, nor can arguments be heard: Therefore a pure democracy is generally a very bad government. It is often the most tyrannical government on earth; for a multitude is often rash, and will not hear reason.⁶

Webster's spelling books also contained a Moral Catechism to teach the moral values Webster considered necessary for maintaining order in a republican society. Like most Americans of this period, Webster equated public virtue with a Protestant Christian morality. In other words, a good citizen is one who lives a Christian life. This attitude is similar in some ways to the goals of the early settlers in New England. The first part of the Moral Catechism illustrates the type of Christian morality people like Webster believed necessary in a republican society.

Q: What is moral virtue?

A: It is an honest upright conduct in all our dealings with men.

Q: Can we always determine what is honest and just?

A: Perhaps not in every instance, but in general it is not difficult.

Q: What rules have we to direct us?

A: God's word contained in the Bible has furnished all necessary rules to direct our conduct.

Q: In what part of the Bible are these rules to be found?

A: In almost every part; but the most important duties between men are summed up in the beginning of Matthew, in Christ's Sermon on the Mount.⁷

One aspect of Webster's concern with nationalism and virtue was the building of an emotional feeling of patriotism. In an essay entitled "On the Education of Youth in America," published in 1790, Webster writes, "It is an object of vast magnitude that systems of education should be adopted and pursued which may not only diffuse a knowledge of the sciences but may implant in the minds of the American youth the principle of virtue and of liberty and inspire them . . . with an inviolable attachment to their country."⁸

What he meant by an "inviolable attachment" is an emotional bond between citizen and government: Webster believed that "every class of people should know and love the laws" and that attachment to the law "may be formed by early impressions upon the mind." This emotional bond was to be forged by the creation of a national language and by the wide dissemination of the patriotic

content of his textbooks. The following statement about Webster's method of selecting material for his readers illustrates his patriotic objectives: "In the choice of pieces, I have not been inattentive to the political interests of America. Several of those masterly addresses of Congress, written at the commencement of the late revolution, contain such noble, just and independent sentiments of liberty and patriotism, that I cannot help wishing to transfuse them into the breasts of the rising generation."⁹

Illustrative of his patriotic themes was the cover of his 1787 reader, which contained the words "Begin with the infant in the cradle; let the first word he lisps be Washington."¹⁰ His readers contained Washington's Farewell Orders to the Army, patriotic poems, and (for the first time in a schoolbook) a history of the Revolutionary War.

For Webster, patriotism, nationalism, and virtue were the foci of educating the republican citizen. These educational values clearly emphasize representative, as opposed to democratic, government. Noah Webster's importance in the history of American education is twofold: He represented widely held opinions of his time, and he had a major effect on the education of children in the United States in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Webster's work symbolizes the rejection by Revolutionary leaders of a multicultural society. Webster's creation of an American language and his spelling books helped to form a dominant English-speaking, Protestant, Anglo-American culture. In the late twentieth century, this dominant culture of U.S. schools would be seriously challenged by Native Americans, Latinos, and African Americans.

CHARITY SCHOOLS, THE LANCASTERIAN SYSTEM, AND PRISONS

Charity schools and juvenile reformatories developed in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century as part of a general attempt to reduce crime and poverty and end the problem of urban street children. The charity school movement was the first major attempt to use schooling as a means of socializing children into the world of work. Common school reformers of the 1830s and 1840s would use the same arguments for the ameliorating power of education as charity schools did. In addition, in some places charity schools provided the basic institutional structure for the development of common schools.

In general, charity schools and juvenile reformatories in the early nineteenth century sought to create good moral character by replacing a weak family structure and destroying criminal associations. An individual, it was believed, became a

potential criminal when the family failed to provide adequate moral training and was eventually led astray through contact with a criminal community.

For instance, the failure of the family structure is emphasized in the petition for incorporation in 1805 of the organization that became the major promoter of the Lancasterian system—the New York Free School Society. The incorporation statement declares that the condition of the children of the poor “is deplorable indeed; reared up by parents who . . . become either indifferent to the best interests of their offspring, or, through intemperate lives, are rendered unable to defray the expense of their instruction.” The petition goes on to argue that the neglect of education had resulted in “ignorance and vice, and all those manifold evils resulting from every species of immorality.”¹¹ This society, which was organized to provide education for the poor, within a short time dominated charity schooling in New York City. By the 1840s the schools of the New York Free School Society came under public control and became the core of the early system of public schools in New York City.

Like those involved with charity schools, reformers involved with juvenile reformatories linked waywardness with the failure of the family. The first reformatories, called houses of refuge, were founded in New York in 1824, in Boston in 1826, and in Philadelphia in 1828. The organization responsible for opening the New York House of Refuge was the New York Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, founded in 1815. In 1823 this organization changed its name to the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents. Its report for 1822 states that children become wayward because no “moral standard of conduct has been placed before their eyes. No faithful parent has watched over them and restrained their vicious propensities.”¹²

Arguing in the same manner, the Boston House of Refuge went so far as to advocate the use of its institution by any child who was considered to have an improper family life. Its 1829 report to the city of Boston argues that to avoid the evils arising from the neglect of family government, the city’s laws should be extended so that any “parents, or guardians, or friends of children, who are unable to exercise any moral government, might place them in this institution.”¹³

Thus the purpose of charity schools and reformatories was to correct the problems caused by the failure of parental government. In addition, they were to keep children and youth from exposure to immoral education by isolating them from criminal contacts. Members of the New York Free School Society believed that criminal associations were one of the major problems of raising children in a city. DeWitt Clinton, president of the New York Free School Society, issued this warning in 1809: “Great cities are, at all times, the nurseries and hotbeds of

crimes . . . and the dreadful examples of vice which are presented to youth, and the alluring forms in which it is arrayed . . . cannot fail of augmenting the mass of moral depravity.”¹⁴

The preceding arguments provided the rationale for the charity schools. In essence, they were supposed to eliminate crime and poverty by replacing the failed government of the family with the government of the school and by keeping children off the streets and out of contact with potential criminal associates. The argument that an important function of schooling is to keep children off the streets continued into the twentieth century.

Reformers involved in charity schools and juvenile reformatories believed the solution to crime and poverty to be education and provision of the proper institutional environment: Education was supposed to provide the tools by which an individual could function in a social role, and the institutional environment was supposed to teach an individual how to use these tools in a moral manner.

The charity school movement spread rapidly in the 1790s and the early 1800s. These schools, which provided the basic framework for the later development of public schools, were organized mainly by private associations such as the New York Free School Society. The existence of charity schools created a division between social classes: The poor attended charity schools, and the better-off attended other private and public institutions.

Although the stated intention of charity schools was to save the children of the poor from a life of crime and poverty, their creation also had important effects on existing private schools and, later, on the development of public schools. The best history of the early effects of the development of charity schools is Carl Kaestle’s *Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750–1850*. Kaestle examined the registers of the private schools in New York City in the 1790s and found that they were not exclusive or limited to the education of the children of the wealthy. In fact, he argues, the private schools were common in several respects. First, they were the most common or prevalent system of education. Second, they all provided what was called a common system of education. And third, they were attended in common by children from a wide range of families with differing incomes and occupations.¹⁵

As Kaestle indicates, this last point is most important because school reformers at a later time would argue for the necessity of common public schools as a means of mixing the children of the rich and poor in the same classroom, in order to eliminate social-class divisions in education: “This third fact is the most important, for it is this sense of the word that was central to the ideology of the ‘common school’ reformers of the nineteenth century. The data . . . suggest that

their reform, whether they knew it or not, was an attempt to restore the social mixing that had existed, at least in New York, before the creation of the free schools.”¹⁶ Private schools were attended by a variety of children from different social classes because tuition was adjusted according to the income of the parents. Furthermore, Kaestle found little difference between the percentage of children annually attending school in the 1790s and the percentage attending free public schools in the mid 1800s.

Kaestle also found that attempts in the 1790s to systematize the private schools in New York City failed and that these schools were unable to accommodate the influx of immigrants, particularly from Ireland and France. The result was that in the early nineteenth century private schools became, in Kaestle’s words, “restricted more and more to the wealthy minority. Meanwhile, the city’s public school system arose from the charity schools, which had played a traditional but numerically slight role in the colonial period.”¹⁷

In addition to laying the foundation for later public schooling, charity schools provided the first organized educational opportunities for the increasing number of freed slaves settling in the North. Kaestle details these developments in *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780–1860*. He states that a school for freed black slaves was opened in Philadelphia in 1770, in New York in 1787, and in Baltimore in 1792.¹⁸

The Lancasterian system, introduced into charity schools in the United States and England in the early nineteenth century, was revolutionary in its emphasis on the process of schooling as a means of developing moral character. It was considered ideally suited to charity schools because it was inexpensive and provided training in character development.

The New York Free School Society was mainly responsible for introducing and spreading the fame of the Lancasterian system in the United States. Most of DeWitt Clinton’s dedicatory speech for the new Free School Society building in 1809 was devoted to praising the new instructional system. He was so enraptured with its potential that he stated, “I consider his [Joseph Lancaster’s] system as creating a new era in education, as a blessing sent down from heaven to redeem the poor.”¹⁹ The system spread rapidly throughout the country, and its adoption was not limited to charity schools. Ellwood Cubberley found that the system was in use in the early nineteenth century from Massachusetts to Georgia and as far west as Detroit, Cincinnati, and Louisville. In 1822 the Pennsylvania state legislature, in an act reorganizing the second school district, required the use of the Lancasterian system.²⁰

The popularity of the system in the United States eventually caused its English developer, Joseph Lancaster, to make his home here. He died in 1838

when he was run over by a horse and carriage after inspecting a New York Lancasterian school. At the time of his death, he had plans to push his system to a new height of educational efficiency. He had contracted with the New York Free School Society to run an experiment in which a system of instruction would be used that was supposed to teach forty children to read and spell accurately in four to six weeks.

Claims were made that civilization owed Joseph Lancaster a debt for coining the pregnant mottoes “A place for everything and everything in its place” and “Let every child at every moment have something to do and a motive for doing it.”²¹ These were the mottoes of a system designed to handle large numbers of pupils in an efficient, inexpensive manner. The system could supposedly handle as many as a thousand students at a time. Under the Lancasterian system, pupils were seated in rows and received their instruction from monitors, who received their instruction from the master, who sat at the end of the room. Monitors were selected from among the better students in the class, and they wore badges indicating their rank.

The discipline and orderliness required by the Lancasterian system were meant to provide the moral training. An engraving of a Lancasterian schoolroom in Pennsylvania illustrates how the training in orderliness was inherent in the system of classroom management. This particular room was designed to accommodate 450 students. The teacher sits at the head of the room on a raised platform. Beneath and in front of the teacher are three rows of monitors' desks placed directly in front of the pupils' desks. The pupils' desks are divided into three sections, each of which is divided into two parts, and each section is in line with one of the rows of monitors' desks. Arrows on the engraving indicate that a group of pupils would march to the front of the room and stand around the monitors' desks, where they would receive instruction from the monitors. When they finished, they would march to the rear part of their section and recite or receive further instruction from another monitor. While this group was marching to the rear, another group would be marching up to the front to take their places around the monitors. When finished, these pupils would march to the rear, and the group in the rear would move forward to the second part of their section to receive instruction from yet another monitor. Because each of the three sections had a group in front, one in the rear, and one in the middle working on different things, a total of nine different recitations could be carried on at one time.

Educators of the period made an analogy between the Lancasterian system and a factory. An unidentified French writer was quoted as saying, “It is a masterpiece which must produce a revolution in popular education It may be

styled a manufactory of knowledge.”²² DeWitt Clinton described it as “a system which is, in education, what the neat finished machines for abridging labor and expense are in the mechanic arts.”²³ Undoubtedly, the greatest selling point of the system was its cheapness. It provided a system for educating poor children inexpensively. Those promoting the system also believed that it provided character training for the child.

A student’s submission to this factory system of education was supposed to lead to a sense of orderliness and obedience. The periodic movement of pupils and materials required order and discipline. Each student had an assigned place in the educational machine, and the machine was kept well oiled by a distribution of awards and punishments. Virtue was rewarded by a system of badges, the highest being the Order of Merit. Virtue and ability led to appointment to the rank of monitor. Lancaster developed a unique system of punishments. Children who talked frequently or were idle were punished by having a wooden log placed around their necks. Extreme offenders were placed in a sack or basket suspended from the roof of the school in full view of the rest of the pupils.

The constant activity, regimentation, and lockstep marching were supposed to imprint the virtues of orderliness and obedience indelibly on the student’s mind. Clinton hailed Lancaster as the benefactor of the human race: “I contemplate the habits of order which it [the Lancasterian system] forms, the spirit of emulation which it excites, the rapid improvement which it produces, the purity of morals which it inculcates—when I behold the extraordinary union of celerity in instruction and economy of expense.”²⁴

The virtues of submission, order, and industriousness were considered necessary for functioning in the world of business. The Boston School Committee investigated the New York Lancasterian schools in 1828 and reported that the system kept students attentive and interested by permitting no moments of idleness. The committee praised the method and declared that “its effects on the habits, character, and intelligence of youth are highly beneficial; disposing their minds to industry, to readiness of attention, and to subordination, thereby creating in early life a love of order, preparation for business.”²⁵

The Lancasterian system was supposed to help the pauper child escape poverty and crime by imparting formal knowledge and instilling the virtues needed in the world of work. Within this framework of reasoning, the qualities of submission, order, and industriousness made the child moral by making him or her useful to and functional in society. In addition, the very act of attending school kept pupils off the streets and out of contact with the kind of learning believed to occur through contact with criminals.

Concern about the evil influence of the criminal community on the molding of human character was the basis for the establishment of houses of refuge for juvenile delinquents. At first, the New York Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents wanted only separate buildings within prisons for youthful offenders, but in 1824, after deciding this did not provide complete enough separation, it founded the New York House of Refuge.

Just as charity school reformers viewed cities as colleges of vice, promoters of juvenile reformatories viewed prisons as systems of criminal education. This attitude is clearly stated in the 1828 report of the New York House of Refuge, which called prisons “so many schools of vice . . . so many seminaries to impart lessons and maxims, calculated to banish legal restraints, moral consideration, pride of character, and self-regard.”²⁶

Like the charity schools, the juvenile reformatories sought to provide an institutional replacement for what was believed to be a failed family structure. The Lancasterian system was used in an attempt to create an ideal family structure within the institutional setting of the reformatory. The ideal family government would separate the juvenile from evil and teach the habits of order and discipline. The Boston Prison Discipline Society’s report in 1832 claims, “How much may parents, and all who have the care of youth, learn from the Houses of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents.” What could be learned, according to this report, was the morally rewarding effect on youth of “regular hours for solitude and sleep; regular hours for promoting cleanliness; regular hours for exercise and recreation; regular hours for obtaining knowledge human and divine; and regular hours for manual labor.” The report goes on to state that the significance of the houses of refuge was their “unspeakably important lessons of instruction to the world, on these every day duties of parents and others.”²⁷

The houses of refuge emphasized regimentation and order. The New York House of Refuge instituted a rigorous schedule of Lancasterian instruction and labor. The first two hours of the morning were devoted to classroom instruction, and then there were four hours of labor in workshops. Then came lunch and a “little time . . . [for] recreation.” In the afternoon, four hours were devoted to labor. Then came supper, followed by two more hours of Lancasterian instruction. Religious exercises were given in the early morning and before retirement at night.²⁸

The New York and the Philadelphia houses of refuge followed similar schedules. In both systems, each child was placed in a separate cell at night. During the day, the children were not allowed to communicate while receiving instruction or performing work. Conversation was allowed only during free time.

In this manner, the juvenile offender was to be isolated from evil and trained in the habits of order, obedience, and industriousness. The 1833 annual report of the New York House of Refuge states that “obedience and industry are necessary to make good boys good men and useful citizens.” The report goes on to hail its own success at being able “to implant principles of virtue and habits of industry, where the vilest and wickedest associations have pre-occupied the mind.”²⁹ The education and training received by the inmates were intended to prepare them to fit into the social structure. Basic occupational skills were to be learned in the classrooms and workshops. The virtues instilled by the system were considered necessary in the world of work.

The development of charity schools, the Lancasterian system, and the houses of refuge reflected growing faith in the power of schooling to solve the problems of society. They all contained within them, in varying degrees, institutional procedures that provided the individual with moral examples, habituated the student to moral conduct, and disassociated the pupil from evil influences. What is most important about these institutions is that they embodied the belief that education could end poverty and crime in society.

This belief in the ameliorating power of schooling became an essential part of the common school movement of the 1830s and 1840s. Charity schools provided a working model and, in some places, the basic institutional structure for the establishment of a common school system. In addition, they became a target of attack by some common school reformers who believed the existence of charity schools resulted in the separation of the children of the rich and the poor. This, it was believed, reinforced social-class differences. The hope of the common school was to overcome the problems of social class by mixing together all children in the same schoolhouse. A major result of this argument was the extension of the moral training provided in the charity schools to the children of all social classes.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Harry Warfel, *Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 335.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 335–336.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–75.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
5. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 21.
6. “Noah Webster’s Federal Catechism (1798),” in *Education in the United States: A Documentary History*, ed. Sol Cohen (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 769–770.
7. “Noah Webster’s Moral Catechism,” *ibid.*, p. 771.

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8. Noah Webster, "On the Education of Youth in America," in *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
9. Quoted in Warfel, *Noah Webster*, p. 86.
10. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 90.
11. "Incorporation Statement of the New York Free School Society," in William O. Bourne, *History of the Public School Society of the City of New York* (New York: Wood, 1870), p. 3.
12. "1828 Report of the New York Society for the Prevention of Pauperism," in *Report of the Prison Discipline Society, Boston, 1828* (Boston: Press of T. R. Marvin, 1855), p. 174.
13. "1829 Boston House of Refuge Report to the City of Boston," in *Report of the Prison Discipline Society, Boston, 1829*, p. 246.
14. Quoted in Bourne, *History of the Public School Society*, p. 17.
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