Sixth Edition

Education and Social Change

Contours in the History of American Schooling

John L. Rury

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This brief, interpretive history of American schooling focuses on the evolving relationship between education and social change. Like its predecessors, this new edition investigates the impact of social forces such as industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and cultural conflict on the development of schools and other educational institutions. It also examines the various ways that schools have contributed to social change, particularly in enhancing the status and accomplishments of certain social groups and not others. Detailed accounts of the experiences of women and minority groups in American history consider how their lives have been affected by education at key points in the past.

Updates to this Edition

- A revised final chapter updated to include recent changes in educational politics, finance, policy, and a shifting federal policy context
- Enhanced coverage and new conceptual frames for understanding the experiences of women and people of color in the midst of social change
- Edited throughout to update information and sources regarding the history of American education and related processes of social transformation in the nation's past

John L. Rury is a Professor of Education and (by courtesy) History and African & African American Studies at the University of Kansas. A past president of the History of Education Society and vice president of the American Educational Research Association, he has also served as an editor of the *American Educational Research Journal*.

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Preface

It is a familiar commonplace that the world is changing rapidly. We live in a time of sharp social and political divisions, marked by rapid social change affecting billions of lives. Disputed goals and critical problems face the nation, as issues are contested zealously, from economic policy, to deprivation and inequality, to the environment and a host of other issues. If there is anything that most Americans seem to agree upon, however, it is the importance of schools and education. Without expanding our present knowledge and abilities, we surely will fail to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

The many disagreements of our time also reveal how far we have come, and how we often take the conditions of daily life for granted. Technology has made many wonderful advances: We travel in elaborate flying machines, live and labor in secure dwellings, and communicate across great distances instantly. At the same time, our values have changed too, though perhaps less dramatically. Today, we publicly object to discrimination, celebrate equality, and cherish freedom, even if such sentiments are not universally shared. We also hold great faith in the power of education. These facets of contemporary American life, however, are relatively new in historical terms. To one extent or another, they are the result of a complex process of social change that has unfolded over many decades. They are also the result of human sacrifice and struggle, a continuing process of conflict and change. This course of events continues today, and has come to impact much of the world. It is partly what accounts for the zeal of debates today. But understanding this process of social conflict, transformation, and renewal is critical to appreciating who we are, and how we can deal with the challenges that lie ahead. It is to such tasks that this book is dedicated, focusing on the history of education as a condition and manifestation of social change.

This is a book largely about the past, addressing a far-reaching and complex topic. Its purpose is both analytic and descriptive,

recounting what transpired and explaining how and why events have taken a particular path. Finding the proper balance between these goals has often proved trying. But I hope that the narrative ahead is testimony to the worthiness of the goal. It is meant to be an aid for readers beginning to think about these questions, although I hope that others also find it interesting and useful. As John Dewey pointed out many years ago, the ultimate role of education is preparing for an ongoing and inescapable process of change. Understanding this may be our best hope for posterity, and studying its history can help a great deal.

Acknowledgments

In writing a book, an author incurs many debts. In the years that I have worked on this project, I have amassed a number of my own. The first is to Catherine Bernard, senior publisher at Taylor & Francis, who has ushered me through at least two editions of the book. Lane Akers got me started on it and was a constant source of support and encouragement for many years. Matthew Friberg recently stepped in for Catherine to complete the task of bringing this edition to publication.

Helpful ideas for revision were offered by University of Kansas doctoral students Roger Booker, Carsten Holm, Jennifer Hurst, Ryan Belew, Lauren Anderson and Andrew Patty, who used the book in teaching the introductory course “Education and Society.” It has benefited from many other colleagues, too numerous to recount by name, along with generations of students. Several reviewers also provided very valuable ideas for changes, as did readers from around the country who generously suggested yet others. I have attempted to adopt these many suggestions, but problems undoubtedly remain. Consequently, the typical academic aphorisms are certainly applicable in this edition: My friends and colleagues should be held blameless for my own shortcomings, and responsibility for any errors, omissions, and infelicities is mine alone.

To close, I especially would like to acknowledge the continued support of my spouse, Aïda Alaka. She has seen many versions of this text and yet has remained an unwavering source of encouragement. For that, among countless other reasons, I continue to dedicate the book to her.

John L. Rury
March 2019

Introduction

History, Social Change, and Education

This book begins with a simple query: Do schools change society, or does society change the schools? Obviously, the answer is more complicated than the question suggests. Influences run in both directions: Education clearly affects social development, and schools also reflect their changing context. Still, the question of basic influence remains. Can schools function as instruments of social transformation? Or are they constrained by larger cultural, economic, and political forces?

History can address such puzzles. Reformers have long believed that education can remedy social problems, and many have vied to do this through schooling. But critics also raised nagging questions: Is educational reform potent enough to affect sweeping change? Or is its impact more limited, destined to ultimate disappointment? This is a persistent dilemma, for Americans have placed uncommon faith in the power of education. As historian Henry Perkinson noted, schooling has been an "imperfect panacea" for curing the nation's ills, often promising changes it failed to deliver (Perkinson, 1968). But he also said little about what it *could* do.

Education includes a broad range of activities, but this book focuses on schools and other institutions of formal education. It does not pretend to be comprehensive. Instead, as the title suggests, it is thematic, focusing on events that help illuminate patterns or "contours" in the past. By examining key steps in the evolution of institutions, it is possible to see how education was linked to social transformation.

The book's principal goal is to help with *thinking* about history and social institutions such as schools. In doing this, it draws on ideas from the social sciences. It is important, in that case, to devote some attention to a few of these concepts. At the same time, it is also

helpful to consider the significance of terms such as “education” or “schooling” and “social change.”

Why Study History?

Some people enjoy reading history, others dread it. But, beyond this, does it have any particular value? To grasp educational problems, after all, examining history can seem pretty silly. It may appear more practical to simply examine pertinent data and devise workable solutions to current difficulties. How can experiences from the distant past help anyone today?

Things change, but original circumstances often have a big impact on their subsequent development. It is commonplace to observe that today’s society is different from not so very long ago, and yet certain aspects of life remain familiar. “The more things change, the more they stay the same” is an old saying that reflects this perception. It conveys the point that continuity exists in the wake of change, and underscores the importance of studying history to understand exactly what is similar and different (Nevins, 1938). Understanding today’s problems sometimes requires looking to the past to find their roots. That can enhance the likelihood of finding effective solutions.

History also reminds us that others have faced significant problems too. People today often remark that change is occurring faster than ever, but the present is hardly unique in this respect. Indeed, ours is an era of considerable stability, even if technology and knowledge are rapidly advancing. Truly revolutionary change occurred in the more distant past (Aghion & Williamson, 1998). And it was those earlier developments that set the stage for today. One of the values in history, consequently, is to appreciate the origins of our own time, and the challenges faced by those who came before us (Tuchman, 1978).

What does this have to do with education and schools? Like social change, education also is a knotty subject. On the one hand, it is an intricate process of human growth and development, which everyone has experienced (Dewey, 1938). It also entails the transmission of knowledge and values from one generation to the next. And because education is linked to power and social status, it is subject to almost

constant debate. In its institutional form, education has become integral to imparting and certifying skills and knowledge seen as critical to economic status, making it a topic of intense public interest. Understanding education in its many dimensions, consequently, can be a daunting proposition.

Because of its manifold purposes and functions, education often has been a centerpiece of important periods of change. It has contributed to economic growth and political shifts, and it has helped to forge a national identity for different cultural and social groups. Of course, the experience of education itself also has evolved over time, influenced by the economy, the political system, and other facets of the social structure. Schools today are quite different from those in the past, and their purposes have changed somewhat too.

It is possible to say, then, that education has been on either side of social change: both as a causal agent and as an activity influenced by other factors. The link between education and society, however, is continually evolving. This makes it especially interesting as a topic of study, and a means for reflecting on the present.

Thinking about Social Change

Like historians, social scientists often study large-scale social change, and offer ideas and propositions about society to test and refine with historical evidence (Abrams, 1982; Skocpol, 1984; Smith, 1991).

Some of these concepts have become everyday terms of conversation. They assist thinking by organizing facts, values, beliefs, and theories to understand the world more easily. A good illustration is the idea of industrialization, which can be interpreted a number of ways but usually concerns technological development, economic growth, and population movement. In academic parlance, abstract ideas like this often fall into the realm of social theory, and they can help in understanding large-scale shifts in society. Whatever they are called, it is important to consider just how historians and social scientists have used such concepts. Social change is difficult to define, but certain ideas can help to identify its many dimensions.

The most pertinent social science ideas are those that describe vast processes of transformation. Industrialization may be the most familiar example, representing changes in the organization of work that accompanied mass production manufacturing. Historically, this first occurred in Great Britain, between 1750 and 1850. It appeared a little later in the United States, in the mid-19th century. And it developed even later in Japan and other countries. Wherever it happened, however, industrialization had a profound impact on the people who experienced it, and it has produced a lasting effect on the organization of society (Ashton, 1948; Brownlee, 1979).

This can easily be seen in history. Before the industrial revolution, most people lived in the countryside, surviving by subsistence agriculture and local crafts. These conditions changed dramatically with the rise of industry. Large numbers of people found employment in factories and related occupations (such as transportation), and moved to cities where they consumed goods produced elsewhere. They worked longer hours, typically performing work dictated by machines. Industrialization thus meant more than just a change in production; for many people, it meant a whole new way of life (Laslett, 1965).

Industrialization caused many aspects of society to change. For most people cheaper, mass-produced goods meant a rising standard of living. But, for many, it was also a time of wrenching dislocation, especially those forced to seek work in burgeoning cities. In the United States, industrial workers often came from Europe, traveling thousands of miles to seek employment. This frequently led to cultural conflict and political tensions. It also held important implications for education, as schools struggled to prepare their students for a rapidly changing world (Rabb & Rotberg, 1981).

Change did not occur just in the cities. In the countryside, farm machinery and modern horticulture also reorganized work. Among other things, this often meant that fewer workers were needed. Such developments had important implications for education, as schools were expected to prepare youth for new jobs elsewhere. Technological change often required new skills, different work habits and greater efficiency, all of which schools could help to foster (Cowan, 1997).

Yet another concept associated with social change is *urbanization*. This refers to the changing spatial arrangement of society, particularly the growth of cities and the many social questions that came with them. The rise of factories meant ever more people crowding together, sharing space, and competing for influence and resources. This, in turn, entailed the development of not only institutions such as schools, but also churches, reform groups, charities, and a host of governmental entities to insure social stability. As cities grew, they became more complicated, and finding new ways of managing their increasingly diverse citizenry became a major challenge (Monkkonen, 1988; Rabb & Rotberg, 1981).

These changes augmented the importance of formal education. With the growth of large cities, social scientists documented social behavior peculiar to urban settings. People were constantly coming and going, and close personal relationships became more difficult to sustain. Urban residents began to relate to one another in functional terms, and some believed that social cohesion began to weaken. Historically, it appeared that shared norms and expectations eroded, and familiar social controls lost their significance—often contributing to greater delinquency. More formal, institutionalized systems of socialization and discipline, such as the schools and police, gained new significance (Schnore, 1965, 1974).

Such developments were manifestations of social change, and education became more important in certifying individual abilities and moral character. As the social scientists put it, *secondary relationships* based on status and accomplishment were substituted for firsthand knowledge of a person's past, and formal credentials became increasingly significant. New patterns of behavior evolved rapidly, and observers noted the emergence of an urban culture largely defined by status symbols (Palen, 1997). These were signs of the modern age, but, for many Americans, they were a disturbing change.

A related concept of more recent vintage is *Globalization*, which refers to the increasing inter-dependency of economic, cultural, and political developments around the world. Like urbanization, it is essentially concerned with spatial relationships, and ways that activities in one domain or another come to transcend nations and

even continents. Globalization is associated with rising international trade, transportation, and communication, and greater movement of people across borders. It has become a widely used term, particularly following a decline in the Cold War and the rise of digital communications technology thereafter (Stiglitz, 2003).

Like industrialization and urbanization, globalization also has a history. “World-System” scholars argue that globalizing influences have been evident for several centuries, extending back to colonial development and the rise of trade between Europe and other continents (Wallerstein, 2004). Economic historians maintain that the first “modern globalization” occurred during the era of rapid industrialization, when a growing volume of trade and millions of people moved freely around the world. World War I and the Great Depression put a stop to it, but globalization began to be evident again following World War II, when the United States emerged as the world’s principal economic, political, and cultural power. Due partly to American influence on trade and freedom of communication, it has accelerated in recent decades, a development with important implications for education (Aghion & Williamson, 1998).

Globalization is also linked to the idea of a worldwide division of labor, with national economies playing new roles in the production of goods and services. Manufacturing, for instance, has been moving to countries with lower wages for decades. In more developed countries, on the other hand, technological development has led to demand for more skilled workers, and the rise of service employment has contributed to higher educational expectations. Given this, it is telling that the biggest complaints about globalization come from people with less education, while its advocates tend to be college-educated. Regardless of this, however, there is little doubt about that globalization represents a transformative force in recent history (Applebaum & Robinson, 2005; Osterhammel and Petersson, 2009).

As suggested above, social scientists and historians have long noted that industrialization, urbanization, and globalization have been linked to a more highly defined *social division of labor*. Indeed, increased specialization in occupations was almost axiomatic during industrial development; it was one of the chief ways productivity gains (making goods at lower cost) have been realized historically.

At the same time, as urbanization advanced, there was a sharpening division of labor in the occupational structure of cities. Larger places developed more specialized occupations and services. This too was an important manifestation of social change, as only the biggest cities have the population base necessary to support highly specialized or narrowly focused activities and interests. And, of course, the growing international division of labor is perhaps the single most controversial aspect of globalization. Thus, the historical development of the division of labor has been linked to each of these concepts. Because the division of labor is closely tied to the need for new and different types of knowledge and skills, it has had profound implications for the development of education (Hawley, 1950; Stiglitz, 2003).

The division of labor is linked to yet another enduring concept in social theory: *class conflict*. This idea is often associated with social inequality and the development of the capitalist economic system. Karl Marx, the famous German revolutionary and philosopher, was probably the best-known proponent of the view that capitalism inevitably produces such inequities, but it had many other adherents too. Today social scientists continue to debate such questions, but few dispute the importance of systematic inequality based on the type of work people do or how much wealth they command. And when such inequalities grow extreme, conflict can erupt. Historically, as the division between rich and poor widened, Marx and others predicted that the working class would come into conflict with the capitalists, owners of the means of production (Wright, 2005, 2016).

There is evidence of this in history, even though the Marxist apocalyptic vision did not materialize. With industrialization, especially the development of the factory system, differences between social classes were aggravated. This led to socialist movements, relatively small in the United States but larger elsewhere, and the development of modern labor unions. Historically, there was considerable strife over the rights and living standard of workers. This too was an important element of social change. These conflicts included battles over education and schooling, especially in the nation’s growing industrial cities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Industrialization, urbanization, globalization, the development of technology and the division of labor all have been important aspects of social change as it has unfolded in the United States. They also are practical concepts, developed to explain extensive alterations to the social order. As such, they are vital to the task of comprehending just how education and social change have been related. But these are hardly the only ideas relevant to historical reasoning. Many additional social science concepts also are pertinent, most of which deal less directly with large-scale transformation. But they too can be very useful in understanding social and educational change in the past.

History and Social Theory

One of the goals of social science is to establish basic categories of collective experience, to help explain behavior in a variety of settings. Such conceptions are the elements of social theory, and they are critical to making sense of social change in history.

A good example of this, and a very familiar one, is evident in the term *culture*. Broadly defined as the way of life in human society, culture can be considered behavioral characteristics or traits typical of a social group. These usually include rituals or ceremonies, customs, attitudes and ideas transmitted from one generation to the next. The tricky part is identifying these traits when they are considered normal. Because it is so encompassing, culture can be a slippery term to define precisely. But it is indispensable in explaining the process of social change, especially on a larger historical scale (Kluckhohn, 1949; Kuper, 2000).

Culture is especially pertinent to schooling, as education can be defined as a form of cultural transmission. If society is to function smoothly, familiar and productive attitudes and values need to be taught to each succeeding generation. This does not mean that such ideas are always accepted; the young often reject aspects of the dominant culture. When this happens, it often represents cultural change. And because schools are directly involved in teaching ideas and shaping attitudes, they stand at the very center of it. A major

issue in the history of education, consequently, concerns cultural transformation (Spindler, 1963).

Social scientists have used the idea of culture to pose yet another concept: *cultural capital*. It is premised on the recognition that all cultures are not valued equally. In the United States, for instance, certain forms of behavior, values, and attitudes are more admired and rewarded than others. This is evidence of a dominant culture that can dictate many traditional values and tastes. The concept of cultural capital thus can be linked to *social status*. Certain ways of speaking, dressing, and conducting oneself, after all, are associated with greater standing or prominence. For example, an English accent is often favored over a Spanish one; suits are typically seen as higher status than jeans and tee shirts. Knowledge of classical music or jazz is often taken as a sign of sophistication, as is familiarity with fine wines. This sort of knowledge can represent cultural capital, a command of information and abilities that are valued by others with higher standing. Those who possess such knowledge and skills often have access to greater social benefits. Those who lack it are frequently considered to be inferior. In this respect, cultural capital is related to status and social inequality.

Cultural capital can also find expression in more significant ways. It can take the form of a large vocabulary, for instance, a well-developed understanding of history, or ability in a foreign language—especially a high status one such as French. It can have more practical dimensions too, such as understanding how institutions function or how to behave in certain situations, like being a good conversationalist or even doing homework on time. Individuals who possess these traits hold advantages in social life and often enjoy greater esteem as a consequence. It is in this regard that the term *capital* is fitting. Because these characteristics or conditions empower individuals to do things that provide social benefits, they can be considered a tangible form of wealth (Bourdieu & Coleman, 1991; DiMaggio, 1982; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Schools can assist in realizing such benefits if they grant the holders of cultural capital greater access to credentials or other forms of recognition. A large body of research demonstrates that cultural capital is an advantage in educational institutions (Lareau &

Horvat, 1999). Children with highly educated parents, for instance, have access to books, music, magazines, and media technology that may impress their teachers. They also learn to speak properly and have opportunities to travel and visit museums and other cultural institutions. Parents who understand how complex organizations function can provide children with even more advantages. Every historical period has had some form of cultural knowledge that can be passed across generations. Consequently, *cultural capital* is a useful concept in studying education, even if its meaning may shift from one historical setting to another (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; Roscigno et al., 1999).

Another social science term that has gained currency is *social capital*. This idea is parallel to cultural capital, but conveys a somewhat different point. Social capital refers to advantages that individuals derive from relationships. As sociologist James Coleman pointed out, in order for cultural capital (socially valued knowledge and skills) to be conveyed across generations, there must be positive and sustained relations between adults and children. In this respect, supportive relationships can be a valuable asset, and hence a form of advantage or capital. Within groups, it can reinforce dominant attitudes and behavior, as long as strong relations sustain them. Social capital can thus help to perpetuate beneficial dispositions, values, and behavior within social groups. As Coleman noted, it can also be efficacious in networks of association and influence. Knowing the right people to secure a certain advantage, such as lawyers or bankers, can be considered a form of social capital. Tightly knit communities, where people help one another with all types of problems, offer valuable social capital to their residents. When members of these communities encourage values that encourage socially responsible behavior, such as maintaining a job or attending school, it can represent a form of cultural capital that is a tangible benefit of social capital (Coleman, 1988).

Regarding education, a telling example of social capital is the effect of local communities on school attendance. Some social groups seemed to encourage regular enrollment more than others. The children of Jewish immigrants had unusually high levels of school attendance in the early 20th century, even though their

parents often were poor and lacked formal education. Similar patterns have been observed more recently among Asian Americans. Some of this appears to have been linked to attitudes that young people should spend time in schools and strive for success. This is clearly a form of cultural capital, but its realization depended on the close relationships between adults and children, ties that helped to transmit these advantageous values. Historically these groups did not have many conventional forms of cultural capital, such as knowledge of American customs or proper English. The school was an institution that helped develop these traits, but these children's success was influenced by relationships with adults in the community. In the case of immigrant groups with comparatively little native cultural capital, social capital was a resource that helped them to overcome disadvantages. If a community is quite cohesive and can persuade or compel the young to excel in school, the influence of social capital is typically a factor (Perlmann, 1988; Rotberg, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1994).

Of course, this can also work in the opposite direction. There have been groups that have shunned the schools, discouraging their children from attendance. Italian immigrants, for instance, sometimes told their children to leave school and find jobs to contribute directly to household income. These relationships transmitted values that did not represent a form of cultural capital in the larger society, even if it immediately afforded families greater resources. As Coleman suggested, social capital is highly situational. Indeed, if community relations have a contrary impact on school success, children may be disadvantaged. Some social scientists have described this as *negative social capital*, as it represents relationships that can be problematic. In any case, a tightly knit community with broadly shared values and expectations can contribute to social capital if it results in tangible, enduring advantages in the larger social context (Perlmann, 1988; Portes, 1998).

Social and cultural capital are useful concepts for explaining why some individuals and groups succeeded historically and others did not. In this respect, both are related to the economic term *human capital*, which refers to differences in skills and knowledge that help explain why some people—and groups—are more economically

industrious or productive. Lawyers and doctors, for example, can perform tasks routinely that would take less knowledgeable people much longer to complete, if they could do them at all. The same principle applies to accountants, engineers, computer programmers, teachers, and most other jobs that require advanced levels of training. This, according to economists, is the reason why people with higher levels of education usually earn more money than others. Human capital has become a critical component of the modern economy (Becker, 1964). To the extent that social and cultural capital can contribute to opportunities to acquire human capital—typically through school or other types of formal training—they can help improve social status.

These different conceptions of capital are important to understanding the development of modern school systems. Human capital—skills and comprehension—is usually seen as an outcome of schooling, while cultural and social capital—socially helpful knowledge and relationships—are typically considered helpful for success in schools. In all three examples, however, capital represents a palpable resource that can be drawn upon for social or personal advancement. Broadly speaking, culture and capital are concepts that help to characterize people and groups, and they allow greater understanding of human differences. Together, these are ideas that have special significance in research on education, and they are relevant to educational history as well (Rury, 2004).

People who occupy different positions, of course, often view the world in quite dissimilar ways. Social scientists use the term *ideology* to represent systems of ideas and beliefs that people use to interpret their circumstances and guide their actions. This is yet another critical concept in comprehending the relationship between education and social change, and it is clearly connected to the definition of culture discussed above. One useful way of distinguishing between them is to think of culture as principally representing attitudes and behavior, and ideology as limited to beliefs and ideas, even though each influences the other. As historian Carl Kaestle has noted, in the United States, ideology has been strongly linked to Protestantism and a battery of ideas revolving around the capitalist economic system: private property,

hard work, and self-denial for purposes of advancement. These somewhat disparate ideological elements have worked together historically to form a coherent worldview that has shaped politics and institutions. There are other aspects of ideology, but as noted above, the development of values and attitudes is clearly a crucial component of schooling. Consequently, ideology has been a critical factor in the development of education (Kaestle, 1983).

Like culture, ideology is a tricky concept because it is an aspect of everyday life. History, however, provides a useful means of examining its effects on familiar institutions and events. *Racism* and *sexism* are collections of ideas that hold certain groups of people to be inferior to others, notions that historically have had a profound effect on American society. *Racism* is an ideology that suggests African Americans and other groups should be seen as biologically different, mentally inferior and less deserving of social status than others, particularly Whites. *Sexist* ideology holds that women are inferior to men in terms of intellect and physical stamina. Both have exerted powerful influences on popular thought and behavior in U.S. history. Obviously they also have held important implications for education, and for the development of schooling in the United States (Guillaumin, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994).

Ideological beliefs such as these have resulted in overt and covert efforts to limit or constrain the educational prospects of children from certain groups in American history. Researchers have used the term *opportunity hoarding* to describe such practices, as access to schooling and the benefits it affords have often been reserved for the children of favored social groups, while others have been largely excluded. This was evident in racially segregated education systems in the South for many decades, when better funded schools were designated for whites only. The same could be said of policies that sent American Indians to special schools intended to eradicate their cultural heritage, or the practice of relegating disabled children to custodial institutions. It was also manifest in rules that denied women access to the nation's most elite colleges and universities for more than a century. And it clearly existed in suburban communities that resisted the efforts of poor and non-white families to settling within their school districts. These actions perpetuated social and

educational inequality, denying many generations of Americans the same opportunity to realize their potential that others have enjoyed. As such, opportunity hoarding can clearly be described as an especially potent form of social injustice (Anderson, 2010; Rury & Rife, 2018; Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011).

There is more to the question of ideology and its impact on education, however, than the distressing legacy of racism, sexism, and opportunity hoarding. Yet another aspect of popular ideology in this country has been *equity*—or the principle of equality of opportunity. This idea is associated with such other familiar features of American ideology as freedom and democracy, and the famous refrain, "all men are created equal." Of course, these sentiments are contradictory to racism and sexism, and other ideas that inhibit social groups because of biological or cultural traits and through practices such as the hoarding of educational opportunity. It has often been noted that American life is riddled with such incompatible elements. But conflict over these issues has helped make the United States such a dynamic society, and helps to account for its rapid pace of social and institutional change. The ideals of equality and the freedom to gain access to schooling have animated social movements to remove barriers to opportunity, and their successes eventually became manifest in many of the enlightened public policies that exist today. Even so, the nation's school system continues to struggle with many of these questions (Ravitch, 1983).

Concepts such as *culture, industrialization, urbanization, globalization, social* and *human capital, ideology, opportunity hoarding* and *equity* can assist in thinking more clearly about how society changes, and the ways in which this process has affected people's lives. In the case of education, these concepts are helpful in interpreting just why schools and related social institutions, such as families and other agencies of socialization, have changed over time. Schools evolved a great deal in the past several centuries. As suggested earlier, studying this process can illuminate just how these institutions and the larger society have interacted over time.

The Evolution of American Education

Schools have become an integral element of American culture. Nearly everyone has attended one for a considerable length of time, typically during life's most impressionable stages. And for the most part, people's school experiences have been quite similar, especially in the last 70 years or so. Hallways and classrooms are nearly ubiquitous, as are teachers and principals. Almost all schools divide the day into discrete periods of activity, and follow annual schedules set by state authorities. In the main, schools pursue goals dictated by their sponsoring institutions and agencies, such as state governments or churches. And all share a commitment to individual growth or human development and responsibility to the future of society.

For most people, these and other aspects of schooling are generally taken for granted, one of the most telling signs of a common culture. Historians David Tyack and Larry Cuban have referred to some of these features as the "grammar of schooling," rules and expectations that define the institution's everyday operations. Because schools contain large numbers of children, for instance, they devote special attention to discipline and order, and require adult authority in matters of supervision and training. Schools also place great emphasis on routine transmission of formalized knowledge, and evaluation of learning with standardized methods of assessment. Of course, schools are also places to make friends, play games, and do a variety of other things, but these features do not make it a school. Rather, it is the rules and formal relationships of authority that form the familiar institutional parameters most often associated with schooling. Memories of these aspects of organizational life have been commonplace for many decades, and seem to be essential to the very concept of "school" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

But schools have not always been this way. Indeed, many of these contemporary qualities of schools did not exist in earlier times. They have evolved historically, in response to a wide array of factors. It is comforting to think of schools as fixed social entities, but in fact they have been quite pliable throughout history. One reason to study the history of education, in that case, is to identify just how the familiar features of schooling developed.

This line of inquiry begins with some basic questions: How did schools develop in the past, and what caused them to change? These matters are central to the history of education, and critical to anyone interested in educational reform. As a prelude to the more detailed discussions in chapters to follow, it is fitting to take a look at some of the big changes that have affected schooling, and consider how they may have been related to some of the social science concepts considered thus far.

Two hundred years ago schools were held in makeshift huts or cabins, or in rented rooms in urban areas. Most of the population lived in the countryside, so small schoolhouses predominated, where any existed at all. Children of all ages attended and teachers conducted different lessons simultaneously. School terms sometimes only lasted a few months and attendance often was sporadic. Teachers did not have regular employment, working from one term to the next, and many were barely more educated than the students. Features of school that people often take for granted, such as age-grading and a common curriculum, all had to be conceived and eventually accepted as widely practiced routines. These changes were largely coterminous with industrialization. In fact, the first modern schools often were compared to factories, which developed at about the same time. Even so, the process of change was painfully slow, and frequently met with stubborn resistance. It may have occurred during a time of rapid social change, but building the modern American school system was often a protracted struggle (Axtell, 1974; Cremin, 1951).

Other features of the now familiar education system developed later. Most teachers in the United States did not receive profession training until the early 20th century, and bureaucratic systems of management became widespread even later. Schools for children of different ages, grammar schools and high schools, were introduced in a piecemeal fashion. Many of these changes were driven by population growth, as more children attended schools. This was especially true in major cities, some of which grew exponentially. Urbanization, it turns out, was a central element of educational change. Without the growth of enrollments, modern, rationalized school systems would not be practical. Larger numbers of children

made age grading feasible, along with the long-term employment of teachers. Just finding rooms for all of these students often became a major challenge facing educators (Tyack, 1974).

At the same time, the process of industrialization and the growing division of labor became associated with curricular differentiation in schooling, and the development of specific courses of study to prepare students for various careers. By the early 20th century, many high school students could choose between industrial education courses, college preparatory programs, and such specialized subjects as home economics and stenography. The idea of linking schools closely to the world of work became known as *vocationalism*. As schooling became associated with a host of different types of jobs, school completion (sometimes called *attainment*) became an important factor in the allocation of people to various types of employment. Schools were becoming adapted to the development of modern, urban America, as it grew more diverse and forward-looking, and the economy expanded rapidly (Rury, 1991a).

American schools have historically been organized in relatively small independent districts, unlike most other countries, which have national systems of education. Until the mid-20th century, there were hundreds of thousands of these entities, with little central coordination to guide their development. This added another facet to the process of historical change: educators in some communities learning from others, imitating practices and policies, or adapting them to new circumstances. Schools or systems judged to be successful or prominent became models for those seeking to improve their practice or augment their status. As non-native settlement moved westward, educators often looked to older systems in the east for ideas about how best to organize schools, even if they were frequently modified in practice. Social scientists use the term *institutional isomorphism* to describe this process (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995). It represents the manner in which different institutions or organizations historically come to share similar characteristics, as they sought greater success in a field or domain of endeavor. In the case of schooling, it helps explain how innovations such as age-grading, bureaucratic management

systems, and curricular reform became commonplace, spreading from one part of the country to another.

Institutional isomorphism could take a number of different forms, depending on historical circumstances. Reform by imitation, called *mimetic isomorphism*, was hardly the only way it happened. Change also occurred when educators moved from one district to another, introducing new aspects of professional knowledge and practice learned elsewhere. This is often labeled *normative isomorphism*, when institutions adopt professional standards or practices that personnel bring with them. It became increasingly important as more teachers and administrators were trained in colleges and universities that shared similar curricula. It was also abetted by growing professional organizations, such as the National Education Association (NEA). Shared professional standards became clearer as a consequence, and exerted normative pressure on schools to adopt them. Finally, systemic change also happened when schools were required by state legislatures or education agencies to teach certain subjects, use particular tests or observe many other mandates. These were instances of regulative or *coercive isomorphism*, a process that educators may not have welcomed, but also had the effect of making their institutions appear even more similar. This tended to occur more frequently in the 20th century, as public education systems became more expansive, costly to operate and were increasingly embroiled in politics (LeTendre et al., 2001; Scott & Meyer, 1994).

As a consequence of these developments, today's mature system of education came fully into view by the mid-20th century. By then it had become so big and complex that debates occurred over its purposes and functions. Some would say that it became a mechanism for assigning people to different positions in the social order, a large-scale sorting machine (Spring, 1976). In the words of one observer, the schools helped to produce inequality (Kaye, 1973). Others would argue that the schools were engines of opportunity, allowing individuals to aspire to whatever position their talents were suited for (Ravitch, 1978). It is a debate that continues today.

In any case, a central question facing public education was the link between schooling and the growing complexity of American society.

As the social division of labor became more intricate, the issues of schooling and training people for productive careers became more important. Linked to this was the matter of providing individuals and groups with the skills and knowledge required by the economy. As technology advanced, the demand for people with appropriate skills and knowledge grew significantly. By the latter 20th century, there was a revolution in the perceived importance of human capital, and public interest in schooling grew accordingly (Goldin, 2001).

These developments, in turn, made education a potent political issue, especially in cities but elsewhere too. As schooling was seen as an economic and cultural advantage, it also became a point of contention. The history of American education is rife with groups organizing to demand changes in the schools. Such incidents were commonplace in the 19th century, but became far more frequent with the growing importance of education. Following the World War II, education became an increasingly contentious issue, especially as it grew more tightly linked to social and economic status (Ravitch, 1983; Vinovskis, 1999).

Historically, much of this agitation focused on the question of equity, and whether everyone had equal access to education. In the early 19th century, there were debates about the status of working-class children in schools, along with women in secondary and higher education. In the 20th century, political conflicts often concerned new ethnic groups, along with questions of school funding. These battles were difficult and embroiled educators in considerable conflict, but they also contributed to important changes. As a consequence, many of the greatest inequalities in American education have been reduced or eliminated, even if important disparities still exist. Today the issue of equity in education continues to be a point of frequent dissension, and schooling has continued to be a major issue in national politics. Looking at the history of this issue can help clarify today's struggles over education, and suggest ways to address them (Katznelson & Weir, 1985; Peterson, 1985).

This basic outline reveals how education has evolved in the United States over the past 200 years, as society has developed in response to industrialization, urban development, and the growing complexity of modern life. The educational system that exists today

is the result of a long process of adaptation to shifting social conditions. Most features of contemporary institutions were formed in response to specific historical circumstances. Given this, there can be little doubt that schools will continue to evolve as they react to social change in the future.

Schools Changing Society

While it is clear that society has shaped the development of schooling, there is also the converse question: How has education influenced or changed society? Beyond the process of individual development, what was the cumulative effect of schooling on social change? A number of telling examples can shed light on this.

One concerns the case of women's education. Early in American history women received little schooling, but after the Revolutionary War new attention was given to their education. As public schools were established during the 19th century, most were coeducational, providing boys and girls with similar educational opportunities. Female enrollment grew, and, by mid-century, women's literacy rates in northern states were almost equal to men's. Women also began to attend academies, high schools, and colleges in greater numbers. All of these changes preceded the movement of women into jobs requiring higher levels of skill, and the development of the first women's rights movement. Did education help to "cause" these latter developments? The answer is not entirely clear, but it certainly appears to have contributed to them. Given the historical evidence, it seems likely that these large-scale shifts in female employment and political status would not have occurred without changes in women's education (Rury, 1991; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

There is a parallel example in the case of African Americans. The ancestors of most African Americans came to North America as slaves and thus were excluded from conventional schooling, even if they cultivated a rich tradition of informal education. After gaining freedom in the Civil War, African Americans enrolled in schools on a massive scale across the South. Although their institutions often received less financial support than those for Whites, these opportunities expanded the ranks of articulate leaders who could

voice challenges to racism and discrimination. Eventually African Americans made schooling a defining issue in their struggle for civil rights, with the historic *Brown* case in 1954 standing as a turning point in the movement for equality. Without the development of education as a resource for the Black community and as an object of struggle, it is doubtful that these changes would have occurred quite as rapidly as they did (Anderson, 1988; Sitkoff, 1993).

These are just two of the most dramatic and profound changes in American society that have been affected, at least in part, by the development of schooling (they are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 6). There are many others, as noted elsewhere in the book. Some of these concerned ideology and the American ideals of freedom and equality. Schools have played an important role in legitimizing and spreading such popular ideas as democracy, equity, and fair play. Ideology typically changes at a slow pace, so such developments are often difficult to ascertain precisely. But this does not mean that they did not occur. Part of the problem of studying education and social change, in that case, is identifying less obvious developments such as these, and assessing how they fit into relationship of schools and society.

All things considered, it appears that schooling and education clearly have had a substantial impact on society, even as they have been shaped by urbanization, political conflict, and other societal changes. All of these events have established the features of modern schools that exist today. It is the analysis of this process that makes the history education interesting and worthwhile, to help understand how the present has arrived and perhaps what the future holds.

A Final Word about History

Henry Ford once said, “History is more or less bunk.” Generations of students have declared it boring. At its worst history is lifeless or formulaic in describing events in the past. But it can also include human drama, memorable characters, conflict and struggle, and many lessons for life. For historians, it is also a science, one that requires scrupulous attention of the facts and careful testing of

explanations with information from the past. This means that good history is reliable, at least regarding basic matters of evidence. In this respect, it is more than just a story; it also strives to set the record straight, to identify what actually occurred in earlier times.

This book is intended to be a relatively brief treatment of its topic, even if it may seem a bit painstaking at times. Many relevant facets of history have been left out as a consequence. In particular, it has not been possible to discuss many of the diverse voices and viewpoints that have animated debates about education in the past. But the book is intended as a starting point for investigating the inevitable questions that readers may have about particular facets of this history. Throughout the narrative, there are references to other works, usually contained in parentheses with the author and date of publication, so the full citation can be found in the bibliography. The text also occasionally refers to authors who have been especially influential. References have been included not only to corroborate the facts, but also as resources to utilize in investigating particular topics. Please follow up on any questions that may arise by looking at some of the relevant citations. The bibliography, moreover, is hardly exhaustive; there are many other studies in the history of education and related topics that are also worth investigating. This volume is meant to be a starting point in thinking about these issues, not the end.

Of course, history is more than just identifying what happened. The historical record is always incomplete, and judgments must be made about what is truly significant in the surviving information. This is where interpretation enters the picture. Here the expectations of history as a scholarly field exert a powerful discipline: The account that is constructed must conform to the evidence, but it also has to address important questions and offer persuasive, thought-provoking answers. This is how some of the major ideas just outlined briefly came into currency. The use of concepts such as *industrialization* or *ideology* has to fit the evidence at hand, but they are also part of a larger narrative that historians have largely agreed upon. Yet they are still debated. Constructing historical explanations, it turns out, is a complicated business, continuously subject to dispute and revision. New evidence is constantly being turned up, challenging established

explanations and theories, and posing questions to longstanding conceptions of the past. This means historians must be alert to changes in the field. The discussion of events in this book is informed by the most recent research, but eventually there doubtless will be new perspectives to consider and additional evidence that complicates the account offered herein.

This means it is important to pay attention to the details of educational history while working to develop an understanding of social and educational change. The task can be demanding, to be sure, but the point of reading history is to acquire a personal grasp of patterns in the past. In this book, there are many names and dates. These comprise important place markers in the historical development of American education. They are not necessarily meant for memorization, but are important pieces of the historical puzzle and can help give shape to the narrative that follows.

The book also features somewhat detailed accounts of particular events that have marked the development of American education. These episodes, presented as descriptions of particular moments, are used to illustrate various themes. Each one is labeled a *Focal Point*. They are intended to help bring an issue to life, to augment the broad trends that a relatively short book unavoidably must dwell on. Education, after all, was a topic that often invoked great passion, and the ensuing struggles helped to create the school system—and the larger culture—that exists today. One such instance has been chosen to start most chapters; others are sprinkled throughout the narrative. They touch on a variety of themes, but several are concerned with changing experiences of childhood in American history. Others offer a glimpse of conflicts in a particular era, or events that simply illuminate a historical moment. In each case, the goal is to offer a glimpse of how people experienced education, and how educational ideas and institutions appeared at different times.

Now the stage is set. The chronicle that follows is a history of the institutions and experiences that have come to be called “education,” and the way it fits into the larger process of change that has shaped modern society. Hopefully, it will help to illuminate contemporary problems, and stimulate ways of thinking about them a little more clearly and expansively.

1
Colonial America
Religion, Inequality, and Revolution

A good point to begin thinking about changes in American education is the colonial era. Extending from the 17th century (1607) to the Revolutionary War (1776–1783), it spanned nearly two centuries. This was a beginning for much of what eventually came to be seen as elements of American culture, distinct from other parts of the world. And it was an era of sweeping social changes, before industrialization and large-scale urban development. Colonial society was agricultural and it was cast on a small scale. But it also was in flux, experiencing growth and other changes that eventually led to Revolution and a new age in history.

A revealing glimpse into colonial society is offered by one of its best-known and most historically controversial figures. It provides a sense of life at the time, and insight into an essential aspect of education: growing up.

FOCAL POINT: PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN A NEW WORLD

Cotton Mather (1663–1728) was one of the most influential and celebrated men of his time. He was a leading cleric (minister) and intellectual in New England, involved in many aspects of public life. Named for his grandfather, Mather was third in a family line of pastors at Boston's famous Old North Church. His father Increase also served for a time as president of Harvard College. Cotton

graduated from the college and became an overseer (trustee), and later helped to establish Yale, turning down its presidency. He was also a controversial figure in the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692, condemning witchery. Altogether, he authored hundreds of works, including the famous Magnalia Christi Americana—a history of Puritanism in America (Silverman, 1984).

In addition, Mather was a dedicated keeper of diaries, and his daily reflections provide insights on the time. With respect to education, Mather's chronicles of his family life are revealing; they offer a telling perspective on the problems of an 18th-century parent (Hiner, 1979).

In 1717, Cotton Mather was profoundly troubled. The reason was his children, and his 18-year-old son Increase in particular. "Creasy," as the son was nicknamed, had been accused by a local "harlot" of fathering her child out of wedlock. Mather was mortified, writing in his diary, "Oh! Dreadful Case! Oh, Sorrow beyond any that I have met withal! What shall I do now for the foolish youth! What for my afflicted and abased family?" Mather managed to keep the case out of the courts, and he also kept Creasy confined at home, plying him daily with sermons and remonstrations for piety and good behavior (Hiner, 1979). But Creasy was not very contrite. Just two weeks after being accused, Mather wrote that young Increase had "made a worse exhibition of himself unto me… than I have ever yet met withal."

Seemingly desperate, Mather wrote in his diary, "Oh my God, what shall I do? What shall I do?" He had harbored great hopes for young Increase, naming him after his own father in hope the child would continue the Mather tradition of conspicuous piety and religious stewardship (Silverman, 1984). What he found instead was a continuing source of anguish and pain, disappointment tempered by love but also humbling and humiliating. It was a difficult trial of parenthood.

Cotton Mather was father to some 16 children. This was a high number even for colonial America, where the average birth rate was about eight per married woman. But Mather also witnessed all but five of his children die, most before the age of four. He also buried two wives, and had married a third just two years before the accusations against Creasy (Hiner, 1979). It is possible that the large size of his family was meant to compensate for these losses. Some researchers have speculated that high birth rates were a response to the fear of death and uncertainty in the New World. If children were likely to die, a family needed more of them (Moran & Vinovskis, 1992). No doubt the revelations about Creasy did little to ease Mather's anxieties about his family.

There is abundant evidence, however, that Mather cherished his son deeply. Less than two years after the charged illicit union, Creasy was accused of "bearing a part in a night-riot, with some of the most detestable rakes in town." Once again Mather was distraught. "My miserable, miserable, miserable son Increase," he wrote in his diary, at the same time asking, "Oh what shall I do?" He decided to send Creasy to stay with his grandfather, who also was upset, and to write him a "tremendous letter" threatening that he would "never own him or do for him or look upon him" until he repented.

Shortly after sending his son away, though, Mather found himself in tears as he asked God to help his son. "Ah poor Increase," he wrote in his diary, "Tho I spake against him, yet I earnestly remember him, and my bowels are troubled for him." A little later, in writing another pastor for help with Creasy, Mather predicted that "when you see him, you will certainly love him" (Silverman, 1984). Creasy continued to be a test to his father's devotion until his untimely death at sea in 1724. But Mather's torment upon hearing that news revealed the depth of his affection. "Ah vain world," he wrote, "how little is to be expected in thee and from thee… disappointed harvests, how frequent are you… this world

will afford us no substantial happiness." In this respect, Mather's feelings toward Creasy were not unusual: He grieved openly and sorrowfully when each of his children died. The fact that it occurred so frequently, or in the case of Creasy so far away, did not diminish the pain. Youthful indiscretion, sickness, and death were all a part of life for Cotton Mather and other parents in 18th-century British North America. But families were bound together with genuine love and affection, even if they were separated by vast distances and for long stretches of time. It was these sentiments that defined parenthood more than any other.

In many respects, Cotton Mather's behavior was quite contrary to the image of a didactic 18th-century cleric. He did not assert the authority of patriarchy or parenthood, and he did not command his son or threaten him (aside from a hollow warning of banishment). Nor did he throw him out or condemn him to damnation and suffering. Rather, he fretted despondently, as one who worried about Creasy's plight and cared deeply for him. Despite his conservative religious background, Cotton Mather was quite a modern parent for his time. Behavior such as his would come to be emblematic of familial relations in Colonial America (Morgan, 1966).

Historians have suggested that Europeans who settled in the New World acquired a distinctive view of life and social relations (Bushman, 1967; Butler, 2000). This was partly a reaction against Old World traditions of inherited privilege and hierarchical rules regarding status and opportunity. But even if settlers missed their former society, the New World offered a different set of expectations and freedom from many constraints in the old order. Although many young men observed what historian Harvey Graff has described as the "traditional pathways" by following in their father's vocation and station in life, others did not. American children did not even have the memory of European convention to constrain them, and alternative pursuits often proved inviting (Graff, 1995).

> Cotton Mather, for all of his regard of tradition and respect for authority, was a product of this new social environment. He did not dictate orders to his children as much as he educated them. In this respect, it is possible to say that he attempted to transmit a high level of cultural capital to his offspring. But the transfer of these attributes was never automatic; nor was it often easy, as Mather's experience with Creasy suggests. Mather worried about his children's prospects, but all he could give them was training and wise counsel. It was up to them to make their ways in the world as free, autonomous individuals. And of course there was Mather's undying affection, a source of pleasure in his life and also anguish. Such is the puzzle of human development and education in the modern era: How to prepare the next generation for the challenges of the future, while trying to protect them from the dangers? It was a dilemma especially poignant in the so-called "New World."

Life in a Colonial Setting

It is difficult to imagine today, but North America seemed a truly "New World" in colonial times. At least this was true for Europeans who came to settle, or to profit and plunder. It was a vast stretch of time, and much happened between the moment when the first White settlers arrived and the Revolution. A largely English colonial society took root, and it evolved rather quickly from one generation to the next. On the western side of the continent, and in Florida and the southwest, Spanish settlements appeared, and they too witnessed considerable change. This was an early form of what today is called globalization. It was a complicated process, but it is still possible to make certain observations about the time. It was quite different from today.

Most of North America was a vast wilderness then, inhabited by a native population numbering perhaps ten million throughout the

continent. Visitors to New England reportedly could smell pine trees more than a hundred miles offshore. The first European settlements were tiny, and did not extend very far into the interior. Residents lived in close proximity to nature, and its hardships were a major preoccupation, especially the weather and wild animals or pestilence. Life in these circumstances was a constant battle against the elements, and dogged perseverance was necessary for survival.

Of course, the North American continent was already inhabited when English settlers arrived. The Native Americans, or “Indians,” as they had been dubbed by Columbus, included hundreds of different social and cultural groupings. The vast majority lived in agricultural and hunting societies, on a scale considerably smaller than European nations, apart from certain tribal federations. Although the American Indian population was substantial, it was spread thinly across the landscape. Divided into many different tribes and lacking advanced military technology, the Native Americans were often unable to prevail against Europeans in disputes. As a consequence, they were eventually defeated, exploited, and pushed out of the way to make room for the expanding White population. In educational terms, this was among the most basic and profound lessons taught by the experience of colonial settlement: the Europeans saw Native Americans as an inferior people. When not feared, they were crushed and discarded if seen standing in the way of “progress,” and pitied or made “civilized” once defeated (Nash, 1974/2000).

The self-righteous attitudes of Europeans who felt superior to American Indians took different forms, and weren’t always expressed in hostility or violence. Some newcomers adopted an early form of racism, speculating that inherent mental differences accounted for observed European superiority. Others found themselves beguiled by the handsome features of natives, or by their seemingly modest, natural lifestyle. But even the “friends” of the Native Americans sought to convert them to Christianity, teach them European morality, or undermine their culture in countless other ways. This initial contact between two vastly different traditions marked an early process of social change in American history. It was a transformation that proceeded largely in one direction, with American Indian society being forcefully pushed to the margins of the emerging European-

based civilization, even though Whites learned a great deal from Native Americans in the process (Axtell, 1985). In light of this history, the term *New World* is both telling and ironic.

The Different Worlds of Colonial North America

The cultural interaction and displacement that led to European domination was in full bloom by the time Englishmen came to settle in the 17th century. British North America grew to be a large, diversified land, extending along the Atlantic seaboard in different colonies. Religious expatriates started some of these settlements; others were founded for personal or collective gain. The land was marked by different climates and a varied topography, and settled by people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Thus, it is difficult to generalize about the colonial population and the educational practices and institutions of the time. It is wrong, in short, to speak of a single, unitary colonial culture. Although the colonies shared a number of similarities, each was quite distinctive—especially when it came to everyday culture and educational customs.

Spanish colonial settlements were a bit different. Spaniards launched exploratory missions and dispatched expeditions in search of fortune nearly a century before the English. In North America, they established outposts that grew into settlements in Florida during the 16th century, Texas in the 17th century, and along the Pacific coast in the territory of California during the 18th century. These colonies did not attract large numbers of settlers. Instead, they generally consisted of missions and ranches, with garrisons of troops for protection. These outposts were attacked by British and French raiders, especially in Florida. The principal point of Spanish settlement and political authority lay to the south in Mexico (Rawls & Bean, 2003; Weber, 1994).

Most historians divide British colonial America into three regions, each with a large contiguous territory (Henretta, 1973; Main, 1965). The first, in order of settlement, was the South, which began with Jamestown in 1607. Representing the colonies of Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia, the South specialized in commercial agriculture, and developed a social structure and cultural traditions

well adapted to its dominant economic interests. Just to the north were the middle colonies, the largest of which were Quaker Pennsylvania and Dutch New Amsterdam, later named New York by the English. These colonies, which also included New Jersey and Delaware, featured a heterogeneous mix of peoples who came for a variety of purposes. To the north of the middle colonies was New England, perhaps the most familiar colonial region, and oft-noted in regard to the history of education.

Different patterns of economic development and cultural and political traditions characterized each region. All of the colonies were preindustrial and local economies were dominated by agriculture, but climate and terrain dictated the way people worked and lived. The South, with its relatively warm climate and long growing season, exported commodities such as tobacco and, to a lesser degree, rice, along with other cash crops. Land was plentiful but workers were not, so Southern landholders turned to involuntary labor. This meant indentured servants at first, but eventually they utilized large numbers of African slaves. This was accompanied by the development of racist ideology, which took decades to evolve. In the North, large-scale agriculture of this sort was rare, and small freeholder farms predominated, usually worked by a single family. The quality of land for cultivation varied a good deal. These farmers generally produced little for the export market, although many participated in the expanding local trade, particularly as nearby settlements grew (Henretta, 1973; Hofstadter, 1971).

Culturally, different traditions characterized each of these regions, but there were many localized customs as well. In the South, for example, the wealthy planters (plantation owners) represented a cultural and political leadership. Even if they were a minority of the population, they set the tone for prevailing values and institutional development, including educational practices. Elsewhere, the local colonial leadership was dictated by the circumstances of each colony's founding. Religion was an important factor in the cultural character of many settlements, especially in the North. Spiritual belief remains a key aspect of culture today, of course, but it was especially significant then. Religious convictions were critical elements of individual identity, much the way nationalism or ethnic

heritage may be today. It was an age of religious ferment, moreover, and there was considerable conflict between rival faith traditions in Europe. The settling of North America followed closely on the heels of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic counterreformation, events that shaped British politics and international conflict (Fischer, 1989; Morgan, 1975). Religion was especially influential when it came to education.

Denominational influences differed widely across the colonies. In the South, the wealthy planters were generally Anglican, the Church of England, which had split from Catholicism during the reign of Henry VIII. On the other hand, dissident religious groups, hoping to practice their beliefs outside the established church, largely settled the New England and middle colonies. The Quakers in Pennsylvania were one such group, along with Catholics in Maryland, and a little later Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in Pennsylvania, New York, and elsewhere. But the best-known and probably the most important of the religious colonies were those established in New England. It is there that discussions of the connection between religion and education in American history usually begin.

Religion, Culture, and Education

Most Americans are familiar with the story of the Pilgrims launching Plymouth Colony during the early 1600s. Like them, many migrants to British North America came in pursuit of religious autonomy. Other groups seeking to practice their own faith settled nearby, the most important being the Puritans. They founded Massachusetts Bay Colony and the city of Boston, which became the region's most important settlement. Their beliefs and behavior reflected elements of what became American culture in the years to follow.

The Puritans—like many British settlers in northern colonies—were resolute Protestants. In particular, they were followers, to one extent or another, of the French theologian John Calvin (1509–1564), who rejected papal authority to form a church based on biblical interpretation and faith. They departed England because they believed it corrupt and decadent, and they hoped to establish a more perfect social order based on moral authority and religious virtue.

Like many other Protestants, they rejected the seemingly empty rituals in Catholic and Anglican religious practices. They held that each person bore an individual relationship to God, based on piety and goodness, although they were hardly prudes. The search for religious freedom, however, did not always mean they were willing to tolerate the views of others. There were occasional sectarian conflicts that marked the first century of settlement in New England (Miller, 1956, 1959; Rutman, 1977). Such clashes notwithstanding, most people who came to this part of British North America believed that the grace of God was manifest in the lives they led.

The religious beliefs of the Puritans, the Pilgrims, and other groups in New England held great consequence for education. It would not be wrong, as suggested earlier, to view religion as a principal component of the ideology of the age. Perhaps the most fundamental tenet of Protestantism was the belief that each person needed to form a connection with God. To do this one had to be able to read and interpret the Holy Scripture, catechisms, and other religious writings; in particular it meant that every man, or person, should know the Bible. This required literacy, and the ability to reason from principles conveyed through a variety of texts. It was a set of skills that earlier generations of Europeans had not cultivated widely. In the era of Calvinist Protestantism, however, becoming literate and knowledgeable was believed a great virtue in the service of religion. This meant that historically new importance was attached to education.

Social theorists have long debated the historical significance of Protestantism, and Calvinism in particular, as a transforming influence in Western civilization. Max Weber, the celebrated German social theorist, argued that the Protestant Reformation was linked to the rise of capitalism and its distinctive social and ideological features. In particular, he suggested that Protestant predilections for simplicity and thrift, hard work, and self-improvement influenced the merchants, financiers, and forward-looking aristocrats who helped shape modern capitalist society (Weber, 1930). It was an ideological outlook especially well suited to capitalism as a social and economic system. In the New World, it influenced thousands of small free-holding farmers and the entrepreneurs who served them as

tradesmen, innkeepers, and peddlers. While the relationship between religion and economic and social development was not necessarily direct and immediate, historians agree that the appearance of Protestantism in the 16th century began an era of unprecedented social change (Landes, 1998).

The movement of Europeans to North America, in that case, can be considered a part of a massive social and ideological shift that occurred at this time (1500–1800). This certainly can be said of the first European settlers in what became New England. The rise of Protestantism in its various forms signaled a renewed commitment to human perfectibility and moral improvement. Migration to North America also entailed a grand experiment in economic development, one predicated on creating permanent settlements and an extension of English society. This was different from the colonies of other European powers, especially the Spanish, which often viewed the New World as a source of immediate exploitation rather than extended investment and settlement (Landes, 1969). These factors helped to give residents of British North America a distinctly modern and capitalistic sensibility by the end of the 17th century. This eventually would contribute to the outbreak of revolution, but it also led to new ways of thinking about the organization of society.

Education for a New World

Schools were fragile institutions in the colonial world, existing alongside older and more familiar agencies of education, the family, and church. Even though there was a high level of verbal commitment to formal education in some colonies, in practice it appears that schools typically were attended infrequently. Only a minority of colonial youth would be considered “educated” by today’s standards. Changes in the economy and intellectual or religious debates affected education, but it is not clear that formal schooling played a role in these events either. To understand education in colonial America, in that case, it is important to consider the ideological, social, and economic forces that shaped local development.

The cultivation of skills and the transmission of culture were major concerns of English settlers, evident almost immediately upon arrival. This was especially true in New England, where early laws called for establishing schools and for educating young men—and eventually young women too. Another early sign of the importance of formal learning was the Puritan decision to establish Harvard College in 1636. Massachusetts Bay Colony has been described by historians as a “theocratic” society, one that placed special value on principled religious leadership (Miller, 1956). Given this, preparing a cadre of educated leaders was considered essential to moral and intellectual life. This was a primary rationale for creating early colleges. In the wake of religious debates and schisms, other institutions of higher learning were started in nearby Connecticut (Yale College, 1701) and New Jersey (today’s Princeton University, 1746) to train yet more religious leaders. Eventually some nine colonial colleges were founded, providing a modest but important supply of educated men for the ministry and other leadership roles (Cremin, 1970). Similar educational opportunities were provided by local academies, which often sent students to the colleges for their degrees (Nybakken, 1997).

The colonial colleges and academies were small institutions, attended by a tiny fraction of the period’s young men. They typically possessed just a building or two and enrolled fewer than a hundred students, many of whom never graduated. Even the sons of colonial intellectuals, like “Creasy” Mather, often showed little interest in higher education. Yet, for small and tightly knit elite, they were very important institutions. The curriculum focused on Latin and Greek, languages that linked the cultivated domains of science and theology at the time. Such knowledge and related subjects was a potent form of cultural capital that distinguished the well-educated from the rest of the population. Students in the colonial colleges also forged friendships that proved helpful in subsequent careers, even marrying sisters of the classmates to form networks of family relationships. This was valuable social capital that benefitted young men in position to take advantage of it. Advanced schooling may not have been as important as today, but it still commanded respect and conveyed advantage in certain circles. For leaders of the British

colonies, the development of colleges was an investment in higher learning and the social and cultural capital that often accompanied it (Vine, 1976).

For most colonial children, on the other hand, the only opportunity for formal instruction was offered by local schools, conducted under a variety of circumstances. These institutions also were quite small. Those who bothered to attend usually did so for less than seven or eight years, often in terms lasting only four or five months. They studied the Bible, along with spellers, books of prayers, catechisms, and other religious texts. The famous New England Primer was the best known of the reading materials used for lessons in spelling and grammar, along with morality and virtue (Axtell, 1974). In these respects, the school was an extension of the home and the church, where religious instruction and reading commenced and were encouraged to one degree or another. Families with a greater stock of formal education, and related skills and knowledge, could give children an advantage in gaining the cultural capital associated with such attributes. But most people in colonial America did not view schooling as a route to higher social status or economic advancement. Rather, formal education was mainly intended to augment the reading and reasoning abilities necessary for a society shaped by religious values and a growing market economy.

Schools were most common in the colonies of New England, where the theocratic and Protestant purposes of formal education were clearly invoked. In 1647, Massachusetts enacted a law requiring towns of 50 families or more to establish a school, to confound the “Old Deluder Satan” in his quest to lead Christians astray. Connecticut enacted a similar decree just a few years later. Although it is unlikely that most towns complied by immediately establishing a school, such measures signaled the importance attached to formal instruction (Cremin, 1970). If the idea of a perfect society, based on a firm set of religious principles, was to be transmitted from the first settlers to their offspring, some form of systematic education was necessary.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that this legislation portended the development of a modern school system. Schooling in colonial New England was intended to supplement—not supplant—

the central role of the family in transmitting religious values and basic scholastic skills. It was left to local authorities, and the taxpayers, to decide whether formal schooling was even necessary in particular towns and villages. Consequently, the “Old Deluder Satan” law was often honored in the breach, especially if relatively few families were interested in supporting a school. Often it was the influence of social capital, or relationships supporting a shared set of values and behavioral norms regarding education, that made the difference. If families did not share the view that schools were important, on the other hand, formal education often languished. Over time the logic of Protestant values regarding education proved decisive, especially in bigger communities. As the population of the region grew, the likelihood of schools finding support increased apace. Education remained largely a voluntary affair, and it was left to individual families to decide just how much schooling was needed for their children, but community norms gradually exerted greater influence on such decisions (Axtell, 1974).

Schools in colonial New England—and elsewhere—usually were tiny institutions, run by a single teacher, or *master*, the term used at the time. Outside of Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, schools were rarely larger than a single classroom, attended by perhaps a dozen or more students. Although there were a few legendary teachers, such as Ezekial Cheever of the Boston Latin School, many were college students or recent graduates waiting to be called to a pulpit or some other vocation. Other teachers were men of modest education, ill-suited by temperament for other lines of work, who managed schools for lack of better prospects (Brown, 1902). By the early 18th century, female teachers taught younger children in “Dame Schools” in some communities, usually in their own homes. Consequently, teaching was a relatively low-status occupation, even when schools were relatively few and education was at least nominally assigned importance by colonial leaders (Perlmann & Margo, 2001).

The question of schooling notwithstanding, efforts to preserve the religious purposes and theocratic culture of Puritan New England were generally a failure. This was principally due to population growth and economic development; as children grew older and new

waves of immigrants arrived, it became impossible to maintain religious conformity. In the 1660s, religious leaders loosened requirements for church membership to attract the next generation of parishioners, who often lacked their parents' religious zeal. This was the so-called "halfway covenant." Other religious changes were important too, especially revivals that periodically swept the countryside. By the end of the 1600s, the original Puritan theocracy had virtually disappeared. Religion continued to be a preeminent factor in the cultural lives of most New Englanders, but church leaders did not command the same authority their forefathers had wielded (Rutman, 1970).

These developments demonstrated just how difficult it was to transfer the values of one generation to the next; it turned out that the transmission of culture could not be legislated. Despite measures such as the "Deluder Satan" law, schools could not sustain the religious traditions of the original Puritan settlers. As noted earlier, they probably reached only a fraction of the children in colonial society. The distinguished educational historian Lawrence Cremin counted just 11 schools in Massachusetts in 1650, serving some 2,339 households (one for every 212); by 1689, the number of schools had grown to 23 and households to 8,088 (1 for every 352) (Cremin, 1970). And as seen earlier, the vast majority of these schools were quite small, and colonial families were rather large. A conservative estimate, in that case, suggests that fewer than one in ten children attended school at any one time. Even if the number of schools increased significantly in the 18th century, as some historians suggest, many children probably attended them only briefly, if at all (Woody, 1923). Clearly, these institutions were limited in effectiveness, even where there was an explicit commitment to education. This suggests that shared community interest in formal education, a component of social capital, often was not very strong, at least by present standards. Many families probably relied on other resources to help impart basic reading skills and similar forms of knowledge (Bailyn, 1960). Schooling simply did not play the critical role that it does today.

But things were changing. By the time Cotton Mather endured the torment of observing his children flounder on the road of life, things

had evolved significantly. The population of British North America expanded inexorably, from less than a hundred thousand in the mid-17th century to about a million by Mather's death in 1728. It would grow to about three million by the American Revolution. This was a big increase, even if it still was a relatively small number. This growth meant new opportunities for commerce and trade, along with new lands to be cultivated and regions to explore in the continent's interior (Butler, 2000).

In the two decades following 1720, the volume of colonial exports to England more than doubled (Henretta, 1973). The next generations moved out of old settlements and established new ones, often in the interior. As the tide of trade grew, much of it in farm and timber products, new opportunities appeared for enterprising traders and financiers. Colonial society, although still largely agricultural and technologically primitive, began to exhibit some of the characteristics of modern capitalism. Affluent merchants controlled larger portions of trade, and farmers produced more crops for the international markets. People at all levels of society exhibited a new level of interest in acquiring wealth. With this, old commitments to shared religious ideals were weakened further. As historian Richard Bushman suggested, in cultural terms this process represented a transition "from Puritan to Yankee" (Bushman, 1967).

Perhaps the most popular single series of cultural events in colonial times occurred during the Great Awakening, a period of religious revivalism. British evangelist George Whitefield, a young man with extraordinary oratorical gifts, arrived in 1739 and proceeded up and down the colonial seaboard, speaking (or shouting) to growing throngs. While not directly challenging traditional beliefs, Whitefield preached a doctrine of salvation based on faith and good works, a gentle revision of the Puritan forefathers. Where the elders had believed in an elect leadership of learned ministers, Whitefield held that conviction and commitment to God was more important than scriptural interpretation (Heimert, 1966; Hofstadter, 1971; Rutman, 1977).

Ideas such as these dealt a final blow to the Puritan orthodoxy. But Whitefield and his many followers, including influential Puritan divine Jonathan Edwards, also infused new energy into Protestant values.

New colleges were started to train “new light” (enthusiastic) ministers, and added emphasis was placed on the importance of basic literacy skills for reading religious texts (Cremin, 1970). In a short time, religion became more accessible and democratic in orientation.

Yet another important source of influence on American intellectual and cultural life was the broad scientific and ideological movement known as the Enlightenment. Even more diffuse and variegated than the Reformation, it was a revolt among European intellectuals against superstition and religious dogma, an affirmation of reason and scientific discovery. Its leading English figures included Isaac Newton and John Locke, but there were many others. In general, these men stood for ending artificial status distinctions based on principles of “divine right,” espoused by European aristocrats. People take such Enlightenment ideas for granted today, but it was a revolutionary ideology at the time, a viewpoint sometimes referred to as *modernism*. Representing the principles of natural equality between men (people), these ideas spread with the circulation of books, pamphlets, and magazines, often finding an appreciative audience in the New World. After all, Enlightenment thinkers represented a perspective well suited to the capitalist and individualistic ethos emerging in British North America. For many Americans, solving immediate, practical problems took precedence over safeguarding orthodoxy. Enlightenment ideas about social equality also were well received, as aristocratic claims to status held little relevance for free-holding farmers, merchants, and planters. Although the influence of Enlightenment figures may have been greatest among the most literate colonists, their ideas were well suited to the social conditions of the New World (Butler, 2000).

British colonial society, in that case, underwent a critical process of social and ideological change. It was shaped both by the shifting conditions of European intellectual and religious life, and by the growing economy of the North Atlantic world. Similar forces were evident in the Spanish settlements that were growing more slowly on the west coast and in the southwest, if on a somewhat smaller scale. Schools were established, but served a relatively small segment of the population. Other children in settlements across the continent

learned more practical lessons from adults who taught them in a variety of settings. Thus, it is clear that the earliest schools in American history were not very effective agencies of change. Rather, the impetus came from the market economy, the arrival of new groups with different values and religious beliefs, and a growing populism in religion and politics signified by the Great Awakening and Enlightenment ideas. The changing intellectual and ideological atmosphere reflected the growing circulation of books and other reading materials, and not the influence of formal institutions of education. If anything, schools were intended to be conservative institutions, bulwarks against change that reinforced traditional beliefs and moral virtues. Insofar as they contributed to a rising level of literacy, schools also may have helped to lay the foundations of the period's most far-reaching process of social change: the American Revolution. But that was a later development, one to be considered in due course.

Schools and Literacy

New England may have had the most self-consciously religious colonies, but others were also concerned with the transmission of culture. In the west, Spanish missions and other schools provided a Catholic education to the sons and daughters of ranchers, although little is known about them. Other social and religious groups settled in the Southern colonies, and they each had different traditions of education. The Dutch brought their religious practices to New Amsterdam, later called New York, and the Quakers (an English dissenting religious group) established the colony of Pennsylvania. Virginia, the Carolinas, and other Southern colonies were divided, with the coastal or tidewater regions settled by planters exporting tobacco, rice, and other agricultural commodities, and the Piedmont or backcountry populated by yeoman (independent subsistence) farmers. The planters generally remained solidly Anglican, whereas other settlers mainly represented various Protestant denominations. There also were small pockets of Catholics in Maryland and elsewhere. Like New England, these colonies also grew substantially, and as new generations of settlers set out on their own,

questions of religion and culture inevitably arose (Greene, 1988). Even if newcomers did not challenge orthodoxy as dramatically as in New England, many were affected by the Great Awakening and popular enthusiasm for accessible religion. The result was a gradual lessening of religious distinctions among the various colonies. A more populist and liberal (tolerant) Protestantism, and the values it represented, became a feature of many settlements by the 18th century (Hofstadter, 1971).

Even so, in the colonies outside New England, the schools numbered fewer than in Massachusetts and its neighbors. By Cremin's estimate, in 1689, Virginia counted only eight schools for more than 7,000 households (about 1 for every 900); and New York had 11 for about 2,200 families (1 for every 200) (Cremin, 1970). For most colonial children, schooling was not a major aspect of life, although it probably was more important in northern colonies than the South. This, of course, points to the connection between religion and education. Children went to school to learn to read for largely religious purposes, and not to prepare for work or other purposes. In New England, the local theocratic authorities had tried to mandate the provision of schooling, and families there clearly valued schools more than in other colonies. Governments rarely advocated schooling elsewhere, especially in the Southern colonies. In a famous statement, Lord Berkeley of Virginia declared in 1671 that "I thank God that there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope that we shall not have these [for a] hundred years." Berkeley, who was governor at the time, echoed the view of many aristocrats and wealthy planters, saying that "learning has brought disobedience, and heresy and sects into the world" (Fischer, 1989). As a corollary of attitudes such as this, there was less interest in schooling in the Southern and middle colonies.

Statistics on literacy, the ability to read and write, seem to bear this out, although literacy was not always linked to schooling. The region with the highest rates of literacy, measured by counting signatures on wills, was New England. Historian Kenneth Lockridge estimated that about three-quarters of the male population there was literate in the mid-18th century, and nearly 90% by the time of the Revolution. Literacy rates appear to have been somewhat lower in the middle

colonies, New York and Pennsylvania, but they were lowest in the South. Lockridge placed the male literacy rate in Virginia at about 70% by the 1790s. Interestingly, literacy levels in England were comparable to Virginia's. Indeed, historians have found that schooling and literacy practices in English regions where colonists originated were similar to patterns in the various colonies. There does seem to have been a general correspondence, in that case, between the schooling provided in various colonies and literacy, perhaps linked to cultural norms in the Old World (Fischer, 1989; Lockridge, 1974).

It is uncertain, however, whether literacy was derived from formal instruction, particularly in most schools of the time. Lockridge attributed much of the growth of literacy to changing "functional demands of society." By the latter 18th century, he wrote, "land was obtained by purchase, often from an entrepreneur, and deeds were registered in the county court" (Lockridge, 1974, p. 37). In other words, reading and writing skills became increasingly important for the performance of essential commercial tasks, such as transferring property and keeping accounts. Here again, economic growth was a source of social change, along with the development of the legal system and the advent of public record-keeping. In this case, the expansion of commerce and government made basic literacy skills indispensable. And once there was a clearly recognized need for these abilities, people began to find ways of attaining them, including formal instruction of one sort or another.

As it turns out, there were multiple avenues to the attainment of literacy in colonial America. The wealthy often hired private tutors to teach children to read, especially in the South, and others were taught at home or as apprentices. No doubt there was considerable "on-the-job" learning of essential skills, and bright, enterprising boys (like young Benjamin Franklin) picked up knowledge at the workplace. There was more specialized training for certain jobs also. In the larger cities, it was possible to gain essential skills in "writing schools" and commercial classes run by entrepreneurial masters, providing lessons in a variety of subjects deemed important to mercantile commerce (Cremin, 1970; Kaestle, 1973a). As literacy became more important, new routes to its achievement became

available. In the most commercially expansive regions of the country, particularly in the cities, literacy rates among both men and women rose sharply in the 18th century.

Literacy statistics are interesting, in that case, but difficult to interpret. Not surprisingly, in all colonies literacy was highest for those with property and wealth, and it was generally higher for men than women. But rates among the poor were highest in Puritan New England, a fact that seems to indicate the importance of religion and schooling. There is evidence that women in certain parts of New England had attained high levels of literacy as well. It was probably the case, moreover, that individuals with more schooling possessed greater mastery of literacy. Simply put, they could read and write better. There is little historical evidence about reading proficiency, however, apart from the general circulation of books, newspapers, and other publications. And, on this score, there was only a little variation among the colonies, some of it a function of population size. By and large, British North America was a literate society, even if schools were better developed in one region than another (Moran & Vinovskis, 2007).

Literacy of one sort or another was essential, of course, to the development of colonial society. It aided the transmission of information and knowledge, matters that became increasingly important in commercial enterprise and political affairs. In general, the circulation of printed materials was quite wide and the number of published items rather large, especially in towns and cities (Cremin, 1970). Newspaper and magazine circulation figures and book sales (press runs), on the other hand, were generally modest. This suggests that reading materials were rarely kept or discarded, but were passed from one group of readers to another. In this way, a relatively small volume of printed material likely reached a wide audience. Literacy thus had a strongly communal flavor in 18th-century America. Given this, uniformly high levels of literacy proficiency may not have been very important, as long as at least some people were relatively good readers. If someone was unable to read something, after all, it could be read aloud or the contents described (Brown, 1989). This was done with all types of reading material, from the Bible and religious sermons and commentaries to

hundreds of political tracts and pamphlets that circulated before the Revolution (Bailyn, 1967; Hofstadter, 1971). Thus, the benefits of literacy probably were spread quite widely, and much informal reading instruction was conducted in the everyday exchange of information.

It is likely, consequently, that levels of literacy in the various colonies were caused by a number of factors, including schools, religious values, the volume of reading materials, and levels of trade and information exchange. As a consequence, literacy was considerably more widespread in the New World than in the Old, and the highest levels were found in New England, which also had more schools than any other region (Bailyn, 1960; Fischer, 1989; Lockridge, 1974). The precise relationship of literacy and schooling remains something of a historical puzzle, but schools alone probably did not produce high levels of reading in most American colonies.

Literacy is an intriguing problem that raises a number of questions about colonial education. If so few children attended school, and schools played such a small and uncertain role in the educational process, just how was culture transmitted from one generation to the next? How were skills developed, and information imparted in the New World? To answer these questions and others, it is necessary to consider the realm of informal education, or the ways people learned and lived on a daily basis in colonial times. This set of activities may have represented the most important educational developments of the age.

Education by Other Means

As indicated earlier, this was a preindustrial time, when most goods were hand-made and people rarely traveled long distances, even if commodities increasingly did. Cities were small by modern standards, and most people seldom set foot in them. Settlements typically numbered no more than several dozen families, and visitors were few and far between. Even in relatively densely populated New England, there often was a pervasive sense of isolation. Most people in other colonies did not even live in towns or villages. Although there was a growing commerce in agricultural products, lumber, and

other goods, people lived in worlds circumscribed by their immediate families and neighbors (Butler, 2000; Main, 1965).

For typical colonial settlers, comforts were scarce, at least by modern standards. Dwellings were small and cramped, lighting was sparse, and other amenities rare. Virtually every household chore, even drawing water, entailed physical labor. There was little manufacturing on a large scale; economic development was mainly in cities and towns. Most things people owned were produced by hand, often not far from where they were used. Skilled labor, necessary to produce many items of utility and value, was at a premium. Although the land often offered abundant resources, long hours of hard work were required to produce the goods that people needed to survive and prosper (Demos, 1970).

Even if life was difficult, however, it was better in many respects than in Europe. Although there was a great deal of variation, life expectancy was greater in New England than in most of the Old World, and there was considerable social stability as well. Land was abundant, and only needed hard labor to make a living and, with a little luck, to succeed. These conditions contributed to the lessons of life in the New World (Fischer, 1989; Vinovskis, 1979). People began to feel that sustained effort was eventually repaid with tangible rewards. In the face of abundant resources, on the other hand, poverty was seen as the consequence of inability or unwillingness to work. Ideas such as these, reinforced by the resource-rich environment of a sparsely settled landscape, eventually would become a cornerstone of traditional American beliefs.

In the colonial countryside, there were few institutions, educational or otherwise. By and large, life revolved around the family, the central unit of productive activity. As a rule, families were larger than in England, and reflected the premium attached to labor. Economic historians have suggested that family size was greater because children became potential helping hands. They also note, however, that high birth rates were evident even when certain colonies became densely populated. Like Cotton Mather, colonists valued their children and many had large families even when circumstances seemed to dictate otherwise (Demos, 1986; Henretta, 1973). In terms of population, early American society was expansive, and

conveyed a sense of optimism about the future that often was less evident in Europe.

About nine out of ten settlers were farmers of one sort or another. Although there was considerable variation in crops, the majority consumed much of what they grew or traded it locally for goods and services. This meant that time was devoted to caring for crops, planting and harvest, minding animals, preparing food, and maintaining tools and other items. They also built and cared for their houses, barns, and other structures, although many tasks were shared with neighbors. Added to this were innumerable other household chores, such as cleaning, childcare, and making and repairing clothing.

For the men of these households, this usually meant caring for 10 or 12 acres, the most that could be planted and harvested with a family's manual labor, along with tending draft animals, working on buildings, and performing other tasks. For the women, it meant food preparation, cleaning, mending clothes, and childcare. The latter was especially important, given the high birth rate. With eight offspring, a colonial woman could be pregnant or nursing a baby almost continually for 24 years. Given the fact that the women typically married in their early 20s, this meant that their years of greatest strength and vitality were preoccupied with childbirth and caring for young children (Henretta, 1973; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988; Norton, 1980). And this was accomplished with few modern comforts and conveniences. For most families, conditions such as these meant hard work and perseverance. It also called for a special type of education.

With so much to be done, and so much dependent on accomplishing these largely manual tasks, children contributed a great deal to most colonial households. This provided a strong incentive for having large families, but it also dictated a peculiar form of socialization. Children were raised to contribute their share of responsibility. Hard work was not to be shirked; indeed, it was considered a virtue. Relevant skills and bodies of knowledge, ranging from farming, carpentry, husbandry, and hunting to food preservation, soap making, cooking, and sewing, had to be imparted, so children could perform these tasks and be ready to eventually

maintain their own households. By and large, these were not topics associated with schooling. At the same time that families worked to survive, consequently, a continuing process of education and training occurred in most colonial homes. It was a system well suited to the conditions of colonial life; indeed, it was essential for survival (Demos, 1970, 1986; Morgan, 1966). And it set the stage for subsequent developments in the history of American education.

Contrary to some stereotypes of harsh colonial ideas about children, parents in British North America exhibited great affection for their offspring. The anguish Cotton Mather suffered over his own children was doubtless felt by many other parents. Historian Jay Fliegelman has observed that the most popular books of the era often dealt with childhood and the transition to adulthood. Colonial Americans appear to have favored stories that emphasized the independence of children and the lessons learned away from parents and family. This literature was influenced by the ideas of John Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers who suggested that individuality and reason were characteristics parents should foster in children. Colonial fathers were advised, consequently, to forge relationships of friendship and mutual respect with their offspring, and not to assert their power or exert undue control. The result, Fliegelman suggested, was an “American revolution against patriarchal authority” in the 18th century, which defined distinctive patterns of childrearing (Fliegelman, 1982, p. 5). Colonial parents loved their children, but they also wanted them to grow up free and independent in spirit.

Historians of the colonial family have noted a peculiar custom among many households, especially in New England and other northern colonies: sending older children away to board with other families, often neighbors or relatives. Historians have surmised that this provided training, a sort of apprenticeship in a variety of tasks in colonial households. But why send them away when there was so much work to do at home? Children may have been sent out so they could be disciplined more effectively. It also helped to impart independence, enabling children to separate from their immediate family and to form other relationships (Norton, 1980; Rury, 1988a; Smith, 1980).

Parents worried about pampering their children, allowing them to become lazy or indolent. They also were concerned about children becoming overly dependent on their families. So they sent their children to other households, at the same time that they took in teenage children from other families. This practice principally affected young women, but boys were occasionally boarded-out as well. In this way, the family served as an institution for somewhat more formal expectations about education. The critical task of imparting knowledge and skills relevant to the challenge of maintaining a household made this a necessity.

Of course, there were also traditional forms of apprenticeship for young men interested in learning a trade. This was a practice with deep roots in European history, and it was observed widely in the colonies. In many respects, boarding children out to other families comprised a special form of apprenticeship. In both cases, formal contracts were drawn up, periods of service outlined, and lessons to be learned agreed upon. It was typical for the host household, or the master of an apprentice, to provide food, lodging, and other necessities in exchange for work, and to train and educate the child as specified by agreement. As colonial society grew, concern grew about the quality of education and training received by apprentices. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, railed against cruel masters who summarily ordered their charges about and did not take their education seriously. Franklin himself had endured such an apprenticeship, as did many others (Cremin, 1970). Such controversy was testimony to the importance of this form of education in colonial society.

Thus, even if relatively few of North America's European settlers attended school, most received an education. They learned from their parents and the churches they attended, along with the apprentice and "boarding out" arrangements commonplace at the time. This was true in the Spanish settlements in California and Texas, as well as British colonies on the eastern seaboard. Given this, it is hardly a wonder that so few institutions of formal learning existed during much of the colonial period. Education was largely an informal affair, embedded in a host of other social relationships and

guided by the necessities of life. This would change—somewhat remarkably—in the years to come.

FOCAL POINT: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

The most dramatic change in colonial North America, of course, was the revolution waged for independence. As in most political upheavals, social change accompanied this war and education was affected profoundly. The American Revolution brought new ideas about schooling and its role in the political order, and led to new educational institutions and practices. One example of this appeared in New York City in the years immediately following the Revolution.

In the year 1785, the American War against King George of England had just ended. Members of the newly formed New York Manumission Society came together in a large room for their second meeting. Comprised of many of the city's most prominent residents, including Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, the group was formed to protect recently freed Blacks from being kidnapped and sold back into slavery. The war changed New York's population visibly. The city grew and temporarily became the new nation's capital, but there were social changes too. Among other things, the war had increased the number of ex-slaves in New York, as many had escaped servitude when their Tory masters fled the country. Ruthless slave traders were preying on them. There was danger of anarchy, as violent abductions of innocent freedmen (ex-slaves) were reported. It was a situation that called for an organized response (Rury, 1985).

The men of the Manumission Society were 18th-century liberals, influenced by the ideas of Locke and other Enlightenment figures. They were opposed to slavery and considered it a violation of basic human rights. Yet, being men of means themselves, they also were concerned

about the investment that existing slaves represented. Here the ideals of the Enlightenment encountered the hard realities of property values in the colonial economy. Consequently, these men supported a “gradual abolition” of slavery, with children of slaves gaining freedom upon reaching 21 years old. It was not immediately beneficial for slave parents, but it did promise to eliminate slavery, which occurred in New York and other Northern states. The wealthy and influential members of the Manumission Society, after all, advocated social reform, but not radical measures like immediate abolition of slavery. While hardly wishing to disrupt things too much, especially after the chaos of war, they felt strongly about the principles of freedom and republican democracy (Zilversmit, 1967).

At their second meeting, however, members of the Manumission Society learned some disturbing news. Freed slaves had gained some notoriety in the city. In particular, they reportedly became associated with sailors and others of questionable repute, and were “playing music” and dancing “in their homes” into the late hours of night. This information was not happily received, and the conversation quickly turned from saving ex-slaves to questions about proper behavior and propriety among them. It was resolved that the society would make its concerns known, and that it would “withhold the benefits” of its association from those engaging in such activities. Clearly, the good men of the Manumission Society did not approve of the behavior attributed to certain members of New York’s free Black population. At subsequent meetings, they considered measures to forestall this sort of behavior in the future. They voted to establish two new institutions for New York’s Black residents: a church and a school (Rury, 1985).

The New York African Free School, the Manumission Society’s “charity school” for free Black children, opened in 1787, the same year that the Constitutional Convention met to discuss a legal charter for the new nation. The school was intended to provide an education in traditional

morality for the children of ex-slaves. Its purpose was to see that they did not “inherit the vices of their parents acquired in slavery or to learn similar ones through want of a proper education.” As historian Carl Kaestle has noted, in this regard it was intended to intervene between children and their parents, whom the Manumission Society did not believe could teach proper values. Here, the purpose was different from the town and district schools of New England and other colonies, which were intended to supplement the education children received at home. Charity schooling, largely confined to the cities, was supposed to reform and control the poor, not necessarily to reinforce and extend the values of their parents. And the key to this was teaching them how to behave properly (Kaestle, 1983).

Protestant religion and morality dominated the curriculum of the African Free School, as in similar institutions elsewhere. The school was not large, enrolling just a hundred students at the start. Many members of New York’s free Black community doubtless greeted it with an understandable suspicion. But before long it had succeeded in one of its principal aims: identifying a core of families within the free Black population who could become leaders. Members of this group, the Manumission Society hoped, could serve as examples to others, and exert pressure on less fortunate African Americans to behave properly (Rury, 1985). The men of the Manumission Society were liberals, after all, and believed that even the most disreputable individuals were subject to improvement. It was their considered opinion, however, that the best course of change was in one direction: greater conformity with the norms of Protestant rectitude and mercantile capitalism. For them, schooling was a paternalistic instrument of modification, a way of changing individuals and groups for better conformity to prevailing values.

This was a form of 18th-century education that went well beyond the confines of the family and immediate community for certain groups of children. The Revolution

signaled a distinctive set of attitudes about society and the role of education in changing it. But the ideas and approaches adopted by reformers were not altogether new. The New York African Free School was a prominent example of a type of schooling that had deep roots in British North America. As historian Gary Nash noted, European settlement had created a diverse society by the mid-18th century (Nash, 1974/2000). The institutions and methods developed by the Europeans to train and educate other groups, especially Native Americans and Africans, were distinctive, and quite different from those established for their own children. Part of this was a product of racism, a belief that members of these groups were inherently inferior in intellect and moral sensibility. But it also reflected a conviction that life in poverty had deprived children of the opportunity to develop such capacities, and that education could help them. This too was a vital aspect of education and the transmission of culture in the New World. And it would have important implications for schools as they took shape in the decades following the colonial period as well.

Education for Civilization

The issues facing the New York Manumission Society were not entirely new. One question facing colonial society, which had not concerned the “old world” of Europe, was how different racial and ethnic groups would live together. The answer, by and large, was offered on terms dictated by White Protestants colonial leaders. This held important implications for the education of non-Europeans, the majority of North America’s inhabitants in the 18th century.

By the mid-1700s, the British colonies were home to people who historically had come from three different continents. As noted earlier, they included European settlers and American Indians. The third group was Africans, who were brought to resolve a labor crisis, especially in the South but in other colonies as well. Each of these

groups comprised a substantial portion of the population, even if Native Americans generally were pushed to frontier areas. Africans grew significantly in number as the slave trade picked up after 1700. A host of new laws solidified their status as slaves, a category of bondage that had not existed in earlier English law. By the second half of the century, Blacks were about a fifth of the colonial population, almost double their proportion in the United States today. In some parts of the South, such as South Carolina, they were a majority (Wood, 1974). In Philadelphia and New York, Blacks counted nearly a quarter of the residents, about the same proportion as today. All things considered, colonial America was a multiracial society. This made questions about acculturation and socialization impossible to ignore.

Europeans who settled in North America were acutely aware of this social and cultural diversity. In the South, elaborate legal barriers were erected to separate Whites and Blacks during the 17th century, among them widely different provisions for education. It took time for the institution of slavery to develop completely, but by the early 1700s there could be little doubt that Africans occupied a distinctly lower social position (Morgan, 1975). Explanations were constructed to account for these racial differences in status; early forms of a racist ideology that held non-Whites inherently subservient to Europeans, Englishmen in particular. Despite the published works of Black scientist Benjamin Banneker and the poet Phyllis Wheatley, most colonial whites believed African Americans to be intellectually inferior. In some quarters, there was greater sympathy for the Native American population. Schools were established to accommodate American Indians, including Dartmouth College, although this feature of the institution was short-lived. Most such experiments ended with very few non-Whites receiving an education, however. For the most part, the schools established by European settlers were for Whites only (Cremin, 1970; Hofstadter, 1971; Wright, 2017).

While colonists established schools for themselves, missionaries undertook the education of others. This form of education was especially important in Spanish California, where more than 20 Catholic missions had been established by the late 18th century. Many of these outposts made the education of native people a focal

point, teaching Spanish and the Catholic catechism. The Spanish authorities believed that educated Indians would make pliable leaders, who could act as intermediaries between the Europeans and indigenous peoples. American Indian children selected for schooling were separated from their families and required to learn the curriculum brought by missionary teachers. It was a model of obligatory education that would be utilized extensively later in American history (MacDonald, 2004).

The most important British missionary campaign was launched by the Anglican Church. Concerned about the colonial population in the late 1600s, a group of influential Anglicans started the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). The founders of the SPG worried that Englishmen would drift away from the church in the colonial wilderness, or that they would be influenced by dissenting groups such as the Puritans, Pilgrims, and Quakers. There were other religions to worry about also, like Presbyterians and the dreaded Catholics. And there were also non-Christian residents of the colonies: Native Americans and Africans. Over the next eight decades, the SPG dispatched hundreds of ministers and teachers to North America, with the aim of “saving” the English population and converting the non-English to the Anglican faith (Calam, 1971).

The SPG encountered a good deal of resistance to its plan, however, and in the end made relatively few conversions. Outside of cities and large towns, its preachers and teachers found it difficult to find enough Anglicans to support churches and schools. Native Americans and Africans presented educational dilemmas that proved largely intractable, although free Blacks certainly were keen to gain literacy and other skills. Perhaps the biggest problem, however, was the SPG’s failure to consider its mission as an educational exchange between cultures. Instead, the SPG believed its duty was one of proselytizing and conversion. In particular, its role was to make good Anglicans of the uneducated Native American and African (largely slave) populations (Cremin, 1970).

Not surprisingly, the SPG campaign of education for conversion generated little interest from Native Americans, who generally found the religious content unimportant. Slaves, while interested in skills to

be learned in school, were rarely allowed to attend. Indeed, a slave revolt in New York was blamed on schoolmaster. Both groups, moreover, had their own traditions of socialization, and doubtless preferred to teach their own values, customs, and beliefs. Thus, while the SPG did open many schools, most of them did not last very long and their impact was slight. The SPG probably exerted greater influence in publishing. The group printed many books and religious tracts, and thousands of Bibles that circulated widely, reaching many more people than the schools (Calam, 1971).

However ineffective the SPG may have been in education, it did represent a type of institution that would become more prevalent: urban charity schools like the African Free School. Often operating in a single classroom, sometimes in the evening or on Sundays, these schools would serve children or adults that could not afford conventional schooling. As American cities grew, especially following the Revolution, this type of institution became more commonplace. It is little wonder, in that case, that the Manumission Society decided to create a charity school for the children of freed slaves. They were drawing on a tradition in American education with deep roots in the colonial era. It was a practice that would be put to new uses in years to come.

Building a New Nation

It is an old axiom that political and social upheaval is often accompanied by change in education. The American Revolution, which started nearly a decade before the Constitution was signed, produced widespread social and political transformation. It was influenced by the ideas of such Enlightenment thinkers as John Locke and Baron Charles Louis Montesquieu. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, it was premised on an assumption that “all men are created equal.” Notwithstanding questions of gender and racial inequities, not to mention slavery, this view of the social order held profound implications for the new nation (Bailyn, 1967; Morgan, 1975). It also led to a number of telling changes in the educational arrangements of colonial society.

Among the most important challenges facing the newly formed United States was establishing a system of education to prepare its people for a new social and political order. The ideals of the Revolution, informed by Enlightenment notions of equality and democratic governance, suggested a political system of popular rule through periodic elections. This was a new and untried idea, however, so when the new government was being debated, many were pessimistic about the prospects for a representative form of democracy. History suggested that republics were doomed to failure; ancient Rome was often cited as a prominent example. The difficulty seemed to stem from popular control by elections. Could the common man, poorly informed and subject to manipulation, uphold principles of fairness and honesty that were vital to the future? Prevailing theories of government held that the aristocracy was naturally suited to rule, even if it needed the guidance of representative assemblies, such as England's Parliament. The very idea of a popularly elected government, without the stabilizing influence of a landed aristocracy, was dismissed by many as potentially disastrous (Brown, 1996; Tyack, 1967).

Because of these sentiments, Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, and the other leaders felt that if the new nation was to succeed, education was essential. Voters in a representative democracy, after all, had to be well informed, and prepared to assess the arguments and opinions of the day. If democracy was to take root, popular education had to become an American institution. This became a rallying cry of the movement to establish a government, and a point of departure for the men then forging a new political culture (Cremin, 1970). The question remained, however, of whether such a system of education could succeed in a country as large and diverse as the United States.

A modest number of proposals for establishing an educational system followed the Revolution. Education and schooling became topics of discussion and debate, the subject of speeches, addresses, articles, and pamphlets. Seven of the new state constitutions made reference to education, and this too prompted controversy. Jefferson proposed his famous plan for establishing publicly supported schools throughout Virginia, in a "Bill for the More General Diffusion of

Knowledge" in 1779, before the Revolution had ended. Characteristically, he believed that widely accessible and free schooling would lead to the rise of a "natural aristocracy" of talent and accomplishment, providing leaders for the new nation. Jefferson's plan was never adopted but it reflected the significance attached to education in the minds of many Revolutionary leaders (Brown, 1989, 1996; Justice, 2013).

Among the most prominent of the advocates of a new education after the war was Benjamin Rush, a well-known Philadelphia doctor and signatory to the Declaration of Independence. Rush envisioned schools across Pennsylvania, supported by taxes and land grants, resulting in "fewer pillories and whipping posts and smaller jails." In a famous statement, he advocated making American children into "republican machines" through improved schooling. Noah Webster, author of the first American dictionary and speller, also proposed universal free education to foster national unity. Webster wanted schools to establish "an inviolable attachment to their country" in children, urging parents to "begin with the infant in the cradle; let the first word he lisps be Washington" (Kaestle, 1983, pp. 6 & 7; Rudolph, 1965; Welter, 1962).

As quaint as these ideas may sound, they represented a radical break with the prevailing educational views and practices of the time. They stand in stark contrast with Lord Berkeley's utterances against popular education a hundred years earlier. They also helped to make education a national concern. These new proposals and others like them called for an end to schooling as a purely local activity, largely for religious purposes or transmitting community values. In 1787, the Second Continental Congress passed the famous Northwest Ordinance, which called for sale of federal lands to support education, declaring "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" (Tyack et al., 1987, p. 32). With this, education was widely acknowledged as a legitimate and important function of government. In the wake of political revolution, schools suddenly assumed new importance as agencies of civic preparation. National leaders believed an educated citizenry was essential to the future. The

United States has been described as the world's "first new nation," and in forging a national identity the role of schooling gained added significance (Lipset, 1979).

On the other hand, these were ideas and proposals offered by elite and well-educated individuals, and whether American schools could perform these functions was a different question. In fact, none of the calls for new statewide or national systems of education were adopted in this period. The Northwest Ordinance and other federal acts provided support for education, but its use was left to the states. Consequently, development of actual institutions proceeded slowly. Schooling remained largely a local matter, and most Americans had far more pressing concerns, such as making a living. The creation of systematically organized, state-controlled public education would wait for another generation of visionary leaders. But a new way of thinking about schooling had been broached by the Revolution, and other changes were set in motion that had a more palpable impact on educational practices.

Republican Motherhood

Among the most important and underappreciated effects of the American Revolution was its impact on the lives of women. Like most early modern societies, British North America was quite patriarchal. Women had few publicly accorded rights, rarely worked outside of the home (unless umarried), and usually had little formal education. As noted earlier, statistics on literacy in the 18th century indicate that a majority of women were illiterate. New England was an exception, but it was widely believed that women did not need literacy because they were not formal members of most colonial churches, a status reserved for men. They were expected to rely on their husbands for moral guidance and conducting business affairs (Brown, 1989; Kerber, 1980).

But circumstances were changing. This was partly due to the liberal atmosphere of family life in much of colonial America. Women were relatively few in number, a demographic trait typical of many colonial or frontier societies. Their scarcity helped to informally raise their status. Added to these factors was the impact of the Great

Awakening, with its sweeping liberalization of traditional religious views and practices. Even if George Whitefield and its other leaders were not proponents of women's rights, their criticisms of traditional churches may have created more openness to women in religious life. Such developments were part of a more gradual reaction against patriarchal views and practices, contributing to the Revolutionary spirit (Norton, 1980).

There also was evidence of changes in women's education during the colonial era. Lockridge noted a significant shift in female literacy, growing from the latter 17th century through the time of the revolution. In New England, the number of women able to sign their wills increased from less than a third to nearly half. Other historians have argued that the extent of female literacy was probably considerably higher. All of this suggests a growing openness to female learning, and perhaps increased involvement by women in formal education (Lockridge, 1974; Perlmann et al., 1997).

The "dame schools" appeared in this time frame, classes conducted by women for young children—both boys and girls—in basic literacy skills along with lessons in morality and good behavior. Some girls may also have been introduced to domestic arts such as sewing and embroidery, and manners at special schools in larger towns and cities. As the number of schools increased, new opportunities for women's education also appeared. For example, girls were allowed to attend the short summer sessions in New England schools during the latter half of the 18th century. This may account for some of the observed improvements in literacy, along with greater openness to women's involvement in religious affairs (Perlmann & Margo, 2001; Sklar, 1993).

Historians suggest, however, that even more sweeping events affected colonial women with the advent of Revolution. This was due in part to the disruptions of daily life that accompanied war. Many women found themselves alone when husbands left or were killed in the conflict. As a consequence, women ran businesses and conducted household affairs. They negotiated contracts, paid debts (often without prior knowledvge of their existence), managed employees, and conducted correspondence (despite poor literary skills). In short, women were required to fill a variety of male roles,

and implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—highlighted the potential of female capabilities (Kerber, 1980; Norton, 1980).

Beyond the upheaval in gender roles occasioned by the war, there was the ideological impact of the Revolution, especially its egalitarian rhetoric and Enlightenment intellectual roots. The words “all men are created equal” inevitably raised the question of women’s status too. Abigail Adams urged her husband John, “do not forget the ladies,” and leaders began to weigh the roles of women in the emerging social order (Norton, 1980). Even though the weight of popular opinion on gender roles probably did not change much, the possibility that women deserved more rights and social recognition became a subject of wider debate. The later 18th century also witnessed a nascent movement for women’s rights internationally. This was the era of Mary Wollstonecraft’s call for women’s equality and other treatises on equality of the sexes. A new view of women’s status was emerging (Rendall, 1985).

There was a shift in thinking about women’s education as well, even if it was largely unrelated to women’s rights. Revolutionary leaders, faced with the question of education for the new republic, came to view women as a vital resource. Benjamin Rush probably was the best-known proponent of female education, but there were many others as well. The reasoning was straightforward: If children needed to be trained in the virtues of republican government, the task largely would fall to their mothers. Hence, it followed that American women had to be educated, at least enough to read, write, and teach their children principles of American democracy. This is a view of female roles that historians have labeled “republican motherhood,” and it became the rationale behind a surge of interest in women’s schooling following the Revolution (Brown, 1989; Kerber, 1980).

Benjamin Rush’s celebrated “Female Academy” in Philadelphia was among the best known of many similar institutions established in this era. Unlike Rush’s school, however, some apparently were coeducational. These schools were not large, and many probably only lasted a short time. But the very fact of their existence pointed to new attitudes about women’s education. These institutions generally did not teach the classical languages, the curriculum of

prestigious male academies. Instead, they typically offered instruction in literature, history, languages, and the “domestic arts,” subjects deemed appropriate for young ladies (Woody, 1929). These were also topics well suited for the task of educating their own children for citizenship, particularly their sons. Thus, the new female role of “republican motherhood” was ultimately quite conservative, and was linked more closely to nation-building than to women’s liberation. At the same time, however, it marked a radical break with the status of previous generations of women, and set the stage for yet other developments in the history of American education (Nash, 2001).

The movement to establish schools for women in the closing years of the 18th century was important, but it would be wrong to suggest that it represented a change for most Americans. These small and somewhat ephemeral academies, despite their numbers, could educate just a tiny fraction of the female population. As noted earlier, even in New England, women probably attended school only during the summer sessions, and elsewhere few attended any kind of school at all. In a largely agricultural society, where wealth was accumulated slowly and through painstaking effort, relatively little effort was given to female schooling. Yet the idea that women should be educated, once broached, would prove impossible to suppress for long. In the years to come it would have a transforming effect on the development of the nation’s school system (Nash, 2005).

Education and Social Change in Colonial America

There can be little doubt that British colonial society evolved significantly during the 17th and 18th centuries. As noted earlier, this was partly due to simple population growth; new patterns of behavior appeared as the numbers of Europeans multiplied more than threefold prior to the Revolution. But there were other forces at play too. The value of land increased and the volume of trade surged forward, fostered by an expansive capitalistic ethic that eclipsed the religious and cultural conservatism of early settlers. This was a gradual process of change, but it was punctuated by the Great

Awakening and Revolutionary War, among other things. British North America remained preindustrial and rural in character, but change was inexorable. By the end of the 18th century, many aspects of an emerging national culture, embracing individualism and self-determination, were beginning to be evident.

This was not an easy process. It entailed displacement of the Native American population and the movement of millions across the Atlantic to the “New World.” As many as a fifth of these people were Africans, the vast majority slaves. Many Europeans, moreover, worked as indentured servants, often with little realistic prospect of freedom. In other parts of North America, Spanish settlements maintained the interests of the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church, providing land to favored noblemen and missions, and ruling the native population with veiled despotism. Despite its growth and relative prosperity, colonial society was marked everywhere by great inequity. This too would become a telling characteristic of American life.

For most of this period, education played a minor role in the transformation of colonial society. Schools were small and usually reinforced traditional values, and they touched the lives of a fraction of the colonial population. The various avenues of informal education that existed at the time, ranging from apprenticeship to literary circles, may have done more to transmit essential skills than the schools.

The biggest changes in colonial society, however, came with the approach of Revolution. The movement to sever ties with England, culminating in the Declaration of Independence and the war that followed, gave birth to a new republican sensibility, a development with enormous implications for education. In the ferment to establish a new nation on principles of popular rule and representative government, increased significance was attached to schooling as an instrument of political socialization. At the same time, the purview of popular education was widened to include women and certain members of racial minority groups, even if such changes were isolated and episodic. A new vision of civil society was emerging, albeit in fits and starts, one holding great moment for the future of American education.

2
Emergence of a Modern School System

The Nineteenth Century

The dawn of a new century in 1800 was a momentous time in the United States. The new nation was brimming with energy as its citizens contemplated a vast continent stretching to the west. It was a land of great natural wealth, and immense challenges too. The decades to follow witnessed important changes in American society and the history of education. As the country expanded, national systems of transportation and communication took shape. State-supervised systems of public education also appeared, beginning with common (or primary) schools and extending to high schools and universities. The reach of formal education expanded considerably, with greater numbers attending school for longer periods of time.

Perhaps the most basic changes, however, were economic and social: it was a time of manufacturing growth and urbanization. Economic development contributed to the expansion and improvement of education; as income grew and the economy became more complex, people attached greater value to schooling. Industry also provided an important impetus to the school system. Educators worried about the immigrants that industrialization attracted to American shores, and designed institutions to prepare children for changing work roles. Guided by Protestantism and republicanism, reformers sought to impart traditional values to everyone.

It also was a time of ferment in American culture. It was marked by lively debates over questions of child-rearing and how best to

educate children both in and out of school. Gradually the traditional attitudes and practices of earlier times gave way to more liberal views of education and the rights of children. But the process of change was slow and halting. The newly created American republic was large, and was undergoing rapid—if uneven—social and economic development. Old ways died hard, and new ones struggled to gain acceptance.

FOCAL POINT: PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN AN AGE OF TRANSITION

Ideas about education are inevitably influenced by social norms and expectations about children. This is an important aspect of ideology that has definitely affected schools. It stands to reason that these institutions would reflect many of the concerns that parents felt about the young, along with other adults. Debates about child-rearing thus can reveal much about the ideological context of education.

American parents faced a dilemma in the early 19th century. Living in a society imbued with an ideology of freedom and democracy, many tried to avoid harsh forms of authority in raising their children. “It is a most wretched and coarse barbarity that turns the house into a penitentiary,” declared the minister Horace Bushnell in 1849. “Where the management is right in other respects,” he added, “punishment will be very seldom needed.” Bushnell and like-minded writers believed it the duty of parents to demonstrate the virtue of good behavior and conformity to social norms. Love and affection were prescribed as a means to a happy and upright childhood; the way to a child’s spirit was through the heart, not through fright or retribution. The will was not supposed to be broken (Fass & Mason, 2000). Rather, it was to be guided and shaped, and the child ideally would freely accept compliance. Physical punishment and coercion

could lead to possible resentment and bitterness, without improved attitudes or habits.

On the other hand, parents also worried that offering children too much choice risked youthful indiscretion, not to mention the hazards of self-indulgence and irresponsibility. The challenge was persuading them to willingly consent to responsible behavior, and to the ideal of personal responsibility and self-government. In scores of advice books and manuals, parents were instructed to cultivate such strong ties of fondness and care that the mere possibility of disapproval would prevent misbehavior. “The love of his parent and his Maker should be the leading strings of a child,” wrote one author, “and the fear of losing it a sufficient motive to deter them from evil.” Constraint was ever present, but it was best expressed in the gentle but firm dispensation of approval from adults, especially parents. The key to raising responsible and successful offspring was love in the service of proper socialization. In the end, the reasoning went, it would lead children to freely accept the correct path (Block, 2012).

The practice of withholding affection as a form of control became more visible in American child-rearing as a result of such beliefs. Popular children’s novels featured boys and girls suffering disapproval or reprimand, being isolated to dwell upon their misconduct. In one such account, the writer Jacob Abbott’s young character Rollo was forced to eat a supper of plain bread, sitting on the back stairs, for being “an undutiful son.” Poor Rollo reflected on his behavior while the family enjoyed a sumptuous dinner, an experience that led him to resolve “never be unfaithful in his work again” (Abbott, 1855; Kaestle, 1983). For Rollo, it was parental disapproval that stung most, although missing some appetizing apple pie hurt too. The reader soon learned that the lesson struck home, and “in the course of a month Rollo became quite a faithful and efficient little workman,” learning the satisfaction to be gained from a job well done.

Writing about such measures was one thing, of course, but practicing them was another. Few parents probably succeeded in conveying lessons as easily as Abbott or Bushnell implied, and controversy sometimes erupted in attempts to do so. A telling case concerned Francis Wayland, president of Brown University and author of popular textbooks on ethics and politics. In 1831, he published an anonymous letter in a local Baptist newspaper about his son, Heman (McLoughlin, 1975/1985). Wayland both described his course of action and attempted to justify it on religious grounds. It provides a rare glimpse into the thinking of an educated American parent concerned with the proper upbringing of a child.

The episode occurred when Heman was just 15 months of age (quotations are Wayland's own). Wayland described his son as unusually "self-willed," with a quick temper. One morning when Wayland took the boy from his nurse, Heman began to cry "violently." Determined not to let the child have his way, Wayland held him until he stopped, and took away a piece of bread clutched in his hand. When Heman stopped crying, Wayland offered the bread but the child threw it down. Wayland then resolved that Heman would not eat until he accepted food from his father and welcomed his affection. Moreover, he was to be restricted from contact with other members of the household. Thus began a test of wills that would last more than 30 hours.

Heman was kept in a room by himself, and was only allowed food when accepting it from his father. When Heman took the bread but refused to embrace his father, the food was taken back. The boy was obstinate throughout the first day, despite Wayland's regular visits, "every hour or two," and his speaking "in the kindest tones." Wayland described the boy "hiding his face in the bedclothes" and crying "most sorrowfully," but he refused to approach or embrace his father. Finally, in the late afternoon of the second day, young Heman relented, after

nearly two days without eating. In the end, he “repeatedly kissed” his father and “obeyed his every command.”

Wayland clearly believed his approach in this case to be appropriate, perhaps even exemplary, and wrote about it as a lesson to others. In justifying his actions, Wayland reasoned that if he had not confronted the child’s will, “I must have obliged my whole family to have conformed in all their arrangements to his wishes.” He noted that Heman’s disposition toward other members of the household also changed as a result of the incident. Describing Heman as now “mild and obedient,” he commented that “my whole family has been restored to order.” In drawing principles from the incident he declared, “there can be no greater cruelty than to suffer a child to grow up with an unsubdued temper” (McLoughlin, 1975/1985). Wayland thought he had performed a service both to Heman and to society at large. And he did so without using corporal punishment, outwardly exhibiting warmth and affection.

The incident reflects a set of attitudes about parental responsibility and child development that were commonplace among Protestants. Willfulness in children often was considered a special kind of vice, parallel if not equivalent to original sin, and critical to overcome by learning obedience and respect for authority. The child-rearing stories and advice books of the age warned of children disregarding their parents, or exhibiting self-centered behavior. The purpose of discipline was to teach self-control and conformity to the expectations of adults. Willful children ran the danger of becoming poor citizens, adults who ignored the rules of society and religion. Making the young conform to adult expectations was seen as safeguarding their long-term interests, and the best possible future for society as well (Kaestle, 1983; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). The trick was to accomplish this without resorting to retribution or coercion, allowing children to choose the proper course of behavior.

It is important to bear in mind that Francis Wayland was not a typical American parent. He held deep religious convictions, and as an educator was accustomed to exerting authority over the young. He seized on the use of food as an opportunity to confront Heman's temper, even if he did not anticipate the ordeal that ensued. After Wayland's account was published, however, not everyone found it an example of good parenting. A second local newspaper published two responses criticizing Wayland's course of action, one characterizing it as starving an "infant boy… into a state of passive obedience" (McLoughlin, 1975/1985). Even in the 19th century, there was debate over adult domination of children and the need for curbing "willfulness" in them. As suggested above, many parental advice books cautioned against breaking the spirit of young children, urging that natural playfulness and curiosity be nurtured and allowed to flourish. But few questioned the need for children to respect their parents and submit to paternal authority (Wishy, 1968).

There can be little doubt that the case of young Heman Wayland represented traditional conventions about children and education, despite the severity of his father's reaction. Most Americans certainly would have agreed that children must obey adults, and should learn self-control at an early age. Many would have imparted such lessons quickly and harshly with corporal punishment, which Francis Wayland pointedly rejected, as Bushnell and other writers recommended. The belief that children should be taught obedience and respect for authority clearly dominated much of American education. It was telling in this regard that Wayland's critics compared his actions to those of schoolmasters who flogged their pupils, yet another point of controversy. Wayland surely disagreed with this analogy, as he emphasized a gentle approach in dealing with Heman. Moreover, his principle objective was to have the boy acknowledge his affection. Few educators would have disagreed with this purpose. Critical commentaries about

abusive masters notwithstanding, most schools upheld adult authority as vital and the importance of children's compliance before all else, however it was conveyed (Finkelstein, 1989; Hogan, 1990).

Social theorists since Max Weber have suggested that the ability to exercise self-control, to repress personal emotions and desires, was a key component of capitalist development. This is one reason why pietistic Protestantism such as Wayland's is thought to be a foundation stone of modern society. Good capitalists, after all, did not spend their riches on base impulses; they saved and reinvested capital to advance the greater glory of commerce and civilization. Francis Wayland, in addition to restoring order to his own household, was teaching young Heman to exercise restraint, to control his feelings, and to heed the influence of upright adults in his life. And it appears to have worked; Heman grew up admiring his father, following in his footsteps and becoming a college president. These were among the lessons of middle-class American child-rearing in the 19th century, and they were the ideological wellsprings of much of the nation's formal schooling. The ethic of improvement through self-control and devotion to work, conveyed through systematic socialization in family life, contributed to the development of American education and the nation's future (Greven, 1977; Rodgers, 1978).

An Age of Expansion

The 19th century was a time of many changes as the United States spread across the North American continent. Industrialization took root, and as the volume of goods increased extremes of wealth and poverty widened. In sheer numbers, the population grew geometrically, increasing from 5.3 million to about 75 million by 1900. English-speaking settlement extended westward, establishing new

towns and cities, and eventually counties and states. Politically, the continental United States arrived at its now familiar shape, forming one of the world's largest nations. Even more significantly, it was rapidly filling with fresh waves of settlers, who eventually became an expansive network of markets and thus a powerful inducement to commerce (Brownlee, 1979).

Even with these developments, industrialization did not occur overnight. Factories capable of manufacturing vast quantities of goods needed consumers ready to purchase them. They also required manpower, eventually in large numbers. The country was big and the population widely dispersed, often making labor a scarce commodity. At the start of the industrial age, American cities were small and most people lived in the countryside. The development of a national transportation network was an important prerequisite to industrialization, a means of moving products and people. Roadways, canals, and trains would become the initial means for developing national markets, both for goods and for labor (Cochran, 1981; Taylor, 1968).

Improved transportation influenced social and political life as well. News and information traveled with people and merchandise, and were communicated more effectively. Political parties could wage national campaigns, and public figures could travel widely. A growing network of improved roads, canals, and railroads helped to foster national awareness of shared interests and values, spurred by political debates and conflicts such as the War of 1812. Disputes over territorial expansion and the divisive question of slavery also contributed to this. A common set of concerns gave new meaning to the term *American* as a source of identity and pride. Growing transportation networks helped to hasten the evolution of distinctive shared national values (Sellers, 1991).

The development of this infrastructure picked up the pace of economic life. Access to markets made the building of factories, already widespread in England, practical in the United States. As it became cheaper to transport merchandise, economies of scale reduced prices for manufactured goods. Starting with the New England textile industry, industrial growth extended well into the following century. Between 1820 and 1860, the volume of cotton

cloth produced annually increased from less than 14,000 yards to nearly a million. And the pace of change increased even faster after the Civil War. Between 1860 and the turn of the century, the value of manufactured products jumped nearly eightfold, from less than $900 million to more than $6 billion, in constant dollars. Textiles continued to be important, but new industries joined the advance, particularly iron and steel, paper, petroleum and chemicals, and processed agricultural products (Brownlee, 1979).

Over the course of the century, manufacturing grew from less than 5% of the gross national product to more than half. This signaled unprecedented economic growth. Per-capita income, a figure that included children, increased dramatically. The impact of these changes was uneven, yielding great fortunes for some and poverty for others. At the same time, however, it contributed to the prosperity of most Americans and made a widening array of commodities available (Dalzell, 1987). A new level of affluence and a higher general standard of living was achieved with industrialization.

Growing wealth, however, was accumulated at a cost. The rise of the factory system meant a loss of autonomy and independence for many workers. It also contributed to devaluing talent, replacing skilled labor with machines. Apprenticeship, long integral to training American youth, gradually disappeared. As the scale of industrial production increased, thousands of workers and their families crowded into drab factory towns or industrial cities, often living in miserable conditions. Beginning in the 1840s and escalating quickly after the Civil War, millions of European immigrants came to the United States, many seeking jobs in the burgeoning manufacturing firms. Industrialization appeared to have produced a new class of unskilled, penniless workers, and a high degree of cultural diversity. Cities and towns grew larger and dingier; even the countryside changed as mechanized farming became more commonplace. The Industrial Revolution altered the face of America, but not everyone felt it was a change for the better (Laurie, 1997).

Industry, Cities, and Education

Even if not widely recognized at the time, the impact of economic development on education was pervasive. Schooling became an increasingly significant social issue. Total investment in education grew dramatically. Economic historian Albert Fishlow estimated that an average American received just 210 days of formal education in a lifetime in 1800. By 1850, that figure had more than doubled and, by 1900, it had jumped to 1,050 days, about half the number in 2000. Since these are averages, some children received more schooling, especially the prosperous, while others got considerably less (Fishlow, 1966a). As a result of these changes, however, formal education began to assume the familiar dimensions of today.

Apart from the sheer quantity of instruction, the purposes of school began to shift too. For many children, especially in cities and towns, schooling became linked to preparation for life, and work in particular. This did not mean that it trained students for specific occupations, even if preparation for employment increased. Rather, schooling focused on cultivating habits of industriousness and responsibility, along with basic literacy, numbers, and other traditional subjects. This was not only education for citizenship, but also preparation for an emerging industrial society, with new status distinctions and greater attention to efficiency. It was only in the late 1800s that vocational education became a major concern. Prior to that, industrialization mainly provided a milieu for educational change, and perhaps some organizational models. If this was the age of the factory, the school helped prepare many students for the urban-industrial social order (Nasaw, 1979).

It would be wrong to assume, consequently, that there was a direct relationship between the rise of factories and schooling. In many instances, the advent of industrialization meant fewer children attended school. Industrialists interested in reducing costs regularly turned to child labor. This meant the factory became a school by default, even if the lessons were frequently harsh. Although some states passed laws requiring factory owners to provide instruction in reading and other subjects, many ignored them. When factories did not hire young children, they often employed teenagers and young adults, both male and female. Youthful workers had the strength and stamina of adults but often would work for lower wages. Work in

factories with few skill requirements could be an alluring alternative to school. The immediate and direct effect of industrial development, consequently, was to reduce educational attainment for some children, especially in poor immigrant families (Faler, 1981; Thernstrom, 1964).

The growth of factories did influence the schools in other respects, however. Many 19th-century leaders were fascinated by industrial development. The factory was widely seen as an engineering marvel, a wonder of efficiency, and practical ingenuity. Some even suggested that it offered visions of an ideal social order, premised on technological innovation and proficiency. Examples of enlightened manufacturing suggested it was possible to build factories that were clean and even morally uplifting. The textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, were perhaps the best-known case, and their labor force of young women seemed to suggest that industrial work could be wholesome. As manufacturing expanded, however, and demand for labor increased, conditions deteriorated. When larger numbers of poor immigrants came to the labor force, even the most idealistic experiments changed dramatically (Dawley, 1976; Dublin, 1979; Marx, 1964).

Other reformers rejected the idea of industry altogether, and attempted to establish ideal agrarian societies in isolated rural communities. The best-known such experiment was Robert Owen's socialist cooperative in Indiana, called New Harmony. Established on principles of shared work and property, and an education system focused on useful tasks without imposing discipline, New Harmony was a challenge to the emerging social order. Its conception of schooling was equally radical. Drawing on the work of European educational theorists, Owen and his followers were sharply critical of existing institutions. Many children were trained for the trades, and progressive principles of learning by play and discovery were highlighted. Unfortunately, Owen's idealism did not insure success at New Harmony, and the venture ended amid acrimony and conflict. Although other communal experiments persisted longer, they exerted little influence on the larger process of social change or the educational system (Kaestle, 1983; Tyler, 1962; Wilson, 1967).

Despite questions raised by Owen and other critics, many educators believed that industrial development represented the future. As historian David Tyack (1974) observed, “the division of labor in the factory, the punctuality of the railroad, the chain of command and coordination in modern businesses…aroused a sense of wonder and excitement in the men and women seeking to systematize the schools” (p. 28) To reformers, like other middle- and upper-class observers, manufacturing was a marvel of rationality, efficacy, and speed. It required workers to respect the demands of production, to be prompt, to follow orders, and to solve problems on the factory floor. In other words, they needed self-discipline and attentiveness, along with deference to authority. Such expectations appealed to the conservative values of early school reformers. They sought similar goals for children, some claiming outright that it was the school’s duty to prepare students for the industrial labor force. Even as factory owners pulled children away from schools, many educators saw the industrial system as a model. It was a powerful metaphor for the future social order (Kasson, 1999; Pollard, 1965; Vinovskis, 1970).

As noted earlier, the industrial revolution brought rapid urbanization. The historian Richard Hofstadter (1955b) once quipped that America grew up in the country and moved to the city. This was true of many times, but was especially pertinent in the 19th century. In 1800, fewer than 1 in 50 Americans lived in towns or cities; by the end of the century the number approached 40%. Cities had prospered in earlier times as nodal points of trade and services, but their growth accelerated with industrial development. Many became centers of manufacturing, while others served as distribution hubs for commodities. The new urban industrial economy attracted millions of workers from the countryside and across the Atlantic, prompting unprecedented urban growth. Successive waves of immigration were tied directly to the demand for industrial labor (Pred, 1966; Sharpless, 1977).

The social impact of industrialization was most readily evident in the larger cities. Their population surged. Starting with fewer than 50,000 in 1800, New York became the first American city to surpass a million by 1860. Others such as Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh,

and Cincinnati grew nearly as fast, along with ports in the South and West. With immigration, these places also became increasingly diverse socially and culturally (Blumin, 1976; Chudacoff, 1975; Ward, 1975).

As cities grew, a host of new institutions attempted to cope with social problems. Poorhouses, asylums, police departments, and jails appeared. Questions of poverty and destitution, crime and social conflict, along with greater cultural variety, demanded fresh responses. Education was also viewed in this light. Although not a new institution, the school did assume additional social functions. In petitioning the City Council for support in 1828, a group of New York leaders declared that better schools could forestall the need for more prisons. In their view, schools were vital to assuring social stability and reducing crime. Similar arguments were made in other cities. For these men, schooling was a means of collective restraint, saving youth from lives of deviance and delinquency. Because of growing poverty and illicit behavior, big cities gave rise to important changes in education. They became incubators of innovation in schooling, but a peculiar form of it: education to foster social order and control (Boyer, 1978; Mohl, 1971; Schultz, 1973).

Among the earliest publicly supported, non-church institutions were “charity schools,” specifically designated for poor children. Like the New York African Free School, these institutions aimed to teach acceptable norms of behavior and basic literacy, along with other subjects. Started by civic-minded elites, much like the Manumission Society, they began on a small scale but eventually were turned over to local public authorities. By the mid-1800s, most large cities possessed the rudiments of a public school system, many of which started as privately sponsored charity institutions. With its New England roots, Boston boasted the most venerable public schools, but New York and Philadelphia also developed large-scale systems in the early 1800s (Boyer, 1978; Kaestle, 1973a). Other cities followed suit. This was an early expression of mimetic isomorphism, as educators in these places looked to one another for ideas. In these patterns of institutional development, it is possible to see the beginnings of modern educational systems (Kaestle, 1973a).

It was in the larger cities that one of the first systematic reforms of school organization was adopted: Lancastrian education. Joseph Lancaster was an English schoolmaster who developed a system for organizing schools efficiently and inexpensively. He posited that a single teacher could oversee large numbers of children by using older students as “monitors,” or teaching assistants. Because these youth knew little more than their peers, most instruction consisted of “dictation,” with monitors pronouncing words, phrases, or numerical problems to be written and inspected for accuracy. Monitors also listened while children recited reading selections or performed exercises (Kaestle, 1973b).

In employing these methods, the Lancastrian system demanded strict discipline and order. Monitors, consequently, often did little more than insure quiet, while recitations and reports were delivered. Students were given medals or other minor prizes for achievement, and the resulting competition provided motivation and helped identify errors as peers scrutinized one another. With students divided into “classes” supervised by monitors, a single adult could oversee hundreds spanning many ages. It was a system well suited to rapidly growing cities and the low budgets of charity school sponsors.

Lancastrian education was also well adapted to the industrial age. Preoccupied with order and efficiency, highly structured routines, and uniformity of expectations, it became a factory-like approach to education. This heightened its appeal among reformers who believed it appropriate for the poor. Making students familiar with the routine of daily recitations and exercises also promised to prepare them new work settings, where tasks could be repetitive and monotonous. The schools also taught punctuality and respect for authority, attributes deemed important when few students were deemed likely to become independent artisans. If the factory and the industrial city were the heralds of a new era, Lancastrian schools were well suited to the future (Hogan, 1989, 1992; Mohl, 1971).

Lancaster’s system appeared in many cities, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati, among others. It was also widely adopted in Europe and Latin America. In the United States, most such schools were started by philanthropists wanting to improve the poor and reduce poverty and crime. The New

York Free School Society was one such organization, chartered in 1805 and led by members of the Manumission Society. This group employed Lancaster's approach almost from the start, and helped to promulgate its virtues elsewhere. About five years later, the Manumission Society hired an English schoolmaster, Charles Andrews, to utilize Lancastrian methods in the African Free Schools as well. Such prompt adaptation of the system to a variety of different schools was symptomatic of its popularity (Kaestle, 1973b; Rury, 1983). It represented an early case of normative isomorphism, as proponents of a particular method in education, along with teachers trained for it, encouraged its adoption in new settings. Lancastrian schools became emblematic of urban education, a standard by which to evaluate local institutions.

The spread of Lancastrian schools continued through the first opening decades of the 19th century. When Joseph Lancaster came to the United States in 1818, he was greeted with acclamation and spoke before Congress. A runaway New York horse cart killed him during another visit in 1838, just as his method of teaching approached its peak of popularity. It soon came under criticism and by the mid-century it had decidedly fallen out of favor. A new generation of educators objected to its rigid focus on discipline and the competition that monitorial education fostered. Even so, the reform preoccupation with order and routine remained important in big city schools long after Lancaster was a distant memory. As new generations of poor and unruly children poured into city classrooms, the basic purposes of urban education changed little, even if methods of instruction did evolve (Boyer, 1978; Kaestle, 1983).

Charity institutions usually were primary (elementary) schools, but secondary or high schools also became commonplace in the 19th century. These also appeared in cities, where some students were interested in advanced instruction. The Boston Latin School was the first such institution in the colonial era, founded about a decade before Harvard, even though the concept of "secondary education" between primary schools and colleges hardly existed. Public high schools appeared much later. Because tutors and private academies prepared young men for college and few occupations required such training, there was little interest in public secondary education until

well after the Revolution. When they finally appeared, however, high schools soon became the leading form of education beyond the primary level. Beginning in 1821, with the first Boston *high school* (distinct from a grammar school or academy), public secondary schools prepared students for a host of purposes. Although attendance was low at first, these institutions eventually became one of the most significant educational developments of the age (Reese, 1995). The growth of secondary education is discussed in greater detail later.

The most important educational changes of the time, however, concerned the *common school*, the primary or elementary institution that became a symbol of the age. Urbanization and economic development helped to spawn a movement to improve the common schools and expand their purview. But the rise of urban industrial society also spurred the appearance of other institutions to assist in the process of economic growth and social differentiation. These included public agencies for building and maintaining the transportation system, for managing natural resources and industrial waste, and for prisons, asylums, and similar institutions. These all were endorsed and supported by an influential political segment of society, middle-class social reformers (Boyer, 1978).

The spread of school reform beyond the cities was also enhanced by the growth of political parties, particularly those advocating national development through enhancing the institutional infrastructure. The early 19th century was a time of growing interest in politics. Although the vote was still limited to white males, it was extended to virtually all social classes by the 1830s. In light of these changes, politics became an increasingly important aspect of life. Reformers, consequently, often worked through the political parties then taking shape. In terms of their general affiliation, these individuals usually were linked to the Whig Party, or later with the Republican Party. These groups were a driving force behind the development of common school reform. They found support in workingmen's parties and early labor organizations in cities, long-time advocates of free public schools. But most reformers were middle class in status, and animated by visions of a more perfect republican social order. It is possible to think of them as

modernizers, helping to build the many institutions so familiar today. They faced a daunting task in the early 1800s, however, for there was considerable resistance to these efforts. Despite their lofty goals, the process of building a coherent and uniform system of schools was marked by great uncertainty (Kaestle, 1983; Kaestle & Vinovskis, 1980).

A Slow Revolution: Education in the Countryside

Not everyone agreed that schools should change, or that new institutions were necessary. There was opposition to industrialism and the goals of reformers throughout the 19th century. Despite the rapid growth of cities, most people remained rural and agrarian, relatively isolated from major changes gaining momentum. Consequently, many were uncomfortable with the shifts that industrialization entailed. Historian Charles Sellers has described this large segment of 19th-century America as a “subsistence” society, largely outside the rapidly growing national economy (Sellers, 1991).

Small farming communities were largely self-sufficient, although they were drawn eventually into the larger economy. Many rural folks were suspicious of urbanite champions of industry and institution-builders seeking to “improve” the nation. They wanted to keep taxes low and preserve a traditional way of life. While not opposed to education, they were hardly champions of new and enhanced schooling, and this became a source of discord. In broad terms, the conflict became a question of control: Would education become an instrument of social and economic development, or remain a prerogative of individual families and local authorities? For small communities, schools often reflected a preference for basic literacy and Protestant values. Reformers approved of this, but wanted these institutions to do more (Cremin, 1951; Graham, 1974; Sellers, 1991).

The answer to such disputes was by no means certain, and the terms of debate were not always clear. In comparison to today, schooling did not occupy much of people’s lives, and educational credentials were not very important. Experience and reputation counted for more than schooling. Money spent on education,

although high compared to other nations, was well below today as a portion of the economy (Goldin, 2001; Solomon, 1970). So it would be wrong to suggest it was an issue that drew much public discussion. Rather, schools became controversial when reformers suggested making them larger, more important and expensive. By and large, critics of the schools focused on expanding and improving them, and met resistance from those who believed change was unnecessary or undesirable. The issues were hardly monumental: a longer school year, a bigger building or a state teaching exam, among others. Wholesale reform did not occur overnight. But disagreements occasionally became bitter just the same. In this way, schools evolved by degrees, with each step marked by different sorts of controversy. There was also a good deal of apathy, from a public too preoccupied by daily life to worry about incremental institutional change (Larkin, 1988; Lasch, 1991).

Not surprisingly, the most controversial issue was taxation of local property to support the schools. In many districts, long-standing custom dictated that parents pay into the school fund for their children's education, or that all households contribute based on willingness to sustain local institutions. Poor children often attended for free, but risked the stigma of being called "charity cases." Reformers argued that a tax on all property would provide a more stable financial foundation and allow the poorest children to attend without being labeled. Such proposals were often met by sharp retorts. In 1849, a New York state law calling for this was decried as taking "A's property without his consent and appl(ing) it to the benefit of B, which is unconstitutional, arbitrary and unjust." Similar complaints appeared across the country. The New York law was overturned within a year, demonstrating the pitfalls of reform. Critics bemoaned the condition of rural districts and inequity in schooling, but it took considerable effort to persuade voters that improving local institutions was a priority (Binder, 1974; Kaestle, 1983, p. 150).

There certainly appeared to be much room for improvement in the early 1800s. Schools in much of the rural countryside had changed little since colonial times. Many were isolated, small, met for short sessions, and were taught by itinerant teachers with little training. But country schools also had become quite commonplace, at least

outside the South. The typical rural district institutions served an area of two to four square miles, accessible by walking and populated by some 20 to 50 families. By the 1830s, they dotted the countryside, mainly in the northeast, serving millions of children. Levels of enrollment were already quite high by 1820, over 70% for children aged 9–13. Americans clearly valued some form of formal education, as attendance figures were higher than other countries. Only Germany had higher rates in 1830 and by 1880 the United States led the world. Growing numbers of girls attended school along with the boys, especially in the northeast and upper Midwest, yet another unique feature of American education (Fishlow, 1966b; Larkin, 1988; Vinovskis, 1972).

Large regional disparities existed, however, with enrollments lowest in the South, where industrialization did not occur until much later. Indeed, public schooling was slow to develop there, especially where the plantation economy was most prevalent. By and large, wealthy planters who controlled much of the region did not favor education for common folk. Their own children were taught by tutors or attended private schools, and they saw little need for educating other children. Instead, they wanted to keep wages and taxes low, and to maintain respect for traditional class distinctions. Above all they worried about literacy spreading to the slave population, and the dangers of widespread insurrection. The Nat Turner rebellion in 1831 demonstrated the possibility of violent revolt by educated slaves, and led to extensive prohibitions of any Black education. Because of these tensions and great differences in wealth and social status, it was difficult to reach consensus about schooling or to spur interest in reform. Despite the efforts of a small number of intrepid reformers, Southern investments in public education remained relatively meager. As a consequence, levels of literacy across the region were quite low, with the exception of planters' children, who sometimes received a better education than their Northern peers (Kaestle, 1983; Rury, 2006).

Schools were considerably more popular elsewhere, especially in the Northern tier of states where attendance by 1840 often exceeded 90% of school-aged children. Even with high enrollments, however, it was not always clear just what most students learned in district

schools. The circumstances of formal education differed from one place to another. Residents of some districts took education quite seriously, in others they did not. The length of school terms varied a good deal, as did the condition of school-houses, and there was some inconsistency in daily attendance. Such variations were vexing to reformers. The issue was not persuading more Americans to send children to school, but rather improving the quality of educational arrangements that had long existed (Rury, 1988b).

The rural common schools were probably not very effectual institutions, at least by today's standards. Indeed, they often just reinforced and enhanced lessons children had learned at home and in church, the other two principal institutions in their lives. Such schools undoubtedly helped to impart and improve basic literacy skills, but they built on a foundation established by Protestant family values. Reading and writing were skills highly prized in most devout households, considered essential to piety and to life. Consequently, most rural children probably were introduced to reading at home and church before they were instructed at school. This was an early expression of cultural and social capital in education. A modicum of reading skill was a behavioral norm conveyed at home and upheld in most local communities, particularly in the North. It was reinforced by churches, a central community institution. In a similar fashion, schools also imparted basic mathematical and computational principles, along with a smattering of history, geography, and "moral philosophy" (Fuller, 1982; Gilmore-Lehne, 1989; Soltow & Stevens, 1981).

The success of these efforts hinged decisively on the attitudes of parents regarding the education of their children. The chief instructional technique was recitation, students repeating portions of memorized text. There were contests and games, such as spelling bees or multiplication tournaments, which helped to combat monotony and reward study. Weekly community gatherings made such competitions exciting events. Storytelling helped impart memorable history and geography lessons. But there was little advanced instruction in particular fields, as most teachers knew only the basic school subjects. Additionally, there was limited continuity of instruction, because teachers seldom remained longer than a year or

two. The schools were generally un-graded, which meant children of all ages sat in the same room, often enduring poor ventilation and threadbare accommodations. Added to this, there was a heavy emphasis on discipline, with rules typically enforced by physical punishment (Finkelstein, 1989; Gulliford, 1991; Kaestle, 1983).

In short, much of schooling was boring, repetitious, uncomfortable, riddled with conflict, and offered little sustained intellectual stimulation. Without a great deal of parental support for these institutions, it is unlikely that children would have tolerated them. Parental interest in schools was generally reinforced by other adults who saw children at church and other communal gatherings. These networks of relationships supported local education. In short, the success of rural schools was dependent on social and cultural capital possessed by students, largely imparted by their families and immediate communities. The importance of learning basic reading and mathematical skills was widely agreed on, and the need for responsibility was reinforced by relationships in all aspects of life. The schools did serve important socialization functions, especially for immigrant children, who could learn wider norms and expectations. But even this purpose had to be upheld by parents and other adults. Given their rudimentary character, 19th-century rural schools could hardly succeed without a high level of community support (Brown, 1989; Cohen, 1982; Gilmore-Lehne, 1989; Rury, 2006).

The process of change in rural schools followed a similar pattern in much of the country, particularly the North. Reform advocates, most representing the urban or market sector of society, were intent on building institutions that could deliver consistent levels of instruction and a common understanding of civic and moral principles. Some historians have suggested that it was the commercial farmers and local merchants, those most closely connected to the national economy, who led the process of change in rural areas. They could more easily afford the costs associated with the reform agenda. They were also influenced by educators who articulated a set of parallel goals concerning new methods of instruction and humane treatment of children. But even these ideas were predicated on the expectation that such measures would

produce better educated and morally superior citizens. This appealed to parents who realized that their children were unlikely to be farmers, and had to succeed in a rapidly urbanizing society. Some even suggested that investment in schools could make communities more attractive, and possibly raise property values. As historian Nancy Beadie (2010) has suggested, education was sometimes viewed a key element of economic development. Such arguments undoubtedly helped open the door to reform in many local districts, and residents working together on such improvements helped to build social capital. In this way, school leaders worked assiduously to cultivate a system of better educational institutions. Although reformers often employed idealistic, even messianic language, ultimately their task was a profoundly practical one (Kaestle, 1983; Parkerson & Parkerson, 1998).

The idea of a coherent system of education was important for reformers, to address disparities from one locality to another. Even in the countryside, many promulgated a vision of uniformity in schooling that drew parallels to industrial production. In this respect, they promoted a process of isomorphism; parallel changes were undertaken in a wide variety of locales, making schools more similar in many respects. In proposing to improve education, many reformers were influenced by the example of industry. A virtue of factory production, after all, was continually improved standards of quality. Not only were products manufactured with greater efficiency, but they also were often better in appearance, function, and reliability. This was a result of advances in multiple phases of production and evolving technology. It was a logic that reform-minded educators often hoped to apply to systems of education (Hogan, 1990).

It was in this sense that industrialization may have been most influential as an example, or perhaps a metaphor, for education. The effects of manufacturing were plain for everyone to see, and hardly limited to the cities. They bound the country together in a growing market for mass produced goods, and a standard of living scarcely imaginable in earlier times. Along with the nation’s rapidly developing transportation and communications networks, this was a tangible sign of progress. Reformers wanted to depict schools in the same

light: They would improve with each succeeding generation, uniting the country and forging a common national identity (Cowan, 1997; Kaestle, 1983).

Given the close association between home and school in the lives of most rural families, it is little wonder that there was resistance to change. The United States still was largely a pastoral nation, and many people felt quite distant from urban centers of change. From their standpoint, the existing schools functioned adequately and there was little need for costly changes, especially those that seemed to threaten local institutions. In many places, the traditional practice of requiring families to pay tuition for common schooling persisted for decades (Beadie, 2008). But the logic of reform was difficult to oppose. A growing drumbeat of calls for improvement, such as eliminating tuition, issued forth from reform advocates. In their minds education was linked irrevocably to social and institutional change, and free schools were necessary to insure universal participation. Even if the outcome of debates appeared uncertain at times, in the end resistance to the general logic of reorganization proved fruitless.

Common-School Reform

The time roughly between 1830 and 1860 is considered the first great period of school reform in American history. It marked the beginning of efforts to create a uniform system of mass public education, governed largely by the states, spanning the nation. It would take more than a century for this to be achieved, but it began with a generation of reformers in the decades preceding the Civil War. Animated by a Protestant commitment to social perfectibility and the republican spirit of national advancement, they depicted the school as a solution to a host of social problems. As reformers they were hardly unique in this respect. But they did articulate a number of ideas that can be considered the founding mythology of modern education.

To grasp the motivation of reformers, it is important to consider the problems they saw. As suggested earlier, they were troubled by the variability that existed in local schooling. They also fretted over

haphazard training of teachers, short terms in rural schools, and the haphazard provision of such basic supplies as books and firewood. They dreamed of a system with consistent standards of teacher preparation, long and uniform terms, and generous supplies of books, paper and other materials. They worried that, without this, the schools would prove inadequate to the demands of the industrial and urban age. They were concerned too about the growing diversity of American society, and social conflict in the absence of common values and shared identity. For these reasons, school reformers proclaimed the cause of public education across the land. Consequently, historians refer to the decades preceding the Civil War as the “age of the common school” (Binder, 1974; Cremin, 1951).

The most celebrated proponent of common-school reform was Horace Mann, an indefatigable lawyer and state legislator who accepted the newly created Massachusetts post of Secretary of the State Board of Education in 1837. Reformers worked in other states too, many just as visionary and energetic as Mann. Calvin Stowe in Ohio, husband of famous author Harriet Beecher Stowe, was another influential figure. These men approached their task with a missionary zeal (Hagedorn, 2013). Mann worked with a modest salary and virtually no budget, crisscrossing his state to speak to anyone who would listen about schools. He addressed a range of issues, some still controversial today, and lobbied for the basic elements of a modern educational system. His annual reports, published by the state and distributed widely, became influential sources of information about educational improvement. Other reformers across the country drew inspiration and guidance from his example (Curti, 1959; Messerli, 1972). This was yet another instance of isomorphic change, mimetic in nature and occurring within an informal network of agents in various states.

Looking at changes then occurring, Mann was concerned about the divisions becoming evident in the social fabric. Early in his career he had witnessed an ugly Boston mob attack a Catholic orphanage in an anti-Irish hysteria. There were many other instances of bigotry and intolerance in his time. He felt that religious sectarianism and cultural conflict threatened American institutions, including a

democratically elected republican form of government. This made the idea of a common school, attended by children of different backgrounds and without religious affiliation, seem essential to the future. Mann advocated a nonsectarian form of Christianity for schools, and was roundly attacked by Calvinist leaders, who felt that schools without church affiliation were Godless and immoral. Catholics also objected to non-sectarianism, seeing the content of non-Catholic schools as essentially Protestant. Bedeviled by seemingly endless debate over these issues, Mann eventually prevailed in separating the public schools from the churches. In doing so, he helped establish the idea that publicly supported education should serve children a range of religious beliefs and cultural traditions. This became one of the principal points in the term *common school* (Binder, 1974; Messerli, 1972; Welter, 1962).

As noted earlier, this inclusive vision did not contribute much to increasing the number of children in schools. Instead, Mann and his fellow reformers focused on other issues. In addition to nonsectarian instruction, they urged longer school terms, eight- or nine-month sessions instead of the four- or five-month terms common in rural areas. They pressed for systematic examinations and training requirements for teachers, to raise the level of instruction and to help establish a professional identity for educators. In particular, Mann succeeded in persuading the legislature to establish the nation's first publicly supported teacher-training institution in 1838, called a normal school, derived from the French word *normale*. Other such schools appeared in years to follow, providing a cadre of professionally trained teachers to help staff the nation's schools (Curti, 1959; Herbst, 1989; Kaestle, 1983).

Changes such as these required money, and much of Mann's time was spent convincing various political and social groups that public education was important. Because schools were wholly controlled and supported by local districts, Mann had little alternative to exhortation as a reform strategy. He and other reformers worked largely in the realm of ideas, shaping the essential principles of modern public schooling. Local school authorities had to be convinced of the need for change. Mann could get the legislature to pass laws requiring lengthier terms and exams for teachers, but

even these steps met political resistance. Without financial support and sanctions to enforce such measures, there was little immediate impact. Mann and other reformers waged protracted battles against opponents of taxation for schools. Childless adults, for instance, objected to school levies, claiming to have no direct interest in education. But Mann argued that schooling was a public responsibility, a stewardship incumbent on all members of society, regardless of personal circumstances. Reformers also successfully fought against “rate bills” and other forms of partial tuition occasionally charged by local schools. Public education was to be free to all, and open to everyone. These were lofty—and expensive—principles, and it took time to resolve the debates they encountered. As suggested earlier, school reform was a slow and difficult process (Cremin, 1951; McCluskey, 1958; Welter, 1962).

Horace Mann was an astute reformer, however. He recognized the most important opponents to reform, and concentrated his efforts on winning them over. In particular, Mann was concerned that the wealthy often failed to send their children to public institutions, which they may have considered equivalent to charity schooling. Consequently, Mann worked to convince the most affluent citizens, along with those without children that support for public education was clearly in their interest. Taking a page from the founders of urban charity schools, he argued that moral education was the most important aspect of popular schooling, emphasizing the importance of a nondenominational Christian foundation to instruction. Such an education, he maintained, would impart good habits, teach respect for property and hard work, and help to prevent wrongdoing (Hogan, 1990; Messerli, 1972).

Beyond morality, however, Mann also argued that educated workers were more productive, and that schooling could add to the value of industrial goods. In his fifth annual report, published in 1842, Mann quoted industrialists who preferred educated workers because of their diligence and reliability. Elsewhere, Mann suggested that schooling also could help bridge a widening gulf between the wealthy and laboring classes, promoting harmony in an era of marked disparities in status. Using an oft-cited industrial metaphor, he argued that education could thus serve as the “balance wheels”

of society, preventing inequality from leading to destructive conflict. This reasoning became a cornerstone of the common-school tradition (Curti, 1959; Vinovskis, 1970).

Mann did not campaign simply to advance a political cause or an economic agenda, however. He fervently believed in the power of education to resolve a range of social problems and to enhance the perfectibility of civilization. His annual reports were circulated and reprinted widely. This exerted a clear isomorphic influence on the development of education systems elsewhere in the country. In the mid-1840s, he visited Europe to inspect national education systems and returned with reports of schools he observed. In Prussia, he noted state-run institutions with uniform standards of instruction, well-trained teachers, and child-friendly instructional materials and practices. Mann's account helped generate interest in foreign models of education, and the Prussian schools in particular. Eventually, this was a further impetus to educational reform: Educational competitiveness would become a source of national pride. American schools had to be as good as anyone else's (Binder, 1974; Kaestle, 1983).

Mann also was a great believer in women's education, and a strong proponent of the theory of republican motherhood. True to his era, he did not think that women's schooling should be the same as men's, or that women ought to aspire to male roles. Rather, he believed that women had a special role to play in the educational system as teachers. Mann thought women naturally suited to teach, reasoning that a maternal disposition of patience and affection helped in working with students, especially small children. Women teachers also cost less than men, even when professionally trained, so their employment could also reduce the expense of reforms. Thus, the use of women teachers held benefits in terms of both their quality as instructors and the price of improvement (Bernard & Vinvoskis, 1977; Brown, 1996; Rury & Harper, 1986).

Women had been teaching for decades in Massachusetts when Mann started his campaign, so these ideas were not a major innovation there. In this case, too, it was Mann's role as a popularizer and advocate for reform that was most important. His vigorous testimonies in support of women teachers helped make

school leaders elsewhere amenable to hiring them, particularly in the cities. During the latter half of the 19th century, the nation's teaching force feminized rapidly, especially in northern states, where common-school reform took root most rapidly. This was a critical aspect of social change, altering a major job category at the same time it opened a new line of work for women. Some historians suggest that the job of teaching came to be seen as a uniquely female form of work, and such views contributed to the feminization of teaching. In this respect, common-school reform left a particular stamp on American education; by 1900, the vast majority of teachers were women. This has changed relatively little in more than a century (Perlmann & Margo, 2001; Rury, 1989; Vinovskis & Bernard, 1978).

Henry Barnard was a famous contemporary of Mann who held similar appointments in Connecticut and Rhode Island, but did not enjoy Mann's success in building state systems. Barnard was an editor and scholar who became the first U.S. Commissioner of Education in 1867, but his career was sometimes uncertain because political support for reform was always changeable. Other reform figures had similar experiences. They included men such as John Pierce in Michigan and Calvin Stowe, who struggled to raise the quality of public schools in the Midwest. There were many others. These reformers also made exhortation and inspiration their stock in trade. They were institution builders, but they were also engaged in a grand crusade to advance a particular vision of American civilization through education (Curti, 1959; Lannie, 1974; Soltow & Stevens, 1981; Warren, 1974).

Common-school reformers shared a similar set of values and assumptions about life and learning, and this also contributed continuity and force to the movement. Historian Carl Kaestle has catalogued this array of viewpoints, describing it as the ideology of common-school reform. Much of this worldview was derived from the Protestant upbringing of these men and faith in the moral superiority of their cultural backgrounds. Francis Wayland, an educational leader guided by Protestant convictions about human nature, clearly represented this perspective. Most school leaders shared a common set of concerns about the future prospects the American republican

form of government, still a recent experiment in the sweep of history. They believed in the central importance of individual character as a key element of social progress. Without virtuous people, many thought, society was doomed, so proper moral development was seen as essential to national survival. Personal industry and self-discipline were deemed key to moral development, as was private property. This was an ideological perspective well suited to the capitalist social order, and the common schools everywhere trumpeted the virtues of private enterprise. There was a widely shared belief that women should occupy a respected but largely delimited domestic role in the division of labor, although non-White women were expected to perform hard labor. And there was widespread commitment to using education to unify the American people, so that the nation could realize its manifest destiny of world leadership (Hogan, 1990; Kaestle, 1983, Chapter 5).

Most of these ideas were widely held during the 19th century, espoused by a majority of middle-class, White Protestants, then the nation's cultural center of gravity. Those who disagreed with one or more of these propositions, such as Catholics, immigrants, Blacks or other racial minorities, and feminists, were widely believed to be aberrant, part of the problem that common schools were intended to resolve. This eventually led some to form their own separate schools. Most of the institutions established under the aegis of common-school reform, consequently, were for Whites only. This shared set of values and purposes provided the common-school crusade with a clear direction and a distinctive goal: the unification of American culture, defined in narrow ideological terms, through the mechanism of universal schooling (Brown, 1996; Lannie, 1968; Welter, 1962).

The success of common-school reform did not rest wholly on the shoulders of crusading reformers, however, nor on their messianic ideology. There was widespread support for schooling as a general principle in American culture. Historians have noted the effusive language supporting public education in most state constitutions, particularly in the North. Most of these foundational documents provided for some degree of state support for schools, along with a measure of supervision, making it one of the few areas of public life

to receive such attention. As a consequence, some historians have labeled the schools a “fourth branch of government” in the 19th century (Tyack et al., 1987).

In certain respects, this was a legacy of the enthusiasm over education evident immediately after the Revolution. As noted earlier, it found expression in the Northwest Ordinance and related legislative actions. It was on this foundation of commitment that common school advocates built their campaigns. And it was a critical element of their ultimate success. The republican ideology of the new nation, holding that citizenship entailed responsibility and knowledge, dictated that schooling be made universally available, at least for those groups eligible to be citizens (Meyer et al., 1979). These sentiments helped advance the cause of reform, despite resistance from many quarters, and lent it a particular social and cultural orientation.

By the Civil War, the logic of reform had nearly swept its opposition from the debate over education, starting in the northern states. There was much to be done, to be sure, but the ideas that schools should be supported by property taxes, should have greater uniformity, should be nonsectarian, should last for more than six months, and should be taught by trained, professional teachers no longer were sources of widespread controversy. This does not mean, of course, that all of these goals had been achieved. Great variation on all counts existed, more significantly in the South and West than the northeast. But instituting these reforms gradually became a matter of enforcing standards that had become accepted by the political establishment. In this respect, the common school movement reflected an isomorphic process of change finally coming to fruition. It had been aided by the ascendancy of the Republican Party and presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln, inheritors of the modernizing mantle of earlier reformers, and by union victory in the Civil War. These historic developments represented the supremacy of the reform-oriented, institution-building ethos of the urbanized northeast. Struggles to establish the nation’s first compulsory school laws in the latter 19th century marked the closing stages of this campaign. By then, common-school wars had been largely won, even if some battles remained unsettled. Now it was time to turn to

other challenges facing the nascent public school system of the United States (Graham, 1974; Tyack, 1978).

FOCAL POINT: REFORMING PEDAGOGY

Horace Mann was an idealistic and vigorous reformer; he also was a complex historical figure. Among other things, he held a compassionate belief in the inherent goodness of children and their natural proclivity to learn and grow in the proper environment. In this respect, his views departed from more conservative educators, even if he shared many other aspects of the period's dominant Protestant ideology. Historians speculate that unhappy childhood experiences with traditional Calvinist beliefs led him later to reject educational theories that emphasized submission to authority. He likely would have been a critic of Francis Wayland's tactics in the case described earlier (Messerli, 1972).

As seen earlier, beliefs that children needed to learn respect for authority and obedience were widely held in 19th-century America, but there was growing debate over how such lessons should be imparted, and how children should be treated. The controversy aroused by Francis Wayland's approach to child-rearing was indicative of public interest in these questions. A larger dispute arose during the 1840s over corporal punishment in the schools. At issue was a basic question about pedagogy: Did children require fear to learn properly, or did such emotions make learning even more difficult (Hogan, 1990; Wishy, 1968)?

On returning from his first tour of Europe, Mann extolled the virtues of Prussian schools. Although aristocratic Prussia evoked images of authority and discipline, Mann found schools there to be quite humane. Teachers presented lessons rather than demanding that students memorize and recite texts, and they used teaching aids to

help stimulate interest and assist learning. Most significantly, Prussian teachers avoided any form of physical punishment, arguing that fear and pain inhibited learning rather than encouraging it. They studied in special institutes, featuring the ideas of such humanistic thinkers as Swiss educator Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi and the German philosopher Friedrich Froebel, originator of the kindergarten. Mann found himself drawn to this perspective, and suggested in his Seventh Annual Report that American educators had much to learn from their European counterparts. In contrast to schools in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the United States, the Prussian educational system was also centralized and wellfunded (Cremin, 1980; Messerli, 1972).

Mann's report was well received in many circles, but drew a negative reaction from some of the state's most prestigious educators: Boston's grammar-schoolmasters. These 32 men were the head teachers, equivalent to principals today, in the city's public grammar schools, which sent the best students off to high schools or academies. Most had gained their positions through long experience in the system, and were widely held to be among its most knowledgeable and influential educators. Their reaction to Mann's report represented a serious challenge to his authority, but it also offered a rare occasion of public discussion about pedagogical principles and competing views of children (Binder, 1974; Schultz, 1973).

In a lengthy response to Mann, the masters challenged many aspects of his work as an educational leader, but especially his Pestalozzian principles and condemnation of corporal punishment. They dismissed the idea that children could learn through natural curiosity, and maintained that physical punishments were necessary to "focus" and "discipline" student minds. "Duty should come first," they argued, "and pleasure should grow out of the discharge of it." As veterans of the schools, they asserted it foolishly sentimental to believe that order could be maintained

without the use of physical coercion. They believed in “faculty psychology,” which held the mind to be in need of exercise and training like a muscle. The study of dead languages like Latin and Greek, for instance, was considered a virtue, because it enhanced powers of concentration and disciplined the will to master difficult subject matter. In this spirit, memorization and recitation were regarded as techniques essential to “forming the habit of independent and individual effort.” Given this, the practice of exercising fearful authority, forcing students to train the “faculties” of observation and memory through sheer willpower, was of paramount importance (Katz, 1968; Messerli, 1972).

The masters may have had tradition on their side, along with discipline-minded parents, but Mann seized the opportunity to advance his reform agenda. He charged them with base self-interest, and defending their own privileged positions at the expense of children. He demanded that their regime of unquestioned authority and fear be replaced by an approach featuring mutual respect, affection, and the love of knowledge. Mann valued adult authority in classrooms, but believed it was best achieved by courtesy and compassion. In defense of his office, he listed steps taken to establish more inclusive and effective schools throughout the state, and the positive effects of the fledgling normal schools, which the masters had also attacked. In particular, he rejected the suggestion that physical force was necessary for student success (Hogan, 1990; McCluskey, 1958).

The dispute was marked by volleys of responses over a number of years, without changing the course of debate. The masters refused to budge on corporal punishment, declaring “all authority is of God and must be obeyed.” In the meantime, however, several of Mann’s allies gained seats on the Boston School Committee, the body charged with inspecting the schools. Although such events were normally just ceremonial, Mann’s friends turned annual

grammar-school examinations into real tests of student learning. Deploying the first standardized exams in American history, the School Committee found results that were devastating for the masters. It turned out that students had gained very little through fear and recitation, and the haughty masters were almost totally dependent on textbooks and time-worn exercises. As a consequence, students performed poorly on the exams, and those doing the worst were in schools controlled by the most domineering and abusive masters (Messerli, 1972; Reese, 2013).

A report issued by the inspectors revealed that some masters had engaged in various forms of corporal punishment as many as 50 times per week. This led to a public outcry. It was a decisive turning point in Mann's battle to change attitudes about pedagogy. Even though some Bostonians continued to defend the masters, the tide of public opinion started to swing against the traditional pedagogy of fear and authoritarianism (Katz, 1968; Schultz, 1973; Wishy, 1968).

As a result of this, four masters were dismissed. Others were given different jobs in the system, a dramatic loss of status. In the wake of the controversy, a large group of civic leaders raised thousands of dollars for another normal school, concrete testimony of support for Mann's ideas (Messerli, 1972). Although the weight of tradition would preserve corporal punishment, recitation, and authoritarianism as basic elements of schooling for decades, there were signs of change. The pace of reform was slow, but it would begin to gain momentum as the century drew to a close.

The Rise of Secondary Education

The high school is sometimes said to be an American invention. Designed for the graduates of the primary and grammar schools, it was virtually unknown until the early 19th century. Boston's English Classical High School was the first such institution. Founded in 1821 as a more practical and accessible alternative to the famous Boston Latin School, it offered the "higher branches" of learning without a classical (Latin and Greek) requirement. It was not long before other large cities in the North and West established similar schools, yet another instance of isomorphic change. These institutions taught a growing number of primary school graduates seeking a well-rounded but practical education for careers in commerce and government. Consequently, the popularity of high schools grew. By the end of the century, they existed in one form or another in most cities and many large towns. Even though the high school did not directly affect most Americans, as enrollments still were somewhat limited, it became an important component of educational systems (Brown, 1902; Herbst, 1996; Reese, 1995).

The high school started in urban school districts with large numbers of students and firm tax support. Popular demand for such subjects as history, mathematics (algebra and geometry), literature and writing, political economy, science ("natural philosophy"), and geography led to its growth. Most high schools also offered instruction in classical subjects, especially Latin, long considered a sign of accomplishment. From the beginning, however, there was little expectation that most children would attend them; rather, they were intended for the best graduates of the primary and grammar schools. Called "the people's college," early high schools represented something of a contradiction, in that case. They were a part of the public education system, yet they mainly served social and academic elites. This accounted for both their great attraction and the controversies they provoked (Krug, 1964; Reese, 1995).

Many of the early public high schools admitted students by examination, and applicants often were turned away because of low scores. Not surprisingly, students and teachers came to anticipate such tests with dread. In some respects, these exams represented a 19th-century equivalent of standardized tests today. It was a rare form of assessment that was extended across a number of schools,

or even across entire communities. In time, high school admission exams became important indicators of quality in primary or grammar schools, providing a convenient standard of comparison for evaluating institutions. In this way, high schools helped to establish and uphold uniform academic standards throughout urban school systems, simply by virtue of their position at the pinnacle of student ambitions. Insofar as schools responded to this common type of evaluation, it represented a form of coercive isomorphism at work. Consequently, the development of high schools did much to create better-integrated and more unitary education systems (Beadie, 1999; Labaree, 1988).

The high school, however, was also controversial. It competed with private or semipublic secondary institutions, mostly academies established in earlier years. High schools eventually eclipsed these institutions altogether, but the process was fraught with conflict. The academies were rather numerous, especially in the northeast, where networks of influential supporters were unhappy to see them challenged (Beadie, 2010). Furthermore, some early high schools were quite costly, occupying palatial buildings erected at great expense and with considerable fanfare. Critics decried the cost, noting that relatively few students graduated and tuition-based academies provided the same services with little public funding. High schools turned away many applicants, which did not help matters. They were attacked as “finishing schools” for the elite, supported by public monies (Beadie & Tolley, 2002; Herbst, 1996).

The debate came to head in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where opponents of the local high school in 1874 unsuccessfully sued to have it abolished, a case widely cited in later disputes. As a rule, courts did not agree that only the common or elementary schools qualified for public support. Beyond legal questions, however, there was the larger question of popular perceptions. Educational leaders persuasively argued that the quality of public high schools was higher than most private academies, and that high schools helped establish academic standards for the educational system. They also maintained that high schools conferred economic and social benefits to talented students, providing reliable credentials, and thereby preparing local leaders. The institution was depicted as a valuable

asset for the entire community, a resource well worth the cost (Goldin & Katz, 1999a; Reese, 1995).

This argument pointed to the high school's principal source of success. Probably more than anything else, the institution's future hinged on its popularity with the relatively small but rising urban middle class. Parents in this social stratum, perhaps less than a tenth of the population at mid-century, increasingly were concerned with imparting advantages to their children in the form of social, cultural, and human capital. They were the beneficiaries of economic growth and urban development, but felt considerable uncertainty about how their offspring would succeed in the urbanized commercial culture of the age. Apprenticeship and other informal modes of training were disappearing. The establishment of public high schools with rigorous and exclusionary entrance requirements provided a clear and legitimate means to provide status to the next generation. The rhetoric of the high school, free and open to all, gave the appearance of a meritocratic system of performance-based evaluations, whereby the talented succeeded. This carried considerable appeal to middle-class urbanites, who were instinctively drawn to the prospect of status based on ability and accomplishment. It conformed to the ideology of hard work and respect for authority, but in a setting sheltered from the dangers of industry. Competitive high schools, sitting atop a growing public system of education, thus proved attractive to this social group. This accounted for much of the institution's initial success and its rapid spread in the later 19th century (Hogan, 1996; Labaree, 1988).

For most working-class children, on the other hand, high school attendance simply was not viable, because they often began working at age 14 or 15. Unlike the middle-class, poorer families typically could ill afford sending older children to school if they could contribute to household income. Thus, although the rhetoric of equal access made high schools appear meritocratic, they disproportionately served middle- and upper-class students, even if enough working-class students attended to lend the appearance of fairness. In this respect, critics were correct: It was a largely elite institution conducted at public expense. The high school's popularity

among influential social classes, however, made such arguments politically moot (Katz, 1968; Reese, 1995).

There was a great deal of variation in the size and character of high schools. In big cities, with a ready supply of students and a large middle-class constituency, high schools could be sizeable, and often were renowned for academic standards. Philadelphia's Central High School enrolled hundreds and was among the nation's most famous; its graduates commanded considerable prestige. Advanced instruction in this setting imparted cultural capital, and local networks of graduates provided a potent source of social capital for career advancement. Such urban high schools boasted large teaching staffs and attracted the best qualified faculty, offering high salaries and opportunities to specialize in particular subjects. It is little wonder that they proved so attractive to the aspiring urban middle class. Institutions such as these, however, represented less than one in five secondary schools nationally (Labaree, 1988).

On the other hand, in smaller towns, the high school generally was little more than a single class where one or two teachers taught advanced subjects to older students. The quality of education was lower in these settings, and the credentials graduates received may have been questionable. In 1873, the U.S. Commissioner of Education remarked that many such schools provided instruction barely above the primary level. But these limited offerings usually marked the start of much larger and more comprehensive secondary institutions, built in later years as communities grew. In time, high schools came to reflect local ambitions, and many boosters dreamed of institutions closer in size and reputation to urban flagship schools. If the high school was becoming instrumental in conferring middle-class status, after all, every growing community surely would harbor ambitions to have a good one (Goldin & Katz, 1999a; Reese, 1995; VanOverbeke, 2008).

Yet another important feature of 19th-century high schools was the widespread practice of coeducation. Secondary education traditionally was a largely male preserve. Almost from the very start, however, high schools in many parts of the country enrolled male and female students together. For ambitious educators, this was partly a strategy for finding students to fill these expensive

institutions. Admitting girls meant twice as many potential enrollments, and it widened the base of support among middle-class families. Coeducation also conformed to the logic of meritocracy: If girls could pass the exams and receive good grades, how could they be refused admission? Additionally, female high school graduates constituted an important source of teachers for rapidly growing urban school systems. Educators predicted dire shortages of qualified teachers if women were not encouraged to enroll in high school. As a consequence, most American high schools served both genders, a practice not observed in other countries. Exceptions occurred in certain large cities and the South, where separate schools for boys and girls often prevailed as policy. But, in most localities, coeducation was the norm. Altogether, by the end of the century, female students outnumbered males in most high schools, in practically all regions of the country. The growth of secondary education and the rise of the high school launched an era of (relative) gender equity in American education (Rury, 1991a; Tyack & Hansot, 1990). This issue is discussed further in the next chapter.

At the end of the 19th century, over a half million students were enrolled in U.S. secondary institutions, most in public high schools. This meant that the high school had become a form of popular education, even if it reached less than a tenth of the age cohort. Despite the populist rhetoric of high school supporters, it still served a fairly select clientele. And even if most secondary students were women, almost none were Black or Native American. Its inherent elitism notwithstanding, however, there was no denying the power of the high school to attract students. In the decades to follow, high school enrollments would climb even faster. After years of struggle and debate, the high school had finally arrived (Herbst, 1996; Krug, 1964).

The Age of the College

The 19th century also was a time of rapid expansion among the nation’s higher education institutions. The period prior to the Civil War, in fact, is sometimes referred to as the “age of the college,” although only small numbers of students attended such institutions.

It was a time when many colleges were established, most with high hopes for the future but relatively meager resources. These institutions generally prepared students for careers in the ministry or as educators. Other professions usually did not require higher education, although some students did attend college before studying medicine or law. Horace Mann, for instance, graduated from Brown University before standing for the bar, as did other leaders. It was not until the end of the century that modern universities began to take shape, with a focus on science and research and dedicated to preparing students for a range of careers. Even then, however, the collegiate sector of the nation's educational system was tiny, enrolling less than 5% of the relevant age cohort. Despite their rapid proliferation, 19th-century colleges were concerned only with a fraction of the nation's students, something of an academic elite, even if not necessarily the best or brightest students (Ogren, 2008).

As noted in the previous chapter, the United States had a handful of collegiate institutions at the close of the 18th century. In the next 50 years, more than two hundred others were established, mostly by religious denominations. Most of these institutions fought for survival, competing for students and financial support, and some did not survive. Many enrolled only a fraction of their students in college-level courses, with the rest taking "preparatory" classes in secondary school subjects. Even the early state universities were small and religious in character, and they too had sizeable preparatory departments. Because the higher education system was not clearly linked to the changing occupational structure, and there were relatively few secondary schools to send them students, the colleges struggled. They proliferated because of religious zeal and the idealism of pioneering founders, but few prospered until well after the Civil War. By then the fundamental purposes of higher education had started to shift (Burke, 1982; Rudolph, 1962).

Through much of the century, collegiate institutions featured a classical curriculum handed down from colonial times. English models of higher education influenced them, particularly Cambridge University, which emphasized such preparation as the foundation of higher learning. Latin and Greek represented its core, and most classes were conducted by recitation. Knowledge of these subjects

was a source of considerable cultural capital, and this was a part of the colleges' appeal. Reform ideas circulated from an early date. There were efforts to offer more scientific, historical, and literary studies; Francis Wayland, for example, advocated such innovations at Brown, and they were taken up elsewhere too. But the Yale Report of 1828, a faculty statement defending classical studies, helped to inhibit widespread change. Simply put, tradition held that a classical emphasis was indispensable; without it no course of study could appear to uphold collegiate standards. This, of course, insured that most teaching at the colleges would carry little relevance in the job market or society at large. It was a powerful means of transmitting "high culture," but collegiate education had few immediate or practical uses (Hofstadter, 1955a; Rudolph, 1978).

Things began to change, however, in the closing decades of the century. Passage of the first Land Grant College Act in 1862 was a harbinger. Sponsored by Vermont congressman Justin Smith Morrill, it set aside federal lands for support of institutions devoted to practical and scientific study, particularly in agriculture and "mechanics" (engineering). A second Morrill Act in 1890 provided additional support for "A&M" state universities, including many founded in earlier decades. Meanwhile, visionary leaders such as Harvard's Charles Eliot broke the stranglehold of tradition in the collegiate curriculum. Elliot introduced an elective system with few requirements, a curriculum later modified to feature a compulsory core. Scientific research institutes had opened at Harvard, Yale, and other institutions well before Eliot's reforms, and new research-oriented universities were established afterward, with Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and Chicago leading the way. As a matter of principle, the German model of higher education, which emphasized research-based learning, influenced the leaders of these institutions. Flagship state universities such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and California also exhibited these influences, and attracted leading professors dedicated to research. The result was a newfound degree of social relevance in higher education, and enrollments began to climb sharply (Eddy, 1957; Hawkins, 1972; Veysey, 1965).

Of course, rising high school graduation also helped to boost collegiate attendance, but many of the brightest students were drawn

to innovative institutions. University leaders such as James Angell at Michigan and Elliot at Harvard campaigned to make the secondary school curriculum align with collegiate entrance requirements. This strengthened links between the high schools and emerging universities, contributing to isomorphic pressures that fostered greater conformity in both types of institutions. Many colleges, especially those with strong religious ties, were slow to change, and classical studies continued to be a curricular staple for decades. Traditions rarely die easily, but the direction of change proved difficult to resist. Universities were gaining new currency, and there was excitement in the air. A stronger connection had been made between collegiate life and the larger social and economic world, which would bode well for the future of American higher education (Goldin & Katz, 1999b; Lucas, 1994; Ogren, 2008; VanOverbeke, 2008).

Conclusion: The Shaping of a National System of Education

The 19th century was a time of profound transformation, and important changes in the nation's educational system. Industrialization and the market revolution helped to expand the economy, raising standards of living at the same time that work was transfigured. Rapid urbanization brought a host of new problems, along with waves of immigrants. Reformers puzzled over the best ways to respond to these developments, and devised a host of new institutions. Not the least of these were the schools, which aimed to inculcate middle-class values and work habits and helped to forge a new national identity. In particular, the common-school reform movement strived to make education a linchpin of social, political, and economic development. It helped to sustain republican values in an age of considerable ferment.

School reform brought many changes to the education system, most of which reformers would describe as progress. Common schools were improved and high schools were established. Following the Civil War, many institutions outside of the South conducted annual sessions of 160 days or longer, close to today's

standards, with urban districts leading the way. Professional expectations were established for much of the nation's teaching force, with training departments in scores of high schools and colleges, along with normal schools. Hundreds of colleges and universities beckoned to students, even if only a small minority were interested or able to attend (Cremin, 1980). A more unitary school system emerged from all of this, representing a grand isomorphic process of institutions influencing one another.

Of course, the United States remained largely rural and most Americans did not even attend a secondary school, much less graduate and contemplate college. But the basic elements of a national system of education had been established. Corporal punishment and traditional views of childhood and adult authority may have still predominated, but there were voices of dissent, and new perspectives on children and pedagogy were gaining favor. The process of change, although speedy in certain respects, was also slow in reaching all parts of the country. With some 75 million people, the United States was a vast land with great unevenness in economic development and considerable cultural diversity. As significant as the reforms of the 19th century were, the process of shaping the modern educational system had only started.

What about the direction of change—the question posed at the start of the book? In the 19th century, there can be little doubt that industrialization was a driving force in transforming the economy and society at large. One can say the same thing about its impact on education. Clearly, industrial development and urbanization dictated the general thrust of reform in education. The basic organizational form of schooling was influenced by the factory, at least in general terms. Schools were organized to increase efficiency, to raise the quality of a standardized product, and to produce more compliant and dependable workers. This was plainly evident in the Lancastrian schools, but was largely true of common school reform as well. Industrialization also produced a growing commercial middle class, which clamored for secondary institutions, especially the public high school. These schools made curricula more practical, bringing education in line with the economy, and the expectations of businessmen and professionals in growing cities. The same could be

said of higher education, although it took somewhat longer to be realized. By the end of the century, however, a definite hierarchy of educational credentials was emerging for ambitious youth striving to find a secure niche in the social order.

By and large, changes in the larger economy and society drove the process of change in American education during the 19th century. As in earlier times, the schools appear to have responded to the demands of the rapidly evolving social and economic system. In a certain sense, this was predictable: Schools, after all, must prepare students to address the ever-changing needs of life. On the other hand, education clearly worked to the advantage of some people and not to others. Considering just how schools did or did not help members of different social groups, affecting social change in new ways is the task of the next chapter.

3

Ethnicity, Gender, and Race

Contours of Social Change in the 19th Century

There can be little doubt that education has been shaped by larger social forces, but what about the opposite question? How did schooling affect social change? As it turns out, the 19th century offers a good deal of evidence about this too. It is useful, in that case, to examine the period further, especially regarding the critical social categories of ethnicity, gender, and race.

As noted earlier, the connection between education and society is subject to many conditions. Historically, some lines of influence were fairly straightforward. Rising literacy rates, for instance, can be attributed at least partly to formal education. This, in turn, can be linked to economic growth. Reading and writing are aspects of *human capital* and schooling contributed directly to such skills, and hence social advancement. But other aspects of education's role are less obvious. There is, for example, schooling's effect on the social structure, or the status of various groups. Clearly, it helped some to advance, but did its benefits extend to everyone? This is a critical feature of social change: Who succeeded in history and who did not. Expressed a little differently, it speaks to a key issue: Can schooling help to change the prevailing social structure, or does it simply reinforce existing patterns of inequality?

To address this, it is helpful to consider the experiences of different social groups, especially regarding the impact of education in their lives. This means looking at inequality in history, and people who suffered exclusion and discrimination. In many respects, members of certain groups lived at the margins of society. They included

immigrants (mainly from Europe, but elsewhere too), White (native-born) women, African Americans (slaves and freedmen), and Native Americans (or American Indians), among others. To one extent or another, people in these categories occupied positions of dependency or inferiority in society. Their unequal status was often justified by an ideology articulated and promulgated by native-born White males, although its influence affected everyone. Each of these groups came to attach differing degrees of significance to schooling in challenging their subordinate status. The successes and disappointments they experienced speak to the transformative power of education, and its limitations.

Of course, there are many other tales to tell in assessing the contributions of schooling to social change. For instance, it is clear that children from working- or lower-class families did not benefit from school to the same extent as those from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, as seen in discussing the high school in the previous chapter. Consequently, education came to demarcate social class distinctions. These differences existed throughout the country, across regions, among women, and within the various ethnic and racial minority groups. Many children found the question of education especially poignant. For some, schooling proved to be a potent vehicle of self-improvement and social mobility. For others, it ultimately became a grim reminder of failure and source of frustration. Their stories point to some of the most telling contours of education, or its boundaries, as an instrument of social change.

FOCAL POINT: CONFLICT OVER RELIGION AND CULTURE IN EDUCATION

The late afternoon meeting of New York's Common Council on October 29, 1840, was a momentous occasion. Attended by a packed crowd in the City Hall chambers, it convened to consider a petition by the city's Catholics for public funds to support parish schools. Emotions ran high on both sides of the debate that ensued. Bishop John Hughes, a fervid and articulate champion of New York's

Irish community, presented the Catholic position. Opposed to Hughes stood the Public School Society, the semiprivate corporate entity that had managed the city's charity schools for decades (successor to the Free School Society mentioned in Chapter 2), represented by two lawyers. In the dispute lasting almost 15 hours over two evenings, practically all the arguments regarding common schools were aired, pro and con. Of particular importance, however, were the Bishop's objections to the idea that a common, nonsectarian education was desirable or even possible. The Catholic petition represented a serious challenge to the principle of public education espoused by Horace Mann and others. Even though it ultimately was unsuccessful, this exchange revealed much about tensions that underlay American society. In this instance, passionate conflict threatened to destabilize public education just as it was starting. Ethnicity, in all its cultural and religious variety, made the task of defining a common-school experience especially difficult.

Hughes and his followers objected to the Public School Society's institutions on a number of grounds. The first, and most important, concerned religion. Non-sectarianism, according to the Catholics, was simply another form of religion, and in the city's public schools, it became a general distillation of spiritual precepts and maxims, along with readings from the King James Bible. This, declared Hughes, posed the danger of Catholic children turning against their own faith, while gradually being captivated by the Protestant culture prevalent in the schools and America at large. Even worse was the threat of students losing religion altogether. "To make an infidel, what is it necessary to do?" demanded Hughes. "Cage him up in a room, give him a secular education from the age of five years to twenty one, and I ask you what he will not come out, if not an infidel?" (Ravitch, 1974). To Hughes and other Catholics, this was a most pernicious threat.

Added to this were numerous slights and slanders against Catholicism and the Irish in the popular schoolbooks of the day, and in the conduct of many teachers. It was little wonder, reasoned Hughes, that Catholic children had such poor attendance records. These institutions were deemed hostile to the beliefs and heritage of the immigrant Catholic population, particularly the Irish. Textbooks related appalling accounts of the Inquisition, equating “papists” with intolerance and oppression. Other passages praised Martin Luther, founder of the Protestant Reformation, for breaking with the “ignorance and superstition” of the Catholic Church (Lannie, 1968). One book declared that immigration would make the United States the “common sewer of Ireland” (Kaestle, 1983). Instances such as these confirmed the belief of Hughes and other Catholics that the Church’s parochial schools were entitled to tax monies. The existing public schools were discriminatory and culturally intolerant, and fairness demanded that Catholics be allowed to run their own educational institutions.

Bishop John Hughes was an unusually ardent champion of Catholic and Irish causes, and he quickly rose to national prominence. In this instance, however, he did not succeed in winning support for parochial schools. Instead, the controversy was resolved by establishing New York’s first publicly elected Board of Education in 1842, and within a decade virtually all of the city’s tax-supported schools came under its control. Offensive passages in textbooks gradually were expunged, and eventually new books were purchased that were more even-handed regarding religious themes and immigrants. For his part, Hughes spearheaded the development of parochial school systems across the country. These institutions were especially popular in larger cities with significant immigrant populations. For members of these groups, the parochial schools offered a way to maintain their religious traditions, and a safeguard for

native languages and customs (Lannie, 1968; Ravitch, 1974).

A part of Hughes' fervor can be explained by the circumstances of his immigrant, largely Irish constituency. Most were quite poor, and often were subjected to blatant discrimination. This was especially true of the Irish, who mostly arrived from the impoverished countryside with the unpolished manners of traditional folkways. In the years following 1845, when the infamous potato famine drove more than two million abroad, thousands of destitute and desperate Irish poured into New York and other cities each year. Crime rates went up dramatically, as did the numbers of applications for poor relief (financial assistance) and other forms of public aid. Overcrowded and dirty, Irish neighborhoods often were rife with sickness and disease. Many native-born Americans reacted quite adversely to the newcomers, labeling them heathens, criminals, and drunkards. Anti-Catholic sentiments were inflamed too, especially given the rapid growth of the Church. Nativist (anti-immigrant) fears were fueled by the perception of growing immigrant political power as their numbers swelled. Aware of these sentiments, local Irish leaders felt embattled, especially priests and bishops (Archdeacon, 1983; Kenny, 2000).

Sometimes the threats were more destructive than the loss of culture and religious identity. In the mid-1840s, nativist mobs in Boston, Philadelphia, and other cities attacked Catholic institutions, burning churches and other buildings in fits of nativist hysteria. These episodes were fueled by competition for jobs and political influence, and by problems of crime and public disorder that many associated with immigrants. In Philadelphia, fighting began after accusations that Catholics were scheming to remove Protestant bibles from the public schools (Wainwright et al., 1982). Violence was rooted in long-standing hostility to Catholicism in American culture, which held the Pope to be a despotic foreign figure who threatened democratic

traditions. The growth of the Catholic Church, with parochial schooling and other signs of its influence, was seen to be a direct challenge to American institutions.

Incidents of mob violence certainly did not make members of immigrant communities feel welcome. Indeed, these events added urgency to plans for developing their own institutions and to resist integration into American society. For many immigrants, assimilation was scarcely a cheerful thought. The United States seemed an antagonistic land, one posing especially grave dangers to their children (Archdeacon, 1983; Jacobson, 1998).

Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that relatively few Irish children attended school, especially those from the poorest families. In his comments to New York's Common Council, Hughes estimated that fewer than half the city's Catholic children were enrolled. He blamed the Public School Society and the hostility of its Protestant patrons for this. Even though Hughes did not succeed in getting tax monies for Catholic schools, he did manage to impair the reputation of his adversaries. Eventually, the imperious Public School Society was displaced, and the public schools became somewhat more hospitable to Irish students, along with other immigrants. Hughes' expanding system of parochial schools also offered greater educational opportunities to Catholics. But the question of whether significant numbers of indigent foreign children would be educated remained unanswered. These students posed a telling challenge to the schools, especially those of the newly formed Board of Education. Could the children's diverse cultural and social backgrounds be accommodated by institutions dedicated to assimilation? Or would ethnic groups stand apart from the educational system, creating a parallel community replete with their own institutions, separate from the rest of American society?

Ethnic Struggles and Success Stories

The ultimate fate of most European immigrant communities, of course, is well known. The descendants of the Irish and other such groups eventually came into the American mainstream, and schooling played a role in their assimilation. It was not accomplished easily, however, and the ethnic struggle for success unfolded over several generations. For the Catholics, this was an interval of considerable conflict, but also one of progress. Faced with daunting obstacles upon arrival, even the poorest European immigrants could look hopefully to the future, especially for their children (Olneck, 2008).

Not everyone came from northwestern Europe, however, and for other groups these questions proved even more painful. While immigration was predominantly European on the East Coast, elsewhere Hispanic (largely Mexican) and Asian communities represented ethnic alternatives to the cultural mainstream. Their numbers were limited in the 19th century and concentrated in the West, but members of these groups often were forced to attend segregated schools, where any were provided with inferior academic offerings. Like the Irish, they encountered hostility to their native culture and disdain for their religious traditions. They too waged battles for equal treatment in the schools, but found it difficult to achieve lasting progress. Not all ethnic groups experienced the schools as uplifting, in that case, and much depended on whether they were even allowed to adapt to American life (Gonzalez & Fernandez, 2003). Asian (Chinese and Japanese) and Mexican immigrants were often considered “non-white,” and subject to racist ideology and widespread discrimination. This contributed enormously to the problems they encountered.

As for European immigration, the Irish represent a telling case. Their migration to the United States reflected an early stage of global integration economically, although they were fleeing starvation as much as seeking new opportunity. Most arrived destitute following the 1845 potato famine. Crowding into eastern cities, they had few marketable skills and little cultural capital to help secure a foothold. Consequently, many were unemployed, while others worked as

unskilled laborers. Most lived in abject poverty, fueling stereotypes of shiftlessness and irresponsibility. They often competed with African Americans for jobs, creating considerable social tension. Irish women worked as household domestics, cleaning for middle-class urbanites and reinforcing impressions of their servile standing. As Bishop Hughes noted, Irish children were less likely than others to attend school; most ceased formal education before their teens to find jobs and help support their families. The Irish were more likely than any other major group in New York to land in the city's jails, and they constituted a disproportionate share of the homeless. Theirs was hardly a plight that offered promise of redemption (Kenny, 2000).

With time and hard work, however, the living conditions and social standing of the Irish improved. Although most of the famine generation was unskilled and impoverished, their children often found opportunities for advancement. The second generation moved into skilled trades, becoming bricklayers and carpenters, plumbers, and masons. These were jobs requiring skills learned through work or an apprenticeship, not formal training or schooling. This was also true for factory foremen or skilled operatives. Such jobs meant higher standards of living, however, and entry into the lower reaches of the middle class. For the enterprising Irish lad who was willing to work hard and learn from experience, it was possible to get ahead. This was the first step in a lengthy process of social mobility and adaptation (Archdeacon, 1983; Thernstrom, 1973).

The Irish also benefited by leaving the crowded cities of the East, as did other immigrant groups. In the mid-19th century, New York newspaperman Horace Greeley advised his readers to escape congested urban areas, famously declaring, "Go west, young man!" Those heeding his admonition often did quite well. It was not long before the social profile of the Irish in places such as Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis came to closely resemble that of the native-born population. Economic good-fortune contributed to social and cultural integration (Sanders, 1977; Vinyard, 1976).

This gradual success eventually led to better school attendance for Irish children, and further occupational mobility as well. As more families gained middle-class status, educational attainment levels

improved. By the end of the 19th century, enrollment rates for students of Irish heritage were nearly the same as Protestant Americans. The sons and daughters of Irish Americans often attended parochial schools, including Catholic high schools, but these institutions became quite similar to their public counterparts. As a consequence, second- and third-generation Irish Americans began to achieve occupational parity with the general population. They took positions in the growing civil service, as policemen, and in the rapidly expanding field of office employment. By the early 20th century, nearly 30% of all public school teachers in New York were of Irish descent, the largest ethnic group among Board of Education employees. Teachers in other large cities exhibited similar ethnic profiles. The Irish, once noted for their poor school attendance, had come to staff many of the schools. This was a telling measure of change (Kenny, 2000; Perlmann, 1988).

The Irish benefitted from advantages that no doubt helped them to succeed. They spoke English on arrival, and were rapidly integrated into the domestic political system. New York's first Irish mayor was elected in the 1880s, and Irish politicians were successful elsewhere. They also were the first major immigrant group to arrive at the time, well positioned to benefit from rapid industrialization and urban development. Even though they remained loyal to the Catholic Church and its schools, hospitals, and other institutions, success helped them feel comfortable in their new homeland (Archdeacon, 1983; Kenny, 2000).

Other immigrants faced similar challenges, and some took considerably longer to succeed. But in the end, all the major European groups followed a path at least broadly comparable. In a careful analysis of different ethnic groups, historian Joel Perlmann has argued that some immigrants exhibited a greater proclivity toward schooling than others. As noted in the Introduction, for instance, Russian Jewish children attended school in unusually high numbers, and experienced considerable occupational mobility as a consequence. Italians and Poles, on the other hand, had lower rates of attendance, perhaps reflecting educational conditions in their homelands, and realized slower improvement in social status. Over time, however, schooling increased for all such groups, and this

ultimately contributed to their assimilation. For most this process lasted well into the 20th century. In some cases, it was a painstaking struggle, but evidence of progress was undeniable over time (Hogan, 1985; Perlmann, 1988).

With respect to non-European “alien” groups, the situation was both similar and different. After the Mexican American War, the new territories of Texas, California, New Mexico and Arizona had many residents who would later be called Mexican Americans. Like immigrants described earlier, many were quite poor and retained their own distinctive cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions. Even though they were a majority in some places, and had lived in the territories a century or more, Mexican Americans often were treated as colonial subjects, and subject to violence. As suggested earlier, racist ideology held them to be socially and intellectually inferior. Hundreds were lynched or murdered in other ways by racist Whites. Their language and religion were denigrated, and schooling was often unavailable, unless provided by the Catholic Church or Protestant missionaries. When accessible, public schools usually were segregated, with inferior institutions for Spanish-speaking children. Conditions were especially harsh in Texas, where the Hispanic population was subservient to “Anglos” who controlled the region’s politics and economic resources. At the end of the 19th century, fewer than 18% of Mexican American children attended school there. Brutality and exploitation at the hands of whites were powerful lessons outside of school, even if many resisted them. It would be decades before these conditions would change (Carrigan & Webb, 2013; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

In New Mexico, where the native population was called “Hispanos” and numbered more than fifty thousand, they were able to exert considerable political power. But even there, it was a constant struggle to assure equity and their schools were poorly funded, if not fully segregated. Discrimination and exclusion, rooted in struggles over land and economic status, remained predominant themes. Consequently, the experience of Mexican Americans ultimately was quite different from that of the Irish and other immigrant groups. For them, social and economic integration into the mainstream proved very difficult. The same was true of Asian families that came to the

western United States in this period. For most of these Americans, the struggle for equality would not begin to bear fruit until another era (Donato, 2007; Getz, 1997; Tamura, 2001).

The gradual but eventually successful assimilation of European immigrants is the centerpiece to one of the nation's great parables. It is widely known as the American Dream, a story of triumph against great odds (Samuel, 2012). Of course, the experience of Spanish-speaking communities in the Southwest was quite different. But like the Irish, most European immigrants ultimately did find success. Arriving with little more than a capacity for hard labor, they made their way in the booming industrial economy, while their children attended school in ever-greater numbers. As more entered the middle class, their children attained even higher levels of education. There was considerable variation in these trends, but the effects of growing enrollment inevitably affected the changing occupational profile of successive generations. Schools also helped to accommodate these children to their new American identities, inculcating national pride and loyalty along with community values. These institutions added human capital, conveying new skills and knowledge, at the same time that they imparted cultural capital. In this respect, it is possible to say that the school system contributed directly to the process of social change. In many ways, after all, education was integral to the social, economic, and cultural integration that occurred in this era. This seems to have been true for many immigrants, even if not for all. The ideal of education contributing to social success and assimilation is a legacy that continues to the present. Whether or not it has worked equally well for everyone, however, is another question.

Gender and Education: A Momentous Transformation

As noted in earlier chapters, American women had a mixed educational legacy after the Revolution. In most parts of the new nation, they had been largely excluded from formal schooling. Female literacy lagged male rates, even in New England, where girls received more instruction than elsewhere. Following calls for more

female education, there was flurry of activity, but it is not clear how many women were affected. Although some female academies may have been established, no colleges admitted women in the 18th century. In 1800, despite evidence of growing coeducation in common schools, most American women still were poorly educated compared to men (Nash, 2005; Sklar, 1993; Vinovskis & Bernard, 1978).

All of this changed profoundly in the next 100 years. By 1900, female literacy rates exceeded those of males, and women outnumbered men in high schools and were gaining ground in colleges and universities. Even if this was largely restricted to Whites, the magnitude of change was striking. Formerly excluded from higher branches of education, women rapidly seemed to dominate them, causing alarm in some quarters. As seen in the previous chapter, a majority of American teachers were women by the latter 19th century, and other educated job categories were becoming feminized too. Altogether, a revolution of sorts had occurred, at least with regard to gender (Nash, 2008; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

A shift of such proportions raises a host of questions. How did it happen? How did it affect women's status? Just how did the growth of female education change the ideological construction of gender in American society? To answer these questions and others, it is necessary to examine changes in women's education a bit more closely (Rury, 1991a).

Led by visionary leaders, both women and men, female schooling developed in fits and starts. Perhaps its best known early figure was Emma Willard, founder of the Troy (New York) Female Academy, today known as the Emma Willard School. In 1819, Willard wrote a treatise on female education to persuade New York legislators to support her planned school. She was not successful, but did manage to find donations elsewhere. Decrying the poor state of female schooling, especially at the secondary level, Willard argued that women deserved and needed an education similar in quality, if not content, to that for "young gentlemen." She called for schools with endowments, so tuition charges could be moderate and such

institutions would not be overly dependent on enrollments (Scott, 1979).

Willard did not envision training young women for work or careers outside the home. Rather, she argued that higher quality education was necessary “to form the character of the next generation, by controlling that of the females who are to be their mothers.” In other words, she subscribed to a version of “republican motherhood,” the conception of women’s roles articulated after the Revolution. Willard was among the first women to espouse this view publicly, however, marking an important step in the development of female education. Historian Anne Firor Scott has argued that this was an early expression of feminism, describing a sphere where women could grow intellectually without threatening male status. Other scholars described this impulse as “domestic feminism,” especially apt given the concerns expressed by Willard and other educators. Whatever its label, it was an idea that became the rationale for White women’s education during the remainder of the century (Scott, 1978; Sklar, 1973).

Domestic feminism, premised on the notion that educated women made better wives and mothers, was the entering wedge for a generation of reformers advocating female schooling. It was an argument closely tied to the idea that women made good teachers. Prominent educators such as Mary Lyon and Catharine Beecher also made careers by founding schools, training teachers and writing about women’s education. Common-school reformers like Horace Mann, whose advocacy of women teachers also helped female education, contributed additional support. Mann later pioneered collegiate coeducation as the first president of Antioch College.

All this helped to encourage higher levels of women’s education. As public high schools were opened, in that case, they typically were coeducational. In some larger cities separate schools were established for girls, to maintain an appearance of decorum. This was especially true in the South. But even in the most conservative settings, few arguments were offered to challenge the logic of educating women for domesticity. In opening the city’s female high school in 1854, the Boston School Committee declared that women have “the most fearfully responsible duties which can be assigned to

human beings: to form and give direction to human character." The purpose of the school, in other words, was to prepare young women to become "competent mothers and teachers," and "fit companion(s) of high minded and intelligent men" (quoted in Rury, 1991a, p. 16). If American civilization was to prevail, according to this ideological reasoning, the nation's women needed the best possible preparation for marriage and motherhood (Clinton, 1984; Rury, 1991a; Welter, 1966).

Once the door was open to female enrollment, the nation's secondary school population soon was dominated by young women. By 1870, women were a majority in public high schools, and at century's end there were almost twice as many girls enrolled as boys. The large number of female students was due both to relatively low male attendance rates and the fact that many young women simply liked school. Boys could find jobs more easily and at younger ages, leading many to leave school. On the other hand, attending high schools got young women out of the house and into a setting where they could make friends and learn about the larger world. They excelled in a range of subjects, including algebra and sciences, considered traditionally male. It also helped many prepare for jobs in teaching, working in an office, or even going on to college. About a fifth of the collegiate student population was female by 1900. The high school, in that case, proved to be quite alluring to teenage girls, especially those from "middling" households, marking a major shift in American culture. Given the growth of secondary enrollments, native-born White women probably were better educated than their male counterparts by the 1890s (Tolley, 2002; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

Not everyone participated equally in this process of change. As might be expected, women from certain backgrounds were better represented. By and large, the teenage daughters of white-collar workers, the emerging middle class, were more likely to enroll than other girls. Those with parents born in the United States also had high rates of attendance. For young women of the working class, the need to work often made advanced schooling impossible. In this pattern, it is once again possible to see the effects of social and cultural capital. It was young White women from stable, older

communities and with educated parents who had clear advantages. Other women also enrolled in high schools, including some from immigrant and working-class backgrounds, but they faced obstacles. Typically, poorer women were required to work to help support their families, and they often married at earlier ages. Consequently, they did not graduate at the same rate as more affluent girls. Domestic feminism, it seems, favored the education of women most readily disposed to pursue advanced schooling, and those most prepared for transmitting American traditions to future generations. Well-educated women held appeal as potential spouses, as they could prepare their children for success in school and life beyond it. In this respect, the growth of women's education was the very embodiment of cultural capital, transferring skills and knowledge necessary for social status, and highlighting differences in family expectations (Hunter, 2002; Rury, 1988a, 1991).

The expansion of women's education, consequently, marked a quiet revolution. The ideology of domestic feminism held that new skills and knowledge did not jeopardize traditional gender roles. Higher levels of education did not mean that women were going to compete with men. Female education thus posed little challenge to traditional patriarchy. Because women in high schools and colleges were still relatively few, less than 10% of their cohort, female attainment did not threatened most men. Although there was some debate at the time, most Americans did not feel education would create a change in women's standing. The success of female schooling, in the end, may have hinged on educators' inability or unwillingness to seriously challenge the status quo in gender relations.

FOCAL POINT: EDWARD CLARKE AND THE DANGERS OF FEMALE EDUCATION

As suggested above, there was debate over female secondary and higher education at this time. Some conservatives were troubled by coeducation, which seemed to suggest that young men and women could

receive just the same education. Others worried about the morality of teenage male and female students mixing in classrooms and buildings, fearing an epidemic of promiscuity. Catholic leaders, for example, denounced coeducation on these grounds. But perhaps the biggest uproar resulted from a book published in 1873 by physician Edward Clarke, titled *Sex in Education, or a Fair Chance for the Girls*. A slim volume that went through 11 printings in just six years, it claimed that academic and physical exertion was dangerous to young women, and that schooling during the teenage years threatened their health and prospects for motherhood. The controversy that it spawned revealed much both about Victorian beliefs and popular attitudes about sexuality and education. It also underscored the magnitude of change in women's schooling (Zschoche, 1989).

Clarke was once a member of the Harvard medical faculty, an academic pedigree that added to the book's notoriety. The fact that he was from Boston, long associated with conservative morality, also probably contributed to the debate. But Clarke did not ground his arguments in tradition and morality. Instead he maintained that scientific evidence indicated that exertion in school presented the danger of infertility—or sterility—in young women. He argued that adolescence was a critical time in the physical development of women, when their reproductive organs took shape. During that period, he wrote, a young woman "accomplishes an amount of physiological cell change and growth which nature does not require of a boy in less than twice the number of years" (quoted in Rury, 1991a, p. 25). The book featured cases that Clarke claimed to know firsthand, discussed in a clinical fashion, describing girls with anemia due to over-strenuous study. Such accounts were shocking to many Victorian parents, and Clarke's tone of scientific authority gave the book credibility. To most families, the mere possibility of young women losing their ability to give birth

was terrible to contemplate. This question contributed to the book's considerable public appeal (Rosenberg, 1982).

The threat of infertility struck at the very heart of women's education, particularly as it was supported by the ideological formulation of domestic feminism. If schooling threatened a woman's capacity to bear children, after all, what was the point of being educated? The very object of female schooling was to become better mothers. If education somehow put motherhood itself in jeopardy, the logic of domestic feminism would seem to obviate the need or desire for education. Clarke's argument appeared to pose a dire hazard to the advance women's schooling (Rothman, 1978).

The challenge to women's education represented by Clarke's book, it turned out, was rather empty. The response was swift and compelling. Within a year of its publication, at least three other books appeared, challenging the idea that schooling was a danger to women's health. Educators clamored to protest Clarke's suggestion that women should be discouraged from higher studies. Several argued that women's health problems were the result of poor exercise and too much confinement at home. Young women, they maintained, needed to get away from the house and to be stimulated intellectually and physically. They cited dozens of cases of women flourishing at school, instances that seemed to directly contradict Clarke's evidence. Echoing others, former normal school principal Anna Brackett argued that boys and girls were "wonderfully alike" in their search for knowledge and understanding. To deny women an opportunity for education, she reasoned, would leave them "dwarfed and crippled," physically developed but "mentally a child" (quoted in Rury, 1991a, p. 30). Statements such as these left little doubt where most educators stood on the question. Although some conservatives rallied to Clarke's defense, his argument found relatively little support in the general public. Despite the book's many editions and the

attending outcry, it ultimately did not exert much influence on women's schooling (Rury, 1991; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

The episode was telling, however, on a number of counts. Clarke's book sparked controversy because it touched on Victorian anxieties about female fragility and sexuality. At the same time that domestic feminism opened the door to female education, it also put women on pedestals in the name of virtue and motherhood. As suggested in the previous chapter, the idea of a revered but highly delimited role for women was an important component of 19th-century ideology. Middle-class Americans thus often harbored contradictory feelings about women's education. Although they welcomed the opportunity for girls in coeducational high schools and colleges, they also worried it might compromise traditional gender roles. This partly accounted for the interest in Clarke's book. In addition, 19th-century medical theories placed inordinate emphasis on the reproductive organs in explaining women's health, reflecting Victorian preoccupation with sexuality and motherhood. Consequently, the very fact that Clarke suggested a link between schooling and infertility was bound to draw attention (Degler, 1980; Hunter, 2002).

Nevertheless, in the end there was too much popular and professional support for women's education for critics like Clarke to stem its development. Among the many responses engendered by *Sex in Education* was a forceful critique by William Torrey Harris, superintendent of the St. Louis public schools. He noted that teaching boys and girls together seemed to be a natural arrangement, similar to how they worked together in the family and church. "It is in accordance with the spirit of institutions," he declared, "to treat women as self-determining beings, and less in want of those external artificial barriers that were built … in past times." In addition to this, Harris suggested that the girls exerted a positive influence on the boys, making them more manageable and providing models of good behavior.

“The rudeness and abandon which prevails among boys,” he wrote, “at once gives place to self-restraint in the presence of girls” (Rury, 1991a, p. 31). Of course, Harris also appreciated the value of women teachers, and the importance of educated mothers, the major tenets of domestic feminism. But his principal motivations may have been quite practical, perhaps even penurious. Harris realized that without young women, high schools probably would not have been feasible. Female enrollments made these institutions viable; male students were too few and they tended to have lower graduation rates. Female high school graduates also provided new teachers for the burgeoning elementary schools. Given these considerations, it is little wonder that educators across the country vehemently rejected Clarke’s arguments. Women’s education was a key component of the emerging public school system, especially in rapidly expanding urban districts (Reese, 1995; Rury, 1991a).

Perhaps the most important element in the debate, however, was the experience of young women in the schools. For the most part, American parents whose daughters attended high school and college did not see them get sick very often. Indeed, there is little systematic evidence that women’s experiences in this regard were any different from those of young men. Female daily attendance in St. Louis, for instance, averaged only 2% points less than boys over a 15-year period, 94% vs. 96%. Clearly, girls were not missing school in large numbers because of illness, and they also had lower dropout rates than the boys. If Clarke’s book was intended to give parents doubts about female schooling, the experiences of their daughters were cause for reassurance. The vast majority of American high school students were quite healthy, and girls apparently were no more sickly than their male classmates (Rury, 1991a).

Still, the old Victorian anxieties did not die easily. Popular beliefs about inherent differences between men and

women were deeply ingrained, and were reinforced by ministers, physicians, and a host of other authorities. Even if educators believed in the virtues of coeducation, they also took pains to insure that female students were not overexerted, nor exposed to unseemly influences. Consequently, it became commonplace for schools to feature separate doors and staircases for male and female students. Some educators warned against scheduling too many classes on higher floors for young women, as climbing stairs might pose a danger. Others urged regular programs of exercise for female students, to build stamina and combat anemia. Even the most outspoken advocates of coeducation continued to see women as frail, and needing attention to guarantee their health and vitality. The ideology of domestic feminism was pervasive, and it linked schooling inevitably to female roles of domesticity and motherhood. The very same ideas that served to expand women's education also defined the limits of its equality (Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

Coeducation and women's higher education continued to be points of contention for decades in the United States, and they still manage to get into the news today. At the turn of the century, Teddy Roosevelt and other national leaders expressed concern about the low rate of marriage among college-educated women. Others worried about morality, especially as greater numbers of women appeared on college campuses and images of "flappers" and dating began emerged in the 1920s. Such concerns, like Clarke's, reflected the push of women's education against the boundaries of patriarchy and the ideology of domesticity that shaped female roles. It was a tradition and set of cultural expectations that would change slowly in years to come (Gordon, 1990; Solomon, 1985).

Education and Women's Status

The foregoing begs an obvious query: What were the effects of these changes? If the quiet revolution in women's education did not challenge traditional gender roles, how did female schooling affect social change? What about other areas of women's lives, such as work and social or political activities? Another way of posing the question might be this: How did shifts in female education affect women's status outside of their families?

Historians suggest that gender roles were shifting significantly in the later 19th century. This era witnessed an early women's rights movement, when leaders such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton became renowned and also controversial. Much attention has focused on this group of women, especially their campaigns for women's suffrage (voting rights). There can be little doubt that schooling contributed to the growth of this movement, as its most active members were themselves rather well educated. But the women's rights campaign was relatively small in spite of its notoriety. More significant were the thousands of women, most of them middle class, who became involved in other reform causes. On issues ranging from temperance to universal peace and ending child labor, these women became immersed in a wide array of "social improvement" activities. They were in the forefront of the social settlement movement in big cities, working to help the poor and disenfranchised. Jane Addams' work at Hull House in Chicago is perhaps the best-known example, but there were scores of other women who worked in similar settings. They became active in local politics, and some even were elected to school boards and other offices in western states, which permitted female voting and candidates. Women's clubs flourished across the country, and became vehicles for local reform campaigns. Female readers supported the first mass circulation magazines focusing on social issues, and helped to make "muckraking" a potent political influence in the 1890s. In all of these respects, women contributed to moral leadership for the nation, even if they were denied formal power at the national ballot box. This was also a new development in American history, and by and large it was educated women who provided the leadership and most active contributors to these endeavors (Rendall, 1985; Rosenberg, 1982; Sklar, 1995).

Historian Ann Douglas has suggested that the cumulative effect of this was a “feminization of American culture.” As middle-class women became more involved in social reform, they wielded moral power derived from their status as mothers and wives. If they were supposed to be inherently nurturing and virtuous, after all, it followed that women should also represent a high ethical standard in public affairs. In popular culture, consequently, female reform activities became associated with ameliorating social ills. But their intrinsic virtue, real or imagined, was only a part of the story. To function as effective reformers, these women needed well-developed organizational skills, advanced literacy and analytical capacities, and a cultivated sense of history and social change. Given this, it is little wonder that educated women played such prominent roles in certain aspects of social reform. Schooling provided them with the skills and vision necessary to become effective agents of improvement. They became impassioned speakers, accomplished writers, and perceptive social critics, examining a host of problems and encouraging reform. At the same time they were denied conventional careers, more than a few became outspoken reform figures and leaders of informal advocacy groups. In this regard, education contributed materially to the process of social change, even if female schooling was delimited and intended to support traditional gender roles (Douglas, 1977; Harris, 1978; Sklar, 1995).

Social activism was just one area of change in White women’s lives; yet another quiet revolution was getting under way in women’s work. As noted earlier, girls and young women had been employed in factories since the early 19th century, and women teachers were commonplace in New England and elsewhere. But beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, women started finding employment in offices and in early department stores. The invention of the typewriter in the 1880s contributed to this, declared suitable for women by analogy to piano playing, a presumably feminine talent. Even more important was the rapid growth of office employment, created by large-scale industrial and retail enterprises serving national markets, and government agencies formed to supervise them. These new, massive firms required extensive correspondence and record-keeping, calling for legions of skilled workers. High-school-educated

women provided a ready pool of recruits, usually at a lower cost than men. The same tendency was evident at big department stores and catalogue houses then beginning to appear, such as Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward. Bright and articulate young women made excellent receptionists and sales associates, and also operators for telephone exchanges. The result was a new type of work for educated women: employment in a store or office. This was a respectable alternative to the factory, clean, well lit, and often entailing contact with the public. Most women in these positions were young and unmarried, and typically left the labor force after finding a spouse. The newly feminized workplace, it turned out, also provided a convenient setting for meeting potential suitors in many instances. This made such occupations all the more alluring. Without the changes in women's education, however, it is unlikely that their movement into such jobs would have occurred so quickly and easily (Davies, 1982; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Powers, 1992; Rotella, 1981).

Women moved into a number of other professions in the closing decades of the 19th century, most requiring one form or another of advanced education. The new research-oriented universities and professional schools admitted women, and eventually trained some to be professors, medical doctors, and lawyers. Although their numbers were tiny at the start, this indicated the beginning of a gradual transformation of women's work that would grow with time. As noted earlier, the teaching profession feminized and thousands of women found employment in the nation's schools. Many districts preferred unmarried female teachers, believing that wives should be devoted to their families, and most left work after several years to be wed. This created almost constant demand for new teachers, and young women eagerly answered the call. Even though their educational backgrounds varied, most graduated from secondary school, and a growing number of them attended colleges and normal schools. Thus, as the 19th century drew to a close, women began to appear in the ranks of what today would be called professional employment, another new development in American history. A key step in this process, of course, was gaining access to secondary education, and enrolling in colleges and professional schools. Here too, shifts in female education marked a prelude to changes in

women's work (Goldin, 1990; MacDonald, 1999; Rothman, 1978; Solomon, 1985).

Changes in women's schooling, in that case, led to a number of subtle but important shifts in female roles. Only a minority of women participated in these developments, however, and for most others traditional role expectations and overt sexism continued to shape their lives. The women who benefited from education were generally White and from middle- or upper-class backgrounds. But for those with access to schooling, a transformation was underway. Women became active in public affairs and moved into new, higher status professional fields. Education made this possible, and change would continue, especially in employment. In this regard, it is possible to say that education contributed directly to the process of social change, at least regarding gender roles. In providing White, largely middle-class women with critical skills, knowledge, and credentials, it enabled them to challenge many restrictions their mothers had faced, even if most eventually left the labor force to become mothers themselves. It certainly did not spell an end to patriarchy, and it marked a rather modest step in the long struggle against sexist ideology, but was significant nonetheless. It was a telling process of transition, one that appears even more significant in light of other groups' experiences (Blackwelder, 1997).

African American Education: Hope and Despair

If certain women benefited from education, other groups were not so fortunate. Like women, African Americans also have been subject to discrimination and exploitation throughout history. As noted in Chapter 1, the very first schools for Blacks were intended to teach them morality and proper behavior, attributes White leaders thought they lacked. Of course, such schools served only a tiny fraction of the African American population; the vast majority were slaves in the 18th and early 19th centuries. This meant that opportunities for formal education were extremely limited, although a noteworthy degree of learning did occur in slave communities. This created a great thirst for knowledge, and helped to make schooling an important priority for Black Americans.

Education has long been a major theme in African American culture. Dating from the early 19th century, Black leaders emphasized the significance of schools as instruments of social uplift. Even in slavery, when most were denied all forms of formal education, enterprising African Americans made valiant efforts to acquire literacy and other skills. Blacks recognized that lack of education was a mark of inferiority, serving to legitimize their servile status. Racist ideology held that they were intellectually inferior, and inequitable schooling gave such views credence. It is little wonder, in that case, that when slavery was formally abolished during the Civil War, ex-slaves rushed to educate their children in schools that opened soon afterwards. Education was seen as a road out of Canaan, a path to redemption.

Themes of resistance and liberation predominate in the history of Black education. During slavery and afterward, Blacks strived to maintain a cohesive cultural identity in the face of racist oppression. Formal education typically was denied to slaves, except training provided by masters seeking skilled workers. Occasionally there were lessons learned in church or from friendly Whites, sometimes children. But after the bloody, sensationalized rebellion led by slave preacher Nat Turner in 1831, and the rise of the abolitionist movement, Southern states outlawed instruction of any sort for slaves. To be caught merely in possession of a book was cause for severe, even cruel punishment (Bond, 1966; Bullock, 1967).

But laws and brute coercion could not halt the process of acculturation in slave communities. Lessons were passed from one generation to another, representing a rich cultural tradition. Storytelling became a highly refined craft. Slave children were taught to honor and respect their elders and to preserve family and community traditions. They also had to evade Whites predisposed to exploit and abuse them. This meant displaying deference, and observing unwritten rules of race relations. Many managed to gain literacy illegally, and passed it along to others. They struggled to assert their humanity despite White efforts to deny it. In doing this, they cultivated a belief in their own moral superiority over White oppressors, creating a folklore of ingenuity and courage. Above all, they expressed the desire for freedom, and the ability to determine

their own destinies. Education became a central element of this, a major theme in African American culture (Blassingame, 1972; Mintz, 2004; Webber, 1978).

In Northern states, where slavery had been abolished, free Blacks worked assiduously to establish schools for their communities, or to amend those established by Whites, such as New York's Manumission Society. They often were assisted by the growing abolitionist movement, visionary Whites, and free Blacks demanding an immediate end to slavery. In larger cities, such schools eventually became vital Black community institutions. With support from philanthropists, they served a largely destitute population, as even educated Blacks struggled in the face of pervasive discrimination. A generation of Black leaders received formal training in this way, inspiring White humanitarians to establish institutions for others. By mid-century, a number of educational opportunities for Blacks existed in the North, although schools also were violently attacked by racist Whites. These beginnings yielded a small but growing cadre of educated Blacks, contributing to African American schooling in the South following emancipation (Curry, 1981; Litwack, 1961; Moss, 2009).

Despite these positive developments, 19th-century Black education was quite different from schooling for other groups. In this respect, it reflected the powerful influence of racist ideology. First, it was almost always segregated, and encountered fierce resistance from Whites fearful of African Americans. Although school leaders argued that boys and girls should attend the same schools, most reformers shrank from suggestions that Blacks and Whites should be educated together. Even Horace Mann, champion of common school and outspoken opponent of slavery, did not endorse it. Some reactions were violent; schools for Blacks were burned and teachers run out of town. This was a contrast to the response to women's education, which prompted bitter debates but never led to violent outbursts. Second, when Black schooling was offered, it usually had strong moralistic or vocational overtones. This was evident in 18th-century New York and long afterwards. Reflecting racist views regarding their abilities and behavior, few Whites believed Blacks could benefit from advanced training. Instead, they were given a

curriculum focused on good behavior and manual labor. From the very start, Black schooling was separate and unequal (Horsman, 1981; Moss, 2006; Rury, 1983, 1985; Schultz, 1973).

Soon after the Civil War ended in 1865, the victorious North started reforming the social and political order of the South, a period labeled *Reconstruction*. This was no small task, and there was much debate about it. But even before hostilities ended, abolitionists in Congress created the Freedman's Bureau to help the transition of former slaves to their new status as citizens. Part of the task was to create schools, to give freedmen literacy skills and citizenship education. Thousands of institutions eventually were established, staffed by teachers recruited from the North, including many educated Blacks, along with Black and White Southerners. Missionary organizations contributed to the effort. Local African American communities donated hard-earned cash and labor to establish still more schools, and to expand upon Northern assistance. Tens of thousands of Black families eagerly enrolled their children, delighted to receive even a modicum of formal education. The high degree of consensus in their communities represented a potent stock of social capital, shared values regarding schooling. In much of the South, enrollment of African American students matched or exceeded those of Whites, eventually reaching a quarter million. Although the circumstances of these schools were not always stable, and attendance fluctuated, Black literacy rates began to improve significantly. In 1860, only a small fraction of the region's Black population could read as slaves, but, by 1890, nearly half were literate. Reconstruction truly marked a revolution in the lives of freedmen, and education was an important contributor (Butchart, 1980, 2010; Fairclough, 2007; Foner, 1988; Morris, 1981; Span, 2009).

The rise of Black schooling accompanied a remarkable period of political empowerment and activism for former slaves. With basic rights affirmed in the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, and enfranchised by new Southern state constitutions, African Americans could vote and hold office. The result was a glorious moment of political power, as capable freedmen rose to leadership positions. Blacks helped launch a movement to form new,

liberalized state governments. Education provisions were written into new constitutions, and additional support for public schooling was legislated. Such changes were galling to many Southern Whites, but were required for Southern states' readmission to the Union. The most die-hard racists plotted a counterrevolution, waging a violent war against Reconstruction governments (DuBois, 1935; Foner, 1988; Franklin, 1961).

Unfortunately, the progress made during Reconstruction did not endure. Northern Whites lost interest in reforming the South during the economic recession of 1873. Federal military occupation ended, permitting a resurgence of White supremacist rule. The change was not altogether abrupt, as the Klu Klux Klan and other racist groups had terrorized Blacks and reform-minded Whites for years, often focusing their attacks on schools. But by the late 1870s, there were abundant signs of the old order returning to power. With the great compromise of 1877, when presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South to guarantee his election, Reconstruction finally came to a close. This brought many changes, but it also marked an end to the expansion of Black schooling (Foner & Mahoney, 1995).

Without the protection of federal soldiers, Blacks were gradually stripped of many basic rights and their political power was dramatically curtailed. By the end of Reconstruction more than 300 African Americans had been elected to state legislatures or Congress. There was a U.S. senator and a governor too. It was these leaders who had spearheaded the development of Southern school systems, for both Blacks and Whites. By 1880, however, their numbers had dropped by two-thirds, and shrank even further thereafter. The result was an abrupt change in the region's political culture, with liberal ideas sharply constrained. Black leaders and Northern Whites who assisted them, came under pointed attack by resurgent White Southerners. From the earliest days of Reconstruction, such Northerners were called "carpetbaggers" and sympathetic Southern Whites "scallywags." White politicians also fought against populist groups attempting to unite poor Whites and Blacks (Mitchell, 1987). It was after these struggles, during the 1890s, that Southern states initiated poll taxes or other devices to

limit Black voting rights, and the African American population was reduced once again to dependency. This did not hold much promise for the cause of Black rights, and schooling suffered accordingly (Ayers, 1992; Williamson, 1984; Woodward, 1974).

Few Southern Whites supported Black education, and they were not about to provide it with anything more than minimal resources. Racist ideology dictated that “Anglo-Saxon” Southerners were the most “cultivated” race, and therefore deserved the vast bulk of school funds (VanOverbeke, 2008). The decades following Reconstruction marked a time of widening racial disparities in education throughout the South. Although there is evidence that Black schooling flourished for a time, differences began to grow when Whites finally became concerned with education. Formal segregation of institutions took root throughout the South, a battery of provisions that fell under the heading “Jim Crow.” In a famous case, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld such practices in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896, declaring segregated facilities acceptable if considered equal. While *Plessy* dealt with segregated railways cars, the principle held for schools too. It turned out, however, that separate was rarely equal in any domain. Term lengths in Black schools had stagnated by the 1890s, while those in the White schools began to increase. In some places, White terms approached the standard of northern states, 150 days or more annually. Black teachers were paid much less than Whites, with meager allocations for textbooks and other supplies. Where there had been some measure of parity in the past, school districts came to spend five times more money on White students than Blacks (Anderson 1988; Harlan, 1958; Luxenberg, 2019).

Secondary education for African Americans was scarce in the South, just when high schools were being established in greater numbers elsewhere, and for Southern Whites. Consequently, Black schooling was generally limited to the most rudimentary forms of elementary instruction, with short sessions and paltry assistance. Except for a tiny group who could attend private Black high schools and colleges, most Black students were offered little more than basic skills in reading and math. This was an especially egregious case of opportunity hoarding in American history. Most African Americans

were systematically denied access to all but the most paltry educational experiences. Even if schools still helped to boost overall rates of literacy, these developments severely restricted Black political and economic advancement (Anderson, 1988).

As historian James D. Anderson has pointed out, the underlying problem facing African Americans was their continuing servitude. In a region still dependent on a cash-crop agricultural economy, Southern Black labor was essential to the wealth of White landowners. Radical proposals to give the freedmen land, calling for "forty acres and a mule," never materialized, so they returned to plantations for work. Racist ideology was rejuvenated in pseudoscientific theories of Black mental and moral inadequacy. These fables were used to justify grossly unequal schooling, which made it impossible for Blacks to pass arbitrary voting tests. Lack of education and declining political power gave them little choice in where they lived and worked. Poor schools and demeaning labor, of course, also made many African Americans *appear* ignorant, lending credence to White racist mythology. The attack on Black schools thus was integral to creating, in the words of one historian, "slavery by another name" (Anderson, 1988; Blackmon, 2008).

Various forms of this new servitude appeared, usually under the guise of "sharecropping." For African Americans who tried to escape to the cities, new practices of occupational segregation relegated them to the most menial labor at the lowest wages. For women in the towns and cities, domestic service became a near universal form of employment, cleaning the homes of Whites. In short, the old order was restored in a new form. After the heady experience of Reconstruction, the familiar Southern status hierarchy reemerged in a different guise, with Blacks again at bottom and wealthy landowners and other Whites on top (Margo, 1990; Royce, 2010).

As suggested earlier, racism legitimized the servile status of African Americans and helped to mobilize destitute Whites against challenges to the old order. Still smarting from the experience of Reconstruction, many Whites were determined to prevent such changes from reoccurring. As a consequence, even poor Southern Whites seldom expressed support for Black schooling. In fact, they often benefitted from the abject status of African Americans, insuring

a ready source of labor for harvesting cotton and tobacco. Schooling, it was said, only ruined good field hands or servants, making them less willing to perform menial tasks. Because most Southern Whites wanted compliant and reliable Black workers, they fervently opposed efforts to improve African American education (Fredrickson, 1971; Higgs, 1977).

By and large, education remained underdeveloped throughout the region. Schools of any kind rarely had been a priority, and plantation owners were suspicious of education for common folk of any race. Many found the very idea of popular democracy to be abhorrent, believing that schooling threatened the existing economic and political order. Even during the common-school era, reformers waged uphill struggles to establish the most basic rudiments of school systems. But with the end of Reconstruction, most states cut back drastically on spending, and African American education was stillborn. It would not be until the 20th century that new advances would be evident (Bullock, 1967; Harlan, 1958; Leloudis, 1996).

FOCAL POINT: A GREAT DEBATE ABOUT BLACK EDUCATION

In the latter 19th century, there was much discussion and disagreement over the direction and role of African American education. As indicated earlier, there was a long-standing tradition of focusing Black schools on moral development and vocational education. These were important themes in White schooling too, but there was also interest in those children's intellectual development, citizenship education, and leadership abilities. Proposals for Black schooling usually ignored these issues, because Whites found them threatening or racist ideology asserted them irrelevant. Whatever the rationale, opportunities for intellectual development remained very limited for Blacks. Still, new prospects for advanced schooling did begin to appear, many of them started and financed by African American communities. Through these efforts, an articulate

class of well-educated Blacks gradually emerged on the national stage, offering new ways of thinking about education. As a consequence, one of the great educational debates of American history began to unfold.

The principal antagonists in this conflict were two of the most prominent African American figures of the age: Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Washington was the older of the two, and without doubt the more famous initially. Raised as a slave in Virginia, he was educated in the 1870s at Hampton Institute under its first director, General Samuel Armstrong. Reflecting this influence, Washington was an avid proponent of manual and industrial training. At Hampton, he was deeply impressed by the power of physical labor to impart discipline and a spirit of self-improvement. When he became the first principal at Alabama's Tuskegee Training Institute in 1881, Washington began to develop his own educational philosophy, and he had a platform from which he could proclaim it. Within a decade he was the nation's leading proponent of industrial education for African Americans. This was hardly a new idea, but it gained fresh prominence as a result of his influence (Harlan, 1972, 1983).

DuBois' experience could scarcely have been more different from that of Washington. Born free in the North, DuBois was educated in the Great Barrington, Massachusetts public schools before attending Fisk University in Nashville and pursuing graduate studies in Europe. He also studied at Harvard, earning a BA degree and becoming in 1885 the first African American at the university to receive a PhD. Himself the beneficiary of higher education, DuBois advocated college for African Americans. He felt that Blacks needed thoughtful, articulate leaders to protest the injustices they suffered and identify strategies to improve things. To his mind, the traditional emphasis on manual training for African Americans was short-sighted, and could become an obstacle preventing

Blacks from realizing meaningful gains in their lives. Accordingly, DuBois recommended the education of a "talented tenth" to provide an inspired and socially conscious leadership. These individuals would constitute an intellectual vanguard, challenging racist oppression with the ideals of democracy, legal principles of equity and fairness, and appeals to the nation's moral conscience. It was a visionary and in some respects a naive proposal, but DuBois believed it crucial to the future (Lewis, 1993; Meier, 1963).

Between the two men, Washington was more widely recognized and celebrated during his time. This was partly due to the accommodating quality of his public statements, which made him popular among influential Whites. In his most famous public address, at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, Washington invoked the metaphor of a ship searching for fresh water. He called upon African Americans to "cast down your bucket where you are—cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded." He urged Blacks to look to Southern Whites for economic opportunity, and to accept their place in society, seeking improvement though honest hard work. He emphasized the loyalty and familiarity of Blacks over immigrant workers, and endorsed acceptance of Jim Crow segregation, declaring, "in all things that are purely social we can be separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Characteristically, Washington dispensed ridicule on African Americans who sought higher learning. "No race can prosper," he declared in Atlanta, "till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem," adding, "it is at the bottom of life that we must begin and not at the top" (quoted in Brotz, 1966, p. 357). Elsewhere he offered biting caricatures of lazy Blacks seeking education as a way of avoiding hard labor, or educated African Americans who lacked the character imparted by work of any kind. In his widely read

autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, Washington noted the high level of interest in schooling among Blacks, but suggested that it posed a problem. “The idea …was too prevalent that, as soon as one secured a little education,” he wrote, “in some unexplainable way he would be free from most of the hardships of the world, and, at any rate, could live without manual labor” (quoted in Brotz, 1966, p. 357; Harlan, 1972; Luker, 1991). Such sentiments certainly did not urge greater attainment for African Americans.

Washington was not opposed to collegiate education for some African Americans, and could hardly be critical of all schooling, as he ran an institution himself and was famous as an educator. But he represented a certain kind of education. In describing his own school, Washington emphasized the practical lessons imparted through manual labor, declaring, “We wanted to teach them to study actual things instead of mere books alone” (quoted in Brotz, 1966, p. 357). In this respect, the Tuskegee model of Black education conformed closely to that advocated by Whites for decades, one intended to teach work habits and sound moral principles. Washington’s critique of educated Blacks also echoed the sentiments of many Whites, who believed that schooling only made African Americans less willing to perform menial labor. Perhaps to avoid this, he always was careful to point out the centrality of work in every aspect of his educational philosophy. It is little wonder, in that case, that Washington was so popular among White leaders; his stature among African Americans, however, was another matter (Anderson, 1988; Kliebard, 1999; Litwack, 1999).

DuBois was finishing his Harvard training at the time of Washington’s famous address in Atlanta. He spent the next decade teaching at various Black colleges in the South and conducting research on the conditions of African American life. In 1903 he published *The Souls of Black Folks*, in many respects a response to Washington’s autobiography that appeared two years earlier. In direct opposition to Washington, DuBois argued that higher education was the

most pressing task facing African Americans. Without the broadest and most intellectually challenging academic preparation, he asked, how would Black leaders be prepared to provide guidance to their brethren? With no colleges and universities, he wondered, where would the faculty for Black secondary schools—or even Washington's Tuskegee—come from? No educational system, DuBois declared, "ever has rested or can rest on any other basis than that of a well-equipped college and university" (DuBois, 2007, p. 43). Without higher education, in other words, there would be no advanced learning, and no prospect for general improvement of the Black population (Lewis, 1993).

To DuBois' mind, the time to focus attention on industrial training of the sort practiced at Tuskegee had long past. Sharply critical of Washington, DuBois described his views as "a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life." If the African American population was to change its status, a new form of education would be necessary. "The foundations of knowledge in this race, as in others," he wrote, "must be sunk deep in the college and university if we would build a solid, permanent structure" (DuBois, 2007, p. 43) This, of course, was a direct contradiction of Washington's view that higher education for Blacks was a waste of time and resources. But it was only through the leadership of university-trained Blacks that DuBois thought real advancement was possible (Meier, 1963). He would eventually shift his perspective, when it became clear that college-educated Blacks were not always helpful in the struggle for social justice, but at the turn of the century Dubois was among the nation's most outspoken proponents of African American higher education (Alridge, 2008).

As DuBois noted in *The Souls of Black Folk*, among Washington's most outspoken critics were members of his own race, particularly those who had been trained in

universities and were involved in higher education. His most glowing admirers were wealthy Whites, especially philanthropists eager to help advance the cause of education in the South. As a consequence, Tuskegee and other institutions focusing on industrial education received a stream of contributions from wealthy Northerners, amounting to millions of dollars. Other African American institutions also received assistance, but explicit pressures to conform to the Tuskegee model often followed. This became a source of resentment among some African American educators. There also was concern that Washington was hailed as a Black leader even though he did not represent any particular constituency apart from his own institution. When Washington was extolled in the White press, many Blacks naturally felt pride, but others came to resent his statements regarding education and acceptance of segregation. Even if Booker T. Washington was commended as a role model, he hardly was universally admired (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Moss, 1999; Hawkins, 1962; Moss, 1981).

In terms of the educational system of the day, there is no question about the winner of this debate. Tuskegee was the most widely emulated and influential African American institution of its time. Until his death in 1915, Washington was the most famous and powerful Black man in the United States. Tuskegee-trained teachers fanned out across the region, spreading the gospel of industrial education through Black high school and teacher training institutes. DuBois dubbed this the “Tuskegee Machine,” but it was not enduring. Instead, another legacy eventually came to shape the future of African American education, and social and political aspirations. Almost from the beginning, many Black educators and institutions resisted the Tuskegee model of vocational training, preferring to focus on academic subjects and preparing ministers and other professionals. Even Tuskegee shifted its curriculum in this direction in the 20th century. Frustrated by the impotent

political vision of Washington and his followers, DuBois and other reform-minded African Americans formed the Niagara Movement in 1909, a series of meetings to discuss the problems of race and inequality. Within a few years, these forums gave birth to a new civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). DuBois served as the first editor of its magazine, *The Crisis*. Though not as well known as Washington's "Tuskegee Machine," this new association would ultimately hold the keys to advancement for African Americans. And this made the question of who "won" the great debate over Black education a telling example of abiding change in strategy and politics (Fairclough, 2007; Harlan, 1983; Lewis, 1993).

The Degradation of Black Education

By the end of the 19th century the lives of most African Americans in the South had reached a low point. The gains made during Reconstruction were largely wiped out. Most were poor agricultural workers living in a state of virtual serfdom. The educational advances of the 1860s and 1870s had been rolled back. Even more important, Blacks had been stripped of even the most basic of civil rights. The 1890s were a time of political turmoil in the South, as the Populist Movement, an alliance of poor farmers and sharecroppers, challenged the establishment. In the wake of this, thousands of African Americans were murdered—most of them publicly lynched—for a variety of purported reasons, from the petty to the profane. Lynching dated back to Reconstruction, but it reached new levels of severity and continued into the 20th century. As noted earlier, it was also used against Mexican Americans, but the scale and degree of violence directed at African Americans was even greater. The effect was palpable in their lives, extending to daily behavior. Echoing many others, the novelist Richard Wright wrote "the safety of my life in the South depended upon how well I concealed from all whites

what I felt" (quoted in Shapiro, 1988, p. 293). Whatever the circumstances, these developments offered a powerful lesson in political education, viciously affirming the region's doctrine of White supremacy. It helped to create an ideological milieu that hardly bode well for African American schooling (Ayers, 1992; Mintz, 2004; Williamson, 1984).

As historian Louis Harlan has documented, the period around 1900 and immediately afterward witnessed a dramatic expansion of White education in the South, much of it accomplished at the expense of Blacks. Racial disparities in schooling reached historic highs, with White children receiving as much as ten times the expenditures on Black education. In the so-called "Black-belt" where big plantations and the cotton economy predominated, White education was subsidized by Black taxpayers. More high schools were established, but by 1910 just 65 existed for a Black population numbering more than ten million, and most were small. Apart from teaching and the ministry, there were few professional jobs that young African Americans could aspire to. As in prior decades, the education system for Southern Blacks served to enforce their servile status and to insure political and economic impotence. Alabama's superintendent of school declared in 1900 that it was intended "to keep the masses of the colored people in the rural districts," where they could provide labor to plantations (quoted in Darby and Rury, 2018, p. 54). Apart from a handful of private institutions largely supported by northern philanthropy, black schooling primarily offered education for degradation (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Moss, 1999; Harlan, 1958).

The relatively small Black population of the North, only a 10th of all African Americans, had access to considerably better educational opportunities. Studies indicate that African American school enrollment was equivalent to that of most Whites, and often higher than that of immigrants. Their school terms were as long as those for Whites, probably longer on average, as most lived in cities where extended sessions prevailed. And in a growing number of places, public schools were formally integrated, even if residential segregation made racial diversity rare. But despite their relatively elevated levels of education, African Americans found it hard to find

employment commensurate with their credentials. In his intensive study of social mobility in a northern city, historian Joel Perlmann discovered that Blacks benefited the least from education, even though their enrollment levels were higher than many European immigrant groups. Racism permeated the job market, dramatically neutralizing the benefits of schooling for them. In many cities, Blacks competed with the Irish and other immigrants, sometimes encountering violent resistance, but failed to advance as much as White ethnic groups. And while this was true in the urban North, discrimination was especially pernicious in the South, where White supremacy was even more thoroughly ingrained (Franklin, 1979; Ignatiev, 1995; Mohraz, 1979; Perlmann, 1988).

All things considered, frustration and disappointment stalked the educational experiences of African Americans. They flocked to schools following the Civil War, only to see their opportunities obstructed after Reconstruction. Blacks fought to establish modern educational systems across the South, and then witnessed a resurgence of White supremacy that degraded their schools. They encountered racism at almost every turn, but especially in the labor market, where their training was often considered irrelevant, if not an impairment. Where Black education did succeed, it was often designed to train students for menial employment, or to provide preparation for a very narrow range of professional occupations. Altogether, it was not a happy story. African American schooling in the later 19th century provides an instance when hard work and investment in education did not result in meaningful social change. Virulent racism effectively negated any potential gains in cultural and human capital that formal education offered, and sharply restricted the benefits of social capital to the meager resources of Black communities. In the end, the school could not significantly improve the lives of most of the nation's Black population. A considerably more prolonged process of social and political change would be necessary to accomplish that end (Litwack, 1999).

Schooling American Indians

If African Americans were subject to servitude, the American Indians (or Native Americans) were assaulted by military force, driven from their territories, and compelled to adapt their cultures and traditions to radically new circumstances. Perhaps the central series of educational events for them was collective loss at the hands of Whites, who forcibly relocated them to isolated reservations. This was accompanied by campaigns to change the lifestyles and beliefs of American Indians, to eradicate their traditional culture and replace it with the Christian and capitalist values. The principal instrument used to accomplish this was the school. The story of Native American education in the 19th century involved a deliberate crusade to fundamentally alter an indigenous way of life, using instruction to instilling new values and behavior on an unprecedented scale. As historian David Wallace Adams poignantly observed, it was “education for extinction” (Adams, 1995).

By 1900, the era of open warfare against the American Indians had drawn to a close. Battered by almost constant conflict and steadily losing land and resources, the Native American population had dropped from perhaps several millions in 1800 to about 250,000, a low point in modern history. In the meantime, the countryside had been settled by Whites, who eventually came to outnumber them by more than 100 to 1. Once active conflict had started to wind down and most Native Americans settled on reservations, sympathetic Whites began to comment on “the Indian Problem.” As they saw it, American Indians were not adjusting well to their future as potential citizens, and parents of upright, responsible offspring. Instead, they were seen as living in “filth” and “squalor,” without appreciation for private property, individual responsibility, and decent standards of hygene. The answer was an aggressive campaign of education to teach them the “advantages” of modern civilization (Hoxie, 1984; Prucha, 1976).

Native Americans had long practiced their own forms of education, of course, a process of acculturation that differed from one tribal group to another. Children traditionally learned while working alongside adults, accompanying them to the fields and hunting grounds, and taking progressively greater responsibility. Given a sharp division of labor along gender lines, education also usually

differed for males and females. Children were told stories of ancestors and learned legends about tribal history. Elders often served as repositories of wisdom, providing explanations for complex natural phenomena and suggesting solutions to difficult dilemmas. But with a few prominent exceptions, such as the Cherokee, Native Americans rarely organized formal institutions to educate the young, and illiteracy was often a norm. Instead, education was a largely informal process, conducted within everyday events and was not intended to impart conventional academic skills (Axtell, 1985; Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972).

Protestant and Catholic missionaries, aiming for conversions to Christianity and imparting basic academic skills, established the earliest schools for American Indians. As noted in Chapter 2, a number of experiments in indigenous education were conducted in the 18th century, most with limited success. These efforts gradually intensified in the next century. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was established as a branch of the War Department in 1824, and helped to supervise efforts to educate Native Americans, mostly by religious groups. By the mid-19th century, dozens of missionary schools had been started, but they reached only a tiny fraction of the school-aged population. It was not until after the Civil War, however, when hostilities between Native Americans and the federal government reached a peak, that interest in broadening indigenous schooling began to grow (Berkhofer, 1965; Szasz, 1988).

Starting in the 1880s educational programs were run directly by the BIA, rather than through missionary groups, as a part of the federal government's "Peace Policy" toward American Indians. Thereafter, appropriations increased rapidly, climbing from $20,000 in 1870 to nearly $3 million in 1900. Schools and enrollments multiplied quickly too. In the mid-1870s, there were about 150 schools enrolling several thousand students, but, by the end of the century, the number of institutions had more than doubled and enrollments exceeded 20,000. This represented roughly half of the age-eligible indigenous population. These changes in federal policy constituted a massive intervention into the lives of American Indian children (Coleman, 1993; Hoxie, 1984).

The statistical growth of these schools, however, was only part of the story. The goals of this program were even more ambitious than previous measures, including schools for African Americans during Reconstruction. The vast majority of these American Indian students, more than 80%, attended special boarding schools to separate them from their families and tribal settings. Others attended day schools. The first boarding institution, and most famous, was in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Established in 1879 in a military barracks by Richard Henry Pratt, a former army officer and veteran of the “Indian Wars,” the Carlisle school became a model for these institutions. Like many schools for African Americans, it was dedicated to inculcating proper work habits and manners. It also became quite famous for its football teams, which competed successfully against top colleges (Adams, 1995; Coleman, 1993).

Pratt believed in the superiority of modern civilization over indigenous cultures, and predicted that Native American children could be changed for the better if placed in the right environment. “Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization,” he declared, “and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit.” The goal of the boarding schools, in that case, was to obliterate any traces of American Indian traditions and identity in students, and to inculcate the virtues of patriotism and Christian propriety. In the words of Pratt, they were intended to “kill the Indian in him and save the man” (quoted in Adams, 1995, p. 52).

Clearly, one intention of federal policy was pacification of a potentially hostile indigenous population. A major problem, however, getting the children into schools. As suggested by early enrollments, not many indigenous parents initially were willing to send their offspring to Carlisle or other institutions. But large numbers eventually were compelled to abide by government policies. Some wanted their children to learn the ways of Whites, but most others believed they had little choice. Through a combination of brute coercion, active recruitment, and personal persuasion, many thousands eventually did attend, most for less than a few years. Despite its limited appeal, the federal network of American Indian boarding schools became one of the largest experiments in deliberate cultural modification in the nation’s history (Szasz, 1977).

While on campus, Native American students often were subject to military-style discipline. Their studies focused on manual training and moral development, not unlike the curriculum at Tuskegee Institute. Pratt also sent Carlisle students to live with White families for a while, to gain work experience while learning their standards of living. The reaction of students to all of this was mixed, though rarely positive. Many learned to read and calculate, while gaining valuable insights into American customs. Some even recalled their experiences with pleasure. But many others rebelled and returned as soon as possible to the reservation, sometimes escaping at night. But whether they graduated or not, and regardless of how they felt, few indigenous students became assimilated into the larger Euro-American society. The policy of forced separation was too cruel, the curriculum too intrusive and punitive, and barriers to assimilation too great for education alone to accomplish such a change (Adams, 1995).

The failure of the BIA's assimilationist goals was only partly the result of its shortsighted policies. Apart from the narrowly vocational quality of the schools and their strong moralistic overtone, White attitudes also represented a major barrier. This was especially evident when the schools attempted to place Indian students with White families. Although they did occasionally encounter hostility, Native Americans typically were treated as aliens and objects of curiosity. Most had not yet been granted citizenship, and many were exploited by ruthless or racist Whites, forced to work long hours in demeaning jobs with little or no pay. Not feeling welcome, large numbers returned to reservations, where they assumed the lifestyle of their families and neighbors. In this respect, the boarding-school experiment was a failure and Richard Pratt's assimilationist vision was ultimately unrealized. The cultural identities of indigenous children, it turned out, were considerably stronger than Pratt and other educators had imagined. And most other Americans were not interested in making them comfortable. Indeed, racist ideology was so pervasive that it proved a formidable barrier to integration even for American Indians, a group never widely enslaved or economically exploited. It would take more than a few years of schooling aimed at

compulsory assimilation to affect change on this scale (Coleman, 1993; Gould, 1981; Horsman, 1981).

The boarding-school movement eventually lost its momentum, shortly after Pratt's generation of educators passed from the scene, and ultimately a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive set of policies was adopted. This occurred after the famous Merriam Report of 1928, which marked an important shift in policy regarding American Indians. It was clear that the boarding schools had done little to convince indigenous students to abandon their culture. BIA education expenditures also did not change the social and political standing of American Indians. In the hands of overbearing and misguided reformers like Pratt, and backed by the political will and resources of the federal government, schooling was intended to alter the values and behavior of a large portion of the indigenous population.

Of course, many such measures were undertaken in good will, with the belief that assimilation represented an improvement for most Native Americans. But unlike the case of African Americans during Reconstruction, reformers did not take account of the wishes of the proposed subjects in this educational experiment. With a few exceptions, American Indians were not clamoring for schools, and they attached relatively little value to the formal instruction offered them. Consequently, the effect of education on the values and social standing of this group was minimal (Szasz, 1974, 1977).

The case of American Indian education provides one of history's clearest examples of schooling being used consciously to affect social change. Indeed, it was intended to affect a dramatic cultural alteration. But, in this case, formal education did little to alter the role or status of a marginalized group, yet another racial minority. With regard to indigenous education, reformers had clearly overestimated the power of schooling to affect change. Yet it is not clear that they ever seriously recognized the possibility of failure; nor did they understand the limits of education as process of transformation. Cultural chauvinism, abetted by racism and nationalism, blinded these would-be saviors to the enormity of their task and the larger problems associated with assimilation. In the end, social change of this magnitude was more than schools alone could achieve, even

with the backing of federal authority. Given the paternalistic and intolerant quality of the BIA schools, it is little wonder that they did not prevail.

Schooling and the Contours of Social Change

The latter part of the 19th century was a time of accelerating change. Guided by the principles of the common-school era, educational reformers proposed to use education for social amelioration and assimilation. This certainly applied to the destitute immigrants of the Northeast. During Reconstruction similar sentiments led to a campaign to educate recently freed slaves, abetted by Black aspirations for schooling, and a little later they contributed to a crusade to eradicate American Indian cultures. At about the same time, the children of European immigrants started entering the schools in greater numbers, pursuing the promise of their new homeland. White women began attending public high schools, buoyed by ideals of inclusiveness and a special role in rearing future citizens. Each of these episodes imparts a lesson about schooling and social change. Together they demonstrate the limits and possibilities of education as an agent of societal transformation.

To begin, these examples allow comparison of the effects of schooling on different groups of people. For instance, European immigrants and White women benefited substantially from the increased educational opportunity, whereas other groups did not. True, the pace of progress often was quite slow, and benefits of schooling accrued most readily to affluent children. But enrollment for immigrant children gradually increased, and more White women graduated from high school. Over time, a growing number of both groups attended college. The educational advance of certain women was especially dramatic, mainly those from the middle class. It provided them with considerable cultural capital, a degree of social standing and credibility not available to other groups. Even if they lacked formal economic and political power, White women received tangible benefits from formal schooling, advantages that could help in other realms of life (such as favorable marriages). For descendants of the major European immigrant groups, the school

also became a potent vehicle of social and economic integration. It was a part of the “American Dream,” the idea that upward mobility was possible, even assured in the United States (Rank, 2014).

The story was quite different for the other groups. African Americans flocked to schools after the Civil War, supporting them with hard-earned cash and donated materials and service. They displayed eager support for education, and this contributed to improved literacy rates. After a brief period of enthusiasm, however, Blacks entered an era of frustration and distress in education. Once released from federal oversight, Southern states curtailed support for Black schools, and sharply constrained African American rights in other respects. Southern elites depended on a servile labor force, and most Whites were not ready to allow Black education to threaten the prevailing social order. The result was bare-bones schooling with meager resources for learning, hardly a recipe for social advancement.

The problem of race and social status went far beyond schooling, however. African Americans who did manage to acquire an advanced education faced severe discrimination. Even someone as distinguished as W. E. B. DuBois, acknowledged today as one of the great intellects in American history, was unable to gain an appointment at a White university. Indeed, he would not have been hired in Southern White high schools. But plain discrimination was only part of the story. By the end of the century, Black education in the South was under attack. As scores of African Americans were lynched each year, the prospects for further advances appeared bleak. Even in the North, educated Blacks could rarely find work commensurate with their credentials. Although African Americans clearly made education an important priority, its impact on their status was quite limited. Apart from a very small minority, Black Americans did not benefit materially from schooling. In this case, the promise of education to affect social change went largely unrealized.

The experiences of American Indians were similar to those of African Americans, at least regarding the effect of schooling. Even though the federal campaign to educate Native Americans eventually reached many, the effects on their social standing and assimilation were negligible. American Indians did not lobby for educational

opportunities, and many sent their children to government schools grudgingly or resisted it outright. But even if Native Americans had wanted to use the schools for social advancement, it is unlikely that they would have succeeded. The institutions they attended were not designed to enhance social mobility, and most Americans were unwilling to accept them as equals. For groups such as these, assimilation and social improvement required far more than schooling alone.

These historical episodes point to the pervasive power of race as a factor in American life. Racist ideology, which held non-White peoples to be intellectually and morally inferior, prevented most Whites from even contemplating social equity for Blacks and American Indians. Discrimination against European immigrants, although initially expressed in racial terms, turned out to be quite different. Even if the Irish were despised when they arrived, the fact that they were White eventually helped facilitate their assimilation. As the offspring of European immigrants became economically successful, learned to speak English properly, and began to intermingle with the larger White populace, old ethnic antagonisms faded. Indeed, as some historians have suggested, the Irish and other foreigners “became White,” partly by exhibiting virulently anti-Black behavior (Ignatiev, 1995; Jacobson, 1998; Roediger, 1999). In the case of European immigrants, racist ideology may have hastened social integration by highlighting physical and cultural characteristics shared with most White Americans.

For non-European minorities, on the other hand, the story was quite different, including Hispanic residents of the Southwest and Asian immigrants in the West. Distinguished by physical appearance and hampered by ubiquitous discrimination, assimilation was not an option for these groups. Despite the experience of the Civil War, and the antislavery campaigns of the abolitionist movement, racism remained a powerful ideological force in American culture. It made the idea that basic vocational education was appropriate for these groups seem natural and logical. It was also used to justify gross inequalities in funding throughout the South and in much of the North too. Most Americans simply accepted such inequities linked to imaginary differences they felt distinguished racial groups. Many

decades would pass before a significant number of American Whites would even begin to question such assumptions (Takaki, 1979).

Gender, of course, also was an important factor in the nation's social life. Sexist ideology, which dictated a subservient status for women, remained quite prevalent. Sexism led most Americans, including many women, to assume it quite astonishing to even dream of female equality or aspirations other than motherhood. The sexual division of labor was pervasive and restricted women to a relatively narrow range of roles. Despite such views, however, Americans generally accepted the idea that White women should go to school and study generally the same subjects as men. These views had deep roots in the idea of republican motherhood. There were those who took exception to this, of course, as the controversy over Edward Clarke's book demonstrated. But this was a minority view by the latter 19th century. Most American schools were coeducational and it seemed natural that boys and girls would attend classes together with proper supervision. Despite its baneful influence in other spheres of life, in that case, sexist ideology appears to have left much of the educational system open to women, at least among Whites.

Even if women could go to school, sexist discrimination remained an important fact of life, however, and change in women's status unfolded incrementally. The fact that women could get an education did not necessarily mean that they would compete with men or become too independent. Conservative social conventions continued to dictate well proscribed roles for women. Still, as noted earlier, the range of jobs open to them did begin to expand, partly due to growing numbers of educated women ready to fill them. These included occupational roles that called for cultural and human capital gained from formal education. Beyond employment, educated White women could use their schooling in raising their own children, appealing to potential marriage partners in urban middle class. Although their social roles were circumscribed, in that case, women do seem to have realized tangible benefits from educational attainment. Schooling for them appears to have functioned as a lever of social change, even if a relatively modest one.

Gender and race, therefore, appear to have differed with respect to education. Racism was an especially virulent obstacle to the aspirations of African Americans and to the prospects of Native Americans. It proved an especially formidable barrier to advancement, a telling contour of social change. Sexism, on the other hand, limited the opportunities of White women considerably, but left certain avenues open to those who dared to utilize them. Gender was a different sort of contour, robust yet also permeable, allowing women to advance in the face of hostility and to contribute in important ways to society at large.

Differences such as these, products of historical vagaries in the ideological landscape, clearly shaped the impact of education. There were some groups that found schooling to be a vehicle of social advancement, and others who encountered discrimination similar to Blacks and Native Americans, such as Mexican Americans or Asian immigrants. For some, consequently, the school was a potent instrument of improvement and opportunity, a source of hope. For others, it proved a chimera, a vision that ultimately failed to deliver. Ideological constructs such as racism and sexism clearly affected the ability of schools to improve the social standing of the people they served. It would take time, but education eventually would prove to be a more effective instrument of social change for everyone.

4
Growth, Reform, and Differentiation
The Progressive Era

On January 1, 1901, Americans enthusiastically greeted the 20th century, proclaiming it a time of boundless possibility. Although many prophecies proved far-fetched, the general sentiment was contagious. From the standpoint of social change, the opening decades of the new era were among the most momentous in history. It was a time of tremendous economic development and widespread reform. A modern urban civilization burst into view, raising a host of new social questions. Many of today's public institutions and policies took shape then, including the school system.

The period between 1890 and 1920 is often called the Progressive Era. The phrase conveys a sense of improvement or progress that many felt, especially regarding social reform. It reflected the influence of such leaders as Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and the muckraking journalism of Ida Tarbell, Jacob Riis, and Lincoln Steffens, among others. Schools were an important aspect of this; it was a time of many new educational ideas and practices. In fact, a major current of pedagogical thought has been labeled "progressive education" ever since. This has been a recurring source of controversy and debate, but continues to inspire many educators today. Consequently, understanding progressivism in education is an important reason to examine this period (Goldman, 1952; Hofstadter, 1955b; May, 1964).

Education and social reform, however, did not dictate the basic tenor of the age. Rather, forces of industrialization and urban growth

defined it, factors that had spurred change in earlier times. The difference was magnitude and pace. By the 20th century, the degree of industrial development and urbanization had reached levels scarcely imaginable decades earlier. Corporate enterprises reached a mammoth scale, serving far-flung markets with new technologies designed for mass production. Industrial expansion accelerated, boosting international trade and migration. The country was losing its pastoral character in the wake of incipient globalization (O'Rourke & Williamson, 2001). Cities swelled as millions of immigrants arrived to seek jobs. Cultural diversity became even more pronounced and dozens of languages could be heard on the streets. American society seemed to be rapidly changing in ways difficult to fathom (Hays, 1957/1995; Higgs, 1971; Rodgers, 1998). This became a source of new anxieties, and eventually a focal point for reform. As noted by historian Robert Wiebe, a "search for order" became emblematic of a new stage in American history (Wiebe, 1967).

Progressivism, in short, represented a response to this new era of industrial development and urban growth. In the words of historian Lawrence Cremin, it was "a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life… to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the latter half of the 19th century" (Cremin, 1961). Whether or not it was entirely humane, there can be little doubt that education was an integral part of the reform impulse. It was an age that called for schools to serve a multitude of purposes. As society became more complex and variegated, so did the educational system. But before considering that, it is instructive to consider some of the challenges of growing up in this new milieu.

FOCAL POINT: COMING OF AGE IN URBAN AMERICA

Needless to say, the social environment of big cities had a profound effect on children. Among other things, many believed it loosened traditional sources of authority that had long managed their behavior. Urban growth brought

freedom and open-mindedness, and youth were allowed greater latitude in conducting themselves. These changes were hardly abrupt, as prevailing social and cultural norms still exerted considerable influence. But novelty was coming into fashion, and it was especially conspicuous among the young in urban settings.

Anzia Yezierska (1889–1970) immigrated to the United States in the early 20th century, a part of the growing global movement of people at the time. She was Jewish, came with her family from Poland, and lived on Manhattan's bustling lower East Side. Like other newcomers, she struggled to understand this strange, often-contradictory setting. She eventually became a writer, focusing on the immigrant experience; she also was a social activist, and had a brief platonic relationship with educational philosopher John Dewey. In 1925, she published a partly autobiographical novel titled *Bread Givers, A Struggle between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New World*, vividly portraying many of the challenges she faced. It is a moving work, and captures the dilemmas of many immigrant women in the new urban world (Henriksen, 1988; Westbrook, 1994; Yezierska, 1925).

Yezierska's central character is Sarah Smolinsky, the youngest daughter of a rabbi who, like other devout Jewish men, was dedicated to studying the Torah. Even though her father had little income, and the family lived in dire poverty, Sarah and her sisters were subject to his paternal domination. A man of tradition, he expected them to respect his every whim and to provide most of the family livelihood. It was a patriarchy where women were expected to be subservient. As Yezierska noted sardonically,

> Only if they cooked for men, and washed for men, and didn't nag and curse the men out of their homes: only if they let the men study the Torah in peace, then, maybe, they could push themselves into heaven with the men, to wait on them there.

In the book, Yezierska described the miserable, crowded conditions of tenement life. The family shared a tiny apartment with poor lighting and ventilation, and barely adequate plumbing. They rarely left lower Manhattan and its towering apartment blocks and congested streets. There was little beauty in daily life and few prospects for hope. Sarah was a bright student, but in her Orthodox father's view, women were not meant to be scholars. She was expected to help support the family and to obey her parents, particularly her father. As Sarah grew older, however, it became more difficult to comply with his demands.

A turning point came after young Sarah saw her three older sisters forced into marriages arranged by their father, to men they neither loved nor admired. Even though her father received cash payments for these unions, a tradition known as a "bride's price," the prospective husbands were hardly affluent. They too were struggling, and expected their wives to abide by tradition. Indeed, Sarah became gradually more horrified as she watched her sisters swept into lives with little hope, subject to their seemingly cloddish spouses. "I began to feel I was different than my sisters," she proclaimed. "If they ever had times they hated Father, they were too frightened of themselves to confess…. But could I help it what was inside me? I had to feel what I felt even it killed me." She became determined to avoid her sisters' fate, and to escape her father's authority.

The closing chapters of the book describe Sarah's flight from both her family' control and the ghetto's confines. Fed up with her father and fearing marriage, Sarah left home abruptly. She found a job ironing clothes and rented a room of her own. Even though the space was small and her furnishings sparse, she felt a new sense of independence and self-esteem. In examining the room, she noted that it had a door, a feature missing in her family's apartment. "This door was life," she declared. "It was air. The bottom starting point of becoming a person. I simply must have this

room with the shut door." Thus, Sarah Smolinsky began to define herself anew, with the ability to shut out the parts of the world she no longer accepted, and greater control over her destiny.

Education was a telling source of change in Yezierska's book. Always bright and enterprising, the newly independent Sarah found that she qualified for a college scholarship. She decided to go away to study, unthinkable for a woman in the patriarchal tradition of her father. She found college exhilarating, even if she was painfully aware of her status as a cultural outsider. Moved by her own experience of growth, Sarah decided to focus her studies on education, to become a teacher. Eventually she graduated, and took up the life of an educated, independent woman, dedicated to her profession and finally able to look dispassionately at her family. It was a tale of success against great odds, and redemption from the trials of challenging tradition and finding one's own way. It was also a story that captured many themes of immigrant achievement during these years. In this respect, it paralleled the parable of uplift and assimilation derived from the Irish and other European immigrants.

Anzia Yezierska was an astute observer and a compelling writer. She experienced many of the events described in *Bread Givers*, but also drew upon the lives of other women. Millions of immigrant children grew up in the ethnic ghettos of New York and other northern cities. Even though their parents often clung to traditional values, the younger generation was exposed to the rapidly evolving urban scene, and ever-changing fashions of youth. They lived under crushing conditions, but the city's atmosphere of constant change seemed to offer a better future. So long as the urban-industrial economy continued to grow, there would be opportunities for advancement (Binder & Reimers, 1995; Kessner, 1977).

As a work of historical fiction, *Bread Givers* captures the conflict between generations, but also highlights the

difficulties facing immigrant women. They loved their families, but often felt constrained by traditions that sharply restricted their options. Of course, many willingly conformed, marrying within ethnic communities and striving to convey traditional values to their children. But others, like Sarah, rebelled by breaking away. Most women probably did not experience as sharp a rejection of tradition, but the rapidly evolving urban culture often made it difficult to abide parental authority. There was a big, glittering world outside the ghetto, and children were bound to discover it eventually. For bright young women, the lights often shone even more vibrantly (Gabaccia, 1994; Harzig, 1997; Olneck, 2008).

Education was an important part of this story as well. It is no accident that Yezierska's principal character found college to be an effective opportunity to escape. For thousands of immigrants and their children, formal education was an avenue of social improvement. This was especially true for Jewish immigrants, whose children attended schools in great numbers. Schooling provided skills they could utilize in the job market, and it also gave them a better command of English and other facets of American culture (Brumberg, 1986). For capable young women like Sarah or Yezierska herself, various forms of higher education—whether in normal schools, colleges or specialized training institutes—proved a route to professional status and a degree of independence. By 1920, the daughters of immigrants represented the largest group of teachers in New York City, and a generally similar share in other cities. To be educated meant that assimilation was well under way, and it also suggested a greater degree of autonomy, even if most such women left the labor force upon marriage. In this respect, schooling helped to break the chains of tradition (Markowitz, 1993; Rousmaniere, 1997).

The emergence of a dynamic urban civilization signaled a new era in the history of childhood. Rapid growth, greater

> ease of transportation, and seemingly boundless opportunities made many youth impatient to live on their own. It was harder for parents to exert strict controls, even if many continued to try. Other changes also affected family life. The average size of households became smaller, and greater tolerance and compassion eventually came into play (Mintz, 2004; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). As discussed in the next chapter, these developments brought greater independence and freedom of expression for children and youth. As one historian has suggested, teenagers began to move to "the beat of different drummers," marking the beginnings of a youth culture (Graff, 1995). Expanded educational opportunities and new forms of schooling were part of the story. It was a time of rapid change and exciting possibilities; it was the 20th century.

Growth and Differentiation: An Age of Uncertainty

As noted in Chapter 3, the closing decades of the 19th century witnessed unprecedented economic expansion. It was the height of the industrial revolution, when manufacturing output, urban development, and immigration grew faster than ever before or since. It was also a moment of public unrest, much of it stimulated by rapid social change. New scientific discoveries changed the way people lived, and revolutionary theories about nature and society challenged religion and traditional beliefs. International contacts grew also, and ideas from abroad influenced American thought in new ways. Even from today's perspective, when the pace of innovation seems ever faster, it is difficult to appreciate the degree of change at that time (Crunden, 1982; Hays, 1957/1995; Rodgers, 1998).

This is evident in basic social and economic indicators. In the decades between 1870 and 1900, for instance, the nation's rail system grew fourfold, from 50,000 to more than 200,000 miles, sharply reducing time of travel. The share of the labor force engaged

in nonagricultural employment approached 60%, a sharp break from the past. As industrial output grew, some cities expanded almost exponentially. Chicago nearly doubled its population every decade between 1870 and 1910, until it finally exceeded two million. Other metropolises grew at a similar, if somewhat less frenetic, pace. Altogether, the proportion of Americans living in urban areas reached 40% by 1900 and became a majority by 1920. The social milieu of the 20th century was decidedly urban, a new stage in the national experience (Brownlee, 1979; Chudacoff, 1975; Higgs, 1971).

With the development of cities came a subtle but important series of changes in the social order. Increasing trade and a widening division of labor led to greater specialization in work. Described as *differentiation*, it led to a range of new occupational roles and social categories. In larger cities, new economic functions developed and an array of social and cultural groups took shape. It was possible for young women to find employment in laundries, hat shops, dance halls, and many other enterprises, depending on their predilections. New professions developed for men also, from various engineering fields to streetcar operators and police detectives, among countless others. These social and economic roles did not exist in smaller communities. Overall, people working in professional positions increased nearly five-fold between 1870 and 1910. This multitude of new opportunities provided a measure of freedom and choice in employment unknown to earlier generations (Hershberg, 1981; Schnore, 1974; VanOverbeke, 2008; Zunz, 1982).

This was the good news, but there was also another side to city life. Rapid growth and differentiation helped loosen social bonds that gave smaller places much of their cohesion. Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth noted that life in the biggest cities was marked by a loss of community. People no longer knew their neighbors and social relations became more impersonal. In many respects, the capacity for social capital was dissipated. People were known by their social or occupational roles in highly urbanized areas, rather than as individuals. Although city growth offered greater liberty and opportunity, it also entailed a degree of detachment and isolation that was unsettling for many. This was a critical dimension of societal

change: As cities expanded, it was possible to feel lost in a sea of humanity (Hogan, 1985; Reiss, 1964).

There were other features of social change that made the era distinctive. Fueled by demand for industrial workers, immigration surged, peaking at about a million annually in 1907. This was a measure of globalization's impact in manifestly human terms. The vast majority of newcomers were drawn to booming cities, where they formed residential enclaves, conspicuous for many social and cultural ties to their homelands. The city landscape became a differentiated patchwork of unique communities. Distinctive religious or national traditions often highlighted them. By the time of World War I, when immigration began to subside, about a quarter of the nation's population was immigrants or their children. In the urbanized northeast and upper Midwest, they represented an even larger portion of the populace (Archdeacon, 1983; Bulmer, 1984).

The first waves of immigrants were from such western European countries as Germany, Ireland, and England. By 1900, large numbers arrived from poorer areas in southern and Eastern Europe, especially Italy, Poland, and Russia. Most new immigrants were Roman Catholic, and a significant minority was Jewish, two religions historically viewed with misgiving by many Americans. In larger cities immigrant families often comprised two thirds of the residents, creating an unprecedentedly diverse cultural milieu. Native-born Protestants found themselves a minority in these settings, even if they continued to command prestige and authority. This new urban diversity emerged in just a few decades, making traditional status distinctions appear a bit archaic (Barton, 1975; Gleason, 1992).

In addition to cultural differences, there was also widening inequality in this era. Industrialism and the factory system brought thousands of workers together under harsh conditions, often for meager pay and little job security. A 60-hour workweek was commonplace, and workers had no recourse if injured or laid off. Understandably, these conditions contributed to festering resentment and led to large-scale protests. There was a growing prospect of class warfare as a consequence. Treated like pawns, workers eventually revolted in massive strikes, met by violence from industrialists and state authorities. During economic downturns,

when large numbers were unemployed, labor clashes peaked in conflict, sometimes pitting thousands against the police or the military (Stowell, 1999).

Labor battles drew national attention in 1886 following a riot at Chicago's Haymarket Square that resulted in 10 deaths. In 1894 federal agents arrested labor leader Eugene Debs to prevent a national railway workers strike. There were many other such conflicts. These widely publicized events contributed to anxiety about the pace and direction of change. Even relatively small outbreaks added to fears that labor conflict could pose a threat to national stability. To many middle-class Americans, such thoughts were hardly comforting (Babson, 1999; von Waltershausen, 1999).

At the same time, wealth became more concentrated in a small group of industrialists and bankers. This was the age of "robber barons," men such as Andrew Carnegie, Henry P. Morgan, and John D. Rockefeller. Today these names are often associated with philanthropy and culture. But at the turn of century they were notorious for ruthlessly amassing huge fortunes through monopolistic practices, stamping out competition and rejecting pleas for market regulation and improved working conditions (Wiebe, 1967). Their financial accomplishments reflected the advantages of large-scale industrial production used to amass huge fortunes. In the eyes of many, consequently, their companies became embodiments of greed and unbridled hegemony. To contemporaries, they threatened to become a source of power even greater than the government. The idea of seemingly amoral business tycoons running the country also contributed to public anxiety about the future (Crunden, 1982; Goldman, 1952; Hofstadter, 1955b).

It was an age of widespread unrest, and political turbulence often extended beyond the cities. Farmers were buffeted by dramatic swings in prices, influenced by volatility in the industrial economy and speculation in commodities. Increasingly, they felt vulnerable to the railroads, brokers, packing companies, and a host of other middlemen. During the industrial depression of the 1880s, when commodity prices dropped severely, farmers began to organize. A radically new organization emerged, the Farmers Alliance, and grew rapidly in the following decade. Eventually, the populists, as they

were called, backed the presidential candidacy of William Jennings Bryant in 1896. Although Bryant lost, this episode demonstrated that farmers were not immune to problems of the new urban-industrial order. For many Americans, these events also contributed to the sense that social and political reform was needed (Goodwyn, 1978).

The closing decades of the 19th century also marked a time of dramatic technological and scientific advances. A host of inventions and scientific discoveries transformed everyday experience, beginning with electric lights, the telephone, gas furnaces, and the internal combustion engine. Inventors such as Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison became national heroes, and their laboratories produced a host of new products. Eventually the development of the automobile and mass production techniques would mark a new era in transportation and popular culture. Henry Ford became yet another national icon. Each of these technical achievements was important; taken together they marked a sharp break with the past. Technology was no longer confined to the factory, nor did it simply make goods better and less expensive. Now inventions had an immediate and palpable impact on daily life, and this too contributed to a public perception that change was accelerating rapidly (Cowan, 1997).

Yet other scientific developments contributed to the climate of change. Many of the most significant ideas were influenced by Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory, which first appeared in 1859. Taken at face value, Darwin's theory of natural selection appeared to challenge traditional religious conceptions of life and the human condition. As a consequence, it profoundly changed the way that many people viewed the world, lending greater significance to science and technology (Moore, 1979; Russett, 1976).

Darwin's influence extended far beyond the natural sciences and religion. It also contributed to a host of parallel explanations for other phenomena, especially human behavior. Perhaps the best known was the rise of *social Darwinism*, a variant of mainstream ideology that denounced attempts to ameliorate poverty as pointless and contrary to nature. Social Darwinists reasoned that if the poor suffered harsh lives, it was a natural outcome of their inferior abilities and inadequate work ethic. Thus the logic of natural selection was

used to justify the advantages of wealth and cultural capital. The superior status of the rich was declared inevitable. Although Darwin's ideas challenged some aspects of the dominant ideology, such as religion, they also reinforced or augmented others. In many ways, these new ideas also contributed to a sense that the traditional world was giving way, and scientific theories and discoveries promised to change life. To use a Shakespearean phrase Aldous Huxley later helped popularize, it was a brave new world indeed, one that created a good deal of uncertainty (Bannister, 1979; Hawkins, 1997).

Change thus abounded as a new century began. For Americans who grew up on the farm and moved to the city, whether literally or figuratively, the pace of transformation could seem astounding. It led many to question the future of conventional values, and to wonder about the generations to come. This became the inspiration for a range of reforms, most eventually falling under the banner of *progressivism*. For those concerned with the broadest array of changes, however, one reform stood out among all others. Following a proud and venerable American tradition, many of those concerned with saving modern industrial society from its worst excesses turned to the schools.

Progressivism in Education

Reform touched on many aspects of this era, but few issues were affected as much as education. In response to the times, new institutional mechanisms were sought to mediate social change. With respect to schools, the response was a wave of new ideas and practical improvements, all called "progressive." These reforms included many different types of innovation, some quite contradictory in spirit and intent. Consequently, there was considerable debate and disagreement about schools during this era. In fact, the volume of argument about educational issues increased audibly, as it became an ever-bigger public concern. Such conflicts notwithstanding, progressive education in all its various guises left an indelible imprint. Like progressivism writ large, it was a broad and diverse movement, attempting to remake schools and their role in the new social order (Cremin, 1961).

As a general principle, historians have identified two broad impulses in progressive education. The first was a humanitarian disposition toward making education more responsive to children's needs, and integrating schools more closely with local communities. Identified with such renowned figures as John Dewey, Francis Parker, and William Heard Kilpatrick, it has been a prominent strand of reform ever since. Historian David Tyack described these educators as "pedagogical progressives," a fitting title for those interested in changing instructional practice. A second group was less idealistic and more concerned with efficiency and aligning schools with the economy. Tyack dubbed them "administrative progressives," because they were especially interested in the organizational structure and functions of institutions. Historically, they came to exert enormous influence on the development of school systems. Accordingly, terms such as *efficiency, management,* and *vocationalism* became important educational watchwords. These too were a legacy of progressivism (Tyack, 1974).

As one might imagine, differences in the perspective and basic values of these groups in progressive education were vast. At various times, their leaders engaged in sharp debates. For the most part, however, they managed to coexist, largely because they were interested in somewhat different issues. As suggested earlier, pedagogical progressives generally focused on issues inside the classroom, or kindred issues of personal growth and understanding. Their greatest influence probably was felt in primary education, especially for younger children. Theirs was a fundamentally compassionate impetus, aiming to make schooling better attuned to student needs and interests.

Administrative progressives, on the other hand, chose to devote greater attention to matters outside the classroom, the organization of schools, the purposes of curricula, and quantitative measures of ability. Of course, such questions did have a bearing on teaching. But administrative progressives, by and large, were not concerned with instruction. Instead, they were content to set broad parameters for educational tasks, leaving performance to the teachers. Pedagogical progressives wanted to guide and inspire teachers. In this way, each side of progressive school reform managed to tolerate

the other, despite occasional conflicts (Kliebard, 1986; Labaree, 2010).

Of course, the reality for most educators was considerably more complex than these general categories suggest. Many took inspiration from both types of reform, without seeing a major contradiction. It was a time of frenetic change, and all reforms were considered potentially helpful. Consequently, elements from both sides often were adopted pragmatically. The result was a rather disjointed process of change, pushing and pulling in different directions. This was progressive education in all its paradoxical glory, a reform process that helped shape many features of today's school system (Graham, 1974; Zilversmit, 1993).

Pedagogical Progressivism

Like the progressive movement in politics, historians have linked progressive education to crusading journalists who identified problems in the schools. Joseph Meyer Rice was a pediatrician who toured the country in the 1890s examining children and classrooms in big city school systems. He wrote about it in *The Forum*, one of the period's muckraking (reform-minded) journals. Rice's revelations were shocking. He reported children reciting lessons in machinelike order, maintaining silence in cramped, large classes, overseen by often punitive educators. As a medical doctor, he questioned the developmental effects of such conditions. Was it possible for children to learn when denied natural propensities to exercise their bodies and minds? Was it healthy to sit silently for hours in crowded, poorly ventilated rooms? As booming city school districts often ignored building codes in pressing facilities into use, many other observers started asking similar questions. More importantly, a growing number of reformers became interested in the ways children were being asked to learn, and began to consider alternatives to memorization and recitation. It seemed time for a change, new ways of thinking about teaching and learning (Cremin, 1961).

As noted earlier, *pedagogical progressives* advocated more humane and child-friendly practices in schools. They challenged the logic of faculty psychology, which maintained that memorizing and

reciting strengthened mental capacity and discipline. Instead, pedagogical progressives suggested that children learned best by following their interests, expressing themselves, and actively investigating problems. In this regard, they represented the legacy of European thinkers like Friedrich Froebel, Heinrich Pestalozzi, and Johann Herbart, who Horace Mann and other Americans had admired from afar. These ideas also reflected the influence of Edward Sheldon, who taught at the Oswego, New York, normal school, the chief American proponent of Pestalozzi's ideas. Sheldon advocated the use of objects to teach, the origin of today's phrase "object lesson," and lectured widely on instructional methods. Pedagogical progressives also were influenced by William James, a Harvard psychology professor who emphasized the importance of experience, and the brother of novelist Henry James. These men and like-minded thinkers downplayed the idea that human beings had inborn proclivities and strengths that required isolation, arguing instead that tackling real problems was key to growth and learning. Education was supposed to be fun, they suggested, as children followed their natural curiosity to understand the world. Schooling did not have to entail drudgery and restraint; it also could represent liberation, releasing an inherent proclivity to learn (Cremin, 1961; Curti, 1959; Reese, 2001).

The most famous of the pedagogical progressives was John Dewey, although there certainly were many others. Dewey was born in Vermont in 1859, just months after Horace Mann's death. He attended local schools and worked briefly as a teacher until he went to Johns Hopkins University for graduate studies in philosophy. Gradually embracing a far-reaching conception of experiential learning, Dewey went on to become the preeminent American philosopher of his age and perhaps any other. He also became well known for leading the University of Chicago Laboratory School, which he founded after joining the university's faculty. It was Dewey's work at the Lab School, as it soon became known, that led to his early writings on education (Dykhuizen, 1973; Ryan, 1995).

Unlike more traditional educators, Dewey believed that education entailed an interaction between child and curriculum, and between school and society. But Dewey was not a radical reformer; he did not

advocate doing away with traditional academic subjects altogether, and letting children follow every whim and fancy. Instead, he felt that lessons should be taught differently, utilizing the larger world of experience to help students understand history, biology, geography, and other fields. Accordingly, children in the Lab School learned about the past by visiting museums and historical sites, they toured factories to understand the economy, and they conducted biological experiments in parks and nature preserves. In these and many other ways, Dewey and the Lab School faculty (his wife Alice served as director) experimented to learn more about teaching and learning. It was a relatively small school, and benefited from talented and dedicated teachers, who gave students considerable individual attention. It was not immediately clear, in that case, what lessons it could offer to the burgeoning public schools, which often struggled with large classes and irregular attendance. Still, Dewey wrote extensively about insights gained from this experience, providing intellectual tutelage for a growing movement to transform the schools (Cremin, 1961; Kliebard, 1986; Tanner, 1997).

John Dewey eventually argued that the school was central to modern democratic society. It was this institution, he reasoned, that provided citizens with skills and knowledge for political participation, echoing Horace Mann decades earlier. But Dewey also believed schools should convey the scientific sensibility necessary for a changing social order. As a result, his conception of the school's role went well beyond Mann's ideas. For Dewey, democracy entailed more than a politically informed citizenry. It was an associated way of life that allowed for the fullest development of everybody. Democracy, in that case, embraced a range of ideas, such as tolerance, fair play, critical intelligence, and respect for others. Ultimately, he felt it was the highest form of collective wisdom. If democratic society was to succeed, he argued, the school's role was to help cultivate such values, and experience was key to imparting them. In short, Dewey believed schools should be microcosms of society, to teach democratic values so they would not be forgotten. The school enabled most children to encounter these questions outside their families, and Dewey felt it essential that it exemplified the values and practices of democracy (Westbrook, 1991).

The period's atmosphere of rapid social transformation fueled Dewey's conviction that schools had a critical role to play. Like many others, he was alarmed by the magnitude of change, especially in big cities like Chicago and New York, where he lived for many years. He was concerned about growing social divisions between rich and poor, conflict over labor issues, and social fragmentation due to religious and ethnic differences. People's work lives were also increasingly dictated by forces beyond their control. Industrialization, he declared, threatened to turn them into "mere appendages of machines." Because of this, he reasoned that schools had even more important roles to play than in earlier times. Where Horace Mann had invoked an industrial metaphor in declaring the school a "balance wheel," Dewey saw it as a refuge from the ravages of economic life, a place to learn essential values of democracy (Dykhuizen, 1973).

Like Mann, Dewey saw virtue in bringing groups together in a single institution, the central idea of the common school. But he also recognized the reality of social and economic differentiation in urban society. Realizing that nearly all children attended school, at least in the primary grades, he focused more on the construction of community within the institution. Consequently, he saw the role of schooling in conveying the tenets of democratic life and scientific reasoning, so that democracy could flourish in spite of rapid societal change. As social distance between groups increased, education would become ever more important in sustaining civilization. Dewey's basic concern, in that case, was not simply a more humane form of pedagogical practice; it was also the preservation of essential American values (McCluskey, 1958; Westbrook, 1991).

Dewey was hardly the first pedagogical progressive, and he drew many of his ideas from other educators with similar concerns. Chicago became a hotbed for these ideas after Colonel Francis Parker, a Civil War veteran turned educator, arrived in the early 1890s to head the Cook County Normal School, a local teacher-training institution. Parker had acquired a national reputation for innovation after serving as school superintendent in Quincy, Massachusetts. While there, he had done away with traditional drill and memorization, and emphasized the cultivation of children's

natural curiosity and propensity to learn. The Quincy schools drew visitors from around the world to see new methods of teaching with objects, taking field trips, and allowing children freedom to solve problems. In Chicago, Parker established a practice school, demonstrating these principles in action. It was hardly coincidental that Dewey enrolled his own children in Parker's school. Eventually the two men became collaborators in forging a new approach to education. Parker represented an important progressive influence, and his ideas often found expression in Dewey's writings (Curti, 1959; Ryan, 1995).

Parker's school represented the early stage of a movement that gained momentum in the decades to come. Inspired by his example, by Dewey and the work of others, dozens of visionary educators established schools embracing progressive pedagogical principles. In 1915, Dewey and his daughter Evelyn published *Schools of To-Morrow*, which described exemplary progressive institutions around the country. These cases provided evidence that schools embracing the ideals of nurturing individual interests, fostering expression, learning through experience, and upholding democratic values could be established in a variety of settings. Thousands of like-minded educators took heart from these examples, and progressive ideas and practices found their way into schools and classrooms across the country and around the world (Cremin, 1961; Weiler, 2011; Zilversmit, 1993).

While in Chicago, Dewey had been influenced by the famous progressive social reformer Jane Addams, and he was a strong proponent of gender equity in education. Women were especially prominent in the reform movement, founding and leading new schools and occasionally serving as leaders of school districts. For example, Caroline Pratt, Marietta Johnson, and Flora Cook were prominent leaders of innovative private institutions, and Chicago's Ella Flagg Young was among the most important progressive superintendents. Helen Heffernan and Corinne Seeds played important public leadership roles in California. Perhaps even more important, the principles of pedagogical progressivism proved especially significant among teacher-educators, both women and men. Consequently, progressive ideas thrived in many of colleges

and university schools of education, as they do today (Blount, 1998; Lagemann, 1979, 1985; Semel & Sadovnick, 1999; Weiler, 2011). Dewey also had a global impact, as he traveled and discussed his ideas in China, the Soviet Union and many other parts of the world (Ryan, 1995; Westbrook, 1991). School reformers in Mexico also embraced progressive principles, sometimes influencing educators in the United States and elsewhere (Flores, 2014). This reflected an unusual form of isomorphism, reform ideas leading to new approaches to education, guided by the writings of intellectual figures whose ideas gained an international following.

After Dewey joined the philosophy department at New York's Columbia University in 1904, he became particularly influential at its affiliated education school, known as Teachers College. A number of its faculty members became widely recognized advocates of experiential and problem-centered approaches to schooling. Perhaps the most famous was William Heard Kilpatrick, who developed the "project method" in the early 1920s. This was a way of circumventing traditional curricular structures and subjects, by allowing students to undertake projects linked to their own interests. His intention was to offer opportunities for students to pursue their own goals and study appealing topics, while developing skills in reading, writing, and analysis. Defined often outside traditional subjects, projects were supposed to be carefully planned and evaluated. Dewey was critical of Kilpatrick for breaking so dramatically from the academic disciplines, but his ideas proved quite popular. In a relatively short time, Kilpatrick's techniques were being tried across the country, spreading the doctrine of "student centered" progressive education widely. In addition, thousands of teachers were exposed to Kilpatrick and his progressive-minded colleagues at Teachers College, which quickly became the nation's most prominent education school. Many eventually became important leaders, and their efforts to employ progressive techniques in a variety of settings represented a special case of normative isomorphism. These developments, along with the founding of the Progressive Education Association in 1919, helped to give the movement an institutional voice, a stronger identity and greater visibility (Graham, 1967; Kliebard, 1986; Westbrook, 1991).

It was not long, however, before criticisms of the pedagogical progressives began to surface. Traditional educators complained that experiential methods did not teach children basic reading and computational skills. Students who learned history on field trips, critics charged, often did not recall names and dates from the past. Older English teachers suggested that an aversion to drill and memorization added spelling and punctuation errors. More perceptive critics noted that progressive methods seemed to work most readily with affluent children, whose plentiful resources of cultural and social capital provided a ready stock of educative experiences to draw upon. It proved a greater challenge, however, to convey such skills and knowledge to children from impoverished families, especially when their homes offered little intellectual stimulation. These students often demanded more direction and control by teachers, especially if their classes were quite large, as in most public schools. It was little wonder, then, that many progressive schools were smaller private institutions serving an affluent clientele. Critics were quick to point this out, occasionally lampooning progressive education as a trendy fad among the social and intellectual elite (Cremin, 1961; Ravitch, 2000; Zilversmit, 1993).

These and similar comments came to resonate with many adults, especially those who equated discipline and academic achievement with schools in the past. Most American parents continued to believe in controlling children, and were suspicious of educational doctrines that celebrated self-expression. School, after all, was supposed to entail strict authority and command of factual knowledge. To many, progressive schools appeared to be little more than children running amok. Such perceptions were not always unfounded, and there was also a good deal of criticism from within the movement itself. Dewey and other reform figures often struggled to prevent misrepresentation of their ideas, and attempted to distance themselves from educators who simply suggested that children should play freely. By 1938, when Dewey published *Experience and Education*, his major corrective statement, progressive education had lost much of its originality and insight. Too many educators saw it as simply the replacement of books with immediate experience, instead of Dewey's conception of utilizing experience to enrich learning.

Despite their early promise and broad appeal, the pedagogical progressives had a relatively small immediate impact on American schools. Even so, they left an indelible mark on educational thought and practice, one that continues to exert influence today (Cremin, 1961; Cuban, 1984; Ravitch, 1983).

Administrative Progressivism

At the same time that pedagogical progressives sought to bring democracy to classrooms, other educators sought to attune schools to different social roles. As noted earlier, historians have labeled this group *administrative progressives*, but theirs was not a movement comparable to Dewey and his admirers. Rather, *administrative progressivism* encompassed a wide range of educators, most striving to help schools function as smoothly and efficiently as possible (Tyack, 1974).

By and large, the administrative progressives were not very concerned about using education to change society or improve democracy. They worked instead to adapt schools to the rapid urbanization and social differentiation, especially in the labor market. While the pedagogical progressives included many women, administrative progressives were mostly men. Business and other fiscally conservative interests often supported them, and they frequently were opposed by organized labor. Administrative progressives far outnumbered pedagogical reformers and represented the principal direction of change in American public schools. They saw themselves working to build a modern educational system, and many features of schools today can be traced to their efforts (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

If one word were to express the principal bearing and object of administrative progressivism, it would be *efficiency*. Most of the nation's leading educators were interested in building a system both rationally organized and cost-effective. This was partly due to the experience of larger school districts. Major cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles were growing rapidly at this time, and their schools received tens of thousands of new children annually. The need to constantly erect new buildings, train teachers,

buy textbooks and other supplies, and devise new curricula placed an enormous strain on district resources. This, in turn, led to greater public scrutiny of tax funds earmarked for education, and concern about wastefulness and corruption. In the latter 19th century, when city schools were often controlled by ward (local or even neighborhood) politicians, it was not unusual for funds to be diverted by political machine bosses. When corrupt politicians and school administrators accepted bribes or embezzled money, calls for greater professionalism were sounded. As urban school systems faced ever greater demands and budgets grew larger, such questions became paramount (Callahan, 1962; Drost, 1967).

These concerns led to a general movement to create new, centralized, and highly efficient school systems in cities across the country. This was a part of a sweeping reform campaign in municipal government, attacking corruption linked to ward-based political regimes. By 1920, hundreds of municipalities had shifted from neighborhood or ward representation to centralized and bureaucratic forms of governance and administration. In school systems, it was one of the principal accomplishments of administrative reform, creating a new ethos of educational leadership. Instead of local directors selected by politicians, reformed urban school systems were governed by non-partisan boards representing entire communities or municipalities, and administered by superintendents selected for experience and professional credentials. It marked a new era in urban schooling, one that emphasized separation between local politics and school supervision. Educational leaders were supposed to be above corruption, expert managers of resources, and knowledgeable about learning. Efficiency was the watchword, and a growing cadre of administrators saw that it permeated public education (Hays, 1964; Reese, 1986).

A related reform that inspired considerable conflict was rural school consolidation, combining small districts to form larger administrative units. Despite urbanization, millions of children attended one room schools at the turn of the century. Thousands of tiny districts still dotted the countryside, especially in the Midwest. Once a cornerstone of public education, critics decried them as often dilapidated institutions, lacking the benefits of modern facilities and

professional standards. Even when well-maintained, country schools were criticized for not providing a comprehensive curriculum and activities for children of different ages. Bigger institutions were deemed more efficient in building maintenance, curricular development and a host of other respects. This was a form of isomorphism that used urban districts as models for the reform of rural education. It was a hard argument to refute, but many rural communities still fought bitterly to retain their schools. Between 1912 and 1922, Iowa consolidated more than 2,000 country districts, but nearly 10,000 remained. Consolidation proceeded faster in other states, but encountered resistance everywhere from those who saw local schools as a vital link to the past. In many such cases, efficiency was considered a poor substitute for shared traditions and a sense of belonging. Consequently, school consolidation took a while to achieve widespread acceptance. Eventually, the development of gasoline powered school busses, allowing children from large areas to be taught together, speeded the consolidation process (Reynolds, 1999; Steffes, 2012; Zimmerman, 2009).

There was more to administrative reform, however, than just efficiency. If a second word were to characterize the period, it would be *differentiation*. As suggested earlier, differentiation of roles was associated with the division of labor, and occupational specialization. Although this was a source of concern to pedagogical progressives like Dewey, other educators embraced it as an unavoidable feature of modern life. Administrative progressives felt that schools could help make specialization and differentiation function more rationally and smoothly, by preparing individuals for dissimilar roles based on personal interests and abilities. To this end they adapted the term *differentiation* itself to represent the school's commitment to identifying a range of goals for students. This was a departure from earlier educators, who had emphasized themes of commonality and fellowship in public education. With the administrative progressives, specialization and distinction were accentuated, helping students work toward their separate destinies (Krug, 1964; Violas, 1978).

A prime arena for these developments was the high school, which developed rapidly between 1890 and 1920. In general, administrative progressives sought to help secondary schools focus

on preparing students for the labor market and the social roles available to them. Accordingly, vocational education became more important, including such curricular innovations as home economics, commercial and clerical training, and the manual arts. These programs were designed to prepare young men and women for strikingly different purposes (Kliebard, 1999). It is also noteworthy that the rise of high schools in rural districts was a powerful impetus to school consolidation. If towns were to offer their children the advantages of these new curricular developments, and the opportunity to compete for academic honors, local resources had to be marshaled to bring older students together in a single institution (Goldin & Katz, 1999a).

Eventually, however, even grammar schools became concerned with classifying students according to academic success. As several historians have noted, special classes were created in urban school systems for "retarded" students or "laggards," those who failed promotion from one grade to the next. The extent to which institutions were able to do this was expressed in the term *social efficiency*. This phrase was perhaps most prominently associated with David Snedden, a former Massachusetts education superintendent who became a faculty member at Teachers College. It represented the ability of schools to provide students with differentiated knowledge and skills, and to sort them according to their ability. This was a new form of efficiency, unrelated to its use in budgetary matters. It reflected attempts to link schools to social differentiation, contributing to the varied roles and economic functions it entailed. It was a novel idea for public education, one that engendered considerable controversy and debate (Drost, 1967; Tropea, 1987).

This new direction in school policies was not entirely unprecedented, but it became more routine during the progressive era. Differentiation was hardly a groundbreaking concept in urban education. In the nation's largest districts there had been evidence of specialization and a focus on job preparation for decades. In Boston and New York, manual high schools had been established in the 1880s, and they existed elsewhere as well. As suggested in Chapter 4, some cities had maintained separate schools for male and female

students. Many districts also had institutions to prepare students for college or the business world; Philadelphia's Central High School was a well-known example. After 1900, however, new weight was attached to such practices. As the public high school grew in importance, the question of preparing students for employment proved irresistible. Consequently, vocational education and related curricula appeared in schools across the country, and the doctrine of social efficiency spread accordingly. This was a sign of the growing interdependence of society and education, and administrative progressives believed it to be evidence of their work's significance (Fisher, 1967; Kantor, 1988; Krug, 1964).

Developments such as these gave rise to new forms of school management and control: *Bureaucracy*. In many respects, this was a historical consequence of differentiation and greater efficiency. As the social theorist Max Weber noted, bureaucracies developed as systems of rules and regulations, designed to apportion resources according to codes of behavior. Such forms of organization appeared to allocate power and assets rationally, representing presumed impartiality and competence. In the late 19th century, bureaucratic governance and leadership was employed to forestall corruption and political interference in the schools. As urban education systems grew larger and more centralized, bureaucratic forms of administration became widespread. When specialized programs and schools appeared, following the dictates of differentiation, they were governed by the new bureaucratic ethic. Bureaucratic procedures specified purchasing and distribution policies, implementing economies of scale and uniform, cost-effective practices. The administrative progressives who designed such systems of allocation and control believed they were assuring the greatest possible good from limited assets. In the words of David Tyack, they attempted to build the "one best system" of educational organization, believing bureaucratic administration and governance to be the optimal mode of efficient management (Katz, 1971; Tyack, 1974).

Of course, the newly rationalized ethos in education called for evaluation of each school system's constituent elements. This was answered in part by new methods of bookkeeping and accounting, and legions of clerks and managers who became known as

bureaucrats. Another dimension of this was standardized or psychological testing, and growing numbers of professionals trained in assessment and psychometric measurement. This was a logical corollary of social efficiency, differentiation, and preparing students for an assortment of social and economic roles. It was also well suited to bureaucratic preferences for clear, seemingly unbiased criteria for decisions. French researcher Alfred Binet devised the first general test of mental aptitude in 1903, and psychologists in the United States adapted his methods to develop their own tests. Lewis Terman of Stanford University and Edward Thorndike of Teachers College were among the best-known proponents of this new technology for measuring abilities, and they quickly gained international reputations for their work (Jonich, 1968; Lagemann, 2000; Minton, 1988).

During World War I, the practicality of such measures was demonstrated when the U.S. Army administered IQ tests to draftees to help determine their fitness for various types of training. By the later 1920s, thousands of school districts employed standardized tests to judge students' suitability for particular programs, to justify curricular decisions, or simply as points of information for teachers and parents. Test construction and publication became a burgeoning business. Perhaps most importantly, these testing instruments lent legitimacy to the idea that student abilities differed widely, and that certain roles simply were not appropriate for everyone. Thorndike, Terman, and others provided a seemingly scientific justification to the principle of differentiation, and the new discipline of psychological assessment helped to heighten the allure of administrative progressive viewpoints (Brown, 1992; Cravens, 1993; Gould, 1981; Rury, 1988c).

The rise of the mental testing movement held especially important implications for children with special needs or learning difficulties. Children who were blind, deaf, or impaired in speech had been educated in separate institutions since the mid-19th century. Most such schools were residential and served only a small fraction of the pertinent population. Following the Civil War, similar institutions were established by various states for intellectually disabled children, often called "imbeciles" at the time. Other types of learning

disabilities were not well understood. For families unable or unwilling to send their children away, there often was little recourse: These children were educated in the common schools with other students or they simply stayed home. This was not considered a major problem in rural communities, where the incidence of such cases was relatively rare. In larger cities, however, the numbers of children with these conditions could become quite significant. As urban school systems grew rapidly, special classes were established for students with various learning impediments. In 1879, for instance, Cleveland established a special course for “feebleminded” children; Boston followed suit in 1898, as did many other cities. By the early 20th century, a range of such programs existed, supported by the incipient testing movement. This was a new degree of differentiation, and the standardized tests provided an added degree of legitimacy to placing children in these classes (Franklin, 1994; Winzer, 1993).

As it turned out, this was a domain the testers were only too happy to claim. Early psychometricians charged headlong into the task of diagnosing various categories of mental ability, coining such technical terms as *idiot* and *moron* (each a different level of intellectual disability), and suggesting that such conditions were hereditary. Public concerns were raised about the prospect of these children intermingling with the “normal” population, sentiments fueled by pseudoscientific advocates of *mental hygiene* and *eugenics*, a term for human perfectibility. Zealous proponents of these ideas issued racist bromides against immigration and the assimilation of various minority groups, and even urged the sterilization of “feebleminded” couples. Such concepts led to even greater efforts to segregate children with learning problems, as many believed they posed a threat to other students and could not learn much anyway. This was differentiation taken to an abhorrent extreme, reflecting the influence of racist ideology in a preoccupation with segregation based on presumably biological criteria. Given these origins, mental tests would cast a long shadow over the subsequent course of American education (Gould, 1981; Lemann, 1999; Selden, 1999; Trent, 1994).

Administrative progressivism thus had a flavor quite different from its pedagogical counterpart. Concerned with efficiency and fitting the

schools to sustain social distinctions, administrative progressives were preoccupied with finding rational solutions to organizational problems. Unlike pedagogical progressives, their efforts could hardly be described as altruistic. And certain features of the administrative ethos, such as mental testing and bureaucracy, proved to be quite controversial. Although there were some urban school regimes that pursued reforms in the name of humanizing education, especially in cities like Toledo and Milwaukee with progressive-minded mayors, most others sought to impose a rationality that distanced these institutions from public influence. What is more, administrative progressives typically eschewed the idea that education should uplift and transform children, preferring instead to devise programs that would reproduce the existing social division of labor (Reese, 1986; Tyack, 1974).

Like the pedagogical reformers, the administrative progressives managed to provoke opposition to their ideas. Organized labor was often in the forefront of campaigns to stop efficiency measures, especially those that threatened the working conditions of teachers. Unions, socialist groups, and neighborhood associations fought reductions in school expenditures when they believed the quality of education was threatened. And large numbers of working-class Americans remained suspicious of vocational education, fearing it a tool employers could use to undermine trade unions. It would be wrong, in that case, to imagine that administrative progressive reforms swept into prominence with universal acclaim. These ideas were at least as controversial as those of pedagogical progressives, but unlike other reformers the administrative progressives received support from influential political and financial interests. This contributed to the spread of their ideas and practices, a form of isomorphism aided by powerful political allies. The inter-district movement of highly trained professionals in educational administration, testing and other fields added normative dimensions to this process. Expanding state education departments created uniform standards for school accreditation, attendance and other aspects of schooling, early signs of coercive isomorphism (Steffes, 2012). Thus, it is easy to imagine that the success of administrative progressives was preordained. But at the time it was by no means

certain that their agenda of efficiency and differentiation ultimately would triumph (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 1986).

Administrative reformers generally did prevail, however, and most believed they were improving the ability of the schools to address important social issues. They claimed, for instance, that, in helping schools to serve an increasingly variegated student population, they were upholding the democratic aims of public education. Identifying the differing abilities of students with tests, they argued, allowed the schools to help individuals in finding appropriate roles in society. Administrative progressives also managed to achieve their goals of consolidation in thousands of rural districts. Although they may have lacked the fervor and messianic vision of a Francis Parker or William Heard Kilpatrick, they believed they were making schools of the 20th century far better than their predecessors. In this regard, administrative progressivism certainly was an important element of modern school reform.

The Rise of the Modern High School

As suggested earlier, the early 20th century was a time of rapid growth for the high school. Enrollments had expanded through the latter half of the 1800s, standing at about 300,000 in 1890 (public and private schools combined). By 1930, the number had increased more than 15-fold, to nearly five million, almost half the nation's teenagers. Much of this reflected a remarkable increase in institutions: On average, a new secondary school was established nearly every day between 1890 and 1930. By the 1920s, most communities outside the South had access to some form of secondary education, typically through a nearby public high school (Goldin & Katz, 1999a; Herbst, 1996).

This was a big change from earlier times, when common schools represented the standard for ordinary public schooling. Now most Americans had relatively easy access to a higher level institution. Although a slight majority of teens still did not attend high schools, and many more never graduated, their accessibility marked a new stage for the educational system. If the 19th century was the age of

the common schools, the start of the 20th century was the era of the high school (Goldin, 1998).

Like other large-scale developments, the growth of secondary education gave rise to considerable controversy about its purposes. Two public reports about the high school animated these debates, both commissioned by the National Education Association, the period's largest professional education group (today a union). The first was the "Report of the Committee of Ten," published in 1893. Its authors included university officials and national education leaders. Chaired by Charles Eliot, president of Harvard, it also included William Torrey Harris, then U.S. Commissioner of Education. The report aimed to establish order in a secondary education sector that included high schools, academies, private and religious schools, and sundry other institutions. There was also the problem of coordinating secondary schools with the expanding colleges and universities. Given the haphazard development of these varied institutions, it was a significant task indeed (Angus & Mirel, 1999; VanOverbeke, 2008).

Eliot, Harris, and other members of the committee were traditionalists, with a rather conservative perspective on education's purposes, and how to link schools and colleges. By and large, they felt that secondary education should remain squarely academic in orientation. Although they were open to some flexibility in curriculum and student goals, they did not intend to change things very much. They were willing to relax the traditional emphasis on classical languages for greater attention to modern academic subjects. But they envisioned relatively little variation in secondary curricula, regardless of whether students intended to attend college. Basically, they felt that all students should take a rigorous program of English, history, mathematics, science, and language study. The collegiate course would offer classical languages, along with modern language or advanced mathematics and science. Vocationalism was not featured in their recommendations. Committee members believed that powers of concentration, memory, and communication gained from academic courses would be appropriate for any career. It was a point of view that would be roundly criticized in subsequent years (Cremin, 1961; Krug, 1964).

The second prominent report was the “Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education,” prepared by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. It was often called the “Kingsley Commission” after its chair, Clarence Kingsley. Issued in 1918, a quarter century after the Committee of Ten’s report, this one offered a new vision: the comprehensive high school. Unlike the Committee of Ten, the Kingsley Commission advocated a differentiated secondary curriculum, but it also called for bringing students from all backgrounds together within a single institution. In other words, differentiation would be achieved by groups of students pursuing different courses of study while attending the same school. Some would be in vocational programs, while others might pursue a pre-collegiate course of study and yet others might opt for a general or commercial diploma. Certain classes, however, would provide an opportunity for students to mingle, such as citizenship, physical education and health and hygiene (Angus & Mirel, 1999).

Representing the logic of administrative progressives, the commission encouraged secondary schools to follow the path of social efficiency. It also wanted to preserve a sense of community among diverse constituencies while fostering institutional growth. In this way, the commission attempted to preserve the democratic character of public education while acknowledging the importance of differentiation. Dissimilar groups of students could follow their own interests and proclivities, while working together on common problems of governance, civic responsibility, and extra-curricular activities. Whether this conception of the high school succeeded is debatable, but its formulation clearly reflected both wings of progressive education. In this regard, the report was a uniquely American response to the challenges posed by the secondary schooling. With such an outlook, the public high school could remain a distinctive national institution (Cremin, 1961; Herbst, 1996; Krug, 1964).

The two reports provide an interesting contrast, and they have fascinated generations of historians. One perspective advocated a largely academic institution, with only minor differences between the programs students should take. The other not only provided for considerably more diversity in curricula, but also emphasized the

school's role in socializing youth for a democratic society. In reality, the high schools of the time probably embraced neither of these ideal types. There certainly was substantial evidence of growing vocationalism at the time of the Committee of Ten; differentiation was increasingly the order of the day, especially in big cities. Conversely, most schools still featured traditional academic work following the Cardinal Principles report. In fact, middle-class students interested in academic courses were their biggest constituency. Comprehensive high schools eventually did become more commonplace, but only after enrollments increased even more following 1930.

Other developments in the high school's history may have been just as important as these documents, such as standard graduation requirements, assigning credits to courses, and the rise of a robust youth culture. Additionally, pressures from the colleges to prepare students for admission, facilitated by national entrance exams, helped to foster greater uniformity in standards. This was a textbook case of coercive isomorphism. Sheer growth, of course, was also an impetus to change. It would be wrong, in that case, to suggest that either of these reports changed the course of history. They were, however, telling commentaries on concerns of the day and the ways that progressivism may have shaped the thinking of educators (Angus & Mirel, 1999; VanOverbeke, 2008).

Regardless of its curricular orientation, perhaps the most striking features of the high school were its remarkable expansion and impact on the economy. It evolved from a somewhat elite institution to one available to the majority of adolescents. Economic historian Claudia Goldin has described the rise of secondary schooling as the "second transformation" of American education, boosting attainment far ahead of other nations. The geographic origin of this expansion was in the northern, mid-western, and western states, regions with relatively high levels of income and less inequality. Enrollments tended to be higher in communities with fewer jobs in manufacturing and low numbers of immigrants. In other words, a degree of homogeneity in economic welfare and social stability seems to have fostered greater interest in secondary schooling. In areas where factory employment did not lure teens away from school, and where

investments in additional education seemed reasonable, the high schools flourished (Goldin, 1998).

Goldin and other scholars also have argued that the growth of secondary enrollments added significantly to the nation's economic growth after 1920. They suggest that human capital and technological change were to the 20th century what the factory was to the 19th century: a potent engine of development. This was reflected in the nation's rapid increase in white-collar employment, growing from less than a tenth of the labor force to more than a quarter in the space of a few decades. People in such positions were necessary to coordinate the nation's increasingly complex production and distribution system, eventually the most sophisticated in the world. This called for a massive investment in human capital, achieved through ever-higher levels of schooling. Advances at the secondary level accounted for most of the period's increased educational attainment, a general measure of human capital formation. In short, the skills gained in high school contributed to greater productivity and efficiency, expanding capacity for economic growth (Goldin, 2001; Goldin & Katz, 2008).

For young people in certain regions, this meant a substantial economic return (or payoff) to education, especially early in the century. This undoubtedly affected their decisions to enroll and graduate. Analysis of data gathered from the 1915 Iowa census indicated that the income of men who attended high school was significantly higher than those who did not. Many found jobs in the rapidly expanding white-collar sector of the economy, as managers, bookkeepers, and clerks. Even high-paying, skilled jobs in certain manufacturing industries were reserved for high school graduates. It is not surprising, in that case, that reasons for attending secondary school included greater economic security and well-being. The high school was seen as a way to get ahead, and this contributed a great deal to its rapid growth (Goldin & Katz, 2000).

The link between secondary education and the economy was critical to the evolution of American society. Eventually, a gradual decline in the wage premium to high school graduates set in, after the initial boom in enrollments. With expansion of the high school, larger numbers competed for white-collar positions, exerting

downward pressure on earnings. But this took a while to occur. During the opening decades of the 20th century, the economic impact of the high school was quite substantial. Secondary education contributed to growth and change in the American economy, a gradual shift to white-collar jobs in management, planning, and record keeping. It was the early glimmering of a postindustrial society, and at its center was the development of the nation's educational system. This was indeed tangible evidence of a strong connection between education and social change (Goldin & Katz, 2008).

All things considered, the opening decades of the 20th century represented a momentous time for American secondary schools. These institutions experienced dramatic expansion, enrolling nearly half of the youth population by the 1930s. Although high schools started as traditional academic institutions, by the 1920s they were slowly becoming somewhat more comprehensive, embracing a variety of curricula and vocational purposes. Perhaps more important, secondary education became a significant factor in the national economy, contributing to its stock of human capital while augmenting individual earning power. In this respect, the institution had come to fulfill the purposes that administrative progressives had hoped for. It became a key link between the nation's education system and the labor market. This was the leading edge of what could be described as the "human capital revolution," a time when skills and knowledge would become primary factors in economic growth. When this began to happen, education would never be looked on as inconsequential again. Its implications will be considered in Chapters 6 and 7.

FOCAL POINT: INDUSTRIALISM AND PROGRESSIVE REFORM IN GARY, INDIANA

Creating closer links between the economy and the schools was an important theme in progressivism. Of course, this aspect of reform had many sides in the early years of the 20th century, some of which did not conform

neatly to the categories historians have devised for them. One such instance occurred in Gary, Indiana. Led by William Wirt, a charismatic and enterprising superintendent, this city's schools became a famous example of progressive reform in an industrial setting. It was acclaimed for demonstrating how to unite many contradictory elements of education reform, but also showed the potential for controversy that schooling engendered. In addition, school reform in Gary provided a lesson about the fate of educational innovations when removed from settings where they began.

Gary was an unusual city. Founded in 1906 by the U.S. Steel Corporation to house workers for its giant mills, it was named for the company's founder, Judge Elbert H. Gary. Like other industrial company towns, it grew quickly as workers and their families, many of them immigrants, came to take jobs. A key part of the new city's planning was a school system, and in 1908 Wirt arrived from nearby Blufton as its first superintendent. A one-time student of John Dewey, he admired the ideas of pedagogical progressivism and had implemented progressive practices in Blufton. The call to lead a new school system provided an opportunity to develop these ideas even further. Within a relatively short time, Wirt helped to make Gary a showcase of progressive educational reform (Cohen, 1990).

Influenced by Dewey, William Wirt believed in the importance of learning from experience; like the managers at U.S. Steel, he also aspired to greater efficiency. Given these predilections, he devised a series of reforms in the organization of schooling to address both purposes. Because Gary's school system was new, Wirt had the opportunity to practically design it from scratch. Instead of requiring children to remain in one classroom throughout the day, as was common, Wirt rotated them between periods of academic instruction and other activities, including laboratories, gym and assemblies. Wirt labeled

this the “work-study-play school” but it quickly became known as the Gary Plan. It allowed schools to accommodate larger numbers of children, as only half the students required classroom seats at a time. The other children would be in gymnasiums, auditoriums, on playgrounds or in labs. No major resource of the school was idle at any time, and children were exposed to a variety of learning situations. Wirt also emphasized learning from the larger community and encouraged field trips and visits by businessmen and civic leaders. He allowed some schools to be open to the community throughout the year, giving substance to the progressive idea that school should be a center of neighborhood life. It was a practical and energetic brand of progressive reform, and it soon received wide attention (Cohen & Mohl, 1979).

The Gary Plan proved appealing to both wings of progressive education. Dewey praised it for the emphasis on learning outside of classrooms and the imaginative ways that Gary teachers utilized instructional time. The degree of public involvement in the schools, and the willingness of Wirt and his staff to involve the local community, impressed pedagogical progressives. Administrative progressives, on the other hand, were struck by the system’s inventive use of resources. School leaders in other rapidly expanding districts marveled at the idea that schools could serve twice the number of children by utilizing other spaces for activity learning. With endorsements from both sides of the great divide in education reform, the Gary Plan was a widely praised example of progressive ideas put to practical use. After Dewey featured the Gary schools in his book *Schools of To-Morrow* and other writers commended their efficiency, Wirt became well known nationally and internationally (Callahan, 1962; Cremin, 1961).

A key element of Wirt’s success was his firm commitment to progressive pedagogy. Teachers who supervised children outside of classrooms had to be

carefully trained in activity learning. Wirt recognized the danger of these periods becoming little more than supervised play or costly babysitting. Even though it was rapidly growing, Gary was small enough that responsible teachers could be recruited for such duties, at least in the beginning. Making field trips, lab experiments, and other activities integral to the curriculum required coordination, and considerable cooperation from local businesses, government offices and other agencies. Wirt provided resources to make such planning possible, and his personal magnetism and reputation helped to assure good will toward the schools. As the system grew larger, however, and Wirt's attention turned to other matters, the details of such planning were left to others. Eventually, the educative value of non-classroom activities became open to question. Despite the emphasis Wirt and others placed on progressive pedagogy, in time it seemed that visitors were most intrigued by the Gary Plan's potential for cost savings. Even if the appeal of Wirt's system was its combination of different aspects of progressive reform, it gradually became clear that one side of the period's educational debates would predominate (Cohen & Mohl, 1979).

In 1914 Wirt was called to New York City, where the mayor and local school officials asked him to help implement a variant of the Gary Plan, the "platoon" system, in the city's schools. Wirt arrived with fanfare, declaring he could save the city thousands of dollars by organizing the schools more efficiently. After setting up some demonstration projects, Wirt planned to implement his ideas on a wider scale when he found himself in a controversy. The platoon school became an issue in the city's mayoral election, with parent, labor and teacher groups protesting the rotation of children from one activity to another, declaring that quality education was being sacrificed for cost savings. As a result, the New York schools eventually rejected Wirt's plan, and he returned to

Gary chastened but unapologetic. Even though the Gary schools continued to be the subject of considerable attention, Wirt focused his energies on matters closer to home. The New York experience had taught him much about the difficulties of transplanting educational innovations into a different social and political context (Cohen, 1990; Ravitch, 1974).

The basic concept of the platoon school, however, proved appealing to administrators faced with expanding enrollments and limited classroom space. Eventually more than 200 cities adopted some form of this method of school organization. Much of the platoon school's popularity can be attributed to Alice Barrows, Wirt's idealistic and enthusiastic assistant in the ill-fated New York experiment. Barrows took a position in the U.S. education office and became an untiring advocate of Wirt's ideas. It is open to question, however, whether many administrators agreed with Barrow's progressive ideas as much as the efficiency of the platoon plan. Children moving around the school to use laboratories, art rooms, and gymnasiums eventually would become a staple of American education, but it is not clear that it was linked fundamentally to progressive teaching and learning. Like so many other educational ideas, Wirt's system was adapted by educators to serve their own purposes, and to help schools achieve their goals more efficiently. As David Tyack and Larry Cuban have suggested, most school reforms have produced only slight changes to existing practice, as they were adjusted to suit the needs of educators in different settings. The Gary Plan, while appealing at the start, was no exception (Cohen, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

William Wirt's approach to progressive reform was one of dozens of localized efforts to improve schools in terms of both pedagogy and efficiency. The schools of Winnetka, Illinois, led by Carlton Washburn, were another prominent example, along with Helen Parkhurst's "Dalton Plan," which began at a high school at Dalton, Massachusetts.

Parkhurst later was associated with a private institution she founded in New York City, the Dalton School. Not all of these reform programs were as schematic as Wirt's; most developed in relatively affluent communities and emphasized individual expression and a departure from traditional curricula. By the end of the 1920s, however, many were on the defensive. In the case of Gary, a survey of the schools headed by Abraham Flexner, a well-known critic of higher education, found that students performed poorly on academic tests and that Wirt's highly touted efficiency was hardly evident in some of the district's schools. Similar criticisms were leveled at other institutions identified with pedagogical reform. Perhaps findings such as these were inevitable, given the hyperbole that often accompanied charismatic educational figures. Despite its great fervor, progressive reform seems never to have fulfilled its promise of a fundamental transformation in American schooling. Even with visionary leaders and an abundance of local resources and goodwill, the pace of change in schooling was ultimately quite incremental. This is a lesson that most would-be reformers seem all too eager to overlook even today (Semel & Sadovnik, 1999; Zilversmit, 1993).

Outsiders: Gender, Race, and Equity in Education during the Progressive Era

Progressive school reform was rooted in humanitarian principles, as Dewey and other reformers proclaimed, but the movement's record on race, gender, and social equality did not often represent these values. Despite school leaders' interest in serving all the disparate elements of society, inequity in education grew worse during the Progressive Era. The benefits of progressive reform were not available to everyone. Large segments of the population were left untouched by pedagogical change, and administrative reforms—

inspired by efficiency and differentiation—probably hampered students from certain social groups. Despite a growing national debate about race and gender, discrimination was still widely practiced, even by educators. It was an era of sharp differences in social status, and this was reflected in the nation's schools. Equity was not a major focus of reform.

One example of this was women's secondary education. As noted earlier, there had been remarkable gender equity in high schools, notwithstanding Edward Clarke and other critics of coeducation. Girls outnumbered boys by a two-to-one margin in the 1890s, outperforming them on most measures of academic accomplishment. Significantly, they appear to have taken generally the same courses as boys; there was little evident curricular differentiation along gender lines. This changed in the early 20th century, partly because some educators became uncomfortable with the idea of equality for women. They were anxious that high schools were becoming feminized, and feared that boys were in jeopardy of diminished masculinity. These concerns were voiced by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, and echoed widely throughout the educational establishment. Just a few decades after the controversy over Clarke's attack on coeducation, debates about gender in schools appeared once again (Rury, 1991a; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

At the same time, a generation of female educators was working to devise new forms of education for young women. Ellen Richards, a chemist and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's first female faculty member, helped to launch a new academic field called *home economics*. She and her compatriots sought to define it around problems related to women's roles as mothers and housekeepers, from childcare and nutrition to consumer behavior. In the high schools, however, home economics became a way of defining women's roles through training in accepted forms of work, and socialization in prescribed standards of conduct. In this regard, it differentiated the education of young women from males, while it readied them for the "true" female calling: becoming a wife, mother, and homemaker. In a short time, home economics would become one pillar of a distinctively female segment of the high school curriculum (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 1991).

There were other areas of change in women's education too, most of them connected to shifts in employment. As suggested earlier, thousands of young women took jobs in stores, offices, and other clerical work settings. This led to a boom in commercial education, including stenography, typing and bookkeeping. It was not long before these classes became dominated by women, helping to typecast them as feminine. The same tendency was evident in programs in sewing and other skills suitable for the garment trades. The earliest such classes were offered in private trade schools, but eventually most students seeking this training turned to public high schools. The development of a secondary curriculum aimed at preparing young women for "female" jobs was yet another aspect of gender differentiation in education. As the high school became increasingly concerned with vocational training and young men and women were prepared for different careers, many classes were divided along gender lines (Powers, 1992).

Although these developments probably did not result in a dramatic change for many students, the impact was substantial nonetheless. Most schools continued to be coeducational, and girls and boys still took most academic classes together. Change occurred at the margins, in a relatively small number of vocational subjects, but the effect often was palpable. The fact that many classes in most comprehensive high schools almost exclusively enrolled women—home economics, typing, stenography, sewing, and similar subjects—while others enrolled boys—shop, drafting, mechanics, and the like—sent a clear message: Gender largely determined one's place in society. Unlike the 19th century, when the high school was dominated by academic subjects and there were few differences between the sexes, by the 1920s it was obvious that boys and girls were supposed to play different roles. There is evidence, moreover, that the academic performance of young women in certain subjects, particularly mathematics and science, began to fall behind that of the men. Just as the labor market suggested that young women were best suited to be secretaries and filing clerks, many educators believed that girls were not as analytically keen as boys, at least in certain classes. A subtle but insidious set of distinctions began to take hold, and it would be several decades before they would

become a topic again in public discourse (Rury, 1991; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

The movement toward gender distinctions in American high schools was embraced enthusiastically by progressive educators of every stripe. For administrative progressives, it represented an axiomatic case of curricular differentiation. After all, they reasoned, few areas of life exhibited a more striking set of distinctions than gender, and the economy clearly called for men and women to play different roles. For pedagogical progressives, on the other hand, subjects like home economics and shop represented a healthy connection between school and the world that students were going to enter. What better way to introduce them to their likely future positions in society? Few educators posed questions about the inequities inherent in this. Instead, the appearance of courses such as home economics and the commercial arts was hailed as a new era in secondary education. Some fervent reformers made fantastic claims: Ellen Richards, for instance, predicted that home economics could save American civilization, as women learned to be better mothers and housekeepers. This was the ideology of “republican motherhood” taken to a new extreme. Such an assertion may seem silly today, but it helped obscure the sexist quality of proposed reforms. For educators at the time, the concept of differentiation was too logical to resist, even if it threatened to limit future options of their students (Powers, 1992; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

A similar set of issues confronted African Americans in schools, but the discrimination and oppression they endured was far more pronounced. As noted earlier, Black schooling was decidedly inferior in the South. This was clearly evident during the Progressive Era, as Black schools were hobbled by shorter terms, lower teacher salaries, and fewer supplies than what White institutions. More than 90% of African Americans lived in the South, most forced to scratch out a meager living in the countryside. Despite claims of a “New South,” the pace of economic change was much slower than in the urban-industrial North. In the years following 1910, hundreds of thousands of Blacks left the region to take industrial jobs and escape Jim Crow oppression. For most of those who remained, however, life in the South did not improve appreciably. The poor condition of Black

education was a telling reflection of the region's ongoing legacy of servitude (Bond, 1966; Cremin, 1988).

Despite the extreme inequalities in southern education, there were occasional signs of progress. Spurred by Northern philanthropies, southern states invested more resources in public education, including Black schools. Most new funding for African Americans, however, was spent on primary schooling. New schools were built, additional teachers hired, and supplies purchased, but mainly to offer education in the elementary grades. This provided Black Southerners with basic literacy skills but little else. In the meantime, it gave Whites something to claim when accused of depriving Black taxpayers of essential services, and it helped to mask inequities in other areas of the educational system (Margo, 1990; Werum, 1997).

Perhaps the biggest source of racial disparity in Southern schooling appeared in secondary education. During the Progressive Era fewer than 5% of Black youth were enrolled at the secondary level, most of them in private schools supported by tuition, local donations, and northern philanthropy. In the meantime, public high schools were established throughout the region for Whites, particularly in larger towns and cities. Even if Southern school systems lagged in terms of facilities and attendance patterns, White secondary schools appeared quite rapidly. Between 1905 and 1920, more than 500 were established, making secondary schooling widely accessible. By contrast, in 1916 only 58 public high schools for African Americans existed in 14 southern states, just 25 in former Confederate states. Most existed in major cities, where a small but active Black middle class helped to sustain them. In the rural areas where most Blacks lived, however, secondary education was virtually non-existent. Even though the numbers of teenagers in each race were about the same in the "Deep South," White public high schools outnumbered those for African Americans by more than a 10-to-1 ratio. For Blacks, secondary education remained an elusive goal, a bitter reminder of their subservient status (Anderson, 1988; Fultz, 2008).

Even when public high schools did exist, there were questions about their academic offerings. Reflecting the influence of Booker T. Washington, some institutions offered only a manual training

curriculum. This meant that male students spent most of their time in shops and tool rooms, learning carpentry, other trades, or simple handicrafts. For Black women, there was an emphasis on home economics, with an eye to work as domestic servants, their largest source of employment. These schools offered only a smattering of academic classes, and certainly were not equivalent to the best White high schools. Not everyone was enamored of manual training, however, and many Black communities struggled to create and sustain solid academic programs for their children. Historians have identified examples of strong Black secondary institutions during the latter stages of this era (Anderson, 1988; Siddle-Walker, 1996). But such efforts often faced an uphill struggle.

Southern Whites did not think secondary education was appropriate for most African Americans, and when offered for them it focused on vocational subjects. This reflected the persistence of racist ideology holding African Americans to be intellectually inferior, a longstanding myth abetted by standardized tests that purported to demonstrate it. Southern congressmen led the way in drafting the first federal legislation to support vocational education, the Smith-Hughes Act in 1918, arguing that it would benefit the region's African American population. Like other education funds, however, most of this money eventually went to White schools. Still, the link between manual training and Black schooling was firmly established. It would take time and struggle to change it (Werum, 1997).

These differences in the availability and quality of secondary schooling held enormous implications for African Americans. If indeed, the opening decades of the 20th century marked the age of the high school, and secondary education became increasingly important, most of the nation's Black population missed this crucial step in the human capital revolution. As certain skills and knowledge became essential to economic growth, Blacks were denied access to them. This meant that entire generations were deprived of the opportunity for white collar employment of almost any kind. They could not get jobs as clerks or typists, much less as accountants or office managers, without a high school diploma, or at least relevant classes. What is more, they could not convey the knowledge gained from such positions—human and cultural capital—to their own

children. The withholding of secondary education thus caused this large segment of the American population to fall even farther behind. This substantial educational debit would prove a difficult legacy to overcome (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Similar challenges faced the Hispanic population in the southwestern and western states, where segregated, inferior schools had become widespread. Even when Mexican Americans were permitted to attend the same institutions as Anglos, they often were required to take separate classes and focus on vocational subjects. Hampered by language barriers, they stereotypically scored poorly on standardized tests and were excluded from academic courses. Consequently, many did not remain in school, and their rates of secondary graduation fell far below the norm. Millions of Mexican workers came to the United States and many were forcibly deported during the Great Depression. Outright discrimination and uncertainty about their status made it difficult for those who remained to focus on education. Despite some notable challenges to segregated schooling, conditions did not improve much during this period. Upon leaving school, Mexican American youth took jobs as agricultural workers, in factories or as domestic servants, reinforcing stereotypes about their abilities. With few exceptions, progressive educators did not consider the plight of these children, and local school leaders generally ignored problems of unequal achievement (Donato, 1997; Gonzales, 1990; MacDonald, 2004).

The treatment of these “outsider” groups, systematically denied access to the highest quality academic instruction, can be considered evidence of opportunity hoarding in education at the time. To the extent that barriers were erected to keep young women, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other non-white students out of college prep classes in schools across the country, it is likely that their opportunities for academic advancement were constrained. In some instances these practices were more egregious than others. Policies of formal segregation and the sharply restricted availability of secondary schooling in the South, intended to reserve almost exclusive access to academic courses for whites, were perhaps the clearest example of such opportunity hoarding. The treatment of Mexican American and Asian children, however, often

was quite similar. Policies affecting young women may have been considerably less exclusionary, but many of them also were steered away from academic course offerings in favor of more “practical” subjects. The result was a great deal of educational inequity, and a system of schooling that helped sustain the advantages of white males (Rury & Saatcioglu, 2015).

The experiences of young women, African Americans, and Hispanics should be considered a part of the legacy of Progressivism. As suggested earlier, the treatment of these groups in secondary schools was yet another aspect of differentiation. Indeed, David Snedden and other devotees of administrative progressivism probably found little cause for concern in this regard. The schools, as implied by the term *social efficiency*, were simply supposed to reproduce the existing social division of labor, not change it. If African Americans or Mexican Americans occupied servile positions, it was not the school’s task to alter it. The work of the new testing professionals seemed to confirm this. Differences attributable to race and gender often were depicted as biologically based, and thus taken to be God-given, natural, and immutable. Indeed, the most zealous testers believed that inherent mental abilities separated most working-class children from those of more educated parents, regardless of race or ethnicity. Thus, the educational system was seen as a grand selection mechanism, certifying inequality as it chose certain students for success and others for failure (Drost, 1967; Kliebard, 1999).

If it is simple to comprehend the position of a conservative such as Snedden, it is harder to understand the view of the pedagogical progressives on questions of race and gender. John Dewey was a giant among American liberals, an opponent to the idea of racial inferiority, and a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP) (Alridge, 2008). Yet he was strangely quiet on these issues, especially concerning race, for much of his career. Many leading educators subscribed to theories suggesting that non-white groups had not yet experienced social evolution to the same extent as Europeans. Even Colonel Parker subscribed to such views, suggesting that children went through similar stages of development as “savage” races (Fallace, 2015). On

occasion, Dewey acknowledged the problem of inequity, such as in a 1930 article noting sharp racial discrepancies in southern school funding (Dewey, 1930). But it was not a major theme in his writing. Some scholars have suggested that Dewey felt racial differences in education existed because of African Americans' historically servile status, but such ideas were only evident in his earlier years. It is less clear just what he thought later, although he definitely rejected the idea that race reflected underlying differences in academic ability or intelligence (Fallace, 2011; Margonis, 2009).

Race was not yet an issue that White liberals recognized as important, and many undoubtedly harbored racist ideas about human development. Perhaps the battle over education reform was too demanding, along with other philosophical debates, and pedagogical progressives feared that other questions could jeopardize their movement. It is possible that Dewey and others did not feel compelled to confront racial issues explicitly because relatively few Blacks lived in the North. Although his Columbia University office was close to Harlem, then a growing Black community, Dewey probably felt that race was part of the larger issue of social and economic inequality, a matter he devoted much time and energy to addressing in broader terms (Westbrook, 1991). Whatever the cause, issues of race and ethnicity appear to have been a blind spot in the humanitarian campaign to transform the school. It was not a set of problems that received much attention, and the movement—not to mention the education system—was the poorer for it (Rury, 1991b).

The University Enters an Age of Human Capital

As noted in Chapter 3, institutions of higher education underwent important changes in the 19th century. The old-time college, with its emphasis on classical study and mental discipline, gave way to the modern research university. These institutions represented an ethos of investigation and discovery, along with engagement with the larger society. They included eastern private institutions and the flagship state universities of the Midwest and Pacific Coast. By the 1920s, it had become fashionable for middle-class youth, women and men

alike, to attend these schools, both for the lively social scene and to gain useful credentials. Enrollments mounted quickly, as students found that higher education opened pathways to employment in corporations, government, and the professions. Even though overall attendance remained a small fraction of high school students, these were harbingers of the future (Fass, 1977; Veysey, 1965).

The shift from the traditional college to the modern university was a gradual process that accelerated over time. Religion had played a prominent role in the colleges, and although it continued to be important, its dominance in the cultural ethos of higher education declined significantly. A new generation of faculty members was trained in Europe, mostly in Germany, where principles of scientific research held sway. Many of these professors also believed that the university should be more involved in improving society, through social reform and technological advancement. By and large, they found a receptive audience. Increasingly, instruction was grounded in the new research-based academic disciplines, not classical languages or Biblical scholarship. Although many graduates of the old-time college had become ministers, after 1900 more university graduates began to take jobs in business and the professions. All this contributed to a new atmosphere of secularism and an ethic of individual advancement. While many students still went to college for piety and scholarly growth, they were joined by a new type of student, one interested in having fun and getting a good job (Clark, 2010; Marsden, 1994; Reuben, 1996; Rodgers, 1998).

These changes were correlates of growth. Overall, enrollment climbed from about a quarter million in 1900 to more than a million in 1930, more than 10% of the college-age cohort. This was a significant fraction of American youth, even if still a social and cultural elite. These enrollments were a direct reflection of expansion in secondary education, and improved links between high schools and colleges. The College Board, an association of schools and colleges established in 1900, became a key agency for coordinating admission examinations nationally. This made it easier for students to consider a range of colleges, all over the country. As more young people graduated from secondary school, it was natural for some to seek higher status or better opportunities by studying far from home.

Whatever their interests and openness to adventure, increasing numbers were going off to college.

Higher education also began to have an important impact on American culture. Large numbers of college students, particularly in Midwestern and Western state universities, began to develop their own cultural identity. Enrollments grew into the thousands and an elaborate social life began to flourish. The number of female students grew faster than the males, expanding from less than 40% of the student body in the 1890s to almost half by the 1920s. These developments infused new energy into campus life. A brisk dating scene sparked an atmosphere of sexual openness and experimentation, the so-called flapper era, characterized by drinking, dances, and “necking.” Even if only a minority of students participated routinely in them, these activities represented a sharp break with the past. Fraternities and sororities also became popular, especially after 1920, along with football. All of this marked a new era on campus. College life was emerging as a distinctive phase in the experience of middle- and upper-class youth, even if most skipped college altogether. For those who participated, the social side of the university often marked the start of a career in business or the professions: Many students formed friendships and associations that extended into their adult lives (Bledstein, 1976; Horowitz, 1987). This was a particular and potent form of social capital, spawned and nurtured on campuses.

If there was any doubt about it, the utilitarian cast of the university was certified with the appearance of new professional schools and institutes. In the 19th century, legal and medical training had been conducted by private schools or individuals; around 1900, the universities began acquiring these institutions, or developing their own, and awarding professional degrees. Similar arrangements were made for the preparation of engineers, social workers, and other professionals. The first university programs to provide training for business were also established, offering courses in accounting, finance, management, marketing, and similar subjects. These developments proved a substantial boost to enrollments, as students found these new credentials appealing. With the advent of professional study, it was harder to cast the university as an

academic ivory tower. For better or worse, higher education was being drawn ever closer to the practical domains of business, government, and the professions. In this way, it was providing human capital, critical knowledge and skills, for future leaders (Geiger, 1986; Goldin & Katz, 1999b; Levine, 1986).

The growth of higher education also led to a proliferation of institutions. This was yet a new kind of differentiation, as the demand for various forms of higher learning met with an institutional response. In addition to elite eastern private schools and the big state flagship universities, along with other largely residential institutions, a number of new colleges and universities appeared. Among the most important were two-year institutions designed to provide the most basic courses as preparation for higher study, junior colleges, later called community colleges. These first appeared in the West and the Midwest, numbering some 200 by the latter 1920s, but enrolling less than a tenth of all undergraduates. Other more popular forms of higher education also flourished, among them municipal colleges in larger cities and private urban universities. These institutions served commuter students, providing baccalaureate education along with a variety of professional programs. Career-minded students in New York, Cincinnati, or Detroit thus could attend local public colleges, whereas those in Chicago went to DePaul, Loyola, or the Armour Institute (today's Illinois Institute of Technology). This was higher education for the aspiring lower-middle class, especially the children of immigrants, who could ill afford more elite schools or did not want to leave home. Producing legions of lawyers, engineers, accountants, and teachers, these institutions embodied the new pragmatic ethos of American higher education (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Levine, 1986).

The early 20th century was a time of significant growth and change in higher learning. Responding to the demand for new knowledge and skills, the human capital requirements of the urban industrial age, the nation's colleges and universities shifted their mission to provide students with credentials for the rapidly evolving economy. As enrollments grew and coeducation became a national norm, a distinctive collegiate culture came to characterize the student experience. These changes highlighted the prominence that

higher education was coming to assume in American life. They also were a portent of the future for the university as a distinctive feature of the educational system. As striking as these events were, they only hinted at the later growth of colleges and universities; considerably more was coming.

Education and Social Change in an Urban Industrial Era

The Progressive Era was a period of transformation in the United States. The industrial revolution unleashed powerful forces of change. The economy expanded at an unprecedented rate, the nation's transportation and communications systems evolved, and cities boomed in growth. All of this demanded significant change in the educational system, to provide both basic instruction to the masses and preparation for white collar employment. As the nation's population expanded, thousands of new schools were needed. With the educational system's growth, more sophisticated forms of management and organization were required. Along with this, fresh educational ideas were debated as reformers struggled to fashion new institutions.

As for the direction of change, it seems clear that schools responded to shifts in the economic and social organization of the country. Rational, bureaucratic reforms favored by administrative progressives were a response to large, complex school systems, and a need for consistent standards of conduct for students and employees alike, along with boards and politicians. In the countryside, the logic of efficiency and bureaucratic control led to campaigns to consolidate rural schools, although it also encountered resistance there. At the same time, high schools proliferated, partly because of demand for clerical workers, managers, and similar personnel. Rapidly evolving professions, from legal advice to accounting and medicine, spurred new interest in higher education, as colleges and universities created programs for an expanding clientele. Education also helped to demarcate status distinctions between various types of work. As American society became increasingly differentiated, social class distinctions were marked by

varying levels of schooling. In this respect, education increasingly became a “positional” good, helping to accentuate inequality (Stasio et al., 2016). If the industrial revolution was transforming the country, the education system was responding in kind. A new age was dawning and schools evolved to meet its varied needs, reflecting an ever shifting status hierarchy.

Did schools change society in this period as well? Clearly, they provided the skilled and knowledgeable workers needed for the new economy. This was not a small matter, as Claudia Goldin, and others have argued; without an educated workforce it is unlikely that growth would have been so dramatic in the 20th century (Goldin & Katz, 2008). But what about other types of change? Did the pedagogical progressives create a renewed sense of community by making schools more humane and “child-centered”? Did John Dewey and his followers help establish an educational ethic of democracy, moderating a tendency to make people “appendages of machines”? Here the impact of school reform appears to have been rather modest. Although the pedagogical progressives did create some exemplary schools and conducted inspired reform experiments, as in Gary and Winnetka, their impact on the larger educational system was slight. Driven by the rationalistic and efficiency-minded reforms of administrative progressives, most American schools were not influenced much by Parker, Kilpatrick, or other pedagogical reformers. Instead, their development was more deeply affected by a growing educational bureaucracy, the testing movement, and sheer growth of the system. As a result, the legacy of pedagogical reform is an ambiguous one. It produced many zealous reformers, passionate ventures, and idealistic principles, but little lasting change in most of the nation’s classrooms.

On the other hand, the impulse toward greater differentiation and “social efficiency” in American education does appear to have had a significant impact on social change. As noted earlier, the desire to make the schools respond more effectively to the “needs” of various social groups helped to perpetuate and widen existing patterns of social inequality. In particular, women, African Americans, and Hispanics suffered as a consequence of efforts to prepare them for subservient social roles. The development of vocational education,

home economics, and manual arts schools was a part of this process. It would take decades before the effect of these “reforms” was recognized and remedied, and even then it would entail controversy and struggle.

Education and social change were thus clearly linked during the progressive period of American history. The schools responded to the nation’s rapidly developing economy. As growth led to demand for highly educated workers, the “human capital revolution” assigned certain forms of schooling greater prominence, especially secondary and higher education. This was a sign of things to come. In other respects, however, educational reform does not seem to have accomplished the lofty aims its champions aspired to. This was perhaps the great disappointment in a period of considerable ferment, one that gave voice to a hope that continues to echo today.

5
Education, Equity, and Social Policy

Postwar America to the 1970s

In the years following World War II, the United States became the world's most powerful nation. It too was a transformative time, with astounding technological advances, from jet travel to television and electric guitars. Equally dramatic developments shaped social policy and the status of minority groups. This was especially true in urbanized areas, where the vast majority of Americans came to live. It is against this backdrop of change that events in American education can probably be best understood.

Among the most striking features of this period was the growing importance attached to schooling, both as a public and as a private concern. The federal government became a major source of funding and policy initiatives, and education was an important political issue. At the same time, more Americans attended schools than ever before. Enrollments climbed at all levels of the education system, but especially in high schools and colleges. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to go to school, and attainment became an escalating preoccupation. This set the stage for conflict over equity in education, about making the nation's schools accessible to all its citizens.

It was also a time of change in the ideological currents that influenced thinking about schooling. Progressive education fell dramatically out of public favor, partly due to cold-war concerns about discipline and security. More importantly, racial ideas were also liberalized, because of both popular aversion to xenophobic

theories of Aryan supremacy and growing concern about America's image abroad. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, declaring segregated schools to be inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional, was a milestone. It signaled a dramatic shift in national policy and prevalent conceptions of social justice. It also was a defining moment for the modern Civil Rights movement, a development that altered the ideological tenor of public life. Struggles for women's equality and students' rights eventually took inspiration from the battle for racial justice, as did other movements, and these too had an important effect on the schools. American education would never be the same (Ravitch, 1983).

Apart from these developments, important social changes also had an impact on the schools. One was the shifting racial and ethnic composition of the nation's principal metropolitan areas. Demand for labor in the cities, along with mechanization of farming, led to a massive migration of African Americans out of the rural South. With their arrival in the cities, local school systems became racially segregated. At the same time, large-scale suburbanization, often called "white flight," changed the geography of educational inequality, contributing to a perceived decline in urban school systems. Despite the work of idealistic educators, growing inequity in the type and quality of education soon characterized metropolitan areas across the country (Kantor & Brenzel, 1993; Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011). If policymakers and portions of the public believed schools were supposed to bring students from different backgrounds together, these ideals certainly received a stern test (Conant, 1961).

The postwar era also witnessed the appearance of a vibrant, pervasive and commercially expansive youth culture. This was partly a matter of simple demography. Following the war birth rates soared, as Americans returning from the military settled into family life. This was the beginning of the "baby boom" generation, creating a large cohort of teenagers by the latter 1950s (Hawes & Hiner, 1985; Macunovich, 2002). It became a leading edge of cultural change. Teens shaped the evolution of courtship practices, especially as they became interested in sexuality and relationships, rapidly creating elaborate rituals and rising expectations around such concerns (Modell, 1989). With growing high school attendance, followed by

rising college enrollments, educational institutions became the setting where these forms of adolescent behavior developed most dramatically (Coleman, 1965).

Each of these issues is examined in greater depth in this chapter. During the postwar years, the relationship between education and social change was complicated. As a matter of social policy, schools were called upon to ameliorate economic and social inequality. At the same time, the educational system was itself affected by ideological shifts, and by economic and demographic changes. It was an era of civil rights for African Americans, women, students, and other groups historically subject to intolerance and exclusion. The schools became a battleground for these issues. As education assumed greater importance, its availability and quality also became critical questions. Given this, pinpointing the relationship between schooling and social change is difficult indeed. First, however, it is helpful to consider one of the central issues of this era: shifting patterns of family life and the emergence of a teenage subculture that eventually swept the nation.

FOCAL POINT: REBELS IN SEARCH OF THEMSELVES

In many respects, the postwar period marked the era of the teenager. Even though the adolescent population was comparatively small in the 1950s, largely due to the Depression and war, changing work patterns gave teens more free time and rising prosperity meant that they had money to spend. Shifts in industry and labor laws sharply reduced the number of youth working in factories, and growing enrollments meant that large numbers were thrown together in schools each day. All of this contributed to development of a distinctive teen society, a subculture marked by idiosyncratic patterns of behavior, fashion, and values.

Youth cultural identities had existed in earlier decades, but the new teenage social world of the 1950s seemed

even more pervasive and troubling. It gained attention in the press, and terms such as *juvenile delinquent* and *high school dropout* became commonplace. Teenagers seemed to be rejecting their parents' values, listening to new music, and experimenting with tobacco, alcohol, and sex. It was behavior that most adults struggled to understand, and many found it quite alarming (Gilbert, 1986).

Books, magazine articles, television reports, and movies focused on teenage problems. Perhaps the most famous was the 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause*, best known today for its principal actor, the charismatic James Dean. *Rebel* is widely regarded as one of his best performances, but it also featured Natalie Wood and Sal Mineo and helped launch their careers too. What made the film especially interesting, however, was its portrayal of the troubles teens experienced, and the role of adults—especially parents—in these problems. It was a dramatic story, but only partially exploited popular stereotypes. Unlike other films, it was not a tale of demonic youth, crazed by music, sex, and alcohol, bent on self-destruction. Instead, it offered a portrait of misunderstood teens in search of parental affirmation and guidance, impelled into the bizarre social world of peers by the inhibitions of their elders. In basic terms, *Rebel* was a morality play about the shortcomings of modern civilization and neglect of youth. As such, it offers a compelling glimpse into concerns of its time, especially the misgivings of many Americans about growing up in the postwar world (Doherty, 1988).

Rebel Without a Cause was a tale of alienation, violence, and love. It was set in Los Angeles, representing the moral confusion that became associated with Southern California. Loosely based on the true story of a young criminal, the script was adapted by the film's director, Nicholas Ray. Some critics noted that it bore certain Shakespearian motifs, loosely resembling Romeo and Juliet. All its central characters, Jim Stark (James Dean), Judy (Natalie Wood), and John or "Plato" (Sal Mineo), were teens struggling with

different forms of parental neglect, and coping with it in ways that were self-destructive. In the case of Jim (Dean), his indecisive father was unable to provide a positive role model, filling the teen with self-doubt and insecurity. It caused him to lash out at adversaries, and to behave aberrantly (like binge drinking) to gain attention. Natalie Wood's character, Judy, was a young woman feeling rejected by her father, who was insecure about her budding sexuality and her yearning for his approval. And John (Mineo), known mostly by his nickname Plato, was a social misfit whose wealthy parents had abandoned him altogether, leaving him in the care of an African American maid. Judy sought solace in the fast company of other young malcontents, while John drifted at the margins of teen society until he met Jim, who became his friend and something of a father figure. It was these conditions that framed the movie's storyline, and revealed its principal message about adult society's disregard for youth.

Perhaps the most telling relationship was between Jim and his father, played by Jim Bacchus (later the millionaire on the TV show *Gilligan's Island*). Baachus' character was morally vacuous, unable to take a firm stand on anything. He appeared intimidated by his wife, who seemed preoccupied with social conventions and maintaining appearances. These were familiar themes in the 1950s, when many worried that weak or distracted fathers and obsessive, controlling mothers were psychologically harmful. When describing his troubles to a sympathetic police detective, young Jim complained that his parents were always bickering and that his father would not stand up to his mother. "How can a guy grow up in a circus like that," he declares. "Boy, if I had one day when I didn't have to be all confused... if I felt I belonged someplace, you know." Later in the movie, when Jim is faced with a moral dilemma and asks for guidance, his father can only mumble platitudes, urging him not to do anything risky. This leads directly to the story's violent climax, wherein two

characters die, one of them Plato. The message was clear: Adults abdicating responsibility for moral leadership could have dire consequences for teenagers (Cohen, 1997; Mintz, 2004).

Given the quality of the actors' performances and its dramatic impact, the movie painted a forceful portrait of adolescence at mid-century. It also helped to document changes in Americans ideas about childhood and adolescence. The contrast between the image of Jim's father in *Rebel* and that encountered almost 40 years earlier in Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* could hardly be more striking. As noted in the previous chapter, Sarah Smolinsky's father was domineering and manipulative. He imposed his values onto his daughters, and took payments from men who wanted to marry them. Jim Stark's father, on the other hand, was almost wholly inaccessible. Emotionally distant, he offered his son no clear sense of values and little guidance. While young Sarah yearned to escape her father's dominion, Jim hungered to be closer to his father, to have a clear sense of family identity. Like Sarah he took flight, but because he had no distinct set of values to draw on, he drifted into trouble. The two characters reflected differing times and circumstances, and contrasting commentaries on youthful experience.

To some extent the differences in these stories reflect culturally distinctive modes of childrearing and adolescence in 20th-century America. The families depicted in *Rebel* were decidedly middle and upper class, and the problems depicted in the movie were those of the affluent. But child-rearing practices had changed by the 1950s. Several decades of progressive critiques of authority and discipline had contributed to a new pattern of parental behavior, at least in the middle class. At the same time, family size had dropped, and the average number of children among Whites was around three. Moreover, these families began to offer children greater freedom. Following progressive models of education, self-expression came to be seen as

more important than obedience and conformity to traditional values. The famous baby doctor Benjamin Spock helped to revolutionize childcare by telling mothers to heed their infants' needs and desires. Freudian psychology, reaching its popular peak in the 1950s, warned against the dangers of repression and overt control. Like teachers in many "progressive" classrooms, parents were told not to be authority figures. Instead, they were advised to interact with their children as individuals, or even as friends. In a logical extension of this line of thought, some parents abstained from moral judgments altogether, letting their children freely discover their own point of view. This was the sort of parental involvement that came under scrutiny in *Rebel*, a telling break with earlier traditions (Engelhardt, 1995; Graff, 1995).

Researchers have noted this pattern of change in family life during the 20th century. Some, like sociologist Viviana Zelizar, suggested that middle-class Americans came to view children as extensions of themselves, not as sources of support for their families—as in the case of Sarah Smolinsky—or as a religious and moral obligation—as Francis Wayland believed. In the new family, offspring became a form of self-expression, a way for parents to demonstrate and enhance their social status. This is not to say that parents did not care for their children, but it often meant that they expressed different obligations or expectations for them, representing new psychological demands. This new outlook raised a host of questions, however; some of them voiced in *Rebel*. If children were simply manifestations of a consumer ethic, encouraged to inherit the materialism of their parents, there remained the issue of personal and social responsibility. Like many critics of this mode of child rearing, the producers of *Rebel* suggested that a lack of discipline and authority lay at the root of problems with American teenagers. Some believed the fate of the nation hung in the balance (Graebner, 1993; Mintz & Kellogg, 1988; Zelizer, 1985).

The teenage problem, in that case, was a prickly one. If, indeed, the critics of progressive education were correct in suggesting that it was a lack of traditional values in families and schools that contributed to teen misbehavior, only a sweeping change in these institutions could change things. This was precisely the solution that some skeptics recommended. More realistic observers, however, recognized that the problem was considerably more complicated than suggested by the movie makers or other critics of progressivism. The rise of the youth subculture was just getting underway, and would gain even greater force in the decades ahead. James Dean died at age 24, but his memory lived on in a teen society that became ever larger and more pervasive. It was one of the major developments of the postwar era (Mintz, 2004; Modell, 1989).

Ideological Currents and Educational Change

The 1930s and 1940s marked a significant change in the way Americans thought about a number of social issues. The experience of the Great Depression and World War II caused many to question prevailing ideas regarding social status, especially those based on race and social class. During the 1930s, millions lost their jobs, shattering illusions about the stability and security of middle-class life. Socialists and communists became quite active, and helped give voice to calls for equity and social justice. More important, the rapid growth of industrial trade unions, particularly those affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), promulgated ideals of unity and fairness, campaigning against exclusion and divisiveness. In certain respects, the world was turned inside out, and many traditional ideas became subject to question. It was the start of an important shift in popular thinking about a range of social issues (Engelhardt, 1995; Patterson, 1996).

World War II also left an indelible impact. The departure of millions of men and women to fight abroad, and the mobilization of millions more to work in war industries, made a lasting impression. It was conflict on a global scale. All this movement and uncertainty also affected the lives of children, including those who lost parents in the conflict (Tuttle, 1993). Japanese Americans were moved to internment camps for supposed security concerns, where their children learned firsthand about racial prejudice. Minority youth were violently attacked in Los Angeles and other cities as racial tensions escalated (Cogan, 2000; Mintz, 2004). But the war also did much to diminish intolerance. It was widely considered a good fight, intended to save democracy and to turn back the forces of hatred. The enemies were contemptible, especially the Nazi regime in Germany. Its vile theories of Aryan superiority led many Americans to question their long-standing assumptions about racial differences. Fighting against this helped them feel good about the nation's egalitarian traditions. Many thought of the conflict as a struggle of democracy against totalitarianism, and this lent new significance to pleas for greater equity and social justice. These themes extended into the postwar period, as the country began a protracted confrontation with the communist Soviet Union. Labeled the "Cold War," this conflict contributed to feelings of vulnerability, but also lent credence to the idea that Americans should set a democratic example for the world (Patterson, 1996; Terkel, 1997).

Given these considerations, the war and its aftermath raised a number of questions about the country's role in the new global order. If the United States was opposed to dictatorships abroad, how could it morally sanction inequity and intolerance at home? The struggle against Nazi Germany added a racial dimension to the question. For once, Americans were confronted with an explicit ideology of racist superiority that was used to justify a quest for world domination. This was more than a little ironic, given the nation's long history of racial oppression and brutal violence against Blacks. Indeed, many of the chauvinistic Nazi ideas had been influenced by the American eugenics movement. The battle against Nazism helped to turn the tide of popular opinion against explicit theories of racial predominance, perhaps for the first time. It was the dawn of a new

era in popular thinking about such questions (Kuhl, 2002; Polenberg, 1980; Sitkoff, 1993).

These tendencies were abetted by advances in the thinking of leading social scientists and other prominent public figures. Swedish sociologist Gunner Myrdal published his classic work on American race relations, *An American Dilemma*, in 1944, suggesting that racism was an anachronistic holdover of slavery. Myrdal noted that racial discrimination stood in stark contrast to American ideals of liberty and equality, predicting that they would eventually change for the better. President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order banning discriminatory behavior in the nation's war industries, opening a wide field of industrial employment to African Americans. The ensuing demand for workers helped to start a new movement of Blacks out of the South. Most went to the large industrial cities of the North and West, where many came to enjoy new freedoms and higher income. This too represented a step forward in race relations (Chafe, 1986; Lemann, 1991).

Such developments helped set the stage for a shift in American opinion about race and discrimination. The Truman administration's decision to desegregate the armed forces soon after the war reflected this, as did new federal civil rights measures in housing and employment. Meanwhile, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) undertook a series of legal challenges to segregation in education, mostly at universities. Its legal team, led by Thurgood Marshall, adopted a stance implicit in Myrdal's analysis of racism: that such discrimination was inherently inconsistent with the basic American principles, including the legal system. An important precedent was set in 1947, when Mexican Americans successfully challenged Southern California's segregated school policies in *Mendez v. Westminister*, decided by a federal district court. At about the same time, NAACP lawyers began attacking similar policies requiring Black children to attend separate schools, still widespread in the South and elsewhere. It was a difficult legal strategy, an expensive and time-consuming process of challenging local districts to establish precedents extending beyond specific settings. But African Americans were determined to gain

equality, and judicial confrontations pushed forward (Gonzales, 1990; Klinkner & Smith, 1999; MacDonald, 2004; Sitkoff, 1978).

As an immediate consequence of this, Southern states began to make substantial improvements to Black education, to make the *Plessy* legal doctrine of “separate but equal” in schooling more defensible. Many launched “equalization” campaigns, raising pay for Black teachers and building new facilities, including modern high schools in many districts. Local Black communities seized the initiative in securing funds to make these improvements, recruiting teachers and insuring that students were enrolled. Beginning in the late 1940s and extending through the following decade, Black enrollments surged upwards, especially at the secondary level. By 1960, a majority of Black teenagers were attending high school, a historic level of attainment and a portent of future accomplishments. Altogether, it was a time of significant gains in Black education, but the most astounding advances were achieved through the courts, and the efforts of thousands of parents, educators and community members (Bolton, 2000; Donohue et al., 2002; Margo & Finegan, 1993; Rury & Hill, 2011).

Equalization notwithstanding, the NAACP’s approach to attacking segregation through the courts proved a dramatic success. When its case against the public schools in Topeka, Kansas, and other districts was decided by the Supreme Court in 1954, in *Brown v Board of Education*, it marked a landmark in American social policy. The Court ruled that policies of formal segregation in public schools were contrary to the equal protection clause of the constitution’s 14th Amendment. This directly challenged prevailing practices in most educational systems of the South. There was an immediate outcry against the decision, with political leaders across the region vowing to fight it. But elsewhere there was a broad sentiment of support for the Court’s action. Many Whites were ready to end Jim Crow practices of legalized segregation, even if they were less willing to integrate their own communities. Additionally, federal authorities generally supported racial equity in light of cold-war conflicts abroad, as the United States sought alliances with newly developing countries in Africa and Asia. In the global battle against communism, it was important to maintain an image of equality and liberty. Even

so, progress was slow. In the years following *Brown*, steps to ending the segregation of public education were difficult and halting, and often met dramatic—even violent—resistance. Yet the 1954 Supreme Court ruling marked a decisive shift in the prevailing ideology of racial superiority in the United States. While the actual pace of change in policy would often be incremental, there could be no turning back (Borstelmann, 2003; Kluger, 1976; Patterson, 2002; Wilkerson, 1979).

Brown also added momentum to the development of the Civil Rights Movement, a broad-based, grassroots campaign by opponents of racism to end segregation and discrimination in the South and elsewhere. Although it embraced a wide cross-section of Americans, the long civil rights crusade was led by African Americans and they constituted the vast majority of its participants. An expansive and varied movement, it eventually embraced leaders as dissimilar as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Civil rights organizations extended from the integrationist NAACP to the militant and separatist Black Panthers. Some hoped to achieve a desegregated America, whereas others campaigned for Black control of communities and institutions. Although there was much debate between these various groups, a common thread was the struggle for equal rights. With an unusually creative and resourceful leadership, and many thousands of dedicated volunteers, the movement eventually succeeded in revealing the contradiction between American ideals and racist ideology. Its impact was monumental (Cook, 1998; Klinkner & Smith, 1999).

Education remained a critical focal point for civil rights agitation during the 1950s and the following decade. Other issues occasionally took the limelight, such as housing and voting rights, but schooling continued to be a major concern. If the promise of democracy and social equality was to extend to African Americans, equitable schooling was essential. In this spirit, battles were waged to end segregation and overcome educational inequality. This occurred first in the South, where compliance with *Brown* was most controversial, and later in the North, where housing segregation was pervasive. Whites in the South engaged in “massive resistance,” marked by periodic confrontations when Blacks enrolled in White

schools. The most dramatic incident involved nine students at Little Rock's Central High School in 1957. President Eisenhower sent federal troops to restore order, but the school closed the following year. Confrontations such as this, nationally televised, helped to galvanize public opinion against recalcitrant White racists (Klarman, 2007; Patterson, 2002).

Gradually, persistent efforts by courageous Black students and their families, backed by Civil Rights groups, chipped away at segregated schooling. "Voluntary integration" plans in many cities began with relatively small numbers of Blacks taking the lead in "integrating" White institutions. Progress was slow, despite increasing pressure from federal authorities for desegregation across the region. Finally, historic Supreme Court decisions in 1968 and 1969, *Green v. New Kent County* and *Alexander v. Holmes County*, marked the end of widespread Southern struggle against desegregation. Within a few years, the majority of public schools across the region were integrated. In the North and West, on the other hand, entrenched patterns of residential segregation made the integration of education an even bigger challenge (Orfield et al., 1996; Rury & Hill, 2011).

To the surprise of many, the achievement of desegregation in the South did not mark a conclusion to struggles over race and education. Despite the struggles in this period, racial inequality in schooling continued to be a critical problem. It is important to acknowledge, however that the country's ideological climate changed dramatically. The Civil Rights Movement placed the question of social and educational equality squarely on the national agenda; it could no longer be overlooked. Open espousal of racial segregation and discriminatory practices soon ceased to be socially acceptable or politically tolerated. And educators everywhere, at least in principle, became conversant with the ideals of equity and social justice. Altogether, it represented a remarkable shift in political orientation and educational policy (Eskew, 1997; King, 1996; Orfield, 1983).

At the same time, more conservative tendencies also came into play. Among the issues that garnered a traditionalist response in these years was curriculum and instruction, especially they were

organized and conducted by educators. In particular, the ideas and practices of progressive education came under sharp attack.

By the 1940s, progressivism had become an important intellectual force in education, even if it still predominated in a relatively small segment of the nation's school system. While most Americans may have been suspicious of progressive ideas, they were seldom openly hostile to them. This changed in the postwar era, as prominent academics and journalists took aim at progressive education, linking it in the public mind with failure in the schools. This was partly due to the political climate of the "cold war" and ideological misgivings that progressive educators were "soft-headed" or left-leaning and therefore susceptible to communist influence. Progressive educators did not help matters by advocating a curriculum focused on "life adjustment" in public schools following the war. With lessons on balancing checkbooks instead of algebra and current events in place of history, it drew withering criticism from many quarters. At the same time, heightened anxieties about national security, fueled by Senator Joseph McCarthy and other fanatical politicians, contributed to an atmosphere of intolerance for policies and practices seen as unduly permissive. Critiques of progressivism also reflected widespread concerns about a lack of discipline in American students, particularly teenagers, and fears of juvenile delinquency, sex, and violence (Hartman, 2008; Hofstadter, 1963; Ravitch, 1983).

Such misgivings were bolstered by widespread concern about American schools after the Soviet Union's launch of the Sputnik spacecraft in 1957. The first man-made satellite, opening the much-anticipated "space age," Sputnik's success was a major source of embarrassment for the American scientific establishment. It also heightened fears about national defense. The incident directed attention to academic achievement, especially in mathematics and the sciences, leading to passage of a National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. This was a big step in expanding federal aid to schools, although generally limited to math and science programs and teacher preparation (Kaestle, 2001; Urban, 2010). The National Science Foundation and other agencies began to provide support for programs to improve instruction and curricular materials, focusing on conventional teaching and learning. Meanwhile, anti-progressive

sentiments reached a peak. The Progressive Education Association, long an advocate of liberal school reform, dissolved itself in 1955, and two years later the magazine *Progressive Education* ceased publication. Although Dewey's ideas and those of other progressive educators still were influential, especially in colleges of education, the tide of national opinion about schooling had clearly taken a conservative turn (Cremin, 1961; Spring, 1976).

By the start of the 1960s, in that case, the nation's schools were buffeted by the influence of broadly divergent ideological trends. Although there was a dramatic liberalizing of attitudes about race and discrimination, accompanied eventually by school integration, there was also a pronounced turn toward traditional ideas regarding instructional practice. In certain respects, both of these tendencies reflected a repudiation of progressive ideas. The civil rights movement, after all, attacked the principle of differentiation so dear to the administrative progressives. The cry for greater integration and equal education was, at least in part, the antithesis of their preoccupation with distinctions in background and achievement. At the same time, conservative critics assailed the pedagogical progressivism of Dewey and his many disciples. At the very moment that certain matters of educational policy grew more equitable, in principle if not completely in practice, other aspects of schooling returned to traditional methods and standards. Such were ideas about education at this time, a curious legacy of progressivism indeed.

Race, Equity, and Education

In the years following World War II, race became an overriding issue in the nation's major urban school districts. This did not happen overnight, but it eventually became unavoidable as larger numbers of African Americans moved to cities. Nearly four million migrated in the two decades after 1945, mostly to northeastern, Midwestern, and Western states. Once there, they generally settled into expanding inner-city racial ghettos or working-class neighborhoods deserted by Whites. This was a consequence of residential segregation, a cruel fact of life in most settings. By the 1960s, cities such as New York,

Chicago, Los Angeles, and scores of others, had sprawling Black settlements. These areas typically had higher population density, greater poverty, and more crime than other neighborhoods. The degree of racial separation was often greater than the South. As a result, public schools became highly segregated as well (Lemann, 1991; Wilkerson, 1979; Wolters, 1984).

Given these dynamics, race came to affect the spatial organization of metropolitan life in new ways, beyond the impact of ethnicity or social class in earlier periods. Blacks were forcefully kept separate from Whites, a pattern maintained by violence, as well as with legal and quasi-legal measures (Massey & Denton, 1993). African Americans who attempted to leave the ghettos were often met with hostility, while “red-lining” mortgage-lending practices, intransigent real estate agents and restrictive deed covenants prevented them from settling in other neighborhoods. Educational resources, of course, were also spatially distributed. To the extent that these barriers denied Black families access to better schools, such exclusion could be interpreted as opportunity hoarding. In many districts, informal policies maintained segregated schooling even in building proximate to white neighborhoods. Schools in Black neighborhoods tended to be overcrowded, with larger classes and fewer experienced teachers than elsewhere. Graduation rates were lower and fewer students went on to college. Altogether, there were clear and well-documented differences in the quality of schooling along racial lines. This, as critics noted, posed a great challenge to the very principle of public education as a basic facet of American life. If public schools were supposed to treat children equivalently, how could such disparities be reconciled with egalitarian national ideals? These concerns led to extensive conflict over remedies for these inequities (Erickson, 2017; Rury, 1993, 1999b; Rury & Rife, 2018).

There were other facets of city life that exacerbated these issues. Social and technological developments made the spatial organization of urban areas a major policy question. At the same time that millions of African Americans arrived in central cities, other residents had just started to leave. World War II had barely ended when a grand migration to suburbia began. Pressured by housing

shortages and encouraged by public policies favoring new freeways and cheap gas, Americans began flocking to new developments on the fringes of urban areas. Between 1940 and 1960, the suburban population grew by some 27 million, more than twice the increase in major cities. As a result, the share of metropolitan population living in central cities dropped from nearly 63% in 1940 to 51% in 1960. The decline continued thereafter, and by 1980 only 40% of metro residents lived in core cities, with the rest in surrounding suburbs (Fox, 1985; Jackson, 1985; Teaford, 1990). It marked a dramatic change in the spatial organization of the nation's urbanized areas.

Migrants escaping the big cities were disproportionately young, middle class, and highly educated. The availability of Veterans Administration (VA) and Federal Housing Authority (FHA) loans made the suburbs especially attractive to new families. The expanding economy provided a stable source of employment, both in downtown offices and in suburban retail and manufacturing centers. These families could afford affluent neighborhoods, and the men held jobs that accommodated the time and costs of daily commuting. A postwar "marriage boom" added more than ten million new households within a decade. The corresponding rise in births, the "baby boom," made comfortable, spacious suburban subdivisions difficult to resist (Fox, 1985; Palen, 1997).

Suburban residents were also overwhelmingly White. By 1960, when suburban population exceeded that of the central cities, fewer than 5% of suburbanites were African American (Goldsmith & Blakely, 1992). Thirty years later they were less than 10%, and suburban Blacks were largely segregated in their own enclaves. This was partly because of discriminatory real estate practices that discouraged Blacks from buying homes in White neighborhoods. As a rule, only Whites were allowed to settle in the most affluent communities. This too represented a form of opportunity hoarding; African American families who were excluded from these communities were denied the prospect of sending their children to superior suburban schools. With the movement to suburbia, the population of central cities became older, poorer, and darker in complexion (Jackson, 1985; Massey & Denton, 1993; Rury & Rife, 2018; Teaford, 1990).

These historic developments dramatically affected public perceptions of big cities. The proportion of central city residents who were White diminished each decade after 1950, falling from more than 80% to about a third in the 1980s. The Black population increased most rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, leveling off at about a third of central city residents, and the number of Hispanics increased significantly after 1970. As sociologist William Julius Wilson noted, poverty levels increased sharply among all city residents, but especially for Blacks. This not only reflected discrimination, poor education, and declining economic opportunities, but also represented "concentration effects," Wilson's term for the impact of crowding the poor into deprived ghettos. Although some 11% of central city residents were impoverished by the mid-1970s, and 18% of central city Blacks, by the 1980s the figures had jumped to almost 20% and 34%, respectively (Goldsmith & Blakely, 1992; Wilson, 1987). This is a large part of what became known as the "urban crisis" during the 1960s, and its effects continue to be evident today.

It was the early stages of this process of change that educators confronted at the end of the 1950s. The decades following World War II witnessed new cultural geography defined by race and income. It meant that, for most urban and suburban residents, there were few shared public spaces and social experiences. Stereotypical images, increasingly fostered by mass media, created an atmosphere of mistrust and fear (Dougherty, 2008; Fox, 1985). It was a situation ripe for escalating conflict and misunderstanding.

In the 1960s and 1970s, these problems grew worse as the Black population of urban school districts approached a majority, especially in large Northern cities. Despite protests, schools remained highly segregated, both reflecting and contributing to residential segregation (Mirel, 1993; Orfield et al., 1996; Rury, 1999b). Examining the racial composition of Chicago public high schools in 1963, Robert Havighurst (1964) found only four where the student body was less than 90% Black or White, even though the city's population was almost evenly divided between these groups. Most predominantly Black schools, moreover, reported low achievement scores and high dropout rates. This was evident in other large cities

(Harrison, 1972). In general, high levels of segregation—or “racial isolation”—accompanied Blacks in Northern urban school districts, along with declines in educational performance (Mirel, 1993; Rury & Hill, 2011; Stolee, 1993; Wells & Crain, 1997). It did not bode well for traditional, integrated conceptions of the public school.

Inevitably, questions of equity in Black and White schooling became major policy issues facing urban school districts. In public education, the question of race came to be a source of great political dissension. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the NAACP and other civil rights organizations began to agitate for greater equity in urban education. Massive demonstrations and school boycotts were staged against segregated and inferior schools in major cities. In Chicago, during the fall of 1963 nearly 300,000 children stayed home from school, and thousands of parents marched the Board of Education to protest rampant school segregation. Similar events occurred elsewhere, sometimes focusing on a single school and, in other instances, an entire district. In California and Texas, Hispanic students and teachers launched their own boycotts and protest marches, demanding curricular reform and improved facilities. It was a time of confrontation and struggle, with tensions over questions of equity and social justice running extremely high (Anderson & Pickering, 1986; Donato, 1997; Rury & Hill, 2011).

Civil rights groups issued legal challenges to extensive school segregation, holding school districts culpable for perpetuating segregation to avoid aggravating Whites. This continued the tradition of activist litigation that had led to the *Brown* decision. A series of federal court decisions in the later 1960s and early 1970s rejected alleged de facto segregation as an excuse for segregated schooling, the supposed root of educational inequities in most urban districts. This was an extension of the logic employed in *Brown*, which had focused mainly on de jure practices of segregation. In the 1971 landmark *Swan v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* case, the courts approved mandatory bussing of students as a remedy to residential segregation. With this, school districts could be required to address inequalities by moving children from one neighborhood to another (Orfield et al., 1996). This was a viable strategy in Southern cities, where county-wide school districts spanned urban and suburban

area. Elsewhere, it was more difficult, as disgruntled Whites often simply left the city for neighboring suburban districts. In both settings, however, bussing was a source of great dissention, and an already tense situation soon became politically volatile (Dougherty, 2003).

Controversy over the question of de facto segregation had been brewing for some time, and drew national attention to the dilemma of urban education. In 1961, former Harvard president James Conant published the book *Slums and Suburbs*, documenting differences between inner city and suburban schools. He did not focus on desegregation, but city schools were already embroiled in controversy over disparities in resources (Hampel, 1986). Even though Conant avoided debate, his book offered a telling examination of trends in urban education, which would only become more evident in years to come. Eventually suburbanization left urban schools with relatively few white students. When Chicago was ordered by a federal judge to desegregate in the late 1970s, barely 20% of the district's student body was white. This made meaningful integration, particularly in the system's 60 high schools, very difficult to sustain (Kleppner, 1984; Rury, 1999b). Other big city districts faced similar dilemmas (Mirel, 1993; Rury & Hill, 2012; Rury & Rife, 2018).

By the time the Supreme Court's 1973 *Keyes* decision in Denver finally established the principle of federally mandated desegregation in urban districts, the term "White flight" had become a part of the national lexicon. A year later the *Milliken I* decision blocked a massive inter-district integration plan in Detroit, foreclosing large-scale desegregation plans across urban-suburban boundaries, the principal barrier to integration outside the South. As a result, the racial profile of schools on either side of big city district lines became increasingly dissimilar, as segregation became even more entrenched. *Miliken I* had largely made the urban-suburban boundary largely inviolate with respect to bussing for school desegregation, foreshadowing an eventual end to meaningful integration in the North.

These changes had a particularly big impact on high schools. As secondary education in metropolitan areas became marked by

segregation, race was closely associated with perceptions about school quality (Wells & Crain, 1997). This was evident in the early 1960s in some cities, and became more pronounced as the desegregation struggles reached a peak in the 1970s (Hochschild, 1985; Orfield, 1978). But the news was not all bad; Black graduation rates increased in the 1960s and 1970s, even if the quality of their schools remained questionable. By the 1980s there were comparatively few urban public high schools with significant numbers of White students, and perhaps fewer that could be classified as academically excellent. Location became significant in the educational life-chances of children (Bettis, 1996; Mora, 1997; Rury & Hill, 2012; Sexton & Nickel, 1992). In the realm of public perception, urban education became linked to poor academic performance and the problems of crime and violence. These images inevitably were influenced by questions of race.

In the decades following 1950, the ideal of a common-school experience for American youth appeared to become increasingly elusive, at least in metropolitan areas. Residential segregation, which generally became worse in this period, led to lower student heterogeneity in city schools (Rumberger & Wilms, 1992). As metropolitan areas grew in size and complexity, especially outside the South, these patterns have maintained their salience, despite the efforts of civil rights activists and successive waves of litigation. If the public schools are supposed to bring students from different backgrounds together, they has not succeeded in much of the country, at least concerning race and social class (Mora, 1997; Ryan, 2010; Wells & Crain, 1997). In these settings, the traditional democratic vision of American education certainly has not been sustained.

Schools as Instruments of Social Change

As already suggested, when the nation grappled with inequality and social justice, many looked to education to solve these dilemmas. Earlier reformers had called on schools to address problems too, but this time, the impetus came from high in the political system. For the first time since Reconstruction, the federal government adopted

education policies to address long-standing patterns of inequality. This was a sign of the added significance assigned to schooling and the idea that it could help overcome poverty and discrimination. A portent of this was creation of the Peace Corps in 1961, following a call by John F. Kennedy to utilize education and youthful idealism to assist developing nations. Education was also viewed as a means to economic development and self-determination for American Indians (Senese, 1991; Szasz, 1974) As the United States struggled with ways to address a growing domestic crisis over social inequality, and race in particular, schooling appeared to be a practical policy mechanism. This reasoning would eventually lead to the schools becoming even more embroiled in political battles (Hoffman, 1998; Kantor & Lowe, 1995; Nelson, 2008; Skrentny, 2004).

In many respects, this way of thinking about education was a logical outgrowth of arguments made by Thurgood Marshall and his associates in the 1954 *Brown* case. Marshall maintained that schools were a vital resource, critical to the future success of African Americans, both individually and as a group. Being denied access to them, therefore, was a big disadvantage. The Supreme Court agreed and major changes eventually came with school desegregation, particularly in the South. In this regard, it was possible to see desegregation as a policy utilizing the schools as instruments of social change. From there, it was possible to imagine education affecting the prospects of many other social groups as well.

Racial desegregation was the first and most contentious instance of utilizing education to address social inequality in the postwar period. Schools in the South desegregated rapidly following the *Green* and *Alexander* decisions, and, in just a few years, most African American students there were attending integrated institutions. The change was abrupt, and transitions frequently difficult, especially in high schools where fighting occasionally became rampant. Many Black teachers lost their jobs and White educators often did little to make Black students feel welcome (Fairclough, 2007; Rury & Hill, 2012). After a few years, however, conditions improved and many students found the experience to be rewarding. There is evidence that African Americans benefitted academically and that White performance did not suffer, at least

among those who remained in public schools. Students from both groups reported learning important lessons about tolerance and respect, and a new appreciation for cultural diversity. These were insights many would retain for years afterward (Clotfelter, 2004; Wells et al., 2009). Altogether, the achievement of desegregation in the South represented social change on a remarkable scale.

Elsewhere, of course, progress was much slower. In fact, as suggested above, schools became *more* racially segregated in the North and West in the 1960s and 1970s, largely due to White flight and suburbanization. These factors were less decisive in the South, where county-wide school districts often spanned cities and suburbs, making it harder for Whites to escape desegregation. Consequently, cities like Charlotte and Raleigh in North Carolina became models of successful bussing plans. There were instances of positive desegregation in the North and West too, of course, and thousands of students benefitted from integration in these settings. But such accomplishments usually were fleeting, as whites abandoned schools when significant numbers of African Americans arrived. Despite the momentary success of school integration in many cases, the persistence of residential segregation made large-scale desegregation difficult to sustain (Clotfelter, 2004; Rury & Hill, 2012). Somewhat ironically, integration ultimately was harder to achieve in the North and West.

These problems pointed to a fundamental issue in the organization of American education. If schooling was unequal, racial segregation was only one reason among many; there were also disparities with respect to other social characteristics. This was due to the nation's historic commitment to local control and funding of schools, a legacy of the common school era. This geographic principle of school organization and finance meant that institutional resources varied enormously from one setting to the next, depending on local wealth and taxation levels. As many critics came to realize, it was a cause of school inequality nearly as great as formal systems of segregation, even if disparities were usually not as egregious (Wise, 1968).

A long-standing example of this concerned the nation's rural school districts, which suffered from low enrollments and outdated

facilities. Consolidation campaigns launched earlier picked up steam in the postwar era, as the rural population of many states declined. These efforts benefited from the availability of motorized busses, but were prompted by the need for curricular diversity and the burdensome costs of small facilities. As a result, thousands of rural districts were combined into larger administrative units. At the same time, new facilities were constructed, teacher qualifications were upgraded and after-school programs were expanded, particularly sports. These changes reflected highly effective forces of isomorphism, as state and federal requirements for aid made schools more similar in many respects. In the South, school consolidation eventually was linked to desegregation in many rural communities. James Conant and other reformers called for larger high schools that could accommodate greater curricular variety. The result was cost savings in many settings, and greater equity among districts. Despite resistance from residents who valued small country schools of the past, consolidation campaigns helped to bring rural schools into line with higher standards (Conant, 1959; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977; Scribner, 2016; Sher & Tompkins, 1977; Strang, 1987).

The growth of metropolitan area also meant that large numbers of formerly rural districts were incorporated into the suburbs. This made suburban districts larger and financially stronger. With growing wealth in these settings, the schools improved, eventually gaining significant advantages over urban institutions (Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011). As indicated earlier, metropolitan inequality became increasingly evident in the 1960s and 1970s, spurred by suburbanization and residential segregation. The financial disparity between districts was a major theme of Conant's *Slums and Suburbs* and many other studies. That book and similar accounts helped make suburban schools a standard for others to emulate, a potent form of mimetic isomorphism in public education. The fiscal condition of large urban districts declined as the middle class tax base eroded with white flight, and the academic reputation of schools in many cities suffered as a consequence (Dougherty, 2008; Rury, 1993; Katzman, 1971).

It did not take long for federal authorities to recognize this, led by Commissioner of Education Francis Keppell. In 1965, following

enactment of sweeping civil rights and antipoverty legislation, President Lyndon Johnson oversaw passage of the nation's first comprehensive federal education bill, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This was an integral part of Johnson's "War on Poverty," a defining policy initiative of his presidency. The ESEA went far beyond other measures defining federal involvement in the schools, such as the NDEA with its focus on science, mathematics, and related issues (Kaestle, 2001). In supporting it, many Democrats sought to provide assistance for the cities, long a stronghold for the party, whereas others worried about inequality and persistent poverty. A critical element of ESEA spoke directly to the problem of financial inequity that Conant and other observers had noted. Title 1 of the act provided federal dollars to schools serving students from poverty backgrounds. It proved a substantial benefit to city school districts and other poor areas, supplementing depressed property tax revenues, and provided resources to many other communities as well (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009; Nelson, 2008; Ravitch, 1983; Silver & Silver, 1991).

This directly addressed the problem of educational inequality, implicitly acknowledging the importance of equity in educational resources. It also established an important precedent for additional sources of school funding. Many state legislatures eventually adopted similar financial formulas for providing state aid to schools. Although these new sources of money did not completely erase differences between city and suburban schools, they narrowed spending gaps by as much as half. This, of course, was yet another source of isomorphic pressure for institutions to adopt similar programs for assisting low income students. Even if there continued to be significant disparities in base funding, federal and state laws made them considerably less severe. This was a major step in the development of liberal social policy. It helped to restore the principle that public education ought to be equivalent everywhere, a critical step if equal opportunity was ever to be fully realized (Hummel & Nagle, 1973; Nelson, 2005; Silver & Silver, 1991).

Title 1, however, was just the beginning. There were additional educational initiatives launched by the Johnson administration. Perhaps the best known was Head Start, a preschool program

aimed at boosting the achievement of children from poor families. Conceived as a broad social welfare intervention, Head Start was intended to help children overcome developmental disadvantages in areas with manifold social problems. It also was designed as a source of support for poor families. The program started with considerable fanfare, serving more than half a million children in its first year. Critics noted that Head Start initially did not provide much educational content, focusing instead on social, medical, and psychological services for families. The President, they charged, had launched the program too fast, hoping to find support for antipoverty initiatives. Head Start proved popular from the very beginning, however, and eventually employed certified teachers to staff its classrooms. By the 1970s, more than a million children were enrolled each year, and research showed that it provided a significant boost to achievement in the early grades. Like Title 1, Head Start represented a historically new approach to addressing inequality in education: providing compensatory programs and funding to make schooling more equitable (Davies, 2007; Vinovskis, 1999, 2005; Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

Despite widespread support for Head Start and similar initiatives, these programs also became a source of controversy. In the wake of the civil rights movement, public sensitivities to questions of race and inequality were running high. Critics objected to the very term *compensatory*, arguing that it implied that clients of these programs were somehow deficient or deviant. Social scientists also came under fire for using the term *culturally deprived* to describe poor and minority residents of the inner city, who typically utilized these services. The very notion of cultural deprivation seemed to suggest that these families lacked productive values and habits, and needed to mimic the White middle class. Not surprisingly, such suggestions proved offensive to many people, especially activists who struggled assiduously against racism, segregation, and discrimination. In addition to this, new research challenged the deprivation perspective, demonstrating the resourcefulness and resiliency of many city dwellers. By the 1980s, the terms *culturally deprived* and *compensatory* had generally fallen out of use, and social scientists eventually turned to the concepts of social and cultural capital to

account for differences in the educational backgrounds of various groups. Meanwhile, federal and state programs providing urban schools with additional resources had been expanded, becoming even more critical sources of funding (Ravitch, 1983; Schram, 1995; Tucker, 1994).

Regardless of how such programs were described, however, they were clearly intended to do more than simply equalize school-funding levels. They also were supposed to offset inequities in the social and cultural backgrounds of students. When it came to achievement, after all, life did not always offer a level playing field. As seen in the previous chapter, an entire generation of African Americans had been denied the opportunity of attending high school just when secondary education was becoming widely available. Coming from the South, with its long and violent history of exploitation and inequity, Blacks were at a disadvantage, at least regarding formal schooling. Mexican Americans and other non-native language groups faced similar challenges, especially those with little disposable income. In this respect, Head Start and similar initiatives were born of recognition that poor families lacked resources that more affluent parents were able to provide. These included not only prior educational experiences, but also certain additional factors, ranging from books and magazines to music lessons and summer camps. When sociologist James Coleman completed a massive federal government survey of student achievement in 1966, he found that family background factors were more important determinants of children's academic outcomes than school resources. This was a controversial discovery, but it was upheld in countless subsequent studies. It eventually led Coleman, along with others, to develop and articulate the concepts of cultural and social capital. To understand why some children were more successful than others, it was necessary to look outside schools to the social and economic settings where children acquired their formative experiences (Coleman, 1990; Lagemann, 2000; Vinovskis, 2005).

As suggested earlier, theories of social and cultural capital were well suited to address such questions. Although these ideas did not appear to render judgments about anyone, they certainly proposed that socially valued abilities and behavior are more readily evident in

some communities than others. This was close to the concept of deprivation, but it also was different. Given agreement about the existence of productive attributes, it was possible to see the task of schools as compensating for the absence of these capacities by enabling students to develop them. In other words, schooling would provide poor children with information and skills that their families and communities could not. It was possible, in that case, to preserve the basic purpose of compensatory education without declaring particular communities culturally deficient or deviant. Gaining knowledge of socially valued aptitudes did not mean that existing values had to be discarded. The schools were simply a way to learn about the larger world, and to acquire the attributes necessary for success in life. Like previous generations of urban residents, this was what many students in city schools wanted, as much as anyone else. Given their backgrounds, and their families' historic lack of formal education, some simply needed more schooling than others to achieve these ends. Even though academic theories of social and cultural capital did not appear until later, this view became a cornerstone of liberal social policy in the 1960s and 1970s (Coleman, 1990; Ravitch, 1983; Schram, 1995). In this respect, schools conceivably could be a potent instrument of social change.

Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty was relatively short-lived, but its imprint lasted far beyond the end of his presidency in 1969. In the 1970s and 1980s the compensatory logic of Title 1 and Head Start was extended to many other educational programs, including job-training initiatives to help the poor find stable employment. One example was the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (or CETA), passed in the mid-1970s. CETA was designed to train the unemployed for new jobs as the occupational structure changed. It provided stipends for individuals from poor backgrounds, and emphasized the importance of developing skills through vocational and basic academic education. Drafted in response to changes in the economy, this measure and others like it represented yet another step in the federal strategy of using education to break the chains of poverty (Franklin & Ripley, 1984).

A parallel but somewhat different initiative concerned special education. As noted earlier, special classes for blind, deaf, and

“slow” children had long existed in many school systems. In the postwar period, as the student population expanded and new learning problems were discovered, enrollments in these classes mushroomed. Between 1948 and 1968 special education students increased from less than 400,000 to more than two million, and their numbers continued to grow. In the 1960s new research led to the discovery of *learning disabilities*, contributing to a growing body of knowledge to inform the field. At the same time, educators and parent groups began to push for broader support of special education and integrating special-needs students into the general school population. In the later 1960s, a series of court cases challenged the principle of separate classes for these students, employing the same logic as in *Brown*. The plaintiffs held that separate education was unequal, and that students in such classes suffered a stigma. Although these challenges did not result in a landmark Supreme Court decision, they did contribute to a growing movement to bring special education into the mainstream (Safford & Safford, 1996; Scotch, 2001; Skrentny, 2004).

The field of special education continued to grow in the closing decades of the century. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was signed into law by President Gerald Ford. With this, the federal government required school districts to provide special education students with free and appropriate schooling in the least restrictive environment possible (Winzer, 1993). The idea of compensatory education, backed by federal law, now extended to children with learning disabilities and other special needs. By the early 1990s the number of children in these programs exceeded 12% of the public school population, with nearly half labeled “learning disabled.” The goal was to provide extra training and resources to help these students keep pace with other children. This was redemptive schooling of a different kind, requiring a massive investment of financial resources and professional expertise. This too reflected a concern with using schools to achieve greater levels of social and economic equity (Carrier, 1986; Turnbull et al., 2006).

Perhaps the most ambitious program of compensatory education, however, was directed at the issue of gender. Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, feminist activists began to criticize the treatment

of women in schools during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although girls had long exhibited high academic achievement, critics felt that schools reinforced sex discrimination in many other areas of life. They noted numerous problems: textbooks that perpetuated gender stereotypes, counselors who suggested sex-typed courses and career options, curricular differentiation with boys excelling in math and science and girls in humanities, teachers who favored boys, and athletic programs that glorified male sports. Feminists also pointed out that school administration was dominated by men, suggesting that women lacked authority. Reflecting these concerns, the National Organization of Women (NOW) included a provision in its 1967 women's bill of rights calling for "equal and unsegregated education." (Skrentny, 2004)

Continued agitation and lobbying around these questions eventually led to passage of Title IX in 1972 as an amendment to federal education legislation. A rather simple provision, Title IX declared that "no person... shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Because federal aid to schools had become widespread, it was a measure with potential consequences, as non-compliance could lead to a loss of funding. It took several years for regulations governing the implementation of the legislation to be articulated, but, by the latter half of the 1970s, activists could use Title IX to challenge sex discrimination across the country (Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

The problem of sexism in the schools, however, turned out to be troublesome and difficult to remedy. Title IX could be labeled compensatory in the sense of correcting past inequities, but its impact was mixed. There continued to be battles over it in Congress, but many states adopted similar provisions. School districts eventually began to respond, especially in women's athletics. The 1970s witnessed a fivefold increase in female participation in competitive sports. By the end of the decade, more than a third of all high school athletes were girls, with considerable variation across states and districts. While this certainly held symbolic value, it directly affected just a small portion of the student body. There were

halting advances in other areas too. Textbooks were revised to feature fewer stereotypes, and the number of women administrators slowly increased (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). From the standpoint of equity, these were important advances, but they hardly represented a dramatic change.

Other aspects of the educational system proved more difficult to alter. Curricular differentiation was stubbornly persistent, despite efforts to boost female enrollments in math and science. Vocational education classes remained largely segregated by gender, even though the number of girls in technical courses more than doubled. Powerful norms continued to govern conduct in hallways and classrooms, making it difficult to change familiar behavior. Research showed teachers continuing to call more on the boys, and many girls still hesitated to challenge social conventions. With regard to gender, consequently, compensatory education proved to be a frustrating and elusive goal, although a number of important advances were made (Tyack & Hansot, 1990). Even with the best intentions, it turned out to be very difficult to legislate certain changes in the schools, especially if students and educators were ambivalent about altering the status quo.

In spite of such dilemmas, the effect of all the various compensatory programs and the related policy initiatives was a virtual sea change in American education. By the end of the 1970s, such measures had come to represent nearly a cradle-to-grave enterprise, extending from the very young (Head Start) to the adult population (job training), to children excluded by gender or special needs, and to bilingual education (discussed below). It reflected a role for schooling in reducing inequality defined in myriad ways. A substantial research and evaluation enterprise monitored these programs, and addressed a host of other educational questions. When it succeeded, desegregation put millions of Black and White students in classrooms together, directly confronting conventions about racial differences. As a matter of course, schooling had become a way of overcoming all kinds of social problems. As never before, education of one sort or another was seen as profoundly influencing an individual's life chances. Because of this, it was too important to be left simply to the local authorities, especially the

overburdened bureaucracies of distressed urban school districts (Lagemann, 2000; Silver & Silver, 1991).

FOCAL POINT: CHICANO PROTEST AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

On March 1, 1968, hundreds of Chicano (Mexican American) youth burst out of Lincoln High School in Los Angeles, protesting lack of sensitivity to their cultural heritage and a weak academic curriculum. This was the first in a series of dramatic walkouts, or "blowouts," in LA's public secondary schools that escalated in scale and notoriety, eventually involving some 12,000 students. These events were significant for the anger and frustration they reflected, but also because they represented a movement for equity in education that eventually would impact the nation (Escobar, 1993).

The 1960s were years of demonstrations and controversy, often associated with the Civil Rights Movement and Black protests. But there also was a forceful movement among Mexican Americans, and much of it focused on education. In the same tradition as Black youth who staged walkouts for better instruction and culturally relevant classes, Chicano students called for respect and honor, a sense of dignity that schools had historically denied them. For decades, public institutions in Los Angeles and other cities had denigrated the Spanish language and the traditions of Chicano families. They were not permitted to study their own history, and were told by teachers and counselors that they were destined for menial jobs as laborers, factory operatives, or domestic servants. In the latter 1960s, walkouts like those in Los Angeles occurred in cities across the region, with Chicano youth demanding new curricula and a faculty with cultural knowledge of the community (Donato, 1997; Sanchez, 1993; Valenzuela, 1999).

These were hardly the first protests by Mexican American youth. Sporadic battles against discrimination occurred in earlier decades, particularly the 1940s. As noted earlier, the historic *Mendez v. Westminister* case against school desegregation served as an important precedent to the *Brown* decision. But the 1960s were a different time, and Chicano grievances called for a coherent response. In Los Angeles, it took a long and difficult struggle to win concessions from the Board of Education, and the police subjected protesters to grueling harassment. Elsewhere progress occurred much quicker. In Texas, local school boards instituted reforms and began hiring Chicano teachers. Similar changes occurred in New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado. At the same time, new curricula in Mexican American history and culture were developed, just as courses had appeared in Afro American studies and allied fields (Escobar, 1993; Gonzales, 1990; San Miguel, 1987).

These events helped to set the stage for even more momentous changes. One important point of controversy was bilingual education, as protesters demanded instruction in Spanish to help students with limited English proficiency. This was hardly a new issue, as various forms of bilingual education had flourished in American schools earlier in history. In the 1890s, for instance, German communities across the Midwest successfully campaigned to have instruction in their native language offered in public schools. Thousands of children participated in these programs, but they ended abruptly with World War I and the rise of anti-German sentiments. After the war, patriotic fervor gripped the nation with federal legislation to restrict immigration, and there was little effort to revive non-English instruction in the schools. Even so, the idea of multilingualism lingered in the minds of immigrant groups throughout the decades that followed. Bilingual schooling gained new life in the late 1950s, when Cuban refugees flooded into South Florida, fleeing Fidel Castro’s regime.

Consequently, the first bilingual education programs of the era were launched in Miami. Agitation by Cuban refugees and community protests elsewhere led to passage of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, authorizing the federal government to provide support to local bilingual education programs.

In the 1970s, continued protest by activists and action by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights expanded the purview of bilingual instruction in public schools. Finally, the 1974 Supreme Court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* required the schools of San Francisco to provide bilingual instruction to Chinese students, establishing a broad precedent for arguing the necessity of such programs. This led to a proliferation of state and local initiatives to support bilingual schooling, marking a historic shift in educational policy. While bilingualism had a long record in American schools, it had never been undertaken on a scale such as this. Now language became a variable element of public education, a fact that provoked considerable controversy (Gann & Duignan, 1986; Portes & Bach, 1985; San Miguel, 2002; Skrentny, 2004; Zimmerman, 2002).

Driven by the rapid growth of the nation's foreign-born population in the 1960s and 1970s, following federal legislation easing immigration restrictions, bilingual education quickly became a major program in school systems serving immigrant children. Tens of thousands were enrolled in bilingual classes, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, and demand for bilingual teachers soon outstripped the supply. At the same time, the expense of this, along with the idea of teaching in a language other than English, began to stir debate. Critics charged that bilingual classes only slowed the process of assimilation, and did not contribute to academic achievement. Researchers also clashed on these questions, at least at the outset. Eventually, these issues found their way into the wider public, as politicians in California made opposition to bilingual education a topic of argument and strife. All of this

came to a head in 1998, with the passage of Proposition 227, which mandated an English-only approach in California's schools. The approval of this measure by popular vote indicated the extent of controversy that bilingualism engendered, fueled by decades of opposition from conservative political interests. Even with an emerging consensus among researchers on the role of bilingual instruction in boosting achievement for immigrant children, public resistance continued to be widespread. In the end, it seems that the idea that public schools should support cultural diversity, or even ease the passage from a foreign culture into the mainstream, has been difficult for many Americans to accept. No doubt this was partly a legacy of the assimilationist purpose of the common school, supposedly contributing to the development of a single national culture (Garcia 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; San Miguel, 2004).

The irony of these developments is that bilingual education may very well be more important now than ever before in recent history, as new waves of non-native students have inundated the schools in many cities. By the year 2000, immigrants and their children represented more than one in five Americans, and were especially concentrated in major metropolitan areas. In particular, Mexican Americans have become one of the nation's largest ethnic groups, representing nearly 10% of the population, and other Spanish speaking immigrant groups have grown substantially as well. As a number of scholars have pointed out, this has led to a new level of diversity in American education, with important implications for the success of the schools. While children from certain immigrant groups appear to be doing better than others, those from Mexican families still suffer low achievement levels and higher rates of dropping out of school. While many have prospered in the United States, others still struggle with persistent poverty (Valencia, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999).

> This is a dubious legacy for the protesters of 1968, and the fight they waged for respect of their cultural heritage. Despite their success, many of the problems they identified still exist. Overt cultural discrimination may have been reduced, but it still persists and the schools that many Mexican American students attend continue to suffer chronic under-funding, high teacher turnover, and a shortage of personnel in critical positions (Gandara & Contreras, 2010; Suarez-Orazco et al., 2010). Even if measures as extreme as California's Proposition 227 have been few, support for bilingual education has diminished in many parts of the country. This has created a significant challenge for the generation of American children born to the immigrants of the last several decades. Theirs is a task of assimilating in an increasingly diverse national culture, while pursuing ever-higher standards of academic achievement. Given their growing numbers, insuring the success of schools in meeting their needs must be seen as a critical issue for the future (Olneck, 2008; Perlmann, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Backlash: Controversy over Education as Social Policy

Federal measures to provide compensatory education enjoyed considerable public support, as they seemed to extend the benefits of schooling to new groups at relatively little cost. But they also encountered vocal opposition, depicting them as intrusive, overly liberal elements of social policy. Some Americans worried that initiatives such as bilingual education, Title IX and special education were causing the schools to lose focus on academic achievement. Others complained that increasing diversity posed a threat to scholastic standards, a position with discriminatory overtones. These were sentiments that readily found expression in the political arena.

Not surprisingly, a good deal of public concern focused on the role of federal courts in school desegregation, a major point of intervention in the educational system. As noted earlier, the *Swan* case in 1971 established a precedent for the use of busses to desegregate schools. In the years that followed, desegregation plans requiring bussing were implemented in scores of cities, most by order of federal or state courts. These decisions followed the reasoning of *Brown* in holding that segregation represented a singular harm to students, and that districts had a duty to correct it. This view was abetted by Coleman's 1966 survey, which found that integrated schools exhibited higher achievement levels, particularly for minority students. With these developments, equality in education became linked firmly to the idea of desegregation, and bussing became the primary mode of achieving it (Orfield et al., 1996; Wilkerson, 1979).

Millions of children were affected by such plans. In many instances, these measures were met with anger and conflict, as mostly White parents protested the end of "neighborhood schools." In certain cities, such as Boston and Chicago, these battles sometimes turned violent (Lukas, 1985). Partisan critics seized on this, especially Republicans, declaring federal intervention in schooling to be unnecessary and intrusive. Others defended it, but wound up fighting a losing battle for public opinion. If separate schools truly were unequal, the principles articulated in *Brown* called for the solutions being implemented. But many Whites, especially in the North and West, had not imagined that *Brown* applied to them, and soon began to question the judiciary's wisdom. Many cared less about the success of Black students than experiences of their own children. The bussing controversy became a growing source of frustration and anger, one that would ultimately help to define a new era in American politics (Hochschild, 1985; Stolee, 1993; Wolters, 1984).

A parallel debate arose in connection with yet another federal initiative: a policy position widely known as *affirmative action*. This idea employed the compensatory logic of desegregation and educational programs, but applied it to sensitive issues of access in higher education and employment. Basically, the principles of

affirmative action held that groups that suffered discrimination in the past should be permitted first consideration for opportunities in the present and future. This was deemed a necessary step to overcome the accumulated weight of past exclusion, and to permit members of these groups to harness the human and cultural capital that historically had been denied them. In education, affirmative action policies primarily affected post-secondary institutions, particularly professional and graduate programs, as well as hiring practices. These initiatives concerned both gender and race, but it was the latter question that inevitably proved most controversial (Skrentny, 2004).

In the mid-1970s, a White medical school applicant named Allan Bakke sued the University of California, arguing that he had been denied admission to the Davis campus in favor of less qualified minority students. In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the school's admissions policies employed discriminatory racial categories or quotas that were unconstitutional, and Bakke subsequently was admitted. On the other hand, the Supreme Court also ruled that universities could use race or other background characteristics as one criterion—among many—in making admission decisions. Thus, affirmative action remained a viable option in admissions under certain conditions. It was a case that ultimately spoke to both sides of the dispute (Wilkerson, 1979).

While *Bakke* did not fully resolve the legality of affirmative action policies, it did become a focal point for public debate, and in this way fanned the flames of dissension over race and education. Recent research suggests that the case and attending furor exerted little long-term influence on admission practices, but the issues continued to be controversial long afterwards. A 2003 Supreme Court decision regarding affirmative action at the University of Michigan upheld the principle that race can be a factor in admissions, but that strict quotas cannot be used. It also occasioned a good deal of public outcry, even though the basic principles of Bakke were upheld (Gruhl & Welch, 1990; Skrentny, 2004; Stohr, 2006). Because the court was closely divided in the Michigan case, as in Bakke, it is likely that the issue will be revisited in future disputes. In the meantime, a number of measures were implemented at the state level banning or limiting

affirmative action in a variety of circumstances, including California, Arizona, and Michigan among others. As a consequence, the impact of these policies across the country has been curtailed to a large extent (Alon, 2015; Anderson, 2004).

By the end of the 1970s, the political storm that gathered over desegregation and affirmative action helped to establish a conservative tenor in debates about education. These concerns became a part of a movement against big-government movement that propelled Ronald Reagan into the Presidency in 1980. A degree of public skepticism about other policy measures also surfaced, particularly job training, as it seemed to do little to boost employment, especially among the chronically poor. Reagan campaigned against antipoverty programs and welfare, declaring a goal to shift responsibility for such services to the states. Vowing to reduce the size of government bureaucracy, Reagan proposed to close the U.S. Department of Education, or at least remove it as a cabinet position. It was a promise that he was never able to fulfill, however. Federal involvement had grown too large, and the commitment to using schools to address social inequity was too thoroughly entrenched in public expectations. Urban communities, civil rights groups, teachers unions, and other special interests lobbied heavily against curtailing federal education programs. Hundreds of millions of dollars were at stake, representing thousands of jobs and services to millions of students. A new politics of education had emerged at the national level, with various forms of schooling representing a substantial transfer of wealth from the affluent to the poor. This made it difficult to significantly alter many policies that had been launched under Lyndon Johnson and subsequent administrations (Haynes, 1991; Nelson, 2008; Vinovskis, 2008).

The Reagan years provided a clear demonstration of just how firmly entrenched the idea of compensatory programming in education had become as a matter of social policy. Had Reagan decided arbitrarily to end major programs started in the 1960s and 1970s, especially such popular ones as Head Start or Title 1, the political fallout could have been enormous. Indeed, if other aspects of Reagan’s conservative political program were to be realized, such

as massive reductions in welfare budgets and big tax cuts for the wealthy, he could hardly afford the political cost of attacking these aspects of the education system. Instead, he permitted a special commission to examine the issue, which produced the influential report, *A Nation at Risk*. This started a new period of reform, discussed in the following chapter.

In addition to these considerations, conservative opposition to education measures was not as forceful as it was to other social programs. Mainstream public opinion had long been more sympathetic to expenditures for schools than for welfare payments, perhaps reflecting a traditional American belief in self-improvement. If the federal government was going to tax the wealthy to help the poor, providing compensatory education was a politically palatable way to do it. Moreover, there also was growing evidence that these policies made a difference. After lagging for most of the 20th century, rates of Black graduation from high school began to approach those for Whites in the 1970s and 1980s, eventually closing the gap significantly. Black college enrollments also climbed dramatically, ultimately reaching about two thirds of White rates. Although important differences in academic achievement continued to exist, these trends helped to establish a growing Black middle class, including many with elite university credentials (Jencks, 1998). This was significant development, and the role of education in it highlighted the importance of federal policies addressing discrimination and inequity. These circumstances helped to make the major federal education programs relatively secure politically, even in an age of retrenchment (Farley, 1997; Levitan et al., 1975; Peterson, 2006; Stockman, 1986).

High Schools and the Youth Culture

At the same time that American culture became more divided along racial and urban/suburban lines, it also became split in generational terms. As suggested with regard to *Rebel Without a Cause*, the postwar years saw the development of a pervasive national youth culture. One key to this was the high school's rise as a universal

institution, one that virtually all teens attended (Angus & Mirel, 1999; Haubrich, 1993).

As the size and numbers of high schools grew after 1950, they brought teens from all backgrounds together for the first time in history. This was an upshot of the comprehensive vision promulgated by reformers dating from the Kingsley Commission. Educators believed that the high school should be a widely shared American tradition, even if they did not feel everyone should study the same subjects. Statistical evidence points to the prescience of these views. As the number of adolescents grew, especially after the first baby boomers became teenagers, enrollments climbed dramatically. This was a consequence of both demographic increases and improved rates of attendance (West, 1996). By the end of the 1950s, more than 80% of American teenagers attended high school, and an even higher number enrolled at one time or another (Angus & Mirel, 1999).

One effect of this was the segregation of adolescents as a social group from the rest of society for a significant time each week, through most of the year, in settings where they represented a clear majority. Because of age grading and the modular organization of most schools, they did not even have systematic contact with peers in different age groups. This contributed to the development of what James Coleman described as the “adolescent society,” a constellation of social relations with its own behavioral norms and cultural artifacts. From the very start, it was a phenomenon rooted largely in secondary schools (Coleman, 1961, 1965). This was an important component of what was widely known as the “youth culture” (Cohen, 1997).

Schooling, in that case, was critical to this distinctive feature of modern American civilization. Coleman suggested that the social world of adolescence was defined by status groups associated with different school activities. In general, he found that athletics played an especially important role in the lives of students, especially boys. Academic performance was less important, although it may have gained significance with progress through school (Coleman, 1961). Other studies examined the influence of the larger youth culture, mostly existing outside the schools. In this arena it was commercially

exploited by record companies, the radio, television and print media, and a host of other interests. Adolescents had preferred distinctive forms of music for several decades, and dancing had become popular with the rise of dating in the 1920s and 1930s (Modell, 1989; Palladino, 1996). But, after the war, these aspects of the youth subculture assumed even larger proportions.

In the 1950s new forms of teenage entertainment burst into view, especially rock-and-roll music. More working-class youth were involved, as teen employment dropped and large numbers remained in school (Rury, 2004). New dances came into play too, reflecting the growing diversity of teen society, and different forms of consumption evolved continually. In this regard, teenagers were influenced by an expanding consumer culture, but their behavior quite was different from previous generations (Cohen, 2003). The influence of working-class experience and values was clearly evident. Fast cars, cigarette smoking and alcohol, and the hint of sexual promiscuity came into view, different from the clean-cut teen image of earlier decades. Despite attempts at censorship, these images spread rapidly through the media, including radio, movies, and television. It is doubtful that large numbers actually engaged in such activities, but even for those who did not, the idea of rebellion against adult values exerted considerable appeal (Gilbert, 1986; Mintz, 2004). This was an impulse that would exert even greater influence in years to come.

If music and movies were important features of youth culture, clothing may have been equally significant. High school students in earlier decades dressed like miniature adults; boys wearing coats and ties and girls dresses or skirts. As the number of students increased, particularly from the working class, these standards shifted. One study of students in Milwaukee found that postwar students had shed coats, ties, and dresses in favor of slacks, shirts, and sweaters (Haubrich, 1993). Over time, standards became even more informal. In the 1960s, high school dress codes became a subject of student protests and were eliminated altogether across the country. By the 1970s jeans and T-shirts were the norm in many schools, even among younger faculty members, and adolescent tastes were becoming a major force in the world of adult fashion (Davis, 1992; Grant, 1988; Palladino, 1996).

At about the same time, there was a dramatic shift in sexual mores, with a corresponding change in teen behavior. Rates of non-marital sex among teenagers had increased significantly by the early 1970s, jumping from less than 20% to more than a third in less than a decade. This revived interest in sex education as part of the secondary curriculum, a long-standing concern of many reformers. But even this moderate response helped to fuel new anxieties about the schools fostering immorality. In the end, no single coherent national response could be agreed upon, apart from politically motivated calls for “abstinence only” policies (Moran, 2000; Zimmerman, 2002). By the 1980s, a clear majority of teens reportedly had engaged in one form or another of consensual sexual contact. This represented a sharp break from the past. At the same time, the number of single-parent households increased dramatically and teen pregnancy became an important issue for national policymakers (Chilman, 1978; Esman, 1990; Palladino, 1996; Vinovskis, 1995).

The schools contributed significantly to these developments. The rise of a youth culture coincided with the movement to consolidate and expand high schools across the country. The average size of public secondary institutions more than doubled between 1950 and 1970, both because of school consolidation and new facilities in the growing suburbs. These figures, however, tend to understate the size of schools most students attended because of the many small rural districts that still existed. Survey data collected in the 1970s and 1980s indicate that the typical public high school had some 875 students, and more than 40% had above 900 (Boyer, 1985; Bryk et al., 1993). It was the latter schools that enrolled the majority of the nation’s secondary students. These bigger secondary schools have historically been concentrated in urban areas, but many suburban districts also built sizeable institutions over time. For metropolitan youth, the institutional norm became a large, differentiated public secondary school.

School size, it turns out, appears to have contributed to the formation of a distinctive youth culture. Research suggested that the development of bigger high schools led to greater psychological distance between adolescents and adults. Psychologists Barker and

Gump (1964), analyzing school size in the 1960s found that greater numbers of students were excluded from school activities in larger institutions, which contributed to more widespread alienation from the school and its goals. This appears to have been particularly true among working- or lower-class students. Studies later suggested that greater school size inhibited student learning, especially when it was difficult for adolescents and adults to interact meaningfully (Bracy, 1998; Haller, 1992; Lee & Smith, 1997). This point also was made by scholars comparing private—particularly Catholic—and public high schools (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore et al., 1982; Greely, 1982). Bigger, it turned out, was not always better, at least academically.

A general movement to expand students' rights in high schools across the country added force to these developments. In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a decision in the case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, ruling that a suspension of two students for wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War represented a violation of their First Amendment rights (Zirkel, 1999). *Tinker* set off a wave of litigation that soon broadened the definition of self-expression to include everything from dress to hairstyles to displays of affection on school premises. Although not all such challenges proved successful, educators soon found themselves on the defensive, forced to justify traditional rules, policies, and practices. The new legal standard became one of requiring an educational rationale for policies governing student behavior, and many districts chose to minimize such measures rather than risk additional protests and litigation (Arum et al., 2003; Olson, 1972). Developments such as these helped to usher in a new era of uncertainly and permissiveness in high schools.

This set of problems was complicated by changes in the culture of schools during the 1960s and 1970s. There was a resurgence of interest in the ideas of progressive education and curricular experimentation, and a movement to radically alter disciplinary practices. Many schools attempted to make courses more relevant to student interests, dropping core requirements in mathematics, history, and science for experiential learning or interdisciplinary units. In the same spirit, student conduct codes were modified, as

suggested above, to allow greater freedom, especially in dress and deportment. These shifts in adult supervision added even greater momentum to the youth culture, in all its lively variety. In some larger high schools, lack of oversight contributed to youth subcultures that militated actively against academic accomplishment. It is telling in this regard that secondary graduation rates were generally stagnant following the mid-1970s, and researchers suggested that the non-academic roles of these institutions became their most significant function (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007). Some schools may have largely provided a place for teens to meet, set their own goals, and conduct themselves accordingly. For many, this probably was just fine; for others, it doubtless became a problem, especially those concerned with academic achievement (Angus & Mirel, 1999; Eckert, 1989; Grant, 1988; Willis, 1977).

As Coleman and other observers noted, youth culture often took the immediate community and its values as a point of departure. This accounted for the heavy emphasis on athletics in most high schools (Coleman, 1961). But with the social and economic differentiation of the metropolitan landscape, this resulted in a variegated adolescent culture, or—alternatively—a set of different youth subcultures (Coleman, 1965). In the large and impersonal secondary institutions of metropolitan America, competing networks of peers seemed to conduct much of the socialization that occurred in schools. Particularly in the larger buildings, adolescent society often reigned supreme. This may be yet another aspect of how the comprehensive high school ideal, handed down from an earlier time, contributed to challenges facing secondary education.

Youth Culture Goes to College

When baby-boom students graduated from high school, they moved on to college in record numbers. Although American post-secondary institutions enrolled just two million students in 1946, by 1970 the numbers had quadrupled to more than eight million. There had been an early increase due to the GI Bill, which provided tuition benefits to veterans, but that group left by the mid-1950s. The major source of new students was the affluent baby-boom generation in the growing

suburbs, as many as half of whom went to college. The number of post-secondary institutions increased significantly, but the average size of campuses grew even more dramatically. By the end of the 1960s, it was not uncommon for large state institutions to enroll tens of thousands. Under these circumstances, the universities dropped any pretense of governing the daily lives of students, even those living on campus. Apart from a few basic rules, students were left to their own devices.

Baby boom collegians were unlike previous generations of college students. Nearly half were female and most were raised believing American democracy was a moral beacon in the world. This eventually helped foster political activism. They also had been encouraged to explore freely and be creative. In light of relaxed campus rules, along with their experiences in high schools, this set the stage for unconventional lifestyles and alternative cultural norms. With equivalent numbers of women and men, it also opened the door to greater sexual freedom, eventually including a recognition of gay and lesbian rights in some places. It was a new age on American campuses, marked by an emerging “counter culture,” as attending college became as mass phenomenon. Major issues of the day, especially civil rights and war, animated student political views. By the early 1970s, many of the nation’s post-secondary institutions had become veritable hotbeds of non-conventional sentiments (Beemyn, 2003; Heineman, 1993; Kim & Rury, 2007; Rose-Mockry, 2015; Roszak, 1969).

Like any historically large group, the postwar generation included individuals of all kinds, including many who identified strongly with traditional values. But a significant portion of the baby boomers grew to become quite suspicious of authority figures, especially mainstream politicians, the police, and the military. Two major historical events account for much of this: the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam. Both seemed to contradict the professed ideals of American civilization, albeit in different ways. As noted earlier, the civil rights movement confronted racism and discrimination in a dramatic and often forceful manner. It revealed the inconsistency between traditional principles of equality and freedom and the reality of racial oppression and injustice. Thousands

of college students volunteered to participate in civil rights campaigns, and witnessed firsthand the brutal response of reactionary racists. Millions of others followed these struggles in the media, wondering just how American democracy could be reconciled with such behavior. This was an important lesson in the realities of politics, and it affected many profoundly (Halberstam, 1998; Morgan & Davies, 2012).

The Vietnam War represented a different kind of learning experience, one considerably more divisive. The war began as an effort to support the flagging pro-West regime in South Vietnam, and led to full-scale military involvement by the mid-1960s. The armed services had relied on a modest draft from the beginning of the conflict, and permitted students to defer their service while attending school. This, of course, proved a boon to enrollments and placed the brunt of the draft on those too poor or unprepared for college. Some saw the injustice in this, but many youth did not become concerned about the war until it affected their own lives. When the Nixon administration began to dramatically escalate the conflict, and changed the draft to a lottery without exemptions, antiwar protests surged. Even though Nixon succeeded in polarizing public opinion, drawing on cold-war sentiments, the ensuing national debate helped to radicalize millions more youth. The war's widely publicized atrocities, the corruption of the South Vietnamese regime, and the lack of a formal declaration of hostilities, all contributed to an impression that U.S. involvement was illegitimate. To many it appeared as yet another instance of adult authority figures using illicit power to maintain the status quo (Brokaw, 2007; Gitlin, 1987; Ravitch, 1983).

The historical experience of the civil rights struggles and the antiwar movement contributed to a rising level of skepticism among youth about adult institutions. The largest universities had become major centers of research, mostly funded by the government. These activities offered convenient targets for student protest. Demonstrations against university complicity in war-related research, and about curricular issues, rocked the campuses. Berkeley (California), Madison (Wisconsin), Ann Arbor (Michigan), Lawrence (Kansas), and other college towns witnessed protracted struggles

between students and authorities. In 1970, the announcement of U.S. bombing in Cambodia led to massive protests and the killing of four students by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State University. The resulting moral outrage was compounded by release of the so-called “Pentagon Papers,” revealing manipulative plots behind the war effort. The Watergate scandal and Richard Nixon’s dramatic fall from power in 1974 were the final blows, along with the collapse of South Vietnam’s regime shortly afterward. Public confidence in the government and other traditional institutions were at low ebb, particularly among the young. “Never trust anyone over 30” became a popular slogan. A strong “antiestablishment” ethic had taken hold by this time, and before long its influence was quite pervasive. This too became a critical aspect of the “counterculture” (Heineman, 1993; Monhollon, 2004; Roof, 1993).

The very size of the baby-boom generation magnified the effects of such developments and gave them added cultural force. American youth represented a massive market for alternative music, clothing, and other cultural artifacts, and their tastes set new fashion sensibilities. Alternative styles in footwear, jewelry, food, and a host of other products flourished. Rock music had entered the mainstream by the 1970s, and garments made of such casual cotton fabrics as denim, gingham, and chambray were ubiquitous. T-shirts and jeans became signature fashion items, eventually drawing the attention of designers. In the words of sociologist Fred Davis, “antifashion” became the new mainstream taste in clothing, as nonconformity grew to be a force in the apparel industry. Organic crops also became popular, prompting an expanding market for alternative products. In these and countless other ways, the postwar generation began to influence popular culture (Davis, 1992; Jones, 1980; Russell, 1982).

The impact on politics was equally palpable. The left-leaning presidential campaigns of Eugene McCarthy (in 1968) and George McGovern (in 1972) were propelled by antiestablishment baby boomers, as was the most virulent opposition to Nixon and his policies. After Nixon’s demise, politicians ignored baby boomers at their peril, and the election of the slightly unconventional Jimmy Carter as president in 1976 was partly a reflection of their influence.

By the 1980s, however, the political momentum of the postwar generation had become fragmented. Without a clear moral cause such as civil rights or an unjust war, its energy was divided across a spectrum of smaller movements: antiracism, feminism, gay rights, and the concerns of other special interests. This contributed to the conservative revolution led by Ronald Reagan, attacking many of the social values the postwar generation had fought to uphold (Owram, 1996).

The experience of the baby-boom generation represented an unusual process of education, one conducted on a grand historical scale. As noted before, its members were products of the schools, the first generation of Americans to attend high schools and colleges in exceptionally large numbers. While there, they developed a distinctive set of social relationships, values, and customs that became collectively known as the “youth culture” of the time, and eventually the “counter-culture.” This ultimately became a vast and variegated social landscape in itself, embracing a wide range of different viewpoints. It was held together by a pervasive distrust of traditional authority and the mores of adult society. It also encouraged a broad ethic of equity and tolerance, informed by civil rights and antiwar struggles. In time, of course, the youth culture entered the mainstream, becoming a new set of norms and traditions, and impressing its values and customs on the rest of the country.

An Era of Dramatic Changes

American society changed profoundly during the postwar era. As seen earlier, shifts in ideology, government policies, social and political movements, the growth of urban areas, and the economy all contributed to it. In the course of these changes, education became an increasingly important aspect of the national culture.

A number of historical developments converged to shape the relationship of education and social change. First, ideological currents in the immediate postwar period helped set a new tone for social and political events in the years to follow. The 1954 *Brown* decision marked a historic shift in American thinking about race and

social equity. At the same time, however, white flight, racial segregation and the movement of Blacks to cities contributed to divisions between urban and suburban communities, and growing disparities in educational resources. Although educators since Horace Mann's day had imagined the school as an instrument of democratic socialization, by the 1970s, it had evolved into an agency of racial isolation and alienation in much of metropolitan America. Rather than bringing students from social/ethnic groups together, in many respects the schools served to highlight their differences.

Meanwhile, schools also became instruments of federal social policy, intended to help alleviate the very problems they had come to reflect. Education came to be considered a form of compensation for social and cultural inequities, and a way of helping individuals pull themselves into the mainstream. In the South in particular, segregation declined significantly, and levels of Black educational attainment increased remarkably. The creation of a sizeable African American middle class was one important outgrowth of these developments. So were rising numbers of women college students and graduates. Schools also were seen as sources of job preparation, and in many other respects became tools of national policy. Expenditures on education increased steadily in all its forms. Forces of isomorphic development, including federal and state aid, have continued to make many American schools look and operate quite similarly. The age when education was purely a local concern had passed. Schooling was considered a means to promote many forms of social change, and it certainly succeeded in some respects. The social mobility of many African Americans was clear evidence of this, along with the advancement of other racial and ethnic minority groups. Changes in the occupational and social status of women could also be linked to shifts in educational policy. Whether schooling can continue to foster such egalitarian developments, on the other hand, is an open question.

In light of this, some very difficult problems have become associated with the schools, partly due to their wide purview. One was the development of a pervasive youth culture, often working at cross-purposes to the institutions that play host to it. Reformers' insistence on the importance of large schools in the 1950s and

1960s may have helped to compromise adult authority in the face of this. The relaxation of rules and changing standards of conduct helped make the schools into centers of an elaborate social world for teenage youth, often diverting attention away from academic interests. Even if all educators did not endorse such reforms, many contributed to these changes in certain respects. As the youth culture moved to the college campuses, it held immense political ramifications for the 1960s and 1970s. The “counter culture” widely associated with college students and social protest also left an indelible imprint on the age. Perhaps the most important aspect of this was a widespread commitment to equality and justice, including equity in access to high-quality education. In this way too, schooling may have contributed substantially to social change.

There can be little question that impact of this generation on many facets of American history remains palpable today. This is clearly evident in music, fashion, language, and other aspects of popular culture. On the other hand, the postwar era was marked by a concern with inequality and generational change, but the enduring influence of these values is less clear. In the years to follow, national attention to these issues would falter somewhat. The period after 1980 would bring renewed attention to the role of education in the economy and a debate over academic standards. As the baby boomers became adults, their interests changed, and many appear to have retained somewhat conventional values with respect to their own children. The historical reach of the counter-culture, it seems, was somewhat limited in the end.

6
Globalization and Human Capital

From "A Nation at Risk" to Neo-Liberal Reform

The years following Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 marked a dramatic shift in the way Americans thought about education. As mentioned previously, Reagan failed to eliminate the Department of Education and many programs that appeared in the 1960s, but national priorities quickly changed. Concerns about equity gave way to an abiding interest in schooling as a tool for economic development and individual advancement. Education also became a matter of passionate public debate, reflecting conflicting values and starkly different visions for the future.

Globalization has been a major dimension of this change. In the past several decades, American education has reflected public concern about the nation's role in the world. It began with problems in the 1970s. Defeat in Vietnam, an oil-induced recession and the shameful Nixon scandals, capped by the 1979 embassy seizure in Iran, raised American anxieties to new heights. These developments contributed to Reagan's election, and the ascendency of a new conservative ethos in politics. The dissolution of the communist Soviet Union in 1991 also marked an end of an era, signaling a new world order based on trade and capitalist development. The world was getting smaller and the nation's role was changing. Military predominance was less important than economic strength, and many

questioned whether American ingenuity was ready for global competition (Reich, 1992).

In the schools, the conservative ethos represented by Reagan's election meant "back to basics," and calls for an end to liberal policies associated with the 1960s. Globalization, on the other hand, meant a stronger link between education and the economy, especially in light of international tests showing that U.S. scores lagged Japan, Germany, and other countries. As it turned out, these priorities were quite compatible. If there was a global race for wealth and influence, the schools did not seem to be developing requisite cognitive abilities. In light of this, growing numbers of Americans felt it was time to raise standards, and emphasizing core academic skills seemed to be a sensible way to do it. It was a new era, and globalization meant that time and distance were less significant barriers. The spread of digital technology gradually opened a wide world of information to master, making education all the more important (Patterson, 2007; Schulman & Zelizer, 2008).

At the same time, new signs of human capital's importance appeared in the economy. In the 1980s, economic returns to education (earnings for graduates) began to increase significantly, especially for postsecondary credentials. This was linked to the postwar period's changing occupational structure, and rising educational requirements for many jobs. As in earlier times, schooling was tied to career advancement, but it was also increasingly viewed as key to economic growth. This led to greater scrutiny of its productivity, and demands for accountability. It also contributed to debates over organizational models of schools, and improving educational outcomes. Testing became more important, as did other performance measures, especially in light of international comparisons. Private schooling came to be judged superior to public institutions, especially in urban areas. And "neo-liberal" reformers proposed to make education more efficient and productive. If the country was going to stay abreast of competing nations, many Americans believed that the schools had to contribute more (Chomsky & McChesney, 2011; Gabbard, 2007).

In short, the new significance assigned to education, along with anxieties about American status, gave rise to a remarkable period of

reform. Public schools were labeled unresponsive, and a range of alternative forms of education appeared. Many critiques that appeared earlier and under different circumstances gained new resonance. “School choice” became a popular term, and a number of options eventually appeared as alternatives to conventional public institutions, including charter schools. Meanwhile, debates between educators, policy makers, and researchers often reached a fever pitch, often without resolution. All this culminated in passage of the “No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLB) in 2001, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 that radically altered federal involvement in education. It was a historic measure that improbably combined many of the period’s most incongruous reform ideas. It immediately became the signature social policy program of the George W. Bush presidency. Eventually, however, criticism of NCLB reached ever higher levels, and it brought federal educational policy under increased scrutiny and pressure for change (Horsford et al., 2019; Vinovskis, 2008).

Each of these issues will be discussed in this chapter. It has been a time of seemingly momentous events in all sectors of the school system, leading directly to its present circumstances. Given that it is still largely underway, however, characterizing the period is a bit difficult. Hindsight is often 20-20, as the saying goes, but not usually at such close range. Nevertheless, certain trends are unmistakably evident in the past 40 years or so. These developments provide a sense of the times, and help in comprehending the challenges that face schools today. Before turning to such questions, however, it is important to consider an event that arguably launched the contemporary school reform movement, and continues to reverberate even now.

FOCAL POINT: “A NATION AT RISK”

By the end of the postwar era, conventional wisdom came to hold schooling as very important for the country’s future. Americans of nearly every stripe believed it a vital national interest, necessary for competing on a global scale with

such rising economic powers as the Japanese and Europeans. This was a position even the most ardent critic could hardly question. It was perhaps best expressed in a 1983 statement issued by a special commission appointed by U.S. Secretary of Education Terrance Bell, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.* Noting problems of declining achievement in American schools, this document called for substantial reform, focusing on higher standards of performance. *A Nation at Risk* may have been meant to deflect attacks on the Department of Education, but its overall impact was historic. National polls showed widespread public concern that education was slipping in quality, and affecting American economic strength. In short, schooling had simply become too significant for the federal government *not* to play a role in policy questions, and funding elements of the system. It became a political imperative that neither major political party could ignore. Not only was schooling indispensable for economic growth and individual success, it was also a critical instrument of social policy. As the significance publicly assigned to education increased, its political importance understandably grew as well (Ginsberg & Plank, 1995; Vinovskis, 2008; Wong et al., 2004).

Given this, it is instructive to examine *A Nation at Risk* a bit more carefully. Befitting the times, the goals of the "National Commission on Educational Excellence" addressed the popular perception that the educational system was failing to meet the need for a competitive workforce. Among other things, its charter required the commission to assess the "quality of teaching and learning" at all educational levels, in public and private institutions, and to compare "American schools and colleges with those of other advanced nations." This was a big task and the commission toured the nation, hearing testimony and collecting information. It also commissioned papers from educational researchers and other social scientists, which were presented at meetings. But instead of presenting a

detailed and comprehensive report, the commission chose to publish a brief summary and recommendations. The resulting account synthesized findings and offered recommendations, but opened with a strong assertion: “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.” Invoking a global context, it also suggested that “if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.” The effect was striking.

Assertions such as these were calculated to resonate with popular distress about the performance of American schools, and the commission offered evidence to support its position. It highlighted academic underachievement on national and international tests. The “average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests,” the summary declared, “is now lower than 26 years ago when Sputnik was launched.” Nothing was said, however, about the changing composition of the student body in the intervening 26 years. It noted, also, that Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) results had dropped “over 50 points” in verbal scores and “nearly 40 points” in mathematics between 1963 and 1980, again without considering changes in the relevant population. It declared that almost 40% of 17-year olds could not successfully “draw inferences from written material,” and “only one-fifth [could] write a persuasive essay; and only onethird [could] solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps.” Of course, these shortcomings may well have been true of most adults, and probably existed for decades, but the clear inference was that a serious decline in educational standards was to blame. With respect to international tests, the report highlighted adverse comparisons with students elsewhere: “on 19 academic tests American students were never first or second and, in comparison with other industrialized

nations, were last seven times." It clearly suggested that the United States was falling behind the rest of the world.

In response to these and other issues, the commission made a number of recommendations. At the top were changes to the "curricular smorgasbord" of high schools, derided in the report as "homogenized, diluted, and diffused." To remedy this, commissioners recommended a basic academic course of study, with four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one-half year of computer science. Their report also suggested that students work toward proficiency in a foreign language, starting in the elementary grades. In short, a basic academic curriculum was prescribed, similar in spirit to that recommended by the Committee of Ten nearly a century earlier. It was intended for everyone, not just students preparing for college.

At the same time, the commission called for higher standards, warning against grade inflation and low expectations, and "rigorous examinations requiring students to demonstrate their mastery of content and skill." The report recommended that colleges stiffen admissions criteria and utilize standardized tests of achievement, not aptitude, to assess student performance. In line with other nations, the commission argued that "school districts and State legislatures should strongly consider 7-hour school days, as well as a 200 to 220-day school year." More instructional time was urged, and better organization of student activities to foster achievement. With respect to teachers, the commission suggested that salaries be "professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based," and that teachers demonstrate "competence in an academic discipline." Teacher education programs were urged to be more selective, and to cut down on education courses. Finally, the commission suggested that Washington play a role in helping "meet the needs of key groups of students such as the gifted and

talented, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority and language minority students, and the handicapped," as well as supporting research and collecting data. "The assistance of the Federal Government," it was emphasized, "should be provided with a minimum of administrative burden and intrusiveness." Nothing was said about it playing a larger role in assessment or accountability.

This was hardly the first presidential commission on education; Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy had convened similar groups (McAndrews, 2008). But it was arguably the most dramatic, both in the tone of its assessment and recommendations. As suggested earlier, *A Nation at Risk* was at odds with several of Reagan's planned education initiatives: voluntary public school prayer, tax credits for private school tuition, and abolishing the department of education. Reagan never did accomplish these goals, but he did make school reform a larger priority (despite cutbacks to the Education Department). This was not difficult, as the commission did not recommend a strong role for the federal government, and its many proposals had few national budgetary implications. In his second term, Reagan appointed William Bennett Secretary of Education, and Bennett issued broad proclamations about the poor state of public schools. In 1987, he famously visited the Chicago schools, declared them "the worst in the nation," and then flew back to Washington (Kaestle & Lodewick, 2007; Shipps, 2006). In short, while the Reagan administration had no plan for federal involvement in education, it used the issue to disparage urban institutions and teacher unions, longstanding sources of support for Democratic politicians.

A Nation at Risk was deeply flawed as an assessment of the nation's educational system, and subsequent research demonstrated that many of its assertions were mistaken. But it turned out to be highly effective political theater, and helped to mobilize public opinion in favor of reform to raise

> expectations in the schools. Clearly, many Americans were concerned about the nation's status in the emerging global economy, and saw education as pivotal to its success in this context. A direct line can be drawn from the commission's prescriptions to the standards movement that later took shape, culminating in *No Child Left Behind* (Vinovskis, 2008). While it may have started as a way to extend the life of the Department of Education, *A Nation at Risk* turned out to be a historically important document. It marked the beginning of a reform impulse that continues to influence the schools today.

A Shifting Economic Scene

As suggested in the foregoing, the changing American economy was a critical issue in the 1980s, especially the decline of industrial employment and the need for well-trained workers. It was widely hailed as a sign of the "post-industrial" society. Perhaps the most important manifestation of this was the role of education in the labor market. Employers demanded ever higher levels of formal schooling, and it was reflected in rising monetary returns to higher education credentials. Simply put, as the economy evolved, the pecuniary significance of education increased. Reflecting this, economists suggested that "human capital" was playing a bigger role in economic growth. And when business raised educational expectations, so did students and parents (Buchman, 1989; Murphy & Welch, 1989). The result was a sea change in the way Americans came to view schooling. It was perhaps the clearest manifestation of a new significance attached to human capital in economic life (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

This development took a while to unfold. Early in the 20th century, most American youth started working before age 20, even if only on a part-time basis (Kett, 1977). Teen employment diminished markedly in the Great Depression, but during World War II demand for labor skyrocketed. By the postwar period, more teens had

enrolled in high school, and it was more difficult to get full-time work without a diploma (Angus & Mirel, 1999). Consequently, the transition from school to work became a little more complicated. It was no longer possible for most youth to easily find a job; now a diploma was usually required (Rury, 2004).

The nation's economy also had changed profoundly. Industrial jobs were plentiful in the immediate postwar period; demand for factory workers drew African Americans out of the South. Despite periodic downturns, the urban industrial economy remained flush in the 1950s, but it began to change in the following decade (Teaford, 1990). By the mid-1960s, some observers already warned that demand for unskilled labor would decline, although projections underestimated the long-term changes that eventually occurred (Harrison, 1972; Havighurst, 1966). Few anticipated the shifting relationship of education and employment that came later.

As noted earlier, the rapid growth of American secondary education was premised on the principle of differentiation, that high school graduates were destined for many different roles. This was a legacy of the Progressive Era and its social efficiency impulse. The Cardinal Principles held that the high school should be preparation for life, and vocational education was a corollary of that perspective. As the postwar economy changed, however, and industrial jobs disappeared, the appeal of job training weakened. Before long, it was supplanted by other curricular options, particularly a diluted academic curriculum called the "general course." Youth following this path were not trained for any particular occupation; nor were they prepared for college. Instead, they simply were given a broad, unfocused education intended as preparation for adulthood. Some historians have referred to this as "warehousing," keeping youth out of the labor force and off the streets until early adulthood (Angus & Mirel, 1999; Sedlak et al., 1986).

The basic occupational structure of the American labor force changed slowly through the 1960s, with a gradual shift to greater numbers working in the "service sector." In 1970, more than a quarter of the nation's workforce was in manufacturing, and positions requiring higher education had changed relatively little. But the years that followed witnessed a dramatic transformation that continues

today. Beginning then and accelerating in decades afterward, factory jobs began to plummet (Levy, 1987). Nationwide, the labor force's share in manufacturing fell to 18% by 1990, and continued to drop thereafter (Murphy & Welch, 1993). The impact was evident first in the cities, but eventually it affected all areas of the country. Economists speculate that it was due to both technological change and the loss of jobs to other countries (Abramovitz & David, 1996). Whatever the causes, it held important implications for schools. The number of jobs requiring relatively little formal education was falling (Grubb, 1995).

Manufacturing employment was replaced by office jobs, management and technical or professional positions. It took a while, but beginning in the 1980s a shift toward higher education requirements became clearly evident (Cohn & Hughes, 1994; Murphy & Welch, 1989). This was reflected in wage rates for different levels of education. At the start of the 1970s, the hourly earnings for high school dropouts and college graduates were about $7 apart, and high school graduates earned only about $1.50 more per hour than dropouts. Because of a large cohort of baby-boom college grads, the advantage of college actually shrank in the 1970s. By 1979, these collegians made only about $6 more than secondary dropouts. But soon afterward, the gap began to widen, and by the mid-1990s college graduates earned nearly $10 more per hour than dropouts and $7 per hour more than high school grads (Datazone, 1999). In short, the labor market began to pay even bigger returns to those who finished college.

These developments appear to have reflected two trends. First, dollar returns to (or benefits from) college education increased slightly across the 1980s and 1990s, roughly 7%. At the same time, the wages of high school dropouts fell by more than 25%, and those of high school graduates declined by about 8% (Stern et al., 1989). Thus, the earnings premium for attending college became greater than any time in many decades. Not surprisingly, this helped to inspire a significant jump in college enrollments.

Perceptions about globalization contributed to this as well. International trade grew rapidly, and Americans soon became acquainted with Japanese cars, German appliances, French wine,

and many other foreign products. At the same time, manufacturing jobs continued to leave, particularly following passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, which made it easier for companies to operate in Mexico. Robert Reich, Bill Clinton's Secretary of Labor, declared that the new world economy called for a division of labor, with technologically advanced nations like the United States providing "high value" goods and services. In particular, he described the emergence of the "symbolic analyst" as the prototypical worker of the future, jobs linked directly to higher levels of education. Other observers agreed. If the United States was to play a leadership role in the world economy, the quality of its education system was crucial (Bauman, 1998; Orme, 1996; Reich, 1992; Stiglitz, 2003).

Enrollment trends seemed to substantiate this view. By the 1980s, American colleges and universities were widely believed to be the world's best, drawing students from around the globe. They were leaders in research and graduate study, along with training for the professions. This helped higher education to became a focal point of economic expansion, and a critical link to the labor market (Clotfelter, 2010; Goldin & Katz, 2008; Wildavski, 2010). In many respects, this shift represented the fulfillment of trends evident earlier in the century, especially the rise of research universities. And enrollments continued to grow, despite a drop in secondary graduates after the baby boom cohort. A higher proportion of youth was attending college. In the late 1970s, less than half of American high school graduates continued their education, but 20 years later the figure approached 70% (Murphy & Welch, 1993). This reflected reasonable decisions for many prospective students, given the decline of factory employment and growing wage differentials. By 1990, it was calculated that a college degree, on average, was worth half a million dollars more than a secondary diploma in lifetime earnings. Gaining the credentials to become a symbolic analyst, it appeared, had a big payoff. This helped to make the idea of attending college attractive to a broader range of Americans (Hunt, 1995).

A substantial rise in female labor force participation in the 1970s and 1980s also contributed to this trend. Among the most rapidly growing areas of female employment were the professions and other

jobs requiring higher education. This was partly the consequence of the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, an offshoot of the civil rights era. It also reflected the willingness of many women to challenge existing sexual stereotypes. These tendencies were encouraged by the sex-equity reforms achieved under Title IX. As a result, female enrollments in college also climbed sharply, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. This occurred despite relatively low female wage dividends for college (Averett & Burton, 1996; Geiger, 1993). By the 1980s, women outnumbered men among undergraduates for the first time in history, and their numbers continued to grow. This added to the rapid rise in high school graduates attending college in the 1990s; indeed, the rate of college entry among women was about 10% greater than men.

Across the country, educational expectations were rising. In an analysis of White high school graduates in 1960 and 1980, Marlis Buchmann found that students' expectations of the highest degree they would earn changed significantly. Altogether, the number planning to end their education at high school fell from more than a quarter to just 18%, almost a 30% drop. At the same time, those expecting to earn graduate or advanced professional degrees increased from about 12 to over 21% (Buchman, 1989). More youth in 1980 planned to graduate from college than to end their education at high school. This was a significant shift, in a relatively short span of two decades. These trends would accelerate in the years to follow.

Such changes mirrored the wage structure and hiring patterns. This was partly due to shifts in the occupational structure, especially the decline in manufacturing jobs. But it was also due to the growing preference of employers to hire workers—especially beginners—with higher levels of education for all types of jobs (Carnevale & Desrochers, 1997). In a detailed analysis, economists Kevin Murphy and Finis Welch revealed that employees with college education increased in all industrial sectors in the 1980s, contributing to rising higher educational attainment. These changes helped fuel a continuing expansion of higher education through the later 1980s and early 1990s, despite declining numbers of youth (Murphy & Welch, 1993). By the middle of the 1990s, a large majority of high school graduates across the country were planning to begin some

form of higher education, and business became the most popular college major.

The transforming economy also helped to underscore the importance of educational differences between inner-city and suburban communities. Although the latter kept pace with the new economy, the former fell farther behind (Harrison, 1972; Sexton & Nickel, 1992). In inner-city neighborhoods, the prospect of vocational education providing a means of economic development had faded. This was evident as early as the late 1970s, and was reported by Earnest Boyer in 1985 (Boyer, 1985). Jobs calling for purely manual skills were fading in relative terms. In the 1980s and 1990s, this contributed to improved college enrollment for African Americans, but not all youth responded in the same way. Postsecondary attendance for Hispanic students, for instance, lagged behind other groups. As the new service economy continued to develop, these patterns of educational differentiation posed a significant problem. They became linked to persistent poverty in big city minority communities (Bishop, 1989; Katz, 2000; Neckerman, 2007).

These changes reflected rising human capital demands. The emphasis in the closing decades of the 20th century, as never before in recent history, was on academic skills. It was evident in the preferences of employers (Sexton & Nickel, 1992; Stern et al., 1989; Wilson, 1995), This, of course, made the reform suggestions of *A Nation at Risk* appear highly perceptive. The mismatch between the expectations of employers and the preparation of local high school students became a major impetus behind urban school reform. In Chicago, Mayor Richard M. Daley assumed control of the public schools and instituting a series of changes aimed at restoring public confidence in the system, chiefly by focusing on test scores (Shipps, 1998, 2006; Wong & Moulton, 1998). Leaders in other cities performed similar interventions, even though it was hardly clear that achievement gains would result (Stone et al., 2001). In the meantime, urban students often lacked the social and cultural capital to succeed in higher education institutions. Families living in poverty remained concentrated in the larger cities, as were single-parent households and children from minority ethnic and racial groups. These factors were associated with lower levels of academic

achievement, and city schools lacked critical resources to help their students to succeed scholastically (Alexander et al., 1997; Rury, 1993).

James Conant and other proponents of the comprehensive high school believed that the allocation of students to various curricula should correspond to the demands of the labor market. The historical development of the economy and the corresponding changes in high school enrollments proved this idea prophetic in certain respects. The picture that emerged, however, was quite different from Conant's vision in the latter 1950s. The changing occupational structure, with greater demand for strong educational credentials, shifted students' educational plans. Consequently, more than ever, the emphasis was on getting into college and on using formal education to find a secure niche in the evolving job market. Academic skills carried a premium, and educators of all types were struggling with the challenge of improving achievement. As the nation's interest in schooling grew, the stakes of success and failure went up. For better or worse, the development of the economy was driving the educational system in new directions. Finding ways to address the social and economic needs of the 21st century came to represent a major challenge (Rury, 2002).

In the meantime, vocational education diminished in importance, as changes in the economy altered the very premise of a differentiated curriculum. Observers like Conant had fretted over the heavily academic orientation of some high schools in the 1960s, but this tendency grew even more pronounced. The rationale for vocational secondary courses became weaker as the manufacturing sector stagnated or declined. In the last decade of the century, schools everywhere attempted to offer stronger academic programs to all students. In the face of economic change and the rapidly rising value of these skills, the academic curriculum was no longer restricted to only the most gifted students. The old comprehensive school ideal inherited from the Progressive era acquired an increasingly scholastic demeanor (Franklin & McCulloch, 2007; Hammack, 2004).

This turn of events no doubt satisfied proponents of *A Nation at Risk*, but something was lost too. At the end of the 20th century, few

observers bothered to discuss the high school as a place to bring students from different backgrounds together; equity concerns of the 1960s had waned. The common-school ideal, espoused by Horace Mann, rarely was invoked in the era of higher standards and economic predominance. Smaller schools were urged, to give adults greater authority and diminish the influence of the youth culture. Such developments were driven by public perceptions about the economic importance of education, especially at the postsecondary level. But concern with children learning about democracy from the schools, acquiring an appreciation for diversity in backgrounds and viewpoints, and experiencing the process of democratic decision-making appeared to have faded. Government policies focused increasingly on boosting achievement, but the other purposes of schools—articulated by Dewey and his many students and colleagues—seemed to receive little attention (Rury, 2002). And nearly 50 years after *Brown*, as suburbanization polarized most large urban areas into Black and White enclaves, the federal government largely abandoned the aggressive pursuit of desegregation. Given this, it appeared that the vision of the public school as an instrument of egalitarian social policy had fallen to a new low.

Accountability for Schools and Educators

Following publication of *A Nation at Risk*, public interest in education and reform rose appreciably. Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush, was elected in the late 1980s, having campaigned as the "education president," even though he proposed little meaningful change in policies. This did not diminish interest in the issue, however. A number of other politicians took the lead, especially the young and energetic governor of Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton. When he became President in 1992, the question of reform gained added force (Debray, 2006; McAndrews, 2008; Vinovskis, 2008).

It was a new era in American education; schools were considered important to the economy and political leaders felt compelled to address their shortcomings (Greene, 2000). Public education, of course, had changed significantly since World War II. Its role had

broadened to include rectifying social inequities, providing a variety of social services, and promoting economic development. Once concerned primarily with providing instruction in a variety of subjects, the schools had become vital instruments of social policy. Federal funding for education registered in billions, with programs ranging from Head Start to special education and Pell grants for needy college students. State governments added billions more, especially following years of litigation over equity in school finance. All of these developments have helped to increase spending, as well as reduce geographic inequity (Bosworth, 2001; Odden & Picus, 2007). At the same time, however, added resources brought new scrutiny. What exactly were the schools doing with all this additional funding? Was achievement improving? Were American students more competitive globally? These and similar questions, inspired in part by *A Nation at Risk*, were impetus for reform.

It took a while to develop a response to such matters. The result was the so-called *standards movement*, an outgrowth of what became known as *systemic reform*: attempts by state governments to structure curricula more comprehensively and assess academic performance. The basic idea was that school subjects ought to be "aligned" with systems of assessment, so that reliable estimates could be made of how well educators were fulfilling their instructional mission. Marshall Smith, undersecretary of education in the Clinton Administration, was often credited with originating this idea, but by the 1990s its impact could be felt across the country. By that time, most states had identified learning standards in the major subject areas for each grade level. These were goals and objectives that teachers were expected to address in classroom instruction; in practical terms, these benchmarks often amounted to a state-mandated curricular framework. More importantly, however, most states subsequently instituted standardized tests to assess the effects of these measures. Many districts undertook their own testing programs too. In the wake of these developments, testing was about to become a big business, and a larger factor in the life of most American schools (Koretz, 2008, 2017).

By and large, these assessments were achievement tests, tied to specific curricular standards, and not intelligence or ability tests like

those in earlier decades. But the impact was somewhat similar. Although the tests varied a great deal in sophistication and difficulty, the effect was to eventually produce a new atmosphere of accountability, with schools and teachers judged by student performance on standardized exams. Institutions with higher scores were widely considered superior to others, and those with the lowest scores were often described as “failing.” In the wake of these developments, public concern with education, already historically significant, began to reach even higher levels (Smith & Scoll, 1995; Vinovskis, 1996, 2008). Once specific numbers could be attached to presumed achievement, widespread assumptions about good and bad schools could be confirmed relatively easily.

In some cases, the emphasis on testing was taken to extremes. In Chicago, for instance, Mayor Richard M. Daley announced in the later 1990s that public school children in certain grades would be required to achieve a predetermined score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a nationally normed achievement test, before passing to the next grade level. Among the children tested each year were eighth graders, and a passing score was needed for promotion to high school. Not surprisingly, this placed enormous pressure on teachers and students to succeed, but progress was slow and uneven. One problem was that the ITBS was not designed to assess how much children had learned from a particular curriculum. Instead, it compared their overall achievement against that of a national sample of students in the same grade. This meant that the children in Chicago’s public schools, the vast majority from poor, minority households, were asked to perform at the same levels in reading and math as students from affluent and culturally mainstream backgrounds (Shipps, 2006).

Not surprisingly, children from more prosperous neighborhoods in the city tended to perform better on these exams than students from poverty households. Historically, differences in social and cultural capital appear to have accounted for great disparities in the achievement of children from different backgrounds, as was true of other achievement tests. On top of this, the public schools in Chicago suffered by comparison to institutions elsewhere. They had greater numbers of students from poor or otherwise disadvantaged

backgrounds, many Chicago teachers taught without full credentials, and class sizes were large. Consequently, the challenge of raising test scores was enormous. Only through massive investment in extra instructional time, summer school, and special tutoring were advances made possible. Still, thousands of schoolchildren suffered through test preparation exercises that contributed little to their overall education. For those who did not succeed, some of them good students who simply did not test well, there was the humiliation of failing a grade and falling behind their peers. It was a policy that engendered considerable controversy but also received a great deal of public support (Bryk et al., 1998; Lipman, 2003). It was even mentioned approvingly in President Clinton's 1999 State of the Union Address as a model of educational reform, a telling portent of change.

Assessment policies like those employed in Chicago became known as *high-stakes testing*, and became a controversial feature of American schooling. President Clinton had a strong interest in education, and in 1994 he signed the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," establishing targets for school improvement by the turn of the century. These goals were never fully realized, however, and Clinton's focus on education was blurred by the scandals during the latter stages of his presidency. In the 2000 election, Republican George W. Bush campaigned on an education platform that focused on accountability, and increasing the amount of testing required of American students (DeBray, 2006).

Unlike his father, the younger Bush made education a priority after his election, and proposed increases in federal spending for schools. But his concern with establishing accountability for schools also contributed to a growing national preoccupation with standardized tests to measure student learning. These ideas ultimately found expression in the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known popularly as "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB for short). The legislation was cosponsored by Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy, who demanded that assessments focus on achievement differences between various groups of students, particularly those historically excluded from schools or treated unfairly, such as African Americans and Hispanics. This unusual combination of goals, universal

assessment and identifying learning gaps, made NCLB arguably the most ambitious educational reform measure in American history (Rury, 1999a; Vinovskis, 2008).

NCLB was intended to strengthen Title I accountability by requiring States to implement statewide testing systems covering all public schools and students. These systems were supposed to be based on the state standards in reading and mathematics, annual testing for all students in grades 3–8, and statewide progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students reach proficiency within 12 years (2014). Reporting requirements called for assessment results and objectives to be made public for students in a variety of categories, including poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. Districts and schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward proficiency goals were subject to corrective action and restructuring measures. Those that met or exceeded AYP objectives were eligible for academic awards. Altogether, it was a far-reaching proposal, intended to compel teachers and schools to take the education of all children seriously, and to boost academic performance dramatically (Mcguinn, 2006). No student was supposed to be left behind as the nation added substantially to its stock of human capital by raising achievement levels. These were worthy goals, to be sure, but many observers wondered from the start whether they were attainable (Vinovskis, 2008).

Schools across the country quickly began to implement changes in response to new state accountability measures in compliance with NCLB. It was a brave new world of high expectations for everyone, with no excuses for groups of students who struggled academically. Educators could no longer simply shuffle poor performers off to vocational classes or remedial programs; everyone's scores counted. This meant that new attention was given to groups that traditionally had struggled academically, such as poor and minority students. Achievement gaps became a major topic of public discussion, considerably more than in the past. Even if test scores did not improve immediately, the question of educational inequality received renewed attention. These were aspects of the reform program that many civil rights groups favored, even if many other

Americans were somewhat ambivalent about them (Rebell & Wolfe, 2009; Sunderman et al., 2005).

It was not long, however, before educators began to complain about the new accountability system represented by NCLB. Schools in impoverished urban neighborhoods, like those in Chicago and other large cities, found it very challenging to meet annual improvement goals. Even institutions in more affluent communities were hard-pressed to address achievement gaps for critical subgroups, such as recent immigrants or the learning disabled. Educators complained that gains were difficult to realize with limited additional funding, a situation made worse by the recessions of 2002 and 2008, which brought steep cuts in state and local budgets. Increased testing and data management requirements for the states also raised costs often well beyond additional funding provided by NCLB (DeBray, 2006; Rebell & Wolf, 2009).

Federally mandated tests also instigated a powerful form of coercive isomorphism, as schools everywhere began to focus on reading, math and test prep. Other areas of the curriculum, such as history and even science, suffered from neglect as educators attended to subjects covered in required assessments. The result was a narrowing of the taught curriculum and a growing national preoccupation with basic standards of proficiency. All of this became fodder for critics of NCLB. Federal education officials forcefully defended the new law, however, arguing that strict accountability was necessary to insure improved achievement (Meier & Wood, 2004; Sunderman, 2007).

After Bush's first term, the federal role in education remained a touchstone of controversy. NCLB reauthorization legislation was vigorously debated in Congress, with opponents demanding greater flexibility for states and local districts in meeting standards. It eventually appeared that such changes were inevitable, given that the law's goal of raising all students to proficiency by 2014 proved unattainable. But political gridlock in congress prevented the development of legislative alternatives. In the meantime, new attention was devoted to evaluation of teachers, especially in light of research showing the importance of instruction to achievement. In 2009, the Obama administration launched a new initiative called

Race to the Top, which awarded funds to states in a grant competition to promote reforms, including measures such as these. The use of test data to assess teacher effectiveness was controversial, but the pressures to increase systematic evaluation of teaching in light of such incentives grew significantly (Cross, 2014; Rebell & Wolfe, 2009). What became unclear, however, was the level of federal resolve in mandating such reforms. While public support for educational reform remained high, and considerable bipartisan support for elements of NCLB existed, especially the testing regime, the Obama administration eventually shifted its support for NCLB somewhat. Education Secretary Arne Duncan offered waivers from NCLB requirements to many states in 2011, altering the reform program somewhat. This appeared to be the beginning of a historic modification in policy, even though rhetorical commitment to accountability remained high (Abernathy, 2007; Cross, 2014; Poetter et al., 2006).

In the wake of these developments, a growing number of politicians, mainly Republicans, raised a call for greater local control in educational policy decisions. Much of this occurred because of opposition to proposed curricular reforms, especially a“Common Core” movement to create national standards in certain subjects. This initiative was launched in 2009 by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers, powerful voices in public education. It was intended to raise standards across the country, especially in reading and mathematics, providing a more widely shared curricular framework. It was also supposed to boost performance on international tests, enable greater access to college, and produce high-value jobs in the future. Some 46 states eventually agreed to participate, many with support from Race to the Top grants from the Obama administration, and it quickly developed into a major reform initiative (Hess & McShane, 2013; Ravitch, 2013).

The Common Core initially received positive press coverage and gained strong support from the U.S. Department of Education, but also raised the specter of even harder tests and higher proficiency standards. This made many educators uncertain and eventually contributed to a growing movement against the idea, starting with local groups and then conservative politicians. The rallying point

became opposition to Washington's involvement in schooling. As a result, a groundswell of support for local control of schools began to take shape. This, of course, posed a threat to the larger reform impulse represented by NCLB, and the era of federal activism in education policy. The tradition of state and local authority in American education had deep historical roots, eventually making localism practically inescapable in schooling debates. Given this, along with the Obama administration's deferral to state control of reform measures, it appeared that a turning point had been reached. The states would again become a decisive force in educational change (Burke & Marshall, 2010; Schneider, 2015).

This eventuality found expression in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which succeeded NCLB with bipartisan support in both branches of Congress and from the Obama administration. ESSA sharply reduced federal mandates, diverting broad discretion for defining standards and devising assessment systems to the states, although some form of testing still was required. Civil rights groups successfully lobbied to keep mandates for reporting assessment of key student subgroups, but specification of improvement plans was largely left to state or local authorities. Approval of state plans for implementing ESSA was detached from the Common Core, opening the door to states dropping that reform initiative altogether. A number of them did so, with others entertaining legislation to do so. All told, ESSA marked a significant change in education policy, shifting much of the responsibility for educational reform to the state and local level. While it sustained the period's historic commitment to standards-based assessment, and the use of standardized testing to insure accountability, it substantially reduced the federal role in the reform process (Hess & Eden, 2017).

The ups and downs of reform policy in this period offer a fascinating barometer of educational politics. But taking a somewhat longer perspective, it is possible to see the rush to institute new regimes of accountability as a corollary of the human capital agenda dictated by *A Nation at Risk*. It also reflected a correspondingly narrow view of the function of schools. The point of systemic reform, after all, was to make schooling more productive in terms of specific

curricula, and most of the attention of testers was focused on mathematics, science, and reading. These, of course, were subjects frequently linked to the new service and professional sectors of the economy and to higher demand for educational credentials. Standardized tests simply were a form of technology well-suited to detecting these abilities, and identifying schools that imparted them, even if over-reliance on such tests ultimately compromised their effectiveness. Making schools accountable for producing more skilled individuals was thus a strategy for enhancing economic growth and improving the productivity and earning power of select individuals. In other words, education was increasingly seen as just another factor of production, subject to measurement and improvement like fuel, machinery, raw material, and waste management (Hillocks, 2002; Koretz, 2017).

Ultimately, historians may look back at this era as testimony to the power of the human capital agenda as it approached a logical apogee. If education is considered primarily as an economic resource, it makes sense to use tests to ensure that schools turn out uniform products. There were also international manifestations of this, demonstrated by high levels of interest in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TMSS). This was a 1995 comparison of performances on a single standardized test given to students in 41 countries. The relatively poor performance of Americans became a point of national concern, and no doubt fueled interest in testing policies in the United States (Debray, 2006; Vinovskis, 2008). This was yet another instance of global comparisons influencing the direction of policy. Even so, the growing American preoccupation with human capital, framing schools in narrowly economic terms, probably would have produced a similar result, perhaps a little less expeditiously. For the moment, the other purposes of schools appear to have been made subsidiary to their economic function, at least terms of national policy (Rury, 2002).

FOCAL POINT: NEO-LIBERALISM AND SCHOOL CHOICE

Yet another recent development in education has been an abiding movement to remove children from the public schools, which many parents believe have been compromised by materialistic and secular values and the youth culture. This impulse has found expression in longstanding criticisms of public institutions for lack of discipline and seemingly rampant student misbehavior, especially in the years following *Tinker* and the student rights movement. Families with strong religious beliefs had long objected to the secular climate of public schools, but such complaints gained force with the rise of evangelical churches after 1960. In the South, private schools multiplied following desegregation, and many of these White institutions persisted for decades. In the 1980s, researchers noted that Catholic schools seemed to outperform public institutions serving similar children, despite having fewer resources. Together, all of these developments contributed to a new degree of criticism aimed at public schools. Private education, although serving only about a tenth of the nation's children, was held up as an alternative (Bryk et al., 1993; Coleman et al., 1982; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2014).

Sentiments such as these helped foster a movement to create alternatives to traditional public schools, coupled with the idea that greater competition between existing institutions and other educational options would help to spur achievement. Borrowing from conservative economist Milton Friedman, proponents of markets in education argued that the ability to choose between various types of education would make parents and children critical consumers, compelling institutions to raise the quality of schooling. Political Scientists John Chubb and Terry Moe (1990) published a critique of public education, describing it as an unresponsive cartel that failed to consider the interests of its principal clientele, students and their families. It was an argument that helped create political

pressure to provide alternative forms of education, especially in the cities, where problems in public schools were most visibly acute.

Critical scholars have used the term “neo-liberalism” to describe these ideas, along with a host of similar initiatives in other policy domains. The point was perhaps best articulated by geographer David Harvey (2007), who suggested that it represents a global movement to stimulate economic growth and to impose discipline on public institutions of all sorts, starting in the latter 20th century. By and large, neo-liberalism is associated with the idea that private provision of public goods is more efficient and creative than the work of such bureaucratic entities as school districts or state agencies. The basic argument is that the market’s competitive ethos is the best guarantee of competence and productivity in most service providers, as in the production of goods. Thus, neo-liberal policies typically call for the privatization of most forms of government employment, extending from janitorial service to prison operations, even to parks and recreation. Historically such measures have been utilized to combat public sector unions, and to reduce government employment to realize lower costs (Chomsky & McChesney, 2011). In the case of schooling, neo-liberalism is linked to the idea that public school districts are inefficient, overly expensive, and insensitive to rapidly changing needs in their communities and the larger economic system. Given this, neo-liberals suggest that one way to make education more effectual and responsive is to return schooling to the private sphere, where it will be benefit from the force of competition, and the effectiveness that results from it. In this manner, neo-liberal policy initiatives were intended to transform the public sector, making it conform to rules of economic development and the world of business and industry (Hackworth, 2007; Lipman, 2011; Steger & Roy, 2010).

The most extreme critics of the public education have advocated school vouchers, government payments provided to families to pay tuition at private schools. The contemporary idea of school vouchers dates from the postwar era, especially Friedman's 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom*. Traditionally, the strongest advocates for this approach to school funding have been conservative groups seeking support for one form or another of non-public education. For example, vouchers were advocated by racist Southerners seeking support for private segregation academies following desegregation in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. They were also backed by the Catholic Church, which supported the nation's largest network of private schools, dating to Bishop John Hughes in the 19th century. More recently, however, vouchers have drawn interest from groups that historically have supported public institutions. In particular, some inner-city residents also advocated vouchers, as they sought alternatives to failing public schools. Polly Williams, an African American representing inner-city Milwaukee in the Wisconsin legislature, became a national spokesperson for private school alternatives to public institutions in these settings. Following a concerted campaign drawing heavily from conservative foundations, a limited voucher plan was launched in Milwaukee in 1990. For the hopeful followers of Williams and other proponents of private schools, not to mention long-time supporters of the voucher idea, it seemed that a new day had arrived. The promised transformation of urban education, however, never materialized (Carl, 2011; Henig, 1995; Witte, 1999).

With support from national leaders, especially in the Republican Party, and local advocates, an experimental voucher program also started in Cleveland during the 1990s. It was implemented over objections of the city's Black political leadership, drawing support from White politicians and the Catholic Church. Despite legal challenges on grounds that public funds should not go to religious institutions, voucher programs in both cities

included church-affiliated schools and managed to gain loyal followings. As a rule, though, the results have not met the expectations of most voucher advocates. Research reports indicate that students in voucher-eligible private schools did not perform significantly better than those in public institutions, once background factors such as income and parental education were controlled. The existence of the voucher programs also did not appreciably affect the performance of public schools, casting doubt on the proposition that competition would lead eventually to their improvement. Although supporters of vouchers have been persistent in calling for more such programs, most proposals have been met with skepticism. In a 2007 referendum, voters in Utah rejected a program crafted by the state legislature, one of nearly a dozen popular defeats for voucher proposals. Suburban residents were especially opposed to such measures. Republican politicians have expressed considerable sympathy for vouchers, but have not proposed a national program for their adoption in the wake of popular opposition. While public sentiment, as measured in polls, appears to view the idea with considerable skepticism, the voucher movement continues to push for new initiatives. At this point, however, it remains a neo-liberal reform concept that has gained little traction (Carnoy, 2001; Gill et al., 2007; Witte, 1999).

This is not to say that the voucher movement did not influence the course of educational reform. The debate over private schooling quickly led to the development of a broader educational reform impulse, widely captured by the expression “school choice.” Acknowledging criticisms of public institutions regarding academic achievement, other reformers, including teacher union leader Albert Shanker, suggested an alternative form of publicly supported education, outside the traditional structure of most districts. These new institutions became widely known as “charter schools,” as they typically were authorized (or “chartered”) by state legislatures in step with local authorities. The first

laws authorizing such institutions were passed in Minnesota in 1991, followed quickly by California and eventually 39 other states. Generally located in cities and serving larger districts, many such schools were sponsored by universities, neighborhood groups or other organizations concerned with improving education. Often led by visionary educators, and staffed by energetic teachers seeking freedom from bureaucratic oversight, these institutions promised new solutions to educational problems. From the very beginning, charter schools were conceived as incubators of reform, and as models and a source of competition to the public schools. The movement grew quickly, eventually establishing several thousand institutions. This was neo-liberalism in a somewhat restrained form, keeping institutions in the public sphere but hypothetically reaping the benefits of market competition (Carnoy et al., 2005; Lubienski & Weitzel, 2011; Wells, 2002).

School choice, however, was hardly limited to charters schools. At the same time, conventional neighborhood schools in many cities were opened to a wider selection of students, whether for special programs or particular groups of students. In many respects, these different institutions fostered by the choice movement were similar to the magnet schools developed during the desegregation era, especially those organized around a particular theme or serving children with special needs. In some cities, such as Chicago, secondary students were allowed to choose from public institutions across the city, with many traveling widely to attend a school. This too was intended to provide incentives for institutions to improve, or to offer points of strength and excellence to compete for students. Altogether, these developments helped to define a new educational marketplace in many cities, providing students and their families with options that had not existed in the past (Lipman, 2003).

Predictably, a vigorous debate soon unfolded about the strengths and weaknesses of this version of “school choice” as an approach to educational reform, and as a political response to critiques of the public schools. It reached a new height in the wake of sweeping changes in Michigan, where the entire school system in Detroit was reorganized to feature a range of choices for families there to consider. A vocal proponent of these reforms was Betsy DeVos, a wealthy heiress and chair of the Michigan Republican Party, who was appointed U.S. Secretary of Education by President Donald Trump in 2017. As the dust has settled, however, there is relatively little systematic evidence that charter schools performed much better than ordinary public schools in raising educational achievement, especially in serving the most disadvantaged students. And this has been true in the Detroit choice experiment too. It turns out that some perform better, but most do not, even if parents continue to enthusiastically support them. Research on school outcomes has demonstrated few effective policy alternatives to smaller classes and highly effective teachers when it comes to improving the performance of impoverished urban students. Increasing school choice, whether in the form of vouchers or charters, has not yet proven to be a “magic bullet” for transforming American education (Carnoy et al., 2005; Darby & Rury, 2018; Miron and Nelson, 2002).

Perhaps the most important source of opposition to school choice has been the residents of suburban school districts. They have played a large role in the defeat of voucher referenda in a number of states, and have actively resisted the opening of charter institutions in their districts. Many suburbanites participated in a grand process of school choice themselves, in moving to communities with high-performing school systems, and their property values have directly benefitted from proximity to these institutions. They fear that school choice would threaten the superior status of their schools, and possibly open their districts to

low-income students who could lower the appeal to affluent homebuyers. In short, many suburbanites have benefited historically from having choices afforded by higher income, along with barriers that have kept many poor and minority families out of their communities. Even in metropolitan Detroit, suburban ambivalence about school choice, and an unwillingness to cover transportation costs to the suburbs, has stymied interest in transferring from city institutions. These obstacles to truly complete choice in schooling have virtually guaranteed that charter schools and voucher plans will be largely limited to central city districts, severely restricting their ability to boost achievement. This is a reality that most ardent proponents of school choice, including DeVoss and other conservative political figures, have steadfastly ignored. As long as suburban schools can continue to engage in the type of opportunity hoarding that has provided them with clear advantages over urban and rural districts, school choice is unlikely to produce significant changes in educational inequality (Rury & Rife, 2018; Ryan, 2010).

Finally, perhaps the most severe critics of the public schools, and educational institutions in general, have been those who support the idea of withholding children from school altogether, and to educate them at home. This notion dates from the 1960s and author John Holt, who wondered if schools were the most effective venue for the education of many children. In the following decade a nascent movement to educate children at home took form, principally comprised of evangelical Christians and others who objected to the secular and youth-centered environment of most public schools. As criticisms of the schools mounted in the 1980s and 1990s, the homeschooling movement began to grow rapidly. Following early battles with state and local authorities over compulsory attendance and other regulations, homeschool advocates gained enough political clout to ensure the rights of parents to educate their own children. Provisions varied

from one state to another, but, by the start of the 21st century, it was possible in most parts of the country to conduct school within a home environment. Meanwhile, a national network of support groups and organizations sprang up to support the movement, providing resources and advice for parents, including extensive materials on the internet (Gaither, 2008; Knowles et al., 1992; Murphy, 2012; Rudner, 1999).

On the whole, the homeschool movement has not been cooperative with researchers, making its size difficult to estimate, but estimates in 2012 put the number of children receiving this sort of education at more than two million nationwide, and it has grown considerably. The majority historically appeared to be religiously motivated, and most came from larger families headed by parents avowedly conservative in political orientation. A growing number of others, however, see the local schools as academically weak, or unable to serve special needs of their children, among other concerns. Their degree of detachment from the schools varies somewhat as well, and growing numbers have utilized an array of online resources that have become available them. Tensions sometimes occur between parents and homeschoolers who want to participate in sports or other activities, and many districts have made arrangements to accommodate such interests. Some districts experimented with virtual schools, featuring extensive online instruction to count homeschoolers as enrolled for funding purposes, and to provide them access to a more complete curriculum. Even more recently, there have been questions about the ability of parents to provide a balanced and effective program of instruction, especially those lacking a college education. Anecdotally, teachers sometimes complain about homeschoolers who show up in class with little preparation in mathematics, science or other subjects. Recently there has been a movement of former homeschoolers to require minimum standards in key subjects. In an age of increased concerns about

academic achievement, it is hardly surprising that such questions have arisen (Apple, 2006; Devine, 2014; Lines, 2000; Lubienski, 2000).

Perhaps even more important, however, many educators and researchers have raised concerns about the long term effect of homeschooling on American society, and its historic commitment to democracy. If the public school is supposed to function as a commons or meeting ground for all of the various elements of the polity, the homeschooling movement would appear to be somewhat opposed to democratic principles that Horace Mann, John Dewey and other educational leaders long espoused. Critics of school choice raise similar concerns about privatization and the development of charter schools. The neo-liberal impulse to utilize market forces to gain efficiency and improve productivity also could pose a threat to the democratic purposes of the schools, especially if it contributes to sorting students by income or social status. This, of course, strikes at the most fundamental goals of schools in an egalitarian society. It is an issue that will have to be addressed in the years to come, as Americans consider the role of education in the continuing evolution of their democratic traditions (Apple, 2000; Reich, 2002).

Equity and Social Justice

The American credo of democracy and equality has been tested in recent decades by a number of other developments. Following the 1980s, educational inequality has widened, school segregation has increased, and the problems of poor and minority children have grown more acute. Some critics suggest that these developments have been induced by neo-liberal policies of taking children out of public schools. But they are also linked to changes in the larger economy, especially the decline of manufacturing employment in the cities, where many of the nation’s poorest children are located. In the

race for higher levels of academic achievement, fueled by standardized assessments that favored wealthy suburban districts, students in relatively impoverished urban schools fell further behind. This has helped make equity and social justice an issue of growing importance among educators and certain segments of the public. It is a question, moreover, that found expression in a number of ways (Anyon, 2005; Lipman, 2011).

Equity dilemmas in the schools continue to involve questions of gender, race, and socio-economic status, but new issues also have appeared. Over the past two decades greater attention has been given to the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or gender questioning (LGBTQ) youth in schools. Historically, students whose sexual identity falls within this broad range of categories have been subject to extensive harassment by peers and discrimination or exploitation at the hands educators. The same has been true of teachers, and the 1970s witnessed a number of heated battles over the rights of LGBTQ educators in Florida, California, and Oklahoma, among other places. Recent research, however, indicates that there have been significant shifts in attitudes. Since the latter 1990s, there have been declines in bullying of LGBTQ students in schools, and fewer reported instances of them skipping school due to feeling unsafe. And campaigns against teachers have subsided. Even so, LBGTQ students are still far more likely to experience such circumstances, and they continue to find themselves subject to higher rates of punitive school discipline, suggesting that discrimination remains palpable among many educators. Research also suggests that organized resistance to these forms of persecution, such as forming a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), often had a positive effect. Anti-bullying policies undertaken by schools and districts also helped. By and large, LGBTQ students and teachers have employed strategy and tactics from the Civil Rights Movement to advance their cause, with somewhat limited success to date (Blount, 2005; Heck et al., 2016).

Title IX and other reforms during the 1970s reduced important aspects of gender discrimination in the schools, but significant differences continued to distinguish the schooling experiences of girls and boys in the decades to follow. Among the most important

has been a persistent under-representation of young women entering the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or STEM for short. Research indicated that women held only a quarter of STEM jobs in the United States in 2013, with especially low representation in such important fields as computer science and engineering. Years of discussing these patterns have yielded relatively slow progress, partly because of fixed conceptions of these occupational categories in the general public, including many students. On the other hand, teachers are also influenced by stereotypes, which can affect their treatment of young women interested in such fields. This is evidence of sexism continuing to impact education. Given these barriers, overcoming such discriminatory conditions will require a good deal of effort in years to come. Moving more women into the STEM fields, which generally command higher prestige and salaries than other occupations, would be a major step toward greater gender equity in society at large. But the struggle to accomplish this goal must begin in the schools, and will require a good deal of public support to affect long-term changes (National Girls Collaborative Project, 2016; Weber, 2012).

Discriminatory treatment within schools has also continued to affect African American students and their peers from other minority groups. There is abundant evidence that they too have been subject to disproportionally punitive disciplinary measures, especially expulsions and other punishments that remove them from classrooms. They are also over-represented in certain special education categories, such as emotional or behavioral disability, which often also diminishes their access to academic instruction. Added to this, these students are typically under-represented in advanced academic coursework in predominantly white schools. They too are under-represented in STEM fields. Each of these patterns is well documented in recent research, and contributes directly to racial and ethnic achievement gaps within schools. The long struggle to gain integration, which has resulted in large numbers of non-white students attending predominantly white institutions today, does not appear to have substantially closed longstanding differences in academic performance, despite substantial progress on that score during the 1970s and 1980s. This is a problem that

individual schools and districts can address directly in the years ahead. Whether they will or not, however, is an open question (Darby & Rury, 2018; Valencia, 2011; Valenzuela, 1999).

At the same time, differences between schools serving predominantly impoverished and affluent student populations has remained a source of controversy. While systemic reform was gaining momentum, along with neo-liberal proposals, a number of other developments shaped educational policies at the state and local levels. Among the most important has been debates over equity in school funding, especially in light of wealthy suburban districts competing with urban school systems that serve largely poor children. Court battles over fairness of funding in a number of states have partially reduced financial differences across districts, at least with respect to support from legislative sources. Wealthier districts, particularly in suburban areas, often have been able to maintain an advantage by increasing local taxes or finding other ways of raising funds, such as private donations. But the additional resources that urban and poor rural schools have received in the wake of this litigation have proven quite helpful in meeting the manifold needs of their students. The impact of these judicial battles over financial support has proven very controversial, but it has raised awareness of systematic inequity in schooling among a large segment of the public (Bosworth, 2001; Evers et al., 2006).

Even with more equitable funding, however, there is considerable evidence that educational inequality has widened substantially. This has been especially evident in the nation's central cities, where about one out of four students lived in 2000. It was in these settings where poverty and deprivation became most concentrated, affecting the schools directly. Other changes may have been equally important. By the 1990s, nearly a quarter of all children were born to single mothers, most of them teenagers. In the cities, and among African Americans, the numbers were even higher, extending to a majority. As a consequence, traditional forms of family life had been dramatically altered, with fewer households representing the nuclear family that predominated in earlier times (Wilson, 1995, 2009). This has had a big impact on schools, which rely upon families to provide supportive and secure settings for children as they learn. Studies

have clearly demonstrated that single parents have difficulty offering such support, especially if they suffer from poverty or live in depressed neighborhoods. High concentrations of households in these circumstances are associated with chronic school failure, yielding persistently low test scores and high dropout rates (Henig et al., 2001; Natriello et al., 1990).

Poor, inner-city neighborhoods present many challenges to educators. As suggested earlier, sexuality became a prominent feature of popular culture, and the rapidly evolving high school-based adolescent society. In the inner city, this contributed to problems, with high concentrations of poverty and single parent families exerting a significant influence on normative expectations for acceptable behavior. Teen pregnancy became a trend, leading to rising numbers of children growing up in fatherless households. These are conditions historically associated with youth failing at school and becoming involved in violence or criminal behavior. At the same time, racial segregation in schools increased as well. By the early 1990s, about 75% of African American children were attending segregated schools, and research indicates that segregated minority schools have more low-income children, lower scores on standardized tests, less qualified teachers, and fewer advanced courses. In some inner-city settings, all-Black high schools have been labeled “dropout factories,” with graduation rates of 50% or lower (Balfantz & Legters, 2004).

These institutions have many problems, but their failings often are largely a matter of context. As Richard Rothstein (2004) has argued, the obstacles facing inner-city children seeking success in school are formidable, and require a substantial investment in resources to overcome. To achieve their potential for accomplishment, children need stable home lives, a nourishing diet, good health care services, and access to eye care, dental care and other services that will enable them to learn without disruption. Even if children are highly motivated to study, these quality of life considerations can pose enormous problems. For those who are *not* interested in school, the impediments to gaining a productive education are even greater. The conditions faced by today’s youth in many poor neighborhoods make

the “urban crisis” of the 1960s appear mild by comparison (Darby & Rury, 2018; Orfield et al., 2004; Rury & Mirel, 1997).

The problem of poverty is not simply a moral question either. David Berliner and other researchers have determined that non-poor American students score quite well on international tests. This is evident in studies that examine the scores of American students from different backgrounds. And students from the better schools appear to do quite well. In the late 1990s, a group of eighth graders from Chicago suburbs took the Third International Math & Science Study (TIMSS) assessments and scored second in the world in mathematics and first in science (Hawkes et al., 1997). The fact that the United States has such large numbers of students living in poverty, especially in the inner cities, did more to pull its test performance down than any other factor. The levels of poverty were higher here than any other “developed” or wealthy nation, and the effects were readily evident in the schools. Given this, fixing the problem of urban education could produce in benefits for the entire country. Addressing this, however, was a political question, with few readily apparent answers (Berliner, 2006).

With so many urban children contending with circumstances such as these, the road to educational equality remained uncertain at best. Yet relatively few Americans, including many middle-class urbanites, seemed to recognize the scope of the problem and its many dimensions. Some attributed persistent school failure to a “culture” of race and poverty that resists reform efforts. Others subscribed to new variants of old racists ideas about intelligence and “inborn” differences in ability. Either way, prejudicial beliefs about African Americans persisted into the twenty first century (Darby & Rury, 2018; Feagin, 2006).

This was prominently displayed in incidents of deadly police violence against young Black men, culminating in 2014 protests that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri and other parts of the country. Many whites continue to harbor discriminatory attitudes toward blacks, a tendency abetted by images conveyed in mainstream media (Associated Press, 2012; Feagin, 2006; Newport, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014). These distorted perspectives and the prejudices associated with them serve to undermine popular support

for aid to urban schools. This, of course, makes it difficult to realize improvements in these settings. Poverty is widely seen as a chronic condition that is impervious to change, especially for inner-city minority groups, and thus a serious impediment to positive reforms (Feagin, 2014; Wax, 2009). Until these attitudes change, political support for addressing the problems of inner-city education is unlikely to materialize.

These issues are evident in considering other factors that contribute to problems of urban education. Periodic cutbacks in state funding, for instance, hit city students particularly hard, reducing incentives to focus on school. Criticisms of urban school districts also send a message to students that their education was not a priority, a stark contrast to earlier times when War on Poverty programs focused on supporting such institutions. City school bureaucracies have historically been slow to respond to failing institutions, especially in African American neighborhoods beset by poverty and related problems, and this too conveys a message that schooling is not important. In short, the past 30 years or so have *not* been a time of rising expectations regarding education or just about any other facet of life for many children in big city districts, particularly those living in impoverished neighborhoods. It will require another shift public sentiment of historic proportions to raise awareness of these issues, and to eventually bring about meaningful change (Anyon, 2005; Payne, 2008).

Determining just what kind of policies can make a difference, of course, is a big dilemma. Whether simply providing equal funding is enough to address the significant achievement gaps that exist between students in wealthy and poor districts is often debated by educational researchers and policy makers. There is considerable evidence, for instance, that smaller classes and more skilled teachers can have a positive impact on the performance of poor and minority students, but these are measures that require additional funding (Ehrenberg et al., 2001). Students from more affluent backgrounds, on the other hand, do not always appear to gain as much from smaller classes. Their relatively high stocks of social and cultural capital, it seems, enable more privileged children to achieve

success with somewhat fewer school resources. Many are able to attend private schools as well (Krueger et al., 2002).

When it comes to learning, in that case, competition for success does not occur on a level playing field, even when school resources are made equivalent. Students from the least affluent backgrounds require greater assistance to achieve the same outcomes as others. They need the very best teachers, the best equipment and facilities, the more up-to-date technology, and everybody has to work together effectively to boost their achievement. There is a growing body of research suggesting that good school leadership, effective instruction and ample resources can make a big difference in urban schools (Baker, 2018; Bryk et al., 2010; O'Day et al., 2011; Reville & Coggins, 2007; Zavadsky, 2009).

Given this, it may be the case that one way to realize better equality in educational outcomes would be to grant children from less advantaged backgrounds *greater* funding than their more affluent counterparts. To say the least, of course, this could prove politically difficult to accomplish, as it almost inevitably would entail a transfer of resources from the wealthiest communities to the poorest ones, which politicians from affluent areas certainly would resist forcefully. But the very fact that these questions are currently being debated is a positive sign that problems of educational inequality are at least being recognized. A significant and sustained effort to address learning gaps that are linked to inequities in school resources would be a historic development indeed (Heckman & Kreuger, 2005; Rothstein, 2004).

Reform in a Human Capital Era

Given the foregoing, there can be little doubt that the challenges facing American schools in the immediate future are manifold. By any historical standard, the last decade or so of educational reform measures and policy debates has been unusually tumultuous. Perhaps this too reflects the momentous influence of the focus on human capital development, and a consequential narrowing of educational purposes to economic issues in the minds of many Americans. From this perspective, the appeal of privatization—and

even homeschooling—is explicable. The neo-liberal impulse, after all, is historically linked to economic development. If education is primarily seen as a financial good, a basic commodity, it may seem reasonable to turn away from the public schools if they seem unable to boost cognitive development, or add to greater productivity and wealth. Even the disputes over school funding are driven primarily by concerns for boosting achievement, as a means to boost economic opportunity. In the meantime, there seems to be considerably less concern about the egalitarian purposes of education, especially the role of public schools in fostering democratic values and behavior. In other words, education is increasingly seen as a personal or private benefit rather than a public good (Labaree, 1999; Rury, 2002).

These tendencies have been aggravated to a large extent by systemic reform and the accountability movement, culminating in NCLB and to some extent the Common Core. These developments have placed enormous pressure on schools to conform to prevailing conceptions of excellence, defined largely in terms of academic achievement as expressed in test scores. As suggested earlier, it has resulted in powerful forces of coercive isomorphism, narrowing curricula in many institutions and focusing attention on test scores. Many educators have resisted this, but until recently public opinion and political leaders have supported accountability resolutely. While NCLB was supposed to address the achievement gap, there has been scant evidence of its success in this respect. There is little reason to believe that ESSA will be more effective. Meanwhile, controversy over the Common Core inspired greater resistance to educational reform among many Americans. Resurgent localism may yet prove even more influential in shifting the course of national educational policy, which could substantially increase inequality (Rothstein, 2008; Tavernise, 2012).

Without doubt, current debates are yet further testimony to the great significance that education has come to assume in our society, and the divisions that characterize it. Yet fundamental questions about the goals of schooling remain unanswered. For many Americans, schools in recent years have been considered an avenue to individual advancement rather than a means of civic and social integration. This has always been true to one extent or

another, and in this respect the current controversies over education are hardly new. They are the latest incarnations of debates that have shaped American education in the past. But the quality and intensity of current policy disputes seems historically distinctive. In this respect, it may be fair to say that the country stands at a crossroad: in one direction is a neo-liberal agenda of education serving personal purposes and contributing to human capital formation, and in the other is schooling intended to serve the democratic goals of social and economic integration, helping all students become more effective citizens and productive members of society. While developments of the past several decades have pulled in one direction, many critics of the neo-liberal impulse are pulling in the other. As in other periods of American educational history, the outcome of this debate may take years to resolve. In the meantime, American schools will continue to serve a number of conflicting and contradictory purposes, just as they have in the past.

Epilogue

Education and Social Change in Perspective

At the stroke of midnight, January 1, 2000, celebrations around the world marked the beginning of a new millennium. Despite quibbles about its timing, there was little disagreement about the moment's significance. As television images reflected a sense of global consciousness in the festivities, feelings of amity and optimism ran high. Among the prominent themes was the importance of education. If people were to live in peace and prosperity, and humanity was to move forward, schooling of one sort or another was seen as critical. Perhaps as never before, education had become an expression of hope.

Two decades later, with the new century poised for a third, uncertainty and acrimony still characterized schooling in the United States. Little consensus existed about reform measures, and sharp debates have put issues of school organization and funding into the limelight. Teachers have been widely criticized, and some observers have expressed alarm over the future prospects of public schools (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Ravitch, 2013). It has been an especially tumultuous time in American education, but hardly the first. As indicated in preceding chapters, education has long been a contentious issue, and it will undoubtedly continue to be one. Because it is inescapably linked to basic values about what children should learn and do, about human development, and even the purposes of life, it invites debate. Today's controversies are only the latest incarnation of an exchange with a very long history.

The condition of education is not just a matter of debate, however. All of the forces discussed in the preceding chapters also continue to play a role, one way or another, in its current state. The weight of

history, after all, is not carried lightly. National polls show that Americans continue to believe in the principle of free and universal public education, both as an instrument of assimilation and as a way of promoting national unity (West et al., 2017). Of course, it is also widely seen as a means of economic advancement, personal and collective. Race, gender, and social class still produce invidious distinctions within the schools, and across the larger society that sustains them. Despite the growing role of federal government in education, schooling remains a highly localized affair, and differences in the provision and quality of instruction from one place to another can be quite dramatic. And finally there is the economy. As seen earlier, education has been linked in various ways to economic activity for a long time, but in recent decades the influence of the labor market has been especially striking. To understand American schools today, one must consider the collective impact of all these elements and decide which of them are especially salient.

It is useful, in that case, to look to earlier times for a sense of proportion regarding the debates of today. What does the long sweep of history suggest about the issues presently facing the American educational system? Can the past be a source of prescience in any sense? No one has a (working) crystal ball, of course, but there is wisdom in the old maxim that the past is the best guide to preparing for the future.

Education and Social Change: An Extended View

One way to put current issues into perspective is to begin with the problem of education and social change, the question posed at the beginning of this book. How are these two facets of modern life related, and how has their interaction shifted throughout history? And what bearing does this have on current problems facing the schools? Given the many historical events discussed in preceding chapters, perhaps it is now possible to offer some answers.

As suggested in the book's opening, the interrelationship of education and social change is quite complex. Clearly, the schools and educational practices observed throughout history have been shaped by larger social forces, just as have other social institutions

and practices. Many of the major social transformations discussed earlier were economic in nature: the search for labor in the New World, the rise of the factory system, the onset of full-scale industrialization, and the human capital revolution. Each of these events bore significant implications for education, and led to changes in the schools. The factory system provided models for creating more orderly and uniform schools; industrialization helped inspire the social efficiency movement. Business interests helped boost the celebration of differentiation and the rise of testing during the Progressive Era. The more recent preoccupation with human capital and global competition has focused attention on the economic value of education and on the role of schooling in personal and national development. In each of these instances, educational institutions responded to social change dictated by the process of economic expansion and development. Given this record, there can be little doubt that the shifting economy has exerted a powerful influence over the schools.

But social change is not simply economic. As suggested in the Introduction, ideology has been an important component of the relations between major social and political groups in American history, and this too has affected the schools. Ideology has been informed by underlying economic relationships, but religion, the development of science and a host of other influences also have shaped it. Racist and sexist ideology has operated historically to restrict the educational opportunities available to African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and women. In each of these cases, unequal education has helped to sustain and legitimize prejudicial attitudes about these groups. Other minority groups suffered similar patterns of discrimination in the schools as a consequence of beliefs that held all non-White or non-Protestant students to be deficient in motivation, ability, or morality. This was certainly true of American Indians, and other groups deemed to be racially different in the past. As noted in Chapter 5, these attitudes were slow to change, despite breakthroughs such as the 1954 *Brown* decision and the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. In certain respects, women have achieved greater progress in the continuing struggle against the ideological forces of restriction and exclusion,

but sexism continues to exert a powerful influence in schools today. It is clearly evident in unequal representation in STEM fields mentioned in the last chapter. In these respects, and perhaps in countless others, it is possible to say that ideology has been a major element of social change that has helped to shape the course of American education throughout its history (Feagin, 2014).

At the same time, families have changed. As observed in earlier discussions of childhood experiences, patterns of socialization—rearing the young—and relationships between family members have evolved significantly. Families became smaller over the course of American history, demographic episodes like the baby boom notwithstanding, and this has contributed to greater intimacy and affection among household members. It also has meant that parents have even greater resources to devote to each of their children. This has played a role in the growth of schooling, especially post-secondary enrollment in the postwar period. In this regard, the baby boomers and the generations that followed them have been among the most privileged children in history. On the other hand, the number of single-parent households has also increased dramatically, especially in the nation's larger cities in recent decades. These families typically have fewer resources, both psychological and financial, to contribute to their children's education. Students from poor, single-parent households pose a significant challenge to the schools today (Mintz, 2004).

The disparity in family experiences can be seen in the discussion of current issues above. Families with greater resources, in both income and parental availability, are better able to assist their children in achieving educational success. This even extends to the homeschoolers, who may have average income levels but are more likely to reside in two parent households than other children. They are also more likely to live in comfortable, safe suburban neighborhoods. Single-parent households are more common in the larger cities, a set of circumstances highly correlated with low income or household poverty. Because of sharp differences in social and cultural capital, these conditions are also associated with lower likelihood of success in school (Wilson, 2009).

The growing division between children living in these conditions and those with greater resources, including homeschoolers, is one of the great challenges of our time. But it too can be linked to the social and economic changes described above. While certain segments of society have benefited from the new emphasis on human capital, attaining ever higher levels of education, others have been left behind. The widening gulf between those families and children who have experienced success in school and those who have not eventually could pose a major dilemma for a democratic society. The school funding debates have pointed to some promising ways to overcome these differences, but the idea of devoting greater resources to the education of poor children will doubtless prove politically charged in years to come (Duncan & Murnane, 2011).

Distinguishing the educational accomplishments of children from different family backgrounds has been pointed to as a key consideration in social inequality since Coleman's national survey of educational opportunity in the 1960s. This has made education a predominant "positional good," and hence an important element of human relations throughout modern history. The importance of family background factors such as poverty and household structure in Coleman's findings, and countless studies afterwards, points to the significance of cultural and social capital in the positional fates of children today. The ability of some parents to provide their offspring with valuable knowledge and insight about dominant cultural forces, and to offer relationships with influential people, cannot be underestimated. This is true of homeschoolers as well as students attending public or private institutions. As a general rule, children who lack such advantages will face greater difficulty in achieving societal success. Research has shown that schools often reinforce the benefits associated with social and cultural capital, especially when students who possess them receive even greater institutional resources than those who do not. This is evident in the superior test scores and other accomplishments of students in affluent suburbs, who routinely outperform their inner city counterparts. These disparities make the idea of additional funding for schools serving the most disadvantaged children even more imperative, particularly as educational credentials assume greater importance. Without

reform of this sort, inequality may very well grow even more severe in the years ahead (Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999)

Finally, there is yet another element of social change, closely related to the question of inequity, which can perhaps best be described simply as community. As noted in Chapter 2, it was the cohesiveness of early rural settlements that accounted for much of the success of the 19th century common schools. Families knew one another, and a sense of shared values and goals reinforced the role of schools in imparting academic skills, social norms, and culturally sanctioned knowledge. This process reflected the influence of social capital at the community level, a stock of shared relationships and resources that children could draw upon in acquiring relevant values, skills, and knowledge. As noted earlier, the level of social capital in these settings was quite high. Most people felt generally equal in status, and thus had few reservations about helping one another in times of need (Rury, 2006).

Then came urbanization. This too was a corollary of economic growth, but it exerted a particular type of influence on social relations and the schools. The rapid growth of cities in the 19th and early 20th century altered familiar patterns of social interaction among Americans. With people continually on the move, it became more difficult to know and trust one's neighbors, and shared values were not always evident. As a result, the stock of social capital available to children in such circumstances was diminished. They had fewer relationships and social resources to rely upon as they struggled with the demands of school, and learning enough to contend with the future. Schools and other institutions sought to fill this void, providing a growing range of services and resources to help students succeed, and to create a sense of community in the midst of urban change (Tyack, 1974).

With the development of massive, complex metropolitan regions in the later 20th century, however, the challenges of creating a sense of community that spanned the divisions of race, ethnicity, and social class became even greater. The scale and difficulty of modern life had made it increasingly hard to establish the sense of shared values and goals that had once held communities together. Education, as a consequence, became a source of public concern,

and schools found the task of imparting essential skills and knowledge to be quite formidable. Today the challenge of establishing a sense of community to support the nation's schools continues to be a major problem. Many social scientists have commented on the historic loss of social capital in recent decades (Putnam, 2001, 2004). The absence of an awareness of collective responsibility, aggravated by the manifold divisions that characterize our lives, makes the prospect of political solutions to the question of educational inequity ever more remote (Putnam, 2015).

Social change, then, has clearly influenced the schools. The organization of society has become more complicated, and as a result, the demands that it has placed on the educational system have grown. As seen in the forgoing chapters, forces of mimetic, normative, and coercive isomorphism have shaped the evolution of schooling, making institutions quite similar despite widely varying local conditions. At the same time, the ability of the schools to meet the challenges of growing social inequality in recent years has been diminished. But what about the reverse question? How have the schools affected society? Here too there are definite patterns that history can reveal to the attentive observer. Education has clearly influenced the direction of social change, in both dramatic and rather subtle ways.

For better or worse, it has become a central tenet of American civilization that schooling is a vehicle of social betterment. In the past, education was considered a way of improving the moral condition of the common folk and contributing to the greater stability of the social order. This was seen in the case of the New York Manumission Society's members in Chapter 1, and their compatriots in the New York Public School Society in Chapters 2 and 3. It was also depicted as a means of self-improvement, and as an instrument of social mobility for the most talented and industrious members of society. As noted earlier, schooling became a powerful means of social mobility for the offspring of European immigrants, albeit to varying degrees. Education thus contributed to social change by simply making society somewhat better and by providing alternative pathways to success. However incremental, this too was a part of social change.

Perhaps more significant was the role of education in providing groups and individuals a means of challenging dominant forms of ideology and the social norms and practices that accompanied them. This was explored in Chapter 3, which contrasted the experiences of women and African Americans in the later 19th century. Following the Civil War, Blacks eagerly embraced schooling as a way to escape the degradation and ignorance of slavery, only to see their hopes frustrated by the resurrection of white supremacy following Reconstruction. Dramatic advances in literacy were realized, despite meager support from Southern states for Black schools. By and large, however, schooling was not a viable means to social advancement for the Black population, despite the success of individuals such as W. E. B. DuBois. For White women, on the other hand, schooling was a potent—if delimited—instrument of social improvement. Young women flocked to the newly established public high schools in the decades following the Civil War, soon outnumbering young men by nearly two to one. Relatively high levels of formal education helped them to move into such new occupations as clerical employment and retail sales, along with the expanding fields of social work, nursing, and teaching. Female labor-force participation grew significantly, partly because of the growing numbers of educated women entering offices, classrooms, and hospitals. Old barriers erected in the name of sexism were falling. Even if new ones were being built, it became clear that American white women would continue to march forward in the quest for new opportunities in the future.

The lessons to be drawn from these historical experiences are manifold. On the one hand, they demonstrate both the power and limitations of education as a means of ameliorating the effects of ideology. One might say that the schools were strong enough to overcome certain aspects of sexist ideology, but not so powerful that they could fully resist the forces of racism in the 19th century. It was not until the following century that the educational system became an effective means of combatting racism, as became evident in the NAACP campaign to end segregated and unequal schooling. Then the results were quite dramatic, even though it eventually took decades for meaningful change to occur. In most of metropolitan

America today, the quest for racially desegregated and equal education remains a source of frustration for those still seeking social justice and equity. Even when the schools have successfully challenged the dominant ideology, the process of change is often slow and halting, and new barriers appear just as old obstacles are cleared. Still, historically recent advances in Black education have been significant, and the development of a sizeable Black middle class was an important achievement. It was a step in the right direction and a foundation on which further progress can be made.

The history of the schools working to change society is also marked by well-intended failures and unplanned success. The many progressive experiments at using the schools to help build community and to impart stronger lessons do not appear to have exerted much lasting effect. One by one, the major centers of these reforms—Gary was among the most prominent—reverted to traditional models of school organization and instructional practice. Dewey's call to make the school into an agency of democratic values and practices, it appears, had relatively little effect on the larger social order. This certainly does not mean that his ideas were mistaken, but the power of schools as social institutions to affect such sweeping change was limited. On the other hand, rapidly rising enrollments in high schools and colleges following World War II helped to foster the rise of a pervasive youth culture, an event that continues to shape the nation's popular traditions in ways hardly foreseen some 50 years ago. This was an unintended consequence of modern school systems, but it nonetheless came to exert a powerful social influence. As places where large numbers of children, adolescents, and young adults meet together on a daily basis—a vast portion of the nation's population—schools have become incubators of unplanned social change. It is difficult to predict just what new influences may yet emerge from this aspect of the educational system.

There is also the question of human capital, especially in the wake of latter 20th century globalization. Simply put, education has become a major source of economic productivity in the 20th century, particularly during the years following World War II. Economic historians have found that a high school education added

significantly to the earnings of both men and women early in the 20th century. More recently, economists have determined that the relative income of college graduates is at an all-time high. This certainly was good for the individuals possessing these educational credentials, but it also meant that the U.S. economy could enjoy the benefits of their enhanced skills and productivity. Enrollments in American school surged upward across the 20th century, first in the high schools and then in the nation's colleges and universities. This represented an enormous investment in resources, but it helped fuel a postwar era of economic prosperity. At the same time, education came to be seen as a means of ameliorating social and economic inequality. As a matter of social policy, education and training programs have been designed to combat poverty and unemployment. Schooling has thus become both a source of economic development and an instrument of social policy. This is a dramatic change from the start of the century, and perhaps a suggestion of its future importance as an agent of societal transformation (Goldin & Katz, 2008; Putnam, 2015).

A Hope for the Future?

Today the challenge is one of helping the schools to revisit that historic mission of redressing the social and economic divisions that have become so apparent in recent years. An abiding disenchantment with public education, evident in both the homeschool movement and the call for vouchers, seems to represent an inward turn on the part of many families and communities. It reflects a move away from the sense of responsibility for fairness and equity that has animated public education since Horace Mann. If this is the case, it is an unfortunate development, and one that deserves to be met with a vigorous reaffirmation of the role of schooling in fostering a vibrant democratic society. To do this, it is necessary to convey a clear sense of the history of education, and the possibilities that it holds for social transformation. Without such efforts, we are likely to see inequality grow into an even more important problem in years ahead.

Over the course of American history, it is clear that society has changed the schools, at the same time that the schools have exerted a telling influence on the shape of social change. The major social forces that have affected the schools—industrialization, urbanization, globalization, isomorphism, and ideological change—were deeply rooted in the American historical experience. Most of these forces originated in the 18th or 19th century, and they helped to give shape to the foundational elements of the nation's educational system. It seems to be only more recently, as the schools became an ever larger factor in American life, that they have started to exert a telling influence themselves. Enrolling the vast majority of American youth from ages 5 until 18 and beyond, today they embrace more than 80 million people. This alone would seem to represent a capacity for social change unparalleled in history, if a compelling set of shared goals can be agreed upon. As suggested above, it is possible to see evidence in the past of the power of schools to influence social and economic development. If there is a general historical trend, it is that schooling has become an ever more significant factor in modern life, and a potent force in the process of social change. This development by itself would seem to cast a bright light on the prospects for education exerting a positive influence on American civilization, and the larger world. It remains a challenge to the next generation of educators to help fulfill that promise.

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