The Progressive Era in the U.S. Re-Examined:

What was Progressive Education?

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The Progressive Education Movement: A Short History

This essay follows close on the heels of our first foray into the historiographical debate over the conceptual terminology of social, cultural, and political "Progressivism." This essay will develop a comprehensive, yet selective portrait of so-called "Progressive" education so as to outline the major ideological and curricular developments that this term (both theory and practice) designates. We will also trace the borders of historiographical debate over the conceptual delineation of Progressive education and, thereby, evaluate its usefulness as a concept for understanding U.S. educational reform programs during the first decades of the 20th century.

The ideological and curricular roots of Progressive education go back centuries, rooted especially in French and German Romanticism. Early philosophical and educational influences include Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Jean Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1834), and Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). The term Progressive applied to education in the English language seems to have come from Necker *de* Saussure's book *L'Education Progressive, ou Etude du Course de la Vie* (Paris, 1836), which was translated

into English in London as *Progressive Education; or, Considerations on the Course of Life* (1839).

American Progressive education is often linked with the earlier nationalist and millennial "propaganda" of the common school reformer Horace Mann, whose mid-19th century common-school movement equated "education" with "national progress." Mann combined "Jeffersonian republicanism," "Christian moralism," and "Emersonian idealism" within his "total faith" in "the power of education." Mann believed universal education would be the "great equalizer" of democratic citizens. He also saw education as a moderating force that would "balance the wheel" of society while also creating "wealth undreamed of." Mann was deeply disturbed by the conflict he saw around him (social, political, economic, and cultural). He wanted a shared national value system that would insure a sense of community and a common political identity. He saw a public, "common" school as the perfect instrument for this mission. But in order to realize this vision of a public school system, Mann had to form "political coalitions" that often united "disparate interests" in a very "political" program of consensus building.[1]

What Horace Mann began, men like William Torrey Harris saw to fruition. When Harris started his work as a school reformer the idea of "universal education" was still very "radical" to most Americans. When Harris had finished his career, universal education "had been made the nub of an essentially conservative ideology." Harris argued for a broader definition of education as a process of socialization that would inculcate children into the local and emerging "national" culture and prepare them for adulthood as democratic citizens. His four basic principles of education were: 1) schooling should prepare children to become lifelong learners as adults; 2) the

[1] Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876 – 1957* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 8-14; Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783 – 1876* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 133-75; Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

school should teach only what the child would not be taught by family, friends, and associates; 3) the school should teach only such subject matters as would have "a general theoretical bearing on the world in which the pupil lives;" and 4) the school should teach "moral education," but never "religious education."[2]

The early formation of American Progressive education as a "movement," according to self proclaimed Progressives John Dewey and Robert Holmes Beck, started in Quincy, Massachusetts. It was here that Colonel Francis W. Parker became the superintendent of schools in 1873 and he initiated the "Quincy System" soon thereafter. This new system of education became a quintessential model for what later reformers would label "Progressive." In 1892 the journalist Joseph Mayer Rice ran a series on U.S. public schools for the *Forum*, which was published as a book in 1893, *The Public School System of the United States*. While he did not explicitly mentioning a Progressive educational movement, he did use the term Progressive many times in relation to notable school reforms and initiatives, especially the "Quincy System" of Colonel Parker. Also in 1892, several attendees (including John Dewey) of the National Education Association meeting in Saratoga Springs, New York formed the National Herbart Society to promote the educational philosophy of the famous German pedagogue. A year later G. Stanley Hall published his first major research project on child study, "The Contents of Children's Minds" (1893). This research subject would eventually feed into a larger child study movement that would become the major plank of the Progressive education platform: child-centered curriculum and instruction.[3]

[2] Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 14-31; Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876 – 1980* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 158-65. In 1871 William Torrey Harris wrote to the Board of Directors of the St. Louis Public Schools: "The spirit of American institutions is to be looked for in the public schools to a greater degree than anywhere else…If the rising generation does not grow up with democratic principles, the fault will lie in the system of popular education."
[3] Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 355-58; Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*, 3rd ed (1986; reprint, New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004): 1-25.

A Progressive educational "movement" was said to have stirred in earnest by the time John Dewey began his "Laboratory School" in Chicago in 1896 and gave his lectures on *The School and Society* in 1899. The movement supposedly congealed between the founding of the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education (or the Progressive Education Association, PEA) in 1919 and its publication of *Progressive Education* starting in 1924. The high-water mark for Progressive education in terms of organizational development and theoretical vitality was during the 1930s. An impassioned organ of radical Progressive educational theory and practice, *The Social Frontier*, appeared in print in 1934 as an outlet for Social Reconstructionist thought. Due to financial insolvency, it was later tempered and incorporated into the PEA as *Frontiers of Democracy*, which ran from 1939 to 1944. In 1936 many influential Progressive educators and intellectuals formed the John Dewey Society as a moderate forum to discuss Progressive and liberal philosophy. The John Dewey Society also started to publish important educational research yearbooks by 1937.

1938 might have marked the apex of Progressivism in the U.S. In this year the Progressive Education Association's enrollment peaked at 10,440 members; *Time* magazine featured the PEA as a cover story and announced its wide influence; and John Dewey and Boyd Bode both warned fellow Progressives that the movement was dissolving into a non-political, child-centered libertarianism instead of a comprehensive movement for social democracy.[4] However, despite its organizational success, the actual impact of Progressive innovations on American education by the 1930s is uncertain. The celebratory framework of most reformist

[4] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Boyd Bode, *Education at the Crossroads* (New York: Newson, 1938).

literature has obscured more concrete evaluations by later historians.[5] C.A. Bowers pointed out that due to Progressive educator's focus on elementary school teachers and classrooms, "the influence of the Progressive education movement was restricted to only a fraction of the nation's 1 million teachers" – although he argued that one should not discount the wide influence of Progressive intellectuals in teacher training Education departments. Bowers estimated that William H. Kilpatrick taught almost 35,000 students between 1909 and 1938. Larry Cuban has made one estimate of Progressive influence on the practice of public schooling. He argued that at its peak (between 1920-40) no more than 25% of New York public school teachers "adopted Progressive teaching practices, broadly defined, and used them to varying degrees in the classrooms." David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot argued that, overall, actual Progressive reform in public schools was a mixed bag, and to the extent that concrete Progressive reforms were initiated and retained over a long period of time, they "fared best in relatively prosperous states and districts" and "most affected children from favored social classes. Ironically, of course, these were the groups least in need of help."[6]

[5] There were several early histories of Progressive education that were produced while the movement was still widely influential, but they were written primarily by Progressive educators who had an obvious interest in writing the history of their own cause. The first was Edward H. Reisner's "What is Progressive Education?" in *Teachers College Record* (1933-4) and then Merle Curti's *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (1935). A few years later R. Freeman Butts published *The College Charts Its Course* (1939). Robert Holmes Beck wrote the first dissertation on Progressive education at Yale University in 1941, "American Progressive Education, 1875 – 1930." The last early history of the movement written by a partisan was Harold Rugg's *Foundations for American Education* (1947). C.A. Bowers reported in 1969 that "most of the sources that deal with Progressive education are books and articles written by professors of education. Unfortunately, they proved little help in determining how widely their contents were accepted among classroom teachers." Bowers stated the "desirability" of a study on "how much influence the theoreticians actually had on the practitioners in the classroom." *The Progressive Educator and the Depression: The Radical Years* (New York: Random House, 1969), x.
[6] Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 355-58; Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms, 1890 – 1980* (New York: Longman, 1993), 75; Bowers, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression*, 11; David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984): 152, 158. Tyack et. al. also note: "To the degree that Progressive educators succeeded in retaining old programs or installing new ones, they had to work within severe fiscal constraints in most districts. And the success of publicized reforms probably obscured the conservatism of the great mass of American public schools."

It is important to note in more detail the radical group of Progressive educators that organized as a block during the 1930s in opposition to capitalism and New Deal liberalism. They called themselves "Social Reconstructionists" and they were the radical wing of the Progressive education movement. The intellectual catalyst and the most important spokesman for this group was George S. Counts whose call to arms – "Dare Progressive Education Be Progressive?" – was unleashed in 1932. Taking inspiration from radical social scientists like Charles Beard and Thorstein Veblen, as well as the broader socialist movement, Counts published the first manifesto for the Social Reconstructionist platform in 1932, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, which was shortly followed by *The Social Foundations of Education* (1934) and the more tempered writings of William H. Kilpatrick, *Education and the Social Crisis* (1932) and his edited volume of radical Progressive thought *The Educational Frontier* (1933). Most of the social reconstructionists were first active members of the PEA, but between 1931 and 1933, these radicals expressed their desire for more militant social reform through education in the pages of *Progressive Education* and within PEA committees – most notably the Committee on Social and Economic Problems and its publication, *A Call to the Teachers of the Nation* (1933). After Counts self-consciously raised the ideological banner of Social Reconstruction, he helped found *The Social Frontier* in 1934, which was then the official organ for radical Progressive thought and became a marked contrast to the more moderate views found in *Progressive Education*. According to C. A. Bowers, the social Reconstructionist faction rose to prominence in the wake of the Great Depression and took control of the Progressive education movement by 1947, although by then they espoused a more moderate platform based on democratic values, like deliberation and "democratic living." But of course, by this time

Progressive education was becoming an embattled cause.[7]

By the late 1940s and early 1950s both wings of Progressive education were under widespread attack as the cultural climate in the U.S. narrowed its horizons and punished unpopular opinions. By mid-century, America was becoming a very "counterprogressive" country.[8] Lawrence Cremin noted, "The surprising thing about the Progressive response to the assault of the fifties is not that the movement collapsed, but that it collapsed so readily." In 1951 David Hullburd published *This Happened in Pasadena* chronicling the demise of Pasadena's Progressive superintendent Willard Goslin. John Dewey died in 1952. The Progressive Education Association collapsed by 1955. *Progressive Education* (financed by the John Dewey Society after the end of the PEA) issued its last publication in July, 1957. And the John Dewey Society published its last yearbook in 1962 (but the organization remains active to date). Despite the speedy demise of the movement within a decade, Lawrence Cremin was somberly optimistic about its importance. In 1961 he noted, "the transformation" Progressive educators were able to achieve in the school system "was in many ways" "irreversible." He hinted that Progressive education would be back, if in fact it ever completely left: "the authentic Progressive vision

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[7] David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot have succinctly criticized the Social Reconstructionist agenda: "The reconstructionists challenged the existing order by a powerful alternative vision of America, but their strategy seemed naïve to many radicals, their goal seemed dangerous to many conservatives, and their grasp of educational realities seemed tenuous to many fellow school people. Socialism was the road not taken." *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years*, 47-48.

[8] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, 332, 370. Novick used the term "counterprogressive" to characterize primarily the change of interpretive framework within the historical community, which was reacting against the Progressive historiography of Charles Beard and Carl Becker. But he also extended its use to include the reaction against Progressive educationalists like John Dewey: "By the 1950s counterprogressivism extended to the conviction that John Dewey had had a pernicious influence on American education, and that to combat 'populist' anti-intellectualism, one had to return to a more traditional curriculum, and restore the authority of academic elites." C. A. Bowers noted, "A heavy barrage of criticism was being leveled at Progressive education by an awakened and highly concerned public. Dissatisfaction with Progressive education had been growing among interested and vocal members of the American public since the early forties, but it was not until 1949 that they began a direct assault on the philosophy and practice of Progressive schools. The attack was so sweeping that little escaped condemnation." *The Progressive Educator and the Depression*, 242.

remained strangely pertinent" – perhaps "awaiting" a "reformulation and resuscitation that would ultimately derive from a larger resurgence of reform in American life and thought." Cremin uttered these words quite self-consciously as the first comprehensive chronicler of the history Progressive education.[9]

The Progressive Education Movement: Historiography

As an academic pursuit in the United States, the History of Education is a relatively new field of study. It has been around for only about 100 years and it is still arguably fighting for its status as a major disciplinary category of history. It was originally linked to the Philosophy of Education in the late 19th century and began to emerge on its own with the publication of *Source Book of the History of Education for the Greek and Roman Period* (1901), which was written by a sociologist named Paul Monroe. Monroe was asked to research the History of Education by the Dean of Teachers College at Columbia University, James Earl Russell, and Monroe would write several volumes thereafter. Due to Monroe's work, the History of Education emerged as a disciplinary field of study. The first institution to offer doctoral degrees in History of Education was Teachers College at Columbia University. Teachers College alumni produced several influential dissertations on the History of Education during the first two decades of the 20th century.[10]

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9 Ibid., 347-53; Daniel Tanner, *Crusade for Democracy: Progressive Education at the Crossroads* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991). C. A. Bowers, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression*, 242. Bowers noted: "The idea that the schools should be used to overcome the problems of racial integration, a high divorce rate, and chronic poverty, as well as to help American beat the Russians to the moon indicates that at least part of the social reconstructionist philosophy of education has become accepted as the 'conventional wisdom' of our society" (253).

10 Thomas Woody earned his PhD in the History of Education in 1918 at Teachers College and went on to become an early and prolific writer of educational history. He wrote many books on the history of education, both European and American. James Mulhern, "Perspectives," *History of Education Quarterly* 1 (June 1961): 1-4.

It was Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, the first dean of the School of Education at Stanford University, who took hold of the History of U.S. Education and strove to make it not only a thriving academic discipline, but also a professional "science." His monumental work toward this end was *Public Education in the United States* (1919). It was an important early contribution toward the so-called "scientific" history of the early 20th century, although it suffered from the same flawed conceptions of "science" and "objectivity" as did other "scientific" works of history that emerged at the time.[11] Under the rhetoric of "science," Cubberley's work suffered from a selective and celebratory "Whig" interpretation of educational history and was used as a campaign tool for his own part in the Progressive educational crusade. Despite the efforts of scholars like Cubberley, the History of Education remained a small sub-field for the first half of the 20th century and most of the major organs of historical research, including the American Historical Association, would publish only a few articles on the subject.[12]

It was not until the 1960s and the breakthrough scholarship of Bernard Bailyn and Lawrence A. Cremin, combined with the launching of the journal *History of Education Quarterly*, that the History of Education became a respected sub-field within the academy.[13] By this time the historical community was going through a transvaluation of values, as professional and epistemological standards were changing. Much of the new history and historiography of U.S. education challenged old Whiggish pieties and introduced a much more complicated, fragmented, and often radical critique of American education. The 1960's historiographical

[11] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
[12] Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, "Does History Matter in Education Research? A Brief for the Humanities in an Age of Science," *Harvard Educational Review* 75 (Spring, 2005), 9-24.
[13] The History of Education Society transformed an earlier publication, *History of Education Journal*, which was founded in 1951 under the editorship of Claude Eggertson, into a more academic organ with the launching of *History of Education Quarterly* in 1961 under the editorship of Ryland W. Crary at the University of Pittsburgh.

debate within the history profession, especially within the education community, stoked the flames of a cultural divide that would fulminate into the 21st century.[14]

One of the seminal works of this formative period was *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876 – 1957* (1961) by Lawrence Cremin. It was an important and still is in many ways an unsurpassed study of the history of Progressive education.[15] In this prizewinning book[16] Cremin tried to sketch a full picture of not only the educational and theoretical principles of the movement, but also its intellectual and historical generation. Like last chapter's survey of the historiographical literature on the larger conception of "Progressivism," we will now focus particularly on various conceptions of Progressive education so as to get some clarity about the meaning and significance of the term "Progressive" as it related to education and educational reform. Thus, we will be restricting our historiographical discussion to one central question: What was Progressive education? To the extent that Americanization was involved within the Progressive educational program,

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[14] For historiographical debate see Novick, *That Noble Dream*; Robert Harrison, "The 'new social history' in America" in *Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline*, ed. Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield (London: Routledge, 2004): 109-20; Peter Charles Hoffer, "Part I: Facts and Fictions" in *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, Fraud – American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004): 11-130; Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (1997; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 2000). For some specific mention of this debate within educational historiography see Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1978); Jeffrey E. Mirel, "Introduction" in William J. Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grassroots Movements During the Progressive Era* (1986; reprint, New York: Teachers College Press, 2002): ix-xvi; Herbert M. Kliebard, "Afterword: The Search for Meaning in Progressive Education: Curriculum Conflict in the Context of Status Politics" in *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893 – 1958*, 3rd ed (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

[15] C.A. Bowers called Cremin's book "the most important history of the Progressive education movement, particularly in its early phases." *The Progressive Educator and the Depression*, 259. Hebert M. Kliebard argued, "Cremin succeeded in establishing history of education as an integral part of cultural and social history, and the writing of history of education has never really been the same since his book appeared." *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 272. On the 30th anniversary of the work, John L. Rury argued that the book's "appearance did much to make educational history a credible subfield of American history, and one open to new research and interpretation." "Transformation in Perspective: Lawrence Cremin's Transformation of the School," *History of Education Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1991): 66-76.

[16] It won the Bancroft Prize in American History in 1962.

it will be mentioned as a topical subject, but a full analysis of the history and meaning of Americanization programs and a review of the literature on this topic will come later in the chapter on "Americanization: U.S. Nationalism, the Emerging State, and the Public School System."

In *The Transformation of the School*, Cremin was quite clear that Progressive education was a "many-sided effort" and "marked from the very beginning by a pluralistic, frequently contradictory, character." He cautioned his reader that he would offer no "capsule definition of Progressive education" because "none exists, and none ever will; for throughout its history Progressive education meant different things to different people." However, with this caution in mind, Cremin offered several definitions with which one could define this movement. Progressives were "moderate" reformers who believed in democracy and wanted to use education as "an adjunct to politics in realizing the promise of American life." He described Progressive education as "part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life – the ideal of government by, of, and for the people – to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the later half of the nineteenth century." As such it was a "many-sided effort to use the schools to improve the lives of individuals" in four distinct ways: (1) a "broadening" of the school to meet and treat all areas of the community; (2) applying the new "scientific" research of educational professionals inside the classroom; (3) reshaping a student centered curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse study body; (4) instilling a "radical faith that culture could be democratized" and thereby training responsible citizens to lead the country to progress and prosperity. A quintessential expression of the Progressive ethos came from Jane Addams, who Cremin quoted in his introduction: "We have learned to say that the good must be extended to all of society before it can be held secure by any one person or any one

class; but we have not yet learned to add to that statement, that unless all men and all classes contribute to a good, we cannot even be sure that it is worth having."[17]

Cremin argued that Progressive education and its pedagogical agenda could best be defined by summarizing the seven founding principles of the Association for the Advancement of Progressive Education (or PEA). PEA's 1919 statement of purpose proclaimed, "The aim of Progressive Education is the freest and fullest development of the individual, based upon the scientific study of his mental, physical, spiritual, and social characteristics and needs." The principles of this organization included: (1) children should be free to naturally develop according to both individual self-expression and the social needs of the community; (2) the learning process should include a) hands-on direct experience, b) a holistic conception of knowledge and its practical application, as well as c) self-reflexivity; (3) the teacher should guide the social and intellectual development of the child and this necessitates a) a well trained and creative teacher, b) a stimulus-rich learning environment, and c) small class sizes; (4) learning assessments should include both "objective and subjective reports" on the "physical, mental, moral, and social" aspects of the child's development; (5) the overall wellbeing and health of the student is a primary concern; (6) the school should communicate and cooperate with the home in educational, developmental, and extracurricular endeavors; (7) the Progressive school should be a "laboratory" of "new ideas" and it should take the lead in educational initiative.[18]

Cremin also evaluated the specific impacts of Progressive initiatives within the U.S. public school system. He listed 10 points of measurable change: (1) an "extension" of education on all levels whereby more and more children were steadily attending kindergartens on through high school; (2) school system shifted to six years in elementary, three years in junior high, and

[17] Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, viii-x, 88-89.
[18] Ibid., 240-45.

three years in high school; (3) a "continuing expansion and reorganization of the curriculum at all levels;" (4) expansion of extracurricular activities; (5) "more variation and flexibility in the grouping of students;" (6) the learning environment – classroom – became more active, informal and mobile; (7) teaching materials, including textbooks, expanded to increase the interest and learning of the student; (8) the architecture of schools changed to accommodate gymnasiums, playgrounds, athletic fields, and such; (9) teachers became better trained and certified – in word, professionalized; (10) school administration became more centralized, professionalized, and bureaucratic.[19]

There were also some notable failures of Progressive education as well, which Cremin noted: (1) because of success and the diversity of its practitioners, it eventually suffered from schisms and the distortion of its comprehensive aims; (2) Progressives were better able to articulate "what they were against than what they were for;" (3) Progressive reforms often demanded too much time and ability from teachers; (4) after reforms were initiated, Progressives were often tied to specific programs and could not "formulate next steps;" (5) a failure to adequately deal with the conservative post-war climate; (6) professionalization of educators and administrators brought isolation from reform coalition partners in the public who were key in backing and initiating reform programs; and finally, Cremin argued, (7) Progressive educators became to attached to Progressive initiatives and too detached from the "continuing transformation of American society."[20]

In the third volume of Lawrence Cremin's award winning series,[21] *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876 – 1980* (1988), he revisited his definition of "education" and

[19] Ibid., 306-8.
[20] Ibid., 347-51.
[21] The second volume, *American History: The National Experience, 1783 – 1876*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1981.

how its meaning in the American context was tied to both nationalism and reformism. In this volume Cremin noted that by the late 19th century education was becoming increasingly valued by the public at large and so educational reforms were becoming increasingly political conflicts. But at the same time, Cremin pointed out, the "American *paideia*" had not been not settled or formalized and, thus, "Americans were still in the process of defining what it meant to be an American." However, this did not stop the growing corporate state and its elite WASP representatives from fashioning their own version of American identity as an Anglo Saxon "manifest destiny," which was being actively carried over the continent and across the seas as a form of "cultural imperialism" (accompanying, of course, more traditional forms of economic and political imperialism as well). But struggling alongside this push for a dominant American *paideia* modeled on WASP cultural values were "alternative American paideias" fomented by African Americans, Native Americans, and immigrant communities. This created a "complicated" educational terrain as competing socio-cultural groups fought over the right to transmit their own diverse cultural value systems.

It is within this context that "Americanization" programs were launched both within and outside of the pubic school system by mostly Progressive forces. The arch-purpose of these programs was to bring a homogenized ideological order to the newly conceived "nation" and, thereby, solidify a dominant American identity with which to inculcate both children and adults so as to "assimilate" the population into what Progressive reformers believed to be *the* "dominant American community." But Cremin also noted the "pluralistic" character of the many (often "contradictory") Progressive "movements," and thus he dwelt a great deal on how Progressivism

also contained a strand of "liberalism" that sought to "democratize the concept of culture" and promote an "inclusive politics" that addressed the "problems of inequality" within the U.S.[22]

The last work by Lawrence Cremin that we will note is "Education as Politics," a lecture given in 1989. Cremin made it clear (within the highly charged standards and multicultural educational debates of the 1980s) that "education has always served political functions." More specifically, he claimed the educational endeavor eternally focuses on the "future character of the community" and to that extent education can never be separated from politics: "It is impossible to talk about education apart from some conception of the good life; people will inevitably differ in their conceptions of the good life, and hence they will inevitably disagree on matters of education; therefore the discussion of education fall squarely within the domain of politics."

Cremin argued that U.S. education has always been politicized, especially by Progressive reformers, but he tried to make the argument that it became "increasingly politicized" in the wake of Progressivism, post WWII, as many diverse groups "with differing conceptions of the good life" escalated the battle over "the nature and character of education." These battles ensued, Cremin pointed out, because of a longstanding U.S. Progressive tradition to use the system of education to try and "solve" all sorts of socio-political problems, "and in so doing to invest education with all kinds of millennial hopes and expectations." Cremin mentioned social critics like Hannah Arendt who pointed out that educational systems are limited in their ability to change the world, yet she noted that this has not stopped successive waves of Americans from

[22] Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876 – 1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 10-14, 110, 150, 178, 196, 228, 442-44. Cremin also used the term "American Victorianism" to describe the Americanization program of "standardizing" culture based on "ethnic, religious, and racial ethnocentrism" so as to "convey its outlook upon the world and thereby enforce its standards and patterns of behavior" (442-44).

trying to use education for just that purpose.[23] When people battle over educational systems and curriculum, Cremin argued, they are really debating “alternative views of the good life,” especially what “kind of America they would prefer to live in and what it might mean to be an American.”

Cremin believed Dewey to be the great philosopher of American social and political ideals in relation to its educational practices, but Dewey was not the only intellectual force to make the connection between education and politics. Cremin argued that a “distinctively American paideia” molded out of WASP values, nationality, and patriotism became the norm during the 19th century and it demanded a “relentless” program for cultural and political “assimilation:” “the more different the newcomers from the British-American model, the more intense the manifestations of concern.” But the process and programs of “Americanization,” Cremin argued, did not have the desired effect. First of all, for all the rhetoric of a unified WASP paideia, it was never completely realized, and it was often “loosely and variously defined:” The American norm to which school children were “supposed to be assimilating often proved confusing and elusive.” Second, the American paideia began to change in relation to the ever evolving context of American society. And finally, deep seated racism in all parts of the U.S. gave rise to many severe restrictions and rejections of specific minority communities based on their assumed inferiorities. This in turn gave rise to many protest movements over the course of the 20th century and a vigorous debate over “precisely what it meant to be an American.” Cremin ended his essay by noting that American identity has always “inevitably depend[ed]” on the complex and changing “interaction” of the diverse U.S. population. He also reiterated the limited, yet central, role of education within past and present debates on Americanism: “Education cannot take the place of politics, though it is inescapably involved in politics, and

[23] Cremin quoted Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Education,” *Partisan Review* (Fall 1958): 494-95.

education is rarely a sufficient instrument for achieving political goals, though it is almost always a necessary condition for achieving political goals."[24]

If Lawrence Cremin was the first major historian of U.S. education, his seminal reputation was eclipsed not a generation later by the work of David B. Tyack, professor of Education and History at Stanford University. Tyack has authored and co-authored a host of seminal works that have focused on various reform initiatives during the 19th and 20th centuries. We will be surveying several of his major works.

His first major book was *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (1974). This book focused on the "politics" of education by which Tyack meant "who got what, where, when, and how." Tyack wanted to study not only the decision makers who initiated reform, but also those segments of the American population (the "poor and dispossessed) who were marginalized from the political process and, thereby, often the passive recipients of reform programs. Being largely left out of political decisions, the poor were often "victimize[ed]" "predictab[ly] and regular[ly]" by "systematic" reform initiatives that were not drafted or implemented in their interests. And further, these "victims" of systematic injustice were often blamed for their own marginalization. In framing his discussion around the issue of justice, Tyack's study invoked (while criticizing) Progressive principles. He primarily sought to expose the "systemic injustice" at the root of Progressive reforms, which meant a focus not on individuals per se but on the institutions within the "social system" that created and reinforced an atmosphere of injustice:

> It is more important to expose and correct the injustice of the social system than to scold its agents. Indeed, one of the chief reasons for the failures of educational reforms of the past has been precisely that they called for a change of philosophy

[24] Lawrence A. Cremin, "Education as Politics" in *Popular Education and Its Discontents* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 85-127. The three essays in this book were based on lectures given at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1989.

> or tactics on the part of the individual school employee rather than systemic change – and concurrent transformations in the distribution of power and wealth in the society as a whole…Despite frequent good intentions and abundant rhetoric about "equal educational opportunity," schools have rarely taught the children of the poor effectively – and this failure has been systematic, not idiosyncratic. Talk about "keeping the schools out of politics" has often served to obscure actual alignments of power and patterns of privilege. Americans have often perpetuated social injustice by blaming the victim, particularly in the case of institutionalized racism…The search for conspiracies of villains is a fruitless occupation; to the extent that there was deception, it was largely self-deception. But to say that institutionalized racism, or unequal treatment of the poor, or cultural chauvinism were unconscious or unintentional does not erase their effects on children.

Tyack was also lending his skills as a scholar toward a broader initiative of "social justice," which he argued (also working out of a Progressive conception) could be found "in the old goal of a common school, reinterpreted in radically reformed institutions."[25]

Tyack looked mostly at the urban reforms of a growing urban society. Administrative Progressives believed that the older systems of rural schools in the U.S. were too haphazardly organized, inefficient, substandard, and too "subordinated" to community interests. Reformers, especially urban reformers, thought that rural communities were backwards and ignorant of the complex needs of modern society. Progressive reformers "blended economic realism with nostalgia, efficient professionalism with evangelical righteousness" so as to initiate a complex re-ordering, nationalization, and professionalization of the public school system. They wanted to engineer the "one best system" of education that could create a "standardized, modernized 'community' in which leadership came from the professionals." While cloaked in the rhetoric of democracy, the needs of society, and the education of all, Progressive school reforms in urban areas were more about reconstituting the nature of authority in order to "transfer of power from laymen to professionals," and thereby, create a nationalized (and standardized) educational bureaucracy. The results of this restructuring did lead to "better school buildings, a broader and

more contemporary course of studies, and better qualified teachers and administrators," while also giving "country youth greater occupational mobility" and introducing them to "different life-styles."[26]

But there was also a darker side to urban reforms. In a search for the "one best system," administrative Progressives continually stressed "order" and "standardization." It was a program of "institutionalization" to combat the social chaos of modernity in urban America. William T. Harris, superintendent of schools in St. Louis, asserted in his *School Report for 1871*, "The first requisite of the school is Order: each pupil must be taught first and foremost to conform his behavior to a general standard."[27] School modernization and professionalization was modeled on the factory system of bureaucratic division of labor and it often reinforced principles like punctuality, chain of command, coordination, systematizing, hierarchical organization, impersonal rules, regularized procedures, objective standards, efficiency, rationality, and precision. In some cases reformers sought professional bureaucracies so as to promote a more equalized "meritocracy" that would serve all segments of the urban community impartially and fully. However, the "rational" bureaucratic systems of education often "reinforced racial, religious, and class privilege," as well as normalizing "subordination" of students and teachers to the authority of white, male school administrators. WASP professionals simply assumed that their values and interests as "honest and competent experts" were universal goods and, thus, under their control "public education was the most human form of social control and the safest method of social renewal." [28]

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[25] David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 3-12.
[26] Ibid., 19-27.
[27] Tyack quoted William T. Harris, *St. Louis School Report for 1871*, 31-32.

Prefiguring a later book, David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot published "From Social Movement to Professional Management: An Inquiry into the Changing Character of Leadership in Public Education" (1980). In this article Tyack and Hansot "interpret[ed] changing forms of leadership in public education" from the 19th to the 20th centuries. The common school reformers largely shared a "Protestant-republican ideology" and engaged in an evangelical process of "nation building" through a "millennial" crusade to create a "righteous society." Common school reformers were lead by charismatic leaders whose main tools were exhortation and persuasion based on a shared Protestant-republican ideology: "leadership in public education largely took the form of guiding a decentralized social movement because the chief task was the *creation* of common schools through the mobilization of opinion and effort at the local level." 20th century reformers believed in "social efficiency," by which they meant organizational reforms resulting in "new structures and processes of schooling that would enable public education to mesh smoothly and efficiently with a corporate society." These professional school men sought to "take the school out of politics" by centralizing school authority, consolidating children in larger schools, standardizing curriculum, and normalizing a bureaucratic-business model of education: "Believing that the basic structure of society was just and Progressive, the new leaders thought that they knew how to bring about a smoothly running, socially efficient, and stable society in which education was the major form of human engineering."

Tyack and Hansot emphasized that these two movements were "not so sharply distinct" and that there was "significant overlap between the two eras." Both movements shared in the continuity of organizational structuring and expansion that started with the common school leadership. Tyack and Hansot argue that the grass-roots initiated common school movement was the "most impressive case of institution building in American history." Its success was largely

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[28] Ibid., 28-43, 60-65, 72-77, 109, 127-131, 146-47.

due to a homogeneous leadership core, which shared similar ideological orientations and social and economic interests. These reformers wanted to create a national system of Christian common schools in which a "Protestant *paideia*" would "express and perpetuate" their shared socio-cultural values and "civic purpose." Tyack and Hansot argued that part of the "genius" of this movement "was that its leaders were able to wrap their cause in a noncontroversial Americanism," which legitimated their effort by consecrating the Protestant-republican ideology as both a "social mandate" and a national mission. Early 20th century reformers worked within the earlier common-school tradition while engineering an organizational "revolution" so as to reconfigure the established American *paideia* for an industrial, corporate capital nation-state.[29]

Tyack and Hansot later expanded "From Social Movement to Professional Management" into a book on the same topic. In *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820 – 1980* (1982), Tyack and Hansot re-examined the 19th century common school movement that created the U.S. educational system. In structuring their conceptual framework, Tyack and Hansot incorporated much of the "radical critique" of public schooling that historians had written since the late 1960s.[30] Tyack and Hansot argued that 19th century common school reformers saw their educational program as part of a larger mission of consolidating and consecrating a "Christian nation" based on "patriotism, godliness, and prosperity." The project of American

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[29] David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, "From Social Movement to Professional Management: An Inquiry into the Changing Character of Leadership in Public Education," *American Journal of Education* 88 (May 1980): 291-319.

[30] David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820 – 1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). Tyack and Hansot wrote, "Many people (ourselves included) have become newly aware, thanks to the radical analysis, of ideological frameworks and class interests too much taken for granted." They mention in particular Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968). In summarizing the "radical historians" Tyack and Hansot wrote: "They have sought to demystify public education, to scatter the fog of sentiment that covered harsh realities. They have argued that its basic structure was hierarchical and elitist, not democratic; that its operation was class-biased, racist, and sexist; that it was imposed by elites, not created democratically by educational statesmen and their allies; that its ideology was suffused with notions of social control, often covert; that tinkering with minor improvements would not set it right; and that, most important, its claim of being able to right the basic inequities of American life was a legend" (9).

nationalism converged with the reformer's visions of the Kingdom of God, whereby, an idealized version of the republic demanded righteous citizens engaged in a providential project. Common school reformers rarely acknowledged their own socio-cultural "blinders" and pontificated as if they spoke for all Americans, thereby, programmatically trying to assimilate citizens and immigrants alike into a chauvinistic WASP "version of Americanism." In the words of one enthusiastic commentator: "American is Protestantism…Protestantism is Life, is Light, is Civilization, is the spirit of the age. Education with all its adjuncts, is Protestantism. In fact Protestantism is education itself." Tyack and Hansot argued that the American common school movement was the "most ambitious and successful social movement" of the 19th century. By century's end, it was able to create "more schooling for more people than in any other nation and resulted in patterns of education that were remarkably uniform in purpose, structure, and curriculum, despite the reality of local control in hundreds of thousands of separate communities."[31]

Progressive reformers around the turn of the 20th century carried on similar activities, but with a slightly different focus. They sustained the "earlier moral earnestness and sense of mission" of the common school reformers, although Progressives lost "much of the specifically religious content" for a more secular nationalism. Progressives sought to "control the course of human evolution scientifically through improving education." Progressives used a rhetoric of "moral charisma and millennial hope" to sanctify their "dream" of "professionalism" and "social efficiency." Believing whole-heartedly in the "myth" of progress, Progressives saw themselves as "social engineers who sought to bring about a smoothly meshing corporate society," and thereby, "redesign" the public schools to compliment this project. Of course this meant "constraining" public oversight in the schooling process so that public education could become a

[31] Ibid., 5, 17, 21-22, 73-76.

"professionalized" endeavor that prepared students for their subordinate places in the emerging, modern mass-industrial society.[32]

Tyack and Hansot described administrative Progressives as part of a self-conscious leadership elite (several prominent administrative Progressives described their select group as the "educational trust"). They saw themselves as "professional managers" who were able to reshape the public school system "according to cannons of business efficiency and scientific expertise." These administrative Progressives used a rhetoric of "science and business efficiency" in order to reshape the discourse of public schooling in terms of "problems to be solved by experts." They believed that "experts would run everything to everyone's benefit." This rhetoric helped legitimize institutional reforms whereby educational power was "consolidated" in "large and centralized organizations" that were modeled after corporate structures: "In seeking to depoliticize education, in moving the regulation of education upward and inward in urban and state bureaucracies, in basing legitimation for new authority on scientific expertise, the new managers in education were following patterns of action and thought pioneered in the corporate sector of business." And while the schools were operating more and more like corporate organizations, they were also legitimizing the gross inequality and hierarchy of an industrial mass-society under the cover of a meritocratic equality of opportunity that was supposedly being taught in the public schools. But Tyack and Hansot make clear that the administrative Progressives were contested at every turn and their vision of public schooling was not the only administrative program. However, "the ideology of depoliticized expertise splintered opposition and defused the effectiveness of protest" and thus the "ideology of professionalism" was able to

[32] Ibid., 3-8.

entrench the vision and program of administrative Progressives within the centralized, bureaucratic public school system that remains to this day.[33]

In later work, David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, along with Robert Lowe, researched Progressive education during the Great Depression in *Public Schools in Hard Time: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (1984). Their emphasis fell on the "complex interaction" of the "political economy of public education" during the Great Depression years and, specifically, how the process and organization of schooling was effected by the tug and pull of "local governance and finance, of growing assertions of state power, and of national influence of various kinds exerted largely through powerful private organizations." They demonstrated how "pluralistic patterns of interests and power" orchestrated "quite different results in different places." Tyack et. al. also discussed the 1930's as the possible "high point" of Progressive education, but acknowledged that different historians have used the "foggy concept" to refer to "many different ideas and practices" so its quite hard to make an argument for its peak.

The conceptual muddle of "Progressivism" was not helped by the reformers penchant for negative ideological maneuvering (what they were against) instead of positive programmatic statements (what they were for). There was also the added difficulty of distinguishing between "what leaders said" and "what actually happened behind the schoolhouse door." The authors noted that Progressive education as a historical concept refers to many "kinds of reformers" who "thought of themselves as Progressive," who defined the significance of "Progressive" in many different ways, and who worked for organizational and curricular modification to meet the needs of changing historical circumstances as they saw it. Social Reconstructionists, reformist administrators, libertarians, and liberals all had a different vision and program of Progressive

[33] Ibid., 106-111, 206, 226. David Tyack and Thomas Timar reiterate much of this argument in their brief for the National Commission on Governing America's Schools, "The Invisible Hand of Ideology: Perspectives from the

education. To the extent that “Progressive” reforms in education happened during the Great Depression, it was most significantly a “classroom affair, a new kind of interaction between the teacher and the students,” most likely highly varied between different classrooms, schools, and districts, but also limited in terms of the power of tradition teaching practice and cutbacks due to fiscal retrenchment.

The authors also noted that as specific cultural and historical contexts dictated, “Progressive methods could be used to serve conservative ends,” specifically they mention how “Progressive” reforms rarely if even confronted the structural inequalities associated with race and class. The black school reformer and Progressive Horace Mann Bond articulated this issue clearly at the time (he has often been left out of most historical discussions of “Progressive” education as have other back school reformers of the period). In “The Curriculum and the Negro Child,” Bond wrote: “The schools have never built a new social order, but have always in all times in all lands been the instrument through which social forces were perpetuated.” Tyack et. al. maintained that no significant widespread “Progressive” changes occurred during the Great Depression years. The organizational and curricular operations of public schools “changed very little,” and to the extent there were reforms initiated, the can be seen as “short-term dislocations” in the midst of “long-term continuity.”[34]

Outside of the preeminent work of the two leading History of Education scholars, Lawrence Cremin and David Tyack, there have been many other important works published on both Progressive education history and the larger history of educational reform that surrounds this particular movement. One important early work was by C. A. Bowers in 1969, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression: The Radical Years*. Bowers argued that there were

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History of School Governance,” *Education Commission of the States* (Jan 1999): 1-23.

two factions within the Progressive educational movement. The more powerful and mainstream faction represented a romantically oriented "cult of the child" and they articulated a child-centered pedagogy. The other faction came to be known as the "Social Reconstructionists." They wanted the schools to be part of a larger effort to address current social problems so as to use the schools to reform society. The Social Reconstructionists used the rhetoric of class struggle to advocate a platform of social planning and socialistic collectivity.

When George S. Counts gave his landmark speech, "Dare Progressive Education Be Progressive?" in 1932, he was both criticizing the movement's political neutrality and urging Progressive educators, specifically members of the PEA, to forsake moderate liberal reformism in order to embrace more radical educational, social and political pieties. Counts of course meant the rejection of capitalism so that schools could embrace and propagate socialism. To further this mission, Counts wanted teachers to become political actors inside the nation's classrooms and, thereby, not be afraid to use "indoctrination' to "check and challenge" capitalist dogma. Counts believed that schools would indoctrinate students no matter what and, thus, the question became, in whose interests would the public school curriculum serve?

The Social Reconstructionists had a very definite idea. In a PEA pamphlet drafted by the Committee on Social and Economic Problems, *A Call to the Teachers of the Nation* (1934), they exhorted teachers to reject capitalism and renew American democracy: "[teachers] owe nothing to the present economic system, except to improve it; they owe nothing to any privileged caste, except to strip it of its privileges…a powerful organization, militantly devoted to the building of a better social order and to the fulfillment…of the democratic aspirations of the American people." Bowers called this "one of the most extreme and utopian statements to be made by any

[34] David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984): 56-57, 91, 150, 162-63, 180, 189-90.

group during the depression" – even more so than the 1934 Manifesto of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.[35]

Bowers critiqued the Social Reconstructionists, usually by surveying the criticisms of their contemporaries; Progressive educationalists like John Dewey and Boyd Bode made many trenchant critiques. Bowers noted several. The Social Reconstructionists had an "ubiquitous sense of mission," which harkened back to the evangelical millennialism of the common school reformers; they often espoused a simplistic utopianism; and they had a romantic conception of the "power of education to eradicate the evil in the world." Bowers also called the Social Reconstructionists "poor social analysts" because they "lacked an understanding of the teacher's actual position in society:" "Even though teachers had no real protection from being dismissed arbitrarily by school boards – and they thus possessed neither economic security nor the ability to formulate significant policy – the Social Reconstructionists viewed them as a force capable of directing social change." Bowers argued that these educational radicals took a position too extreme to align themselves with labor and to infatuated with the schools to fit well with the Communists, which made their call for teachers to lead the class struggle seem ridiculous to most observers. Bowers quipped, "the editor's messianic zeal had led them far down the road of absurdity." Alienating themselves from other Progressives and ignored by other radicals, the Social Reconstructionists eventually abandoned their radical socialism. They took a conservative turn during the war, which intensified afterwards. Calls for class war were exchanged for slogans urging the saving of democracy and the fighting of totalitarianism.

[35] C. A. Bowers, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression: The Radical Years* (New York: Random House, 1969): ix-x, 4-5, 15, 20, 41. Bowers noted that the editors of *The Social Frontier* did not agree with Roosevelt's New Deal plan to implant a welfare state within a capitalistic society. The plan was to organize teachers and then participate with the labor movement in larger unionizing efforts, while also giving students in the classroom a "labor orientation" towards the issues of the day. They even warned their readership that there may be violence, in which case, teachers should feel justified that the "onus will fall on the shoulders of those few who cannot gracefully surrender their privileges in the face of a popular decision" (134,140).

Ironically, after their journal folded, the more moderate Social Reconstructionists took the field as the most powerful and influential Progressive educators and exerted an important authority over curricular debates in the late 1940s. The message had now become community centered schools, democratic deliberation, democratic cooperation, and fostering "democratic living." This "new doctrine" would have wide and lasting imprint on the American public schools, but would eventually be rhetorically coopted more conservative forces in the 1950s.[36]

In "Education and Progressivism," Joel Spring argued that "Progressivism" had been used and defined so broadly, specifically Cremin's use of the term in *The Transformation of the School*, that it was "a valueless definition since it literally includes everyone." Spring criticized the "lack of clarity" and "confused picture" that this "vague" and "obscure" term identified. He instead called for a more "sharply defined" conceptual terminology of educational reform based on the particulars of various reformist ideology. Specifically Spring suggested that reformer's visions "of the good life" – the ultimate purposes reformers were trying to produce in changing individuals and society – could be the best way to conceptualize distinct "reform" movements. Spring focused on one example in his article: the movement for "social efficiency."[37]

Herbert M. Kliebard followed Spring's lead in 1986 when he published the 1st of three editions of his very influential book, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*. Kliebard completely denied the existence of a Progressive educational "movement:"

> The more I studied [Progressive education] the more it seemed to me that the term encompassed such a broad range, not just of different, but of contradictory, ideas on education as to be meaningless. In the end, I came to believe that the term was not only vacuous but mischievous. It was not just the word "Progressive" that I thought was inappropriate but the implication that something deserving a single name existed and that something could be identified and defined if we only tried.

[36] Ibid., 48-51, 144, 151, 181, 201-54.
[37] Joel Spring, "Education and Progressivism," *History of Education Quarterly* 10 (Spring 1970): 53-71.

Instead he argued for competing "interest groups" with "distinct" "ideological positions" and "agendas for action." These factions contemporaneously co-existed in often "antagonistic" ways, each with its own reform agenda, although sometimes they were able to bury differences in order to form "temporary coalitions around a particular reform." During what has been called the Progressive era, these antagonistic factions "struggled for control of the American curriculum" and the 20th century became an educational "battleground." Often these groups were fighting over the core issue of "differing forms of knowledge" legitimating specific cultural values. Kliebard focused on only four interest groups that represented the major educational divisions at the turn of the century. The most powerful was the entrenched "humanist" group and three reform groups challenging the humanist hegemony were the child study movement, the social efficiency movement, and the social meliorists. Outside the fray, yet infused within it, Kliebard uniquely argued, was the towering figure of John Dewey who while not directly allied with any one group, he helped define and critique the perimeters of 20th century educational reform.[38]

Kliebard refined and articulated his epistemological position with regards to the conceptual territory of "Progressivism" in a 1993 "Afterword" to the 2nd edition entitled "The Search for Meaning: Curriculum Conflict in the Context of Status Politics." He claimed that Progressive education was no more than a "mélange of reforms" that have been "lumped together" under a common term. This was due in a large part to Lawrence Cremin's seminal use of the phrase. While Cremin warned against any one definition, he equated it with "the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large." Edward A. Krug's two volumes on the *Shaping of the American High School* prefigured the turn of direction that would occur in the

[38] Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893 – 1958*, 3rd ed. (1986; reprint, New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), xiv, xviii-xix, 1-52.

1970s when the vagueness and vacuity of the phrase “Progressive movement” was questioned (by Filene and Spring among others), ultimately to be rejected and jettisoned by an influential minority within the historical community. In its place came two new epistemological uses. One was a restricted definition of “Progressive” attached to narrower historical entities, like Tyack’s use of “administrative Progressives.” The other use focused on the “politically and socially regressive nature” of many so called “Progressive” reforms. Kliebard noted tongue in cheek: “We are left with the feeling that much of what went on in the Progressive era was socially and politically, and perhaps even pedagogically, regressive.” Thus instead of even using the term “Progressive,” historians like Kliebard have instead looked for ideologically distinct social, political, and educational “movements” that are much more clear and distinguishable in their affiliations, goals, programs, and practices – “persons identified with a movement, in other words, see *themselves as sharing common programs* or beliefs.” Using this methodology and narrowing the definition of a “movement” ala Peter G. Filene, Kliebard questioned “Progressivism” out of existence: “Once a movement is understood in this way, one can then go on to determine whether the term *Progressive* can legitimately be applied to such a collective, but it is not clear at all that such a collective exists…In short, neither in terms of the coherence of the program for reform nor in its membership nor in its overall ideology can a definition of Progressivism as a social and political movement be articulated.”

Instead of using the terminology of Progressivism, Kliebard formulated his own position, which rested on three points. First, Progressivism cannot be defined “in terms of stable attributes.” Second, specific ideological subgroups can be identified and their more “consistent and recognizable ideological positions” can be conceptualized. And third, all reform issues could be complicated by reform coalitions that could consist of a blending of various distinct

ideological sub-groups. Thus, Kliebard's conception of "Progressive education" was a broadly sweeping "reaction against tradition structures and practices but with multiple ideological positions and programs of reform." This broad "reaction" is composed of distinct and "reasonably coherent subgroups and movements," but in no way do all these pieces "add up to one Progressive education movement." Hence the central term "struggle" in the title of Kliebard's book. The American curriculum was "contested terrain" and "the prize for which the various interest groups competed."[39]

The political scientist Paul E. Peterson wrote *The Politics of School Reform, 1870 – 1940* (1985) in which he used quantitative methods to study three different urban school systems (Atlanta, Chicago, and San Francisco) in an effort to examine the particulars of late 19th and early 20th century educational reform in three unique historical contexts. In an effort to caution against generalizations, Peterson argued, "diverse participants focused on those specific objectives in which they had the greatest stake. Although some related their specific demands to larger views of the good society, their demands were met by counterclaims with alternative visions:" "Each of these groups had their own distinctive sets of interests; no stable alliance among any two of them was able to determine policy choice in all situations; instead, outcomes in particular instances fluctuated as different coalitions came together in an ever-changing series of uneasy alliances." School policy was a constant battle ground between competing factions. In order to gain "legitimacy," Peterson argued, school officials tried to "separate themselves, as

[39] Herbert M. Kliebard, "Afterword: The Search for Meaning in Progressive Education: Curriculum Conflict in the Context of Status Politics," in *The Struggle for American Curriculum, 1893 – 1958,* 3rd ed. (1993; reprint, New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 271-92. Kliebard emphasized his point of educational curriculum being a "battleground:" "Whatever else the curriculum may be in terms of what actually gets taught to children, it is also the arena where ideological armies clash over the status of deeply held convictions…The question of whose cultural and moral values will emerge as dominant…the curriculum in any time and place becomes the site of a battleground where the fight is over whose values and beliefs will achieve the legitimation and the respect that acceptance into the national discourse provides."

institutions, from particular groups and factions:" "No one social group held sufficient economic and political power to dictate the course of school policy. The ultimate winners in such an uncertain contest were, of course, the schools themselves. As organizations, they could only prosper from contests and conflicts among competing interests." It is out of this complex historical environment that the "politics of institutionalization" took place, whereby, urban educational leaders sought "expansion and professionalization" so as to make public schools an "organized system of autonomous power" within politically divided, fiscally strained, and ethnically contentious communities.[40]

Peterson's study paid particular attention to a "threefold system" of social "stratification" in industrial America differentiated by class, status, and political power – especially in relation to the "noticeably inegalitarian" "structure of educational institutions:"[41] education was a class based institution that "declare[ed] one's social worth" and "validat[ed] the status of social groups." Education was "a prize to be won by each social group in order for that group's culture to be affirmed, legitimated, and perpetuated." To the extent the public schooling became an agent of "cultural imperialism," Peterson argued, it did so not by "compulsory instruction" but by "the exclusion of a group from pubic schooling." Peterson criticized the historical argument that 19th century public schools were used to control and train "docile work force." In stead he argued that public school officials "ignored" ethnic immigrants and the poor "until adequate facilities had been extended to the more favored:" "Instead of insisting on attendance in publicly

[40] Paul E. Peterson, *The Politics of School Reform, 1870-1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 4, 15, 22-23, 207. Peterson nicely summarized the complicated notion of reform in this complex environment: "Reformers' policies were as often rejected as approved. When adopted, they were frequently amended; when promulgated, they were not always implemented" (203).

[41] Peterson conceptual included race and ethnicity under the heading of social "status." He explained that although "school politics had become increasingly marked by class conflict in the first decades of this century, questions of race and ethnicity did not instantly disappear. Especially in the South, race relations remained so significant a concern that class issues were never vigorously articulated:" "ethnic conflicts could interrupt a politics of class" (18-19).

controlled institutions, they allowed foreigners to go to their own schools. Instead of keeping potential troublemakers under their watchful eyes, the poorest, most outcast segments of the community went uneducated altogether." But as public schools became more and more "open" and "responsive" to changing community needs, the common pattern of school reform in relation to racial minorities was to give "separate" or "inadequate facilities," or to keep them "completely excluded from education."[42]

Peterson argued that "were it not for widespread citizen involvement in politics, it is likely that the status differences in a culturally pluralistic society would have led to systematic repression of minorities." Local organizations, business, and labor involvement where also at work in expanding the school curriculum: politically powerful ethnic minorities were able to get bilingual education, like the Germans in San Francisco and Chicago; business leaders argued for cheap "basic" education and also manual training; and labor wanted both vocational and a diversified liberal arts curriculum. Peterson noted,

> By the end of the century the debate over the purposes of public education was subtly shifted from questions of cultural incorporation and citizenship to those of compatibility with the demands of the labor market. Thus businessmen could attack foreign-language instruction, music, and some forms of manual training as frivolous departures from the fundamental purposes of public education at the same time that they called for additional courses in the practical skills required for growing industrial economies. Working-class and ethnic groups, on the other hand, defended the differentiated curriculum as an essential ingredient of a democratic society. At the same time, these groups sought practical courses that would widen avenues of economic opportunity. School officials, for their part, maneuvered to protect and expand their organization in the context of these changing political pressures.

This diverse political context was also complicated by the clash of ethnic groups in an American environment of "native dominance" by self professed Anglo Saxons. Peterson argued, based on the evidence he found, "schools were uninterested in (or incapable of) systematic ethnic

[42] Ibid., 6, 8-9, 12, 21-23.

discrimination" in terms of access to classrooms and resource allocation because school officials were mostly concerned with consolidating their institutional autonomy in the face of hostile local party machines – although he did qualify this statement by acknowledging that quantitative data cannot "address the quality of the educational experience of children from various ethnic groups" where "ethnic discrimination" most likely happened.[43]

But growing acceptance of ethnic diversity within the public school system was not the whole story. At the same time, many schools across the country practiced a systemic exclusion and segregation of specific minority populations. Peterson focused on the institutional treatment of blacks, Japanese and Chinese populations. Peterson's general explanation for segregation and exclusion of particular ethnic minorities in the U.S. was the lack of political power: "If the group could not impose sanctions on elected officials, the schools were content to provide only the legal minimum, ignoring the barrage of pleas and petitions from the minority. In most cases, political resources were difficult to accumulate because racial minorities either were explicitly denied the right to vote or were left out of the dominant political coalitions." After emancipation blacks in the South were eager for education, but during the later 19th century, they were not only educated separately in segregated and overcrowded facilities (often excluding many students because there was not enough room), but those facilities were also "markedly inferior" and school supplies where often lacking. Blacks were also excluded from secondary schools until 1920. But they had a strong desire for schooling and measure of political power, which they were able to use effectively up until 1892 in order to receive "concrete" educational concessions. However, blacks began to be systematically disenfranchised in 1892 when the Jim Crow South initiated the white primary and voter restrictions and, thus, from 1892 until 1940s blacks found it

[43] Ibid., 6, 53-71, 73-75, 92. Peterson argued that "rather than a long-term pattern of favoritism, we see early discrimination giving way to increasing acceptance of the larger immigrant groups" (91).

even harder to improve their meager system of segregated education in the South. In Chicago blacks were able to integrate somewhat into the public schools because they were such a small minority, although when the black population increased by the 1920s de facto segregation ensued and their segregated schools suffered in similar ways as did southern black schools.

Because they were such a small minority in San Francisco, blacks were integrated into the public school system in 1875. But the Chinese, constituting about 9% of the population of San Francisco in 1880, were systematically prevented from any public education until 1884 when a lawsuit allowed segregated schooling, which became the norm well into the 20th century. The Japanese students were allowed to attend integrated schools in San Francisco only because of the considerable support of the Japanese government, which used diplomatic leverage with President Roosevelt. Peterson emphasized that many minority populations in the U.S. had to first fight for their right to public schooling (which usually resulted in segregated schools), then they had to fight for educational improvements, and finally they had to fight for integration. Minority success in each stage was the result of "changes in their political status" and as minorities "gained their political rights, their rights to public education also came to be recognized:" "Reform was much more – and much less – than a class struggle, and reformers were often much more – and much less – than a class-conscious elite who imposed their interests and values on a resistant working-class majority. Reform was itself as complex, uncertain, and pluralistic as many of the other forces shaping urban schools."[44]

In 1981 William J. Reese published an award winning paper, "'Partisans of the Proletariat': The Socialist Working Class and the Milwaukee Schools, 1890 – 1920," [45] in which

[44] Ibid., 95-117.
[45] William J. Reese, "'Partisans of the Proletariat': The Socialist Working Class and the Milwaukee Schools, 1890 – 1920," *History of Education Quarterly*, 21 (Spring 1981): 3-50. Reese's paper won the Henry Barnard Prize of The History of Education Society for 1978-79.

he argued that many histories on “Progressivism” and “Progressive education” have focused too much on “new” middle class professionals and, thereby, have ignored other social groups active at the time, like the urban poor, labor groups, and local socialist parties. He argued that “studies written from the top of the educational system down are certainly valuable, though limited in terms of understanding the process of social change in the schools.”[46] Reese argued that the poor and laboring classes were not simply “powerless” and therefore “victimized” by an urban elite. He suggested instead that at the local level radical politics and third-party movements had some political success, and that the “Progressive” era was at the same time “the golden age of Socialism and labor radicalism.”

Reese examined Milwaukee, which in 1910 was the first city in the U.S. to be politically swept by a socialist party. Reese detailed the diversity of the socialist “working class”[47] and how through a complex historical process it became “intertwined” and engaged in a “symbiotic relationship” with non-socialist groups (middle-class women’s groups, Progressive civic groups, and other voluntary associations) in order to form coalitions to address specific reform issues. Through the process of reform coalition, these diverse reform groups interacted and influenced each other socially and politically, and while they differed fundamentally on “ultimate ends,” they were able to come to some agreement and find common ground on “immediate programs” like adding free lunch programs or playgrounds to the public school. The Progressive education

[46] He went on to write: “But what is missing even in recent historiography is an appreciation of the radical politics and third-party movements which periodically swept many cities in the early 1900s; a recognition of how people from many different social classes and ethnic backgrounds once struggled collectively, if for different reasons and with sometimes contrary results, for reforms easily dismissed by some historians today as examples of ‘social control’; and a sense of how immigrants and the urban poor themselves shaped the social life of the school and the contours of the past” (5).

[47] Reese argued, “the ‘working class’ has never been a single, monolithic, or static entity. Since America was populated by individuals with diverse ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds, several working class populations have always existed simultaneously. It is therefore impossible for a historian to identify a single ‘working class’ influence on education, for none has ever existed…In Milwaukee, the Socialist working class grew by accretion, increased its ideological sophistication over time, and represented diverse, shifting elements of laboring people” (6).

"movement" from the 1890s to the 1920s, Reese argued, was no more than an "amalgamation of different groups of people who had assembled at different points in time in response to the unique circumstances of Milwaukee politics," and when the times changed during WWI and the coalitions fell apart, the "pieces" of the movement "could not be pieced together again."

Reese and Kenneth Teitelbaum revisited socialist educational reformers in another article a few years later, "American Socialist Pedagogy and Experimentation in the Progressive Era: The Socialist Sunday School" (1983).[48] In this article Reese and Teitelbaum emphasized the socialist commitment to education. They noted that while socialist groups and parties did align in political coalitions with "liberal Progressives and other radicals" over public school reform issues, they also had strong educational initiatives of their own, like the international Socialist Sunday school movement. These schools sought in most causes to supplement the public school education of working class children by teaching them democracy, "the socialist spirit," and "cooperative effort," so as to instill in them the socialist cause and hopefully produce "good rebels." The authors argued for a more diverse understanding of educational reforms during the Progressive era and claimed that the "significance of the Socialist Sunday schools lies in their very existence" as a "dynamic opposition movement to the public school influences of the day."

Reese expanded these early efforts on socialistic reform groups and published his important study, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grassroots Movements During the Progressive Era* (1986). In this book Reese focused on the diversity of school reformers during the Progressive era and argued that school reform was "a battleground between various contending interests." School reform was such a contentious issue because a "single system of schools tried to serve a plurality of competing interests." Reese's study looked at the "social

[48] Kenneth Teitelbaum and William J. Reese, "American Socialist Pedagogy and Experimentation in the Progressive Era: Te Socialist Sunday School," *History of Education Quarterly* 23 (Winter 1983): 429-454.

conflict" and partisan wrangling over specific educational reforms in Rochester, Toledo, Milwaukee, and Kansas City. He emphasized how actual reforms came into being through the "interaction between many competing forces:" "school innovation and reform were produced by interaction, resistance, adaptation, and accommodation, with the power of capital clearly in a dominant though never unchallenged position."[49]

Reese noted that many prominent middle class, professional, and business elites regarded the public schools as the foundation of a stable social and economic order, and also, as a reporter for the Kansas City's Democratic *Times* claimed, the "handmaiden of economic growth." But the rising control and centralization by urban elites was contested at every turn by many grassroots organizations.[50] Reese called this process a "dialectics of school reform." There was a "constant exchange," Reese argued, between "those who would centralize and those who would decentralize power." There was also cooperation as "shifting coalitions" would come together temporarily on different issues to campaign for municipal reform. Reese noted one issue in particular that was popular and was able to unite various ideological groups: the overall expansion of the social functions of public schooling, like playgrounds, lunches, and medical care. But with the coming of WWI the "spirit of civic activism" collapsed and the community became polarized, thus undermining "faith in cooperation" and bringing to an end the "remarkable era of grassroots Progressivism."[51]

The black historian and Progressive Horace Mann Bond published "Education in the South" in 1939. In this article he agreed with the unabashed fascist Lawrence Dennis that

[49] William J. Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform* (1986; reprint, New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 1-2, 123, 130, 213-14.
[50] Reese characterized these grassroots reformers as a "multidimensional political movement:" "A variety of motivation, perceptions, personalities, and interests converged in the making of grassroots Progressivism … Grassroots Progressivism, therefore, had its middle-class and feminine as well as working-class and Socialist roots, growing together in the 1890s like entangling vines that crossed but did not always join. The Social Gospel and Progressive religion added the final stimulus to the growth of municipal reform" (123, 70).

schools were often the “instrument of a dominant elite” and that these elites have used education as a form of “social control.” While he criticized Dennis, Bond criticized American education even more when he wrote: “The concept of social forces has not been neglected in application to educational institutions in America as a whole.” But Bond emphasized the South where the “dominant planting aristocracy” has used public schools “to maintain both the structure of social classes and that of racial caste” in order to protect their economic and social interests. Bond noted that “the masses of white people in Southern States have, slowly and grudgingly, fought toward the achievement of systems of universal education for white children,” but blacks were left largely outside the push for reform. Bond ended his article by saying that black education may improve, but as long as the “determination of control” lay with powerful, white, racist elites, “we may expect to flow inevitably educational structures that are the instruments of the dominant social and economic class which creates and controls them.”[52]

Taking a page from Bond, James D. Anderson published an important addition to the Progressive education literature, although it was not really about Progressive education. It was rather an indictment of the educational establishment, which failed to enact truly “Progressive” reforms as far as the second-class education of blacks in South was concerned. In *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860 – 1935* (1988), Anderson argued for a new understanding of American education in relation to its tortured history with African Americans:

> It is crucial…to recognize that within American democracy there have been classes of oppressed people and that there have been essential relationships between popular education and the politics of oppression. Both schooling for democratic citizenship and schooling for second class citizenship have been basic traditions in American education…Black education developed within this context of political and economic oppression.

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[51] Ibid., 9, 70, 80-81, 118, 121-23, 133, 214, 222-226.
[52] Horace Mann Bond, “Education in the South,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 12 (Jan 1939): 264-74.

Anderson made it clear that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries both Northern and Southern whites were in many ways "white supremacists" and "insisted on a second-class education" for blacks in order to accommodate them for "subordinate roles in the southern economy."[53]

Anderson argued that in black educational circles Book T. Washington stood virtually alone in pandering to white gradualism by developing the Hampton-Tuskegee Idea which offered only industrial education. Most black educators, black families, and black students wanted a liberal arts style education, just like the majority of white students received. In regards to education, and much else, Anderson characterized blacks as a "responsible and politically self-conscious social class." But due to their subordinate and disenfranchised position, blacks were largely unable to get what they wanted educationally (not to mention politically). Both white Southern educationalists and Northern educational philanthropists shared a certain "unity of belief in white supremacy," which largely restricted (and sometimes outright forced) the channels of black education into segregated, inferior, and mostly industrial education. Many white Southerners felt that school was "inappropriate" for blacks because "learning will spoil the nigger for work." Those white Southerners who conceded the need for black education wanted an educational system that would properly control blacks so as to keep them a permanent class of exploited labor. Northern white missionaries and philanthropists were infused by a combination of white supremacy, paternalism, and democratic idealism. They wanted blacks to have the Hampton/Tuskeegee model of education so that blacks would become skilled, secure and satisfied in their position as exploited labor. Not surprisingly the Hampton/Tuskeegee model of education often resembled slave labor with the "educational" curriculum consisting of 10-11

[53] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860 – 1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1-2, 279.

hours of agricultural work a day (for 6-7 days a week) supplemented with some evening classes for the more intellectually gifted. Anderson concluded his study by focusing on the frustrated struggle of blacks for educational opportunity: "The education of blacks in the South reveals that various contending forces sought either to repress the development of black education or to shape it in ways that contradicted black's interests in intellectual development. The educational outcomes demonstrate that blacks go some but not much of what they wanted. They entered emancipation with fairly definite ideas about how to integrate education into their broader struggle for freedom and prosperity, but they were largely unable to shape their future in accordance with their social vision."[54]

In the late 1970s and early 80s Ronald K. Goodenow wrote a series of articles dealing with Progressive education and questions of race and ethnicity. In these articles he made clear that "Progressivism" is a "complex and shifting phenomenon" that "defies easy definition" and thus he warned that historical "over-generalization is dangerous"[55] We will be looking at two of his papers that dealt with the broader themes of Progressivism covered in this essay.

His article, "The Progressive Educator, Race and Ethnicity in the Depression Years: An Overview," dealt with two scholarly omissions in the historical literature on the Progressive era. Few historians had scrutinized the views of white Progressive educators on race and ethnicity, and few had looked at the "contribution of blacks and ethnics to Progressive education."

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[54] Ibid., 13, 15, 20-21 67, 92, 285.

[55] Ronald K. Goodenow, "The Progressive Educator, Race and Ethnicity in the Depression Years: An Overview," *History of Education Quarterly* 15 (Winter 1975): 365-94; "The Progressive Educator on Race, Ethnicity, Creativity, and Planning: Harold Rugg in the 1930s," *Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science* 1 (Winter 1977): 105-28; "The Progressive Educator as Radical or Conservative: George S. Counts and Race," *History of Education Quarterly* 17 (Winter 1977): 45-57; "Racial and Ethnic Tolerance in John Dewey's Educational and Social Thought: The Depression Years," *Educational Theory* 26 (Winter 1977): 48-64; "The Paradox in Progressive Educational Reform: The South and the Education of Blacks in the Depression Years," *Phylon* 39 (March 1978): 49-65; "The Southern Progressive Educator on Race and Pluralism: The Case of William Heard Kilpatrick," *History of Education Quarterly* 21 (Summer 1981): 147-70.

Goodenow noted that some members of the PEA and many social reconstructionists did discuss racial discrimination and attempt to theorize ethnic conflict, although they generally organized their views around an assimilationist/Americanization framework. Goodenow argued that there were two basic positions that Progressive educators took: "social-structural and institutional" determinants of racial discrimination (Dewey, Counts, Mabel Carney, and Buell Gallagher), and "cultural and psychological" causes of racial prejudice (Kilpatrick and Rugg). The PEA as an organization discussed race and ethnicity within the confines of the Commission on Intercultural Education (1936-38), but the initiatives of this commission generally ignored structural-institutional determinants of racism and ended up stressing a depoliticized "cultural contribution" approach in an effort to promote national unity, tolerance, and democracy.

This article also looked at Southern Progressivism, which as an educational program was mostly concerned with the "modernization" of Southern schools, i.e. standardized curriculum, teacher professionalization, and centralized control of schools. Outside of a few notable exceptions (Mabel Carney and Buell Gallagher), there was little effort done to address race in the South except of course to reinforce segregationist and paternalist social control. One Southern state curriculum guide explicitly stated that blacks were "a constant menace to the health of the community, a constant threat to its peace and security, and a constant cause of and excuse for the retarded progress of the other race." Despite the pious and often empty rhetoric of white reformers, which could serve conservative as well as Progressive ends, blacks were highly interested in Progressivism and generally saw "considerable potential" in using Progressive-democratic rhetoric to their advantage. By turning Progressive rhetoric against white moderates it became "more difficult for them openly to oppose democratic change." There were also liberal black critics of Progressivism, like Horace Mann Bond, who criticized most Progressive

programs for not addressing the structural-institutional determinants of racial oppression and for assuming that a "democratic social order" existed in which blacks could democratically seek to address their grievances and fulfill their aspirations.

Goodenow revisited Southern Progressivism three years later in "Paradox in Progressive Educational Reform: The South and the Education of Blacks in the Depression Years." Goodenow argued that Southern Progressivism was concentrated on "modernization while concurrently maintaining fundamentally racist patters that themselves were contradictory to much Progressive ideology." The main programmatic efforts of Southern Progressives addressed standardized curriculum, scientific management, teacher professionalization, and centralized state control. Within these programs "tolerance" was often used as a rhetoric for segregation and social control. Blacks were to be trained "for loyalty, essentially menial tasks, and continued segregation." Goodenow condemned much of the Progressive program and its democratic rhetoric as "[Booker T.] Washington's accommodationism in modern garb." The PEA as an organization generally avoided the race issue, but several of its members confronted radical discrimination either directly (Counts, Dewey, Mabel Carney, and Buell Gallagher) or in more oblique ways (Kilpatrick).

Goodenow also claimed that "historians of Progressivism have totally ignored" the literature of black Progressives like W. A. Robinson, Doxey Wilkerson, Alain Locke, Charles Johnson, and Horace Mann Bond.[56] Some black Progressives used Progressive rhetoric and methods for consciousness raising and social change. Others, like Bond, argued that Progressive

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[56] Historians of the Progressive era and Progressive education began to take more concerted note of ethnic minorities by the 1970s. David Tyack for one has devoted much space to ethnic minorities, including blacks, within many of his educational histories. Ronald E. Butchart has traced the rich historiography of African American education, and expertly categorized and analyzed the subject up until the late 1980s. Ronald E. Butchart, "'Outthinking and Outflanking the Owners of the World": A Historiography of the African American Struggle for Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 28 (Autumn 1988): 333-66.

educational reform was futile unless the institutional structure of segregation and racism was attacked: “Let us confess that the schools have never built a new social order, but have always in all times in all lands been the instruments through which social forces were perpetuated.” In a racist society ruled by racist “social forces,” Bond argued, all educational reform, whatever the rhetoric, would be structured in favor of whites. In summary, Goodenow condemned Progressivism in the South as a form of “social control,” while he praised it in its role of offering “opportunity to create a more democratic social conscience among whites and a heightened demand for justice among blacks.” He also praised black Progressives like Bond who criticized and exposed the paradoxes of Progressivism by “testing its democratic ideology against real conditions of oppression.”

By 1992 the debate on Progressive education had come full circle and Mustafa Emirbayer was basically fleshing out and expanding Lawrence Cremin’s original position. In “Beyond Structuralism and Voluntarism: The Politics and Discourse of Progressive School Reform, 1890 – 1930”[57] Emirbayer started with Cremin’s landmark conception of the Progressive education as “the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large,” and re-proposed a monolithic interpretation on this movement. He seemingly defined educational Progressives in a very general way: “inspired by Dewey’s vision, a wide range of educators, parents, and community leaders came together during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an impassioned crusade to transform American public schooling.” With this definition he overlooked or ignored pluralistic arguments that denied a monolithic movement and, despite his claim for an empirical foundation, his sociological and political science framework drive an overly deterministic conception that often resulted in superficial and

[57] Mustafa Emirbayer, “Beyond Structuralism and Voluntarism: The Politics and Discourse of Progressive School Reform, 1890 – 1930,” *Theory and Society* 21 (Oct 1992): 621-64.

simplistic analysis.[58] He also based his conceptual framework on one historical context, Boston, and claimed that "school reform unfolded in not dissimilar ways in many other school systems across the county," although he does admit that his "generalizations" do not "extend as readily to the South." Despite these serious failings, his overall analytical framework is intriguing and is very similar to the overall conclusion that I will be drawing at the end of this essay, so his argument merits a closer look.

Emirbayer put forth a conception of Progressivism as "discursive acts[59] by state-building elites," and he situated his concept within a critical synthesis of two general trends that he found "inadequate." He critiqued the strengths and weaknesses of both the school of "structuralist" analysis (Bowles and Gintis, Katz, Nasaw, and Peterson) and also the school of "cultural" analysis (Cremin, Kaestle, Tyack and Hansot). He argued that structural analysis over-determined institutional power at the expense of human actors, it failed to account for the historical timing of Progressive reforms, and it neglected the importance of cultural factors. He also argued that cultural analysis tended to "err in the direction of one-sided voluntarism" and ignore "objective constraints on voluntaristic action."

Emirbayer broke the Progressive education movement down into three contexts: curricular and pedagogical reforms at the local and national levels; local initiatives to reform the

[58] Emirbayer often made statements or used the pronoun "they" to refer to "Progressives" and then made generalizations that are highly suspect, given that not all "Progressives" would have agreed with or argued for a particular position. For instance, he claimed "they proposed the reorganization of classroom instruction so that it would promote each student's capacities for social interaction and creative problem-solving" (625). For a more complicated conception of "Progressive" education see Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*. Since Emirbayer claimed that "educational research has neglected the microscopic domain of curriculum and pedagogy," it is curious that he did not find, read, or reference Kliebard's groundbreaking book. Even the conservative Diane Ravitch referenced Kliebard in her summary book on the subject, *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 33, 54, 529. The omission of Kliebard is also troubling given the close similarity between Emirbayer's "struggle" thesis and Kliebard's conception of curricular "struggle."

[59] Emirbayer agued that Progressive "discourse" was a "major element behind the transformation of public school systems and of moral and civic education:" "to formulate precisely such a discourse, to refashion old symbols, images, and ideals into a new agenda for redeeming the unfulfilled promise of American education." See also Daniel T. Rogers, "In Search of Progressivism."

political and administrative structure of schools; and the professionalization of teaching and administrative, including organizational building. He claimed that "each of these diverse streams of educational Progressivism manifests its own distinctive rhythm and trajectory. But we can nonetheless group them all together under a common banner because…they all shared a common, unifying discourse, a similar set of concerns expressed in the ideals and images of civic republicanism, Protestant millennialism and liberal individualism." Progressives used very influential "cultural discourses" to unite disparate groups into a "broad-based coalition" to achieve the "larger goal" of creating "a new moral basis for American society." Emirbayer noted that Progressive education reforms "long outlasted" other reform movements of the Progressive era because of a unique "agenda." Progressive education debates represented discursive "struggles" of "oppositional and dominant groups" that battled over different visions and legitimations of the "sacred center" of the "public sphere." Both "administrative" and "pedagogical" Progressives were "driven by" a "state-building ideology," which infused their moral crusade for a corporate welfare state that they envisioned would unite a fragmented urban-industrial republic. Progressive educators and administrators were working towards a "new moral order" to check the "corruption" and "decay" of older social institutions so as to preserve and consecrate some type of "normative order" at the "sacred center" of American society:

> In their optimistic view, educational reform would help to redeem commonly shared American values and bring ever closer to reality the new "democratic" society that was the true American destiny…As "the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large," the discourse of the Progressive school reformers embodied both the "social control" dimension so typical of Progressive rhetoric in general, and its more hopeful and millennialist aspiration to a new "national community"…school reformers envisioned a generalized Christian spirituality as the basis for an "intentionally progressive" democracy striving toward ever "more perfect union."

The actualization of the Progressive educational reform was often an "Americanization" program of "socialization" intended for both native and immigrant students. The socialization process of the curriculum also included differentiation and tracking so as reinforce class-based structures of the American economy. The end result of these reforms was "often profoundly undemocratic" and "culturally oppressive. Emirbayer gave Progressive educational reformers credit for being successful in "forging a broad-based coalition" around their distinctive "vision," which far outlasted all other Progressive reform initiatives and helped usher in a measure of "social stability" over the course of the 20th century.

Before we conclude this essay, we will look at two recent articles that have placed Progressive education within an international context and therefore complicate any conceptual usage of the term. Marjorie Lamberti studied Progressive education in Imperial Germany at the turn of the century in "Radical Schoolteachers and the Origins of the Progressive Education Movement in Germany, 1900-1914."[60] Lamberti chronicles the rise of the *neue Padagogik* (new pedagogy) and the *Arbeitsschule* (child-centered school) through the efforts of two predominant strains of Progressive reformers in Germany: radical reformers in Bremen and Hamburg, and more moderate Progressives in Saxony. Both schools of thought combined a critique of religious instruction in the schools (they wanted it more in line with Modernist scholarship, but not eliminated – although some of the radicals wanted it eliminated) and they put forward a broader critique of teaching practices that were teacher centered, fact oriented, and not in line with the new research in psychology. These Progressives drew upon German strains of Progressive pedagogy, German culture, and the new research in psychology at German universities, but several influential leaders had also been influenced by John Dewey's work, especially *The*

[60] Marjorie Lamberti, "Radical Schoolteachers and the Origins of the Progressive Education Movement in Germany, 1900 -1914," *History of Education Quarterly* 40 (Spring 2000): 22-48.

School and Society (1899). The more moderate and majority of German Progressives focused on child centered and learning-by-doing pedagogy that tailored curriculum and instruction to the developmental and psychological needs of the child, while also increasing the professionalization and autonomy of teachers as child development experts. Although Progressives represented a minority of German teachers, they had a deep impact on the profession and were able to convince the German Teachers' Association to adopt the "new pedagogy" during the national congress in May 1912, whereby active-learning was added to this organizations program of reform. This was seven years before the American Progressive Education Association was even founded.

Jurgen Herbst reviewed the English translation of a German handbook, which centered on the international context of Progressive education.[61] The book lacked a clear focus and covered several somewhat successful European Progressive educators and educational movements as well as some less successful attempts in other parts of the globe. In pondering the international aspect of Progressive education and the editor's conceptual befuddlement, Herbst rhetorically raised the question of "how far we want to extend the circle that includes activities we might want to classify under progressive education." "Are there no viable criteria of inclusion and exclusion? Does everything fit?" Herbst analyzed this question by way of a chapter on the development of progressive education in Europe by Jurgen Oelkers. Herbst summarized that ever since the Reformation "academic institutions were run by governmental authorities in the interest and for the benefit of the state," and thus European *Reformpadagogik* had existed alongside the state in "symbiotic relationship" as a "continuous structure" of counter-pedagogical practice stressing "the individualistic spirit" in "antagonistic" relation with the

[61] Jurgen Herbst, review of *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, ed. Hermann Rohrs and Volker Lenhart, *History of Education Quarterly* 37 (Spring 1997): 45-59.

standardization of nationalism. This suggests that since the Reformation Progressive education has been a social institution that has vied with nationalists over competing visions of the public sphere contained within the centralized organization of the state. In light of this conceptualization Herbst asked, "it may well be time now to ask whether there is such a thing as a theory of progressive education and, if there is, whether we should begin to debate and define it."

To conclude this discussion of Progressive education it would be helpful to first restate the conclusions of the last chapter. It is clear that there were many reformist groups of various political and ideological stripes at the turn of the 20th century, of which Progressivism was but one example. As a culturally homogeneous and economically secure social class (although uneasy in their security), Progressive reformers had the ability, education, and socio-economic resources to create many diverse voluntary organizations, including educational organizations, which they used to further various social, economic, political, and cultural causes. Progressives were animated on the whole by a Republican-Populist-Protestant infused ideological orientation that often blended capitalist, scientific, and professional methods, all under a politicized and racialized banner of WASP "Americanism."

Progressives sought many types of social change and aligned themselves with various other ideological groups to achieve reform coalitions on specific issues and initiatives, but they were primarily concerned with devising a clear and efficient *order* to harness modernity and industrialization under the tri-partite *control* of 1) a regulatory State integrated with 2) WASP civic associations and business corporations, and directed by 3) a technocratic elite. "Americanization" as a nationalistic and cultural identity was the *new order* the Progressives sought.

The Progressive educational "movement," to the extent that one can call it a movement outside of the organizational activities of PEA members and their associates, was most explicitly a general educational trend towards a more humane and child centered pedagogy often couched in the language of socialization and democracy – a general educational trend that was spreading across Europe as well. But Progressive education in the U.S. was also a cultural movement that sought to define a WASP America in its own ideology[62] and interests and, thereby, to socialize and acculturate American minorities into the dominant Anglo culture (to the extent that different minority groups were deemed worthy of acculturation in specific geographical contexts). Many minorities were deliberately excluded from Americanization or were offered inclusion on very demeaning, second-class terms. However, more liberal and radical strands of the Progressive movement, especially within its educational manifestations, articulated a more inclusive, community oriented, democratic, tolerant, and multicultural dimension to the Americanization program.

Although often in paternalistic, class-based, and racist language, these more liberal rhetorics of Americanization offered up democratic ideals that inspired minority populations to challenge the rhetorical Progressive platitudes of freedom, equality, and justice against the tarnished realities of the status quo. And arguably as minority populations mobilized, minority leaderships organized, and civil demonstrations multiplied, the more liberal Progressives began to modify their conceptions of the WASP Americanization program and replace it with a more inclusive and multicultural conception – so much so that over the course of the 20th century the liberal state's executive, legislative, and judicial branches would actually articulate and

[62] Carl F. Kaestle, "Ideology and American Educational History," *History of Education Quarterly* 22 (Summer 1982): 123-37. Kaestle defined the progressive ideology as a "moral culture based on Anglo-American Protestantism, republicanism, and capitalism" that asserted "centralist, assimilationist, and moralistic" values and

consecrate the civil rights of *all* Americans for the first time in the nation's history. Of course the more liberal Progressive rhetoric and the rising mobilization of minorities was countered and contested by a more conservative majority, and thus ensued over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st century a *struggle* – a cultural war – not only for the American *paideia*, but for the very meaning and "sacred center" of America. The Progressive Americanization movement is an unfinished project that defines the parameters of the 21st century, which as I write is still the outline of a contested battlefield, and education, as always, is at the center of the political struggle to define the cultural conception of a nation. At the heart of the conflict is a WASP culture that is loosing *control* – loosing the ability to exclusively define and delineate the *moral order* that is supposed to unite a nation. The roots of this conflict lie at the foundation of the Progressive era. The early 20th century Progressive movement, to the extent that there was a unified movement, embraced many offensive strategies to protect and preserve their WASP culture: discrimination, segregation, centralization, corporatization, and above all else public and private programs of "Americanization."

"cultural preferences." He called progressive reformers "hegemonic" because "they were didactic and ethnocentric" and tried to "promote publicly" their cultural value system through public education (128, 130).