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3

The History of Education

Our discussion of the history of education in the United States begins with the introduction of schooling in colonial America when Europeans settled in the colonies and began to devise systematic and deliberate forms of education for their children. Other forms of education existed in North America prior to European settlement. Native Americans educated their children within the structure of their communities and acculturated them into the rituals, obligations, and roles necessary for the maintenance and continuity of community life. Although such forms of education were extremely important, the development of U.S. schooling was heavily influenced by the European colonists as they adapted to life in North America.

There are many interpretations as to why education was so important to the early settlers and why it continues to be an important issue in contemporary society. Historians, such as Bernard Bailyn (1960), have attributed the use of the school to the failure of particular institutions such as the family, church, and community to provide the necessary tools demanded by the conditions of the new emerging society. Historian Merle Curti (1959/1971) attributed the use of formal schooling to the interests of the colonists in protecting freedoms such as thought, religion, and press—freedoms necessary for the maintenance of a democratic society. Regardless of the motives and intentions, it is important to look at the early versions of schools in order to understand how the present-day school evolved. What will become increasingly apparent are three ideas:

1. From its very inception, the school was charged with assuming roles that once were the province of family, church, and community.
2. The school continues to serve as a focal point in larger issues of societal needs.
3. There is little consensus on the motives for school reforms.

Old World and New World Education: The Colonial Era

Our discussion of the history of U.S. education begins with the settlers who brought their ideas about education to the New World. In general, the society of the Old World was highly stratified, and the view most Europeans held was that only the sons of the rich required an education since they would be the future ruling class. Thus, early affluent settlers such as planters and townsmen, particularly in the southern colonies, hired tutors for their sons and sent their sons back to England, if they could afford it, for their university educations.

It is interesting to note, however, that many of the wealthy colonists' sons did remain in the United States for their higher education, since nine institutions of higher learning were founded prior to the American Revolution. These were Harvard University (1636), College of William and Mary (1693), Yale University (1701), University of Pennsylvania (1740), Princeton University (1746), Columbia University (1754), Brown University (1764), Rutgers University (1766), and Dartmouth College (1769). However, the colleges themselves were not at all revolutionary. They taught most of the same subjects found at Oxford or Cambridge, and Greek and Latin were required subjects.

What becomes increasingly apparent in the history of U.S. education is that even before education began to formalize and acquire certain specific patterns, there emerged distinctly different themes regarding the purpose of education. For example, as just noted, the upper-class planter aristocracy and wealthy merchants saw education as a means of perpetuating the ruling class. Religious, utilitarian, and civic motives also emerged over time.

The religious impetus to formalize instruction can best be exemplified by the Puritans in New England who, early in 1642 and 1647, passed school laws commonly referred to as the *Old Deluder Laws*. The first law chastised parents for not attending to their children's "ability to read and understand the principles of religion and capital laws of this country" and fined them for their children's "wanton" and "immodest" behavior. Thus, the first law pointed to a problem among the young to which the parents failed to attend.

The second law was far more specific regarding formalized schooling. To keep the "old deluder" Satan away, the Massachusetts School Law of 1647 provided that every town that had "50 household" would appoint one person to teach all children, regardless of gender, to read and write. Furthermore, the town was required to pay the wages of the teacher. Towns that numbered "100 families or household" had to set up a grammar school (equivalent to a secondary school today) to prepare students for university studies. Towns that failed to comply were subject to fines. Thus, early in the nation's history, the theme of literacy as a means of teaching a Christian life was articulated.

The *Old Deluder Law* was not very popular throughout New England. Often, towns simply neglected to provide the education for their youth as dictated by law. However, it remains a landmark in the history of U.S. education, for it established a precedent for public responsibility for education.

The theme of utilitarianism as the purpose of education can best be seen through an examination of the ideas of Benjamin Franklin, who, in 1749, published "Proposals Related to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania." Franklin called for an education for youth based on secular and utilitarian courses of study rather than on the traditional studies of religion and classics. However, as Bailyn (1960) pointed out, Franklin did not define education along narrowly defined utilitarian principles. Rather, Franklin believed that "the purpose of schooling was to provide in systematic form what he had extemporized, haphazardly feeling his way" (p. 35). Thus, Franklin believed that students should pursue a course of study that would allow them mastery of process rather than rote learning. Reading, writing, public speaking, and art as a means of understanding creative expression would be integral components of the curriculum.

Utilitarian components of the curriculum would be practical aspects of mathematics, such as accounting and natural history (biology). Additionally, students would study history, geography, and political studies. Languages such as Latin and Greek would be available to students who wished to enter the ministry. Others, who sought commerce and trade as careers, might study more modern languages such as French, Italian, German, and Spanish.

Perhaps because of his own life experience, Benjamin Franklin fervently believed in the ability of people to better themselves. His faith in self-improvement through education and in an education that reflected practical concerns was not explored again until the nineteenth century. Franklin's proposal for an academy became the prototype for private secondary education in the United States. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, however, that public support for Franklin's ideas became a reality.

The civic motive for education is best illustrated through the ideas of the prominent American statesman Thomas Jefferson, who fervently believed that the best safeguard for democracy was a literate population. It was Jefferson who proposed to the Virginia Legislature in 1779, a "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," which would provide free education to all children for the first three years of elementary school. Jefferson, a product of enlightenment thinking, was

Jefferson: meritocratic elite

optimistic enough to think that if citizens possessed enough education to read newspapers and thus inform themselves of pressing public issues, they would make intelligent, informed decisions at the polls.

Jefferson's bill also provided for a limited meritocracy within the educational structure. After the initial three years of reading, writing, and "common arithmetic," all students could advance to 1 of 20 grammar schools within the state of Virginia, contingent on their payment of tuition. However, Jefferson proposed that each elementary school send one scholarship student to a grammar school. After two to three years of rigorous, classical studies (Latin, Greek, English grammar, geography, mathematics), the most promising scholarship student from among this group of 20 students would be selected for another funded four years of study, while the remaining group would be dismissed.

Finally, each grammar school would have the task of selecting 10 of its best students who would receive three-year scholarships to the College of William and Mary. Thus, Jefferson set forth in his bill a proposal for an aristocracy of talent, which would be nurtured and supported through a statewide educational structure. Unfortunately, Jefferson was ahead of his time; the majority of the state legislators agreed that the state should not be involved in educating its inhabitants and that, in any event, Jefferson's proposal required funds far beyond those possessed by the state of Virginia at that time.

The schools that were established in the United States during the colonial period varied greatly in the quality of instruction. In Puritan New England, often an elderly housewife (usually a widow) heard lessons, which consisted of recitations. These schools became known as *dame schools*. Elementary education, in the New England town school, established by the *Old Deluder Law*, consisted of such basic subjects as reading, writing, and religion. Students were taught by learning the alphabet: letters first, syllables and words next, and then sentences. There were few supplies and textbooks, except for the famous *New England Primer*. This book, sometimes referred to as the "Little Bible of New England," combined the teaching of reading with religious education, obedience, and citizenship. For example, in teaching the first letter of the alphabet, children would be treated to an illustration of Adam and Eve, the latter holding an apple given to her by a serpent, wrapped around a tree that was separating the couple, with the accompanying words: "A: In Adam's Fall/We Sinned, All." This book, which appeared about 1690, sold more than 3 million copies during the 1700s (Gutek, 1991).

Students were taught content mastery through memorization. They were taught writing skills by copying directly from the printed page or by taking dictation from the schoolmaster. Classes were ungraded; all students were housed in the same room and taught by a teacher who might have been either an indentured servant, a divinity student, or a village preacher. Strict disciplinary methods prevailed, which might be considered overly harsh by today's standards, perhaps influenced by the Puritan predilection to the "authoritarian temperament" of leadership (Button & Provenzano, 1989).

Secondary education, as it evolved in New England, was not coeducational, as was the elementary school; rather, it was for the sons of the elite who were usually tutored at home rather than receiving their primary schooling at the local town school. This school was called the *Latin Grammar School*, as the curriculum emphasized the teaching of Latin and Greek—languages of the educated elite in Europe. Ultimately, it served as a sorting device through which the newly formed Puritan elite in the United States could reproduce itself. Male students entered the *Latin Grammar School* at eight years of age and studied there for another eight years. They read classical texts such as Cicero and Caesar in Latin and Homer and Hesiod in Greek. Clearly, the emphasis here was not on a utilitarian education as later articulated by Franklin; rather, students were being "taught by example" from classical literature, which hopefully would enable them to function effectively as leaders in the Puritan oligarchy.

Education in the middle colonies was far more diverse than in Puritan New England, as the schools that emerged there reflected the vast religious and cultural differences of the region. Generally, education was the province of the colonies' numerous religious denominations, such as Dutch Reformed, Quaker, Roman Catholic, and Jewish. New York was dominated by the Dutch Reformed Church, which, like the Puritans, espoused the importance of literate congregations. When the English took over New York, they established charity schools, which were controlled by the Anglican Church. These schools emphasized reading, writing, arithmetic, catechism, and religion. In Pennsylvania, where English Quakers dominated the political and economic life of the colony, they also controlled education. However, in keeping with their humane attitude toward human life, the Quakers rejected the harsh treatment of children prevalent in the other colonies and paid more attention to individual children as they mastered reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion (Gutek, 1991).

Education in the South was largely confined to the upper class and took place at home on the plantation, since the vastness of these economic units made the construction of formal schools virtually impossible. Education was provided by tutors who might have been indentured servants, divinity students, impoverished second sons of European aristocrats, or convicts. Indeed, before the American Revolution, one observer reported that "two-thirds of the schoolmasters in Maryland were either indentured servants or convicts" (Wright, 1957, p. 101).

Both male and female children were educated on an aristocratic model: Classical studies were emphasized for boys, whereas dancing and music lessons were emphasized for girls. Although some Southern women may have shared their brothers' tutors, learning to master the social graces took precedence over Caesar in aristocratic Southern households. Occasionally, boys were sent away to school, most likely to England. Plantation management was learned by both sexes according to gender-specific roles. Girls were expected to master the domestic side of plantation management from their mothers, while boys learned the practical aspects from their fathers. Southern planters often sent their sons north to colonial colleges or to Europe to complete their education. However, by 1817, Jefferson wrote the "Rockfish Gap Report," the report of the Commission to establish a public university in Virginia, leading to the establishment of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The university was based on Jefferson's model of a natural aristocracy based on talent, or what later was called a *meritocracy*.

On the eve of the American Revolution, almost all of the African-American population of one-half million were slaves. As Gutek (1991) observed,

In being uprooted from their native Africa, the blacks were torn from their own culture and thrust into an environment not merely inhospitable, but completely alien. As slaves the African blacks were undergoing induction into a society vastly different from that of their homeland. (p. 10)

Few members of this group could read or write. Those who could, more often than not, had received their instruction outside of existing formal schools, for "it appears that only a handful attended school along with the whites" (Cremin, 1972, pp. 194–195). Schools that did exist for African-Americans were usually sponsored by church groups, in particular Anglicans and Quakers (Button & Provenzano, 1989). Few slave owners were willing to support formal education for their slaves, since literacy was not directly connected to their work. Moreover, many feared that literate slaves would be more likely to lead insurrections. Although African-Americans were kept illiterate as part of their subordinate position both on plantations and in the cities, some managed to learn skills as artisans, working as carpenters, coopers, wainwrights, farriers, coachmen, and skilled domestics.

Formal schooling for Native Americans was largely confined to missionary activities. In Virginia, the colonists at first attempted to establish "friendly" relations with their Native American

neighbors. However, after hostilities broke out in 1622, they decided that "the way of conquering them is much more easy than of civilizing them by fair means" (Cremin, 1972, p. 194). There were some mildly successful educative endeavors in New England, particularly in Cambridge and Roxbury, which were directed by individual schoolmasters to prepare Native Americans for the Indian College that was established at Harvard University in approximately 1653. This Indian College, as Wright (1957) noted, was brought about largely due to the misguided belief held by some educated whites that "Indians were merely awaiting the opportunity to embrace classical scholarship and learn Cicero's orations" (p. 116). Ultimately, this experiment resulted in failure and was the first example of attempting to educate Native Americans by assimilating them into European culture. As in the case of African-Americans, this period represents the beginning of the marginalization of Native Americans with respect to formal schooling.

The Age of Reform: The Rise of the Common School

Historians point to the period from 1820 to 1860 in the United States as one in which enormous changes took place with unprecedented speed. The Industrial Revolution, which began in the textile industry in England, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and brought its factory system with its new machinery to urban areas, particularly in the North. Urban clusters grew more dense as migrants from agricultural areas and immigrants from Europe flocked to the factories, looking for work. By 1850, these immigrants included a significant group of Roman Catholics who were escaping starvation in Ireland. Westward expansion, aided in part by the revolution in transportation and in part by the land hunger of pioneers, extended to settlements in Oregon and California by 1850.

By 1828, when Andrew Jackson was elected president, all men (except slaves and emotionally disturbed persons) had obtained the right to vote. Thus, the founding fathers' visions of a political democracy were increasingly becoming a reality.

In the decades following 1815, groups of reformers—quite different from such archetypes of rationalism as Franklin and Jefferson—emerged. These men and women often lacked higher education and did not hold public office but often articulated their ideas with the fervor of evangelical Christianity. However, their ultimate goals were secular in nature. America, once seen as the New Jerusalem by the Puritans, would become a secular paradise created by the new reformers.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a New England essayist and philosopher, wrote of this age, "We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform." Although the reform movement attempted to address such diverse societal problems as slavery, mental illness, intemperance, and pacifism, many reformers generally believed that the road to secular paradise was through education.

By 1820, it had become evident to those interested in education that the schools that had been established by the pre-war generation were not functioning effectively. Webster's *New England Primer* had been secularized so that the first line "In Adam's Fall/We Sinned, All" was replaced by "A was an Apple Pie made by the Cook" (Malone & Rauch, 1960, p. 491), but few children had access to the reader. The vast majority of Americans were, not surprisingly, illiterate. Even in New England, with its laws specifying common schools, towns neglected or evaded their duties. In other parts of the country, charity schools provided the only opportunities for disadvantaged children to obtain an education.

Mann: The great equalizer

The struggle for free public education was led by Horace Mann of Massachusetts. Abandoning a successful career as a lawyer, Mann lobbied for a state board of education, and when the Massachusetts legislature created one in 1837, Horace Mann became its first secretary, an office he occupied for 11 years. His annual reports served as models for public school reforms throughout the nation, and, partly due to Mann's efforts, the first state *normal school* (from the French *école normale*), or teacher training school, was established in Lexington, Massachusetts, in 1839.

Mann's arguments for the establishment of the common school, or free publicly funded elementary schools, reflects both the concern for stability and order and the concern for social mobility—both of which were to be addressed through free public education. Admittedly, Mann could not have been immune to the waves of different immigrant groups that were changing the cultural composition of the cities. Nor could he fail to be immune to the goals of his audiences, often the wealthy factory owners, who had to be convinced to support public education. Thus, he spoke of school as a preparation for citizenship as well as the "balance wheel"—"the great equalizer of the conditions of men."

Although many historians, particularly liberals and conservatives, view Mann as one of America's greatest educational reformers, radicals take issue with his arguments, pointing to the common school as a pernicious device for teaching skills such as hygiene, punctuality, and rudimentary skills that would create docile, willing workers. Whatever interpretation one chooses, Mann's belief that schools can change the social order and that education can foster social mobility are beliefs responsible for the faith and support many people give to U.S. public schools.

Opposition to Public Education

Not all groups subscribed to the idea of the common school. The same arguments made today by people without children or people who send their children to private schools in opposition to public support of schools were articulated against the common school Horace Mann envisioned. For example, taxation for public education was viewed as "unjust" by nonrecipients. Roman Catholics, who viewed the common school as dominated by a Protestant ethos, founded their own schools. However, by 1860, public support of elementary schools was becoming prevalent throughout the United States. Education beyond the elementary level, however, was primarily a province of private academies. Nonetheless, in 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Act, which authorized the use of public money to establish public land grant universities, resulting in the establishment of large state universities, especially in the Midwest.

Education for Women and African-Americans

Traditionally, the role of a woman in Western society has been that of helpmate or homemaker to the male, who assumed the role of provider. This role for women was vividly described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile*, written in the eighteenth century. Rousseau, in his tract on education, created the female character, Sophie, who was to be the companion of the central male character, Emile, the recipient of a nontraditional but rigorous education. Sophie was encouraged to eat sweets, learn womanly arts, and be a supportive, loving helpmate to Emile.

This prescriptive role for women held sway throughout the nineteenth century and, for some, into the twentieth century as well. Generally, education for women was viewed as biologically harmful or too stressful. Thus, through the first half of the nineteenth century, educational opportunities for women were severely limited. Few females achieved an education other than rudimentary literacy and numeracy.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, a significant number of girls attended elementary schools and many were admitted to private academies, which functioned as secondary schools. By 1820, the movement for education for women in the United States was making important inroads.

In 1821, Emma Hart Willard opened the Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York. The curriculum at this female seminary included so-called serious subjects of study, such as mathematics, science, history, and geography. Modeled on the curriculum of single-sex male academies, Troy Female Seminary sought to deliver an education to females that was similar to that of their male

counterparts. In subsequent years, other female reformers dedicated to education for women, such as Catharine Esther Beecher and Mary Lyon, opened schools for females. A pioneer in postsecondary education for women, Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke Seminary in 1837. Entry requirements (with the exception of a foreign language) and level of instruction were the same for women as for men at their institutions of higher learning.

Higher education for women did not remain the exclusive domain of Eastern reformers; the movement for female education spread quickly through the Midwest. In 1833, Oberlin Collegiate Institute in Ohio opened its doors to women as well as African-Americans. In 1856, the University of Iowa became the first state university to admit women. In 1865, Vassar College, the first of the Seven Sisters women's colleges, was founded in Poughkeepsie, New York. Shortly after, Wellesley College and Smith Colleges in Massachusetts were founded, and Mount Holyoke and Bryn Mawr Seminaries became colleges.

Although educational opportunities for women were expanding during the period preceding the Civil War, education for African-Americans was severely limited. After Nat Turner's Revolt in 1831, Southerners believed more than ever that literacy bred both insubordination and revolution. Thus, they forbade the teaching of reading and writing to the slave population. In the North, education for African-Americans was usually of inferior quality and separate from the mainstream public school, if provided at all by the public.

This dismal picture of schooling for African-Americans prompted African-American Benjamin Roberts to file a legal suit in Boston in 1846 over the requirement that his daughter attend a segregated school. In a precedent-setting case, Roberts v. City of Boston, the court ruled that the local school committee had the right to establish separate educational facilities for whites and blacks. As a result of this ruling, African-Americans were encouraged to establish their own schools. These were usually administered by their churches and aided in part through funds from abolitionists. During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which announced the end of slavery in all states in rebellion against the Union. In 1865, several months after the end of the Civil War, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which freed four million slaves. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, giving full citizenship to ex-slaves. Although this amendment and the Freedman's Bureau attempted to reconstruct the South's economy and include blacks as full citizens, the Ku Klux Klan continued to spread racial hatred, and Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes in the South continued discrimination against Blacks. Its equal protection clause, however, has been applied to important legal decisions regarding education. In 1868, the Freedman's Bureau helped to establish historically Black Colleges, including Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Hampton Institute in Virginia. However, the problem of equality of opportunity, in general, and school segregation, in particular, continued to be a significant issue throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Andersen, 1988).

Urbanization and the Progressive Impetus

The beginning of the nineteenth century ushered in the First Industrial Revolution—immigration and urbanization of unprecedented proportions. Accordingly, the conditions created by these events were met with responses from social reformers whose concerns were far reaching and who attempted to address and redress the evils in U.S. life.

If the beginning of the nineteenth century seemed problematic to Americans, the close of the century must have been even more so. Again, there was a revolution in industry, referred to as the Second Industrial Revolution, this time involving steam-driven and electric-powered machinery. Factories had given way to gigantic corporations, under the control of such captains of industry as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and Cornelius Vanderbilt. Significantly, immigrant labor played an essential role in this revolution.

Elementary

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the largest number of immigrants to the United States came from the northwestern part of Europe—namely, Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and the Netherlands. After 1890, an increasingly large number of immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe. These immigrants' languages, customs, and living styles were dramatically different from those of the previous group. They settled in closely crowded substandard living quarters in urban areas and found work in factories. Thus, by the turn of the century, U.S. cities contained enormous concentrations of both wealth and poverty. Indeed, the gap between rich and poor had never been as great as it was at the close of the nineteenth century.

Thus far in this chapter, we have argued that the purpose of education has been seen in a variety of ways: religious, utilitarian, civic, and, with Mann, social mobility. The common school was born of an age of reform in this country that was unprecedented until the period between 1900 and 1914 in which a new reform movement, the Progressive Movement, would sweep the country. Progressive reformers insisted on government regulation of industry and commerce, as well as government regulation and conservation of the nation's natural resources. Moreover, progressive reformers insisted that government at national, state, and local levels be responsive to the welfare of its citizens rather than to the welfare of corporations. Significantly, progressive reforms had a sweeping agenda, ranging from secret ballot to schooling. As reformers, such as Horace Mann, in the nineteenth century had looked to schools as a means of addressing social problems, so reformers once again looked to schools as a means of preserving and promoting democracy within the new social order.

Dewey An important U.S. philosopher whose influence on schooling is still very much with us today was John Dewey (1859–1952). Dewey was a contemporary of such reformers as "Fighting Bob La Follette," governor of Wisconsin and architect of the "Wisconsin Idea," which harnessed the expertise of university professors to the mechanics of state government; settlement workers, such as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald; and municipal reformers and labor leaders, such as Henry Brue and John Golden. Thus, progressive education, the movement with which John Dewey has become associated, can best be understood, as both historians Lawrence Cremin and Richard Hofstadter remind us, as part of "a broader program of social and political reform called the Progressive Movement" (Cremin, 1961, p. 88).

Just as the schools today are undergoing a transformation due in part to rapidly changing technology, altered life-styles, and new, massive waves of immigrants, it could be argued that the schools at the turn of the twentieth century were undergoing a similar transformation in their time. In 1909, for example, 57.8 percent of the children in schools in 37 of the largest cities in the United States were foreign born (Cremin, 1961, p. 72). Suddenly, teachers were faced with problems of putative uncleanliness (bathing became part of the school curriculum in certain districts), and teachers began to teach basic socialization skills. Just how these socialization skills have come to be interpreted, whether malevolently by radical historians or benevolently by liberal and conservative historians, is of little concern here. What is important is to consider how Dewey proposed to meet these challenges through education and how his ideas were interpreted by progressive disciples in such a way as to alter the course of schooling in this country.

John Dewey was born and raised in Vermont. By 1894, he had become thoroughly enmeshed in the problems of urbanization as a resident of Chicago and Chair of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago. Distressed with the abrupt dislocation of families from rural to urban environments, concerned with the loss of traditional ways of understanding the maintenance of civilization, and anxious about the effects unleashed individualism and rampant materialism would have on a democratic society, Dewey sought answers in pedagogic practice (see Westbrook, 1991, for an in-depth biography).

Dewey argued in *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), *The School and Society* (1899), and *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) for a restructuring of schools along the lines of "embryonic communities."

Dewey: Lever of social progression

He advocated the creation of a curriculum that would allow for the child's interests and developmental level while introducing the child to "the point of departure from which the child can trace and follow the progress of mankind in history, getting an insight also into the materials used and the mechanical principles involved" (Dworkin, M.S., 1959, p. 43).

Dewey believed that the result of education was growth, which was firmly posited within a democratic society. Thus, school for Dewey was "that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends" (Dworkin, M.S., 1959, p. 22).

To implement his ideas, Dewey created the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. There, children studied basic subjects in an integrated curriculum, since, according to Dewey, "the child's life is an integral, a total one" and therefore the school should reflect the "completeness" and "unity" of "the child's own world" (Dworkin, M.S., 1959, p. 93). Dewey advocated active learning, starting with the needs and interests of the child; he emphasized the role of experience in education and introduced the notion of teacher as facilitator of learning rather than the font from which all knowledge flows. The school, according to Dewey, was a "miniature community, an embryonic society" (Dworkin, M.S., 1959, p. 41) and discipline was a tool that would develop "a spirit of social cooperation and community life" (Dworkin, M.S., 1959, p. 40).

That John Dewey made important contributions to both philosophy of education and pedagogic practice is undisputable, especially if one examines what happened to education in the wake of Dewey's early work. It is important to keep in mind just how rapidly education had expanded in this period. For example, in 1870, about 6.5 million children from ages 5 through 18 attended school; in 1880, about 15.5 million children attended school—a significant increase, indeed. No fewer than 31 states by 1900 had enacted compulsory education laws. Thus, what occurred in schools throughout this nation was to influence large numbers of Americans.

Although few can dispute Dewey's influence on educational reformers, many believe that Dewey was often misread, misunderstood, and misinterpreted. Thus, Dewey's emphasis on the child's impulses, feelings, and interests led to a form of progressive education that often became synonymous with permissiveness, and his emphasis on vocations ultimately led the way for "life adjustment" curriculum reformers.

Psychologists as well as philosophers became actively involved in educational reform. In fact, two distinctly different approaches to progressive educational reforms became apparent: the child-centered pedagogy of G. Stanley Hall and the social efficiency pedagogy of Edward L. Thorndike.

G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924), once referred to as "the Darwin of the mind" (Cremin, 1961, p. 101), believed that children, in their development, reflected the stages of development of civilization. Thus, according to Hall, schools should tailor their curriculums to the stages of child development. Hall argued that traditional schools stifled the child's natural impulses, and he suggested that schools individualize instruction and attend to the needs and interests of the children they educate. This strand of progressive reform became known as child-centered reform.

On the opposite side of child-centered reform was social engineering reform, proposed by Edward L. Thorndike. Thorndike (1874–1949) placed his emphasis on the organism's response to its environment. Working with animals in the laboratory, he came to the conclusion that human nature could be altered for better or worse, depending on the education to which it was subjected. Ultimately, Thorndike came to believe that schools could change human beings in a positive way and that the methods and aims of pedagogy to achieve this would be scientifically determined (Cremin, 1961, p. 114).

Thorndike's work, Frederick Winslow Taylor's work in scientific management, and that of other progressive thinkers encouraged educators to be "socially efficient" in the ways they went about educating students. In particular, this thinking led to a belief that schools should be a meaningful experience for students and that schools should prepare students to earn a living. It also suggested

that schools might begin to educate students based on their abilities or talents. In particular, a leading proponent of this view was educational reformer Franklin Bobbitt. An issue of particular importance, although never resolved, was Bobbitt's scientific approach to curriculum design (a curriculum designer, according to Bobbitt, was like a "great engineer"). The purpose of curriculum design was to create a curriculum that would include the full range of human experience and prepare students for life.

Education for All: The Emergence of the Public High School

Prior to 1875, fewer than 25,000 students were enrolled in public high schools. Most adolescents who were engaged in some form of secondary education attended private academies that were either traditional, college preparatory schools, or vocational schools (such as Franklin had proposed a century earlier). These academies taught not only academic subjects but also vocational ones. Yet, between 1880 and 1920, 2,382,542 students attended public high schools (Gutek, 1991, p. 122), probably outnumbering those who attended academies, and by 1940, about 6.5 million students attended public high school (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1989b, p. 45). In a scant 40 years or so, a structure for the high school had to be put in place and debates had to be resolved regarding the purpose of secondary education.

One of the great changes that has affected high school attendance is that "whereas once it was altogether voluntary, and for this reason quite selective, it is now, at least for those sixteen and under, compulsory and unselective" (Hofstadter, 1966, p. 326). Compulsory school laws grew steadily. In 1890, 27 states had them; by 1918, all states followed suit, encouraged by court cases, such as the one in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1874, which paved the way for the school districts' right to levy taxes to support public high schools.

In examining the evolution of the high school, what becomes immediately apparent is the tension in society over the meaning and purpose of education—a debate that began with the ideas of Jefferson and Franklin, that was augmented by the arguments of Horace Mann, and that was made even more complex with the ideas of progressive educators.

Historian Diane Ravitch has pointed to four themes in particular that were troubling high school educators at the turn of the century. The first was the tension between classical subjects, such as Latin and Greek, and modern subjects, such as science, English literature, and foreign languages. The second was the problem of meeting college entrance requirements, since different colleges required different courses of study. The third involved educators who believed that students should study subjects that would prepare them for life, as opposed to traditional academic subjects. And the fourth, inextricably linked to the other three, was whether all students should pursue the same course of study or whether the course of study should be determined by the interests and abilities of the students (Ravitch, 1983, pp. 136–137).

In order to address the reality that by the 1890s "the high school curriculum had begun to resemble a species of academic jungle creeper, spreading thickly and quickly in many directions at once" (cited in Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985, p. 240) and to clarify the purpose of a high school education, a Committee of Ten was formed by the National Education Association, headed by Harvard University President Charles Eliot. The committee issued its report in 1893, supporting the academic purpose of secondary education and dismissing curricula differentiation. It argued that the purpose of secondary education was to prepare students for "the duties of life" (quoted in Ravitch, 1983, p. 138). Furthermore, the committee recommended that modern academic subjects be awarded the same stature as traditional ones. It proposed five model curricula, including classical and modern languages, English, mathematics, history, and science—in essence, a liberal arts curriculum. Finally, the committee recommended that all students should be taught in the same manner: it was conspicuously silent on the subject of vocational education.

Secondary

The Committee of Ten's recommendations were subsequently reinforced in two ways. The first was through the National Education Association's (NEA's) newly established committee on college entrance requirements, which recommended that all high school students study a core of academic subjects. The second was through the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's adoption of the same core courses, which became known as Carnegie units and which were implemented in high schools throughout the country.

Not to be ignored was the progressive response to the Committee of Ten. In 1918, the NEA's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools made its report, which became known as the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*. These principles, harkening back to the work of men such as G. Stanley Hall and supported by the "neutral measurement" work of Edward F. Thorndike, opened the door to a curriculum less academically demanding and far more utilitarian than the one proposed by Charles Eliot's Committee of Ten. Essentially, the Cardinal Principles, or the main goals of secondary education, were:

1. Health
2. Command of fundamental processes
3. Worthy home-membership
4. Vocation
5. Citizenship
6. Worthy use of leisure
7. Ethical character (Ravitch, 1983, p. 146)

For many educators, these Cardinal Principles helped to resolve the difficulty of educating students who were not college bound (at this time, only a small group of students in U.S. high schools expected to attend college). Educational historian David Cohen stated, "Americans quickly built a system around the assumption that most students didn't have what it took to be serious about the great issues of human life, and that even if they had the wit, they had neither the will nor the futures that would support heavy-duty study" (cited in Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985, p. 245).

The final curriculum reform and a logical conclusion to the direction educational reform took during the period preceding the Second World War was the *"Education for Life Adjustment"* movement, first proposed in a lecture at Harvard University by Charles Prosser in 1939. Concerned with the failure of educators to enact any meaningful changes during the Depression years, Prosser proposed a curriculum for the nation's high schools, which addressed the practical concerns of daily living. Prosser's ideas were not entirely new; in fact, they could be said to be the logical conclusion of educators who believed, in the final analysis, that not all students were able to master serious academic subject matter.

However, Prosser and his apostles sought life adjustment courses not just for those at the bottom of the educational ladder but for all high school students. As Hofstadter (1966) aptly observed, "American utility and American democracy would now be realized in the education of all youth" (p. 353). Students who once studied chemistry might study "the testing of detergents; not physics, but how to drive and service a car; not history, but the operation of the local gas works" (p. 356). As historians, Richard Hofstadter and David Cohen are quick to point out that this phase in educational reform exemplifies both the unbridled faith Americans have in education and the ambivalent feelings they harbor toward the life of the mind.

The Post-World War II Equity Era: 1945–1980 Post-secondary

During the post-World War II period, the patterns that emerged during the Progressive Era were continued. First, the debate about the goals of education (i.e., academic, social, or both) and

whether all children should receive the same education remained an important one. Second, the demand for the expansion of educational opportunity became perhaps the most prominent feature of educational reform. Whereas the Common School era opened access to elementary education and the Progressive Era to secondary education, the post-World War II years were concerned with expanding opportunities to the post-secondary level. They were also directed at finding ways to translate these expanded opportunities into more equal educational outcomes at all levels of education. As in the first half of the twentieth century, so too in the second half, the compatibility of expanded educational opportunity with the maintenance of educational standards would create significant problems. Thus, the tensions between equity and excellence became crucial in the debates of this period.

Cycles of Reform: Progressive and Traditional

The post-World War II years witnessed the continuation of the processes that defined the development of the comprehensive high school. The debates over academic issues, begun at the turn of the twentieth century, may be defined as the movement between pedagogical progressivism and pedagogical traditionalism. This movement focuses not only on the process of education but on its goals. At the center of these debates are the questions regarding the type of education children should receive and whether all children should receive the same education. Although many of these debates focused on curriculum and method, they ultimately were associated with the question of equity versus excellence.

Perhaps these debates can be best understood by examining reform cycles of the twentieth century that revolved between progressive and traditional visions of schooling. On one hand, traditionalists believed in knowledge-centered education, a traditional subject-centered curriculum, teacher-centered education, discipline and authority, and the defense of academic standards in the name of excellence. On the other hand, progressives believed in experiential education, a curriculum that responded to both the needs of students and the times, child-centered education, freedom and individualism, and the relativism of academic standards in the name of equity. Although these poles and educational practices rarely were in only one direction, the conflicts over educational policies and practices seemed to move back and forth between these two extremes. From 1945 to 1955, the progressive education of the previous decades was critically attacked.

These critics, including Mortimer Smith, Robert Hutchins, and Arthur Bestor, assailed the progressive education for its sacrificing of intellectual goals to social ones. They argued that the life adjustment education of the period, combined with an increasingly anti-intellectual curriculum, destroyed the traditional academic functions of schooling. Arthur Bestor, a respected historian and a graduate of the Lincoln School (one of the early progressive schools in New York City) argued that it was "regressive education," not progressive education, that had eliminated the school's primary role in teaching children to think (Ravitch, 1983, p. 76). Bestor, like the other critics, assailed the schools for destroying the democratic vision that all students should receive an education that was once reserved for the elite. He suggested that the social and vocational emphasis of the schools indicated a belief that all students could not learn academic material. In an ironic sense, many of the conservative critics were agreeing with the radical critique that the Progressive Era distorted the ideals of democratic education by tracking poor and working-class children into nonacademic vocational programs.

Throughout the 1950s, the debate between progressives who defended the social basis of the curriculum and critics who demanded a more academic curriculum raged on. What was often referred to as "the great debate" (Ravitch, 1983, p. 79) ended with the Soviet launching of the space satellite *Sputnik*. The idea that the Soviets would win the race for space resulted in a national commitment to improve educational standards in general and to increase mathematical and

scientific literacy in particular. From 1957 through the mid-1960s, the emphasis shifted to the pursuit of excellence, and curriculum reformers attempted to redesign the curricula in ways that would lead to the return of academic standards (although many doubted that such a romantic age ever existed).

By the mid-1960s, however, the shift in educational priorities moved again toward the progressive side. This occurred in two distinct but overlapping ways. First, the Civil Rights movement, as we will discuss, led to an emphasis on equity issues. Thus, federal legislation, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, emphasized the education of disadvantaged children. Second, in the context of the antiwar movement of the times, the general criticism of U.S. society, and the persistent failure of the schools to ameliorate problems of poverty and of racial minorities, a "new progressivism" developed that linked the failure of the schools to the problems in society. Ushered in by the publication of A. S. Neill's *Summerhill* in 1960—a book about an English boarding school with few, if any, rules and that was dedicated to the happiness of the child—the new progressivism provided an intellectual and pedagogical assault on the putative sins of traditional education, its authoritarianism, its racism, its misplaced values of intellectualism, and its failure to meet the emotional and psychological needs of children.

The new progressivism developed during one of the most turbulent decades in American history (Cavallo, 1999). Colleges and universities became sites of protests by the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements. In 1964, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a radical group of students headed by Tom Hayden at the University of Michigan, issued the *Port Huron Statement*, a radical critique of U.S. society and a call for action by U.S. students. In the same year, the University of California, Berkeley, Free Speech Movement, led by Mario Savio, protested university rules limiting assembly and demonstrations on campus. In 1968, African-American students went on strike at San Francisco State University, resulting in the resignation of its president. Its new president, S. I. Hayakawa, a law and order advocate, threatened to suspend anyone who interfered with the college. The strike ended after a number of months, with each side declaring victory. At the same time, African-American students took over Willard Straight Hall at Cornell University. Faced with threats to take over the entire university by the African-American Society (AAS) and SDS, President James Perkins agreed to consider their demands without reprimands. Downstate, New York City police were called in to end a takeover of the Columbia University library. SDS-led students protesting the Vietnam War and the university's plan to build a gymnasium in the neighboring Morningside Heights section of Harlem were removed forcefully. Finally, on May 4, 1970, four students at Kent State University, protesting the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, were killed by the Ohio National Guard called in by Governor James Rhodes after protesters burned down the Army ROTC building. These killings, memorialized by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's haunting words, "four dead in Ohio, four dead in Ohio" in their song *Ohio*, resulted in mass demonstrations at colleges and universities throughout the United States, but also in the beginning of the end of the antiwar movement. When students recognized that the government would kill them, the protests began to slowly subside.

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, a variety of books provided scathing criticism of U.S. education. These included Jonathon Kozol's *Death at an Early Age* (1967), which assailed the racist practices of the Boston public schools; Herbert Kohl's *36 Children* (1967), which demonstrated the pedagogical possibilities of open education; and Charles S. Silberman's *Crisis in the Classroom* (1969), which attacked the bureaucratic, stultifying mindlessness of U.S. education. These books, along with a series of articles by Joseph Featherstone, and Beatrice and Ronald Gross on British progressive education (or open education), resulted in significant experimentation in some schools. Emphasis on individualism and relevant education, along with the challenge to the unquestioned authority of the teacher, resulted in alternative, free (or open) education—schooling that once again shifted attention away from knowledge (product) to process.

Although there is little evidence to suggest that the open classroom was a national phenomenon, and as the historian Larry Cuban noted in his history of teaching, *How Teachers Taught* (1984), there was surprisingly little variation in teaching methods during the twentieth century—that is, despite the cycles of debate and reform, most secondary teachers still lectured more than they involved students. Nonetheless, the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s was a time of great turmoil in the educational arena. The time was marked by two simultaneous processes: (1) the challenge to traditional schooling and (2) the attempt to provide educational opportunity for the disadvantaged. In order to understand the latter, one must look back to the origins of the concerns for equity.

Equality of Opportunity

The demand for equality of opportunity, as we have noted, has been a central feature of U.S. history. From the Jeffersonian belief in a meritocratic elite, to Mann's vision of schooling as a "great equalizer," to Dewey's notion that the schools would be a "lever of social progress," U.S. reformers have pointed to the schools as capable of solving problems of inequality. More importantly, as Lawrence Cremin (1990) pointed out, Americans have expected their schools to solve social, political, and economic problems, and have placed on the schools "all kinds of millennial hopes and expectations" (p. 92). While this has been true throughout America's history, the translation of this view into concrete policy has defined the postwar years and has helped explain the increasing politicization of the educational conflicts.

Immediately following the Second World War, the issue of access to educational opportunity became an important one. The GI Bill of Rights offered 16 million servicemen and women the opportunity to pursue higher education. Ravitch (1983, pp. 12–13) pointed out that the GI Bill was the subject of considerable controversy over the question of access and excellence. On one hand, veterans' groups, Congress, and other supporters believed the bill provided both a just reward for national service and a way to avoid massive unemployment in the postwar economy. Further, although aimed at veterans, it was part of the growing policy to provide access to higher education to those who, because of economic disadvantage and/or poor elementary and secondary preparation, had heretofore been denied the opportunity to attend college. On the other hand, critics such as Robert Maynard Hutchins, chancellor at the University of Chicago, and James Conant, president of Harvard University, feared that the policy would threaten the traditional meritocratic selection process and result in the lowering of academic standards (Ravitch, 1983, p. 13).

Despite these criticisms, the GI Bill, according to Ravitch (1983), was "the most ambitious venture in mass higher education that had ever been attempted by any society" (p. 14). Furthermore, she noted that the evidence does not suggest a decline in academic standards but rather a refreshing opening of the elite postsecondary education system. Historians and policy makers may disagree about the success of the GI Bill, but it is clear that it represented a building block in the post-World War II educational expansion. This expansion was similar to previous expansions, first in the Common School Era to compulsory elementary education, second in the Progressive Era to the high school, and in the post-World War II years to postsecondary education. The same types of questions left unresolved, especially from the Progressive Era, as to whether mass public education was possible, would become central points of controversy in the coming years.

Although the GI Bill set an important precedent, the issue of educational inequality for the poor and disadvantaged, in general, and for African-Americans in particular, became the focus of national attention and debate during this period. From the years immediately following the Second World War to the present, the questions of equality of opportunity at all levels have been significant areas of concern. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the relationships between race and

education, and the question of school segregation were at the forefront of political, educational, and moral conflicts.

Race, as much as any other single issue in U.S. history, has challenged the democratic ethos of the American dream. The ideals of equality of opportunity and justice have been contradicted by the actual practices concerning African-Americans and other minorities. Although legally guaranteed equal protection by the Fourteenth Amendment, African-Americans continue to experience vast inequities. Nowhere was this more evident than in education.

The post-Civil War Reconstruction period, despite the constitutional amendments enacted to guarantee equality of treatment before the law, had little positive effect on African-Americans, especially in the South. During the latter years of the nineteenth century, the Supreme Court successfully blocked civil rights legislation. In the famous 1896 decision relating to education, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Court upheld a Louisiana law that segregated railway passengers by race. In what is commonly referred to as its "separate but equal" doctrine, the Court upheld the constitutionality of segregated facilities. In his famous dissenting opinion, Justice John Marshall Harlan stated:

In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our constitution is color blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man, and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved . . . (cited in Ravitch, 1983, p. 120)

Despite Justice Harlan's interpretation that the Constitution guaranteed a colorblind treatment of all citizens, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision remained the precedent through the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1930s and 1940s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) initiated a campaign to overthrow the law, with school segregation a major component of its strategy.

The proper education of African-Americans became a controversial subject for African-American leaders. In 1895, Alabama Tuskegee Institute's Booker T. Washington gave his "Atlanta Compromise Speech" at the Atlanta Exposition, arguing that blacks should be more thrifty and industrious, and should pursue vocational education to prepare them for work in the new Southern industrial economy. In 1903, W. E. B. DuBois, a Harvard Ph.D. and professor at Atlanta University, published *The Souls of Black Folk*, which criticized Booker T. Washington's vocational approach to education as assimilationist. DuBois called for academic education and Civil Rights protest against institutional racism.

The unequal and separate education of African-Americans in the South became a focal point of the civil rights movements of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Although the *Plessy* decision supported separate and equal, it was apparent to civil rights advocates that the schools were anything but equal. Furthermore, in terms of both educational opportunities and results, African-Americans in both the North and South received nothing approximating equal treatment.

After a series of victories, the advocates of civil rights won their major victory on May 17, 1954, when, in its landmark decision in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that state-imposed segregation of schools was unconstitutional. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote,

It is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right that must be made available to all on equal terms. (cited in Ravitch, 1983, p. 127)

Thus, the Supreme Court reversed the "separate but equal" doctrine enshrined in the *Plessy* case, and stated that separate educational institutions are unequal in and of themselves.

Although there would be considerable conflict in the implementation of the ruling, and although many legal scholars criticized both the basis and scope of the decision, the *Brown* decision marked both a symbolic and concrete affirmation of the ethos of democratic schooling. Although a compelling victory, *Brown* served to underscore the vast discrepancies between what Myrdal (1944) pointed to as the American belief in equality and the American reality of inequality. In the coming years, the fight for equality of opportunity for African-Americans and other minorities would be a salient feature of educational reform. The *Brown* decision may have provided the legal foundation for equality, but the unequal results of schooling in the United States did not magically change in response to the law.

In the years following the 1955 *Brown II* decision, which ordered desegregation "with all deliberate speed," the battle for equality of opportunity was fought on a number of fronts with considerable conflict and resistance. The attempt to desegregate schools in the South first, and later in the North, resulted in confrontation and, at times, violence. For example, in Little Rock, Arkansas, President Eisenhower sent federal troops to enforce desegregation in 1957. When Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus responded to the Supreme Court's refusal to delay desegregation by closing Little Rock's high schools, the federal courts declared the Arkansas school closing laws unconstitutional. Thus, events in Little Rock made it clear that the federal government would not tolerate continued school segregation. Although protests continued in the South into the 1960s, it was apparent that the segregationists would lose their battle to defend a Southern tradition.

The issue of school desegregation, however, was not an exclusively Southern matter. In the Northern cities and metropolitan area suburbs, where housing patterns resulted in segregated schools, the issue of de jure (segregation by law) segregation was often less clear. Where de facto segregation existed (that is, the schools were not segregated intentionally by law but by neighborhood housing patterns), the constitutional precedent for desegregation under *Brown* was shaky. Nonetheless, the evidence in the North of unequal educational opportunities based on race was clear. Thus, civil rights advocates pressed for the improvement of urban schools and for their desegregation.

The desegregation conflicts in Boston, every bit as embittered as in the South, demonstrated the degree to which the issue divided its citizens. As recently as the 1970s and early 1980s, the Boston School Committee was under judicial mandate to desegregate its schools. Judge Arthur Garrity ruled that the school committee knowingly, over a long period of time, conspired to keep schools segregated and thus limited the educational opportunity of African-American children. For a period of over five years, the citizens of Boston were torn apart by the Garrity desegregation order. Groups of white parents opposed, sometimes violently, the forced busing that was imposed. As J. Anthony Lukas, in his Pulitzer prize-winning account *Common Ground* (1986) noted, the Boston situation became a symbol of frustration as it signified how a group of families, all committed to the best education for their children, could have such significantly different visions of what that meant. Judge Garrity stood resolute in his interpretation of the Constitution. Over time, the violence subsided. Many white Bostonians who could afford to do so either sent their children to private schools or moved to the suburbs. Thus, the Boston school system moved into an uneasy "cease-fire" and committed, at least publicly, to the improvement of education for all.

The Boston desegregation wars, like the conflicts a decade earlier in the South, revealed that U.S. society, although moving to ameliorate problems of racial inequality, was nonetheless a society in which racist attitudes changed slowly. Moreover, the Boston schools were a microcosm of the U.S. educational system—a system in which inequalities of race and class were salient features. The educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s were directed at their elimination.

An important concurrent theme was the question of unequal educational outcomes based on socioeconomic position. From the late 1950s, the findings of social scientists, including James Coleman, author of the 1966 report *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, focused national attention on the relationship between socioeconomic position and unequal educational outcomes. Furthermore, as part of the social programs of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson, Americans were sensitized to the idea of ameliorating poverty. Since schools were, in Horace Mann's vision, the lever of social reform, it was only natural that schools once again became the focal point.

During the 1960s and 1970s, a series of reform efforts were directed at providing equality of opportunity and increased access at all levels of education. Based on the Coleman report findings that unequal minority student educational achievement was caused more by family background than differences in the quality of schools attended, federally funded programs, such as Project Head Start, were aimed at providing early preschool educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. Although many radicals criticized the assumption of cultural deprivation implicit in these efforts, many reform efforts were aimed at the family and the school rather than the school itself.

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court in a 5–4 vote in *Milliken v. Bradley* ruled that the Detroit interdistrict city-suburb busing plan was unconstitutional. Based on this ruling and continuing opposition to forced busing for desegregation, educational reformers shifted their attention to improving education for often segregated inner-city school districts. From the 1970s on, school finance litigation attempted to equalize spending between high-income suburban and low-income urban and rural districts. In 1971, in *Serrano v. Priest*, the California Supreme Court ruled the state's system of unequal funding unconstitutional. However, in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5–4 in *San Antonio (Texas) Independent School District v. Rodriguez* that there was no constitutional guarantee to an equal education. In subsequent years, school finance cases had to be filed at the state level based on individual state constitutional provisions for equal education. Examples of successful cases are *Robinson v. Cahill* (1973) and *Abbott v. Burke* (1990) in New Jersey, *The Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. New York State* (2004), and *Williams v. The State of California* (2004). The Kentucky Education Reform Act (1988) represented one of the landmark legislative reforms to provide equal education.

Although these cases provided increased funding for low-income students, they did little to eliminate the de facto segregation in most Northern urban districts, which by the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown* in 2004 were almost as segregated as Southern districts before desegregation (Orfield & Lee, 2004; Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2004). Furthermore, court decisions such as the long-standing *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) School District* (2002), which ruled that busing was no longer necessary to achieve racial balance, resulted in the resegregation of many formerly integrated districts (Frankenberg & Lee, 2002; Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Mickelson, 2002). Paul Tractenberg, founder of the Education Law Center in Newark, New Jersey, which has represented the state's low-income children in *Robinson* and in *Abbott*, noted that *Abbott* is more consistent with the separate but equal doctrine of *Plessy* than the separate but never equal doctrine of *Brown* (Tractenberg et al., 2002).

The fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 2004 was marked by disagreements over whether the decision should be celebrated or commemorated. Advocates of celebration argued that the decision ended legally sanctioned segregation, marked the end of Jim Crow, and ushered in the Civil Rights movement. Advocates of commemoration argued that U.S. schools are still overwhelmingly segregated and that the continuing black-white achievement gap indicates that the decision never lived up to its promise. Further, Supreme Court decisions on desegregation in Charlotte Mecklenburg, Seattle, and Louisville ruled that these districts had accomplished their goals for desegregation and were now termed "unified." In the Seattle case, in particular, the court

ruled that school placement could not be based on race (see UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2012, for details of these cases). The result of these and other housing patterns in both cities and suburbs has been an ongoing resegregation of U.S. schools (Reardon et al., forthcoming; UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2012).

Nowhere was the conflict over these liberal reforms more clearly demonstrated than in the area of higher education. During the 1960s, educational reformers placed significant emphasis on the need to open access to postsecondary education to students who were traditionally underrepresented at colleges and universities—namely, minority groups and the disadvantaged. Arguing that college was a key to social mobility and success, reformers concluded that college was a right rather than a privilege for all (see Lavin, Alba, & Silberstein, 1981). Defenders of the traditional admissions standards argued that postsecondary education would be destroyed if admissions standards were relaxed (see Sadovnik, 1994).

By the late 1960s, many colleges and universities adopted the policy of open enrollment. The City University of New York, long a symbol of quality education for the working class and poor, guaranteed a place for all graduating New York City high school students in either its four-year colleges (for students with high school averages of 80 and above) or its community college system (for students with averages below 80). Similar open admissions systems were introduced in other public university systems. Furthermore, federal financial aid funds were appropriated for students from low-income families. The results were a dramatic increase in the numbers of students participating in U.S. higher education and a growing debate over the efficacy of such liberal reforms.

Conservatives bemoaned the decline of standards and warned of the collapse of the intellectual foundations of Western civilization. Radicals suggested that more often than not students were given “false hopes and shattered dreams” as they were sometimes underprepared, given their unequal educational backgrounds, for the rigors of college education. Liberals, agreeing that the new students were often underprepared, suggested that it was now the role of the college to provide remedial services to turn access into success (see Sadovnik, 1994).

During the 1970s, colleges took on the task, however reluctantly, of providing remediation for the vast number of underprepared students, many of whom were first-generation college students. The City University of New York (CUNY) became perhaps the largest experiment in compensatory higher education. Its efforts symbolized both the hopes and frustrations of ameliorating unequal educational achievement. Although there is significant disagreement as to the success of these higher-education reforms (which we will examine more closely later in this book), it is important to recognize that this period did result in the significant expansion of higher education. By the late 1990s, CUNY abolished remediation at its four-year colleges, thus ending open admissions. Chancellor Matthew Goldstein argued that remediation should occur at two-year colleges and that this represented the necessary first step in restoring CUNY’s reputation as an elite public university system, which provided meritocratic access to generations of low-income students. Critics argued that the end of open admissions would have a deleterious effect on access for these students in general and African-American and Hispanic students in particular (Attewell & Lavin, 2008). A recent *New York Times* article indicated that while the academic profiles in terms of selectivity of incoming students at CUNY’s five selective four-year colleges continues to rise, the number of African-American and Hispanic students continues to decline (*New York Times*, 2012).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the coeducation movement at elite colleges and universities began. In 1969, all-male Ivy League Universities (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Brown, Pennsylvania, and Dartmouth) began to admit women. In response, in 1970, Vassar College became coeducational, leading to other women’s colleges such as Connecticut College for Women and Skidmore College admitting men. Coeducation became the rule, with only some of the elite Seven Sisters (Smith, Mount Holyoke, Wellesley, and Bryn Mawr) and a few others still women’s colleges in the year 2012 (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006).

We have looked at two related processes that define the post-World War II history of education. The first is the continued debate between progressives and traditionalists about the proper aims, content, and methods of schooling. The second is the struggle for equality of opportunity and the opening of access to higher education. The educational history of the 1980s and 1990s, as you will see, was characterized by the perceived failure of the reforms of this period, most particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s.

Educational Reaction and Reform and the Standards Era: 1980s–2012

By the late 1970s, conservative critics began to react to the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. They argued that liberal reforms in pedagogy and curriculum, and in the arena of educational opportunity had resulted in the decline of authority and standards. Furthermore, the critics argued that the preoccupation with using the schools to ameliorate social problems, however well-intended, not only failed to do this but was part of an overall process that resulted in mass mediocrity. What was needed was nothing less than a complete overhaul of the U.S. educational system. While radical critics also pointed to the failure of the schools to ameliorate problems of poverty, they located the problem not so much in the schools but in the society at large. Liberals defended the reforms of the period by suggesting that social improvement takes a long time, and a decade and a half was scarcely sufficient to turn things around.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence (1983), founded by President Reagan’s Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell, issued its now famous report, *A Nation at Risk*. This report provided a serious indictment of U.S. education and cited high rates of adult illiteracy, declining SAT scores, and low scores on international comparisons of knowledge by U.S. students as examples of the decline of literacy and standards. The committee stated that “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (p. 5). As solutions, the commission offered five recommendations: (1) that all students graduating from high school complete what was termed the “new basics”—four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and a half year of computer science; (2) that schools at all levels expect higher achievement from their students and that four-year colleges and universities raise their admissions requirements; (3) that more time be devoted to teaching the new basics; (4) that the preparation of teachers be strengthened and that teaching be made a more respected and rewarded profession; and (5) that citizens require their elected representatives to support and fund these reforms (cited in Cremin, 1990, p. 31).

The years following this report were characterized by scores of other reports that both supported the criticism and called for reform. During the 1980s and 1990s, and into the twenty-first century, significant attention was given to the improvement of curriculum, the tightening of standards, and a move toward the setting of academic goals and their assessment. A coalition of U.S. governors took on a leading role in setting a reform agenda; business leaders stressed the need to improve the nation’s schools and proposed partnership programs; the federal government, through its Secretary of Education (under Ronald Reagan), William Bennett, took an active and critical role but continued to argue that it was not the federal government’s role to fund such reform; and educators, at all levels, struggled to have a say in determining the nature of the reforms.

As we have pointed out in Chapter 2, the politics of the reform movement were complex and multidimensional. Conservatives wanted to restore both standards and the traditional curriculum; liberals demanded that the new drive for excellence not ignore the goals for equity; radicals believed it was another *nendum swing* doomed to failure (one that sought to reestablish *excellence* as a code word for elitism).

In the 1990s and in the early part of the twenty-first century, the reforms initiated in the 1980s continued and expanded (see Tyack & Cuban, 1995). There are a number of reforms, including President Clinton's Goals 2000 in 1994, President G. W. Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, and President Obama's Race to the Top (RTT) in 2009, that have the most visibility. Although they all purport to balance equity and excellence as their goal, it is not clear how effective they have been. In Chapter 10, we will discuss them more fully; in this section, we will describe them briefly.

First, the school choice movement seeks to give parents the right to choose the public school to send their children, rather than the traditional method in which one's school was based on neighborhood zoning patterns (Cookson, 1994; Fuller, El-more, & Orfield, 1996; Wells, 1993a, 1993b; Tractenberg, Sadovnik, & Liss, 2004; Sadovnik, 2011b). The choice movement is divided into those who support public school choice only (that is, giving parents the right to choose from public schools) to those who would include intersectional choice policies, including private schools. Such an intersectional choice program has been employed in Milwaukee where low-income parents receive tuition vouchers to send their children to private schools. There has been significant controversy over this plan, with supporters stating it is the key to equity and critics arguing that it means the death of public education. The most important reform in this area is charter schools, which are independent of local district control, but receive public funding. By 1998, 33 states passed charter school legislation, resulting in more than 1,000 charter schools (Wells et al., 1998, p. 6). As of 2012, 41 states had charter school legislation, resulting in more than 5,700 charter schools (Consoletti, 2012). Second, Race to the Top, while enlarging the federal support of charter schools, has also enhanced NCLB's accountability mechanisms. In this regard, RTT has supported Value Added Models (VAM) of teacher quality linked to standardized tests of student achievement and negative sanctions, including school closings (B. Baker, 2012). In addition, the Obama Administration has provided waivers from NCLB to numerous states if they provide alternatives consistent with RTT.

It is perhaps too early to assess these reforms, but it is apparent that they are part of the recurring debate in U.S. educational history about the efficacy of mass public education and the compatibility of excellence and equity. Throughout history, these themes have been crucial as the preceding historical discussion delineates; the answer to the questions is a matter of both historical interpretation and empirical investigation.

Understanding the History of U.S. Education: Different Historical Interpretations

The history of education in the United States, as we have illustrated, has been one of conflict, struggle, and disagreement. It has also been marked by a somewhat ironic pattern of cycles of reform about the aims, goals, and purpose of education on one hand, and little change in actual classroom practice on the other (Cuban, 1984). Moreover, as we pointed out in Chapter 2, one's view of U.S. educational history and the effectiveness of the schools in meeting their democratic aspirations depends on one's interpretation of the historical trends and events. In the following sections, we outline the different schools of historical interpretation.

The different interpretations of U.S. educational history revolve around the tensions between equity and excellence, between the social and intellectual functions of schooling, and over differing responses to the questions, Education in whose interests? Education for whom? The U.S. school system has expanded to serve more students for longer periods of time than any other system in the modern world. This occurred, first, by extending primary school to all through compulsory education laws during the Common School Era; second, by extending high school education to the majority of adolescents by the end of the Progressive Era; and third, by extending postsecondary

education to the largest number of high school graduates in the world by the 1990s. However, historians and sociologists of education disagree about whether this pattern of increased access means a pattern of educational success. Moreover, these disagreements concern the questions of the causes of educational expansion (that is, who supported the reforms), who benefited from them, and which types of goals have been met and/or sacrificed.

The Democratic-Liberal School

Democratic-liberals believe that the history of U.S. education involves the progressive evolution, albeit flawed, of a school system committed to providing equality of opportunity for all. Democratic-liberal historians suggest that each period of educational expansion involved the attempts of liberal reformers to expand educational opportunities to larger segments of the population and to reject the conservative view of schools as elite institutions for the meritorious (which usually meant the privileged). Historians such as Ellwood Cubberly, Merle Curti, and Lawrence A. Cremin are representative of this view. Both Cubberly (1934) and Curti (1959/1971) have portrayed the Common School Era as a victory for democratic movements and the first step in opening U.S. education to all. Furthermore, both historians, in varying degrees, portray the early school reformers such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard as reformers dedicated to egalitarian principles (Curti is more critical than Cubberly).

Lawrence A. Cremin, in his three-volume history of U.S. education (1972, 1980, 1988) and in a study of the Progressive Era (1961), portrays the evolution of U.S. education in terms of two related processes: popularization and multitudinousness (Cremin, 1988). For Cremin, educational history in the United States involved both the expansion of opportunity and purpose. That is, as more students from diverse backgrounds went to school for longer periods of time, the goals of education became more diverse, with social goals often becoming as or more important than intellectual ones. Although Cremin does not deny the educational problems and conflicts, and he notes the discrepancies between opportunity and results—particularly for the economically disadvantaged—he never relinquished his vision that the genius of U.S. education lies with its commitment to popularization and multitudinousness. In his final book, *Popular Education and Its Discontents* (1990), Cremin summarized this democratic liberal perspective as follows: "That kind of organization [referring to U.S. higher education] is part of the genius of American education—it provides a place for everyone who wishes one, and in the end yields one of the most educated populations in the world" (p. 46).

Although democratic-liberals tend to interpret U.S. educational history optimistically, the evolution of the nation's schools has been a flawed, often conflictual march toward increased opportunities. Thus, historians such as Cremin do not see equity and excellence as inevitably irreconcilable, but rather as the tensions between the two, resulting in necessary compromises. The ideals of equality and excellence are just that: ideals. Democratic-liberals believe that the U.S. educational system must continue to move closer to each, without sacrificing one or the other too dramatically.

The Radical-Revisionist School

Beginning in the 1960s, the optimistic vision of the democratic-liberal historians began to be challenged by radical historians, sociologists, and political economists of education. The radical-revisionist historians of education, as they have come to be called, revised the history of education in a more critical direction. These historians, including Michael Katz (1968), Joel Spring (1972), and Clarence Karier (1976), argue that the history of U.S. education is the story of expanded success for very different reasons and with very different results. Radical historians do not deny

that the educational system has expanded; rather, they believe it expanded to meet the needs of the elites in society for the control of the working class and immigrants, and for economic efficiency and productivity. In addition, radicals suggest that expanded opportunity did not translate into more egalitarian results. Rather, they point out that each period of educational reform (the Common School Era, the Progressive Era, the post-World War II Era) led to increasing stratification within the educational system, with working-class, poor, and minority students getting the short end of the stick.

Let us examine the radical view on educational expansion and the question of whose interests it served. Michael Katz (1968) argued that it was the economic interests of nineteenth-century capitalists that more fully explain the expansion of schooling and that educational reformers stressed the ability of schools to train factory workers, to socialize immigrants into U.S. values, and to create stability in the newly expanding urban environments. Likewise, historians Joel Spring (1972) and Clarence Karier (1976) both advanced the thesis that the expansion of the schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was done more so in the interests of social control than in the interests of equity. Spring argued that this perspective

advances the idea that schools were shaped as instruments of the corporate liberal state for mainstreaming social control. . . . The public schools were seen as an important instrument used by the government to aid in the rationalization and minimization of conflict by selecting and training students for their future positions in the economy and by imbuing the population with a sense of cooperation and national spirit. (1986, p. 154)

One of the problems with this view, pointed out by radicals who generally agree with this interpretation, is that it views the expansion of education as imposed on the poor and working class from above and often against their will. Other radical historians, including David Hogan (1978) and Julia Wrigley (1982), suggest that the working class and labor unions actively supported the expansion of public education for their own interests. Thus, the explanation of educational expansion is a more conflictual one rather than a simplistic tale of elite domination.

Despite these historiographical disagreements, radical historians agree that the results of educational expansion rarely met their putative democratic aspirations. They suggest that each new expansion increased stratification of working-class and disadvantaged students within the system, with these students less likely to succeed educationally. For example, political economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) noted that the expansion of the high school resulted in a comprehensive secondary system that tracked students into vocational and academic curriculums with placement, more often than not, determined by social class background and race. Furthermore, the expansion of higher education in the post-World War II period often resulted in the stratification between community colleges that stressed vocational education and four-year colleges and universities that stressed the liberal arts and sciences. Once again, radicals argue that placement in the higher education system is based on social class and race. Studies by Kevin Dougherty (1987, 1994) and Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel (1989) give ample evidence to support the view that the expansion of higher education has not resulted in equality of opportunity.

Thus, the radical interpretation of U.S. educational history is a more pessimistic one. While acknowledging educational expansion, they suggest that this process has benefited the elites more than the masses, and has not produced either equality of opportunity or results. Further, they view the debates about equity and excellence as a chimera, with those who bemoan the decline of standards seeking to reimpose excellence with little regard for equality.

Conservative Perspectives

In the 1980s, as we noted in Chapter 2, a rising tide of conservative criticism swept education circles. Although much of this criticism was political and, at times, ahistorical, it did have an implicit historical critique of the schools. Arguing that U.S. students knew very little and that U.S. schools were mediocre, the conservative critics such as William Bennett, Chester Finn, Jr., Diane Ravitch, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., and Allan Bloom all pointed to the failure of so-called progressive education to fulfill its lofty social goals without sacrificing academic quality. Although critics such as Ravitch and Hirsch supported the democratic-liberal goal of equality of opportunity and mobility through education, they believed that the historical pursuit of social and political objectives resulted in significant harm to the traditional academic goals of schooling.

Diane Ravitch (1977) provided a passionate critique of the radical-revisionist perspective and a defense of the democratic-liberal position. Yet, in the 1980s, Ravitch moved from this centrist position to a more conservative stance. In a series of essays and books, including *The Troubled Crusade* (1983), Ravitch argued that the preoccupation with using education to solve social problems has not solved these problems and, simultaneously, has led to the erosion of educational excellence. Although Ravitch remains faithful to the democratic-liberal belief that schools have expanded opportunities to countless numbers of the disadvantaged and immigrants, she has argued that the adjustment of the traditional curriculum to meet the needs of all of these groups has been a violation of the fundamental function of schooling, which is to develop the powers of intelligence (1985, p. 40). According to Ravitch, the progressive reforms of the twentieth century denigrated the traditional role of schools in passing on a common culture and produced a generation of students who know little, if anything, about their Western heritage. Although she believes the curriculum ought to be fair and nonracist, she has also argued that efforts at multiculturalism are often historically incorrect and neglect the fact that the heritage of our civilization, from a conservative vantage point, is Western. In 2010, Ravitch again moved back to a more liberal position, as she provided a scathing critique of neo-liberal education reforms, like charter schools, vouchers, privatization, and standardized testing. Ravitch has argued that these reforms that she once supported have resulted in a corporate takeover of public schooling and threaten the democratic nature of public schooling (Ravitch, 2010).

Ravitch's perspective over the past three decades has been far more complex than that of other conservative critics such as Bennett, Bloom, Finn, and Hirsch. Where these authors, like Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) and Hirsch in *Cultural Literacy* (1987), never fully capture the complex relationship between educational reform and social and political milieu, Ravitch's *The Troubled Crusade* (1983) points to the putative decline of educational standards within the context of political movements to move us closer to a fair and just society. In fact, Ravitch has argued that the belief that all students learn a rigorous curriculum is not conservative, but rather consistent with her earlier liberal belief that all students be given an equal opportunity to succeed (Ravitch, 1994). Ravitch understands the conflictual nature of U.S. educational history and simultaneously praises the schools for being a part of large-scale social improvement while damning them for losing their academic standards in the process. Bloom blames the universities for watering down their curriculums; Hirsch blames the public schools for valuing skills over content; and Bennett, in his role as Secretary of Education during the Reagan administration, called for a return to a traditional Western curriculum. None of these conservatives has analyzed, as Ravitch has (perhaps because she is the only historian among them), the historical tensions between equity and excellence that are crucial to understanding the problem. Nonetheless, what they all have in common is the vision that the evolution of U.S. education has resulted in the dilution of academic excellence. Over the past few years, Ravitch has passionately argued that the conservative and neo-liberal pursuit of academic excellence has neither improved the schools or moved us closer to a fair and just society. In fact, she accuses conservatives and neo-liberals of

ignoring the pernicious effects of poverty on student achievement, a position closer to liberals, if not radicals.

Conclusion

As students of educational history, you may well be perplexed by the different interpretations of the history of U.S. education. How is it possible, you may ask, that given the same evidence, historians reach such vastly different conclusions? As we pointed out in Chapter 2, the interpretation of educational issues, including the interpretation of its history, depends to a large extent on one's perspective. Thus, each school of historical interpretation sees the events, data, and conflicts in different ways. We do not propose that there is one unified theory of the history of education, nor do we believe that the historical and sociological data support only one theory. Rather, we believe that there are patterns in the history of education and that the foundations perspective is a lens for looking at these patterns.

The history of U.S. education has involved a number of related patterns. First, it has been defined by the expansion of schooling to increasingly larger numbers of children for longer periods of time. Second, with this expansion has come the demand for equality of opportunity and ways to decrease inequality of results. Third is the conflict over goals, curriculum, and method, and the politicization of these issues. Fourth is the conflict between education for a common culture, or a "distinctively American paideia, or self-conscious culture" (Cremin, 1990, p. 107) and education for the diversity of a pluralistic society. And fifth are the tensions between popularization and educational excellence. All of these processes speak to the fact that Americans have always asked a great deal, perhaps too much, from their schools, and that conflict and controversy are the definitive features of the evolution of the school.

The history of U.S. education is a complex story of conflict, compromise, and struggle (see Table 3.1). The disagreements over this history are summed up well by Diane Ravitch, defending the democratic-liberal tradition, and David Nassaw, arguing for a more radical interpretation. Ravitch (1977) stated:

Education in a liberal society must sustain and balance ideals that exist in tension: equity and excellence. While different generations have emphasized one or the other, in response to the climate of the times, schools cannot make either ideal a reality, though they contribute to both. The schools are limited institutions which have certain general responsibilities and certain specific capacities; sometimes they have failed to meet realistic expectations, and at other times they have succeeded beyond realistic expectations in dispersing intelligence and opportunity throughout the community. In order to judge them by reasonable standards and in order to have any chance of improving their future performance, it is necessary to abandon the simplistic search for heroes and devils, scapegoats and panaceas. (p. 173)

Nassaw (1979), in a very different vein, stated:

The public schools emerge in the end compromised by reform and resistance. They do not belong to the corporations and the state, but neither do they belong to their communities. They remain "contested" institutions with several agendas and several purposes. The reformers have not in the past made them into efficient agencies for social channeling and control. Their opponents will not, on the other hand, turn them into truly egalitarian institutions without at the same time effecting radical changes in the state and society that support them. The public schools will, in short, continue to be the social arena where the tension is reflected and the contest played out between the promise of democracy and the rights of class division. (p. 243)

Text continues on page 90.

Table 3.1 Timeline of Historical Events in U.S. Education

Date	Event
1636	The first college in the American colonies, Harvard College, is founded in Newtown (later renamed Cambridge, MA). Its dual function was educating civic leaders and preparing a learned clergy.
1779	Thomas Jefferson writes his <i>Bill for a More General Diffusion of Knowledge</i> , outlining his views on the popularization of elementary and grammar school education.
1789	The Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides for public education and delegates authority to the states. This has resulted in the absence of a national system of education or national curriculum, as exists in many other liberal-democratic societies.
1817	Thomas Jefferson writes the "Rockfish Gap Report," the report of the Commission to establish a public university in Virginia, leading to the establishment of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The university is based on Jefferson's model of a natural aristocracy based on talent, or what later was called a <i>meritocracy</i> .
1821	Troy Female Seminary in New York is founded by Emma Willard.
1833	Oberlin College in Ohio admits women, becoming the first coeducational college in the United States.
1837	Horace Mann becomes Secretary to the Massachusetts Board of Education, ushering in the Common School Era of compulsory primary education.
1837	Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (later, Mount Holyoke College) in Massachusetts is founded by Mary Lyon.
1848	Horace Mann, in his Twelfth (and final) Report to the Massachusetts Board of Education, states that "education is the great equalizer of the conditions of men . . . the balance wheel of the social machinery," which becomes the basis of an American democratic ideology of education.
1862	The Morrill Act is passed, authorizing the use of public money to establish public land grant universities, resulting in the establishment of large public universities, especially in the Midwest.
1863	During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, announcing the end of slavery in all states in rebellion against the Union.
1865	Several months after the end of the Civil War, Congress passes the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which freed four million slaves.
1865	Vassar College, the first of the Seven Sisters women's colleges, is founded in Poughkeepsie, NY. Shortly after, Wellesley College and Smith College in Massachusetts are founded, and Mount Holyoke and Bryn Mawr (PA) Seminaries become colleges.
1868	The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified, giving full citizenship to ex-slaves. Although this amendment and the Freedman's Bureau attempted to reconstruct the South's economy and include Blacks as full citizens, the Ku Klux Klan continued to spread racial hatred, and Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes in the South continued discrimination against Blacks. Its equal protection clause has been applied to important legal decisions regarding education.
1868	The Freedman's Bureau helps establish historically Black Colleges, including Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Hampton Institute in Virginia.
1891	Jane Addams founds Hull House in Chicago, a settlement house that provided cultural and educational programs for Chicago's immigrants and poor.
1893	The National Education Association's Committee of Ten, chaired by Harvard University President Charles Eliot, issues its report on secondary education, which reasserts the college-preparatory function of the high school. Eliot is to become one of the leaders of the social efficiency strand of progressive education.
1895	Alabama Tuskegee Institute's Booker T. Washington gives his "Atlanta Compromise Speech" at the Atlanta Exposition, arguing that Blacks should be more thrifty and industrious and should pursue vocational education to prepare them for work in the new southern industrial economy.

Continued

4 The Sociology of Education

Many years ago, the famous philosopher Alfred North Whitehead was asked, "Which is more important, facts or ideas?" He reflected for a while and said, "Ideas about facts." At its very core, sociological inquiry is about ideas and how they shape people's understandings of society. The desire to know and to transform society is not unique to sociologists; in fact, social curiosity has played a key role in humans' adaptive capacity. In one sense, sociology is simply a method for bringing social aspirations and fears into focus by forcing people to ask sharp and analytic questions about the societies and cultures in which they live. The tools of sociology can be thought of as empirical and conceptual. Sociology is empirical because most sociologists gather facts about society. Facts, however, do not speak for themselves; without arranging them into meaningful patterns, facts are virtually useless. Trying to uncover the underlying patterns that give larger meaning to facts is the purpose of making social theories. Often, teachers think that social theories are of little use in teaching children. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Without some idea of how the major elements in society fit together, teachers are at a loss in understanding the relation between school and society, how their own profession has evolved, and why students behave the way they do in school and outside of school. An understanding of society is essential if teachers are to develop as reflective practitioners. In a society that is becoming increasingly multiethnic and multiracial, the need for a sociological perspective among educators is urgent. In this chapter, we will explore some of the main elements of the sociology of education; these elements include theories about the relation between school and society, whether or not schooling makes a significant difference in individuals' lives, how schools influence social inequalities, and an examination of how school processes affect the lives of children, teachers, and other adults who are involved in the educational enterprise.

In her book *Education and Inequality* (1977), Persell provided a model for analyzing the relationship between school and society through four interrelated levels of sociological analysis (see Figure 4.1). The societal level includes the most general structures of a society, including its political and economic systems, its level of development, and its system of social stratification (or institutionalized levels of inequality). The institutional level includes a society's major institutions, such as the family, school, churches and synagogues, business and government, and the media, all of which play an important role in socialization. The interpersonal level includes the processes, symbols, and interactions that occur within such institutional settings. These include language, dress, face-to-face interactions, gestures, and rituals, all of which comprise everyday life. The intrapsychic level includes individual thoughts, beliefs, values, and feelings, which are to a large degree shaped by the society's institutions and interactions.

For sociologists, the issue of whether the individual actions are determined by external forces (determinism, called behaviorism in psychology) or whether individuals are capable of freely shaping the world (voluntarism, called existentialism in philosophy) is a crucial one. A sociological perspective, while recognizing human capacity for free will, emphasizes the power that external forces have on individual choices and how these are often related to group differences within the social stratification system.

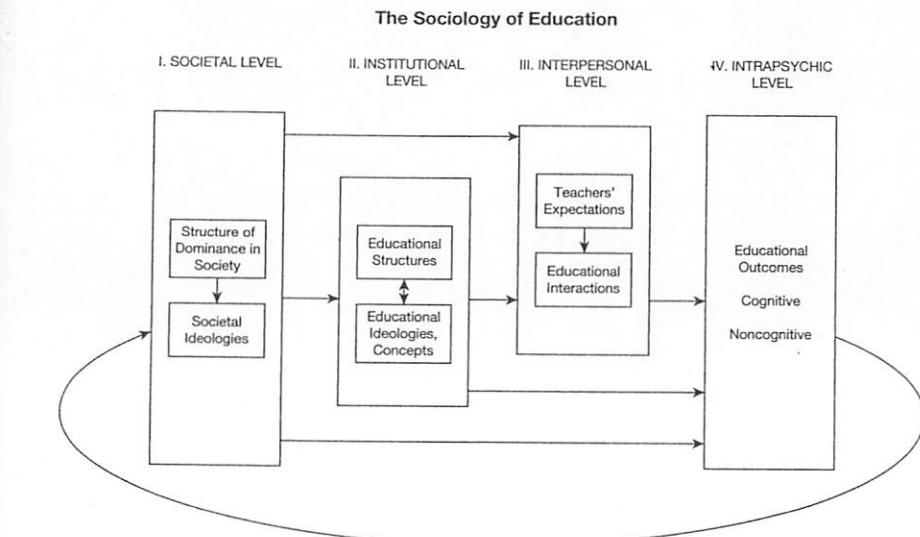


Figure 4.1 Theoretical Model of Relevant Variables and Their Interrelationships.

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As you will see, functionalism is concerned with the ways that societal and institutional forces create, in Durkheim's terms, a collective conscience (society internalized in the individual) based on shared values. Conflict theory is concerned with the ways in which differences among groups at the societal level produce conflict and domination that may lead to change.

The Uses of Sociology for Teachers

How can people create schools that are more effective environments in which children can grow and learn? What is the relation between school and the larger society? Can schools produce more social and economic equality? These questions and many more have sparked the imaginations of generations of educators and those noneducators who have a deep interest in academic achievement, the welfare of children, and a more just, more open society. The kind of answers that are found to these questions will shape education and society for years. Without clear thinking, good information, and honest assessments, education as an institution is bound to move into the future like a ship without a rudder, floundering, directionless, and in danger of sinking. Before better educational programs can be designed, educators must know what works and what does not. The empirical and conceptual tools of sociology are ideally suited to this task because they guide one toward systematic thinking and realism about what is actually possible. There are those who would argue that sociology is not fully scientific, but compared to other ways of problem solving, sociology utilizes the principles and methods of science and, moreover, sociologists are self-critical. Because of the standards of the discipline, the work of sociologists must bear the scrutiny of other sociologists and the public at large.

Sociologists, then, are in a good position to view schools with a dispassionate eye and a critical awareness that simple solutions to complex educational problems are almost bound to fail and

can be counterproductive. From these observations, it should be evident that teachers can learn a great deal from the sociology of education; for example, sociological research helps pinpoint the characteristics of schools that enable them to become effective learning environments. These characteristics include vigorous instructional leadership; a principal who makes clear, consistent, and fair decisions; an emphasis on discipline and a safe and orderly environment; instructional practices that focus on basic skills and academic achievement; collegiality among teachers who believe that students can and will learn; and frequent review of student progress.

To take another example, it is known that interactions in the classroom shape the learning experiences of the child. Sociologists have developed many techniques for understanding classroom interactions. One of the best known is Ned Flanders's Interaction Analysis Scale (Amidon & Flanders, 1971). This method involves the use of observers who watch classroom interactions and note these interactions on a standard scale. This process gives observers a thorough and objective measure of what really goes on in classrooms. Flanders hypothesized that student performance and learning is greatest when teacher influence is indirect—that is, when there were other classroom interactions besides "teacher talk." The hypothesis was upheld when observations showed that students in indirect teacher classrooms learned more and were more independent than students in classrooms where most, if not all, instructional activities were directed by the teacher.

As teachers, sociology provides you with a special analytic lens on education and school that, when you learn to use it, will give you greater insight and coherence in your approach to studying education. We hope that this clarity will help you improve your pedagogical practices and promote your professional growth. Part of becoming a professional is developing an intellectual and experiential frame of reference that is sufficiently sophisticated. It is our belief that this intellectual sophistication will help you integrate the world of education into its larger social context. This last observation leads to our first major issue in exploring how sociology can help us understand education in the "big picture." What is the relation between school and society?

The Relation between School and Society

Have you ever wondered why schools are the way they are? Why do teachers teach what they teach in the way they do? Can schools change society, or must society change if schools are to become different? Obviously, there are no simple answers to these questions; yet struggling to find answers, even for complex questions, is in itself a process of clarification. Sociologists of education often ask big questions about the relation between school and society because they believe that educators cannot really understand how schools operate, or why they operate as they do, without a working idea of how schools and society interact. To help them in this complex intellectual and empirical process, sociologists almost always have a theory about the organization of society and how it shapes the education of children. In particular, sociologists take an interest in how schools act as agents of cultural and social transmission.

Schools—as well as parents, churches and synagogues, and other groups—shape children's perceptions of the world by processes of **socialization**. That is, the values, beliefs, and norms of society are internalized within children so that they come to think and act like other members of society. In this sense, schools socially and culturally reproduce the existing society through the systematic socialization of its youngest members. Think of such a simple ritual as pledging allegiance to the flag. Through this culturally approved ritual, young children learn something about citizenship and patriotism.

Socialization processes can shape children's consciousness profoundly. Schools, for instance, wittingly or unwittingly, promote gender definitions and stereotypes when they segregate learning and extracurricular activities by gender, or when teachers allow boys to dominate class discussions

and activities. Not only do schools shape students' perceptions and consciousness but they also act as important, perhaps the most important, **sorters and selectors of students**. Schools, through such practices as tracking, academically stratify students by curricular placement, which, in turn, influences the long-term social, economic, and cultural destinies of children. In effect, schools play a major role in determining who will get ahead in society and who will not.

How do schools select some students for educational mobility? Is it on the basis of merit or is it primarily on the basis of students' ascriptive characteristics, such as class, race, or gender? Or is it a combination of merit and social position that explains who gets into the educational "fast track" and who gets "cooled out"? The concept of equal educational opportunity is a key element in the belief system that maintains that the United States is a land of opportunity where hard work is rewarded. Is this belief based on real social facts or is it simply a myth that confuses people and leads them to believe that their relative social and economic failure is caused by personal inadequacies?

At an even deeper level, one might wonder why people study the subjects and materials they do. Who selects what people teach and learn, and why? Is knowledge value free or socially constructed? Can ideas ever be taken out of their contexts? For instance, history texts have traditionally overlooked the role of minorities and women in shaping U.S. society. How has this influenced people's perceptions of what is really historically significant and what is not?

Theoretical Perspectives

From these remarks, it should be apparent to you that the sociology of education is a contentious field and that the questions sociologists ask about the relation between school and society are fundamental and complex. Because the scope of these questions is so large, sociologists usually begin their studies with an overall picture of how society looks in its most basic form. This is where theory comes in. A good definition of theory is "an integration of all known principles, laws, and information pertaining to a specific area of study. This structure allows investigators to offer explanations for relative phenomenon and to create solutions to unique problems" (Woolfolk, 1990, p. 585). Theory is like an X-ray machine; it allows one to see past the visible and obvious, and examine the hidden structure. Unlike X-ray pictures, however, theoretical pictures of society are seldom crystal clear or easy to interpret. Why is this? Partly this is because people are members of society (i.e., people have been socialized by society) and it is very difficult to be objective or disinterested in the analysis of people. Theoretical pictures of society are created by human beings and interpreted by them. Thus, knowledge of the social world cannot be totally separated from one's personal and social situation. Still, should you let the fact that all knowledge is socially generated and interpreted discourage you from exploring those issues that shape your life? Obviously not. Without the struggle for objectivity and honesty, there is little hope that people can create a productive and just society.

Theory, then, as inadequate as it is, is one's best conceptual guide to understanding the relation between school and society because it gives one the intellectual scaffolding from which to hang empirical findings. Essentially, there are three major theories about the relation between school and society: functional, conflict, and interactional (for a full discussion of these theories, see Sadovnik, 2011b).

Functional Theories

Functional sociologists begin with a picture of society that stresses the **interdependence** of the social system; these researchers often examine how well the parts are integrated with each other. Functionalists view society as a kind of machine, where one part articulates with another to produce

the dynamic energy required to make society work. Perhaps the earliest sociologist to embrace a functional point of view about the relation of school and society was Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), who virtually invented the sociology of education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His major works include *Moral Education* (1962), *The Evolution of Educational Thought* (1977), and *Education and Sociology* (1956). While Durkheim recognized that education had taken different forms at different times and places, he believed that education, in virtually all societies, was of critical importance in creating the moral unity necessary for social cohesion and harmony. For Durkheim, moral values were the foundation of society.

Durkheim's emphasis on values and cohesion set the tone for how present-day functionalists approach the study of education. Functionalists tend to assume that consensus is the normal state in society and that conflict represents a breakdown of shared values. In a highly integrated, well-functioning society, schools socialize students into the appropriate values, and sort and select students according to their abilities. Educational reform, then, from a functional point of view, is supposed to create structures, programs, and curricula that are technically advanced, rational, and encourage social unity. It should be evident that most U.S. educators and educational reformers implicitly base their reform suggestions on functional theories of schooling. When, for example, *A Nation at Risk* was released in 1983, the argument was made by the authors of the report that schools were responsible for a whole host of social and economic problems. There was no suggestion that perhaps education might not have the power to overcome deep, social, and economic problems without changing other aspects of U.S. society.

Conflict Theories

Not all sociologists of education believe that society is held together by shared values alone. Some sociologists argue that the social order is not based on some collective agreement, but on the ability of dominant groups to impose their will on subordinate groups through force, cooptation, and manipulation. In this view, the glue of society is economic, political, cultural, and military power. Ideologies or intellectual justifications created by the powerful are designed to enhance their position by legitimizing inequality and the unequal distribution of material and cultural goods as an inevitable outcome of biology or history. Clearly, conflict sociologists do not see the relation between school and society as unproblematic or straightforward. Whereas functionalists emphasize cohesion in explaining social order, conflict sociologists emphasize struggle. From a conflict point of view, schools are similar to social battlefields, where students struggle against teachers, teachers against administrators, and so on. These antagonisms, however, are most often muted for two reasons: the authority and power of the school and the achievement ideology. In effect, the achievement ideology convinces students and teachers that schools promote learning, and sort and select students according to their abilities and not according to their social status. In this view, the achievement ideology disguises the real power relations within the school, which, in turn, reflect and correspond to the power relations within the larger society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Although Karl Marx (1818–1883) did not write a great deal about education specifically, he is the intellectual founder of the conflict school in the sociology of education. His analytic imagination and moral outrage were sparked by the social conditions found in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. Industrialization and urbanization had produced a new class of workers—the proletariat—who lived in poverty, worked up to 18 hours a day, and had little, if any, hope of creating a better life for their children. Marx believed that the class system, which separated owners from workers and workers from the benefits of their own labor, made class struggle inevitable. He believed that, in the end, the proletariat would rise up and overthrow the capitalists, and, in doing so, establish a new society where men and women would no longer be alienated from their labor.

Marx's powerful and often compelling critique of early capitalism has provided the intellectual energy for subsequent generations of liberal and leftist thinkers who believe that the only way to a more just and productive society is the abolition or modification of capitalism and the introduction of socialism. Political economists Bowles and Gintis, in their book *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), used a Marxist perspective for examining the growth of the U.S. public school. To their minds, there is a direct correspondence between the organization of schools and the organization of society, and, until society is fundamentally changed, there is little hope of real school reform. It has been argued by other conflict sociologists of education, however, that traditional Marxism is too deterministic and overlooks the power of culture and human agency in promoting change.

An early conflict sociologist who took a slightly different theoretical orientation when viewing society was Max Weber (1864–1920). Like Marx, Weber was convinced that power relations between dominant and subordinate groups structured societies, but, unlike Marx, Weber believed that class differences alone could not capture the complex ways human beings form hierarchies and belief systems that make these hierarchies seem just and inevitable. Thus, Weber examined status cultures as well as class position as an important sociological concept, because it alerts one to the fact that people identify their group by what they consume and with whom they socialize.

Weber also recognized that political and military power could be exercised by the state, without direct reference to the wishes of the dominant classes. Moreover, Weber had an acute and critical awareness of how bureaucracy was becoming the dominant type of authority in the modern state and how bureaucratic ways of thinking were bound to shape educational reforms. Weber made the distinction between the “specialist” and the “cultivated” man. What should be the goal of education—training individuals for employment or for thinking? Or are these two goals compatible?

The Weberian approach to studying the relation between school and society has developed into a compelling and informative tradition of sociological research. Researchers in this tradition tend to analyze school organizations and processes from the point of view of status competition and organizational constraints. One of the first U.S. sociologists of education to use these concepts was Willard Waller. In *The Sociology of Teaching* (1965), Waller portrayed schools as autocracies in a state of “perilous equilibrium.” Without continuous vigilance, schools would erupt into anarchy because students are essentially forced to go to school against their will. To Waller’s mind, rational models of school organization only disguise the inherent tension that pervades the schooling process. Waller’s perspective is shared by many contemporary conflict theorists who see schools as oppressive and demeaning, and portray student noncompliance with school rules as a form of resistance.

Another major research tradition that has emerged from the Weberian school of thought is represented by Randall Collins (1971, 1979), who has maintained that educational expansion is best explained by status group struggle. He argued that educational credentials, such as college diplomas, are primarily status symbols rather than indicators of actual achievement. The rise of credentialism does not indicate that society is becoming more expert, but that education is increasingly used by dominant groups to secure more advantageous places for themselves and their children within the occupation and social structure.

A variation of conflict theory that has captured the imagination of some U.S. sociologists began in France and England during the 1960s. Unlike most Marxists who tend to emphasize the economic structure of society, cultural reproduction theorists such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), examined how “cultural capital”—knowledge and experiences related to art, music, and literature—and “social capital”—social networks and connections—are passed on by families and schools. The concepts of cultural and social capital are important because they suggest that, in understanding the transmission of inequalities, one ought to recognize that the cultural and social characteristics of individuals and groups are significant indicators of status and class position. More

recently, Lareau (2003, 2011) provided an application of Bourdieu to the understanding of how social class differences in social capital within family and their relationship to child rearing and schooling contributes to the reproduction of social and educational inequalities. Finally, the work of Basil Bernstein (1977, 1990, 1996) analyzed how communication, family, and educational codes (patterns and processes that create meaning and understanding) also contribute to social and educational inequalities.

A growing body of literature suggests that schools pass on to graduates specific social identities that either enhance or hinder their life chances. For example, a graduate from an elite prep. school has educational and social advantages over many public school graduates in terms of college attendance and occupational mobility. This advantage has very little to do with what prep. school students learn in school, and a great deal to do with the power of their schools' reputations for educating members of the upper class. The theories of Bourdieu and Passeron extend the work of other sociologists who have argued persuasively that human culture cannot be understood as an isolated and self-contained object of study but must be examined as part of a larger social and cultural structure. To understand the impact of culture on the lives of individuals and groups, one must understand the meanings that are attributed to cultural experiences by those who participate in them (Mannheim, 1952).

The conflict perspective, then, offers important insights about the relation between school and society. As you think about schools and education, we hope that you will utilize functional and conflict theoretical perspectives as a way of organizing your readings and perceptions. Before we turn from theory to more empirical issues about students and schools, there is a theoretical perspective that ought not to be overlooked.

Interactional Theories

Interactional theories about the relation of school and society are primarily critiques and extensions of the functional and conflict perspectives. The critique arises from the observation that functional and conflict theories are very abstract, and emphasize structure and process at a very general (macrosociological) level of analysis. Although this level of analysis helps in understanding education in the "big picture," macrosociological theories hardly provide an interpretable snapshot of what schools are like on an everyday level. What do students and teachers actually do in school? Interactional theories attempt to make the commonplace strange by turning on their heads everyday taken-for-granted behaviors and interactions between students and students, and between students and teachers. It is exactly what one does not question that is most problematic at a deep level. For example, the processes by which students are labeled gifted or learning disabled are, from an interactional point of view, important to analyze, because such processes carry with them many implicit assumptions about learning and children. By examining the microsociological or the interactional aspects of school life, people are less likely to create theories that are logical and eloquent, but without meaningful content.

Some of the sociology of education's most brilliant theorists have attempted to synthesize the macro- and microsociological approaches. Basil Bernstein (1990), for instance, has argued that the structural aspects of the educational system and the interactional aspects of the system reflect each other and must be viewed holistically. He has examined how speech patterns reflect students' social class backgrounds and how students from working-class backgrounds are at a disadvantage in the school setting because schools are essentially middle-class organizations. Bernstein has combined a class analysis with an interactional analysis, which links language with educational processes and outcomes.

In this section, we have tried to give you a sense of how theory can be used to explain the relation between school and society. These theories provide background metaphors and analytic

focuses for the work of sociologists. We turn now to some specific areas of research that have interested sociologists of education for many years.

Effects of Schooling on Individuals

Do schools matter? This provocative question is one that most people feel they have already answered. It is safe to say that most Americans believe that schools have a significant impact on learning and on social and economic mobility. In this section, we examine some of the effects of schooling on individuals to see what the relative importance of schooling is in terms of what people learn, employment, job performance, income, and mobility.

Knowledge and Attitudes

It may be surprising to learn that sociologists of education disagree strongly about the relative importance of schooling in terms of what knowledge and attitudes young people acquire in school. Nobody argues that schools have no impact on student development, but there are sharp divisions among researchers about how significant school effects are, when taking into account students' social class background. Generally, it is found that the higher his or her achievement level. According to such researchers as Coleman and colleagues (1966) and Jencks and colleagues (1972), differences between schools account for very little of the differences in student achievement. Is this true? Does this finding make sense of the world as we know it? Does it make no difference whether a student attends a school in a wealthy suburb or an underfinanced, overcrowded school in the inner city?

Actually, other research indicates that differences between schools in terms of their academic programs and policies do make differences in student learning. One of the first researchers to show that differences in schools are directly related to differences in student outcomes was Ron Edmonds (1979a, 1979b), the pioneer of the effective schools movement. As mentioned earlier, the effective schools research demonstrates that academically oriented schools do produce higher rates of learning. More recent research, which compares public and private schools, also indicates that in schools where students are compelled to take academic subjects and where there is consistent discipline, student achievement levels go up. An important study by Heyns (1978) found that sixth- and seventh-grade students who went to summer school, used the library, and read a great deal in the summer made greater gains in knowledge than pupils who did not study in the summer. Moreover, it has been found that the actual amount of time students spend in school is directly related to how much they learn.

Other research has indicated that the more education individuals receive, the more likely they are to read newspapers, books, and magazines, and to take part in politics and public affairs. More highly educated people are also more likely to be liberal in their political and social attitudes. Education is also related to individuals' sense of well-being and self-esteem. Thus, it is clear that, even taking into account the importance of individual social class background when evaluating the impact of education, more years of schooling leads to greater knowledge and social participation.

Employment

Most students believe that graduating from college will lead to greater employment opportunities, and they are right. In 1986, about 54 percent of the 8 million college graduates in the United States entered professional and technical jobs. Research has shown that large organizations, such as corporations, require high levels of education for white-collar, managerial, or administrative

jobs (Collins, 1971). In fact, as we discussed earlier, credential inflation has led to the expectation among employers that their employees will have an ever-increasing amount of formal education. But do well-educated employees actually do a better job? Surprisingly, most research has shown that the amount of education is only weakly related to job performance. Berg (1970), for instance, studied factory workers, maintenance workers, department store clerks, technicians, secretaries, bank tellers, engineers, industrial research scientists, military personnel, and federal civil service employers and found that the level of education was essentially unrelated to job performance. From this evidence, it seems clear that schools act as gatekeepers in determining who will get employed in high-status occupations, but schools do not provide significant job skills for their graduates. People learn how to do their jobs by doing them, which is not so surprising.

The economic and social worth of an academic credential, however, cannot be fully measured by examining its effects on job performance. Perhaps because academic credentials help individuals to obtain higher-status jobs early in their careers, possession of a college degree is significantly related to higher income. In 2011, high school graduates earned, on average, \$32,552; college graduates earned \$53,976 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003a). Among household heads at all levels of education, women earned less than men. Women with professional degrees, on average, earned considerably less than men with college degrees. These differences are due to occupational segregation by sex, pay discrimination, and the fact that women, more than men, take time off or work part-time due to family commitments.

These general findings, however, mask a great deal of variation when examining the relation between educational level and income level. According to some research, young African-American males who are highly educated earn as much as their white male counterparts, but whether this remains true across the life course remains to be seen. Many other factors besides education affect how much income people earn in their lifetimes; these include type of employer, age, union membership, and social class background. In fact, even the most thorough research cannot demonstrate that more than one-third of income is directly attributable to level of education. So, getting a college and professional degree is important for earning more money, but education alone does not fully explain differences in levels of income.

Education and Mobility

The belief that occupational and social mobility begin at the schoolhouse door is a critical component of the American ethos. As part of what might be termed *civil religion*, there is an abiding faith among most Americans that education is the great equalizer in the "great status race." Of course, not everybody subscribes to this faith. In a fascinating study, MacLeod (1995) found that working-class boys often reject the prevailing "attainment through education" ethos by emphasizing their relative lack of economic and social mobility through cultural values that glorify physical hardness, manual labor, and a certain sense of fatalism. In general, however, most Americans believe that more education leads to economic and social mobility; individuals rise and fall based on their merit. Turner (1960) called this *contest mobility*. He compared contest mobility in the United States to sponsored mobility in the United Kingdom, where students are selected at an early age for academic and university education and where social class background is very important in determining who will receive academic or vocational training.

In this regard, keep in mind another important distinction when thinking of education and mobility. Hopper (1971) has made the point that there is a difference between educational *amount* and educational *route*. That is, the number of years of education is one measure of educational attainment, but where people go to school also affects their mobility. Private and public school students may receive the same amount of education, but a private school diploma may act as a "mobility escalator" because it represents a more prestigious educational route (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

The debate as to whether the public school is really the great equalizer has not been resolved. For some groups, such as the middle class, increased education may be directly linked to upward occupational mobility; for the poor and rich, education may have little to do with mobility. An educational degree alone cannot lift many people out of poverty, and upper-class individuals do not lose their social class position if they fail to achieve a high-status educational degree. In general, the data do not support the belief that education alone provides individuals with great amounts of economic and social mobility.

Rosenbaum (1976) has offered one suggestion as to why this may be the case. He likened mobility to *tournament selection*, where winners are allowed to proceed to the next round of competition, and losers are dropped from the competition. Players (students) can be eliminated, but winners must still continue to compete. The problem with this tournament, however, is that the criteria for winning and losing include a great many variables that are related to students' social class, race, and gender characteristics, as well as merit variables, such as grade-point average and SAT scores. The complex interplay between merit and privilege creates a tournament where the rules are not entirely even-handed and not everyone has the opportunity to set the rules. Without a doubt, the relation between education and mobility will continue to be debated among scholars and policy makers. The popular belief that education opens the doors of opportunity, however, is likely to remain firmly embedded in the American ethos.

Inside the Schools

How can the sociology of education help one to understand schools in terms of their objectives, cultures, and how they shape students' perceptions and expectations? In other words, how do sociologists look at schools from an organizational point of view? How do such organizational characteristics as curricula, teacher behaviors, and student peer groups shape learning and social growth? Since most people are apt to think about learning and growth from a psychological perspective, it is illuminating to stand back and speculate how school structures can also influence student outcomes. Think of something as simple as school size. Larger schools can offer students more in the way of facilities, but large schools are also more bureaucratic and may restrain initiative. Smaller schools may allow more student and teacher freedom, but small schools often lack resources. In general, schools are getting larger, if for no other reason than they are cost-effective. Whether schools are large or small, however, the content of what they teach is a topic of important study.

Curriculum expresses culture. The question is, Whose culture? For some time, sociologists of education have pointed out that curricula are not value free; they are expressions of certain groups' ideas, beliefs, and prejudices. Knowing something about the bias and viewpoints of those who write curricula awakens one to the relativity of knowledge, and its social and cultural context.

As you know, not all students study the same curriculum. It is also a fact that curriculum placement within schools has a direct impact on the probabilities of students attending college. In 2000, approximately 47 percent of public high school students took what is called a college preparatory course of study, which includes such subjects as English, history, science, math, and foreign language; 10 percent took a vocational program and approximately 43 percent enrolled in a general program, which combines such courses as English with accounting and clerical courses (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2000a). In private schools, virtually all students are enrolled in an academic curriculum. Research has shown that curricular placement is the single biggest determinant of college attendance (Lee & Bryk, 1989; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). For example, in 1992, there were significant differences among white, African-American, Hispanic-American, and Asian-American high school students with regard to track placement. Some 46 percent of white students were in the college track, compared to 35 percent of African-American students, 31 percent of Hispanic-American students, 51 percent

of Asian-American students, and 23 percent of American-Indian students. Some 11 percent of white students were in the vocational track; compared to 15 percent of African-American students, 13 percent of Hispanic-American students, 9 percent of Asian-American students, and 17 percent of American-Indian students. Some 43 percent of white students were in the general track, compared to 49 percent of African-American students, 56 percent of Hispanic-American students, 40 percent of Asian-American students, and 61 percent of American-Indian students (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997a). In 2010, 16.9 percent of all students in the United States scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam; however, only 3.9 percent of African-American students scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam (Collegeboard, 2012). We will have a great deal to say about curriculum later in this book, but for now, it may be useful to underscore the importance of curriculum when studying schools from a sociological perspective, especially in terms of cultural transmission and the selective channelling of opportunity.

Teacher Behavior

It may seem obvious, but teachers have a huge impact on student learning and behavior. Jackson (1968) found that teachers have as many as 1,000 interpersonal contacts each day with children in their classrooms. Teachers are extremely busy people; they must also wear many different occupational hats: instructor, disciplinarian, bureaucrat, employer, friend, confidant, educator, and so on. Ingersoll (2004) supports these findings. These various roles sometimes are compatible with each other, and sometimes they are not. This can lead to role strain, where such conflicting demands are placed on teachers that they cannot feel totally comfortable in any role. Could this be a cause of teacher burnout?

Clearly, teachers are models for students and, as instructional leaders, teachers set standards for students and influence student self-esteem and sense of efficacy. In a fascinating study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), teachers' expectations of students were found to directly influence student achievement. The researchers told some teachers in a California elementary school that children in their classes were likely to have a mental growth spurt that year. In reality, the intelligence test that the children had taken revealed nothing about their potential achievement level. The students had been placed in their classes randomly. At the end of the year, the researchers returned to school and gave another test to see which children had improved. Although all the children improved somewhat, those labeled "spurters" made significantly greater achievement gains than other children, especially in the first and second grades. Thus, the labels that teachers apply to children can influence actual performance. This form of self-fulfilling prophecy indicates that teachers' expectations play a major role in encouraging or discouraging students to work to their full potential.

Persell (1977) found that when teachers demanded more from their students and praised them more, students learned more and felt better about themselves. Research indicates that many teachers have lower expectations for minority and working-class students; this suggests that these students may be trapped within a vicious cycle of low expectation–low achievement–low expectation. In part, this cycle of failure may be responsible for high dropout rates and failure to achieve at grade level. Of course, teachers cannot be held responsible for all the failures of education; there are many nonpedagogic reasons why U.S. schools are failing to educate so many children. Teachers should not be scapegoated for society's problems, but the findings on teacher expectations do indicate that the attitudes of teachers toward their students may have a significant influence on student achievement and perceptions of self. Also, it is important not to overlook the fact that there are many outstanding teachers who are dedicated and inspirational, and who have helped motivate students to do their best.

Student Peer Groups and Alienation

When you reflect on your high school and junior high experiences, you undoubtedly have strong memories of your fellow students and the various social groups that they created. Almost nobody wants to be labeled a "nerd," and in most schools, the student culture idealizes athletic ability, looks, and that detached style that indicates "coolness." In a sense, the adult culture of the teachers and administrators is in conflict with the student culture. This conflict can lead to alienation and even violence.

Stinchcombe (1964) found, for instance, that students in vocational programs and headed toward low-status jobs were the students most likely to join a rebellious subculture. In fact, student violence continues to be a problem. Students are not only attacking each other in increasing numbers but they are also assaulting teachers. The number of beatings, rapes, and even murders that are perpetrated against teachers has become something of a national scandal, but compared to what students do to each other, the danger for teachers is minimal. Some argue that school violence is increasing because teachers are underpaid and classes are too large. This may explain some of the violence, but it certainly does not explain all of it. A hundred years ago, teachers taught for little money and had class sizes double or triple present-day standards and there was little school violence. In today's culture, violence is far more acceptable, even glorified in the popular media. Being "bad" is misconstrued as being tough and smart. School children are bombarded with imaginary and actual violence in their homes, in their schools, and on the streets. It has been estimated that by the time the average child is 12 years old, he or she has been exposed to 10,000 television murders.

Student subcultures continue to be important after high school. There are four major types of college students: careerists, intellectuals, strivers, and unconnected. Careerists generally came from middle- and upper middle-class backgrounds, won few academic honors, lost confidence during college, and were not intellectually motivated by their experience. Intellectuals usually came from highly educated families, studied in the humanities, were politically involved, and earned many academic honors. Strivers very often had a working-class background, came from ethnic or racial minorities, worked hard, often did not have a high grade-point average, but graduated with a real sense of accomplishment. The unconnected came from all backgrounds, participated in few extracurricular activities, and were the least satisfied among all the groups with their college experience.

It should be evident, then, that student cultures play an important role in shaping students' educational experiences. We also hope that it is evident to you that looking within school from a sociological perspective can be very illuminating. Schools are far more than mere collections of individuals; they develop cultures, traditions, and restraints that profoundly influence those who work and study within them. They socialize and sort and select students and, in doing so, reproduce society. In the next section, we examine an issue of critical importance: How do schools reproduce social, cultural, and economic inequalities?

Education and Inequality

Suppose we asked you to draw a picture of American society. How would it look? Like a circle? A square? A shapeless blob? Let's rephrase this question a bit. In terms of the distribution of income, power, and property, would you say that the shape of American society is flat? Probably not. Most of us know that income, power, and property are unevenly distributed in society. There are the "haves" and the "have-nots." Thinking figuratively again, most of us would agree that the economic and social structure of the U.S. population resembles a triangle where most of the people can be found at the base.

In the United States, there are essentially five classes: the *upper class*, with 1–3 percent of the total U.S. population; the *upper middle class*, with 10–15 percent of the population; the *lower middle class*, with 25 percent of the population; the *working class*, with 40 percent of the population; and the *lower or underclass*, with 20 percent of the population. The distribution of income, power, and property among these classes is highly uneven. The top fifth of the U.S. population owns three-fourths of the nation's wealth, whereas the remaining four-fifths own only one-fourth of the wealth (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998, 2003a). The bottom fifth own less than 0.2 percent of the nation's wealth. In 1987, the top fifth of U.S. families earned 43.7 percent of all income, whereas the bottom fifth earned 4.6 percent of the income. Moreover, by 1998, income differences became wider and the United States increasingly became a bipolar society of great wealth, great poverty, and an ever-shrinking middle class (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998, 2003a). In 2009, the top fifth of U.S. families earned 50.3 percent of all income, whereas the bottom fifth earned 3.4 percent of the income (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012).

Social class differences are not only reflected in differences in income but in other social characteristics such as education, family and child-rearing practices, occupation, place of residence, political involvement, health, consumer behavior, and religious belief. In short, if you know a family's or individual's class position, you have a good idea about their life-style and life chances. Moreover, class influences what people think, by shaping the way in which they think. Class position creates selective perception which, in turn, creates a world view that "explains" inequalities. Ideology, then, grows out of the class system and reinforces the class system through beliefs that justify or condemn the status quo. Those who are oppressed by the class system may resist and revolt, and those who benefit usually cooperate with and defend the current form of social stratification.

People, however, are not just stratified by class; they are also stratified by race, ethnicity, age, and gender. In short, Americans live in a hierarchical society where mobility is blocked because of structural inequalities that have little or nothing to do with individuals' merits or abilities.

For some time, sociologists have speculated and argued about whether schools mitigate social inequalities by providing opportunities for those who would not normally have them. Can schools create a more open society? This is a topic of immense importance and complexity. In later chapters, we will examine this issue in depth; for now, however, it might be useful to review some of the major ways that schools help transmit social and economic inequalities.

Inadequate Schools

Perhaps the most obvious way that schools reproduce inequalities is through inadequate schools. We have already discussed the crisis in U.S. education and how numerous critics of contemporary schooling have pointed out that the way in which children are educated today will not prepare them for productive and fulfilling lives in the future. Urban education, in particular, has failed to educate minority and poor children. Moreover, differences between schools and school systems reinforce existing inequalities. Students who attend suburban schools and private schools get a better educational experience than other children (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982). Students who attend the most elite private schools obtain substantial educational benefits, both in terms of their actual educational experience and the social value of their diplomas (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

Tracking

There is compelling evidence that within-school tracking has a critical impact on student mobility (Lucas, 2002; Oakes, 1985, 2005; Tyson, 2011). In principle, *tracking* refers to the placement of

students in curricular programs based on students' abilities and inclinations. In reality, it has been found in many thorough studies that tracking decisions are often based on other criteria, such as students' class or race. By and large, working-class students end up in vocational tracks and middle-class students in academic tracks. Studies have shown that students placed in "high-ability" tracks spend more time on actual teaching and learning activities; are able to use more interesting materials; and consistently receive better teachers, better laboratory facilities, and more extracurricular activities than do their lower-track peers (Oakes, 1985; Goodlad, 1984). Moreover, track placement directly affects cognitive development (Rosenbaum, 1976). Students in lower tracks experience more alienation and authoritarian teachers than high-track students.

De Facto Segregation

Another important way that schools reinforce (even create) inequalities, particularly racial and ethnic inequalities, is through *de facto segregation*. In the previous chapter, we discussed in some depth the effects of segregated schools on student achievement, not to mention the issue of basic rights and equities. Although this issue is far from resolved, most of the evidence indicates that racially mixed schools benefit minorities and do not suppress white achievement. One study found that African-Americans from low-income communities who attended racially mixed schools were more likely to graduate from high school and college than similar African-American children who attended segregated schools. Moreover, African-American students who attended integrated schools were less likely to be arrested by the police, more likely to live in desegregated neighborhoods, and women were less likely to have a child before the age of 18. Thus, racial integration at the school level seems to be beneficial to minority students, and there is no conclusive evidence that majority students are harmed by integration.

The issue of segregation, or resegregation, will be with society for a long time, if for no other reason than most people live in racially segregated neighborhoods. Groups and individuals who believe that students should be allowed to choose the schools they wish to attend argue that school choice will break down the barriers to integration created by racially segregated neighborhoods. Whether school choice would really end segregation is still very debatable; certainly, the historical evidence from the South during the 1960s and 1970s is not reassuring. During this period, white families set up their own academies in order to avoid racially integrated public schools. More recent evidence indicates that following a number of court decisions, including *Swan v. Charlotte Mecklenburg* and *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, have resulted in significant resegregation, a pattern representative of the country (UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2012). In addition, the evidence on school choice indicates that it has often resulted in segregated rather than integrated schools (UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2012).

Gender

Another way that schools reproduce inequalities is through gender discrimination. Men and women do not share equally in U.S. society. Men are frequently paid more than women for the same work, and women, in general, have fewer occupational opportunities than men. Although this gender gap has been somewhat reduced for middle- and upper-middle-class women in the last decade, inequalities persist, particularly for working-class and lower-class women. How do schools perpetuate this problem?

Although girls usually start school cognitively and socially ahead of boys, by the end of high school, girls have lower self-esteem and lower aspirations than do boys. Somewhere during the high school years, in particular, girls begin to show signs of not living up to their potential. Is it the gender composition of the faculty and staff that influences girls to lower their aspirations?

Most teachers are female, whereas most administrators are male; could this be sending a subliminal message to girls that they are somehow subordinate to men? Do teachers treat boys and girls differently by stereotyping them by behavior? Are girls supposed to be "nice" and "feminine" while boys are allowed to act out and gain the center of attention? Studies do show that boys get more teacher attention (good and bad) than girls.

Traditionally, textbooks have been biased against women by ignoring their accomplishments and social contributions. Until very recently, there was little discussion in textbooks of sexism or gender bias. Discrimination need not always be overt. Often, gender bias is subtle; for instance, women go to college at higher rates than men, but they often go to two-year colleges or to less academically prestigious institutions.

Over the past two decades, however, the gender gap in academic achievement has all but disappeared, with female students outperforming males in language arts and social studies, and closing the gap significantly in mathematics, sciences, and having higher college attendance rates, albeit much lower participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines (Arnot, David, & Weiner, 1999; Borman, Tyson, & Halperin, 2010; Buchmann, 2009; Buchmann, DiPrete, & McDaniel, 2008).

Thus, schools are active organizational agents in recreating gender inequalities. However, schools alone should not be held accountable for gender discrimination. This form of social stratification is rooted in the values and organization of society; schools in some ways only reflect these societal problems. This is not to say that educators intend to reproduce class, ethnic, racial, and gender inequalities, but the consequences of certain school policies and processes may reproduce these inequalities. Moreover, there is some evidence that for middle-class students, schooling does provide a "channel of attainment." In the main, however, the best evidence indicates that schools, despite educators' best intentions, tend to reproduce social inequalities. A major aspect of any meaningful reform movement must address this issue if schools are really to open doors to equal opportunity.

Sociology and the Current Educational Crisis

To grasp the magnitude of the current crisis in U.S. education, it is essential to recognize that at least one-third of the nation's children are at risk at failing in school, even before they enter kindergarten. Demographer Harold Hodgkinson (1991) described the condition of U.S. children in stark and poignant terms. Since 1987, one-fourth of all preschool children in the United States live in poverty. In 1990, approximately 350,000 children were born to mothers who were addicted to cocaine during pregnancy. Some 15 million children are being reared by single mothers whose family income averages about \$11,400 a year. At least 2 million school-age children have no adult supervision after school, and every night between 50,000 and 200,000 children have no home. By 2009, these figures indicated an increase in these measures of poverty. As of 2009, there were 15.5 million children from families living in poverty and an additional 31.9 million children from low-income families. How can schools help children to become productive and happy adults when so many children begin life with such severe disadvantages?

The sociological imagination helps one understand what is and what can be when one tries to imagine schools and school systems that meet the challenges that are facing today's children and young adults. The current educational crisis is complex, and solutions to the pressing problems are difficult to find. But people should not despair; we need to begin the work of reconstructing U.S. education. Sociologists ask the tough questions about schools and they search for answers by collecting data. Sometimes the data support preconceived beliefs, sometimes they do not. In either case, sociologists are committed to finding out the truth about the relationship between school and society, and it is this truth-seeking activity that is most likely to lead to meeting the challenges facing education today.

The following selections illustrate the sociological imagination applied to educational problems. The articles address important issues concerning the relationship between school and society and illustrate Persell's model of the levels of sociological analysis. The first article, "The Contribution of Schooling to the Learning of Norms," by sociologist Robert Dreeben, illustrates the functionalist theory of education through an analysis of how the schools socialize children into the norms of society.

The second selection, written by sociologist Ray C. Rist, "On Understanding the Processes of Schooling: The Contributions of Labeling Theory," provides an illustration of the interpretive or interactionist perspective. Rist demonstrates how labeling theory provides a useful tool for understanding what goes on inside schools. The interactionist perspective, as Rist suggests, is an alternative to the more structural approaches of functionalism and conflict theory.

The third selection, "The Politics of Culture: Understanding Local Political Resistance to Detracking in Racially Mixed Schools," written by sociologists Amy Stuart Wells and Irene Serna, examines how affluent parents resist detracking policies. This article illustrates the ways in which conflict theory and interaction theory, used together, help us understand how power and privilege affect school practices and policies.

The Contribution of Schooling to the Learning of Norms

Robert Dreeben

This paper is concerned with the familiar phenomenon known as schooling. It departs from the usual approaches to education in that the problems of instruction and its direct outcomes are of peripheral interest. The main argument is based on the observation that schools and the classrooms within them have a characteristic pattern of organizational properties different from those of other agencies in which socialization takes place and on the contention that what children learn derives as much from the nature of their experiences in the school setting as from what they are taught.

Traditional approaches to understanding the educational process usually deal with the explicit goals of schools as expressed in curriculum content: the cognitive skills involved in reading, arithmetic, and the like; subject matter content; national tradition; vocational skills; and a multitude of good things such as citizenship, self-confidence, tolerance, patriotism, cooperation, and benevolent attitudes of various kinds. They are also concerned with pedagogy: methods of instruction considered broadly enough to include motivation and quasi-therapeutic activities as well as didactics more narrowly conceived. One indication that curriculum and pedagogy occupy a central place in educational thinking is the existence of a massive literature reporting research devoted overwhelmingly to problems in these two areas and to evaluations of instructional effectiveness in bringing about curricular outcomes.¹

There is no question but that schools are engaged in an instructional enterprise, but the preoccupation with instruction has been accompanied by the neglect of other equally important problems. It is my contention that the traditional conception of schooling as an instructional process, primarily cognitive in nature, is at best only partially tenable. That is, what pupils learn is in part some function of what is taught; but what is learned and from what experiences remain open questions. Doubtless the dissemination of knowledge is high on the school's agenda; but does such dissemination represent its peculiar contribution?