

CLASSES FOR ORDER: THE ORIGINS OF INEQUALITY IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

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Classes for Order: The Origins of Inequality in American Education

Thesis directed by Professor Fred W. Anderson

If speaking of universal public education is problematic in the United States today, historically it was even more so. This work explores how regional attributes affected and were reflected in American schooling regimes from the colonial era through the end of the nineteenth century. Throughout, America's governing classes strategically molded schools to promote social stability and political order in their communities. Colonists in ethnically homogeneous New England built schools and created school systems to reinforce communal norms; leaders in the heterogeneous Middle Colonies supported schools but not unifying systems, while the Southern planter gentry rejected schools as dangerous, destabilizing influences. After Independence, Northerners embraced universal education; Southern leaders, invested in slavery, claimed schooling as their own exclusive province. Southern elites resisted attempts to impose universal schooling in their region during Reconstruction and ultimately coopted Northern reformers' efforts to foster order through public education in an increasingly diverse nation.

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CLASSES FOR ORDER: THE ORIGINS OF INEQUALITY IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

Over the course of her career, Avis Adams, who started teaching in an Illinois country school, acquired a number of “Parker’s Supplementary Readers” immodestly published by Charles M. Parker of Taylorville to accompany the widely-duplicated Illinois “State Course of Study.” An 1895 copy of one of Adams’ brittle, yellowed, eight-page “Penny Classics” features Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem “The Builders.” Adams never annotated her copy through her long career, which spanned from that Illinois country school to an Oregon high school and back to Illinois again. The text itself includes “Suggestive Exercises,” which primarily consist of instructions like, “Express in your own words the thought of the first stanza.”¹ At any rate, when the index-card-sized “Parker’s Supplementary Readers,” along with several smaller but more substantive books of poetry, first came into my possession, I regarded them as quaint tokens of America’s halcyon one-room school days. How provincial, I thought, that students should spend their days reading rhyming platitudes about how to

Build to-day, then, strong and sure
With a firm and ample base;
And ascending and secure
Shall to-morrow find its place.

For a long time, I did not think much about Adams’s materials, as they got shuffled underneath my own stacks of textbooks and lesson plans and even bigger piles of student work to grade. But as a teacher, I used my free time to keep tabs on trends and schools. Headlines that seemed to appear with increasing frequency ran something like, “The Whiteness of Private Schools” or “School Segregation Resurgent—Schools in the West Among the Nation’s Most Segregated.” Those pronouncements always rankled and they left me perplexed. If *Brown v.*

¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Parker’s Supplementary Reader: The Builders” (C. M. Parker, December 1895).

Board of Education could not resolve inequities in American public schools after more than 60 years, it suggested that roots of the inequities were more deeply embedded in America's past and more thoroughly ingrained in American society, culture, economy, and politics than a single judicial decision could ever reach. I set out in search of insight about how American schools both reflected and formed American society, culture, and political economy, and I quickly discovered that no single source offered the insight I wanted.

The history of education in America is a strangely fragmented field. Much of the literature on the history of schooling, comes from educators probing the origins of their profession or from ethnohistorians focused on the educational experiences of specific groups of students, but very little comes from generalists seeking to uncover how schools responded to and furthered transformations in America. Despite an auspicious moment in the 1950s and '60s when the Committee on the Role of Education in History, whose membership included the likes of Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., Merle Curti, and Richard Hofstadter, convened to remedy the marginalization of the history of education and to urge the field's incorporation into mainstream historical scholarship, inquiries about education seem no nearer the mainstream than they did when Ellwood Cubberley published the profession-aggrandizing *Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History* in 1919. Bernard Bailyn's *Education in the Forming of American Society* most clearly articulated the committee's demand for a reconsideration of the role of education in American history through his proposal to extend scholarship about the history of education beyond schools, and his charge inspired some notable contributions. Rush Welter's 1962 *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* expanded the bounds of popular education well beyond schoolhouse doors to include interest-group publications and lecture series as he explored how education reflected and influenced

political developments in the United States.

Historian-cum-administrator Lawrence Cremin devoted his career to the new scholarly direction urged by the Committee on the Role of Education in History. Undertaking an exploration of how Americans pursued education not only through schooling, but also through informal mechanisms like family interaction, church attendance, and newspaper reading, Cremin earned the 1962 Bancroft Prize for *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957*, and the 1981 Pulitzer Prize for *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876*. Yet by the time Cremin published the final installment of his *American Education* trilogy in 1988, which overlapped in many ways with his prize-winning 1962 text, historians dismissed *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* in astonishingly terse tones. Lawrence Veysey, for instance, wrote for *The American Historical Review* that, “The present volume is the best of the three. There is more effort to provide some serious social history and less reliance on the scattershot inclusion of biographies of educational leaders. But again the lengthy book has no real bite.”²

The inhospitable terrain facing scholars interested in the history of education leaves few willing to sully their hands with any kind of comprehensive, synthetic investigation of schooling; the want of scholarship that examines the role of education in American cultural, social, political, and economic development produces a narrative that seems unwieldy and incoherent. It is difficult to square James Anderson’s *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* with Cremin’s work, for example; yet both works have merit. The strength of Anderson’s scholarship is his meticulous recovery of the educational experience of blacks, which for generations was written out, or minimized in other narratives. The strength of Cremin’s work is in his willingness

² Lawrence Veysey, “Review: American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980 by Lawrence A. Cremin,” *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 1 (February 1990): 285.

to consider that education occurred well beyond the physical space of the schoolhouse. A third particularly strong intervention in the historiography of American education comes from Carl Kaestle, who in his path-breaking *Pillars of the Republic* offered more extensive attention to regional discrepancies in American common schools than any of his predecessors.

For the moment, the outstanding example of how the history of education might be re-introduced to mainstream historical scholarship comes from Clif Stratton. Stratton seemingly stands alone among contemporary historians striving to knit the story of American schooling into broader historiographies of American society, culture, political economy, and empire by offering a more comprehensive examination of schooling in the United States and how schools reflected predominant public sentiment. His work makes a compelling case that after Reconstruction, in support of the United States' imperial goals, schools promoted "multiple unequal paths to 'good citizenship,'" as determined by students' race or nationality.³ Through a series of vignettes focusing on schooling regimes in places ranging from Atlanta to New York to Hawaii and Puerto Rico, Stratton's *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* shows how curricula, textbooks, school politics and policies developed by white school reformers prepared white students for social advancement while extending only vocational training or industrial education to students of color or foreign nationality. For all the breadth of Stratton's scholarship, however, he excludes all mention of Indian education, a surprising omission in a book about the mechanisms by which Americans expanded their nation's influence and reach. Still, Stratton offers an exciting glimpse at how scholarship about education might enrich the broader narrative of American history. His synthesis supplies context that most ethnohistorians' works do not and explores nuances that most generalists do not, and,

³ Clif Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2016), 1.

in doing so, highlights the essential function schools and education policy served in unifying and expanding the nation.

My work resembles Stratton's in attempting to rejoin education history to a more holistic narrative of American history, but I am exploring American schooling from the colonial period through the end of the nineteenth century, where Stratton's story picks up. I will, in addition, adjust one framework that defines most standard histories of schooling from Cubberley's work through the present; I do not begin with the assumption that a value for universal education was normative in early America, since Alexis de Tocqueville's view might be considered just as valid. De Tocqueville, the famed foreign tourist of early America, wryly observed, "What gives us most trouble in Europe is men born in a lower station in life, who have received an education which makes them long to get out of it without giving them the means to do so."⁴ Many Europeans from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth, including many who arrived in America during that period, shared de Tocqueville's skepticism that public schooling benefitted the community. His view further suggests that governing elites actually had powerful motives to block the diffusion of knowledge.

Since the most common historical narrative to explain the origin of public education in America tends to represent efforts to construct schools as a monolithic effort to educate new republicans, without fully accounting for regionally distinct conceptions of republicanism and attendant variations in Americans' understandings of virtue or liberty, the standard account is deeply unsatisfying. Assuming that Americans desired to diffuse knowledge, à la Thomas Jefferson, tends to produce a teleological narrative of schooling that implies that Americans universally wanted public schooling. The assumption of national uniformity in early American

⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 56.

educational regimes suggests regionally divergent social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions necessarily produced ideological convergence about whom should be educated, to what extent and at what cost they should be educated, what purpose education served, and what value might be derived from an educated citizenry. But even the Constitution, the first legal mechanism that might have enforced a uniform response to such considerations, offered no guidance: neither the Constitution nor the Bill of Rights expressly defined education as a right, nor did the Ninth and Tenth Amendments offer any kind of hint about how public education might be managed. If speaking of “American” public education is, as countless others have pointed out, problematic today, historically it was even more so. Consequently, it seems worthwhile to ask: to what degree did educational policy and practice in early America reflect regionally disparate social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental conditions? And further, to what extent did educational policies and practices affect regional variances in early America?

Allowing for the possibility that variations in regional schooling regimes were deliberate rather than incidental offers the requisite framework to begin answering the preceding questions. Colonial communities in Massachusetts and elsewhere in New England, nearly from their inception, sought to institutionalize education, which testifies to their tremendous faith in the capacity of an informed citizenry to improve the social, political and economic welfare of the community. Since literacy was a key component of Protestant Congregationalism, New Englanders were willing to assume the risk of education’s troubling capacity to leave men discontented with their station. In contrast, Southern elites who had the means to exert the greatest influence over their region’s educational regimes found the possibility that education could incite rebellion, namely a slave revolt, so alarming that they sought to restrict access to

schooling. As early as the seventeenth century, then, a measure of demographic homogeneity within a region and the stability of regional social, political, and economic structures influenced communities' support for institutionalized education and their perception of education's value or danger. The linkages between communities' homogeneity, stability, and tolerance for institutionalized education also help explain why the republican project of universalizing education, even as it flourished in the North, failed to gain significant momentum in the South until after the Civil War. During Reconstruction, blacks and Northern reformers sought to remake Southern institutions, including schooling, in preparation for the states' reintegration into the Union and the expansion of citizenship to freedmen and -women. However, the disruption of the South's nascent common school systems, which began as Union troops departed, suggests the South's racially mixed and politically volatile post-war communities remained inhospitable territory for universal education as Northern reformers idealized it.

Of course, even histories that take Northern efforts to produce universal education as a national paradigm, insofar as they acknowledge the regional discrepancies in the development of public schools, offer valid and insightful explanations for the anemic Southern school systems. Explanations that Southern school systems developed at a slower rate than Northern ones because of the region's dispersed rural populations and Southerners' prevailing opposition to taxation and attendant mistrust of government authority, in particular, have merit. The logistics of school creation in rural communities varied from school formation in urban settings. By virtue of students' physical separation, rural schools featured student bodies that were more diverse since teachers accommodated students of all ages and stages of educational progress at once. Local communities' attitudes toward taxation are also often cited to explain the delayed development of public schooling in the South. Southerners often grumbled about having to pay

for other men's children to attend school. But urban schools faced challenges too; they were often crowded, limiting the quality of education students received. Even in the comparatively urban North though, the vast majority of schools were rural, and in Northern states with population densities on par with those in the South, schools were still more abundant and the populace more literate. At the same time, Northerners too resented taxation and often repealed school taxes almost as soon as they were enacted. Since various Northern communities faced many of the same obstacles named as the sources of the South's delayed acceptance of common schooling, it seems important to bear in mind that not all regional variants affected the emergence of common schools to the same degree.

In exploring how regional attributes affected and reflected distinctions in American schooling regimes, this work traces school development over three periods: the colonial era, the early republican era, and in the final three decades of the nineteenth century. From the seventeenth century through the nineteenth, America's governing classes consistently and strategically molded schools to promote order in their communities. I argue that slavery produced sectionally distinct school regimes in early America and that the racist attitudes that sustained slavery continued to shape public schooling even after Americans finally renounced the notion that humans might be owned by another. In examining colonial schooling, the first chapter explores the political, social, cultural, commercial, and environmental factors that produced English settlers' initial educational regimes, and traces the emergence of three distinct patterns of educational policy and practice. Colonial school development proceeded to reinforce communal norms in demographically homogenous regions, while colonists in demographically heterogeneous communities, and in societies with race slavery most particularly, tended to reject schools, viewing them as sources of unrest. The second chapter explores how the Revolution

affected educational policies and practices as Americans took on the task of governing themselves. The comparative absence of schools in the South prior to the Civil War was not entirely an accident of dispersed population, nor did it merely manifest resentment of taxation. Sectional distinctions solidified to produce two opposing approaches to public schooling. The North, having repudiated slavery after Independence, embraced universal education, while the South, utterly committed to and invested in slavery, insisted that schooling was the province of the governing elite. Finally, this work traces why and how the Civil War failed to secure a national commitment to universal education, but advanced a model of exclusive education. As the third chapter argues, the Civil War did not fundamentally change Southern elites' conviction that universal schooling might disrupt their communities. Instead, through their intimate association with Southern schools after the war, Northerners learned to place even greater faith in the capacity of schools to perpetuate order: insofar as they derived lessons from the Southern approach to schooling, reformers became all the more convinced that schools could effectively solve social "Problems." Regardless of whether the problems were defined as Southern, Indian, immigrant, or criminal in their origin or focus, Northern educators believed that creating curricula of the correct sort could solve them, and the problems of order they represented.

The following chapters explore four central themes in the development of American schooling from the colonial era to the end of the nineteenth century: coercion, regionalism, universalism *versus* exclusivism, and national convergence. These themes can be stated briefly in the form of four propositions.

Schools, both in their presence and in their absence, served coercive functions in early America. Regardless of time or location, governing elites' calculations about how to use schools to establish and maintain order constituted the sole consideration that united American

educational practice and policies. Particularly in the North, where schools were abundant, they served a variety of ordering functions beginning almost as soon as the first colonial settlements assumed an air of permanence. Sometimes schools suited decidedly local objectives; New England Puritans used schools to instill uniform values and morality, while commercially-minded middle colonists looked to schools to prepare children for useful work later in life. At other times, schools served a more universal objective. They standardized transactional communication and effectively conferred or affirmed social status. After the Revolution, schools retained their colonial functions and governing elites endowed them with an even more critical purpose, to ease Americans' transition to self-governance. Northerners increasingly placed their faith in universal education to check any disorderly tendencies of the public. In the South, keeping the masses ignorant while expanding educational opportunities for the elite seemed to offer the governing class an effective means of influencing public opinion and training successive generations of elites to preserve order. Even after the Civil War occasioned a second revolutionary transformation, schools retained their essential function in advancing the cultural, social, political, and economic order governing elites envisioned.

Slavery produced determinative sectional differences. Although factors like population density, attitudes toward taxation and government authority, and predominant religious convictions augmented regional distinctions, slavery produced determinative sectional variations in early American communities and their institutions. Countless aspects of early Americans' lives, from political convictions to religious practice varied because of slavery. Edmund Morgan, for example, established that slavery produced divergent conceptions of freedom that ultimately produced wildly divergent rationales for Independence and ideologies about governance after the Revolution. In time, slavery so hardened the sectional variations in Americans' definitions of

freedom, and the project of national expansion placed so much pressure on Americans to reach a consensus about the meaning of liberty, that Abraham Lincoln lamented during the Civil War:

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same *word* we do not all mean the same *thing*. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name—liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.⁵

In addition to the crisis slavery precipitated when Americans failed to reconcile their conflicting versions of republican governance, slavery also produced countless other sectional differences that intimately affected the way Americans lived. Christine Leigh Heyrman, in particular, compellingly demonstrates how slavery advanced regionally distinct religious practices, particularly after the Revolution. In response to Southerners' initial indifference or even hostility to Methodists and other evangelicals, clergy of those denominations moderated their doctrines, preaching, and practices to accommodate slave societies; evangelicals transformed their practices to limit slaves' opportunities to wield power through ministry, and, in seeking to ensure that clergy represented values compatible with those of the governing elite, abandoned egalitarian impulses and transformed the ministry into the province of formally educated practitioners. So in both profoundly public and intensely personal ways, slavery altered Americans' outlooks and how they lived; slavery even accounts for the sectional divergence in schooling regimes that newer educational histories, like Kaestle's, more readily recognize.

As a corollary to the preceding theme, the sectionally distinct visions of order that slavery produced prompted governing elites to adopt opposing educational practices and

⁵ Abraham Lincoln, "Address at a Sanitary Fair" (Speech, Baltimore, Md., April 18, 1864), <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/address-at-a-sanitary-fair/>.

policies: universalism in the North and exclusivism in the South. Even during the colonial period, Northern policy-makers, deeply worried about cultivating common moral standards and promoting their region's commercial interests, could embrace schools as a means of establishing order without any substantial risk of inciting a slave revolt because of the small size of their slave populations. Northerners had even greater latitude to turn toward universal education as a means of tempering the democratic character of their states as the Revolution and subsequent emancipation initiatives further diminished the prospect that schools might invite dissent. On the other hand, Southern elites, from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth, had little cause to think that schools would make their communities more stable and generally feared schools would actually promote disorder. Lacking Puritan fervor and the Middle Colonies' commercial orientation, the South's planter class had few incentives to depart from their English predecessors' disdain for public schooling; as slave populations grew they counted more and more reasons to maintain as few schools as possible. While the Revolution prompted Southerners to affirm the utility of schooling in preparing men for political leadership, the governing class worked to ward off any dilution of their authority by ensuring that education remained a prerogative of the elite. In contrast to their Northern counterparts, Southern policy-makers consciously rejected public schools and universal education as an unnecessary and unwise invitation of the lower orders' discontent, and slaves were the prime subjects of their concern. Only when emancipation forced Southern elites to reconsider how to preserve their social, political, and economic order did sectional divergences in schooling attenuate.

The introduction of curricula calibrated to preserve governing elites' ideals of order facilitated the convergence of American educational policy and practices after emancipation. Southern elites' hostility toward widespread schooling proved so effectual after the Civil War

that even Northern policy-makers signaled their intent to follow suit, and American educational policies and practices finally converged in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Although Southern elites no longer enjoyed absolute autonomy in the region, the influence they exercised to shape the schooling regime that emerged after emancipation largely helped recreate plantation order. Pleading poverty to deflect Northern pressure to accept universal schooling, and endorsing a curricular approach that eliminated almost all intellectual or academic instruction, the South's governing class ensured that education continued to confer social standing, political clout, and economic opportunity on a select set of white Southerners. Northern policy-makers, satisfied with white Southerners' façade of progress in the expansion of schooling and preoccupied with their ambitions to impose order in the West set and further develop public schooling, also resorted to the tactic of differentiating schools' curricula based on where they anticipated students would fit among the ranks of American citizens. As Northern elites abandoned attempts at school integration, but persisted in projects like expanding vocational education and distinguishing it from high school education, the effects of school reform in the North and West duplicated those produced by the changes in education policy and practice occurring in the South. As schooling models assumed a similar bent throughout the nation, the new regime turned away from the equalizing and democratizing functions the North's celebrated common schools purportedly served before the Civil War and created an array of classes to ensure privileged whites retained their authority and subjugated others⁶; in essence, following a Southern model, America's governing class repudiated the objectives of common schools and universal education

⁶ Although high schools started to reinforce class differentiation as they were introduced in the North before the Civil War—by providing an avenue to a collegiate education that only a limited portion of the population might put to use—reformers professed an expectation that the schools would extend wider professional opportunities to students. Southern schools opened after the Civil War, on the other hand, abandoned even the pretense of opening new professional opportunities to students and featured a race-specific curriculum for blacks centered on menial physical labor; the schools were explicitly designed to constrain opportunities.

and normalized the differentiation of citizens through education.

Given that scholarship from a host of historians including Gregory Downs, David Blight, and even Ira Katznelson, demonstrates how effectively white Southerners negotiated the ultimate terms of national reunification and reconciliation in their favor, my conclusions about the influence of Southern interests on the development of American public schooling should not come as a surprise. Any surprise my work does occasion should, if nothing else, reiterate the value of joining the history of education to the larger narrative of American history. One problem that remains unresolved in my inquiry that bears on the broader historical narrative and seems to merit closer examination revolves around Northern and Southern conceptions of industrial education. Just as before the Civil War Americans had different definitions for liberty, it seems Northerners and Southerners after the war had different understandings of what industrial education meant. Southerners used industrial education to instill industriousness through manual labor. Given the extent to which boosters of industrial education solicited Northern support for their work, it is difficult to imagine that Northern audiences failed to grasp what Southern industrial education was like. But a number of documents suggest Northerners tended to see industrial education as a stepping-stone toward work in industry. As a result, it is unclear whether Northerners understood that their definition was at odds with Southerners' usage. Given the inconsistency of Northerners' definitions of equality, it is not clear whether they ever worried their concept of industrial education might be different from Southerners'. Uncovering the extent to which regional conceptions of industrial education aligned might offer new insights, for example, about Americans' aspirations for industrialization, the gradations in Americans' conceptions of equality, or even about whether national reconciliation was more genuine or

superficial.

In the end, the project of universal education progressed after the Civil War, but it hardly advanced in the direction indicated by school reformers before the war, in that public school reformers started to reject the notion that all American children should have access to a common curriculum. More critically, the project to advance distinct curricular plans for students of different races and ethnicities both conformed to and perpetuated inherently unequal visions of citizenship well into the twentieth century. Consequently, when I came across Avis Adams's teaching mementos again recently, they assumed a far different significance than when I first got them. No longer were they quaint reminders of schools of yesterday. They became—and still remain—unsettling.

If the presentation of “The Builders” in other instructional texts or even newspapers of the latter portion of the nineteenth century are in any way consistent with how Adams prompted her students to interpret the poem, the verses, regardless of Longfellow's intent when he published them nearly a half-century earlier, became a patriotic ode to public schools and the schools' capacity to enable students to be the “architects of Fate” who might change the nation, “Some with massive deeds and great,” and others with “ornaments of rhyme.”⁷ Just as common school teachers from Massachusetts to Illinois to Montana exhorted their students to aspire to those “massive deeds” or to craft “ornaments of rhyme,” Booker T. Washington and other industrially-educated teachers exhorted their students to learn “that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.”⁸ And just as it became more common for women like Adams, with her four-year college degree, to teach in common schools and high schools

⁷ “The School Dedication,” *The Philipsburg Mail*, February 27, 1896, Vol. X, No. 5 edition, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.

⁸ Booker T. Washington, “The Atlanta Exposition Address, September 18, 1895,” in *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1901), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/washington/washing.html#washing42>, 220.

throughout the nation, it was also a deliberate part of school reform that, as W. E. B. Du Bois noted, “all candid people know there does not exist today in the centre of Negro population a single first-class fully equipped institution devoted to the higher education of Negroes; not more than three Negro institutions in the South deserve the name of college at all.”⁹ So my great-great-great-aunt Avis’s poems now prompt me to celebrate her dedication and skill in inspiring students and in opening new opportunities to them, but the poems also demand that I acknowledge the classes of students and teachers that school reformers passed over.

⁹ W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (March 2000): 27.

EMERGENT CLASSES IN COLONIAL AMERICA

The travails of England's earliest arrivals in North America, who thought they could spend their first days in a new world bowling in Jamestown's streets, vividly illustrate that successful colonization demanded a tremendous amount of sheer physical labor. After meeting their most basic physical needs, quickly colonists turned to the labor of transplanting English lifeways: civic and social organization, religious traditions, political ideals—even educational systems. Indeed, before colonists themselves were at leisure to consider anything other than survival, remote politicians envisioned education as an essential component of schemes to extend British imperial influence beyond the European sphere.

As early as 1622, John Brinsley, a Puritan minister and schoolteacher, accepted a commission from the Virginia Company in London to outline a curriculum suitable for a colonial grammar school. He enthusiastically accepted his charge to ensure that colonists acquired an education along with people of the “inferior sort” in “all ruder countries and places; namely for Ireland, Wales, Virginia, for the Somer Ilands...that all may speake one and the same Language.”¹⁰ Beyond his representation of the logistical advantages afforded by institutionalized schooling, Brinsley reminded colonial governors not only in Virginia, but throughout the empire, of their moral obligation to provide systematic education: “you cannot be ignorant of the wofull estate of all sorts, so long as they remaine in ignorance and blindness.” He exhorted governors to reduce a “barbarous people to civilitie” and prepare the community to “recive the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Brinsley's impassioned appeal for institutionalized schooling in the colonies thus indicated three compelling reasons for governors to attend to settlers' education

¹⁰ John Brinsley, *A Consolation for Our Grammar Schooles...*, ed. Thomas Clark Pollock. R. Field for T. Man, 1622 (New York: Scholars' Facsimilies and Reprints, 1943) Sabin Americana, 1.

that reappeared throughout the colonial period as imperial officials and colonists themselves considered what educational policies or practices to pursue: instilling civic, practical, and spiritual knowledge.

Brinsley emphatically sought to outline colonial officials' moral obligation to superintend the development of schools. He warned of the reckoning that awaited the governors if they failed to organize schools, arguing the chief advantage of supporting colonial schooling is the salvation of the governors' own souls: "If you should not use all holie meanes for the honour of our God, with the saving and preserving of all those soules, and their posteritie, and gaining the verie savage amongst them unto Jesus Christ, whether Irish or Indian, but onelie respect your owne ends and projects, you could never stand before his heavenlie Majestie."¹¹ Despite Brinsley's rhetoric, the Virginia Company's stockholders felt few scruples in abandoning the proposed school after Powhatan Indians rose up to slaughter hundreds of English intruders in March 1622.¹² Colonial officials' abortive attempt to impose an educational ideal in Virginia typified the transitory effects produced by many, though not all, successive efforts to transplant English educational models throughout North America.

In examining colonial schooling from the 1620s through the eighteenth century, this chapter explores the political, social, cultural, commercial, and environmental factors that affected English settlers' initial educational regimes, and traces the emergence of three distinct patterns of educational policy and practice. Constituting a *tour d'horizon* of the colonial educational regimes as they existed in the mid-eighteenth century, the survey proceeds geographically from south to north. It seeks to answer two broad questions, which are intended, like the two faces of a coin, to complement one another. First, how did disparate conditions in

¹¹ Brinsley, xiv-xxvi.

¹² Brinsley, iii.

colonial settlements inform various colonial authorities' policies and shape emergent practices regarding education? Second, what do schooling policies and practices reveal about colonial settlements?

The first question will clarify the degree of colonial authorities' influence in shaping colonists' educational experiences and the ways regional settlement patterns affected colonists' perceptions of the merits of institutionalized schooling. As exemplified in the Jamestown experience, colonial officials looked to education to instill common religious or civic values; colonists' failure to resurrect the scheme after their devastating war with Powhatans indicates they rated education as non-essential. Jamestown's experiment warned that education might actually be dangerous because of its potential to magnify dissent. Subsequent policies devised by colonial officials often accounted for subversive factions in colonial populations; in colonies where officials worried about education's power to incite religious dissent or servile revolt, they avoided mandates for public education. Thus, colonists dynamically influenced the imposition and outcome of schemes for public education.

The second line of inquiry will clarify the place of education policies and practices in colonial lifeways. Settlers in early Virginia, preoccupied with survival, may have regarded schooling as a concern of secondary importance, but their successors embraced more nuanced attitudes. Indeed, colonists' adoption of education regimes ultimately accorded with the degree of demographic, denominational, and political stability they enjoyed. Surveying educational regimes that prevailed, from south to north, in England's colonies by the mid-eighteenth century promotes a more comprehensive view of how socio-economic, cultural and political factors influenced public education schemes prior to the existential crises of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution.

“I thanke God there are noe free schools”: Education in the Southern Colonies

By the mid-eighteenth century England’s southern colonies had long since cohered as a distinct region based on staple-crop economies that gave them both a crucial role in imperial commerce and a set of social and cultural institutions dependent on chattel slavery. Regional conditions, in turn, affected the logistics of schooling and attitudes toward education generally. In the eighteenth century, the demands of managing a burgeoning empire and the ambition of extending it meant the crown had little time and few resources to devote to oversight of education. While the Board of Trade, the organ of Privy Council that was principally responsible for the administration of the colonies, issued instructions asserting the right of the crown to license colonial schoolteachers and directing colonial governors to instruct assemblymen to provide for schooling, primarily in the interest of alleviating vice and immorality, both distance and preoccupation with commerce precluded systematic oversight of educational programs.¹³ Georgia, as the newest of the mainland colonies and a particularly critical imperial outpost, attracted slightly more attention from Whitehall and Westminster. Left to their own devices, and only nominally interested in the welfare of poor whites whom they primarily valued as allies against potentially rebellious slaves, southern elites developed an approach to schooling suited to their plantation-based communities.¹⁴ The geographic dispersion of plantations and their inhabitants’ preoccupation with cash-crop production constituted a logistical barrier to communal schooling initiatives. More importantly, however, the planter gentry systematically obstructed the establishment of schools. While the great planters needed education as a marker of refinement and status, they determined that poor whites needed minimal instruction beyond what

¹³ Board of Trade, *Royal Instructions to British Colonial Governors 1670-1776*, ed. Leonard Woods Labaree, vol. 2, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), 492, 504.

¹⁴ Richard Middleton and Anne Lombard, *Colonial America: A History to 1763*, 4th ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 469.

was necessary for farming or artisanal occupations. However else the two groups differed on other issues, they could agree that slaves needed neither practical nor academic education, and indeed that even rudimentary literacy could render them intolerably dangerous. As slave populations and the accompanying threat of revolt grew throughout the southern colonies, planters abandoned even the practice of allowing slaves reading instruction to promote Christian indoctrination and actively sought to limit all educational opportunities.

Georgia

Georgia's extreme southern location mirrored its position on a continuum of colonial attitudes regarding education. The colony's founding as a refuge for British debtors who were supposed to insulate plantation colonies further north from the slave refuge of Spanish Florida fostered a highly unstable environment for fledgling schools. Early educational endeavors, coordinated through the Church of England, irregularly supplied teachers; preachers like John Wesley, sought to serve Indians more than English colonists.¹⁵ Similarly, Joseph Ottolenghe, one of The Associates of Dr. Bray, an Anglican philanthropic organization dedicated to spiritual education, arrived in Savannah in 1751 to serve as a catechist for the slave population. Since Parliament legalized slavery in Georgia January 1 that year, the educational outreach would seem to have been a sop and a rationalization. While the original charter banned chattel slavery, colonists had practiced it openly for a decade and there were perhaps 600 slaves in the colony by 1750.¹⁶ Ottolenghe's reading instruction reached approximately 50 of them, with little lasting effect. Comparatively few spoke English, the language of instruction, and slaveholders

¹⁵ Elbert W.G. Boogher, *Secondary Education in Georgia: 1732-1858* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1933), 19-20.

¹⁶ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 274.

obstructed Ottolenghe's enterprise by assigning labor at times that conflicted with lessons.¹⁷

When they could access educational opportunities, however haphazardly offered, many white colonists resented the stigma associated with eligibility for free education based on colonial leaders' assessment of families' poverty.¹⁸ Even after 1743, when colonial officials reversed their policy allocating public funds for education based on assessments of individual attendees' poverty, the diversity of the white population, which included Germans, Irish, and Scots, rendered publicly available English-language instruction inaccessible to some and its Anglican affiliation offensive to most. From 1746-1754, Parliament funded posts for just two schoolteachers in the colony; otherwise teachers' salaries made the posts desirable (it was said) primarily to drunkards.¹⁹

Educational endeavors fared even worse after Georgia became a royal colony. Colonial assemblies declined to make any provisions for an educational system and a 1755 passed a law explicitly outlawed writing instruction for slaves.²⁰ In February 1764, trustees of a Savannah property designated for a community school voted to divert all school funds toward building a market.²¹ By the start of the Revolution, slaves found themselves almost completely deprived of access to educational opportunities and poor whites were bound out in apprenticeships, which did not guarantee any particular standard of education. Only the sons of wealthy planters, dispatched to Europe or northern colleges after a local private tutor exposed them to the basics, had the means to access any substantive educational opportunity.²²

¹⁷ E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 252-253.

¹⁸ Dorothy Orr, *A History of Education in Georgia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 8.

¹⁹ Parliament, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, ed. Leo Francis Stock, vol. v, v vols. (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924), 297, 375, 459, 540, 585. Orr, 10; see also Boogher, 22.

²⁰ Monaghan, 243; see also Boogher, 23.

²¹ Orr, 12.

²² Orr, 16, 13.

Since the colony was Britain's final colonial endeavor in North America before the Revolution, Georgia's educational system had the most limited time in which to develop. Still, hostility of dissident religious groups, resentment of impoverished families about being regarded as charity cases, and linguistic and legal barriers that deterred willing and unwilling immigrants decisively confined educational opportunities to private settings.

The Carolinas

The Carolinas constituted Georgia's nearest neighbors both geographically and in the continuum of colonial attitudes toward education. King Charles II authorized the establishment of Carolina in 1663 and the proprietors expected that the settlement could ease overcrowding in Barbados and other English Caribbean colonies and supply established markets with new commodities.²³ Charles Town developed into a thriving business hub for wealthy planters who eventually narrowed their efforts to concentrate on rice and indigo cultivation. Outside the port city, vast estates first filled the low country while migrants, pushed from Virginia and Maryland by the dearth of land available to aspiring yeomen, and newer immigrants settled in southern Carolina's backcountry or the northern portion of the colony.

As in Georgia, planters secured education for their children, retaining tutors or sending children to private schools in Charles Town or, for the most aristocratic sons, to schools in England or northern colonies. Planters occasionally provided for the most impoverished children through bequests; to a limited extent, South Carolina's apprenticeship system, as in other colonies, fostered basic reading, writing, and arithmetic instruction for children outside the

²³ Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 13.

planter class.²⁴ The planters of the South Carolina Assembly, which from 1694 periodically issued calls to establish a school or hire a schoolmaster, typically only acted to sanction the efforts of the Anglican parishes that undertook the most systematic role in superintending the education of Carolinian children.²⁵ As in Georgia, Anglicans advocated for reading instruction for Charles Town slaves as a means of securing salvation, despite reactionary prohibitions planters imposed on writing instruction in 1740.²⁶ Alexander Garden, a prominent Anglican minister arranged for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to purchase two slaves in 1742, whom he taught to read and tasked with conveying the skill to other slaves in Charles Town.²⁷ Anglican educational endeavors extended beyond Charles Town, but in town and outside of it, their efforts produced limited results.

Charles Woodmason, an itinerant Anglican minister who rode the circuit preaching in South Carolina's backcountry, found it "cover'd with Swarms of Orphans and other Pauper vagrant vagabond Children" who needed an education lest they become a burden to the community. He appealed to colonial leaders for schools "where these children might be taught the Principles of Religion, and fitted to become useful Members of Society."²⁸ According to Woodmason's 1765 account, several parishes were home to particularly poor and illiterate people. He lamented some parishes or parochial districts lacked a schoolmaster or had one only intermittently because teachers proved to be drunkards or otherwise objectionable.²⁹ Woodmason also generalized about the parishes that he visited:

Their Ignorance and Impudence is so very high, as to be past bearing—Very few

²⁴ Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 175.

²⁵ Edgar, 174; see also Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 285-286.

²⁶ Monaghan, 243, 254.

²⁷ Monaghan, 255.

²⁸ Charles Woodmason, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution*, ed. Richard J. Hooker (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 118-119.

²⁹ Woodmason, 54, 67-72.

can read—fewer can write.[... T]hese People despise Knowledge, and instead of honoring a Learned Person, or anyone of Wit or Knowledge be it in the Arts, Sciences or Languages, they despise and Ill treat them—And this Spirit prevails even among the Principals of this Province.³⁰

Simultaneously, Woodmason's critiques highlighted the limited efficacy of Anglican educational systems and the skepticism with which many Carolinians regarded schools and learning.

Although Anglicans enjoyed official sanction to teach and occasionally received community funds to subsidize their efforts, dissenting parents educated children at home or in illegal schools.³¹ Some localized schools established by dissenting communities featured highly structured and unusually comprehensive curricula. For example, the Moravian community of Wachovia, established in the North Carolina backcountry in 1753, featured a school by 1760, in large part because of the Moravian association between salvation and religious education.³² The education system firmly reinforced the community's social structure and emphasized reading, writing and arithmetic, and occasionally featured grammar, history, geography, and natural sciences, and included an apprenticeship system orchestrated by community elders in the "Helpers Conference."³³ Even after apprenticeship, adolescents, male and female, continued attending evening classes in community schools. The Moravian community represented the exception, rather than the rule, in Carolinian educational practice; in keeping with their Pennsylvanian roots, the Moravians more nearly embodied the prevailing educational practices of the Middle Colonies, which are explored in pages below.

When regarded alongside Georgia's education regime, the Carolinas' nearly-seventy-year head start in colonization seems insignificant. Alexander Garden's assessment of the colony's

³⁰ Woodmason, 52-53.

³¹ Edgar, 174.

³² Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 72.

³³ Thorp, 77; see also Edgar, 175.

planters hinted that the ruling elite's apathy for the conditions of other Carolinians undermined the community's well-being: "planters were 'absolutley above every occupation but eating, drinking, lolling, smoking, and sleeping.'"³⁴ Unsurprisingly then, the same oppressive poverty and accompanying hostility toward education evinced in Georgia appeared in the Carolinas.

With regard to the prospects for establishing any kind of institutionalized education regime in the Carolinas, Woodmason's observations seem damning: the planters who were in positions to act on behalf of the community "look on the poor White People in a Meaner Light than their Black Slaves, and care less for them."³⁵ In a period defined by chattel slavery, Woodmason's comment unquestionably overstated the case, but still clearly conveyed the social and economic gulf that separated the planter elite from other Carolinians, white and black.

Virginia and Maryland

The tobacco plantations colonies of Virginia and Maryland occupied more northerly geographic locations on the Atlantic coast, as well as a more central position in the continuum of colonial attitudes regarding education. Settling England's first permanent colony in North America, Virginians arrived largely directionless. Although they knew they wanted a profit, for roughly the first decade of the colony's establishment they pursued that aim haphazardly. With the colony on the brink of collapse, tobacco emerged as its salvation. The labor-intensive nature of tobacco cultivation spurred a wave of immigration that produced a dramatically imbalanced population that primarily consisted of obstreperous, disaffected young men.³⁶ With so few women in the colony, and consequently few children, most Virginians had little interest in

³⁴ Edgar, 174.

³⁵ Woodmason, 60.

³⁶ Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), 407-408.

educational opportunities. As illustrated above, the first faint interest in promoting education manifested in Virginia came as an externally organized effort to instruct Indians in English and scripture.³⁷

Nevertheless, some English children lived in the colony and their presence prompted a limited portion of the population to consider their education. The scattered nature of plantation development prompted most families to deploy their own resources for education, rather than seeking to pool resources with other families in a formal school setting.³⁸ Some families lived in areas with denser settlements, however, and the colony boasted eight schools before the end of the eighteenth century.³⁹ Colonists also secured a charter for the College of William and Mary, the first and only pre-Revolutionary college in the southern colonies, in 1693.

Virginia's northern neighbor developed in many similar ways based on their common climates, settlement patterns, and tobacco-based agriculture. Catholicism, sanctioned by King Charles I's proprietary grant to Lord Baltimore in 1632, afforded perhaps the greatest distinction between Virginia and Maryland. Jesuits maintained one school in Maryland at mid-century.⁴⁰ After Protestants assumed control of the colony, in 1694, the colonial government apparently made its first attempt to provide for education; the Legislature passed an act to maintain free schools by taxing fur sales, and later on, applying taxes to other exports and claiming property of people who died intestate.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Maryland was perhaps better known for Baltimore's free library, opened in 1696, than for schools.⁴² As in Virginia, and other slave-holding colonies, a significant portion of the population remained consistently, nominally literate and most

³⁷ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), 12.

³⁸ Cremin, 239.

³⁹ Cremin, 241.

⁴⁰ Cremin, 182.

⁴¹ James W. Thomas, *Chronicles of Colonial Maryland With Illustrations* (Cumberland, Maryland: The Eddy Press Corporation, 1913), 335.

⁴² Cremin, 340.

unquestionably lacked a “gentleman’s education.”⁴³

Although John Brinsley’s educational plan of 1622 never took root, eighteenth-century Virginia had more schools than any other southern colony, making the Old Dominion a strong contrast to Georgia and the Carolinas. However, emphasizing the mere presence of schools invites a distorted view of the place of institutionalized education in colonial Virginia. For example, in 1660, Governor William Berkeley and the General Assembly petitioned Charles II “for his letters patents to collect and gather the charity of well disposed people in England for the erecting of colleges and schooles.”⁴⁴ But a decade more in Virginia changed Berkeley’s position; in 1671, Berkeley wrote in a report to the Council for Foreign Plantations, “But I thanke God there are noe free schools noe printing, and I hope Wee shall not have these hundred yeares for learning has brought disobedience & heresey & sects into the world and printing has divulged them, and libells against the best Government. God keepe us from both.”⁴⁵ In condemning free schools, institutions open to any child in the community whose parents contributed to their maintenance, Berkeley disavowed the value of public education. Berkeley’s correspondence indicates that Virginia followed a trend manifested in slave-holding communities; the slaveholding elite actively supported limitations on the availability of educational opportunities—as evinced by the transitory presence of two schools founded by The Associates of Dr. Bray in the 1760s—because they feared the subversive potential of education as a means of fomenting slave rebellion and undermining their social authority among poor whites.

Among the elite, vivid concerns about the subversive potential of education pervaded

⁴³ Russell R. Menard, *Economy and Society in Early Colonial Maryland* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), 58.

⁴⁴ Warren M. Billings, ed. *The Papers of William Berkeley, 1605-1677* (Richmond, Virginia: The Library of Virginia, 2007), 151.

⁴⁵ Billings, ed., 396-397.

even the most recent colonial arrivals' thoughts. In 1724 Hugh Jones, an Anglican minister who immigrated from England to take a professorial post at the College of William and Mary, lamented the shortcomings of Virginia's educational system. According to Jones, "in matters of religion, there has not been the care and provision that might be wished and expected."⁴⁶ But readily acknowledging the potential threat education posed to the community, he proposed that,

to prevent the seeds of dissention and faction, it is to be wished that the masters or mistresses should be such as are approved or licensed by the minister, and vestry of the parish, or justices of the county;But as for the children of Negroes and Indians, that are to live among Christians, undoubtedly they ought all to be baptized... [but] be not taught to read and write; which as yet has been found to be dangerous upon several political accounts, especially self-preservation.⁴⁷

Through church or state regulation of local schools Jones first hoped to mitigate destabilizing influence of dissenters by policing adherence to Anglican doctrine; his second notion that slave instruction could be strictly confined to recitations of prayers the catechism and exposure to moral precepts represented a compromise between Anglican doctrine and planters' efforts to ward off slave rebellions.

As an educator in a community that was dismissive of, if not hostile to, the value education, Jones thoughtfully considered ways to infuse Virginian culture with an intellectual tinge. He lamented the gross inattention to girls' education and wished boarding schools might be created at Williamsburg and other towns.⁴⁸ He suspected gentlemen might be more engaged at William and Mary if music, dancing, and fencing comprised part of the curriculum, since planters were "more inclinable to read men by business and conversation, than to dive into books...desirous of learning what is absolutely necessary, in the shortest and best method."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia From Whence Is Inferred A Short View of Maryland and North Carolina*, 1724, ed. Richard L. Morton (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 95.

⁴⁷ Jones, 98-99.

⁴⁸ Jones, 116.

⁴⁹ Jones, 111, 81.

Despite Jones's efforts to enlighten Virginia's planter class, most remained adamantly dismissive of education except as a corollary to elite economic, social, or political status. Ironically, planters who evinced such little concern for intellectual pursuits roundly criticized the College of William and Mary as insufficiently rigorous. They bemoaned the school's quality of education and the lack of discipline exhibited by scholars, and continued to do so for another fifty years. Many planters preferred to send children to colleges in England or in the Middle Colonies, once college education took root there.⁵⁰ The College of William and Mary catered to some elite Virginians, including Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe, but its checkered history from its founding through the mid-1720s, when a lack of funds, political in-fighting, and natural disaster hobbled the institution, dissuaded many others.⁵¹

Philip Fithian observed many of the same attitudes toward education that preoccupied Jones when Fithian tutored for one of Virginia's well-heeled families in 1773-1774. On its face, Fithian's assignment, which entailed teaching the five girls English, teaching three boys English "carefully" and supplementing their study with Latin and Greek, seemed typical by eighteenth-century standards and conformed with English models of liberal education.⁵² But from the start of Fithian's term with the Carters, the girls missed roughly half of the instructional time when they were engaged in music or dancing lessons, and eventually, by spring Fithian confessed: "It is with difficulty I am able to collect the members of our School together for Business. Holidays have become habitual, and they seem unwilling to give them over."⁵³ Fithian was hardly the only tutor who found students unwilling to learn; another tutor found himself "barr'd out of his

⁵⁰ Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg, Incorporated, 1943), 86; see also Richard Henry Lee, *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, ed. James Curtis Ballagh, Vol. 1 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 70-71 and Gilman M. Ostrander, *Republic of Letters, The American Intellectual Community, 1775-1865* (Madison: Madison House Publishers, 1999), 6-10.

⁵¹ Cremin, 337.

⁵² Fithian, 8.

⁵³ Fithian, 123.

school” by reluctant learners.⁵⁴

Ultimately, the sheer increase in the quantity of schools or the mere fact that plantation elites employed private tutors does not indicate the quality of education available to colonial students. Available anecdotes suggest that perhaps Virginia’s schools enjoyed firmer footing than those in Georgia or the Carolinas, but if dozens of privileged sons attended William and Mary in 1775, over 466,000 Virginians did not.⁵⁵ Virginia’s elite limited the quality of education available to the general community, just as Carolina’s and Georgia’s elites did. Further, Virginia’s planter class pursued higher quality educational opportunities, but with considerable disregard for English intellectual standards.

The landscape of institutionalized education in England’s southern colonies featured dispersed “microclimates” where like-minded settlers clustered and founded schools, but where an absence of institutional education prevailed otherwise. The microclimates, like the Moravian community in North Carolina, located where the reach of official policy was weaker, were generally remote from seats of colonial authority. As a result, the communities built schools in accordance with shared ideology, typically denominational ones that associated reading scripture with salvation and opposed slavery, which imbued schools with a positive communal function. But more commonly, the landscape of institutional education in southern colonies was inhospitable to schools. Ambivalence toward schools—or outright antipathy, as exemplified by Governor Berkeley in 1671—prevailed among colonial officials and the planter elite. The planter class, dependent on the labor of some 374,400 men, women and children who were enslaved

⁵⁴ Fithian, 45.

⁵⁵ Peter H. Wood, “The Changing Population of the Colonial South: An Overview by Race and Region, 1685-1790,” in *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Peter H. Wood, Gregory Waselkov, & M. Thomas Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

throughout the southern colonies by 1775, imbued schools with a negative communal function.⁵⁶ The numbers of the enslaved—nearly sixty percent of South Carolina’s population, a quarter of North Carolina’s, forty percent of Virginia’s, and roughly thirty percent of Georgia’s on the eve of the Revolution—radically heightened planters’ objections to anything likely to expand access to literacy.⁵⁷ South Carolina’s legislature even led the southern colonies in 1740 in establishing fines to deter teachers who would instruct slaves in reading or writing.⁵⁸ Elites pursued education for their own children, as a marker of social standing, but in settings that deliberately excluded slaves who might use slaves to incite rebellion. Many among the slave population valued education, but the brutally coercive authority of their masters, which compelled slaves’ labor, also denied them access to schools. For poor whites in the southern colonies, most of whom were unchurched before the Revolution and consequently had no need to secure salvation through reading scripture, education lacked a definite positive value.⁵⁹ Moreover, plantation agriculture, which dispersed settlers, inhibited access to schools. Frequently too, poor whites evinced the attitude that ““We never were beholden to the Trustees nor will we now begin.””⁶⁰

“Natural Things...ought to be the Subject of...Education”: Education in the Middle Colonies

Northward up the Atlantic coast and centrally positioned in a continuum of colonial attitudes toward education, the Middle Colonies developed educational regimes quite distinct

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ William Goodell, *The American Slave Code In Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Features Shown By Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 319.

⁵⁹ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 82.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Orr, 8.

from their southern neighbors, owing to their integration in Atlantic trade networks, and socially- and culturally-informed governance. The mercantilist orientation of the Middle Colonies and the religious convictions of original proprietors like William Penn created an environment less hostile to the spread of educational opportunity. Although commercial farming practices in the Middle Colonies propagated slavery in the Middle Colonies, slaves constituted much smaller proportions of the population; white colonists thus had little reason to jealously guard against access to schooling. Far from seeing schools as an unequivocal threat to political and social order, many in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York regarded reading, writing and arithmetical skills as prerequisites for participation, either directly or indirectly, in transatlantic trade. Especially in the region's port cities, Philadelphia and New York, competency in ciphering letters and numbers might advance the prospects of an ambitious shopkeeper or merchant. While the diversity of religious affiliations in the Middle Colonies typically prevented colonial assemblies from enacting measures to impose a uniform educational system, most in the region further agreed that reading religious tracts constituted an act of faith and inspired virtuous living. Local communities developed schooling regimes that furthered their commercial interests even as they accommodated the convictions of the faithful.

Pennsylvania and Delaware

Quaker sentiments defined many aspects of life in colonial Pennsylvania, including the character and availability of educational opportunities, from the time of its founding in 1681 to the Revolutionary era. William Penn supported utilitarian education as a means of preparing students for Business and endowing them with an understanding of “the Characters of the Power that made us,” but scoffed at the idea of teaching that burdened students with “words and rules;

to know grammar and rhetoric, and a strange tongue or two, that it is ten to one may never be useful to them.”⁶¹

Quakers valued education as a means of safe-guarding children’s morality and preparing them for active employment, but they were not particular about whether instruction occurred in homes or in public institutions; in the absence of any demand for formal ministerial education, Quakers had little use for, and did not support, institutions of higher learning. In keeping with Penn’s philosophy, a 1682 law required that parents ensure their children could read Scriptures and write by age 12, but offered no prescriptions about how to educate them.⁶² Quakers’ ideological acceptance of education did not provoke broad, unified support for institutionalized education in Pennsylvania, or in Delaware after their separation.⁶³ For example, Benjamin Franklin’s 1749 “Proposals for the education of the youth in Pensylvania,” calling for communal efforts in Pennsylvania to ensure children’s civic education, met with little enthusiasm from colonial authorities. For Franklin, the great “Aim and End of all Learning” was to instill “an Inclination join’d with an Ability to serve Mankind, one’s Country, Friend and Family.”⁶⁴ Secularizing the purpose of education inculcated by his own Puritan educational experience and with a view to assimilating the thousands of German immigrants who arrived annually, Franklin envisioned public schools that taught reading, writing, grammar, Latin, arithmetic, history and other subjects.⁶⁵ But Franklin was out of step: “Boston” in the words of one scholar “placed a high value on intellect and higher education, whereas Philadelphians...never placed a high value

⁶¹ William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude in Reflections and Maxims Relating to the Conduct of Human Life. Licens’d, May 24. 1693* (London: Thomas Northcott, in George-Yard in Lombard-Street, 1693), 2-4.

⁶² Adolphus William Ward, Alfred Rayney Waller, William Peterfield Trent, John Erskine, Stuart Pratt Sherman, and Carl Van Doren, eds., *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol. 17 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907) XXIII, Sec. 4.

⁶³ Cremin, 32.

⁶⁴ Benjamin Franklin, “Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensylvania.” (Benjamin Franklin, 1749), Eighteenth Century Collection Online, 30.

⁶⁵ Monaghan, 197.

on either. The Philadelphia Quakers, like all too many other Americans, ... valued education, especially its more practical aspects, while mistrusting learning.”⁶⁶

While colonial authorities declined to force the institutionalization of education, many Quakers and various Protestants sects organized schools for the children of their communities in Philadelphia and throughout the colony. The decline in Philadelphia’s student-teacher ratio throughout the eighteenth century illustrated the trend toward formal schooling within discrete communities; from a peak of 391 children per teacher in 1715-1719, the student-teacher ratio fell to 248 by 1765-1769.⁶⁷ While Quakers and most other sects in Pennsylvania saw no pressing need to attain advanced education as a qualification for ministry or otherwise, egalitarian impulses authorized education of slaves, free blacks, and Indians.

No evidence clearly reveals the extent or avenues through which Pennsylvanian slaves accessed schools or other educational opportunities such as reading instruction provided by their masters. However, colonial Philadelphia had two schools for blacks, which the community likely tolerated because of the limited scale of the operations with respect to the size of Pennsylvania’s comparatively small slave population and the dual purpose the schools served in educating free blacks and slaves. When the Negro Charity School at Philadelphia opened in 1758, slaves constituted two percent of the colony’s population.⁶⁸ The Associates of Dr. Bray, the same Anglican group that started Savannah’s slave school, managed Philadelphia’s. Administrators kept enrollment under 40, but expanded the educational purpose beyond Georgia’s school to include reading instruction and tasks that benefitted masters such as sewing, knitting and

⁶⁶ E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 140.

⁶⁷ Cremin, 539.

⁶⁸ Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 81-82, 272.

embroidery.⁶⁹ The model implemented in Philadelphia inspired the similar, but shorter-lived effort in Virginia, as well as schools in New York and Rhode Island.⁷⁰

Since the creation of publicly available schools depended on a colony's capacity to manage dissent that education might encourage, Pennsylvania officials, who welcomed dissenters and tolerated slavery, offered public education limited sanction, though to a greater extent than in southern colonies. The governing elite occasionally sanctioned public education as a means of propagating common religious or civic values, but the heterogeneous nature of the population raised the specter of dissent and thereby fostered a preference for private or semi-private education superintended by individual families or localized denominational communities. The organic quality of Pennsylvania's schools thereby allowed communities to manage children's exposure to subversive ideals in educational settings. Quakers' ideological aversion to slavery, however inconsistently applied, apparently blunted slavery's power to stunt the development of institutionalized education as in southern colonial plantation societies.

New York and New Jersey

Although situated north of Pennsylvania and Delaware geographically, New York and New Jersey occupied a place on the continuum of colonial attitudes toward education proximate Pennsylvania and Delaware, but on the side nearer Virginia and Maryland. When the Dutch settled New Netherland, colonial authorities' dual schemes for colonization based on either trade or patroonships fostered an inherently heterogeneous population. When England annexed the colony and rechristened it as New York in 1664, it inherited a population segmented not just religiously (including various Protestant sects, Catholics, Jews and others), but demographically,

⁶⁹ Monaghan, 258-259.

⁷⁰ Monaghan, 260.

linguistically, ethnically, racially, and occupationally. Just as this wild heterogeneity influenced New York's subsequent development, New Netherland's experiments with institutionalized education left an important legacy of antagonism between colonial governors, who wanted to impose institutionalized education, and New Amsterdam's elite families, who wanted to superintend education locally.⁷¹ In 1665 English officials authorized local authorities to call parents to account for instructing children in laws, religion and a trade, but without making any substantive provision for it. Consequently, private entrepreneurs supplied the bulk of the colony's formal educational opportunities before and after annexation.⁷²

New Jersey, though initially settled along with New Netherland and annexed as part of New York, more closely resembled rural Pennsylvania, particularly in the west. New Jersey's population, like New York's and Pennsylvania's, was relatively diverse, with immigrants of various religious affiliations from all over western Europe.⁷³ Thus, New Jersey schools tended to be denominational, but affiliated with a wide variety of religious sects. Among these the most notable were New Light Presbyterians, who founded the College of New Jersey during the Great Awakening in the hope of producing ministers to serve the booming Scotch-Irish population of the Middle Colonies and the southern backcountry.

As in southern plantation colonies and Pennsylvania and Delaware, religious dissent alternately furthered and limited institutionalized education in New Jersey and New York. In New York, the Church of England's designation as the colonial religious authority certainly threatened New York's many dissenting congregations and the subject fueled intense public debate about the merits of public, government-sanctioned education. As New York sought to establish its first college in the mid-eighteenth century, for example, the decision to affiliate the

⁷¹ Cremin, 181.

⁷² Cremin, 537.

⁷³ Cremin, 258.

school with the Church of England after acquiring public funds through a state-sponsored lottery, provoked sharp outcry. Beginning in 1752, William Livingston published a series of editorials in the *Independent Reflector* to advocate for the adoption of public schools that maintained a “catholic Foundation” without being affiliated with institutionalized education.⁷⁴ A rhetorical opponent, using the appellation Anonymous, argued that without the Crown’s religious affiliation education would be unconstitutional; the Crown could not be removed from any branch of civil government.⁷⁵ While King’s College opened as a government institution affiliated with the Church of England, it represented a rare example of government sanction of institutionalized education in New York. Far more often than it mobilized opposition to government-funded schools, religious dissent, as in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and growing secularism in New York apparently acted as a catalyst for dissenting communities to pool resources and employ private teachers to embed and affirm their religious doctrine in instruction. Indeed, through the end of the colonial period, families employed ten times as many teachers privately as they did in state or church schools.⁷⁶

Although comparatively more muted in New York than the plantation colonies, slavery produced apprehension about accessibility of educational opportunities. New Yorkers tolerated the work of Society for the Propagation of the Gospel catechist Elias Neau, who began offering instruction to slaves in 1704, with a view to confirming them as members of the Anglican church; despite opposition in the aftermath of the 1712 slave revolt (which some slaveholders attributed to Neau’s school), he continued until his death in 1723.⁷⁷ Broadly speaking, however, in eighteenth-century New York, where slaves constituted 12 to 16 percent of the colonial

⁷⁴ David A. Copeland, ed., *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers Primary Documents on Events of the Period*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000), 161.

⁷⁵ Copeland, 163.

⁷⁶ Cremin, 538.

⁷⁷ Monaghan, 249.

population, slavery apparently restrained educational opportunities to a greater extent than in any other northern colony.⁷⁸ Colony-wide statistics are unavailable, but in New York City, the average ratio of students to teachers declined from a peak of 566 children per teacher between 1710-1714 to a low of 187 students per teacher between 1750 and 1754. The city's declining student-teacher ratio suggests children's educational opportunities expanded dramatically. But New York City's average student-teacher ratio of 316 students per teacher in the period from 1700 through the Revolution looked less impressive compared to Philadelphia, where, with a smaller slave population, there were 248 students per teacher in the same period.⁷⁹

Despite widespread consensus in the Middle Colonies that schooling served a positive vocational and moral purpose, slavery and religious diversity prevented colonial officials from sanctioning any particular approach to education. Like southern elites, slaveholders in the Middle Colonies, particularly in New York where the region's slave population was most concentrated, associated slaves' literacy with an increased probability that slaves would behave subversively or openly revolt. Although less adamant about limiting slaves' access to schools than their southern peers, and in some cases even admitting an obligation to foster to slaves' spiritual growth through providing reading instruction, the Middle Colonies' legislatures never reached a consensus about whether the merits of educating slaves outweighed the risk of encouraging rebellion. Instead, New Yorkers, for example, relied on privatized education more than other colonists, which limited the extent of educational opportunities for slaves. Religious distinctions

⁷⁸ Berlin, 272.

⁷⁹ Cremin, 539, 571-574. Cremin calculated his ratios based on the number of white children under age sixteen in the two cities, regardless of whether they were enrolled in schools. Consequently, the comparison between New York City and Philadelphia might be considered conservative, since including black children, who were more numerous in the colony of New York, would heighten the discrepancy between the student-teacher ratios in the two cities.

too acted to discourage official sanction of any particular mode of instruction. Even in Pennsylvania with a predominantly Quaker population, the principle of religious toleration restrained officials from dictating a particular mode of instruction. In the absence of an official policy, the emphasis communities in the Middle Colonies placed on basic literacy, computation, and practical sciences largely defined the curricular limits of their schools; many Quakers, for example, regarded higher education as unnecessarily ornamental until professionalization of disciplines like medicine transformed middle colonists' attitudes toward college in the mid-eighteenth century. While religious distinctions prevented systematic schooling and delayed the proliferation of institutions of higher education, individual denominations' commitments to teaching reading, combined with the commercial orientation of communities, meant that the benefits of basic schooling outweighed its drawbacks in the Middle Colonies.

Every Township shall “appoint one within their town to teach”: Education in New England

The New England colonies, at the northern geographic limit of this survey, occupied the end of the continuum of colonial attitudes toward public education opposite Georgia by virtue of New England's comparative material impoverishment and the legacy of Puritanism. Among the region's four colonies, however, disparities existed. Practices in Rhode Island and New Hampshire were proximate to those of Pennsylvania and Delaware, while Massachusetts's and Connecticut's educational regimes represented the furthest extent support for public instruction reached in British North America. From the beginning of its settlement, New England's colonial authorities imagined the region, more than any other English venture in North America, as a destination where virtuous families might achieve a family independence or competency.

Puritans, who quickly outnumbered Pilgrims, fused religious idealism in the fabric of their civil society. The founders of Puritan communities had strong incentives to standardize and institutionalize education, and facilitated the growth of educational institutions to an extent inconceivable in the Middle Colonies until the mid-eighteenth century or in the southern colonies until after the Revolution. Puritan settlements ascribed a definitively positive value to education not only because, like other Protestant denominations, they wanted the faithful to be able to read the scriptures translated into English, but also because they expected the clergy, equipped with liberal educations that enabled them to comprehend sacred texts in the original languages, to expound them to their congregations with orthodoxy and understanding. As New England's population expanded and dissenters from abroad and within diluted Puritan zeal, distinctions emerged among the region's educational institutions. Still, in communities where subsistence farming slowed the development of social hierarchies outside the region's few urban areas, education afforded young men the means to advance professionally and socially.

Rhode Island and New Hampshire

In Rhode Island and New Hampshire, commitment to institutionalized education dissipated when dissenters fled Puritans' rigid adherence to doctrine. Roger Williams's decisive break with Massachusetts's government and ecclesiastical order in 1636 and the welcome he subsequently extended to the antinomian Anne Hutchinson offended the Puritan "intellectual ruling class" in Massachusetts exemplifies the contrast Williams cultivated between his community and the one he left.⁸⁰ Eventually, colonial leaders' adamant rejection of intellectualism in Rhode Island produced a shortage of ministers and diminished the power of

⁸⁰ Baltzell, 138.

higher educational attainment to confer social status.⁸¹ Territorial conflicts with bordering colonies and wars with Native Americans also destabilized community institutions, including schools; concurrently, dispersed settlement patterns inhibited the formation of community institutions generally.⁸²

Despite challenges posed by anti-intellectual currents, territorial disputes, Indian wars and scattered communities, Rhode Island and New Hampshire had some schools affiliated with the Church of England, some operated by individual towns, and an array of private schools and academies, and a college by the close of the colonial period. Among the private enterprises, some served Indian students, at least one in Rhode Island served black students, and others specifically catered to girls, but Rhode Islanders' activity in the slave trade also worked against a more general diffusion of education.⁸³ As the memories of Massachusetts's Puritan oppressiveness faded, Rhode Island Baptists secured a charter for the College of Rhode Island and New Hampshire Congregationalists secured a charter for Dartmouth College, which originated as a charity school intended to train Indians as missionaries. Colonial education regimes in New England's dissenting colonies, much like Middle Colonies, represented colonists' organic efforts to provide for their children's instruction beyond the reach of Massachusetts's overbearing colonial authorities.

Massachusetts and Connecticut

Colonial authorities and local communities' positive values for education aligned only in England's two strikingly homogenous Puritan colonies. The same year Roger Williams

⁸¹ Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island: A History*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 187, 238-239.

⁸² Thomas B. Stockwell, ed., *A History of Public Education in Rhode ...* (Providence: Providence Press Company, 1876), 2, 4; see also David E. Van Deventer, *The Emergence of Provincial New Hampshire, 1623-1741* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 187.

⁸³ Stockwell, 4, 10-11.

decamped to Rhode Island, Massachusetts colonists founded Harvard University intending to secure a regular supply of trained ministers. Then, concerned about securing qualified applicants for the new university, Massachusetts Puritans introduced the earliest sustained efforts to institutionalize education beginning with a 1642 mandate that parents provide their children with education. Just five years later, the Massachusetts Bay General Court significantly refined its expectation; communities of 50 households or more had to establish grammar schools and once they reached a density over 100 households communities also needed a Latin grammar school.⁸⁴ Connecticut's 1650 school law combined elements of Massachusetts's laws. The law called for parents and the community to ensure pupils could read religious texts and the capital laws and that ultimately they prepared them through apprenticeships for "honest lawful labor, or employment, either in husbandry of some other trade profitable for themselves and the commonwealth," or for "higher employments."⁸⁵ In all significant respects, Connecticut's scheme replicated the Massachusetts model of providing free education for all in town schools funded by town and colony taxes, donations, bequests, and supplemental tuition payments from parents whose children were currently receiving instruction.⁸⁶

Despite misgivings about the potential for education to spark dissent, which they shared with colonial authorities throughout England's settlements, Puritan leaders ultimately regarded schools as a bulwark against dissent. Because Puritan leaders sanctioned schools, they also actively promoted ideological purity in school curricula. At the close of the seventeenth century Connecticut's Puritans regarded Massachusetts's schooling regime with increasing dismay, especially as Harvard, the pinnacle of the system, seemed to function more and more as a

⁸⁴ "Massachusetts School Law of 1647," in *Historical Documents in American Education*, ed. Tony Johnson W. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 7.

⁸⁵ Johnson, 7-9. See also Arthur Raymond Mead, *The Development of Free Schools in the United States as Illustrated by Connecticut and Michigan* (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1918), 1.

⁸⁶ Mead, 8.

professional school for lawyers and doctors, rather than as a theological seminary. In response, Connecticut colonists secured a charter for Yale in 1701, intending to protect their youth from Harvard's liberalization.

For their part, Massachusetts officials also actively sought to use school systems to combat the attenuation of Puritan values. Boston's Puritan minister Cotton Mather lamented the subversive elements in colonial society introduced not only by religious dissenters, but also by fishermen and other immigrants.⁸⁷ He vigilantly warded off the subversive tendencies that threatened his enclave through educational institutions. Myriad accounts of his efforts to superintend education fill Mather's diary. He sought close alliances with local schoolmasters; in 1711 he made sure to deliver a copy of *Vrai Patron des Saintes Paroles* to the master of Boston's school for French Protestants, so that the students would "at once learn the Language, and improve in Knowledge and Goodness."⁸⁸ Beyond alliances with local teachers, Mather considered ways to influence school curriculum. In 1713, he speculated about whether his *A, B, C. of Religion*, written for children in his own family, ought to reach a broader audience through schoolmasters.⁸⁹ And not content with securing salvation for Puritan children alone, he sought in March 1717 to extend education to blacks and Indians that they might have instruction in "reading the Scriptures, and learning their Catechisms."⁹⁰ Mather and other Puritan leaders leaned heavily on educational institutions to maintain the integrity of their city on a hill.

Most colonists' actions accorded with ideals articulated by elite colonial figures, like Mather, and originally expressed in the 1642 and 1647 laws.⁹¹ As a preliminary checkpoint, the

⁸⁷ Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 140.

⁸⁸ Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724*, vol. 2 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), 94.

⁸⁹ Mather, 226.

⁹⁰ Mather, 442.

⁹¹ Cremin, 182.

1691 Charter of Massachusetts Bay assured colonists that colleges and schools already established might continue without interruption.⁹² The provision thus implies that William and Mary understood, and sought to placate, communities' apprehensions about how colonial reorganization might affect their local institutions, particularly schools. A sampling of town histories also offers insight. Colonists confronted daunting challenges in maintaining their schools, namely warfare with Indians and their French allies and strained finances, but generally maintained schools of their own volition.

Warfare posed the gravest threat to colonial settlement, and consequently to schools. In Marlborough, for example, the colonists who situated their town abutting Okommakomesit, a praying town, initially established a school in 1656. However, their encroachment on Okommakamesit's farmlands and orchards, heightened tensions between the settlements, and eventually helped contribute to hostilities in King Phillip's War; the town history acknowledges the disruption of schooling for the duration of the conflict.⁹³ Town records also attribute disruption of schooling in Amesbury to warfare. Colonists settled Amesbury in 1637 and complied with Massachusetts's 1647 school law, but during Queen Anne's War, found that "ye whole town cant have the benefit of any settled place for schools without exposing our children to danger in travelling our rodes."⁹⁴ Deerfield, the northwesternmost settlement on the Bay Colony's frontier, faced the most dramatic upheavals. According to the town's record, "No town action regarding education is found until after the close of King William's War."⁹⁵ And again,

⁹² Francis Newton Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the State, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 1877.

⁹³ R. A. Griffin, and E. L. Bigelow, "Marlborough" in *History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, ...*, vol. 2, ed. Samuel Adams Drake (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, Publishers, 1880), 149.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Joseph Merrill, *History of Amesbury and Merrimac, Massachusetts*, 1880., ed. Sara Locke Redford (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1978), 155.

⁹⁵ George Sheldon, *A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts*, 1896-96, ed. Amelia F. Miller and Donald R. Friary, 2 vol. (Somersworth: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1972), 272.

after Queen Anne's War decimated the town, schools disappeared from town records and did not reappear for nearly twenty years.⁹⁶ As it did elsewhere in North America, warfare disrupted education in colonial Massachusetts; wars did not, however, cripple it.

The challenge of securing adequate funding for schools posed a secondary challenge for colonists. In Deerfield, colonists repeatedly cut back school funds, and in the face of a cash shortage in 1703, had to devise an elaborate scheme to pay the schoolmaster:

Bargained with Mr Jno Richards to pay him for ye teaching of their Town children for ye year Twenty and five pounds in manner following: yt is to say They have by Bargin liberty to pay him ye one 3d part of sd sum in Barley and no more: ye other two 3ds in other grain yt is to say in indian corn: peas: or Rye in any or all of them: oats wholly excepted: all these aforementioned to be good and merchantable."⁹⁷

Elsewhere, strained finances meant schools met in private houses in Amesbury⁹⁸; in Winchendon, which only officially incorporated in 1764, town residents were so hard-pressed to appropriate funds for schools that "It was several years before all sections of the town were supplied with school houses. Schools were kept in private houses, cooper's shops, and wherever room could be found."⁹⁹ Limited funding, like warfare, intermittently deterred colonists from providing schooling, but never persuaded colonists to abandon educational endeavors altogether.

While towns apparently strove to fulfill their legal obligations, colonial authorities held communities accountable for failures to provide schooling. The courts fined Marlborough in 1701 for "having failed to provide a qualified teacher."¹⁰⁰ Whether Marlborough residents found the fine unfairly assessed or were simply desperate, they re-hired Jonathan Johnson, Sr., who was also the town blacksmith and sexton, in 1705. Amesbury too, ran afoul of colonial law for not

⁹⁶ Sheldon, 570.

⁹⁷ Sheldon, 273-274.

⁹⁸ Merrill, 169.

⁹⁹ Abijah P. Marvin, *History of the Town of Winchendon (Worcester County, Mass.) From the Grant of Ipswich Canada, in 1735, to the Present Time* (Winchendon: Abijah P. Marvin, 1868) 123.

¹⁰⁰ Griffin, 149.

having any school in 1722 and the Ipswich court ordered residents to hire a teacher.¹⁰¹ By 1753, the town apparently had a school for each parish, but in 1757 did not have a grammar school, as required by law, and had to account for it in the Salem court.¹⁰² Through the combined efforts of local communities and colonial officials, Puritan communities mounted a relatively effective campaign to integrate individuals into an unified religious and civic community and idealized hierarchically ordered settlements as places “where children could attend schools, where ‘social Worship’ was readily available, and where ‘wild and strange Behavior’ was ‘put out of Countenance.’”¹⁰³

The school laws of Massachusetts represented one component of a comprehensive scheme for colonial development intended to produce a hierarchical array of remote settlements and villages radiated around towns that served as bureaucratic hubs.¹⁰⁴ Universally under the charter of 1629 and unofficially even under the second charter of 1691, membership in a Puritan congregation constituted a qualification for eligibility to serve as a town leader in Massachusetts communities.¹⁰⁵ But Puritan town settlement designs faltered in the face of dramatic eighteenth-century population growth based on natural increase and compounded by the arrival of even such devotedly Calvinist immigrants as Huguenots and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. Additionally, the Second Great Awakening, felt most profoundly in the 1740s in New England, overwhelmed orthodox, Old Light efforts to constrain it.¹⁰⁶ New England’s eighteenth-century shift toward greater heterogeneity attenuated the correlation between church membership and town leadership. Consequently, “Without deprecating education altogether, the radical New Lights

¹⁰¹ Merrill, 175-176.

¹⁰² Merrill, 218, 224.

¹⁰³ Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 17.

¹⁰⁴ Edward M. Cook, Jr., *The Fathers of the Towns: Leadership and Community Structure in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 143-144.

¹⁰⁵ Cook, 122.

¹⁰⁶ Bushman, 183.

believed that Old Lights exaggerated its importance.”¹⁰⁷ The urgency the Puritan founders of the Bay Colony had felt regarding school regulations abated somewhat throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut before the Revolution.

The landscape of institutionalized education in England’s northernmost colonies, as it did further south, featured regional variations, but overall New England provided more fertile soil for the development of not just schools but school systems. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, officials’ cognizance of religious dissent deviated from patterns elsewhere and spurred school formation. The synchronicity of officials’ and local communities’ values produced an exceptional level of commitment to the development of public schooling. The comprehensive nature of Puritan schooling regimes, with provisions for cultivating a literate populace as well as ensuring religious and civic leaders’ advanced study of philosophy and classics, helped mold cohesive communities that retained the imprint of the founding generation’s idealism well into the eighteenth century. Even as New England became more secular, the first settlers’ legacy manifested itself in a comparative abundance of clergy and other professionals, many of whom served as schoolmasters or private tutors before embarking on their careers. With New England’s paucity of commercial opportunities, schooling itself offered Northerners the means to earn a living, both locally and as they exported their teaching, printing, ministerial and other professional skills to the southward. In northern colonies where land ownership proved less determinative with regard to social and political standing than in plantation colonies, degrees potentially conferred improved standing the community. Even in New England’s dissenting colonies, authorities, while not always deeply invested in public education, typically lacked compelling reasons, like the imminent threat of slave revolt or a multiplicity of sectarian

¹⁰⁷ Bushman, 201-202.

divisions, to actively oppose formal schooling; the value for religious tolerance, as in the Middle Colonies, mitigated Rhode Island's anti-intellectual reaction to Puritanism, and allowed other dissenters to establish schools within their own communities. Colonists in New England lived in communities that rivaled or even bested the metropole in terms of the access to and sophistication of institutionalized education.

The significance of region in shaping colonial education regimes

It is critical to acknowledge the multiplicity of education policies and practices that prevailed in England's North American colonies. No single regime serves as a representative of the colonial experience; the highly institutionalized educational schemes of Massachusetts and Connecticut, with provisions for instruction in basic literacy through completion of college degrees, constitute a particularly exceptional model. Some communities valued education and some individual Americans valued education, many others did not share that affinity. Some colonial leaders were openly hostile to education and others were comparatively ambivalent. Many Americans objected to educational experiences that did not conform to their values. Particularly in communities where education policies aligned with an established religion, dissenters objected to institutionalized religion vis-à-vis school establishment. As a companion to dissenters' concerns about the corrupting influence of institutionalized education, some communities, particularly in slave societies, were preoccupied with the threat formal schooling posed to their physical and economic security. Among all colonial communities, the challenge of creating an economically, politically, and socially stable community proved to be an overriding concern; the task of producing order on the frontier, combined with colonists' collective

perceptions about whether schools might sustain or undermine order, determined whether colonial communities embraced or rejected formal schooling.

THE CONTINUUM OF ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION IN COLONIAL AMERICA¹⁰⁸



USEFUL
 “It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures ... it is therefore ordered by this Court ... That every Township ... shall ... appoint one within their town to teach all.”
 Massachusetts Bay General Court, 1647

“Natural Things ... ought to be the Subject of the Education of our Youth, who at 20, when they should be fit for Business, know not any thing of it.”
 William Penn, 1693

DANGEROUS
 “I thanke God there are noe free schools noe printing, and I hope Wee shall not have these hundred years for learning has brought disobedience & heresy & sects into the world.”
 William Berkeley, 1671

Multiple factors of secondary importance influenced the degree to which England’s

North American colonies sought and sustained institutionalized education: duration of

¹⁰⁸ Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’ Anville and Didier Robert De Vaugondy, “A New Map of North America, with the British, French, Spanish, Dutch & Danish Dominions on That Great Continent; and the West India Islands” (London: Robert Sayer, 1750?), Library of Congress.

colonization, concentrations of population, security of the community, and correspondence of colonial authorities and communities' educational objectives. The duration of colonization afforded some stability and allowed for development of rudimentary physical infrastructure like housing and configuration of agricultural workspaces, followed by a shift in the application of labor toward constructing community infrastructure like churches, town meeting spaces, and eventually schools. Indeed a superficial comparison of Massachusetts and Georgia might lead to the conclusion that duration of colonization was a determining factor in a colony's commitment to institutionalized education. But one need not look further than Virginia to see that duration of colonization, while perhaps a factor, was not determinative. Population density also influenced the development of colonial education regimes in that higher population concentrations, as in New England or Philadelphia or New York City, encouraged school formation by virtue of the schools' accessibility; lower population concentrations, as in Georgia or the Carolina backcountry or even the plantations of Pennsylvania or New York, hindered accessibility. Physical security of colonial settlements affected schools too. The contrast between the stability of Boston's schools and the tenuous existence of those in Deerfield proceeded from the outlying settlement's vulnerability to Indian raids and imperial warfare. Finally, colonial politics also influenced the development of educational regimes. Colonies like Georgia and Massachusetts had school regimes that reflected attitudes shared by colonial authorities and the broader community, although the communities embraced opposing ideological bases for their attitudes regarding education. Schooling in colonies like South Carolina and Rhode Island, however, reflected the discord between the policies of colonial authorities and local communities.

The single most critical factor in determining the success of efforts to institutionalize education was the homogeneity and attendant demographic, denominational, and political

stability of the community. The leaders of heterogeneous communities, especially in racially diverse slave societies, feared instability and thus eschewed formal schooling because of the disorder that wide access to education seemed to invite. Officials in colonies like South Carolina, where a majority of the inhabitants were enslaved, rejected institutionalized schooling as an imminent threat. Conversely, Massachusetts's educational regime developed as an outlier because a constellation of factors fostered the institutionalization of education, including a homogenous population deeply concerned about maintaining the socio-religious order of Puritanism. As immigration diluted Puritan ideals, the ideological commitment to universal education lost some momentum, but the Puritan conviction that schools should inculcate communal values and morality remained intact.

Of preeminent concern to the men who founded and governed the British colonies in North America was maintaining order, and their attitudes toward schooling reflected, above all, their estimate of whether education was likelier to maintain or threaten the stability of their communities. Understanding the existence of an accessible public schooling in early American communities as an indicator of the communities' homogeneity and stability offers a revealing window into larger trends about how sectional distinctions based on economic development, religious practice, and racial divisions manifested themselves in early Americans' daily lives. Southern plantation-based settlements' efforts to control access to educational opportunity, in contrast to the diffusion of educational opportunity in the middle and New England colonies, show how plantation slavery produced a regionally unique culture and ideology, despite a shared imperial genealogy. Gradations in communities' development or rejection of institutionalized education within regions offer a powerful reminder that the emergence of free, public education was not an inevitable offspring of American genius, but rather the highly contingent product of

EMERGENT CLASSES IN COLONIAL AMERICA

culture, chance, and circumstance. An assumption that Puritans' schools were objects of envy outside New England, or even taken as worthy of emulation, distorts early American history by presupposing a degree of unity that never existed and, indeed, helps mask the tenuous nature of what unity Americans managed to achieve in the Revolutionary period.

SCHOOLS, SLAVERY, AND COERCION IN THE REPUBLIC

In 1775, less than a month before the dispute between thirteen of Britain's American colonies and the empire boiled over in bloodshed, Edmund Burke, a lonely but leading liberal voice in the House of Commons, urged Parliament to consider how the empire's policy of "wise and salutary neglect" begat Americans' "fierce spirit of Liberty."¹⁰⁹ Having portrayed Americans' objections to Britain's more active imperial management after the Seven Years' War as a consequence of decades of non-intervention, Burke identified six conditions in the colonies that encouraged their expectation of freedom: the concept of rights they inherited as Englishmen, the relative autonomy of the colonial assemblies, the Puritan tradition of dissent, the South's jealousy of freedom occasioned by the presence of slaves, the remoteness of imperial bureaucrats, and—strangely enough—the colonists' education. Of the latter, Burke explained, that a

circumstance in our Colonies, which contributes no mean part towards the growth and effect of [their] untractable spirit...[is] their education. In no country perhaps in the world is the law so general a study.... But all who read, (and most do read,) endeavour to obtain some smattering in that science.... I hear that they have sold nearly as many of Blackstone's *Commentaries* in America as in England. ... [S]tudy renders men acute, inquisitive, dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in defence, full of resources. In other countries, the people, more simple, and of a less mercurial cast, judge of an ill principle in government only by an actual grievance; here they anticipate the evil, and judge of the pressure of the grievance by the badness of the principle. They augur misgovernment at a distance; and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze.¹¹⁰

The ideas Burke expressed about the role of education in inciting the Americans' acts of rebellion reflected widely-held views among eighteenth-century British elites as well as planter

¹⁰⁹ Edmund Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, ed. Francis Canavan, A New Imprint of the Payne Edition, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/burke-select-works-of-edmund-burke-vol-1--5>.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

elites in the southern American colonies; they feared educating the public would leave the lower classes dissatisfied and unfit for their “natural” occupations.¹¹¹ But more significantly, Burke’s assessment of Americans’ education offers confirmation of his own argument that imperial neglect permitted British officials to harbor misperceptions of Americans. Burke’s impression of Americans as a literate populace with an affinity for legal studies might be called generous at best, and more reasonably described as ill-informed. He developed his view based on no direct experiences in the American colonies, and instead drew his conclusions from encounters with American agents like Benjamin Franklin who had argued the colonies’ case in Westminster and petitioned the imperial government on behalf of American interests during the previous decade. Throughout the American colonies, education of the caliber Burke described was the province of the elite; although the comparatively little social stratification meant more Americans might use formal schooling to claim the status of gentlemen than in England’s more rigid hierarchy, advanced educational opportunity eluded most. In one regard, however, Burke’s assessment contained a kernel of truth; elite colonial Americans’ classical educations certainly favored their consumption of tracts about the Roman Republic, Protestant doctrine, Enlightenment philosophy and radical Whiggish conspiracy theories that informed their notions of Republicanism.

After 1776, American intellectuals and policy-makers who fomented the Revolution and implemented republican government called for reforming American society in ways that might sustain the fledgling nation’s independence. From Boston to Charleston, politicians and writers agreed that the success of the American experiment in self-rule would hinge on the virtue of American citizens, and that to sustain it over time would require assiduous attention to their education. From Massachusetts, John Adams mused in his 1776 *Thoughts on Government* that “Laws for the liberal education of youth, especially of the lower class of people, are so extremely

¹¹¹ W.B. Stephens, *Education in Britain, 1750-1914* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998), 12.

wise and useful, that, to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant.”¹¹² For Charles Pinckney, the value of education in preserving the republic appeared so great that he apparently included in the plan he presented on behalf of South Carolina’s delegation to the Constitutional Convention a proposal for the formation of a national university.¹¹³ Pinckney reiterated his support throughout the convention, moving to include provisions for the creation of seminaries for the study of literature, arts and sciences, and, having failed to carry his point in earlier debates, collaborated with Virginia delegate James Madison in the convention’s final week to “insert, in the list of powers vested in Congress, a power ‘to establish an University, in which no preferences or distinctions should be allowed on account of religion.’”¹¹⁴ George Washington, most notably in his “Farewell Address,” and Thomas Jefferson, through his tenacious advocacy of “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge” that envisioned a comprehensive and meritocratic system of elementary through collegiate education, also emerged as proponents of government activity on behalf of schools.

The notion that public schooling should be extended to more Americans through government initiatives, championed as it was by a constellation of Revolutionary luminaries, seemed to virtually guarantee that the republican experiment would transform education regimes inherited from the colonial era. Whereas the rationales that education could help inculcate morals, supply vocational training, and foster civic engagement produced decidedly uneven support for public schooling in colonial communities, the republican notion that the political well-being, and indeed the survival, of the nation might hinge on education, seemed certain to

¹¹² John Adams, *Thoughts on Government: Applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies: In a Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend* (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1776).

¹¹³ Charles Pinckney, “The Pinckney Plan,” *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, vol. 3, edited by Max Farrand (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911).

¹¹⁴ James Madison, *Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*, edited by Adrienne Koch, 2nd ed. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), 639.

produce consensus that schooling served a positive function and infused educational projects with a sense of urgency. Indeed, the new-found enthusiasm republican elites espoused for education demands that we consider the question: To what extent did the rhapsodies of Revolutionary leaders influence educational policies and practices in the young nation?

The failure of Pinckney's suggestion to include provisions for schools in the Constitution forestalled the creation of a uniform, national educational policy and demonstrated that while the governing class and many other Americans acknowledged schools might serve a positive function, their sentiments were far from universal. Even those who believed schools were important community institutions failed to agree about whom to educate or to what extent. At the level of national policy, only a single educational project achieved consensus support before the Civil War. In 1819 the young nation, already straining to contest Indian control of western lands north of the Ohio River, moved to secure its frontier settlements by establishing the "civilization fund."¹¹⁵ The fund subsidized the work of missionaries energized by the Second Great Awakening to build schools, with the hope that the schools would pacify volatile heathen Indians and transform them into literate and independent Christian farmers. Aside from the civilization fund then, in assessing how Revolutionary leaders' calls for an educated body politic translated into substantive changes in educational practice during the nineteenth century, consideration of highly contingent regional conditions proves as essential as during the colonial period.

Certainly, the American Revolution disrupted the three disparate colonial education regimes physically, fiscally, and ideologically. As the new nation developed into a confederation and then a union of states, the new, added ideological justification for education, based on

¹¹⁵ Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 39.

promoting republicanism, resonated with those predisposed to adopt it.¹¹⁶ But as republican tenets themselves evolved largely along sectional lines, where southern communities continued to adhere to classical republicanism while northern communities adopted increasingly liberal and democratic outlooks, the patterns of educational institutionalization originating in the colonial period only intensified. As in the colonial period, during the decades from Independence through the secession of the Confederate states, those who had the political capital to influence education policy remained true to the single tenet that unified American educational policies: managing access to education constituted an essential tool for establishing and preserving social, political, and economic order in their communities.

From the three broad categories of colonial attitudes toward institutionalized education, two regional patterns emerged after the Revolution and intensified in antebellum America. In Southern slave-holding communities, schools generally posed a threat to the delicate social, political, and economic order, particularly after Eli Whitney's cotton gin obviated the Revolutionary generation's expectation that the institution of slavery would die out naturally. As cotton supplanted tobacco, indigo, and rice as the region's premier staple crop, slavery and the slave trade increasingly defined Southern society. As Southern slavery expanded, rather than receded, the republican faith in the necessity of education for self-governance faltered; fears colonial planters harbored about slave rebellion intensified in the new republic, and produced a correspondingly ardent opposition to institutions that might afford slaves an opportunity to resist planters' coercion. Meanwhile, in the North, where many communities already ascribed a positive value to education, republican rhetoric added further impetus to efforts to institutionalize education. Republicanism quieted most dissent about state encroachment on family prerogative,

¹¹⁶ Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1781* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 426.

particularly concerns articulated by adherents of minority Protestant sects who feared public schools might be used to undermine their doctrinal teachings, as state and federal constitutions codified prohibitions against religious establishments. And, except in Delaware, the liberal republican logic of liberty spurred emancipation throughout the North and thereby extinguished fears that public schooling might foster slave rebellions. Having quelled the primary objections to public schooling that colonial Americans entertained in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, Northern republicans embraced public schooling as a way to prepare citizens for their new responsibilities in self-government while maintaining their expectations that schools would inculcate Protestant values and supply knowledge that might be practical in adult employment. As the nineteenth century progressed, Northern communities increasingly looked to public schools to cultivate social, political, and economic stability as waves of European immigrants arrived.

Comment on the Trans-Appalachian West

As the trickle of white Americans pressing into the trans-Appalachian West via the Ohio River turned into a flood of settlers after Independence they built communities that often resembled ones they left behind in the East. A majority of settlers who emigrated westward moved in a roughly lateral pattern, so that those who left the South tended to settle south of the Ohio River and those who left New England and the Middle States tended to stay north of the Ohio. Environmental conditions in the trans-Appalachian West proved conducive to modes of production similar to those that developed in the coastal regions in the colonial period. The Southwest had lands that perpetuated plantation agriculture, albeit with cotton and sugar as the

primary staple crops, rather than the tobacco, rice, and indigo that sustained communities in the original southern states. Communities north of the Ohio tended to replicate the grain production and subsistence farming practices that prevailed in the northern colonies. As a result of the approximately lateral movement of settlers and their production practices, trans-Appalachian communities mimicked the ones that prevailed in the East. Most notably, settlers in the Southwest looked to slaves to supply their labor needs, while those northward relied on family or hired labor.

Of course, some settlers headed westward, chiefly from Virginia into the Ohio River valley before the Confederation Congress adopted the Northwest Ordinance and representatives in the federal government agreed to block slavery's northward creep. Consequently, the first generations of white settlers north and south of the Ohio River included slaveholders, and those who arrived in Indiana, Illinois, and to a lesser extent in Ohio, wanted to perpetuate slavery as long as they could.¹¹⁷ In the nineteenth century, however, white Southerners on the fringes of the planter class, particularly those sympathetic to the liberal, democratic iteration of republican sentiment and consequently more enthusiastic about public schooling, tended to emigrate further north as opportunity arose. The Finley family of North Carolina exemplified the tendency. Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister from Pennsylvania, married into a slave-holding family in North Carolina. Drawn by agricultural opportunity in Kentucky, Finley moved his own young family there in 1784, along with 14 slaves held by his father-in-law. Finley opened the new settlement's first high school in 1790, emancipated his father-in-law's slaves once he became the executor of the estate, and then resettled in the free territory of Ohio in 1796.

Finley's experience represents the tension between slave-holding and education as

¹¹⁷ Paul Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indiana and Illinois," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 21–23.

supplied by republicanism; he was “convinced that it was wrong to hold his fellow-men in bondage, and thus deprive them of their natural rights,”¹¹⁸ and instilled in his son that “a man may boast of his patriotism, and his exceeding great love of our free and happy institutions, but if he neglects to lend his aid to the work of education, he does most emphatically contradict, by his conduct, his profession.”¹¹⁹ As it had along the Atlantic the colonial period, the presence or absence of slavery after the Revolution profoundly influenced other institutions, including education policies and programs that developed in communities west of the Appalachians.¹²⁰

In early national America, the distinctions between the Southern and Northern sections of the nation, and the westward continuity of that sectionalism sometimes escaped the notice of even the clearest-eyed and most impartial contemporary observers. The newness and precariousness of so many western settlements made sectionalism difficult to immediately discern, particularly for most white Americans, North and South, who had already given in to ingrained racial stereotypes. The French observer Alexis de Tocqueville, fared slightly better when noted regional discrepancies in schooling while touring the United States more than fifty years into America’s republican experiment. Traveling through the States in early 1830s, de Tocqueville, who decried the barbarity of denying slaves an education,¹²¹ further observed:

In New England, every citizen receives the elementary notions of human knowledge; he is moreover taught the doctrines and the evidences of his religion, the history of his country, and the leading features of its Constitution. In the States of Connecticut and Massachusetts, it is extremely rare to find a man imperfectly acquainted with all these things, and a person wholly ignorant of them is a sort of phenomenon. . . . What I have said of New England must not, however, be applied indistinctly to the whole Union: as we advance towards the West or the South, the instruction of the people diminishes. In the States which are adjacent to the Gulf

¹¹⁸ James B. Finley, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley Or, Pioneer Life in the West* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curtis, 1853), 110.

¹¹⁹ Finley, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley*, 41.

¹²⁰ Andrew Cayton, “‘Separate Interests’ and the Nation-State: The Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West,” *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 1 (June 1992): 65-67.

¹²¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeve, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835), 360.

of Mexico, a certain number of individuals may be found, as in our own countries, who are devoid of the rudiments of instruction.¹²²

De Tocqueville lumped the South and West together as regions where ignorance prevailed without distinguishing clearly between the Northwest and Southwest, but considering his route adds an important dimension to the observation. The twenty-six-year-old traveler himself was older than two-thirds of the nine western states and three organized territories that existed when he traveled to America, and he only set foot in half of them. The relative newness of the Western states and territories he visited does not appear to have factored in de Tocqueville's conclusions about the communities' commitments to education. Still, his comment that inhabitants of the Southwest's Gulf Coast states seemed particularly ignorant, suggests that within a single generation of their admission to statehood, regionally distinct attitudes about education started yielding discernable results that were consistent with the divide that already existed between free states and slave states east of the Appalachians. That Kentucky and Tennessee escaped similar censure from de Tocqueville seems a by-product of the fact that they were among the Southern states with the smallest proportions of slaves, which attenuated the need for the governing class to guard against widespread access to schools. As a Louisville merchant explained to de Tocqueville, "The division of the land and the type of cultivation which requires few slaves, prevents us having hundreds of Negroes cultivating the land of one man as one sees in the South. With us slavery is a great evil, but not a peril."¹²³ Nearly twenty years later, Kentucky and Tennessee continued to feel the impact of slavery as their residents, with illiteracy rates over 20 percent, ranked among the least educated in the Union. Indiana and Illinois, by then free states both in name and in fact, featured the least educated populations in free territory but had

¹²² De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 249-251.

¹²³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) 99-100.

illiteracy rates of 17 and 11 percent respectively.¹²⁴ The distinctions between literacy rates in the Ohio frontier suggests that the mere existence of slavery, even more than the number of slaves held in a state, profoundly influenced educational policy and practices as sectional ideologies hardened in antebellum America.

Slave-state Schooling

Just as the logic of republicanism opened debates about how to equip citizens for self-rule, the Revolution also opened debates about the meaning and extent of freedom and equality. In slave states all serious contemplation of abolition, along with genuine interest in the expansion of public schooling, died out along with the Revolutionary generation's intelligentsia.¹²⁵ Concurrently, Gabriel's Rebellion, the uprising Virginia's planters quashed in 1800, before slaves could carry out their plans, convinced Southern elites in both the region's original states and those west of the Appalachians that the faith placed in education as an institution necessary for creating competent citizens—as envisioned by Jefferson, Washington, Madison, Pinckney, and even the delegates of the North Carolina and Georgia state constitutional conventions—was incompatible with planters' objectives of economic productivity and social and political

¹²⁴ J.D.B. DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States, Embracing Its Territory, Population-White, Free Colored, and Slave-Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; The Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns, and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census; To Which Are Added The Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning With 1790, in Comparative Tables, with Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based Upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information* (Beverly Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854), 145. I calculated illiteracy rates based on DeBow's report for the Census Bureau, which is the most comprehensive data set available for the antebellum period that examines schooling practices and education throughout the nation. My calculations include all free people, regardless of race or gender, but exclude slaves, who had virtually no access to schools. Since no slave children attended schools in North Carolina or Georgia, the whole-population illiteracy rates were even more dismal than the figures above indicate.

¹²⁵ Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000); see also Drew R. McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers: James Madison and the Republican Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

stability.¹²⁶ As a consequence, advocates' ambitions for expanding educational opportunities to wider swaths of the Southern populace by establishing a comprehensive school system that included institutions offering instruction at levels from primary school through collegiate coursework receded in the nineteenth century.

Practically speaking, the state universities that opened throughout the South were the only remnants of the Revolutionary plans to expand educational opportunities that survived into nineteenth-century. They functioned, however, less as the capstone of public school systems than as loci of socialization for the sons of state elites; as such their principal function was to perpetuate aristocratic white dominance in the slave states' political, social, and economic hierarchies. At the same time, the almost total neglect of public primary and grammar school education perpetuated the inferior position of poor whites and free and enslaved blacks.

In the rush of state constitution-making that followed the colonists' Declaration of Independence, delegates considered, among the overwhelming array of factors that might affect the republics they sought to establish, the role of schools. Constitutional conventions in two Southern states opted to codify a commitment to schooling. In 1776, the North Carolina delegation proclaimed that "a school or schools shall be established by the Legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth, with such salaries to the masters, paid by the public, as may enable them to instruct at low prices; and all useful learning shall be duly encouraged, and promoted, in one or more universities." In 1777, Georgia's delegation established that "Schools shall be erected in each county, and supported at the general expense of the State, as the legislature shall hereafter point out." Delegates at a second convention in Georgia in 1789, however, experienced a change of heart, and removed all mention of schools from their revised

¹²⁶ Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

constitution; promising as the language in North Carolina's constitution seemed, the emphasis on convenience and inexpensive instruction rendered the provision largely ineffectual. By 1850, less than half the free children in North Carolina and Georgia attended schools whether public or private, and adult literacy rates in North Carolina and Georgia, ranging from roughly 70 percent to 80 percent, ranked among the lowest in the United States.¹²⁷ Delegates in other conventions considered the role of education too, but given Revolutionaries' overriding concern about reining in government authority, few conventions embraced the idea of codifying such an expansion of government activity. Once established, however, state legislatures renewed debates about the role of education in their republic.

A handful of Southern Revolutionaries emerged as dogged advocates of efforts to expand public access to schools. Most notably, Thomas Jefferson persistently assured skeptical colleagues in the Virginia legislature that "the most effectual means of preventing [the corruption of the government] would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts, which history exhibiteth, that, possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes."¹²⁸ Jefferson's scheme for universal education proposed the division of the state into districts wherein all resident boys and girls would attend daily and learn about "Graecian, Roman, English and American history" as they were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. Under public supervision and at public expense boys with aptitude might proceed to grammar schools, and the most distinguished grammar school graduates would advance to the College of William and

¹²⁷ DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States*, 142, 145. For the sake of consistency, all literacy or illiteracy rates cited this chapter apply to states' entire free population, regardless of race.

¹²⁸ Thomas Jefferson, "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge (1779)," in *Historical Documents in American Education*, ed. Tony Johnson W. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002) 21-26.

Mary. The plan proved exceptional among republican educational schemes in envisioning a comprehensive school system that would nurture a natural aristocracy. It enjoyed a decidedly cool reception among the majority of Virginian planters who spent far less time grappling with the logic of republicanism than they did reckoning the proportion of their plantation profits that would be consumed by taxes. Jefferson originally presented the bill in 1778 and then again in 1780 without success and eventually enlisted James Madison as a surrogate in 1785 and 1786 while Jefferson defended American commercial and diplomatic interests as minister to France. Virginia's legislature finally passed a dramatically amended version in 1796 that allowed only for the establishment of public primary schools at the discretion of county officials.¹²⁹ Few county officials ever exercised their discretion. Other Southern republicans, generally those who developed Federalist leanings like Washington, Madison, and Pinckney, also urged an expansion of educational opportunity, but none championed a project as expansive as Jefferson's.

Although many Federalists contemplated the best way to produce an aristocracy to constitutionally balance the influence of democracy in the new republic, most rejected Jefferson's efforts to cultivate a natural aristocracy "fitly formed and disposed to become useful instruments for the public" through schooling. Instead, most elite Southerners, like many Americans before and since, tended to equate wealth and merit; consequently the Revolutionary generation's planter class, particularly in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia where they were most distant from the existing universities in Virginia and the North, embraced state universities as a means of perpetuating the existing aristocracy. Although considerably more enthusiastic about universities for their sons to attend than public primary schools for their

¹²⁹ "79. A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, 18 June 1779," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-02-02-0132-0004-0079>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 2, 1777–18 June 1779, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 526–535.].

poorer neighbors, planters lacked the drive, and the political and financial resources, to devote to building universities in war-ravaged states immediately after Independence. The University of North Carolina opened nearly two decades after the state's constitutional convention called for its creation; the University of Georgia, chartered in 1785, finally opened in 1801; South Carolina's legislature chartered their state's university in 1801 and the first students enrolled in 1805.¹³⁰

Even once open, the universities often teetered on the brink of collapse. Before the Civil War, they were hampered by meager and inconsistent state funding,¹³¹ plagued alternately by low enrollments or an abundance of ill-prepared students,¹³² and routinely distracted from academic pursuits as students pursued violent pastimes like dueling and school officials used the universities to satisfy personal political aspirations.¹³³ The state universities certainly did not easily map onto the educational regimes that predominated in the South; the dearth of primary school options, combined with curricula that emphasized social and physical pursuits over intellectual rigor, produced classes of students so ignorant that astonished faculties, recruited largely from Yale, Princeton, and other Northern universities, had to develop remedial courses for many of the students.¹³⁴ State universities that opened later in the Southwest, like the University of Alabama, encountered similar problems.¹³⁵ While university boosters insisted that the schools were invaluable as “trainers of public leaders,” most Southerners, particularly poor

¹³⁰ William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 7-8, 12-13; Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 10-11; Daniel Walker Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, vol. 1 South Carolina College, 2 vols. (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 3.

¹³¹ Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 35-39; Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 23, 36-38, 42-43, 48.

¹³² Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 36, 51, 59; Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 13, 23, 48; Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 93-94.

¹³³ Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 9, 36, 43-43, 54; Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 19-46; Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 88, 92, 113.

¹³⁴ Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 29; Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 28.

¹³⁵ James B. Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, vol. 1 (1818-1902), 2 vols. (Birmingham: The University of Alabama Press, 1953), 56, 64, 88, 118.

whites whose children lacked any substantive educational opportunities, increasingly perceived the schools as “playgrounds for rich men’s sons” and resented the expenditure of public funds.¹³⁶

As early South Carolina College alumnus William Grayson observed of his privilege, “cordial and enduring friendships between the young men from every part of the State... became so strong as to regulate the disposal of State Offices in the legislature and to excite...

jealously.”¹³⁷ Grayson’s candor also conveyed that the social and political advantages of university attendance far exceeded the academic value of education for Southern elites:

The raw freshman... makes rapid advances in smoking, chewing, playing billiards, concocting sherry cobbles, gin slings and mint juleps, becomes an adept at whist and “old Sledge,” in champagne and hot suppers, to say nothing of more questionable matters and takes degrees in arts and sciences about which his diploma is altogether silent... What he learns in the regular college course is learned so imperfectly that it is forgotten in a year or two.¹³⁸

As physical manifestations of the Revolutionary generation’s republican commitments, Southern universities endured in the antebellum period as bastions of the slave states’ self-interested aristocracies and exhibited a clear repudiation of Jefferson’s faith in virtuous democracy guided by a disinterested aristocracy.

As the nineteenth century progressed, many Southern politicians, including those who emigrated to new slave territories, continued to discuss public primary school initiatives and cloaked them in republican rhetoric but without embracing Jeffersonian impulses or demonstrating any eagerness to satisfy the constitutional or statutory obligations they reluctantly adopted. For example, the 1845 Texas Constitution, echoing Jefferson, proclaimed: “A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the

¹³⁶ Snider, *Light on the Hill*, 63; Hollis, *University of South Carolina*, 129; Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 37-38; Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 232.

¹³⁷ William J. Grayson, *Witness to Sorrow: The Antebellum Autobiography of William J. Grayson*, ed. Richard L. Calhoun (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 78.

¹³⁸ Grayson, *Witness to Sorrow*, 80-81.

people, it shall be the duty of the legislature of this State to make suitable provision of the support and maintenance of public schools,” but stipulated that only “freemen, when they form a social compact, have equal rights.”¹³⁹ Texas legislators took no further action toward the development of a public school system for nearly a decade, when they eventually passed a law to establish common schools in 1854. Despite a constitutional provision and supporting legislation, the government’s commitment to public schooling in Texas was so limited, as in other slave states, that individuals and families largely assumed responsibility for schooling. Two years after adoption of the common school legislation, which specifically outlined the state’s obligation to educate orphans, Henrietta Embree, who had moved from Kentucky to Texas as the bride of a physician, noted that “we have taken an orphan boy (William) to live with us for a while at least, he is going to school. Dr. Embree pays for his schooling which is no more than Right, the Orphan should be taken care of.” Reflecting further, Embree gave no indication that she expected the legislature’s action might affect educational opportunities for the poor:

Who knows but some day [Dr. Embree and I] may have little ones cast out upon the wide world with nothing to depend upon but there own resources or charity of this unfriendly world, with none to look to, but strangers but I truly hope if we should be called away before our little one is able to take care of herself, we will leave a plenty to give her what is termed a good education and with that she can do. Education will stick to her when all else is lost.¹⁴⁰

While Embree asserted the importance of education, she understood as well as any antebellum Southerner that families ultimately bore the responsibility for schooling children regardless of her legislators’ declarations.

As the American republic matured in the nineteenth century, the South’s governing elite

¹³⁹ Francis Newton Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the State, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 3564, 3547.

¹⁴⁰ Henrietta Baker Embree and Tennessee Keys Embree, *Tandem Lives: The Frontier Texas Diaries of Henrietta Baker Embree and Tennessee Keys Embree, 1856-1884*, edited by Amy L. Wink (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 19.

made resistance to public education a matter of principle; they portrayed their resistance as sound stewardship of public funds and as a repudiation of the coercive compulsory schooling legislation emerging in the North. For example, in John C. Calhoun's "A Disquisition on Government," written in the late 1840s, he mused that "The press may do much, —by giving impulse to the progress of knowledge and intelligence, to aid the cause of education, and to bring about salutatory changes in the condition of society," but otherwise indicated that schools were only useful insofar as they might civilize Indians.¹⁴¹ Calhoun's patently coercive view that schooling would improve Indians dovetailed with the deep-seated skepticism with which he and many other Southerners regarded governmental authority; Southerners who, from the earliest years of the republic favored limited government, particularly at the federal level, developed an increasingly rigid sectional perception that government interventions usurped local and individual autonomy.¹⁴² Calhoun thus channeled white Southerners' wariness of distant legislators' intentions to provoke resistance to government involvement in the traditionally parental responsibility of supervising children's education. Moreover, the South Carolinian's faith in the press as a valuable instrument of education exemplified the distinctions Southern elites increasingly drew between the value of schools and the value of education. Slaveholders routinely argued schools were immaterial, so long as Southerners had access to the press. "If there were not a teacher within fifty miles," Virginian George Fitzhugh, an indefatigable booster of slavery and champion of the Southern planter class argued in 1854, "The mail and the newspaper-press might be employed, as cheap and efficient agents, in teaching the masses."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ John C. Calhoun, *The Works of John C. Calhoun*, edited by Richard K. Cralle, vol. 1, 6 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1854), 70, 56, 74.

¹⁴² Cayton, "'Separate Interests' and the Nation-State," 39–67.

¹⁴³ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: A. Morris, 1854), 145–146. However circular Fitzhugh's logic might seem, to a certain extent, the planter gentry made a valid point about the utility of the press in educating the public; since literacy rates consistently exceeded school attendance rates in antebellum America, some people evidently acquired the rudiments of learning in informal settings.

Another South Carolinian, the planter and legislator Grayson, also indicted formal schooling and professed:

For the student of a higher grade...no help is necessary that a college affords which he cannot procure better elsewhere. ...[b]ooks are now abundant everywhere. The youth who is really disposed to learn has no need to leave home for the purpose. ...But this is not all. ...Among the thousands who take diplomas without learning anything how much excellent mechanical talent is thrown away; how many good carpenters, turners, tanners, joiners, have been spoiled!¹⁴⁴

Southern society had a place for all individuals, but only the elite needed an intellectual education. Poor whites and slaves needed vocational training; to afford schooling was wasteful or dangerous.

At the heart of slaveholding elites' commitment to state universities, in contrast to their deliberate and elaborate efforts to prevent the development of common schools, lay the institution of slavery. Slaveholders' persistent and pervasive fear of a literate slave population was the primary factor that motivated their efforts to control access to schooling. Concerned that, without an investment in human bondage and consequently with less motivation to be vigilant about restricting slaves' access to education, poor whites might teach blacks, elites calculated ways to restrict educational opportunities throughout the South. Certainly planters, like Fitzhugh, sought to obfuscate the extent of and motivations for planters' resistance to public schools, especially ones that would serve poor whites, by attributing "the cause of the neglect of popular education" to "Our Southern free-trade philosophy, our favorite maxim, 'every man for himself.'"¹⁴⁵ A small minority who repudiated planters' investment in slavery, like the plantation-bred abolitionist Moncure Daniel Conway, came to acknowledge the reason school reformers failed to make headway in slave states. They acknowledged that the dearth of schools was a product of the ruling class's fear of literate slaves. Conway self-published and distributed

¹⁴⁴ Grayson, *Witness to Sorrow*, 80-81.

¹⁴⁵ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 144.

“Free Schools in Virginia: A Plea of Education, Virtue and Thrift, vs. Ignorance, Vice and Poverty” in 1850 to urge the Virginia legislature to make more substantive efforts to develop a school system. Predictably, he was disappointed by the representatives’ cool reception of his proposals. Blinded by equal parts enthusiasm and naïveté, Conway initially failed to grasp why his project failed. Then he read Horace Greeley’s comparatively detached assessment:

I looked eagerly into my New York ‘Tribune’ to see what Greeley would say about it. His paragraph (editorial) was friendly, but I only remember the closing words: ‘Virginia's white children will never be educated till its coloured children are free.’ This shaft went very deep into me, for I found that proslavery ‘philosophers’ considered the Free School system a dangerous Northern ‘ism.’”¹⁴⁶

Other nineteenth-century educational reformers proposed measures to expand public schooling in the South, but leading up to the Civil War, the planter class’s incessant fears regarding slave insurrection consistently and effectively blocked the expansion of schooling for poor whites, just as Greeley had predicted.

Southern elites carried inaction with regard to establishing public schools so far that it even occasionally threatened to upset the tacit alliance planters cultivated with poor whites as a measure of security against slave revolts. Fitzhugh emerged as a reluctant champion of school reform because he feared that “the neglect to educate and provide means of employment for the poor whites in the South” prompted poor whites “to believe that the existence of negroes amongst us is ruin to them.”¹⁴⁷ And although Fitzhugh echoed Jefferson in arguing “As our’s is a government of the people, no where is education so necessary,” he certainly did not share Jefferson’s conviction that education would serve to enlighten citizens and alert them to tyranny.¹⁴⁸ Three-quarters of a century after Jefferson originally proposed it, education reform

¹⁴⁶ Moncure Daniel Conway, *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 88.

¹⁴⁷ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 147.

¹⁴⁸ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 144.

throughout the South seemed imperative to Fitzhugh because by educating poor whites

the Southern white man would become a noble and a privileged character, and he would then like negroes and slavery, because his high position would be due to them. Poor people can see things as well as rich people. We can't hide the facts from them. It is always better openly, honestly, and fearlessly to meet danger, than to fly from or avoid it. The last words we will utter on this subject are,-The path of safety is the path of duty! Educate the people, no matter what it may cost!¹⁴⁹

For the few planters who accepted Fitzhugh's logic, public schools, expensive as they were, would be a valuable investment to secure the established order, rather than a Jeffersonian bulwark against corruption. Collectively, the discourse about antebellum school reform in the South indicates how fragile the region's political, social, and economic order was once King Cotton vanquished egalitarian republican impulses and fortified planters' reliance on slave labor. Planters' inactivity with regard to the establishment of schools threatened to undermine the racial alliance between planters and poor whites that had helped to sustain slavery since the early eighteenth century; on the other hand, a proliferation of schools almost certainly promised to empower blacks.

Planters entertained well-founded concerns about the correlation between education and slave revolt; enslaved Southerners just as certainly understood their standing vis-à-vis education. Surreptitiously practicing the fundamentals of literacy after he bribed a young white boy to teach him to read in defiance of North Carolina law, Thomas H. Jones recalled that "I felt at night, as I went to my rest, that I was really beginning to be a *man*, preparing myself for a condition in life better and higher and happier than could belong to the ignorant slave."¹⁵⁰ Jones's further conclusions about the power of education offer a specific example of why slaveholders saw slave

¹⁴⁹ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 147-8.

¹⁵⁰ Moses Roper, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy, and Thomas Jones, *North Carolina Slave Narratives: The Lives of Moses Roper, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy and Thomas Jones*, edited by William L. Andrews (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 220-221.

literacy as a threat. In the shop where Jones was enslaved, as he listened to a white apprentice talk about the advantages afforded by education, Jones became

intensely anxious to learn. I was a slave; and I knew that the whole community was in league to keep the poor slave in ignorance and chains. Yet I longed to be free, and to be able to move the minds of other men by my thoughts. It seemed to me now, that if I could learn to read and write, this learning might—nay I really thought it would—point out to me the way to freedom, influence, and real, secure happiness.¹⁵¹

Even without overtly threatening violence, Jones's comments, and similar sentiments of other slaves, terrified planters who acutely understood their control over Southern communities to be dangerously tenuous; black literacy exposed the fictions the planter gentry constructed about blacks' sub-human intelligence as part of their rationalization of race slavery as manipulative inventions and simultaneously afforded blacks further means to coordinate rebellions.

Although South Carolina and Georgia adopted laws to prevent blacks from learning to read even in the colonial period, the same republican embrace of liberty that prompted states to debate abolition after Independence and infused Jefferson's "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" prevented most slave states from adopting legislation to limit slaves' education in the Revolutionary and Confederation periods. In 1800, however, South Carolina enacted the first law that explicitly constrained slaves' educational opportunities; by prohibiting closed meetings of slaves and free blacks for "mental instruction," the law revealed planters' overriding concern about the prospect of slave revolts, as did a similar law Virginians passed in 1818 that banned the "unlawful assembly" of slaves in schools. The Virginia law went even further, however, in that it expanded the scope of the law to reading or writing instruction for free and enslaved blacks alike.¹⁵² Incidents like the publication of David Walker's *Appeal to the*

¹⁵¹ Moses Roper, *North Carolina Slave Narratives*, 218.

¹⁵² William Goodell, *The American Slave Code In Theory and Practice: Its Distinctive Features Shown By Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, and Illustrative Facts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 320.

Coloured Citizens of the World in 1829 and Nat Turner's recruitment of roughly 70 enslaved blacks and free black sympathizers to claim their freedom by force in the following year so alarmed white Southerners that legislators throughout the slave states vigorously sought to limit blacks' access to education. By 1834, in all states where at least one out of every three people was considered property legislatures had passed laws to limit literacy.¹⁵³ North Carolina's 1831 law prescribed punishments for literate slaves and for their teachers, whether black or white, because, the legislators reasoned, "teaching slaves to read and write tends to dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion."¹⁵⁴ In Savannah, the discovery of 60 copies of Walker's work horrified officials. The *Appeal* exhorted:

Oh! my coloured brethren, all over the world, when shall we arise from this death-like apathy?--And be men!! ... we must exert ourselves to the full. For remember, that it is the greatest desire and object of the greater part of the whites, to keep us ignorant, and make us work to support them and their families."¹⁵⁵

Ironically, the circulation of Walker's work convinced officials in Georgia to behave precisely as he expected; to keep blacks ignorant and compliant the legislature banned reading or writing for all blacks and outlawed the circulation of potentially inflammatory literature.¹⁵⁶

As cotton supplanted tobacco, indigo, and rice as the South's premier staple crop, slavery and slave trading came more than ever to define the region. The fears colonial planters harbored about slave rebellion intensified in the new republic, and produced a correspondingly ardent

¹⁵³ Goodell, *The American Slave Code*, 319-323; Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 14-16, 18, 216; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 273-275.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Goodell, *The American Slave Code*, 321-322.

¹⁵⁵ David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829*, Revised (Boston: David Walker, 1830), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html>, 70.

¹⁵⁶ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 14.

opposition to institutions, like schools, that might afford slaves an opportunity to resist planters' coercion. Ultimately, the system of education that emerged in the antebellum South, or, more precisely, the absence of a public school system, developed as a concerted effort to perpetuate and expand slavery. In the absence of public schools for primary education, those who could afford to do so paid to attend private academies, field schools and seminaries or hired tutors. As in the colonial period, planters sent their sons and occasionally their daughters to school, as Grayson asserted, in order to "improve the manners, morals, and mind of the Student."¹⁵⁷ Also as in the colonial period, Grayson's syntax reflected the priorities of Southerners who contemplated the purposes of schools; the tertiary significance of improving students' minds reflected slave-owners' apprehensions about the improvement of poor whites' and blacks' minds and fostered a pervasive anti-intellectualism that forced leaders of the state universities to devise programs of remedial instruction even for many of their state's the most privileged scholars.

The slow development of public schools in the South might be viewed as a by-product of the region's sparse population, Southerners' hostility to taxation and governmental usurpation of parental responsibilities, or the ambivalence of impoverished whites.¹⁵⁸ Each of the factors certainly affected the logistics of school development in the South, to a greater or lesser extent at various times and locations, but no factor matched the import of planters' commitment to the maintenance of a vast gulag of highly profitable slave labor camps where unpaid workers were confined for life. For example, Iowa and Arkansas had comparable population densities in 1850, but Iowa's illiteracy rate was less than half that of Arkansas.¹⁵⁹ In the North, many Catholics resented common schools because they feared the government's objective was to indoctrinate

¹⁵⁷ Grayson, *Witness to Sorrow*, 79.

¹⁵⁸ Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 30-31.

¹⁵⁹ DeBow, *Statistical View*, 145.

their children as Protestants, but rather than evade schooling, they turned to parochial schools as an alternative to public schools. Moreover, accounts of how Southerners, from Andrew Jackson to Frederick Douglass to Harriet Jacobs, sought out educational opportunities, suggest that rather than being ambivalent, many poor blacks and whites alike eagerly sought ways to improve their lives through education. As Jackson's biography also illustrates, however, a position among the slave-holding class, transformed the prospect for personal advancement that education afforded poor Southerners into a threat to the region's social, political, and economic order.

Free-state Schooling

In the first month of his American tour, after having stopped only briefly in Rhode Island before proceeding to New York for several weeks, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that

Everyone I have met up to now, to whatever rank of society they belong, has seemed incapable of imagining that one could doubt the value of education.... There is no hostility between religion and science.... There is less to fear here than anywhere else [in Europe] from the malaise caused to a State by a great number of people whose education lifts them above their standing and whose restlessness could disturb society.¹⁶⁰

Though his subsequent travel through slave states forced de Tocqueville to reconsider his observation about Americans' universal acceptance of education, his sense that educating the people posed no threat to the stability and order of Northern communities proved incisive.

Northern communities, under the banner of republicanism, embraced education as a means of maintaining order; initially, republicanism merely offered communities in free states, which from the colonial period, were inclined to regard schools favorably, further incentive to open schools.

When immigration rates soared in the second decade of the nineteenth century, free states

¹⁶⁰ De Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, 196.

redoubled the Revolutionary generation's ideological commitment to education. For reformers in the North, education promised to help their communities absorb the rising tide of immigrants, who, seemingly ignorant of their civic responsibilities in a republic, threatened to overwhelm established customs. Communities in free states launched initiative after initiative to enhance and expand government-subsidized and government-supervised education counted on schools to build a more cohesive and uniform citizenry.

As in the South, in the frenzy of constitution-drafting that followed Independence, convention delegates in the North also considered the role of schools; as in the South, two states codified their commitment to public education. North Carolinians actually took for their model the clause in Pennsylvania's constitution that established the state's commitment to public schools, and the two were nearly identical. The only substantive variation, however, established a very different trajectory for Pennsylvania's public schools compared to those in North Carolina. While clearly echoing William Penn's view of schooling in declaring its preference for "useful learning," Pennsylvania's delegation determined that "A school or schools shall be established *in each county* by the legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth [emphasis added],"¹⁶¹ and therefore clearly established their new commitment to making public schools widely accessible. In Massachusetts, republican ideology also enhanced colonial commitments to education and employed the Puritans' blueprint for a systemic approach to schooling. Ratified in 1780, the Massachusetts constitution's commitment to public schools was by far the most explicit and expansive in the Revolutionary period. Written chiefly by John Adams, the provision for "The Encouragement of Literature" displayed the affinity between Adams's and his friend Jefferson's republican visions:

Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of

¹⁶¹ Thorpe, *The Federal and State Constitutions*, 3081-3092.

the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties...it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the university at Cambridge, public schools and grammar schools in the towns.¹⁶²

In sharp contrast to slave states, free states, even those that did not follow the examples of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts in codifying commitments to public education in their constitutions, largely made good on the Revolutionary generation's republican commitment to universal education. By 1850, in Pennsylvania approximately three out of five children attended public or private schools and in Massachusetts roughly three out of four of the state's children attended school; in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts well over 90 percent of adults could read.¹⁶³ Except in Indiana and Illinois, where commitments to slavery and unfree labor proved especially persistent, all free states boasted literacy rates comparable to those in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts by the midpoint of the nineteenth century; the average illiteracy rate among slave states was three times higher than the average illiteracy rate among free states.¹⁶⁴ Free states inverted the approach southern states took toward public education. Overall, free states emphasized the development of free primary schools for many rather than "public" universities for a few, although all free states in New England and the Middle Atlantic had founded quasi-public universities before Independence, and those in the Northwest, except Illinois, included provisions for universities in their constitutions.

While Jefferson's fellow slaveholders rejected his vision for a comprehensive republican scheme of education, other Revolutionaries promoted republican educational reforms with greater success in the North. Noah Webster literally capitalized on prevailing sentiment in free states in favor of educational policies that would diffuse knowledge among a broad swath of

¹⁶² Thorpe, *The Federal and State Constitutions*, 1888-1923.

¹⁶³ DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States*, 142, 145.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

citizens. Riding a tide of Federalist sentiment after the states ratified the new Constitution, Webster urged:

Nothing but the establishment of schools and some uniformity in the use of books, can annihilate differences in speaking and preserve the purity of the American tongue. A sameness of pronunciation is of considerable consequence in a political view.... Our political harmony is therefore concerned in a uniformity of language.¹⁶⁵

Webster hardly hit upon an original angle in championing the utility of schools in fostering uniform standards of communication: John Brinsley's 1622 proposal for schooling in Virginia had pointed out that teaching a common language would promote commercial interactions and spiritual development. But by promoting schooling as a means of stabilizing the new republic Webster modified the colonial rationale, and ascribed to schools a vital function in stabilizing America's fragile political union. Because he imbibed an appreciation for intellectual pursuits during his childhood in New England and absorbed the commercial orientation of his adopted community in New York, Webster was ideally situated to think that he could convert patriotism into profits earned on instructional materials. Between 1783 and 1785 Webster published the three-volume *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, which consisted of his best-selling "Blue-Backed Speller," a grammar, and a reader. So when Webster argued in 1789 that it was imperative to somehow communicate the new nation's uniform language widely, and asked, "Who shall do this?" His question was clearly rhetorical, for Webster, adept at self-promotion, proclaimed in his 1839 draft of "The Age of Spelling Books" that his speller "has rendered the language of the United States uniform. So say gentlemen in every part of the country."¹⁶⁶ His spelling books and dictionaries garnered most of their accolades from Northern reviewers,

¹⁶⁵ Noah Webster, "Noah Webster on the Necessity for an American Language (1789)," in *Historical Documents in American Education*, ed. Tony Johnson W. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 75.

¹⁶⁶ Noah Webster, "The Age of Spelling Books," Noah Webster papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

although regional acclaim for Webster's work was hardly universal.¹⁶⁷ Salesman Samuel Miller's records of 1841 offer a fairly clear picture of how nineteenth-century school development prompted Webster to scale back his national plan to inculcate republican English; Miller, who was from Princeton, started west from New Haven, and apart from a stop in Baltimore and three stops in Kentucky, concentrated his time in free states as he tried to get school officials to purchase the Blue-Backed Speller.¹⁶⁸ Miller's route underscores Webster's keen awareness of how Independence produced sectionally distinct approaches to education.

Although public primary schools proliferated in the free states after the Revolution, Northerners assumed disparate approaches to schooling based on their colonial pasts. When de Tocqueville conducted his 1831 tour, he noted that Massachusetts and Connecticut relied on local governments to superintend education, as did Pennsylvania, whose schools served as a model for neighboring Ohio; New York, on the other hand, centralized school funding at the state level but left local communities in charge of school organization.¹⁶⁹ Regardless of how governments managed them, the republic's first public schools reflected the widening ideological divide between classical republicanism and liberal republicanism. Although far more progressive and democratic than schooling in slave states, barriers to education remained for some Northerners. For example, the few public schools that did not charge some kind of tuition or fee usually provided schooling for poor children; particularly in urban settings, free schools and their students carried a stigma in early America, leaving workingmen resentful of the aristocratic

¹⁶⁷ Tim Cassedy, "'A Dictionary Which We Do Not Want': Defining America Against Noah Webster, 1783-1810," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (April 2014): 229-54.

¹⁶⁸ Noah Webster, "Journal of a Tour, 1830; Account of Towns Visited, 1841," Noah Webster papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

¹⁶⁹ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 78, 81, 108-109; de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, 91.

education that well-to-do families procured, at a cost, for their own children.¹⁷⁰ Poor blacks faced even greater challenges in seeking out educational opportunities because white abolitionists and blacks with greater financial resources urged poor blacks to become literate but without attending charity schools; so-called “friends” feared blacks’ enrollment in charity schools would allow opponents of emancipation to point to black students’ attendance as evidence of their racial inferiority.¹⁷¹ Although the Revolution expanded freedom and established the principle of equal rights before the law, it did not settle the meaning of equality. Because communities in free states expected schools to cultivate rather than upset social, political, and economic order, Northern communities struggled to determine just how widely wisdom should be diffused.

After a flurry of post-Revolutionary legislation directing the establishment of schools and the attendant creation of rural district schools and reorganization of urban schools, education policies and practices in free states changed little through the first decade of the nineteenth-century; but beginning in the 1810s and accelerating dramatically in the 1830s, an influx of Irish, German, English, Scottish, and Scandinavian immigrants, most of whom settled in free states where the incipient market revolution afforded greater opportunity for employment, prompted communities to adjust their approaches to schooling. The linguistic and religious diversity new arrivals introduced and perceptions of immigrants as competitors in the labor market threatened the stability of Northern communities to such an extent that many private citizens and policy-makers alike urged renewed attention to schooling.¹⁷² In 1820 the prominent Massachusetts politician, attorney, and orator Daniel Webster glorified New England schools as “a wise and

¹⁷⁰ Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 32, 55; Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 45-49.

¹⁷¹ Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 173; Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 124-125; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 16-17.

¹⁷² Donald Hugh Parkerson and Jo Ann Parkerson, *The Emergence of the Common School in the U.S. Countryside*, *Mellen Studies in Education*, v. 36 (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 28; Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 46-47.

liberal system of police.” He explained:

knowing that our government rests directly on the public will, in order that we may preserve it we endeavor to give a safe and proper direction to that public will...we confidently trust, that, by the diffusion of general knowledge and good and virtuous sentiments, the political fabric may be secure, as well against open violence and overthrow, as against the slow, but sure, undermining of licentiousness.¹⁷³

Webster was no radical, but his thinking about how schools could uphold republican values in the face of change galvanized the state’s most prominent advocate of public school reform, Horace Mann, to consider how common schools might help Massachusetts contend with the disorder that industrialization and the influx of immigrants were introducing to the state. Mann, almost from his first days as the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, a post without precedent in the United States, actively worked to bring order to Massachusetts society and economy. He declined to upset the prevailing social order by adopting a neutral stance on the racial segregation of schools, promoted greater order by encouraging girls’ school attendance and consequent exposure to civic ideals, and sought to secure the perpetuation of Protestant ethics in the face of a rapidly growing Catholic population through a non-sectarian curriculum that welcomed the “religion of the [King James] Bible.”

As further confirmation of how determined Northerners were to use schools to maintain order in the midst of societal upheaval, when Bostonians faced what they considered an epidemic of truancy, predominantly among Catholic immigrants, Mann acted doggedly to improve attendance rates. His interest ultimately heralded an escalation in common school proponents’ coercive efforts: to restore order and ensure immigrants learned about virtue, Massachusetts

¹⁷³ Daniel Webster, “Senator Daniel Webster on the Schools as a ‘Wise and Liberal System of Police’ (1820),” in *Historical Documents in American Education*, ed. Tony Johnson W. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 81.

passed the nation's first compulsory school law in 1852.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, the speed with which some immigrant communities established schools also provoked reform. In Iowa in 1854, for example, Elisabeth Koren's Lutheran community built schoolhouses with a zeal that matched that of the Puritans, and the school in her town was a central fixture of residents' attention as they industriously sought to impart knowledge to their children. Within days of her own arrival in the new community, Koren reported "I had been busy teaching the A B C's to Kari," a toddler whose family temporarily lodged Koren and her husband.¹⁷⁵ Alarmed that immigrants like Koren might not impart sufficiently American values and ideals to the children in their communities, some antebellum school reforms established mechanisms to evaluate school curricula.

Not all immigrants welcomed reformers' efforts to impose a standard curriculum, mandate attendance, or to evaluate the achievements of students or teachers. Catholic resistance to public schools, in particular, hardened as the Protestant tenor of common schools became increasingly apparent, and especially once Pope Pius IX directed the faithful in 1851 to maintain separate schools for their children. Tensions between Catholic school and common school advocates escalated further in the second half of the nineteenth century as Pius IX censured the notion that:

popular schools open to children of every class of the people, and, generally, all public institutes intended for instruction in letters and philosophical sciences and for carrying on the education of youth, should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority, control and interference, and should be fully subjected to the civil and political power at the pleasure of the rulers, and according to the standard of the prevalent opinions of the age.¹⁷⁶

The papal condemnation of public schools as they existed in the United States prompted many

¹⁷⁴ W.S. Deffenbaugh et al., "Compulsory School Attendance," Bulletin, No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Bureau of Education, 1914), 8.

¹⁷⁵ Elisabeth Koren, *The Diary of Elisabeth Koren 1853-1855*, trans. David T. Nelson, 2 vols. (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1955), <http://solomon.nwld.alexanderstreet.com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/cgi-bin/asp/philo/nwld/getdoc.pl?S288-D010>, 144.

¹⁷⁶ Pius IX. *Quanta Cura & The Syllabus of Errors: Condemning Current Errors, December 8, 1864*. Translated by Archbishop Spalding in 1870. Angelus Press. Kansas City, Missouri: Angelus Press, 1998.

American Protestants to regard the nation's Catholic minority, which continued to grow rapidly when the influx of Irish Catholic immigrants gave way to Catholic immigration from Southern Europe, as a threat to American sovereignty.¹⁷⁷ The subsequent success of New York's Irish Catholic community securing state funds for their schools in 1869 and the Catholic Church's assertion of papal infallibility in 1870 reinforced Protestant sentiment. Further heightening Protestant suspicions, America's Catholic bishops met in Baltimore in 1852, 1866, and 1884 and moved to systematize and coordinate their own schools outside of the public school system.¹⁷⁸ Despite school reformers and legislators' efforts to undermine Catholic schooling, the parochial school system continued growing and found allies among politicians who resented federal efforts to influence states' educational policies and practices. By 1890 more than a half-million children attended Catholic schools, the largest school system operating in the United States without public funding.¹⁷⁹

Still, as school attendance and literacy rates attest, many Northerners, from residents of diversifying urban communities to commercially-oriented farmers, accepted public schools as positive community institutions that affirmed their Protestant and republican worldviews, afforded new generations the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge useful in their adult professions, or at a minimum occupied children "for three months in the winter" when parents "have no use of them."¹⁸⁰ For all the credit assigned to Mann as a pioneering educational reformer, Mann frequently interacted with and admired the work of Northern reformers outside Massachusetts. For example, Mann traveled west on the Ohio River for his health in 1840 and

¹⁷⁷ David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1982), 102; Ward M. McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction: The Public School In the Politics of the 1870s* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 42, 57, 71.

¹⁷⁸ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: A Global Context from the Puritans to the Obama Era*, 8th ed (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 113-114.

¹⁷⁹ Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue*, 78.

¹⁸⁰ Finley, *Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley*, 41.

when he visited Cincinnati Mann made a point of meeting with Nathan Guilford, whom he regarded as “the author of the School System of Ohio.” He credited Guilford for his work in the state senate to promote reforms and especially praised an 1825 bill to establish common schools. Mann reflected in his April 11 diary entry, “What great results have followed from this measure. Here is encouragement. Cannot I work in a faith that needs only to look as far forward as fifteen years?”¹⁸¹ Mann’s remark indicates that he gleaned from notable reformers in the West ideas to implement in Massachusetts, and attests to a genuine exchange of ideas between reformers of throughout free states rather than a unidirectional export of new theory from Massachusetts. Among the reforms Mann eventually implemented that Guilford’s work helped establish in Ohio was the practice a lawyer described to de Tocqueville of examining “the masters, their methods and the progress of the pupils.” By fostering a system that evaluated teachers and their success in teaching students, officials gained even wider latitude to establish order in their states.

Concerned that their democracies might fall into anarchy in the absence of a powerful, unitary sovereign, policy makers in free states leaned heavily on schools to help establish order in the decades after Independence. Regarding schools as tools of stability and assimilation, Northerners sought to diffuse knowledge, and looked for ways to extend the reach of schooling to a broad swath of citizens. They initially focused on increasing school accessibility. In the nineteenth century, however, immigrants introduced dramatic change to Northern states where the market revolution promised greater economic opportunity. Alarmed by the tide of foreign languages and religious sects washing over their communities, Northern politicians renewed their commitment to stabilizing their communities by using schools to foster citizenship. New measures like compulsory attendance and teacher evaluations ensured that students were suitably

¹⁸¹ Horace Mann, “Journal, 1837-1843,” Horace Mann collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

integrated into republican communities.

While Northerners pitched school reform as progressive, adoption of the reforms was hardly uniform in the free states; the lack of uniformity attests to the limited efficacy of republican reformers like Webster, whose vision of national unity accomplished through the cultivation of a uniform national language many communities repudiated. Still, haphazard as it may have been in practice, Northern school reform produced strikingly uniform results, most evident in the region's high proportion of literate residents.

Schools as institutions for order in opposing visions of empire

The competing visions of expansion that emerged out of the sectionalism slavery inspired produced commitments to almost diametrically opposed systems of schooling in the republic. Southern slaveholding elites regarded education as the province of the powerful; access to schools needed to be limited so as to preserve the class order in slaveholding communities. Northern policy-makers and the public embraced schooling as a means of constructing unified, free-labor communities; access needed to be extended as far a practical in order to preserve the communities' social, political, and economic stability. Both the Old South and Old North developed systems they could extend westward, and that would reinforce the slave or free society ideals they wanted to defend. Regional elites, in North and South alike, idealized schooling as a means of propagating values and instilling virtue; both systems, however, were inherently coercive.

In the South, limiting access to schools served a dual purpose. First, the planter class calculated that keeping poor whites and blacks ignorant would foster their complaisance in a

social, political, and economic system engineered around slavery. Additionally, southern state universities promoted solidarity among each rising generation of planter gentry and their professional counterparts. In the North, broadening access to schools was calculated to enlighten the public and awaken a virtuous appreciation for and commitment to preserving republican institutions. Both approaches featured vulnerabilities. In the South, denying most people access to elementary schooling perpetuated widespread ignorance and illiteracy; in the North, offering a civic education invited—even promoted—public debate about equality and the legitimate scope of governmental authority. Ultimately, the South’s rejection of institutionalized schooling left slaveholders uniquely unprepared to defend the institution they so desperately wanted to preserve.

The Revolution, as profoundly destabilizing as it was, changed remarkably little in educational practice and policy. As in the colonial period, policy makers’ ability to contend with ethnic and cultural heterogeneity played a far greater role in informing republican leaders’ approaches to schooling. Southern state universities and Northern common schools were new features of education in the republican period, but each innovation stood on foundations grounded in the regional disparities of schooling regimes, dating back to the colonial period.

CLASSES RECONSTRUCTED AND ORDER RESTORED

The teachers who first chronicled the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, a school for the education of freedmen founded in 1868, traced its origins “from Hawaii to Virginia [in] an idea, worked out by American brains in the heart of the Pacific, adequate to meet the demands of a race similar in its dawn of civilization to the people among whom this idea had first been successfully tested.”¹⁸² Acknowledging the barest facts of Hampton’s genesis, the statement gestures to the novelty of the school Samuel Chapman Armstrong founded under the aegis of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the American Missionary Association. Armstrong’s experiences as the child of Presbyterian missionaries serving in Maui, as a student at Massachusetts’s Williams College, as a Union officer commanding black soldiers in the Civil War, and as an agent of the Freedmen’s Bureau thereafter, all affected the curriculum he developed and the strategies he used to promote the school’s success.

Hampton was just one of hundreds of schools opened in the South after the war, but cultural, social, political, and, economic transformations wrought by the Civil War secured Hampton’s legacy as an enduringly influential innovation in American schooling. At Hampton, Armstrong refined “industrial education” a curricular approach that emphasized physical labor at the expense of intellectual work and pitched it as an instructional method that suited the needs of the “backward races” whose complete ignorance put the nation at risk. Half a century distant from Lincoln’s assertion at Gettysburg that that nation must renew its dedication “to the proposition that ‘all men are created equal,’” an apocryphal testimonial about Hampton

¹⁸² Mary Frances Armstrong and Helen Wilhelmina Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students. By Two of Its Teachers, Mrs. M. F. Amrstrong and Helen W. Ludlow. With Fifty Cabin and Planation Songs, Arranged by Thomas P. Fenner*, Electronic (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1874), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/armstrong/armstrong.html>.

circulated by Harvard professor emeritus Francis Greenwood Peabody, purported that:

A distinguished American being asked by a Northern friend where his son might get the best industrial training, is said to have answered, ‘Since you are so unfortunate as to be neither a Negro nor an Indian, your son cannot have the best of such training which this country has to give.’¹⁸³

Peabody’s tale, though he conceded it was likely a “friendly exaggeration,” highlighted the dramatic ways in which the nation and its schooling regimes altered after the Civil War.

Even as Americans endured the four devastating years of war that determined whether the American nation would expand as a union based on free labor, or as a house divided between free and slave societies, Northern legislators laid the foundations of the single empire they hoped to construct. New laws ranging from the Morrill Act to the Pacific Railway Act to the Homestead Act clearly reflected Republican aspirations for modernization, industrialization, and expansion westward, and affirmed Northerners’ commitment to using education as a means of sustaining American development. This chapter, therefore, explores the ways in which Union aspirations for national uniformity and progress translated into postwar educational policy, and how those policies affected—and were affected by—the regional regimes that were so deliberately different before the war. Although the Civil War itself changed little about Northerners’ commitment to the republican and utilitarian functions of public schooling, Reconstruction and the ongoing project of national reconciliation afterward prompted Northerners to broaden their imperial aspirations southward and westward and strengthened their commitment to using schools to promote national progress and reconstitute the republic.¹⁸⁴

Armstrong, for example, mused about his work for the Freedmen’s Bureau that, “I am glad I’m

¹⁸³ Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Education for Life by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Founder of Hampton Institute, With an Introduction by Francis Greenwood Peabody, Formerly Plummer Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard University, and a Biographical Note by Helen W. Ludlow of Hampton Institute* (Hampton, Virginia: Press of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1913), 9.

¹⁸⁴ Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 141, 153.

on the outposts doing frontier duty and pioneer work, for the South is a heathen land and Hampton is on the borders thereof.”¹⁸⁵ But from North to South, coast to coast, the consolidation and expansion of empire forced Americans to consider ambiguities of racial, ethnic, and religious minority groups’ standing as citizens; the ensuing debates profoundly affected the development of public schooling in the United States and the degree to which public schools extended or limited Americans’ economic, social, and political opportunities.

While the Civil War wrought a revolution in public education by catalyzing the dramatic expansion of formal schooling in the South and West, the end of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow forwarded a counterrevolution that repudiated both Revolutionary republican ideals of the diffusion of knowledge and the egalitarian professions of antebellum common school advocates. During Reconstruction black communities vociferously demanded expansion in their access to public schools. The counterrevolutionary movement in public schooling occurred gradually, as whites looking to reconstruct the nation noted with increasing alarm the ways in which blacks’ educational attainments might challenge white supremacy. To effect the counterrevolution, white elites, from politicians to philanthropists, experimented with ways to subjugate blacks, most immediately to secure a ready supply of laborers, and ultimately settled on the tactic of differentiating curricula in the schools that served black communities. The innovative industrial education model that emerged supplied only the most rudimentary academic training and inured students to hard labor. The assurances that Booker T. Washington, as a product of industrial education at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute and a proponent of it at the Tuskegee Institute, offered at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition indicating that blacks had no intention of pursuing social equality, and the eagerness with which white

¹⁸⁵ Edith Armstrong Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong; a Biographical Study*, by Edith Armstrong Talbot (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904), 170.

audiences around the nation welcomed his assurances, ensconced industrial education as the preferred mode of training second-class citizens. It persisted well into the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Multiple competing interests contributed to the post-war revolution and counterrevolution in American educational practice and policy. Northern elites' conviction that common schooling represented an ideal means of preparing Americans for citizenship prompted them to pursue additional improvements to existing school systems to include high school education, graded instruction, increasingly rigorous teacher preparation, and centralized and professionalized management of school districts. Northerners' faith that universal education could foster orderly self-governance throughout the republic spurred them to expend a considerable portion of the political and economic capital they attained through the Union's military victories in efforts to further systematize schooling throughout the nation. As General Jonathan Pope represented the situation to Ulysses S. Grant, "Freedom of Speech and of the Press, Education, Equality before the law, and in political rights and privileges are the essentials of any satisfactory reconstruction in the South."¹⁸⁶ Still, differences of opinion among Northerners about the meaning of equality, particularly within the Republican Party, limited their ability to reach a consensus about whether students should be uniformly prepared for citizenship. With Reconstruction-era school boosters dogged by conflicting visions of an educated citizenry and varying degrees of commitment to their cause, white supremacists exploited their strategic advantages in restoring a plantation society, so that race increasingly served as a proxy for race slavery in molding schooling regimes that developed after the Civil War. Most white Southerners had no intention of creating schools that would prepare blacks for full civic participation. Despite being the primary subjects of many

¹⁸⁶ Ulysses S. Grant, "Letter from Jonathan Pope, July 27, 1867," *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, ed. John Y. Simon, vol. 17, 32 vols. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 259.

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school reformers' efforts, blacks, Catholics, and Indian communities all influenced the standardization of educational policy and practice after the Civil War. Eager for the reunited nation's progress in industrial development, but unconstrained by calculations about how to secure re-election, pursue social equality, or restore the plantation order, Northern philanthropists more and more actively managed educational endeavors. Their investments were most apparent in efforts to redeem the South and the West.

In the South, emancipation and the prospect of black suffrage demanded an immediate reevaluation of republican commitments to education. The war did not immediately obviate sectional differences with respect to schooling. Just as Northerners continued to regard universal education as an agent of civic cohesion that could homogenize Americans as virtuous and industrious citizens, Southerners persisted in seeing public schools as institutions that could upend the social, political, and economic order if people outside the governing class had access to them. But where Southern whites were anxious about the upheaval, black communities welcomed it. Blacks imprinted their enthusiasm for schooling, based on the conviction that education would secure economic, political, and social liberty, on the South during Reconstruction. With growing alarm about what the black community's rapid educational achievements, especially with respect to literacy, portended for Southern society, many Southern whites continued to resist the expansion of schools. Others, however, followed the Northern cue to embrace the coercive capacities of universal education. In using schools as a system of subjugation over the final three decades of the nineteenth century, Southern whites became quite as anxious as their Northern counterparts to control school funding and curricula. Opposed to academically-oriented classical curricula that predominated in most common schools, including those the black community sought to organize then, white Southerners championed an industrial

education model based on manual labor, which accommodated Southern elites' concerns for maintaining racial order.

A Catalog of Competing Interests

Well before the Civil War ended, newly emancipated slaves initiated a transformation in Americans' educational policies and practices. In slavery, as agents of the Freedmen's Bureau quickly discovered, blacks had "seen power and influence among white people always coupled with learning," and despite legal and social prohibitions, some slaves, perhaps five percent of them, acquired literacy by conducting informal schools with other slaves in attics or pits hidden in forests, cajoling white children to show off their reading skills, or in extremely rare instances, through slave-owners who felt a religious or ethical obligation to instruct men and women they considered property.¹⁸⁷ As in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, slaves took advantage of disorder to claim freedom, and "Wherever [Union] troops broke through the lines of the enemy, schools followed."¹⁸⁸ As they secured freedom even during the war, blacks organized schooling initiatives seemingly overnight. Hundreds of emancipated blacks crowded local schools with just a single teacher.¹⁸⁹ Washington recalled from his childhood that as black communities made the transition to freedom:

Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn. As fast as any kind of teachers could be secured, not only were day-schools filled, but night-schools as well....Day-school, night-school, Sunday-school, were always

¹⁸⁷ U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, "Bureau of Freedmen and Refugees. (To Accompany Bill H.R. No. 598.) March 10, 1868" (U.S. House of Representatives, 1868), Archive of Americana, 22; see also Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 20.

¹⁸⁸ U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, "Bureau of Freedmen and Refugees," 21.

¹⁸⁹ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 1, 31; see also Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3, 8.

crowded, and often many had to be turned away for want of room.¹⁹⁰

Washington further noted that while “The great ambition of the older people was to try to learn to read the Bible before they died,” for many Freedmen and -women a more general goal of becoming literate motivated them: “Sunday-schools were formed soon after freedom, but the principal book studied in the Sunday-school was the spelling-book.”¹⁹¹ During the war, black soldiers, who voluntarily forfeited some of their new freedom, had an especially loud voice in advocating for schooling because the military chain of command led all the way to the President. Through appeals primarily to officers and their wives, 20,000 black soldiers “could read intelligently, and a much larger number were learning their first lessons” at the end of the war, and the soldiers successfully secured educational opportunities for other blacks.¹⁹² The first teacher hired in Washington’s community in the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia was a “young coloured man from Ohio, who had been a soldier.”¹⁹³

Whether soldiers or civilians, Freedmen and -women leaned heavily on literate blacks to share their knowledge, expected black political leaders to advocate for school reform, and pooled their limited savings to operate schools. In spite of the limited number of blacks who acquired any education in slavery, blacks accounted for one third of the teachers in schools for Freedmen and -women through 1876. In political conventions black communities furthered the republican logic that liberty and education were intertwined and mutually reinforcing, and staked out the radical position that the government should recognize education as a fundamental individual right.¹⁹⁴ By dint of the black community’s advocacy there, North Carolina’s new constitution in

¹⁹⁰ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1901), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/washington/washing.html#washing42>, 29-30.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Williams, *Self-Taught*, 46, 49, 50; U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, “Bureau of Freedmen and Refugees,” 20.

¹⁹³ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 29-30.

¹⁹⁴ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 68-69, 78-79.

1868 codified individuals' right to an education.¹⁹⁵ Impatient with the bureaucratic pace of allies in the Republican Party, the Union Army, the Freedmen's Bureau, and Northern missionary societies, blacks augmented state funding for universal schooling at their own expense, even in the face of crushing poverty.¹⁹⁶ The black community's efforts yielded decisive results. Between 1870 and 1876, for example, the numbers of students attending schools in South Carolina more than quadrupled.¹⁹⁷

The enthusiasm with which blacks pursued education and sought to expand their access to formal schooling evoked powerful reactions within white communities, especially among those in the South who were most immediately affected by blacks' aspirations. According to Washington, many elite whites "feared the result of education would be that the Negroes would leave the farms, and that it would be difficult to secure them for domestic service."¹⁹⁸ As a consequence of Southern whites' concerns that educated blacks would no longer be a dependable labor source, Freedmen's Bureau agents observed, "Much opposition has been encountered from those who do not believe in the elevation of the Negro. A multitude of facts might be given....if military power should be withdrawn, our schools would cease to exist."¹⁹⁹ Under the watchful but unpracticed eye of the Freedmen's Bureau, planters who found their position in the region's political, economic, and social hierarchy challenged by the Civil War worked vigorously to shore up their standing by making common cause with poor whites in perpetuating the South's racial

¹⁹⁵ Laura F. Edwards, *A Legal History of the Civil War and Reconstruction: A Nation of Rights, New Histories of American Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 132.

¹⁹⁶ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 4, 8, 9, 19.

¹⁹⁷ John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, Third (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 139-140.

¹⁹⁸ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 119; see also Rebecca Montgomery, "Lost Cause Mythology in New South Reform: Gender, Class, Race, and the Politics of Patriotic Citizenship," in *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers That Be*, ed. Janet L. Coryell et al. (Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 2000), 174-98; Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 20.

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, "Bureau of Freedmen and Refugees," 23.

order. During his first months as a Freedmen’s Bureau agent in Virginia, Armstrong mistook elite complicity in subverting Reconstruction for “inactivity” in “suppressing any misconduct of the lower class.”²⁰⁰ Poor whites, who did not effectively organize to promote the expansion of their own educational attainments until the Farmers’ Alliance and then the Populist Party emerged beginning in the 1880s, objected to opening public schooling to blacks on the grounds that it threatened their economic and social supremacy.²⁰¹

As whites, from the smallest of freeholders to the grandest of the plantation gentry, coalesced in their alarm about black educational attainments, they moved to obstruct the development of blacks’ schools and to undermine the quality of instruction. Since white Southerners’ antebellum suspicion of centralized government and resentment of taxation persisted after the war, objections to the new property, poll, sales, and occupation taxes Republican-controlled legislatures authorized to fund schools only intensified in the face of post-war depression.²⁰² Most commonly, whites argued against the expansion of public schooling on the grounds that “the chief beneficiaries paid little or no taxes.”²⁰³ Beyond Southern whites’ objections to new taxes, the work of marginalized white Southern men who took posts in Freedmen’s schools proved instrumental in the project to restore antebellum white supremacy. Socially ostracized and physically attacked, Southern white teachers who worked in black schools provided live demonstrations of the perils that would befall whites who attempted to integrate blacks into Southern society. At the same time, most took their assignments hoping to condition blacks to assume a place in the lower orders of society.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 142-143.

²⁰¹ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 26-27.

²⁰² Andrew Cayton, “‘Separate Interests’ and the Nation-State: The Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West,” *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 1 (June 1992): 43; Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 46, 139.

²⁰³ Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 112.

²⁰⁴ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 55, 74-76.

Whites' resistance to changing the South's plantation order left blacks to seek out allies in their school reform efforts. Although Freedmen and -women found many Northerners receptive to, or even eager for the expansion of schooling, black communities recognized that few allies shared their egalitarian ideals. Northerners, from soldiers and agents of the Freedmen's Bureau, to missionaries to politicians to industrial philanthropists, devoted their energy to promoting school reform in the South and did so for a wide range of reasons and with varying degrees of commitment. Blacks first developed relationships with Northern missionaries who largely replicated common school designs in the Southern schools they opened for black and white children. Black communities recognized that most Northern missionaries held a paternalistic view that education would teach blacks to accommodate white values by aspiring to "respectability."²⁰⁵ The enthusiasm of white, typically middle-class, female, Protestant missionaries for serving in blacks' schools peaked by 1866, although their efforts continued through the next decade.²⁰⁶ Congregations' collections to sponsor missionary work in black schools underwent a similar decline.

To contend with missionaries' increasingly limited presence in black schools, blacks also sought political allies, chiefly in the Republican Party. Massachusetts Senators Charles Sumner and Henry Wilson spearheaded efforts to create a national public school system, which seemed a viable possibility in 1866 when the government established the Bureau of Education, albeit without assigning any specific responsibilities, allotted funding for Freedmen's Bureau schools, and even Southern Democrats argued the federal government should pay for the public schools it

²⁰⁵ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 37, 42; see also Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 144-148.

²⁰⁶ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 80, 81, 85, 87, 106, 119.

wanted to impose on Southerners.²⁰⁷ Still celebrating in 1871 that “for the first time since the adoption of the Constitution...the government is consistent with its creed,” Wilson insisted that, “popular education, as an essential element of free government, is by general consent admitted.”²⁰⁸ Wilson clarified that the scope of the Republican Party’s education project embraced the preparation of “men...in the factories of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, among the mines of Pennsylvania and Colorado, the prairies of Illinois and Iowa, or on the plantations of Georgia and Louisiana...for the privileges and duties of American citizenship.”²⁰⁹ Having confined his interest to the working classes, however, Wilson’s declaration hinted at the emergence of distinct privileges and duties for laborers.

Arguing the importance of a literate body politic, Congressional Republicans pressed for centralized oversight of public education and for compulsory attendance policies, and some Radical Republicans even fought for integrated schools.²¹⁰ Only the most radical of Radical Republicans envisioned emancipation as a vehicle for creating racial equality; many more Americans, while interested in schooling, hesitated to see it transformed into a vehicle for blacks’ advancement. As a consequence, voters rebuked Republicans for their egalitarianism in the 1874 elections.²¹¹ While Northern missionaries and the Republican Party initially seemed to be valuable boosters of black schooling, as Reconstruction progressed, missionaries increasingly lacked the funding and philosophical commitment to meaningfully support black schooling, and political calculations drew Republicans’ attention elsewhere.

In addition to missionaries and politicians, Northern industrial philanthropists and a small

²⁰⁷ David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1982), 101-102.

²⁰⁸ Henry Wilson, “New Departure of the Republican Party,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 1871, 106, 110.

²⁰⁹ Wilson, “New Departure,” 113, 119.

²¹⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 471.

²¹¹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001) 130, 139.

but influential group of white Southerners who aspired to expand the region's economic productivity formed coalitions to promote Southern school reform; though they included schools for blacks in their schemes, blacks rarely counted them as genuine allies. Henry Wilson offered philanthropists a blessing on behalf of legislatively ineffectual Republicans saying, "In the present transition state at the South and Southwest, and in many portions of the West, there is a most inviting field for our millionaires to combine an agency for material development, and for the mental and moral improvement of the masses."²¹² With the approbation of leading Northern reformers and politically powerful Southerners, Northern philanthropists, and the men who managed their distributions, served an especially important function in stimulating school development in the South. For example, Barnas Sears, who had succeeded Horace Mann as Massachusetts's Superintendent of Education, stepped down as the president of Brown University to assume responsibility for overseeing the allocation of the Peabody Fund's two million dollar endowment. Financier George Peabody earmarked his money for "intellectual, moral, and industrial education" throughout the South. Peabody's giving, which Wilson pointedly praised, inspired other substantial philanthropic efforts among contemporaries in Baltimore, including Johns Hopkins and fellow New Englander, Enoch Pratt, and eventually even interested Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller in promoting the "usefulness" of the South's poor children.²¹³ Peabody, who moved from his hometown in Massachusetts to begin his career in finance in Baltimore and eventually settled in London before hostilities opened, traveled extensively in the South, as did his associates, and cultivated personal relationships with the South's governing elite that allowed him to influence legislation and assuage their fears about

²¹² Wilson, "New Departure, 119.

²¹³ Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 110, 115.

public schooling.²¹⁴

Northern philanthropists allayed Southern whites' apprehensions by minimizing the presumed evils of black suffrage, and instead indicated that through engagement in the project of universal education, local communities might direct public schools to be "purely practical," and could, Sears explained,

qualify [Freedmen] for their new condition by giving them intelligence enough to be their own masters. Freedom of itself does not make one an intelligent and useful citizen. This question of labor can never be properly adjusted with an ignorant people of blind impulses.²¹⁵

In other words, Sears suggested that with just enough education blacks might be trained out of what racist whites perceived as impulsivity and unreliability and reformed into useful workers. Northern philanthropists and Southern entrepreneurs thus found common ground in using industrial education to affirm blacks' subordinate position in the South. Beyond a school curriculum that emphasized hard labor over intellectual pursuits, they placed particular emphasis on developing curricula for normal schools that trained black teachers to propagate the industrial education model they preferred.²¹⁶

Revolution and Counterrevolution

Due to an array of contingencies through the final decade of the twentieth century, black school reformers experienced successes and reverses, first in securing educational opportunities and moving toward school integration and then in influencing curricular design. Because of white Southerners' hostility to public schools, especially ones that served black students, the

²¹⁴ Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, 112.

²¹⁵ Barnas Sears, "Objections to Public Schools Considered: Remarks at the Annual Meeting of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund." New York, Oct. 7, 1875 (Boston: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1875), 28.

²¹⁶ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 245, 1101-111, 114.

federal government's coercive capacities materially affected school access and integration. As a result, black school reformers' influence attenuated after the surrender of the Confederacy and through the height of Ku Klux Klan militancy, as whites redirected their war efforts to mount campaigns to undermine the changes blacks initiated during the war. Between Congress's adoption of the Ku Klux Klan Act in 1871 and the establishment of Redeemer governance, black school reformers recovered some of their influence. After 1877, however, Democratic state legislators and philanthropists gained greater influence over schools' accessibility and curricular designs. As long as the black community retained some measure of political influence, particularly as Democrats, Republicans, and eventually Populists competed for seats in state legislatures, advocates could at least protect their claim to public school funds. But as Democratic partisans gained firmer control of state legislatures, and then cut back monies allotted to public schools and moved to disenfranchise blacks, black communities had few avenues to pursue in protecting their ideal of egalitarian schooling.

Virtually as soon as the Army of Northern Virginia dispersed following Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, white Southerners' "insurgency to undermine the army's rule" commenced.²¹⁷ One of their chief objectives was to check the black community's wartime moves to gain educational opportunities in contraband camps, in the military, and at missionary schools. Reforms initiated by the earliest post-war governments in 1865, which were sympathetic to the Confederacy, seemed calculated to persuade President Andrew Johnson to adopt a lenient approach to reconstituting the Union. The proposed constitutions made public schooling far more accessible for whites, while explicitly excluding blacks.²¹⁸ Although Republicans quickly wrested control of Reconstruction from Johnson, their initial efforts to check white Southerners'

²¹⁷ Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 9.

²¹⁸ Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 45.

legislative machinations to exclude blacks from public schools provoked physical resistance: months before Congress expanded the mission of the Freedmen’s Bureau to “furnish such protection as might be required for the safe conduct of schools,” Armstrong, from his post in Virginia, asserted that if the federal government was to “[t]ake us away and the Negroes might as well all be hanged at once.”²¹⁹

Even as Republicans established the expectation that all Reconstructed states would make provisions for expanding public education to black and white children, created the Bureau of Education, and funded the Freedmen’s Bureau so as to give schools “a more enlarged and permanent character,” black and white teachers and school boosters, whose “efforts were regarded with disfavor by their southern white neighbors,” more regularly became the targets of white supremacists’ acts of violence.²²⁰ For example, a Barnwell County court clerk shot a fellow South Carolinian and Confederate veteran who was running as a Republican for a post as the county school commissioner in 1868 because as a “native Unionist” the candidate was “especially obnoxious to the Rebel element.”²²¹ Far more often, white supremacists terrorized Southern black teachers who embraced their work as a political act.²²² One teacher who eventually went to Hampton for additional training recalled that while he was in North Carolina, Ku Klux Klan members threatened him and another black school advocate:

[The KKK] determined to break the school up, and put up a notice that I had to ‘stop teaching that nigger school, and let them niggers go to work,’ else they would hang me to a limb, and kill Johnson and bury him in the school-yard ground. Johnson was a colored man who had influence over the colored people, and did all he could to have their schools to continue, as I did myself. . . . They were opposed to me on the account of my being a teacher and instructing my

²¹⁹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 169; U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, “Bureau of Freedmen and Refugees,” 24; quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 141.

²²⁰ U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, “Bureau of Freedmen and Refugees,” 24; quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 155-156.

²²¹ Quoted in Grant, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 582-583.

²²² Williams, *Self-Taught*, 97, 103, 106, 125.

people.”²²³

White supremacists’ involvement in lynching teachers and burning school-houses, among countless other acts of violence perpetrated in the South, finally prompted Congress to take more dramatic action to subdue the Ku Klux Klan with the 1871 legislation and the deployment of federal troops to South Carolina to root out the Klan the following year.²²⁴

With white supremacists’ campaign of terror neutralized by the passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act some black school reformers shifted their focus from opening new schools to promoting school integration. Within the black community, many advocates wanted integrated schools as a means of securing political equality and social equity, but a significant minority wanted segregated schools where black children would not encounter whites’ prejudices. Still, in South Carolina and Louisiana, where blacks constituted a majority of the states’ populations in 1870, and where a community of free blacks predated the Civil War, blacks temporarily secured provisions for integrated schools in the 1870s.²²⁵ Although Southern Democrats initially shied away from explicitly endorsing segregated schooling because they assumed the Fourteenth Amendment would prohibit separate facilities, the 1873 *Slaughter-House Cases* ruling emboldened white segregationists.²²⁶ By issuing a very narrowly tailored interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s applications, the Supreme Court affirmed states’ considerable authority to determine the privileges and immunities of their citizens; segregationists interpreted the decision as a signal that the federal government would not impede state legislatures’ programs for public education.

²²³ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 106.

²²⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 454-458.

²²⁵ Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 108-111; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 279; Colored, 1870. *Social Explorer*, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/6f4cdab7a0/explore> (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau; accessed March 9, 2017).

²²⁶ Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 110.

Congressional Republicans' failed bid to secure integrated schools in the 1874 Supplemental Civil Rights Bill further diminished the prospects for integrated schooling, especially in the South, where already "the feeling against mixed schools is so strong that [blacks] are shut out from all Southern collegiate institutions, and consequently are able to get no professional training except in schools established...especially for them."²²⁷ The vast majority of Southern whites opposed integrated primary schools, and although some poorer whites welcomed any public schooling as a means of alleviating their own educational disadvantages, after 1874 whites' insistence on segregated schools and the additional expense incurred because of the duplication of institutions, personnel, and curricular materials effectively undermined the whole project of universal education.

Conservatives and Southern Democrats especially used the issue of integration to undermine school reform projects. Partisans maintained that since even most Northern public schools remained segregated the federal government might extend financial support to Southern schools, but it had no legitimate grounds on which to try to influence schools' organization and operation. William Ruffner, Virginia's Superintendent of Public Instruction, for instance, declared in 1873 that:

I do not desire the national government to go to school-teaching, but I do desire to see these Southern States furnished with the means of educating the children of the freedmen. ... In order to do it properly, [Virginia] must have large aid. And this is true of every Southern State.²²⁸

Once Reconstruction concluded, Democratic assertions of state legislatures' prerogative in setting school policy translated into the adoption of reforms that started to dismantle public schooling in the South. In 1878, for example, South Carolina's Democrat-controlled legislature reallocated school funding based on attendance, which reduced funds for blacks' schools since

²²⁷ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 52.

²²⁸ Quoted in Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 162-163.

poverty prevented many blacks from attending regularly.²²⁹ The success of South Carolina's policy encouraged further legislative efforts to limit blacks' access to schools in the state and elsewhere in the South.

Despite the setbacks black school boosters faced, in the late 1880s, white Southerners' inchoate commitment to developing more schools for white children seemed to constitute a tacit recognition of the ways in which blacks' demands for schooling and rapid progress toward literacy enhanced blacks' standing in the community. More farmers, particularly whites who were previously ambivalent about schooling sought to avoid the degrading ignorance that they associated with slavery. Farmers joined the ranks of school reformers in the South and West as they sensed that business training and exposure to scientific farming techniques might help them advance economically.²³⁰ Most members of the Farmers' Alliance divulged their concern about the possibility of blacks subverting the racial caste system through their insistence that whites should not be taxed to fund black schools.²³¹ A few leaders of the nascent Populist Party, however, reassured party members that offering a small measure of support for blacks' education, namely for industrial education, promised white farmers certain advantages.²³²

Campaigning on behalf of the newly-established Populist Party in Georgia, Tom Watson tried to persuade white Southerners that the advantages of promoting black education were three-fold: managing blacks' education would neutralize the danger of black suffrage by allowing whites to mold blacks' political thinking, placate Northern activists alarmed by the growing evidence of blacks' oppression in the South, and allow whites to constrain black' economic advancement. Specifically, he proposed:

²²⁹ Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 213.

²³⁰ Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 58.

²³¹ Postel, *The Populist Vision*, 60-62.

²³² C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1938), 221.

Every colored voter will be thereafter a subject of industrial education and political teaching...Why should the colored man always be taught that the white man of his neighborhood hates him, while a Northern man, who taxes every rag on his back, loves him? Why should not my tenant come to regard me as his friend rather than the manufacturer who plunders us both? ...Why should we always allow Northern and Eastern Democrats to enslave us forever by threats of the Force Bill?²³³

Watson emphatically clarified that with respect to blacks' advancement through educational attainment, "The question of social equality does not enter into the calculation at all."²³⁴

Although Georgia's Populists enjoyed only fleeting success and public funding for black schools continued to dwindle, Watson's endorsement of industrial education reflected white Southerners' growing conviction that "enforced labor being no longer to be had, the future of the South depended upon the speedy creation of a class of skilled and willing laborers, and that such laborers were to be found mainly in the vast army of unemployed freed men and women."²³⁵

Curricular Alternatives: Classical or Industrial Education

Even as black communities fought for access to public schools and to integrate them, a secondary challenge developed as school reformers debated whether classical or industrial education was most suitable for black students. Although the debate principally centered on curricular models for professional institutions, because those schools offered teacher preparation programs, the debate had profound implications even for blacks' primary education. Black communities and a few Northern missionaries, generally favored a classical academic curriculum so that black students would be taught the same subjects as white common school students.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Thomas E. Watson, "The Negro Question in the South (October 1892)," in *A Populist Reader: Selections from the Works of American Populist Leaders*, ed. George Brown Tindall (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 118–28.

²³⁵ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 27.

Duplicating the common school curriculum, proponents thought, would equip blacks to pursue the same occupations as whites did to advance economically, politically, and socially. Schools like Howard, Fisk, and Atlanta, with programs that offered training for ministers, teachers, lawyers, physicians, and other professionals, embodied the pinnacles of classical education for blacks. On the other hand, most white reformers and a conservative black minority felt that “between the university and no school there was a middle course in which lay the hope of the race” and their vision of industrial training ultimately offered a curricular scheme that Southern whites could stomach.²³⁶

Armstrong, and later Washington, served as the public faces of conservative black schooling, which featured three central elements: manual labor, basic teacher preparation, and social discipline.²³⁷ For his part, Armstrong felt and shared in his “First Annual Report for Hampton,” issued in 1870, that blacks’ pursuit of classical education was pointless: “Our students could never become advanced enough in [three years] to be more than superficially acquainted with Latin and Greek; their knowledge would rather tend to cultivate their conceit than to fit them for faithful educators of their race.”²³⁸ At the same time, he conceded that students who really wanted a classical education might enroll at Howard. And indeed, many black students really wanted a classical education. Characterizing the sentiment that prevailed in 1875, Washington dismissively observed, “There was a . . . feeling that a knowledge, however little, of the Greek and Latin languages would make one a very superior human being, something bordering almost on the supernatural.”²³⁹ Even as the black community persisted in aspiring to a classical education, however, Armstrong’s appeals to influential backers for their support of

²³⁶ Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 151; see also Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 123.

²³⁷ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 33, 49.

²³⁸ Armstrong, *Education for Life*, 50-51.

²³⁹ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 89.

industrial education began paying dividends. Having secured financial support from the prestigious Peabody Fund, Armstrong also managed to attract public endorsements. Barnas Sears, in his capacity as the coordinator of the Peabody Fund, affirmed in 1875 that, “we must educate the mass of the people up to that point of intelligence which will render the skilful practice of all the industrial arts possible.”²⁴⁰ Although Horace Mann could never bring himself to endorse integrated schooling publicly, his successor’s endorsement of the notion that some students only needed a limited amount of education signaled that a remarkable shift in northern school reformers’ objectives was underway.

In time, manual labor became the most significant component in Hampton’s curriculum and at other schools that repudiated classical education. While Armstrong initially maintained that, “the poverty of these pupils has required the introduction of manual labor,” he later asserted that he always intended for manual labor to serve as a curricular cornerstone: “the manual labor schools for boys at Lahaina, Waimea, and Hilo. . . . These schools, over which my father as Minister of Education had for fifteen years a general oversight, suggested the plan of the Hampton School.”²⁴¹ Whether Armstrong’s resort to manual labor was incidental or integral, by the time Washington arrived at the school in 1872, his admissions interview consisted of an order from the head teacher to the effect that, “The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it.” She followed the order with the minute inspection his work: “When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, ‘I guess you will do to enter this institution.’”²⁴² Hampton so completely instilled a value for manual labor in Washington that in his 1901 autobiography he announced: “I

²⁴⁰ Sears, “Objections to Public Schools Considered,” 29.

²⁴¹ Armstrong, *Education for Life*, 45; Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Lessons from The Hawaiian Islands*, 1884, 212-213.

²⁴² Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 52-53.

have had no patience with any school for my race in the South which did not teach its students the dignity of labor.”²⁴³ Yet Washington also indicated that when he attended Hampton, at a time when blacks still wielded political influence and could count on the federal government to temper Southern whites’ opposition to black schools, Armstrong had not fully developed the manual labor emphasis in his curriculum. By the time Washington returned to teach at Hampton in 1879, however:

I found that during my absence from Hampton the institute each year had been getting closer to the real needs and conditions of our people; that the industrial teaching, as well as that of the academic department, had greatly improved. ... [E]very improvement was made under the magnificent leadership of General Armstrong solely with the view of meeting and helping the needs of our people as they presented themselves at the time.²⁴⁴

For Armstrong, the surest way of meeting the needs of blacks centered on preparing black teachers to model behaviors that would uplift other members of community.

Armstrong, who landed at the Freedmen’s Bureau after he finished his Civil War service, founded the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1868 as an attempt to try “to solve the problem of an education best suited to the needs of the poorer classes of the South, by sending out to them teachers of moral strength as well as mental culture.”²⁴⁵ He believed that one of the best ways to instill moral strength and mental culture was to accustom teacher candidates to grueling physical exertion and manual labor. Teachers could most effectively instill a value for manual labor if they modeled it. He reasoned, “the surest way to convince [blacks] of their own capacity for the duties imposed upon them by freedom was to show them members of their own race trained to self-respect, industry, and real practical virtue.”²⁴⁶ In other words, Armstrong proposed that teachers should lead blacks to accept that emancipation demanded that blacks earn

²⁴³ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 14.

²⁴⁴ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 95.

²⁴⁵ Armstrong, *Education for Life*, 45.

²⁴⁶ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 23.

a living through hard work.

The final element of Armstrong's curriculum at Hampton focused on instilling social discipline, particularly in service of cultivating black subservience. Washington also expounded on the tenet of social discipline; at Hampton he learned, he said:

that it was not a disgrace to labour, but learned to love labour...[for] labour's own sake and for the independence and self-reliance which the ability to do something which the world wants done brings. At that institution I got my first taste of what it meant to live a life of unselfishness, my first knowledge of the fact that the happiest individuals are those who do the most to make others useful and happy.²⁴⁷

In teaching black students that the highest satisfaction they should aspire to was the satisfaction of physically laboring to suit others needs and desires, Armstrong sought to minimize white Southerners' concerns about the prospect of his students upsetting the South's customary social, political, and economic order. As Washington recalled of Armstrong, "he was constantly seeking to find ways by which he could be of service to the Southern whites."²⁴⁸ Armstrong spent a considerable portion of his career as the superintendent at Hampton striving to persuade white Southerners to offer their tacit support for Hampton and other industrial schools.

To a certain extent, Armstrong's exotic upbringing seemed to aid his efforts to ingratiate himself with Southern elites; his daughter Edith certainly believed so. As she explained in the critically-acclaimed biography she wrote about her father, despite his service in the Union army and the Freedmen's Bureau, "Southerners could respect, if they could not love" Armstrong. As "an official with semi-foreign antecedents...he was never troubled by the intense and burning local antagonism to his work which made the situation of many of his fellow-workers almost intolerable."²⁴⁹ Sectional neutrality aside, it seems more probable that Armstrong's exotic

²⁴⁷ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 73-74.

²⁴⁸ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 56.

²⁴⁹ Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 151.

antecedents endeared him to white Southerners, because of the way his childhood evidently sparked in him a segregationist outlook that was highly compatible with Southern whites' conviction of their racial superiority. Armstrong marveled when he first arrived in Virginia with the Freedmen's Bureau that blacks and whites "had been brought up together, often in the most intimate way, from childhood; [it was] a surprise to me, for on missionary ground parents—with the spirit of martyrs—take every pains to prevent contact of their children with the natives around them."²⁵⁰ So Armstrong absorbed his pious, Northern, Presbyterian parents' racism and his sense of blacks' inferiority consistently affected his judgment of Hampton students and his assessment of his life mission.

As much as Armstrong's childhood predisposed him to organize Hampton in sympathy with white Southerners' racism, his deportment as the superintendent was calculated to secure the "steady liberality of Northern friends, and the generosity of Virginia."²⁵¹ Beyond Armstrong's publicly professed confidence in his students' inequality, the martial order he imposed at Hampton likely thawed the resistance of white Southerners, who had long relied on physical force to subdue blacks and who had a penchant for military-style schooling. At Hampton, "Through all discipline ran [Armstrong's] firm military methods; he was severe toward an offense" and, when addressing students in the auditorium, he "appeared like a general taking command of his little army, an army organized to fight vice and ignorance."²⁵² It seems Armstrong also discovered a certain utility in mimicking the political assertions of white Southerners. Having heard Virginia's superintendent of public instruction argue that the federal government should pay for blacks' public education without interfering in state's management of public schools, Armstrong too later insisted that "wise and legitimate means can be found for

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 143.

²⁵¹ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 26.

²⁵² Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 188-189.

using national aid against that worst enemy of republics, an ignorant population.”²⁵³ Armstrong further seemed to derive Hampton’s commitment to preparing students for a progressively narrower set of “duties of freedom” from the superintendent’s insistence that “the negroes have *duties as well as rights*.”²⁵⁴ As indicated by Armstrong’s insistence that his students should experience hard work, up to ten hours each day, he prioritized preparing students for their duty to labor for a living over preparing them to assert their rights.

In sharp contrast to most antebellum school reformers, Armstrong never evinced any particular zeal for preparing his students for lives as citizens with rights and civic responsibilities. As he professed when the future of the Freedmen’s Bureau and his position there looked less and less secure, he merely determined to “stick to the darkies while there is anything to be done for them.”²⁵⁵ From the beginning, his resolution hardly indicated a loyalty or devotion to the cause of advancing Freedmen’s prospects; Armstrong was far more concerned with his own prospects. He spurned an offer extended by Oliver Otis Howard to serve as the president of Howard University in 1867, where he would have been tasked with oversight of the school’s classical curriculum. Instead, Armstrong scrambled to open Hampton and push his competing vision of industrial education. He boasted to his mother in 1868 that “My machine has just commenced to run,”²⁵⁶ and the school was always more about the profit it might bring him than any benefit it might afford black students. After including a working farm in his plan for the school, and adding facilities where students made the very bricks used to construct school facilities, he calculated “to wait till another year's results are in and when, if successful, I shall have mastered a highly profitable business, will know all about it, and of course be able to do a

²⁵³ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 271.

²⁵⁴ Emphasis in original; quoted in Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 162-163.

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 152.

²⁵⁶ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 167.

second time what I have done once.” As Armstrong’s neo-plantation took shape, his personal ambitions expanded with the school.

Hampton’s success was important to Armstrong for financial as well as political reasons. He aspired to be “known as a landowner” because owning land would “make my position socially far more pleasant and dignified and my political chances greatly improved.”²⁵⁷ As late as 1874 when the prospects for industrial education remained far from certain, Armstrong persisted in self-promotion. Of his enterprise at Hampton, he bragged in a letter to a college classmate:

I have a remarkable machine for the elevation of our colored brethren on which I mean to take out a patent. Put in a raw plantation darky and he comes out a gentleman of the nineteenth century. Our problem is how to skip three centuries in the line of development.²⁵⁸

Armstrong was hardly the only school reformer in the South who calculated ways to secure personal advantages through the creation of schools for blacks. Some planters also built schools on their own land in order to entice field hands to work where their children had convenient access to instruction.²⁵⁹

At the outset, Armstrong publicly affected a small degree of concern for the welfare of the subjects of his educational experiment, but the longer he stayed in the South, the more his attitude mirrored the openly racist views of white Southern elites. When Armstrong first commanded the black soldiers in the Civil War he observed, “There was, as there has been ever since, more in [the black soldier] than we expected to find and more than his old masters ever dreamed of.”²⁶⁰ But shortly after he arrived at his post with the Freedmen’s Bureau based at the site of a wartime contraband camp, Armstrong’s estimation of black shifted. “Freedmen as a class are destitute of ambition,” he griped. Condemning blacks as “supremely stupid,” he latched

²⁵⁷ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 169-170.

²⁵⁸ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 230.

²⁵⁹ Williams, *Self-Taught*, 178, 180, 182, 195.

²⁶⁰ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 20.

onto education as a remedy, saying, “The education of the freedmen is the great work of the day; it is their only hope, the only power that can lift them up as a people, and I think every encouragement should be given to schools established for their benefit.”²⁶¹ As late as 1878, when Armstrong still believed that “The talk of disfranchisement is idle,” one of the chief benefits schools like his machine afforded blacks was in preparing the community to exercise suffrage, albeit in ways that would not disrupt Southern order as Reconstruction had.²⁶² Since Armstrong’s public rationales for his school were pitched to the prevailing political climate, he sought to appeal to blacks and whites through Reconstruction. With the transition to Redeemer governance, however, he more openly suggested to whites the ways in which Hampton could influence black voters.

Blacks’ political ignorance troubled Armstrong less as blacks lost political rights. He concluded that “difficulty of character is the chief difficulty” but, still looking out for his own interests, asserted schools like Hampton could remedy that defect.²⁶³ Two decades after Hampton first opened, Armstrong rationalized that “Negroes are less devoted than formerly to politics.... The hope for them lies in the good management of landholders and employers of every kind and in the lifting influences of a practical Christian education. ... The Negroes just now need light more than rights.”²⁶⁴ Refusing to admit his enterprise at Hampton had outlived its usefulness, Armstrong rewrote its benefit to the South. Hampton no longer ostensibly benefitted blacks by uplifting them or preparing them for civic participation. By the 1880s Hampton seemingly benefitted landowners and employers of every kind. Armstrong’s assertions of the utility of black education shifted over the course of his superintendency largely because, as Robert C. Ogden, a

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 262.

²⁶³ Armstrong, *Lessons from The Hawaiian Islands*, 213.

²⁶⁴ Quoted in Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 262-263.

long-time family friend of Armstrong's and an executive in the nascent department store business in New York, eulogized Armstrong in 1894, "His official action with men was guided entirely by their possibilities of usefulness as he understood them."²⁶⁵ In essence, while Armstrong recognized "the value and necessity of practical training of the whole life" for blacks, his sense of their possibilities of usefulness, both to himself and in Southern society, changed as blacks' economic, political, and social prospects changed.

As Washington's commentary about Hampton's increasing emphasis on manual labor hinted, when Armstrong's assessment of blacks' usefulness changed, so did Hampton's curriculum. While consistently holding to the maxim that "Education of the heathen, and of all backward races, must be of the head, the hands, and the heart, a judicious proportion being always maintained," Armstrong adjusted the proportion of Hampton's curriculum to accord with the prevailing political climate.²⁶⁶ Particularly after Reconstruction, Armstrong realized that the safest way to maintain the support of white Southerners was to accede to their general feeling that "the bulk of the Negroes were unfit for any form of industrial work other than farming, [so] they must be placed in a school on a farm where they could plow and plant as they were used to doing" and he adjusted Hampton's curriculum to increasingly emphasize education of the hands.²⁶⁷ In doing so, Armstrong discovered that Hampton's industrial education program elicited "from many of the best citizens of Hampton, ...friendly visits and frequent words of encouragement and good-will."²⁶⁸ Just as critically, Armstrong imparted his philosophy and methodology so effectively to Washington that at Tuskegee he declared that he "wanted to be careful not to educate our students out of sympathy with agricultural life, so that they would be

²⁶⁵ Robert Curtis Ogden, "Samuel Chapman Armstrong; A Sketch by Robert C. Ogden" (Fleming H. Revell Company, January 28, 1894), 17.

²⁶⁶ Armstrong, *Lessons from The Hawaiian Islands*, 223, 217.

²⁶⁷ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 158-159.

²⁶⁸ Armstrong and Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students*, 31.

attracted from the country to the cities, and yield to the temptation of trying to live by their wits.”²⁶⁹

Perhaps the single most critical development in securing Armstrong’s legacy and in propagating his system of industrial education, was the support evinced by Washington, the stand-out pupil who came to be a walking, talking, testimonial for Hampton’s utility “in the working out of the whole Southern problem.”²⁷⁰ Washington candidly attributed his conceptualization of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to Armstrong’s influence. Although he did take credit for “the night-school idea, with which... I had to do both at Hampton and Tuskegee,” Washington otherwise credited Armstrong almost entirely for the model at Tuskegee, where he felt “something must be done more than merely to imitate New England education as it then existed. I saw more clearly than ever the wisdom of the system which General Armstrong had inaugurated at Hampton.”²⁷¹ Stuck between the proverbial rock and hard place in trying to attract sufficient support for his work at Tuskegee, Washington saw few alternatives to publicly flattering Armstrong and Hampton, and promoting industrial education, even as he privately entertained a more egalitarian hopes for blacks’ advancement.²⁷²

Washington understood, as Armstrong did, the importance of publicity in securing support for his institution. Like Armstrong, who solicited philanthropists for donations and took choirs of students on publicity tours to perform plantation songs for Northern audiences, Washington acknowledged that he was “compelled to spend a large proportion of my time away from the school, in an effort to secure money.”²⁷³ Washington too, grasped that political support

²⁶⁹ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 127.

²⁷⁰ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 179.

²⁷¹ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 30-31, 108-110.

²⁷² Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 277.

²⁷³ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 56, 180.

was just as significant as financial backing. Where Armstrong courted whites almost exclusively after Reconstruction, however, Washington also initiated a campaign to win over the black community's support for industrial education. He invited, for example, the editors of the Philadelphia-based *Christian Recorder* to visit Tuskegee. After their visit, the paper published a glowing and influential account: "This is the system of education that is bound to win in a Republic like ours where, between the servant class and master class, there must be a continual change of places year by year, regulated by the variations of fortune, the development of intellect, the exercise of genius and stability of morals."²⁷⁴ For a while, Washington managed to convince black visitors that his efforts at Tuskegee would allow for a change of places between the master class and the servant class even as he persuaded whites that their place in the South's hierarchy was secure.

Washington clearly understood that Hampton's and Tuskegee's success rested on building a coalition of support for industrial education, even as he recognized not all supporters wielded equal political or financial influence. Convinced that white support was absolutely essential to his project since he calculated that the black community was too impoverished and too politically marginalized to support an institution like Tuskegee, when Washington took to the stage at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition, he made certain to acknowledge the financial support that sustained industrial education and calibrated his remarks to appeal to whites. He appreciated the "the constant help that has come to our educational life...from the Southern states," but even more particularly highlighted the generosity of "Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement [to Tuskegee]."²⁷⁵ He then took pains to insure that Tuskegee might secure additional funds and the approbation of the white community

²⁷⁴ The *Christian Recorder*, "The Tuskegee Normal School," *The Christian Recorder*, December 24, 1885.

²⁷⁵ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 223.

by presenting Tuskegee as an institution where blacks might be educated without posing a threat to whites; industrial education, he promised, might solve the Southern problem, since “The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly.... The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.”²⁷⁶

Because of the black community’s declining political clout, prospects looked good for industrial education even before Washington’s address. When Armstrong died two years earlier, *The New York Times* had memorialized him, saying “Hampton is his monument, and it will be enduring, because he had so established it in the confidence of the American people that they will not let it perish.”²⁷⁷ But after Washington’s speech, he was inundated with congratulations from white elites. Southern politicians swarmed him at the Exposition offering their congratulations, newspapers from coast to coast reported favorably on the address, and even President Grover Cleveland drafted an open letter praising Washington. Cleveland enthused, “Your words cannot fail to delight and encourage all who wish well for your race; and if your colored fellow-citizens do not from your utterances gather new hope and form new determinations to gain every valuable advantage offered them by their citizenship, it will be strange indeed.”²⁷⁸

In spite of inherent dangers, Washington continued “ingeniously playing the racial game,” and Northern philanthropists demonstrated their satisfaction with industrial education at Hampton and Tuskegee with burgeoning commitments for financial support.²⁷⁹ The Peabody Fund initially offered Hampton and Tuskegee hundreds of dollars annually, and hundreds of

²⁷⁶ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 223-224.

²⁷⁷ The New York Times, “Editorial Article 1 -- No Title,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 1893.

²⁷⁸ Grover Cleveland, “Cleveland to Washington.: The President Writes to the Eloquent Alabamian,” *The Washington Post*, October 16, 1895.

²⁷⁹ Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 283-284.

other citizens offered donations too, but after Atlanta the schools attracted donations of tens of thousands of dollars from the likes of Andrew Carnegie and Collis P. Huntington, and eventually, in 1923 each school secured endowments of half a million dollars from the Rockefeller Foundation.²⁸⁰ By the 1930s, “Industrial education, as symbolized by Hampton and Tuskegee, had all but monopolized the field. Atlanta, Fisk, and Howard were thriving as a root out of dry ground and living at a poor, dying rate.”²⁸¹ In a desperate bid to save Howard, the president conceded to the construction of an industrial department there too.

The black community was far less enthusiastic. As early as 1890, some blacks openly criticized Washington for his aggressive salesmanship of industrial education. After Washington publicly berated black clergy as lazy, for example, some blacks viewed his criticism as an attempt to curry favor with whites, and protested that, “We cannot see the necessity of publishing the shortcomings of the ministry for the purpose of securing money for a school that does not train ministers.”²⁸² Criticisms lodged against Washington evinced far more passion after Atlanta:

[T]he best thing Mr. Washington can do is to stick close to Tuskegee. He is better prepared to turn out farmers, shoe makers, carpenters, cooks and seamstresses than he is for anything else. The trouble with the average would-be Negro leader, he is always ready to sneeze when the Negro-hating white man, through his newspaper, takes snuff. All this talk about industrial opportunities for the Negro is rot to so far as the South is concerned.²⁸³

Despite Washington’s prominence, a majority of blacks rejected the industrial education model and resented reconciliationists’ persistence in pushing the Hampton ideal.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 223-224. 188-190; *The New York Times*, “Started Negro Education; Now His Work Flourishes: General S.C. Armstrong Saw Freedman’s Need and Founded Hampton Institute, Which Is Soon to Receive Rockefeller Endowment,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 1924; see also Louis R. Harlan, “The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue in Public Education,” *The Journal of Southern History* 23, no. 2 (May 1957): 189–202.

²⁸¹ Walter Dyson, *Howard University, the Capstone of Negro Education: A History, 1867-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Graduate School, Howard University, 1941), 169.

²⁸² The Christian Recorder, “Bishop Payne and I,” *The Christian Recorder*, December 4, 1890.

²⁸³ C.H.J. Taylor, “We Only Want Our Rights as Citizens,” *The Christian Recorder*, December 19, 1895.

²⁸⁴ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 68.

The Working out of the Whole Southern Problem

Immediately after emancipation it seemed nearly certain that blacks would gain equal access to public schools because of their activism, Northerners' approbation, and because even some poor Southern whites wanted public schools and some planters were willing to offer schooling to entice black laborers to remain near their fields. In seemingly Newtonian fashion, however, white majorities reacted against blacks' educational aspirations and blacks' options for public schooling receded as more whites reasserted their long-held belief that black education posed a real threat to Southern order. With the Ku Klux Klan ostensibly reeled in after 1871, however, many black education projects resumed. Given the challenges of securing funds among constituencies hostile to raising taxes for public services, of countering Democrats' legislative maneuvers to divert money to white schools and enlisting poor whites as fellow school reformers, blacks hoped to tap into Northern largesse.²⁸⁵ When "Redeemer" governments circumscribed black educational opportunities, black suffrage temporarily forestalled the conservative effort to eliminate universal schooling altogether. But the erosion of black political influence, accomplished largely through fraudulent electioneering, changed the dynamics in school reform.

With fewer public schools available to satisfy blacks' demands for educational opportunities, the contest to determine whether classical or industrial education best suited blacks assumed critical importance: would teachers in the dwindling number of black schools train young blacks to aspire to economic, political, and social equality or accept lives of service to whites? Numerous contingencies affected the resolution of the differences among the opposing proponents of classical and industrial education during the time that elapsed between Hampton's founding and the Atlanta Exposition. Armstrong's decision to forgo his opportunity

²⁸⁵ Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 148-149, 170.

to oversee Howard and instead introduce industrial education after the Hawaiian missionary model at Hampton, for example, helped demarcate the two lines of curricular ideology.

Washington's enthusiastic embrace of industrial education and his efforts to persuade wary blacks and whites of the utility of industrial education proved decisive in eliciting Southerners' acceptance of it. Another fortuitous development, however, occurred in 1878, when Armstrong extended his school's mission to include Indian students and "the coming of the Indians also brought the institute into closer relations with its Southern neighbors, who had a sympathy with the Indian they could not summon for the Negro."²⁸⁶ By including Indian students at Hampton, Armstrong not only deflected Southern whites' concerns about his school at a time when their opposition to black schooling was otherwise resurgent, but also demonstrated the efficacy of industrial education in civilizing other races.

Increasingly, proponents of Southern school reform, from Northern philanthropists to Populists, united in their willingness to support industrial education endeavors that accomplished the nearest approximation of antebellum economic, political, and social order possible under a Constitution that repudiated slavery. The work of Armstrong and Washington proved instrumental in accomplishing Southern whites' capitulation to Northern and black demands for schools, though on terms entirely different from the ones outlined by common school idealists. Desperate to make his way in the world and make a name for himself, Armstrong piloted the first experiment in industrial education at Hampton and made a success of the venture by currying favor with Southern whites and deep-pocketed Northern entrepreneurs. Armstrong persistently reassured his school's benefactors that his brand of education would never permit blacks to overthrow white supremacy and would only secure a steady supply of compliant laborers. In 1895 Armstrong's protégé publicly exposed the fractures in the black community created by

²⁸⁶ Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 215.

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disagreements about whether blacks should pursue classical or industrial education, which was a subset of the larger debate about whether blacks should demand full equality immediately or gradually induce whites to accept black equality. As he channeled Armstrong in Atlanta, Washington secured the role of schools like Hampton and Tuskegee in perpetuating blacks' status as second-class citizens well into the twentieth century. Washington galvanized white support for industrial education and white school reformers' enthusiasm had far-reaching implications for schooling practices throughout the nation. The apparent success of the industrial education model buoyed white reformers' hopes that elsewhere in the nation schooling could resolve the challenges to white Protestant order posed by communities, from immigrants to Indians.

SCHOOLS AS SOLUTIONS, COERCION CONTINUED

Having settled the question of whether lands where American migrants settled would be free or slave, national expansion progressed rapidly after the Civil War and demanded that government officials reconsider their antebellum policies toward the sovereign tribes that persisted in the midst of the empire. Policy-makers generally rated the “civilization fund” of \$10,000 per year that Congress authorized in 1819 a failure. Intended to tamp down conflicts between Indians, who resented encroachments onto native lands by migrants who classed them as a savage race, and migrants themselves, the investment seemed to yield few positive outcomes and certainly fell short of white Americans’ objective of uplifting Indians. Corruption beset the work of agents stationed in outposts distant from their federal supervisors in Washington and undermined the original scheme to set Christian missionaries “of good moral character” to the task of introducing “agriculture suited to [the Indian settlements’] situation; and for teaching their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic.”²⁸⁷ Although debates over schooling for blacks and Catholics tended to divide Northern and Southern, Republican and Democratic Americans, sizable majorities agreed after the Civil War that the nation must revise the 1819 civilization plan. Hoping to ameliorate relations with Indian communities, in 1868 Congressional leaders and presidential candidate Ulysses S. Grant proposed a new plan that called for the expansion of missionary education on reservations. As the Indian Wars persisted into the 1870s, however, the government shifted tactics once again. Hoping for greater success in “subduing” Indians through Americanization in schools, the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to assume direct control of

²⁸⁷ John A. Mallory, ed., *The United States Compiled Statutes, Annotated, 1916: Embracing the Statutes of the United States of a General and Permanent Nature In Force at the Close of the First Session of the 64th Congress and Decisions Construing and Applying Same to April 1, 1916*, vol. 5, 12 vols. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1916), 4963.

schools in 1876, and by 1900 Congress appropriated \$3 million annually. Still, Indian communities, albeit in limited ways, continued to subvert government aspirations of pacifying the West by reforming Indian children.

A Solution of the Frontier Problem through [Industrial] Education

As Congress sorted through the details of Reconstruction, attempting to stamp out resurgent unrest in the South, a growing portion of Grant's daily correspondence focused on unrest in Western states and territories. For example, Episcopalian bishop Henry B. Whipple of Minnesota lamented in an 1867 letter to General Grant that the "wretched Indian system...had made them our relentless enemies and caused the death of thousands of innocent people" and vilified politically-appointed Indian agents whose pecuniary interests led Whipple to "tell of dead mens [sic] names on pay rolls, civilization funds squandered, of schools which were a sham."²⁸⁸ Grant shared the letter with Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson, whom he hoped would help promote a policy to quell violence in the West. Between 1868 and 1871, even as Congress and General-cum-President Grant worked to restore civil authority in the South, they scaled back the mission of the Freedmen's Bureau and redeployed federal resources to the West in service of Grant's Peace Policy. The policy focused on confining Indians to reservation lands, replacing politically appointed reservation agents with missionaries who were charged with renewing the program outlined in 1819, and enlisting a panel of philanthropists to collaborate with the Secretary of the Interior in overseeing the Office of Indian Affairs. As part of the effort to regroup, Grant tasked General Oliver Otis Howard who had directed the Freedmen's Bureau

²⁸⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, "Letter from Henry L. Whipple, February 5, 1867," *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, ed. John Y. Simon, vol. 17, 32 vols. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 42.

with mediating between the Apache and white settlers in Arizona. Practically at the same time as Congress enacted legislation in 1871 authorizing federal troops to subordinate Klansmen in the South, Congress's determination in the Indian Appropriations Act that Indian communities were subordinate to rather than separate from the United States allowed the federal government to integrate Indians into the nation but forced policy-makers to contend with Indians' position within the republic.

Just as Southern Reconstruction drew to a close, Grant's Peace Policy foundered. Battles from Texas to California and Arizona to Montana, with tribes including the Comanche, Kiowa, Southern Cheyenne, Arapaho, Modoc, Apache, Sioux and Nez Perce, prompted Congress and President Grant to reassess the efficacy of missionary education and turn incrementally to reassigning oversight of Indian education to officials in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Unwilling to abandon either the objectives of the original civilization fund or efforts to secure Indian communities' surrender to the reservation system, the federal government transformed schools into battlefields in the on-going Indian Wars. Boarding schools became the first line of defense. From 1876 the federal government aggressively expanded its direct oversight of Indian school operations and curricular designs in an effort to facilitate Americans' imperial objectives. In 1878 the government debuted boarding school education for Indians at Samuel Chapman Armstrong's Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, where "the Indian became the companion of the Afro-American in his study, and together they continued the objects of his life-work."²⁸⁹

Just as Catholic communities resented the efforts of state legislators and common school

²⁸⁹ Robert Curtis Ogden, "Samuel Chapman Armstrong; A Sketch by Robert C. Ogden" (Fleming H. Revell Company, January 28, 1894), 19-20; see also Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 41-42; John R. Gram, *Education at the Edge of Empire: Negotiating Pueblo Identity in New Mexico's Indian Boarding Schools* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 14.

reformers to dictate the terms of their education, Indian communities also sought to control the educational experiences of their children and resisted initiatives to force youths into the federal government's schools. There was, however, a critical difference. Only Republicans consistently regarded Catholic resistance to public schools as a threat to the social and political order; the military threat posed by Indian communities that resisted government constraint of their sovereignty elicited bipartisan support for Indian education reforms after 1876.

At the same time, the seemingly imminent extinction of America's "noble savages" alarmed white reformers, many of whom were the same Northern missionaries and philanthropists who put their stamp on black education in the South. Missionaries and Northern philanthropists who feared wholesale racial extermination urged the government to experiment with tactics they argued were more humane, and advocated increasingly invasive policies to civilize Indian children as a means of circumventing physical battlefields. As early as 1870, Iowa McGregor, for example, had appealed to Grant's Christian impulses, arguing for the integration of Indians among American families lest "in one half century all traces of the Indian will be lost," and suggested that "the children compelled to be sent to schools, and when of proper age to be apprentice to some trade or profession, suitable to their talents or preferences."²⁹⁰ Congress ultimately enacted a compulsory attendance policy for Indian students in 1891. In the intervening time, school reformers, administrators and teachers strategized in more and more explicitly racist terms about what elements of Indian culture it might be safe to perpetuate and which elements they needed to eliminate.²⁹¹ Although native peoples continue to resist white authority, the reservation school system, more than any earlier approach to Indian schooling, tempered the

²⁹⁰ Ulysses S. Grant, "Letter from McGregor, Iowa, March 17 1870," *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, ed. John Y. Simon, vol. 17, 32 vols. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 112.

²⁹¹ Jaqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation, Indigenous Education* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), xv; see also Gram, *Education at the Edge of Empire*, 5-6.

force of Indian communities' resistance to the United States' imperial consolidation.

Schools to Kill the Indian and Save the Man

In pursuing assimilation through education, the government depended on three school models; day schools located on reservations approximated common schools, but boarding schools located both on and off of reservations accommodated many more students. From the mid-1880s at least three times as many Indian children attended boarding schools as day schools.²⁹² Boarding schools, particularly ones remote from tribal communities, emerged as policy-makers' preferred tool for indoctrinating Indian children so that they would regard the government as a "friend and benefactor" because the schools effectively removed students from the influence of their families and communities. In theory, boarding school students were wholly under the control of federally-sanctioned teachers committed to reforming Indian children through industrial education and training in American Protestant-republicanism.²⁹³ Whether inside or outside the federal government, almost universally school boosters debated Indians' capacity for civilization and citizenship; very few evinced any concern for native institutions, culture, or opinions.²⁹⁴ Typically, reformers like Richard Henry Pratt qualified their confidence that education would integrate Indian communities into the nation, remarking, "...Indians, some of them, are just as good and loyal citizens as anybody."²⁹⁵ Pratt, who founded the boarding school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, publicly professed that the schools would build up "a strong and

²⁹² David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 58.

²⁹³ Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), 42-43; see also Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 335.

²⁹⁴ Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 42.

²⁹⁵ The New York Times, "A Plea for the Indians: The Interests on Their Schools Advocated," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1881.

a bright hope in the breast of the Indian. A hope that they may become white men, and follow the white man's road."²⁹⁶

Beginning in 1875, Lieutenant Pratt conducted the government's first experiment in off-reservation industrial education with a group of imprisoned Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho and Caddo warriors at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. Pratt sought to ensure that "they should be industrially trained, educated, and civilized so far as possible, so that if returned to their people they would go back as influences for good"; he induced twenty-three men to remain in the South to continue their education after the government ordered their release.²⁹⁷ Although Pratt's "[c]orrespondence with a number of agricultural and industrial schools failed to secure entrance for any of them anywhere," Pratt resented that when he finally appealed to Hampton Institute as a last resort, even Armstrong seemed "chary at first," and only admitted seventeen of the Indian men.²⁹⁸ Armstrong attributed his wariness to his black students' apprehensions. They were afraid, Armstrong claimed, of the braves. For his part, Pratt, who earlier commanded Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Sill in Oklahoma Territory, regarded Indians as racially superior to blacks, who were "condemned to live at the bottom of society."²⁹⁹ He regretted that his students had no alternative to attending Hampton and worried white prejudices toward blacks would taint their perceptions of Indians if his charges attended Hampton. Pratt evidently failed to comprehend that Hampton was the only institution willing to accept the Indian students precisely because so many whites, while they perhaps classified Indians as superior to

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Richard Henry Pratt, "American Indians, Chained and Unchained Being an Address before the Pennsylvania Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion at the Union League, Philadelphia, October 23, 1912, Entitled 'One of General Sheridan's Ways With Indians and What Came of It,' Supplemented by an Address to The Society of American Indians at Their Annual Convention, in Columbus, Ohio October 5, 1912 on 'The Solution of the Indian Problem,'" n.d., 6.

²⁹⁸ Pratt, "American Indians, Chained and Unchained," 7.

²⁹⁹ Richard Henry Pratt, quoted in Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 25.

blacks as Pratt did, ultimately regarded Indians as racial inferiors.³⁰⁰

Paradoxically, the trial year at Hampton offered affirmation for both Pratt and Armstrong. Pratt's determination to keep Indian students away from the degrading influence of blacks intensified: "I became satisfied that any general system of education for the Indians in schools away from the tribes should have the best incentives of contact with industrious white people, and not negroes."³⁰¹ Armstrong discovered that despite his initial concerns that black students would not accept their new classmates, the students adjusted well, and he subsequently welcomed the opportunity to redeem not just blacks but all "backward races" at Hampton.³⁰² He regarded the trial as an unequivocal success:

This hospitality to a few red men has resulted, not only in an increase to one hundred and nine Indians, but in the great work of Capt. Pratt at Carlisle, Pa., to which this was an essential stepping-stone; in a new and hopeful public sentiment, a fresh departure in Indian education, and in a new demonstration of the Indian's capacity, with proper opportunities, to become good citizens.³⁰³

At Hampton, the task of civilizing Indians into citizens first fell to the lot "of our colored graduates," and Armstrong doubted "if it would be possible to find elsewhere, and from another race, service so faithful, so intelligent, so conscientious, and so unassuming."³⁰⁴ Men like Booker T. Washington, who served as a "house father" to the Indian men at Hampton when he returned as a staff member in 1879, modeled the exact kind of citizenship many reformers championed for Indians.³⁰⁵ The association formed at Hampton between blacks and Indians materially affected Indian students' prospects for securing an education for citizenship, regardless of Pratt's

³⁰⁰ Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 6; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 7.

³⁰¹ Pratt, "American Indians, Chained and Unchained," 9.

³⁰² Samuel Chapman Armstrong, *Lessons from The Hawaiian Islands*, 1884, 223.

³⁰³ Samuel Chapman Armstrong, "Concerning Indians. Extracts from the Annual Report of the Principal of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, for the School Year Ending June 30th, 1883" (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, 1883), 3.

³⁰⁴ Armstrong, "Concerning Indians," 13

³⁰⁵ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1901), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/washington/washing.html#washing42>, 97-98.

insistence on Indians' superiority to blacks, because the experience convinced Pratt of the value of Armstrong's system of industrial education.³⁰⁶

For all his fastidiousness, when government officials early in the boarding school experiment "determined that at Carlisle we would not attempt even a high school education," the decision bothered Pratt little.³⁰⁷ Like most proponents of black schooling, Pratt and most other white reformers who promoted boarding schools for Indians, however humane they thought the institutions, never envisioned Indians as equals in the American political, economic, or social order. For example, in conveying the kind of training students, as prospective citizens, experienced at Carlisle, Pratt offered an account reminiscent of Washington's entrance exam at Hampton: "Prof. Lippincott...said that when a girl was sweeping if she had the love of God in her heart she would be very careful to sweep the corners."³⁰⁸ By emphasizing the manual labor that distinguished Carlisle students' education, Pratt reassured receptive audiences that Indian conquest was well in hand.

When Pratt opened his school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania's decommissioned army barracks in 1879, he emulated Armstrong's curriculum, as well as his structured, militarized management of pupils. Although Armstrong's vision of having "a class of men in the army, now that its fighting days are about over...help settle the Indian question" as teachers never transpired, both he and Pratt adopted highly regimented approaches to their students' education.³⁰⁹ An enthusiastic piece in *The New York Times* about Carlisle noted that, "Bad behavior is the exception, and insubordination is unknown."³¹⁰ Nine years later the same paper suggested why that might be so: at Hampton, "a certain guardhouse for refractory Indians was a disgrace to

³⁰⁶ Coleman, *American Indian Children at School*, 43; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 44-51.

³⁰⁷ Pratt, "American Indians, Chained and Unchained," 13-14.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ Armstrong, "Concerning Indians," 4.

³¹⁰ *The New York Times*, "Civilizing the Indians," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1889.

civilization for lack of room, of ventilation, and because of offensive odors.”³¹¹

Clinical assessments generated by school administrators minimized the boarding schools’ devastating capacities, and dwelt instead on the schools’ essential civilizing function. Hampton’s annual report for 1883, insisted that “THE HEALTH QUESTION, which threatened to be an obstacle, if not a fatal barrier to Indian education at the East, has been to a degree settled,” but acknowledged that “There have been 110 Indian students at Hampton during the year. One has died, leaving the number at present in the School 109.”³¹² School hospitals and cemeteries testified to the harsh environments at Carlisle, Hampton, and other boarding schools, but rosy publicity the schools generated offered reformers bold reassurances that “no place was so suitable [for Indian education] as Hampton, because of its industrial teaching,” and that similarly patterned boarding schools offered, “a fresh departure in Indian education,” and demonstrated “the Indians’ capacity, with proper opportunities, to become good citizens.”³¹³

Despite the evidence to the contrary, the boarding school programs convinced the government and the public that they could, through “an earnest, common-sense effort” accomplish the civilization of Indians without extensive military intervention, but officials still debated whether education should be a token gesture of appeasement or a more substantive means of integrating Indians into white society.³¹⁴ Pratt’s most substantial departure from Armstrong’s Hampton model represented the latter approach and came in the form of his insistence that Indian students should be discouraged from returning to their communities by extending their industrial education beyond the school campus. According to Pratt’s ideal, Indians should integrate with whites, so he pushed a scheme to place “the young Indians out in

³¹¹ The New York Times, “The Hampton School Case,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 1889.

³¹² Armstrong, “Concerning Indians,” 5, 18.

³¹³ Armstrong, “Concerning Indians,” 3.

³¹⁴ The New York Times, “Civilizing the Indians”; see also Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club*, 5, 27.

good families to work . . . where they might not only learn agriculture and industry at first hands, but also improve their English and the habits of civilized life by coming into personal contact with exemplary citizens.”³¹⁵ The experience, he thought, would complete the Indian students’ transformation from savages into men and women. As adept at self-promotion as Armstrong, Pratt chiefly celebrated the successes he achieved in civilizing Indian communities by breaking them down. His motto, “To civilize the Indian; get him into civilization; to keep him civilized, let him stay,” encapsulated the hope cherished by boarding school proponents that industrially educated Indians would forfeit their Indian identities to emulate whites’ morality and work ethic.³¹⁶

When Hampton expanded its educational mission to include Indian students and even more forcefully after Carlisle opened its doors, many proponents of school reform and advocates who hoped to pacify Indian communities optimistically embraced the boarding school model.

The New York Times, for example, cheered Carlisle’s opening:

From the start the school has been a success beyond Capt. Pratt’s most sanguine hopes. Only two students have died—they were both sick on their arrival—and the health average has been good. . . . The Indians in the West show a strong interest, and many tribes are watching the progress of the school, as in it are Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, Puones, Comanches, Poncas, Nez Perces, Menomenees, Sacs and Foxes, and Iowas.³¹⁷

In presenting boarding schools as a humane solution to the Indian problem, and one that Indian communities themselves purportedly welcomed, early advocates helped foster a sense among the American public that boarding schools had an important role in securing Indians’ status as civilized citizens. Personal testimonials from teachers about how boarding schools were transforming reservation communities offered the public specific insight about the efficacy of the

³¹⁵ Pratt, “American Indians, Chained and Unchained,” 9.

³¹⁶ Pratt, “American Indians, Chained and Unchained,” 15.

³¹⁷ The New York Times, “Civilizing Indian Youth: A Solution of the Frontier Problem Through Education,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 1880.

government's program. Elaine Goodale, raised in a pious Massachusetts farm family, arrived to teach at Hampton in 1883 and traveled to a Sioux reservation the following year. On the reservation, she noted the positive influence of Hampton and Carlisle students in civilizing others in the community, and in a piece circulated on Armstrong's fundraising trips in the North, she paid particular attention to how "women of the camp [wanted] to learn to make 'raised bread,' which she rated as "really an important step."³¹⁸ The publicity Hampton and Carlisle generated proved compelling, and the schools' successes convinced the government to open additional off-reservation boarding schools in Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, South Dakota, Colorado and Kansas, and even more economical boarding schools located on reservations followed an industrial education curriculum.³¹⁹ In a retrospective assessment at the close of Pratt's career at Carlisle, *The New York Times* again praised his work: "He introduced into the curriculum at Carlisle much of military method and stimulated a strong esprit de corps which took hold of the Indian nature and made the difficult work of teaching his pupils possible and practicable."³²⁰ The flattering portrait of Pratt's accomplishments testified to the extent to which boarding school boosters hoped industrial education, employing an authoritarian discipline to quash Indian children's intractability, could prepare the students to be pliant citizens gained currency.

In spite of boarding school champions' flagrantly coercive efforts to turn the institutions into factories of citizenship and civilization based on a white prototype, Indian students discovered ways to "fight back peaceably."³²¹ The asymmetrical distribution of power between whites and Indian communities usually prevented tribes from openly resisting white education

³¹⁸ Mary Frances Armstrong, ed., *Hampton Institute, 1868 to 1885. Its Work for Two Races* (Hampton, Virginia: Normal School Press, 1885), 32.

³¹⁹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 57.

³²⁰ Special to *The New York Times*, "Ousted from Indian School. Secretary Hitchcock Demanded the Removal of Gen. R. H. Pratt," *The New York Times*, June 12, 1904.

³²¹ Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 2-4.

and, as in black communities, debates about what kinds of knowledge were valuable produced factions.³²² In some communities, as among the Five Civilized Tribes living in Oklahoma territory, a majority embraced white schooling with an enthusiasm and rationale that matched blacks' conviction that literacy helped secure power. Elsewhere, majorities were more adamant in their insistence on rejecting white culture, which seemed to embody duplicity. Indian communities further west, and especially in the Southwest, were perhaps most successful in blunting the efficacy of boarding schools because of their position at the periphery of America's postbellum empire and comparative proximity to students' homes. The Albuquerque and Santa Fe Indian Schools, for example, existed in a borderlands environment where the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo muddied the definition of Pueblo citizenship to a greater extent than the Indian Appropriations Act had for other tribes. School administrators who operated with limited financial resources were unable to demonstrate the hegemony of the federal government and had to negotiate with local communities regarding school policies and practices.³²³ As agricultural and nominally Catholic communities, moreover, Pueblos impressed school personnel as being more civilized than other Indians.³²⁴ Consequently Pueblo families managed to influence the schools' climate and curriculum more than many other Indian communities.

Pueblo communities also influenced the development of boarding school in New Mexico through student resistance to and parental resentment toward the schools, the efforts of nearby Indian communities to reverse the undesirable effects of the schools during students' vacations, and the prevalence of Catholic mission schools that competed with and espoused hostility toward government schools.³²⁵ Catholics, who maintained mission schools founded as part of Spain's

³²² Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 336.

³²³ Gram, *Education at the Edge of Empire*, 9, 11, 17.

³²⁴ Gram, *Education at the Edge of Empire*, 17.

³²⁵ Gram, *Education at the Edge of Empire*, 6, 172, 173; see also Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 210, 222-223.

colonial enterprise in addition to founding new schools to accommodate growing numbers of European immigrants in the East, had the largest school system outside of state-funded public schools. Catholic communities, by dint of the Church's hierarchical and centralized structure, mounted a cohesive and well-funded campaign to resist reformers' efforts to assimilate Catholic children into Protestant culture in common schools. Although the distinctiveness of Indian communities inhibited intertribal alliances to resist federal educational initiatives, various tribes, like the Pueblos, opted to resist by seeking protection in the Catholic Church's shadow school system.

Within and beyond the Southwest, some Indian communities persisted, outside both government and Catholic schools, in maintaining some of their own educational practices and sought, to varying degrees, to exploit the limited autonomy afforded by their segregation from whites on reservation lands and to compartmentalize white schooling. Indian communities' resistance proved so effectual that when Congress deployed an appropriations committee in 1886 to evaluate the success of the reservation schools in civilizing Indians, the testimony indicated:

We made diligent inquiry across the continent on the north and across the continent on the south, and we could not find that there was one student of all the hundreds educated at Carlisle or Hampton, or in any of the schools off the reservations, but had gone back to their savage life in a very short time except a few that were employed by the Government of the United States.³²⁶

Many Indian communities selectively integrated skills and knowledge, like English literacy, if it seemed to shield their communities from further subordination.³²⁷ Perhaps the most significant and, from white reformers' perspectives, wholly unintended way in which Indians contended with the asymmetrical power dynamic of schools to define American "Indianness" was through students' development of pan-Indian relations. Indian communities' selective adoption of white

³²⁶ Samuel Chapman Armstrong, "Judging From the Results: Mr. S.C. Armstrong's Plea For a Continuing of Indian Education," *The New York Times*, March 29, 1886.

³²⁷ Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 49, 60, 66.

instruction forced administrators to wage an on-going defense of the boarding school system. As Washington keenly understood and pointed out, “no white American ever thinks that any other race is wholly civilized until he wears the white man's clothes, eats the white man's food, speaks the white man's language, and professes the white man's religion.”³²⁸

Preoccupied with Southern Reconstruction, the federal government initially made little progress in utilizing education as a tactic for resolving the Indian Wars that escalated through the 1870s. After assuming direct responsibility for Indian education in 1876, however, the government's boarding school program substantially changed the dynamic in white-Indian relations, though the results often had little to do with Indians' education. Foremost, boarding schools convinced a credulous public that the government had a humane alternative to Indian extinction and confirmed the prevailing racial hierarchy in preparing students for second-class citizenship. The schools further weakened Indian communities by estranging students from their families and promoting factions of school supporters and opponents. Boarding schools influenced students in ways white reformers failed to anticipate when students resisted assimilation, but white Americans' perceptions of the schools' utility in helping solve the “Frontier problem,” coupled with the success of segregated institutions in solving the “Southern problem,” prompted wider dependence on schooling and differentiated curriculum in America's consolidating and expanding empire.

³²⁸ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1901), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/washington/washing.html#washing42>, 98.

Education Reconstructed

The Civil War unequivocally transformed educational policies and practices in American states and territories. At least in theory, the war opened schools to four million emancipated men and women, and the war introduced sustained political debate about universal education into the federal government, intensified efforts to use schools to perpetuate a non-sectarian Protestant morality, and invited a reassessment of how schools might forestall violence between new and old inhabitants of the West. In the Civil War's immediate aftermath it was far from clear how America's fragmented communities might be reconstructed; schools, as the institutions that perhaps most clearly bore the imprint of antebellum sectionalism, proved to be a highly contested element of the reconciliation process. General Jonathan Pope, shortly before President Andrew Johnson removed the activist Kentuckian from his position as the governor of the Third Military District in 1867, perhaps best clarified the possibilities when he attested to Grant that:

The earnest and touching anxiety of the Freed people to learn cannot but awake a profound impression upon the mind of any one who has had the opportunity to observe it.—It may safely be said that the marvelous progress made in education and knowledge by these people, aided by the noble charitable contributions of Northern Societies and individuals, finds no parallel in the history of mankind.—If continued.... and the masses of White people exhibit the same indisposition to be educated that they do now, five years will have transferred intelligence and education, so far as the masses are concerned, to the Colored people of this district.—The social and political results of such a change cannot fail to be important.³²⁹

Pope, who recognized that black communities lacked the political and fiscal resources to sustain schools on their own and therefore looked to charity to sustain their educational projects also anticipated the ways in which Southern elites would exert themselves to channel funding into school projects that obstructed blacks' ambitions.

With men like General Pope, who welcomed "this most desirable progress of the colored

³²⁹ Ulysses S. Grant, "Letter from Jonathan Pope, July 27, 1867," *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, ed. John Y. Simon, vol. 17, 32 vols. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 261.

race” in the minority, the North’s military victory, while it extended Northern influence into the South and West, hardly secured the Union the means to advance a uniform project of universal education. The Civil War settled the great questions of slavery and federal supremacy, but it did little to solve the underlying problem of race. Through national reconfiguration, then, racism ultimately translated into educational policies and practices that deviated significantly from the leveling rhetoric forwarded by Northern common school reformers and perpetuated slavery’s legacy in diminishing the instruction of the people. Greater Reconstruction introduced various classes of schools and curricula that sought to perpetuate white Protestant supremacy, just as Northern and Southern policy-makers strove to do from the moment John Brinsley mapped out his plan to educate the “ruder sorts.” But in the absence of Constitutional sanction for racial castes, white reformers’ experiment with industrial education for blacks and their duplication of that approach for Indian education offered a model for how school segregation and curricular differentiation might be implemented throughout the nation and thereby perpetuate antebellum hierarchies into the twentieth century. Elite school reformers’ acceptance of school segregation and industrial education for black and Indian students dovetailed with Northerners’ continued refinement of universal education to include high schools, greater attention to graded instruction, and increasingly rigorous standards for and deference to professionally trained educators. As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, then, educational opportunities expanded for white students, but many other Americans found their chances to capitalize on the economic, political, or social advancement those educational innovations promised were foreclosed. Reformers and government officials from California to Hawaii to New York to Puerto Rico used schools to advance “multiple unequal paths to citizenship” based on distinctions in educational opportunities that depended on race, religion, and nationality.³³⁰

³³⁰ Clif Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Oakland: The

The Civil War and Reconstruction resulted in amendments to the Constitution that supplied a legal framework for the ideal of equality, but it did not erase white Southern elites' resolve to maintain an antebellum constitutional balance between aristocracy and democracy that protected white supremacy. Using schools, the North's premier institution for advancing egalitarian objectives, Southern elites worked within the bounds of the new Constitution to secure the order they desired and so effectively normalized their vision of republicanism that federal officials came to speak of schooling as essential not for citizens, but for "citizen-sovereigns." At the same time as Francis Greenwood Peabody shared the tongue-in-cheek lament that the sons of "distinguished Americans" could not avail themselves of the best industrial training, and just a few years shy the debut of the Stanford-Benet Intelligence Scales that purported to offer clear scientific confirmation of how race determined individuals' intellectual capacity, William H. Hall of the United States Bureau of Education announced that "In a democracy, such as ours, the primary object in educating the people is to make good, intelligent, loyal, and prosperous citizen-sovereigns," and further clarified that illiteracy was only problematic when "native white males of voting age...are unable to read the names printed on the ballots they are supposed to cast intelligently."³³¹ In the end, the assessment of Hampton's program of industrial education offered in 1870 by the prominent Unitarian minister and school reformer from Boston, George L. Chancey, appears acutely prescient:

This school...sets the rule of education to the whole nation.... The Northern men and women who went South to teach have learned more than they have taught.... It is already written in the proof-sheets of the new history, that Massachusetts learned from Virginia how to keep school.³³²

University of California Press, 2016), 1.

³³¹ W.S. Deffenbaugh et al., "Compulsory School Attendance," Bulletin, No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Bureau of Education, 1914), 101-102.

³³² Quoted in Mary Frances Armstrong and Helen Wilhelmina Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students. By Two of Its Teachers, Mrs. M. F. Armstrong and Helen W. Ludlow. With Fifty Cabin and Planation Songs, Arranged by Thomas P. Fenner*, Electronic (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1874), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/armstrong/armstrong.html>, 39-40.

SCHOOLS AS SOLUTIONS, COERCION CONTINUED

Chancey's commendation reveals how white Southerners' program of industrial education reassured Northerners that schools might profitably deviate from the common school ideal. White Southerners' ideal of order appealed to whites elsewhere as they grappled with the dramatic demographic shifts that occurred throughout the nation, which seemed to pose a serious threat to white Protestant hegemony, in the wake of emancipation and national expansion.

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