7 Organizing the Modern School System

Educational Reform in the Progressive Era, 1890–1915

Overview

The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century were fraught times in the United States. The industrialization and urbanization that began in the nineteenth century continued to give rise to profound economic, political, and social problems. In addition, Americans faced a massive new wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Called by historians the progressive era, these years produced many reforms in response to the social problems. Most of these reform efforts were part of a movement to organize twentieth-century American society into an efficiently functioning unit that would meet the needs of the modern industrial economy. This new society ideally would operate on principles of political nonpartisanship, scientific and professional expertise, and white supremacy. Before we say more about the organizational focus of reform, however, some indication of the genesis and the variety of the era's multifaceted reform effort may be helpful.

Economic Reform

The key economic development at the end of the nineteenth century was the growth of "trusts" in various areas of American business life. These trusts, later called monopolies, consisted of large corporations that gained control over a particular business or industry. This control enabled them to set prices, regulate production to maintain these prices, and determine wages without regard to consumer demand or the needs of workers. Perhaps the most famous trust of the period was the Standard Oil Company, the enterprise that made John D. Rockefeller enormously wealthy and famous. As trusts became more and more prominent during the 1890s, their harmful effects grew, and a movement to curb their economic power took form.

The year 1893 marked a major turning point in the economic life of the nation. That year saw the beginnings of an economic depression so severe that it motivated citizens to act against the trusts. If any particular event can be said to have initiated the progressive reform movement, it was this depression and the chain reaction it provoked. National politics of the 1890s and the early twentieth century was obsessed with problems of the trusts. The most famous politician of this period, Theodore Roosevelt, carefully cultivated his image as a "trust buster" in his successful campaign for the presidency, though he was really more of a regulator than a buster, using the power of government to superintend over business activities. This was one of the major ideas behind Roosevelt's "new nationalism" program.[1]

An alternative approach to regulating big business was offered by Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt's opponent (along with William Howard Taft) in the election of 1912. Born

and raised in the South, Wilson's view of the trusts hearkened back to the laissez-faire principles of Andrew Jackson. Campaigning under the programmatic label of a "new freedom," Wilson hoped to break up the economic trusts and revitalize the economy by supporting small-scale enterprise and competition rather than through government regulation. Although Roosevelt and Wilson differed in their prescriptions for economic recovery, they agreed that the monopoly power of the trusts, if left unchecked, would gradually alienate rank-and-file Americans.[2]

The rise of organized labor during these years was another way in which the issue of economic privilege was confronted. Trade unions developed in several crafts to check capital's attack on traditional craft privileges as well as its control over the larger economy. The American Federation of Labor evolved as a loose federation of craft unions seeking to preserve the autonomy and work practices of self-employed artisans who were losing work to factories organized and managed according to scientific principles. Labor also sought to protect its members from the predatory trusts through the passage of legislation such as child labor laws, workmen's compensation, and unemployment insurance.[3]

Political Reform

American politics was another arena of progressive era reform. Politicians at all levels of government succumbed to the financial favors that the wealthy could bestow on them in return for a contract or a favorable decision regarding some regulatory or tax issue. Another problem, particularly visible in the nation's cities, was the corrupt reign of political machines, which were often kept in power by the votes of needy members of the lower classes. Thus reformers focused on two problems: An indigent underclass whose needs made them vulnerable, and a wealthy upper class whose power and greed made them insensitive to the public good.

The response to these concerns was a multifaceted array of progressive political reforms. For example, citizens in several states managed to install one or more of the following electoral reforms: the initiative, referendum, and recall. Political initiatives gave voters the power to develop and pass legislation, referendums subjected pending or existing legislation to voters' approval, and recall gave voters the power to remove corrupt officials. The operating principle in each case was the voters' right to correct the mistakes and overcome the malfeasance of the politicians they put into office. Another example of voter empowerment was women's suffrage. After a long campaign, the suffrage movement finally secured through constitutional amendment the right of women to vote in 1920.[4]

Other political reform movements sought to deal with the many problems the nation's large cities were experiencing. As the need for city services such as lighting, transportation, and sewage developed, private companies moved in to meet these needs, frequently with results that led to private profits but did not serve the public interest. Protests against the excesses of private capital throughout the nation led to the movement for municipal ownership of essential services. Public utilities provided another, more moderate, response to the excesses of private ownership. Many of the private utility companies used the city politicians they controlled to resist the movement toward public regulation. One way to combat this corruption was to replace elected politicians with professional administrators. For example, the city manager movement emerged to replace politically corrupt mayors with people trained in the administration of large governmental enterprises. Similarly, city commissioners appointed to run various city departments were touted as a replacement for corrupt city councilmen who oversaw city services. City commissioners, according to their advocates, brought professional expertise to the management of their departments, which politicians, chosen by the electoral process, lacked.[5]

Social Reform

Social life was another area that concerned reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The problems of the new immigrants and other urban poor were seen as a major crisis. One effort to meet these problems was the development of the social settlement house in urban neighborhoods. The most famous of these was Hull House, situated in Chicago's near west side. Headed by Jane Addams, it served the new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Hull House was a nonsectarian institution that ministered to its immigrant clients in many areas—providing cultural exhibits and classes in English, vocational skills, family life skills, and citizenship training. All these endeavors were undertaken to help the immigrants adjust to their new surroundings and to improve their lives. Hull House's sensitivity to immigrant home cultures, however, was not typical of the broader settlement movement. Most settlement houses were more aggressive in their attempts to assimilate immigrants into the "American Way" of Protestant morality and middle-class Anglo normativity, and most of them were unwilling to extend their services to African Americans once they began arriving in northern cities.[6]

Many cities used also their public schools as a base for Americanization classes for adult immigrants. These classes had many of the same goals as did the social settlements. Americanizers in the schools were typically less interested than Addams in finding ways to use the immigrants' own background as a bridge to life in the new world. The aim was to socialize immigrants into an American culture that was assumed to be superior to that of the "old country."[7]

Reform in this era was not limited to economics, politics, and social welfare. From journalism to religion to science to education, reform was a major theme during this period. It was during this period that the term "progressive" began to be used consciously to indicate reformers' commitment to critiquing and redressing the many problems they found in virtually every American institution.[8]

Defining Progressivism

Historians have been careful to document the diversity of the reforms that have been grouped under the "progressive" label. As noted previously, Theodore Roosevelt's regulatory bent and Woodrow Wilson's penchant for decentralization were both seen as progressive ways of dealing with the trusts. Thus, to call both Wilson and Roosevelt "progressive" with regard to the trusts is to make the term elastic enough to encompass diametrically opposed strategies. Similarly, empowering voters through political initiative, referendum, and recall clearly involved an extension of the franchise. On the other hand, professionalization of the new city managers and city commissioners took decision making away from both voters and politicians. In social reform, though there was near unanimity about the need to bolster and propagate Anglo-Protestant cultural values, progressives disagreed amongst themselves about how far government, especially the federal government, should go in compelling conformity.[9]

Such contradictions have led scholars to seek a more refined view of progressive reform, one that takes account of the movement in all of its complexity. A productive way to accomplish this is to break the reformers into subgroups. In many domains one can identify liberal and conservative progressives, who differed from each other in ideology and social goals. Liberal progressives sought *social justice* by casting off restrictions of one kind or another, while conservative progressives sought *social order* through rational management by trained experts.[10]

Using these categories to analyze the antitrust activity discussed earlier, Woodrow Wilson fits the label of a liberal progressive and Theodore Roosevelt is best described as a

conservative progressive. Similarly, in the political arena, initiative, referendum, and recall exemplify liberal progressivism, and city managers and city commissioners represent conservative progressivism. In social reform, however, the distinction is harder to draw. Americanization was embraced by all progressives. Both Wilson and Roosevelt were very concerned, for example, about the potential degradation of the white race and middle-class Anglo-Protestant values. Prohibition, perhaps the progressive movement's crowning social achievement, illustrates well the social paternalism that unified almost all progressives. They might disagree about economic policy or politics, but progressives spoke with one voice about the social ills of alcohol and other vices.[11]

Of the two types of progressives, the conservative progressives were by far the larger and more influential group of reformers. Their centrally administered regulatory programs proved to be much more powerful in reshaping American society than the changes advocated by the liberals. Both parts of this larger progressive movement shaped the schools of this era.

Progressive Education

Like the larger reform movement, educational reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was "marked from the beginning by a pluralistic, frequently contradictory character." Attempts to analyze contradictions within the movement have led to distinctions similar to what we discussed with the larger progressive movement. As a whole, however, the progressive education movement was interested in the following ideas:

- the extension of educational opportunity;
- a shift from elementary/high school organization to a three-tier system including junior high schools;
- expansion and reorganization of the curriculum and addition of the extracurriculum;
- reorganization of classes according to student testing and school consolidation;
- pedagogical and curricular innovations grounded in scientific findings like those from developmental psychology;
- improving the design and quality of school buildings;
- improving the education of teachers;
- changes in school administration.

Uniting these diverse reforms was the widespread effort to expand the functions of the school and to oppose restricted definitions of schooling.[12]

Historian David Tyack has divided progressive educators into two major categories: administrative progressives and pedagogical progressives. Administrative progressivism sought changes in school organization and management that gave power to a new class of professionally trained school administrators. Their agenda included reorganizing schools under "scientific" principles and administering them through the expert leadership of a professionally trained school superintendent. The agenda of pedagogical progressivism involved moving toward more child-centered teaching and more democratic relations between teachers and administrators. Pedagogical progressivism took place largely outside the ranks of school administrators, which is one reason why administrative progressivism had a more pronounced impact on the school system.[13]

Why Progressive Education?

Changes in American social, political, and economic life that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced enormous enrollment increases in the

public schools. A trend toward increased enrollments before this period, passage of compulsory attendance laws, massive immigration from Europe and elsewhere, and internal migration from farm to city all contributed to the huge increases in the size of the city school systems. For example, enrollments in Cleveland, Ohio went from 45,000 to 145,000 between 1900 and 1930. In Detroit they climbed from 30,000 to more than 250,000. Such increases happened in city schools throughout the nation, creating an atmosphere of public concern. Administrative progressives capitalized on the national mood in several ways, most notably through school centralization and curricular differentiation.[14]

Centralization of Schools

Centralization refers to an increase in authority for some distant governing body and a corresponding decrease in authority for more local governing agencies. It refers to a shift in control of schooling to the next highest level of government, be it local, state, or national. In the progressive era, this often meant a shift of authority from individual or neighborhood schools to control by the next highest level, the local school district. Specifically, in the nation's largest cities, power moved from neighborhood or ward boards to citywide school boards.[15]

Centralization took place in gradual, uneven patterns, as city schools attempted to grapple with increasing enrollments and the social problems that accompanied them. Variations in the pace and particulars of centralization from city to city did not mean that the process itself differed significantly from place to place. Most often, centralization was imposed on schools by outsiders who were convinced that the schools were ineffective. In New York City, for example, it was Nicholas Murray Butler, a college administrator, who led the fight for centralization. In Chicago, it was William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago.[16]

The centralizers wanted to break the hold of neighborhood interests in city school affairs. Most often, city school lines followed neighborhood geographic lines, which divided cities into "wards." Butler, Harper, and others sought to give citywide boards of education more power over issues such as teacher hiring and firing, building construction and maintenance, and textbook selection. These areas traditionally had been the purview of the ward board and its administrative agent, the ward trustee. According to the centralizers, and there was substantial evidence to back up their charges, the schools were rife with political corruption and unable to educate their students effectively. Giving more power to a central board meant a change in the kind of person who would become a school policymaker. The newly empowered central boards were made up of men chosen (usually elected) on a citywide basis, not on the grounds of affinity to a particular neighborhood. This meant that candidates were usually prominent businessmen or professionals who had citywide visibility. Their antagonists, the neighborhood (or ward) board members, were most often small businessmen such as insurance men or tavern owners, who were in close day-to-day contact with the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

Centralization and School Governance

Giving more responsibility to a central board meant that the schools would now be guided by the same men who guarded the larger reputation of the city. These prominent men were expected to act in the best interest of the largest number of citizens, not in the particular interest of some small neighborhood group. For example, under centralization, teacher hiring was done on the basis of individual qualifications rather than on familial or

political connections. Similarly, decisions on sites and building contracts or on choice of textbook publishers and other suppliers of school materials were made on the basis of broad educational benefit rather than personal relationships. The school board functioned rather like a corporate board of directors, its members setting overall policy and monitoring its implementation while refraining from interfering in day-to-day operations.

From the beginning, objections were raised to the centralization process. While centralization advocates argued that central board members would set policies that benefited all children, many parents, particularly those most removed (geographically and socioeconomically) from the central board members, had reason to be skeptical. One recurring theme of opponents of centralization had to do with religion. Ward, or neighborhood, boards were generally attuned to the religious beliefs and practices of their constituents, whereas centralized boards were less sensitive to such matters. This was a threat to citizens who thought religion and other neighborhood concerns worthy of protection. One critic of centralization in New York City strongly stated his reservations as follows:

> New York is a peculiar city. It is a cosmopolitan city. If you do away with the [ward] trustee system you do away with the people's schools. The trustees are in touch with the schools, and none others are or can be but those who live in the locality of the schools. We have a peculiar population, made up of all nationalities. They are people whose children we want to get in the public schools. There is a fear on the part of these people that we are going to interfere with their religion. If we have ward trustees representing all classes, confidence will be restored.

These sentiments did not carry the day, however. In New York, and in most other cities, centralization swept away the localized approach to urban education.[17]

Years after most city schools were centralized, concern about the social distance between central boards and the cities' rank-and-file citizens still existed. In 1917, for example, Scott Nearing published a study of boards of education that showed that more than 60 percent of the individuals who held these positions were from the commercial and professional classes—businessmen, manufacturers, bankers, doctors, lawyers, and real estate men. He argued that these men could hardly be expected to represent fairly the interests of the working classes. Twelve years later, George Counts found that 76 percent of city board members were professionals, proprietors, or managers. He added that such a skewing meant that the interests of the city's common citizens were likely to be ignored by educational leadership. The fundamental issue that both critics raised was the probability that the public schools were becoming less and less schools of the people, alienated from the ordinary working citizens they were supposed to serve.[18]

Changes in school governance brought about by centralization were accompanied by changes in the role and qualifications of school superintendents. The superintendent and his office were separated from teachers by the development of an elaborate educational hierarchy. Within this hierarchy there were differences in power, prestige, and economic reward.

The office of school superintendent, as noted earlier, did not exist in the common school period. Horace Mann had been a secretary, not a superintendent. Not until later in the nineteenth century did the superintendency develop as a response to increasing enrollments in urban schools. At first the city superintendent had a highly circumscribed role. His main jobs were to keep records and to examine students to make sure that they were learning what they were supposed to learn. The superintendent had little or no control over teacher selection and promotion, over provisions for choosing texts and other school materials, or over the fiscal and personnel management of the schools.

With the move to a citywide board, however, the school superintendency changed substantially. Advocates of centralization did not envision the same type of hands-on role for city board members that had characterized the local boards. Instead, following newly developed corporate organizations, the citywide board made policy and hired a school superintendent (manager) to implement it. The new city superintendent had a much expanded role that required specialized training. Thus, in the early twentieth century, the professional education of school administrators began to flourish in universities. Prior to this, superintendents had usually been men whose wide-ranging educational, occupational, and intellectual experiences qualified them to lead their schools. As the notion of educational leadership was transformed into educational management, however, job-oriented skills and training became the norm. The superintendency became professionalized.

Major universities began to develop schools of education devoted to training school superintendents and other school administrators as well as high school teachers. The professors in these new schools of education were intent on making education into an applied science that could be mastered by their students. Professors of school administration developed innovations such as "school surveys," which studied school enrollments and facilities and resulted in recommendations for school improvement. The professors who trained the new superintendents were often hired as consultants by their own graduates to make studies and recommend improvements, all in the name of increasing efficiency, a concept very popular in the business world at the time.[19]

Teachers and Centralization

The centralization of city school boards and the rise to power of school superintendents was a direct threat to the established work patterns of urban school teachers. Most teachers were women, and elementary teachers were overwhelmingly female. Teachers were also likely to come from social and religious backgrounds more similar to their students than to school officials. The teachers who led the opposition to centralization, then, had different social and occupational backgrounds than most school administrators. Most of the teachers had been hired under the rules of the ward system, which emphasized whom one knew. Consequently, whatever status they acquired came through long years of teaching in the schools.

What had developed in urban schools prior to centralization and the rise of the superintendency was a system of promotion that recognized experience as the criterion of excellence. A teacher often started her career as a paid substitute assigned to one school and then took her first full-time job in the lowest grade of the school when an opening occurred. She then worked her way up through the grades until arriving at the level of the seventh grade, where she would also be the assistant principal. Finally, she could be "promoted" to the eighth-grade class, where she would also hold the rank of "principal," meaning principal teacher. This trajectory was in its way a coherent system of promotion whereby the individual who reached the eighth-grade class and "principal" teacher status had literally done the work of all those who served under her. Needless to say, the women who worked in this system were devoted to its maintenance and suspicious of those who saw in it a "hidebound" approach that stifled innovation.[20]

Prior to centralization, city teachers often formed themselves into mutual-aid groups that provided sick or burial benefits to their members. It was a short step from these kinds of groups into more formal teacher associations that sought to institutionalize the principles of the seniority system through salary scales and other occupational benefits such as tenure laws. In one way, centralization, combined with professional school administration, can be seen as an improvement for teachers, since it led to a more

regularized system of employment and personnel policies. But this was not the situation that usually resulted. Rather, new qualifications for entering teaching were often introduced and also were often imposed on experienced teachers to prevent their promotion. Further, regularized salaries involved cuts or freezes as often as they meant raises for teachers. These developments led teacher associations and teacher unions to form during this period, usually in opposition to the new boards and superintendents.[21]

As superintendents developed a central office with a staff and a corps of supervisors to help them manage their schools, this organizational elaboration distanced the school officers even further from their teachers. In this new order, school principals were now to be chosen, not on the basis of seniority, but on the basis of their ability to earn a graduate degree in education or to pass a test. This was seen by women elementary teachers as a direct assault on their historic traditions. They understood that, given the realities of university or college attendance, tying a principalship to graduate study meant more male and fewer female principals. Given the politics here, many principals throughout the progressive era continued to maintain closer ties to their building's teachers and their local community than to central administration.[22]

Teacher unions were largely unsuccessful in combating this and other aspects of the new order of administrative progressivism. The timidity of some women prevented their joining the unions. Also, the existence of many teacher associations representing a wide range of specialized interests made it difficult for teachers to unite into a single organization powerful enough to combat the superintendency. Occasionally, teachers did forge coalitions with parent and community groups against the policies of boards and superintendents. These instances were exceptional, however. Teachers were typically incorporated into the bottom ranks of a developing educational hierarchy, with little influence on decisions like classroom curriculum. Their best option, which many of them exercised, was to move west, where the administrative oversight was thinner and the pay much better.[23]

Curricular Differentiation in the American High School

The phenomenon of curricular differentiation in the high school reversed what had been accomplished in the common schools. The common school curriculum was the same for all students. By the 1920s, however, a major portion of America's public secondary schools had a curriculum that offered different courses of study for different kinds of student.

One reason for the change in curriculum was a change in the purpose of education. The common elementary curriculum was based on the idea that schooling was fundamentally a moral enterprise. Politically, this translated into citizenship education for a polity of equals. A common curriculum, then, had the goal of preparing all students for moral and political action. Differentiation, however, reflected a new, largely economic, purpose for education. The differentiated curriculum was an attempt to accommodate the differentiated economic roles that students would play in their later lives. Politically, differentiation was justified by the notion that the system provided equal opportunity for all students to develop to the fullest of their abilities. This change in the guiding purpose of schooling from moral virtue to economic betterment was one of the progressive era's most significant developments. It happened gradually, most prominently in the area of the high school curriculum.[24]

Committee of Ten

In 1893, a high school study committee of the National Education Association (NEA), known popularly as the Committee of Ten, published a report sparked by the rapid

development of colleges and universities. Although high schools had existed long before the formation of the committee, they were not the only institutions offering secondary education. Privately run academies, as we have seen, had for a long time dominated the secondary education market. Some students went to other private preparatory schools, and still others had private tutors to prepare them for college examinations. While the high school competed with these other institutions in preparing students for college entry, it also educated a number of students, particularly girls, who had no intention of enrolling in college. Therefore, a movement emerged in the late nineteenth century to introduce more technical and commercial studies into the high schools in order to equip students, both boys and girls, to deal with the realities of modern life.[25]

The Committee of Ten confronted an extremely untidy world of secondary education in which college preparatory study was only one of its purposes, though probably the major one. The solution offered by the Committee of Ten satisfied none of the competing interest groups completely. The committee outlined four alternative curricula for the four-year high school, all of which were seen as equally appropriate and defensible, depending on the desires of the students. In this respect, it reflected the orientation of its chairman, Charles W. Eliot, who had pioneered Harvard College's elective system, an approach to higher education that allowed students to choose from a menu of options rather than all receiving the same course of study. Through the Committee of Ten's recommendation, Eliot was able to bring the elective principle into the high school. Students chose their course of study depending on their goals and interests. Once that initial choice was made, however, the curriculum was largely prescribed, making it clear that the committee opposed complete election by 14–17-year-olds.

The four courses of study outlined by the Committee of Ten were the Classical, the Latin-Scientific, the Modern Languages, and the English. The major variation in them was the number and nature of the foreign languages prescribed. In the Classical, three foreign languages were required, including the two classical languages of Latin and Greek. In the Latin-Scientific, two foreign languages, Latin and a modern language, were required. In the Modern, two modern languages were required; and in the English only one modern language was required. The studies that would replace the classical and/or modern languages were almost all in the sciences, mainly in nonphysical sciences such as botany, zoology, and anatomy.[26]

Two other tenets of the Committee of Ten deserve attention. First, the committee believed that no difference in the course of study should exist for college-bound and non-college-bound students. Any of the four choices would be appropriate for an individual from either group. To committee members, what was good preparation for collegiate studies was also good preparation for students who would enter work or adult domestic roles immediately after high school. Second, the committee recommended that any of the four courses of study would be equally appropriate as preparation for college entrance. Thus, though offering three alternatives to the traditional, classical course of study, the committee did not differentiate in any intellectual, social, or vocational sense among the purposes of these curricula or the students who chose them. The selection was to be based entirely on student interests.

The recommendation for equivalence among the four courses of study, three of which were nonclassical, earned Eliot and the committee the enmity of many educational traditionalists who believed that classical languages were the key to intellectual and cultural achievement. This group was further offended by the assumption that college-bound students did not need a curriculum that differed substantially from that of the non-college-bound. Although classicists wished to differentiate the college-bound from the non-college-bound, the committee held to a commonality among high school students. For Eliot, the purpose of secondary education was

the same, or common, for all students; it was to discipline their minds in preparation for whatever activity was to follow.

The enmity of the classicists is not what is remembered about the Committee of Ten report, however. It quickly became known as a conservative document because it refused to accommodate those who wanted to diversify the high school curriculum to include subjects considered practical and relevant in the commercial and industrial worlds. From their perspective, the Committee of Ten had turned its back on the world in which many if not most of the high school students would take their places.

Opposition to the Committee of Ten Report

Pressure to reverse the Committee of Ten's support of exclusively academic studies characterized the next two decades of debate over the American high school. Advocates of reversal included many of the young men and women then attending high schools, their parents, businessmen, and other men of affairs in the larger society. They wanted to see the high schools offer commercial subjects and also work in manual training like woodworking and metallurgy. For a time, separate commercial and manual training high schools were advocated as institutions that would not abandon traditional or liberal studies but would supplement them with more practical classes. In some instances, these separate high schools were founded and existed as alternative routes to liberal education and even to college entry. In the city of Atlanta, Georgia, for example, the Technological High School was established, which offered technical subjects together with foreign languages and the sciences, all as preparation for study at the Georgia School of Technology.[27]

But such mild advocacy of more practical studies gave way rather quickly to the arguments of those who wanted to revamp the high schools completely by offering commercial and technical subjects. This group believed that modern social conditions made the existence of college-oriented high schools a luxury taxpayers could not afford. In reformers' eyes, the new commercial and industrial world needed high schools that would train students for modern life.

Vocational Education

The National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE), founded in 1906, was an influential group in the movement for practical studies. Although it was founded by educators who adhered to a manual training philosophy, the NSPIE was supported from the beginning by business and industrial leaders who sought to link schooling to employment. The NSPIE quickly became involved in advocating for industrial (or trade) schools, where students could learn the skills needed for industrial and manufacturing jobs. Although enrollment in these schools was elective, it was not long before advocates were arguing that students who lacked academic aptitude or orientation should be channeled into industrial programs.[28]

Many members of the educational community felt squeamish about separating commercial or industrial education students into distinct programs. Such a policy would completely isolate the industrial students and make the possibility of their return to academic studies highly unlikely. This was a new development in public education that directly contradicted both the old common school orientation of moral equality in the elementary schools and the principle of curriculum equality in alternative high school studies favored by the Committee of Ten.

Many both inside and outside education were particularly disturbed by the idea of separate industrial or trade schools whose major function was training students for

employment. Their fears of an education dominated by employers were heightened as some in the business community began advocating separate industrial high schools under a private board that would be responsive to employers' needs, not necessarily those of students.

Separate boards for what were now becoming known as industrial schools were advocated in several locales, most notably in Chicago in the 1910s. Chicago's plan became known as the Cooley plan, named for Edwin G. Cooley, a former superintendent of the city's schools who was a major supporter of a separate vocational board to be controlled by employers. However, a coalition of educators and labor leaders opposed this plan on the grounds that it would allow the public schools to be overwhelmed by the interests of one group. Such an arrangement, opponents argued, would not be in the interests of the students, the laboring classes, or society at large. The Cooley plan was defeated, other attempts to establish private boards for vocational schools were largely unsuccessful, and the momentum toward separate commercial and vocational high schools was largely halted. Curricular differentiation, however, remained the dominant issue that faced the high schools for the next decade.[29]

Immigrants and Schools

From the beginning, the differentiation of the high school curriculum into academic, vocational, and commercial emphases stirred concern about issues of social equality. It did not take a particularly keen eye to notice that the different courses of study tended to segregate students by social background. The academic track appealed mainly to upper- and middle-class students of Anglo descent, the commercial track was populated largely by middle-class girls, and the vocational track was reserved for lower-class boys, quite often from immigrant families.[30]

The United States had been a nation of immigrants from the time of its settlement by Europeans in the seventeenth century. But the immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included a much more ethnically and culturally diverse pool of people. Over the course of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, New York's Ellis Island was the main gate of entry on the east coast. In the West, Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay served as the main portal for Asians and Pacific Islanders who sought entry into the United States. The immigrants crowding into eastern cities came heavily from Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, and Turkey. In New York City, most of the new immigrants were Jews and Italians. The massive flow of these new immigrants intensified the administrative progressives' drive for more centrally controlled, scientifically managed, and differentiated city schools. However, the cultural diversity of the immigrants meant that the public schools were now facing students whose backgrounds they did not know, whose languages they did not speak, and whose habits they often found strange and threatening. [31]

The Catholic Question

The troubled relationship between Catholics and the public schools became more acute in the post-Civil War years. While uneasy compromises were sometimes considered in an effort to remove some of the obstacles that prevented some Catholics from attending public schools, for the most part the Catholic hierarchy saw in their own parochial schools the only viable alternative to the public schools.

As discussed in Chapter 4, moves toward establishing Catholic parochial schools were made as soon as the common school movement got underway, but in the late nineteenth

century, the call to the Catholic faithful to support their own parish schools intensified. Both before and after the Civil War pleas and strategies were made to obtain public support for Catholic schools, but proponents of common schools and so-called "100 percent Americans" blocked such attempts. Increasingly the common school became identified as the "American" school and Catholic parochial schools were termed "foreign" institutions. As immigration increased and parishes became more identifiable along ethnic lines (German, Italian, Polish, etc.), the "foreignness" and exclusivity of Catholics increasingly became a political as well as religious and educational concern.

Senator James G. Blaine, a former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, brought the matter to a head in 1875 when he proposed an amendment to the Constitution that would settle the question of whether or not public funds could be used to assist parochial schools. His proposed amendment read as follows:

> No State shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; and no money raised by taxation in any State for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund thereof, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect; nor shall any money so raised or lands so devoted be divided between religious sects or denominations.

The Blaine Amendment passed the House by a vote of 180 to 7, but it failed to garner the necessary two-thirds majority in the Senate. Supporters of the measure had greater success when they crafted similar amendments at the state level. All but 11 states then in the Union passed laws that accomplished the end toward which Blaine and his supporters were working. The message to Catholics (or any other sect) was clear: public funds were to be used for public purposes only.

In the face of such resistance and out of concern for the protection of their faith, in 1884 Catholic bishops convened in Baltimore for their Third Plenary Council. The bishops directed every parish to establish a parochial school within two years. Catholic parents were instructed to send their children to these schools unless the bishop of the diocese determined that an exception could be made under some circumstances. Despite such decrees, Catholic schools never enrolled more than half of all Catholic children in the country.[32]

Administrative Progressives and Immigrants

The administrative progressives' attitude toward the new immigrant groups was generally negative. Recall that centralization sought to remove corrupt school management from city schools. For centralizers, much of the corruption found in urban neighborhoods and exploited by urban machine politicians resulted from the presence of immigrant communities that did not understand American culture.

A compelling example of negativism toward immigrants on the part of administrative progressives is found in the writings of Ellwood Cubberley. A former school superintendent who became dean of the School of Education at Stanford University, Cubberley was the author of several popular textbooks used for decades in the education of teachers and administrators. In the pages of one of these books, after discussing the virtues of older, nineteenth-century immigrant groups from Northern and Western Europe, Cubberley had this to say about the more recent arrivals:

> These southern and eastern Europeans were of a very different type from the North and West Europeans who preceded them. Largely illiterate, docile, lacking in

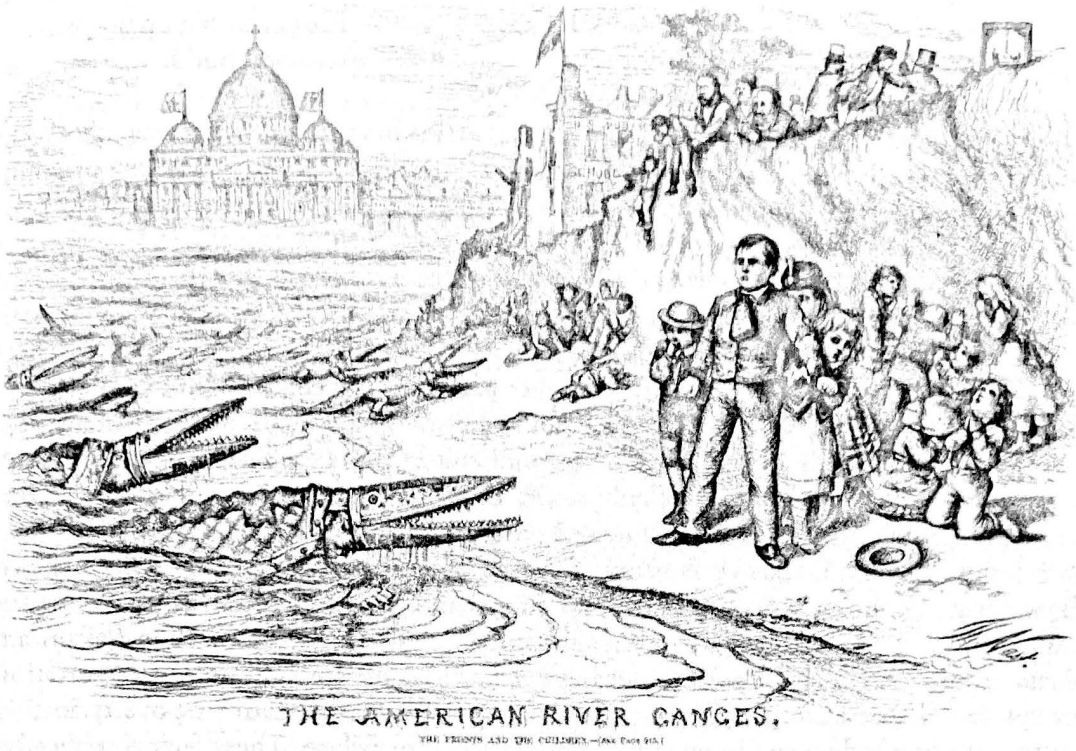

Figure 7.1 "The American River Ganges" by Thomas Nast. *Harper's Weekly*, September 30, 1871. In an effort to win political support from New York's Irish Catholics, the Democratic political machine headquartered at Tammany Hall proposed providing public support to parochial schools. In opposition, Nast here warns of the result: Crocodilian bishops slithering out of the river, the public school in ruins, Tammany politicians dropping little children into the river, a public school teacher being led to the gallows, and the American flag hanging upside down, a universal signal of distress.
Source: Provided courtesy HarpWeek, LLC.

> initiative, and almost wholly without the Anglo-Saxon conceptions of righteousness, liberty, law, order, public decency, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock and to weaken and corrupt our political life ... [T]hey have created serious problems in housing and living, moral and sanitary conditions, and honest and decent government, while popular education everywhere has been made more difficult by their presence ... The new peoples, and especially those from the South and East of Europe have come so fast that we have been unable to absorb and assimilate them, and our national life, for the past quarter of a century, has been afflicted with a serious case of racial indigestion.[33]

Immigrants at School

Cubberley's sentiments expressed here were typical of the attitudes of administrative progressives about immigrants and public education. To get a more complete view of this relationship, however, it is also important to look at the school–immigrant encounter from the point of view of the immigrant children and their families.

In 1911, the Commission on Immigration was appointed to conduct a survey of the lives of the recent immigrants. Evidence from that survey, as well as the results of studies regarding immigrant performance in several cities in the early twentieth century, shows rather convincingly that immigrant children with Northern European backgrounds

(English, Scottish, Welsh, German, and Scandinavian) did about as well in school as children of old-stock American whites. Children of Eastern European Jews performed on a par with, or better than, other groups, but non-Jewish Eastern and Southern Europeans lagged significantly in school performance.[34]

Looking more carefully at these differences, historians have found that immigrant groups were as likely to be in school as nonimmigrants and, at the elementary level, both groups made similar progress. Thus, the inference is that there was little difference in educational aspirations between the groups. Differences in achievement, however, clearly surfaced at the high school level. Much of that gap in school achievement can be explained by factors associated with social class, such as wealth and occupational status. That is, immigrants experienced the same debilitating factors in regard to school performance as did nonimmigrant students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Regardless of cultural background, students from families mired in poverty generally brought with them negative attitudes toward the school, less exposure to print culture and other artifacts of middle-class life, and less familiarity with school culture and expectations. Consequently, whether they were immigrant or nonimmigrant, they did poorly in school.[35]

Yet this is far from the whole story. Scholars controlling for social class factors have shown that certain immigrant groups did better than others in school. Eastern European Jews were a classic example of immigrants who excelled in school, while Italians and Slavic groups generally did poorly. Further inquiry into the backgrounds of these various groups found that factors such as urban or rural origins and wealth or poverty in their native countries influenced immigrants' school success or failure. These factors surfaced in areas such as students' facility with words and abstractions, behavioral dispositions toward schooling, and responsiveness to school rewards—all of which related to school success or failure. These factors are culturally based and operate somewhat independently from socioeconomic characteristics.

Another finding that emerges from historical work on the school–immigrant encounter is that there were differences from city to city. Still another factor that is important in explaining differences in achievement is the relative participation and success of immigrant groups in public and nonpublic schools. Most Southern and Eastern European immigrants were Roman Catholics and were largely responsible for the increased enrollment in Catholic parochial schools through much of the twentieth century. Thus, the preference of a group for parochial over public schooling needs to be included in any complete explanation of the school–immigrant encounter as well as the possibility that this preference could vary from city to city.

Deeper insight into the school–immigrant relationship has come from a thorough study of the subject in the city of Providence, Rhode Island. In that city, Irish school achievement, which had lagged in the nineteenth century, paralleled that of "native" whites (Yankees) in the early twentieth century. The explanation offered for this is that as Irish gradually moved into positions of political, economic, and social power and came to occupy more teaching positions in the public schools, the school achievement of their children rose substantially. In addition, the school success of Jewish immigrants was qualified somewhat in this study by the finding that Jewish youngsters, although they did attend high school in high proportions, did not receive higher grades than other groups. Finally, although Italians were underrepresented in high school, their occupational success was comparable to that of other groups, despite the educational differential.[36]

It should be noted that the preceding discussion of immigrant schooling concerned European immigrants. Immigration by non-Europeans was reduced dramatically during the progressive era, beginning with the passage in 1882 of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first of many pieces of legislation designed to restrict certain groups of people from

entering the United States. In the case of the Chinese, a loophole was created in 1907 that permitted Chinese children to come to the United States to attend private schools. Most of these schools were created by Americans with ties to American missionaries to China. The goal was to teach Chinese children American culture and Christian religion, and then send them back to China to spread the good news. Most of the teenaged children who came over, however, did not come to learn English and then return home. The majority came to stay, running away from the schools to go be with family already in the United States. Sometimes the schools themselves were simply fronts for smuggling operations, with Chinese parents paying "tuition" fees to get children into the country.[37]

Americanization and the American Indian

Americanization referred to attempts to indoctrinate immigrants and others with ideas and values that supported the cultural status quo. As the only "nonimmigrants" on the American continent, the experience of the Native American populations has always been a special case. During the progressive era, policies toward the acculturation of American Indians once again underwent change, although as in the case of different immigrant groups, inconsistencies in the application of policies and wide variations in responses among individual Indians and their tribal groups work against neat generalizations. It is clear, however, that the frontal assault on Native American languages, customs, and values that characterized the off-reservation boarding school experience began to soften somewhat during the progressive era.

An unmistakable signal that the nation's Indian policy needed revamping was given in the 1901 annual report by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, William Jones. The commissioner observed that over the previous 33 years, the government had spent over $240 million in an attempt to move Native Americans from dependency to self-reliant citizenship. Public funding had provided food, clothing, plows, seed, wagons, and schools. The results of this investment, said the commissioner, were extremely disappointing. The average Indian, he noted, "is little, if any, nearer the goal of independence than he was thirty years ago, and if the present policy is continued he will get little, if any, nearer in thirty years to come." However well-intentioned past policies may have been, he concluded, they were now seen to be wrongheaded; it was time to reassess.[38]

Special criticism was directed toward the boarding school policy. Francis Ellington Leupp, who succeeded Jones as commissioner in 1905, declared:

> It is a great mistake to start the little ones in the path of civilization by snapping all the ties of affection between them and their parents, and teaching them to despise the aged and nonprogressive members of their families. The sensible as well as the humane plan is to nourish their love of father and mother and home ... and then to utilize this affection as a means of reaching, through them, the hearts of the elders.[39]

The shift from the goal of immediate assimilation toward one of gradualism was based on several assumptions that were emerging among educational elites during the progressive era. One was the conviction held by some that Indians, either because of inborn racial traits or sheer obstinacy, were simply incapable of rapid assimilation. Commissioner Leupp grounded his assertion that assimilationists had expected too much too soon in his conviction that "race characteristics" that had been transmitted across the centuries could not be changed in "a day, a year, or a good many years." Following the lead of scholars who were putting increasing stock in evolutionary theories of development, Leupp held

that crossing the boundary between barbarism and civilization would take time, if indeed it could ever occur completely: "Ethnically he will always remain an Indian, with an Indian color, Indian traits of mind, Indian ancestral traditions and the like." Belief in the doctrine of inherited racial characteristics that were resistant to sudden change was similarly expressed by a speaker at the NEA meeting in 1909 who explained to an audience discussing the problem of Indian education that "the races of men feel, think, and act differently not only because of environment, but also because of hereditary impulses."[40]

Evolutionary and genetic explanations for the failure of past Indian assimilation policies were buttressed by a related criticism: boarding schools were inherently cruel and inhumane. The novelist Hamlin Garland charged that the practice of disrupting families and teaching the children to abhor the ways of their parents was "so monstrous and so unchristian that its failure was foretold to every teacher who understood the law of heredity." Popularized autobiographical essays by Indians themselves poignantly emphasized the alienation felt by many. A Yankton Sioux girl who had begged to go away to a missionary school and who later became a teacher herself nonetheless recalled the pain of separation: "Like a slender tree, I had been uprooted from my mother, nature and God. I was shorn of my branches, which had waved in sympathy and love for home and friends."[41]

The founder of the child study movement, G. Stanley Hall, helped popularize yet another notion that worked against the strenuous efforts of those who hoped to eradicate Indians through education. As an advocate of the "doctrine of culture epochs" or "recapitulation theory," Hall believed that each child, and each race, must progressively move through successive stages in the civilizing process. Hall held that there was a direct correspondence between the stages in an individual's physical and psychological development and the stages in the evolution of human society. In modern society and schools, he maintained, educators were in too great a rush to turn children into adults and in consequence placed too much emphasis on book learning and gave too little attention to the true nature and needs of childhood. Hall romanticized the slower pace of primitive societies where children engaged in play and physical activity and were allowed to develop naturally. He urged teachers of Indian children (indeed, of all children) to build on children's natural capacities and backgrounds rather than obliterate them. Doing so will allow children to pass through these stages naturally on their way to adult, civilized life, which is a higher achievement than the savagery or barbarism associated with Indians and unassimilated immigrants.[42]

Another point of criticism of past Indian policy followed a different line of reasoning. Indian "uplift" policies, it was sometimes charged, encouraged attitudes of dependency rather than self-reliance and individual initiative. Government programs designed to feed, clothe, and house as well as educate Indian youth were thought by some to reward laziness and create an expectation that the government would and should provide for those who do not provide for themselves.

The campaign against off-reservation boarding schools thus drew from strains of thought that were at various points racist, pluralistic, humanistic, progressive, and socially conservative. Efforts to reform Indian education during this period were inconsistent in both theory and practice, but in that respect they reflected some of the same inconsistencies and definitional problems associated with "progressive education" in general. While more humane educational methods and approaches were often adopted as "means," the "ends" of greater efficiency and a greater degree of assimilation over time still remained paramount in the minds of those described above as "administrative progressives." At the same time, "pedagogical progressives," about whom more will be said below, also made their influence felt, not only by modifying the curriculum and methods of teaching, but also by advocating greater sympathy and respect for Indian cultural

traditions and values. "Progressive educators" encouraged teachers to understand Indian children as products of a "different civilization" rather than a "lower civilization." Teachers began to incorporate Indian music and other arts and crafts into the curriculum. They attempted to improve students' facility with English by motivating them to retell tribal legends or describe aspects of home life in their writings.

In terms of government policy toward Indian education, emphasis began to shift away from off-reservation boarding schools back to on-reservation schools, day schools, and most significantly, public schools. The number of schools sponsored by the federal government declined as local public schools began to pick up more responsibility for educating Indian youth. Day schools continued to reflect the same condescension mixed with amelioration on the part of their staffs as had the off-reservation boarding schools. One account of a day school for Pueblo Indians in New Mexico, for example, details the sometimes racist attitudes of the principal and superintendent of that school toward its pupils, along with their genuine attempts to educate the pupils and improve the lives of their families. Public school attendance, meanwhile, grew tremendously. Whereas in 1900 less than 1 percent of all Indian students were enrolled in public schools, by 1925 over half were in public schools—although there were still thousands of Indian children who were not enrolled in any type of school.[43]

In 1928 a massive report authored by Lewis Meriam of the Institute for Government Research laid bare the distressing state of Indian life at that juncture in the nation's life. *The Problem of Indian Administration*, more commonly referred to as the Meriam Report, underscored the failed policies of the past. In its treatment of education, the Meriam Report was extremely critical of the boarding school system. Emphasizing the need for adoption of the "modern" view of connecting children's education to family and community, the report urged greater reliance on day and public schools and the pedagogy of progressive education. The report maintained that government policy must "give consideration to the desires of the individual Indians." Those wishing to enter the mainstream white society should be enabled to do so, while those wishing to remain Indian and live according to the old culture should likewise be aided toward that end. Implicit in the report was the assumption, however, that those who chose the latter path would have an increasingly difficult time facing the "advancing tide of white civilization."[44]

Character Education Outside the System

Concerns for the children of immigrants and Indians were not the only worries facing progressive reformers in the closing years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries. Middle-class Americans were becoming increasingly concerned about their *own* children, especially boys. As urban areas became ever more crowded with upwardly mobile families as well as families that seemed "stuck" at the bottom of the social order, fears were increasingly expressed regarding the pastimes of and character influences on urban youth.

Reformers often called "child savers" focused their attention on underclass delinquent children and crafted a juvenile justice system to deal with the most wayward youth. But even children not labeled as delinquent caused concern. Families were under new forms of stress as fathers disappeared into large office buildings or factories for long periods each day and spent fewer hours at home. For an increasing number of young people, working side by side with their parents in fields or homes was becoming a story of the past, not a reality of the present. While schools underwent reforms in the progressive era to provide order and discipline for youth, it was seen that they could not carry the whole burden. Increasingly voices were raised lamenting not only the problems and conditions facing

children of the urban working class and immigrant poor, but of "decent" boys and girls from middle-class homes who were experiencing the bodily changes and emotional turmoil of adolescence as well.

The theory of adolescence put forth by psychologist G. Stanley Hall highlighted the "storm and stress" experienced by young people as they entered their teen years. Based on his recapitulation or culture epochs theory, Hall believed that activities normal for healthy adolescent development were being ignored or thwarted by parents, teachers, and others who pushed children to "grow up" and "act their age." According to Hall, acting their age was exactly what they *should* be doing, but modern society was denying opportunities and outlets for adventure, strenuous activities, and the free use of heroic imagination that children at this stage of development needed. Thus, while educational reformers were trying to make the schools more inclusive and more responsible for the welfare of children, and the "child savers" were focusing their attention on children of the urban poor and a juvenile justice system, other concerned adults looked outside the legal and educational system for alternative or supporting paths to foster sound physical, spiritual, social, and moral development.[45]

Youth Organizations: The YMCA and Boy Scouts

Among the oldest of voluntary youth associations formed to combat the ills of urban life and negative influences among youth was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Founded in England in the 1840s, the original purpose of the "Y" was to use prayer, Bible study, street preaching, and other wholesome activities to combat the growing evils of industrial life while providing low-cost housing for young people leaving the countryside for the city. The movement spread to the United States and other countries in the pre-Civil War period. In 1851 Montreal and Boston became the first two YMCA affiliates to be established in North America. In 1853 the first YMCA founded expressly for African Americans was founded in Washington, DC.

The Civil War reduced the number of YMCAs and membership as young men were called to battle, but among the YMCAs that were still operating in the northern states during the war, attention was turned to aiding soldiers and prisoners of war. After the war the YMCA movement expanded and resumed its evangelical focus on soul saving. The movement gradually moved beyond its initial focus on boys and began to provide services to families regardless of social class, religious belief, race, or nationality. By the turn of the century the YMCA had largely lost its evangelistic emphasis, embracing a more nonpartisan identity centered around generic morality, citizenship, and what many called the "muscular Christianity" of sport.[46]

It was the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), however, that became the archetype for adolescence-to-adulthood organizations. Along with the YMCA, precursors to the Boy Scouts included such organizations as the Boy Brigades, Woodcraft Indians, and the Sons of Daniel Boone. The Woodcraft Indians was perhaps the most influential forerunner of the American Boy Scout program. Founded in 1902 by the artist and naturalist Ernest Thomas Seton, the Woodcraft Indians was organized to exalt what G. Stanley Hall had termed the "savage" stage of human development. Camping, swimming, nature study, Indian names, games, and awards were the focal points of these units. Being something of a nonconformist himself, Seton made little effort to inculcate conventional morality, piety, and patriotism in his boys.[47]

The Boy Scout program combined the adventure programming of earlier organizations with a strong emphasis on character and patriotism. It was the invention of a British

general, Robert S.S. Baden-Powell (1857–1941). Following a distinguished military career in various wars for the British Empire, and after a short stint working with the Boy Brigade, Baden-Powell published in 1909 a book titled *Scouting for Boys*. It was an immediate bestseller, giving Baden-Powell the momentum needed to create a worldwide organization. The scout motto, "Be Prepared" and the oath in which a boy promised "To do [my] duty to God and the King [British version], to help other people at all times, and to obey the scout law" set forth the basic aims of the scouting program. The scout oath and law, with minor refinements over time, affirmed characteristics of the good scout and good citizen, e.g. trustworthiness, loyalty, helpfulness, cheerfulness, and obedience. From its American founding in 1910, the Boy Scouts came to epitomize traits and activities that promised to build character in boys from 12 to 18 years of age. Its chartering documents proclaimed that the BSA aimed "to promote, through organization and cooperation with other agencies, the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others, to train them in Scoutcraft, and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues."[48]

Savannah native Juliette Gordon Low founded the Girl Scouts in 1912 after meeting Baden-Powell in London. There were important differences in philosophy that kept the identities and activities of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts separate. Girls were thought to be unhappy with their roles and status in society whereas boys, if given the chance, seemed to thrive in the rough and tumble of masculine life. Emphasis in the Boy Scout program was on competition, achievement, outdoor adventure, and individualism tempered by cooperation. Girls, it was assumed, needed to be taught to appreciate femininity and domestic achievement. If it was right and proper for boys to work on merit badges in pioneering, camping, signaling, and nature study, girls should be taught to be proficient in household tasks such as sewing, laundering, and cooking *inside* the house rather than at a campfire. The head of the Pittsburgh Girl Scout program urged that "the home-maker of tomorrow ... must be made efficient in her task and happy in it."[49]

Girls were not totally shut out from outdoor pursuits, however. In 1902 Laura Mattoon opened Camp Kehonka on the shores of Lake Winnipesaukee near Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. Over the next several decades, private camps for girls began appearing throughout New England, just as they had for boys. For the most part, these camps were for the privileged daughters of upper-middle-class New Englanders. Democratization of camping for girls made inroads, however, as religious, fraternal, political, and ethnic groups began establishing camps for girls who had ties to these varied associations. The spread of the camping zeal among girls was boldly proclaimed when the Young Communist League and the Pioneer Youth of America founded camps for girls from families with communist or socialist sympathies.[50]

The Pedagogical Progressives

The various camps and youth organizations established in this era embodied an approach to education that pedagogical progressives would recognize and admire. Pedagogical progressives were more aligned with the liberal progressivism than with the conservatism of the administrative progressives. Social justice was a goal of many of these pedagogical progressives, and they felt that school reform could be used to achieve it. Two exemplars of pedagogical progressivism will be considered here. The first, John Dewey, was a brilliant philosopher and theorist, who put his ideas into practice in a variety of educational and social settings. The second, Ella Flagg Young, was a practicing educator who brought progressive pedagogical ideas into her work in schools.

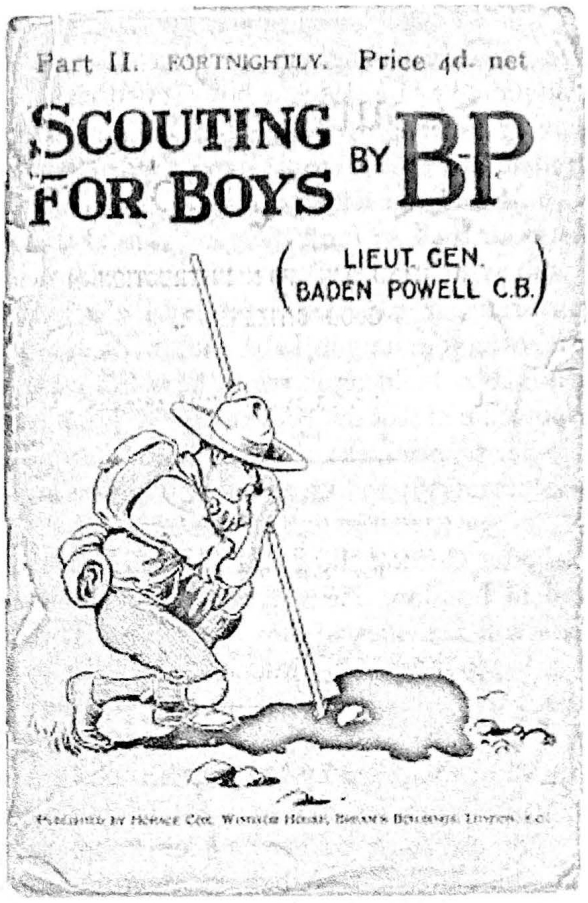

Figure 7.2 Scouting for Boys cover. Written and illustrated by Robert Baden-Powell, the second installment of *Scouting for Boys* included adventure stories as well as outdoor skills and lore. This 1908 copy of the original cover portrays a scout engaged in tracking.
Source: wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Scouting_for_Boys-Part 2_cover.gif.

John Dewey

John Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, the son of a storekeeper in that small, New England college town. Dewey went to college at the University of Vermont and graduated in 1879 with a degree in a classically oriented liberal arts curriculum. He then taught Latin, algebra, and science for two years at a high school in Pennsylvania, but he was not very effective and his contract was not renewed. He returned to Vermont for a year and taught in an academy near Burlington while he studied philosophy with a tutor as a prelude to graduate study in that subject. In 1882, he enrolled in the philosophy department at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. He was quite successful in his graduate studies, earning both a teaching assistant's duties and a graduate fellowship.[51]

Upon completion of his doctorate, Dewey obtained a position teaching philosophy at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He was hired there at the urging of one of his former teachers at Johns Hopkins who had gone to Michigan to build a program in philosophy. It also did not hurt Dewey's chances that the president of the University of Michigan was a former president of the University of Vermont and knew Dewey and his family.

During his tenure at Michigan, Dewey showed a strong interest in the young field of psychology. He saw a natural affinity between the empirical findings of the psychologists

and the systematic thought of philosophers. Dewey's use of scientific experiments to link his ideas to his social interests was leading him into the philosophy of "pragmatism." Dewey and other early pragmatists believed that ideas, like biological organisms, survived and evolved according to their ability to explain and guide real-world events. He also exhibited a deep interest in social problems and was acknowledged as one of the two leading "liberals" on the faculty. In his final Michigan years, he used his previous high school and university teaching experience to develop an interest in the field of education. By combining his interests in philosophy, psychology, and social reform, Dewey became a uniquely practical philosopher, one who used scientifically organized experiments as a test of philosophical thinking and, in particular, of democratic social reform.

Pragmatism was an ideal philosophy for a man who wanted to make a difference in the world. Dewey got the chance to begin making a difference when he was called to the University of Chicago in 1894. Dewey was appointed to the newly established and richly endowed university as head of its department of philosophy, which also included the fields of psychology and pedagogy. This multifaceted department allowed him to combine all his developing interests under one academic umbrella and to have a major voice in developing each of the three fields.

Dewey at Chicago

As a condition of his coming to Chicago, Dewey made it clear that his department needed a laboratory school for educational experimentation. Enrollment in Dewey's school grew quickly as its fame spread throughout national academic and professional circles. Dewey's work received even more publicity when Francis Parker's teacher-training school, recently detached from the control of the Cook County political apparatus, also became part of the university. Parker's school functioned as a teacher-training laboratory, while Dewey's school continued its mission as a testing ground for educational principles. When Parker died, the two schools were combined and then consolidated with the undergraduate program in education to form the School of Education, with Dewey as the head. Graduate work in education continued to be done in the academic Department of Philosophy, which was also still led by Dewey.[52]

Parker's almost romantic belief in the potential of children became a subject for experimentation in Dewey's laboratory school. Dewey proceeded to lay out the intellectual foundations of his educational efforts in a series of books and articles, the two most famous being *The School and Society* (1899) and *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902). In both volumes, Dewey exhibited a characteristically dialectical thought pattern in which he described a problem involving two opposing forces and then demonstrated how a new formulation of the problem blended the two poles. For example, in *The School and Society*, Dewey took the vast differences between the culture of the school and that of the surrounding society and showed how the discrepancies could be overcome through synthesis. For Dewey, the school itself was a social institution, a part of society, and needed to be consciously organized as such. In Dewey's formulation, learning was a natural by-product of concrete social activities. So, by organizing schools like other social institutions, Dewey believed learning would lose the abstract quality that permeated so much of the academic study that went on in schools.[53]

In curricular terms, this meant aligning school experiences with the real-life occupational and democratic experiences of the surrounding society. This real-life curriculum was formed cooperatively by students and their teacher. Together with a commitment to scientific methods and principles, this meant that the school functioned both as a learning laboratory and as a vehicle for the improvement of a democratic society. Pedagogically,

this largely continued Parker's new education, in which primary grade children were encouraged to actively explore their surrounding environment. However, Dewey stressed two elements that Parker and other advocates of the new education did not.

First, Dewey did not assume that a child-oriented curriculum meant abandoning traditional subject matter. Rather, he saw his program as an occasion for reorganizing traditional subjects to fit the needs of both children and society. Although child-centered, it still took the children from where they were to where the educators wanted them to be. Thus, for Dewey, teachers had to have knowledge of both children and subject matter in order to orchestrate the most productive blending of the two. Second, the activities that constituted Dewey's curriculum were intended to improve the classroom society and, thereby, to improve the larger society of which they were a part.

Democracy and Education

In his most elaborate educational statement, *Democracy and Education*, written in 1916, Dewey provided a systematic exposition of his educational philosophy. While this volume was a philosophical treatise written more than a decade after Dewey left Chicago for a non-educational position at Columbia University, it built on the principles enunciated in his earlier volumes. Most important, *Democracy and Education* described the principle of growth as the essence of educational activity. Education was growth, defined as the ability to make connections between experiences and to use these connections to direct the course of future experiences. Any conception of education that saw it as an activity directed toward some pre-established "end" missed its essential developmental character. Growth needed no end to be effective: Growth was its own end.[54]

In this volume Dewey also stated the view of democracy that guided his educational thought and, earlier, had guided his educational practice in the experimental school. Recall that Dewey's school was conceived of as a society in itself, or more specifically, as an embryonic democratic community. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey made explicit the definition of democracy that underlay his educational philosophy. As the following passage makes clear, the ordinary political sense of democracy was only a small part of what Dewey meant:

> The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest: these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint, communicated experience.[55]

This statement attests to how important schools were to Dewey's vision of American society. They were the primary means for incubating the democratic way of life that he saw as our most important attribute. Thus, one can conclude that for Dewey the school was an essential, if not *the* essential, institution of social reform.

In spite of this emphasis on schools, Dewey was not just an educational reformer. He was active in a variety of social and political reform activities and organizations. He was an ally of Jane Addams and a frequent visitor and contributor to her activities at Hull House. He was also an inveterate writer on social and political issues in journals of political opinion such as *The New Republic*. He worked diligently through organizations such as the American Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University

Professors to see that educators were not prevented from influencing the policies that controlled their practice. A commitment to reform permeated all aspects of Dewey's life.

Dewey's Disciples, Critics, and Legacy

Dewey was remarkably influential on studies in the field of education but less influential on practice in the schools. The popularity of his views made him a magnet for other educators to follow as well as a target for intellectual opponents on both the left and the right. Dewey's disciples were numerous in professional educational circles. While some of his followers saw in his work mainly the impulse to liberate the interest of the child from the "dead hand" of subject matter, his opponents saw his work as an attempt to replace necessary subject matter with a pedagogy that privileged student interest erroneously over academic studies. Still others saw Dewey as a powerful force for the unionization and professionalization of teaching through the invigoration of teacher organizations and other professional educational groups.

In the next chapter, we will show the devotion to Dewey of several educational practitioners and scholars in the 1920s and will suggest the limitations in that devotion. In the chapter after that, we will discuss those in the 1930s who saw Dewey and his disciples as a major threat to the intellectual integrity of American schools, and we will show how some political radicals saw in Dewey a powerful political voice for a collective response to the economic depression of that decade and a voice for educational improvement through a teaching force empowered by unionism. In later chapters, we will see how advocates of many positions not normally associated with Dewey could invoke his name in support of practices and policies that seem remarkably anti-Deweyan. Dewey bears some of the responsibility for the diffuse influence he exercised on American education, partly because of the complexity of his ideas but also because of the frequent obtuseness in his writings that often made it difficult for his readers to really understand what he was trying to say.

In the 1930s, Dewey took on both his pedagogical disciples and his pedagogical critics in an address to an educational honorary society that was subsequently published as *Experience and Education*. In this volume he used the same dialectical strategy he had employed in his pedagogical works of the turn of the twentieth century. In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey showed the dichotomy between the child-centered educators' embrace of the child, unencumbered by subject matter, and traditional educators' endorsement of subject matter, to the point that education excluded any recognition of the interests of the child. For Dewey, these two extreme camps, which he labeled progressive and traditional education, were equally off the mark. Only by combining the necessary content of academic subjects with the equally necessary influence of genuine interest in that subject matter by children could education yield a properly productive outcome. Dewey adopted, thereby, a middle-of-the-road synthesis that recognized the significance of both the child and school subject matter and, just as important, the role of the teacher. For Dewey, the teacher was the responsible adult in a school classroom, whose job was to link the interests of children to the subjects they were studying. Dewey emphasized school activities such as gardens that began with the interest of children but then used that interest to develop activities and assignments that brought in the insights of disciplines such as, in the case of a school garden, mathematics, several of the sciences, history, and geography. These subjects were studied, not discretely or abstractly, but rather in terms of an interest that had attracted the attention of students.[56]

Despite Dewey's consistent advocacy of an approach that sought to mediate between the child and subject matter, he remained a beacon for many child-centered advocates who had far less commitment to subject matter than he did and a target for subject

matter advocates who refused to understand that he himself was not opposed to rigorous studies. Dewey also became a controversial figure in scholarship on the social and political aspects of education, again because of some ambiguity in his thought and the interpretation of that thought as it played out in the classroom and the larger society.

For example, some historians looked at Dewey's educational formulations, particularly his emphasis on classroom community and cooperation, and saw them as having some profoundly antidemocratic implications. In spite of Dewey's reputation as a liberal reformer, these historians saw a strong conservative side to both his views and those of other liberal progressives. According to this interpretation, Dewey's emphasis on cooperative activity seems to leave little room for student autonomy for individuals who, for one reason or another, are not comfortable with the group living that Dewey saw as the essence of democratic society. Similarly, his devotion to scientific inquiry seems to ignore literary and/or artistic ways of knowing. Also, in his advocacy of practical educational reforms such as vocational education, Dewey seems to have paid insufficient attention to the socially and politically conservative ways in which this curriculum was used in the schools. Finally, his broad commitment to an evolutionary account of civilization and its recapitulation through deliberate activities among children reified a fundamentally racist view of the world that understood Euro-American culture and civilization to be normative and the bearer of progress. To use a suggestive term, there is a "darker side" to Dewey's version of progressive education, one that involved an approach to education that appears to be insensitive to dissent and to difference.[57]

Ella Flagg Young

Ella Flagg Young's pedagogical progressivism was aligned with Dewey's views, but she operated in a quite different environment from that of the philosopher. She spent almost her entire adult life in the public schools of Chicago, which at first glance seems an unlikely place from which to either study or advocate pedagogical reform. The fast-paced atmosphere of school and classroom life leaves little time to think imaginatively about how things can be different.

Given her career, Ella Flagg Young should have been an administrative progressive, one who changed school governance and management to enhance her own occupational prestige. She did hardly any of that, however, perhaps because she was a woman who was attuned to concerns other than personal or occupational advancement. Or perhaps it is because the men who led the movement for administrative progressivism were little inclined to make room in their ranks for a female colleague. Whatever the reasons, Ella Flagg Young's career reveals just how different her priorities were from those of the administrative progressives of her day. Even if they had invited her into their fold, it is unlikely that she would have joined them.

Early Life and Career

Born in 1845 in Buffalo, New York, Ella Flagg moved with her rather eccentric family to Chicago in 1858. Her early education was almost entirely home-based, as her parents prized individual freedom and self-direction. Prevented from entering high school because she had not completed a year of preliminary study in a Chicago school, she eventually enrolled in the normal department of a city high school and pursued a teaching certificate that was clearly differentiated from the diploma granted to regular high school students. In 1862, she began her career in the Chicago schools by teaching in an elementary school. She rose quickly through the ranks and eventually became

principal of the "practice school" portion of one of the city's high schools that had been set aside for normal school students.[58]

She continued to win promotions, moving to the principalship of a full elementary school and then to the principalship of a larger school. In 1887, she was made an assistant (or district) superintendent with responsibilities for the curriculum of the elementary schools and the quality of the teachers in her district. In her work as an administrator, her supervisory responsibilities gradually expanded from the traditional elementary school curriculum to the newer subjects such as manual training and its counterpart for girls, domestic studies. In 1898, shortly after Chicago centralized its school governance and hired a new, authoritarian superintendent, Young resigned her position to become a full-time graduate student at the University of Chicago. Her progress was facilitated there by President William Rainey Harper and John Dewey, both of whom sought closer ties between the university and the city's public schools. She received her undergraduate degree on the basis of examinations and soon was admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree. She enrolled in the first course Dewey taught at Chicago and became his first doctoral student. At the time Dewey had not really formulated his views about the relationship between democracy and education. Ella Flagg Young, with her 33 years of experience in the public school system, helped Dewey understand the limitations the current educational system placed on students and teachers alike and offered to him a vision of a freer, more participatory educational landscape.[59]

After receiving her doctorate, Young was appointed a professor of education. She became a popular teacher and a colleague of Dewey's who helped develop his famous Laboratory School. Because of her close ties with Dewey, she became caught up in a clash between Dewey and his colleagues in the School of Education at Chicago. In 1904, Dewey resigned under some pressure from the president and took a position at Columbia University. Shortly thereafter, Young also resigned, evidently tired of bickering and faculty politics. She soon left for Europe, where she traveled with her long-time companion Laura Brayton and studied education, particularly the German school system.[60]

Principal of Chicago Normal School

After her return from Europe, Young was rehired by the Chicago school system, this time as principal of the city normal school. Her graduate studies, her European experience, and her long years in the schools made her an ideal candidate for this position. She had a unique ability to combine theory with practice, and she also had a long record of positive contacts with the teachers of Chicago.

Young's doctoral dissertation, "Isolation in the Schools," gave her the chance to refine her educational views. In it she decried the lack of relationship between the various subjects that comprised the curriculum in the schools and also between the various elements (teachers, principals, superintendents) that composed the school bureaucracy. Her views of the dignity and importance of teachers made her the friend of classroom teachers and, potentially, the enemy of administrative progressives, who sought to mechanize the teachers' role in the new top-down form of school management. She brought these beliefs to bear on the curriculum and staff of the normal school, where she served until 1909, at which time she was chosen as superintendent of the Chicago schools.

Superintendent Young

Selecting a superintendent in Chicago in 1909 was a task fraught with problems. The schools were plagued by long-standing disputes among board members, were enmeshed

in the city politics that often featured clashes between the mayor and the council, and were reeling from fights with the growing Chicago Teachers Federation (CTF), an association of elementary teachers that had its roots in a pension protection group formed in the 1890s. Young's popularity with teachers and the teachers' federation, as well as her relative distance from the grubby city politics surrounding the schools, probably enhanced her candidacy. After her selection, she enjoyed a successful first year, which culminated in being chosen as the first woman president of the NEA. In that capacity, she helped extricate the NEA from the clutches of an old guard that was trying to prevent the modernization of the association.[61]

Young served in the superintendency until the end of 1915. Her early years were quite successful, but in 1913, she attempted to resign because of political changes in the board. Her situation had been complicated by a dispute she engaged in with the CTF over alternative methods of funding teacher pensions. Her resignation was not accepted by the board of education, which succumbed to political pressure on Young's behalf from the mayor's office. Still, Young's relations with the board were damaged and her last two years in office were marred by several acrimonious exchanges with board members. Finally, in 1915, faced with a new mayor and an increasingly fractious board, she again resigned from the superintendency, and this time her resignation was accepted.

Young's Progressivism

Ella Flagg Young's views were in direct opposition to those of the administrative progressives. The most important commitment she had was to collegial teacher–administrator relations. While she was a school principal, she had founded a club for her teachers where they could come for discussions of school affairs. This club soon became a movement, and Ella Flagg Young clubs flourished in most elementary schools of the city. Later, as an assistant superintendent, she founded a teachers' council in her district, a body that was to advise her in her administration of the schools. She had a long, cordial relationship with the CTF, the association founded to link the elementary teachers throughout the city with each other. Although the relationship with the CTF cracked a bit in the later years of her superintendency, the crack was superficial. Teachers remained committed backers of Young to the end of her superintendency.

Young's pedagogical views included support for object teaching, manual training, and other new subjects. A conscientious student of John Dewey and a collaborator with him in a variety of pedagogical experiments, she was clearly aligned with his real-life curriculum and inquiry-based teaching methods. It is her views about sharing authority with teachers, however, that most distinguish her from the administrative progressives and their budding authoritarian bureaucracies.

Teachers' Unions and Progressive Reform

Ella Flagg Young and John Dewey were both involved in progressive pedagogical reform in Chicago at the same time that Chicago's teachers inserted themselves into the reform agenda in the city. Under the leadership of Margaret Haley, the CTF became a prominent force in Chicago school politics. Haley became a national actor in educational affairs as well, delivering a remarkable and widely discussed speech at the 1904 convention of the NEA.[62] She also was active on behalf of teacher unions in other cities and in support of larger political causes such as women's suffrage. Along with her colleague, Catherine Goggin, Haley made Chicago teachers, particularly members of the CTF, into a force to be reckoned with in the city's politics, even beyond educational issues. She led, for

instance, a movement to increase the taxation of the city's corporations that earned her national attention. While Haley and her federation were never associated intimately with pedagogical innovation, her devotion to economic and political reforms that improved the financial support of public schools and ameliorated the occupational situation of teachers earned her a reputation as a tough-minded political reformer whose major goals were tangible educational improvements.[63]

In the early twentieth century there were many female teachers who, like Haley and Young, had chosen to forego marriage for "personal fulfillment outside the home." Having very different needs than the young women who would teach for a few years and then get married, these women banded together in city after city to fight for fairer pay and pensions. By 1910 half of all large cities in the United States had at least one organization representing female teachers. School boards had for decades paid women less than men for the same work on the grounds that equal pay would, given that women were the great majority of teachers, require exorbitant increases in cost and hence taxation, and that high salaries for females would discourage them from wanting to marry. The activism of women like Haley and Young to change this was largely unsuccessful during the progressive era, but they laid the groundwork for gains future generations of teachers would eventually make.[64]

Conclusion

Both John Dewey and Ella Flagg Young failed to achieve victories in the battles they fought. Public education emerged from the progressive era more influenced by the organizational reforms of centralization and curricular differentiation than by the pedagogical alterations sought by Dewey or the empowerment of teachers sought by Young. To put it more succinctly, the pedagogical progressives lost out to the administrative progressives. Although pedagogical progressives made significant headway in experimental and laboratory schools and had a substantial influence over many teacher-training institutions, they had little success in dislodging the traditional teacher-dominated, subject-centered curriculum that characterized most public and many private school classrooms.

These classrooms and the teachers who worked in them were now part of a streamlined, bureaucratic school system. Administrators were firmly in control of their teachers and deferential to their boards. A modernized educational apparatus had been firmly installed in the nation's urban schools.

Notes

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