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In Search of a Grand Narrative: The Turbulent History of Teaching

Judith R. Kafka
CUNY Bernard M Baruch College

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Judith Kafka (Baruch College, City University of New York)

A quarter of a century ago, in the concluding essay in an American Educational Research Association edited volume on the history of teaching, esteemed historian David Tyack (1989) observed: "Policymakers do not have a choice about whether to use history. They do, willy-nilly. The question is, 'How accurate is their historical map?'" (p. 408). Writing at a moment in which teaching and teachers were a central focus of educational policy making, Tyack argued that historians of education should do a better job making sure that policy makers get their history right. At the time, the very idea of a "right" history of teaching was somewhat thorny. With administrative histories of schooling on the descent and social history on the rise, scholars in the late 20th century were using new research methods and asking new questions about the multiple and varied experiences of different groups and individuals involved in the history of American education. In this context, the notion of a single, coherent narrative about the history of teaching seemed both outdated and out of reach. Yet Tyack maintained that synthesizing the different voices, experiences, and perspectives that would together constitute a grand history of teaching was a worthwhile—and even necessary—endeavor. Integrating new historical "knowledge into larger patterns of understanding," he argued, could "offer insight to policymakers by showing the connections between events as well as the genealogy of isolated issues" (p. 410). In order to develop such a narrative, Tyack urged historians of education to pay greater attention to the history of what and how teachers taught and to

identify commonalities that existed through and across time: "To what degree did the everyday work of teachers—instruction in classrooms—show elements of constancy *over* time and *between* different institutional settings and *among* teachers with different social characteristics?" (p. 418). Answering this question, Tyack maintained, would allow historians to develop a "new and complex" narrative that could inform policy makers (p. 419).

Tyack's challenge to historians has only become more relevant in the 25 years since he issued it. Policy makers' decisions have become increasingly "high stakes" for teachers, students, and communities, while school reformers continue to look to the past to justify their visions for the future. On the one hand, current school reformers are fond of stating that public education as we know it was developed over a century ago and that much about today's teaching no longer makes sense for today's students, in today's economy, within today's global context. On the other hand, policy leaders often present their solutions as emulating a mythical yesteryear of teaching—when schools were better, teachers were smarter, and students knew how to behave. Surely these policy makers and reformers would benefit from a more robust understanding of the past and the lessons it offers for the future. Yet historians of education have yet to produce the kind of synthesized, integrated history of teaching that Tyack called for.[1]

[1] Tyack himself offered two histories that come the closest to what he called for—*Learning Together* (1990), coauthored with Elizabeth Hansot, which presents a history of schooling and gender, and *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, coauthored with Larry Cuban (1995), which speaks directly to policy makers and those interested in school reform.

Their failure to answer his call, I believe, stems from three primary causes. First, researching the history of teaching is methodologically very challenging (Cohen, 1989; Cuban, 1984/1993; Tyack, 1989). Historical artifacts that indicate what happened in classrooms—teachers' and students' memoirs, textbooks and teacher guides, directives from supervisors, observational notes or reports from outsiders, letters and journals, photographs, videotapes, oral histories—are difficult to uncover and offer incomplete information when considered independently. Putting enough artifacts together to get a sense of teaching in any one classroom is quite an accomplishment, let alone accessing sufficient data to draw conclusions about teaching across a broad spectrum. Larry Cuban, whose 1984 book *How Teachers Taught* (reissued in 1993) remains the most thorough and important work on the topic to date, compared the historian of classroom teaching to a paleontologist who finds a bone that "is an infinitesimally tiny fragment of the skeleton, the skeleton an even tinier fraction of the population that the scientist wants to describe" (p. 14). With information about classroom teaching so hard to uncover, and the conclusions one can draw from that information so seemingly tenuous, historians have tended to focus on questions about education and the teaching profession that are easier to research and perhaps somewhat more satisfying to answer. Studies in recent years detailing political battles fought over schooling and the ways districts, cities, and states structure educational inequalities (either intentionally or otherwise) have helped

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More recently William Reese's *America's Public Schools* (2005) and David Labaree's *Someone Has to Fail* (2010) also provide sweeping overviews of the history of American public education.

illuminate the historical roots of many of today's educational conflicts and crises, but few include information about what actually went on in classrooms (Donato, 2007; Dougherty, 2004; Mirel, 1993/1999; Moss, 2009; Nelson, 2005; Podair, 2002; San Miguel, 2001; Steffes, 2012).

The second reason we lack a synthesized history of teaching is that most historical work produced in the past quarter century that *has* considered classroom practices has done so with a focus on historical specificity rather than grand narrative. This is understandable given the state of the field. In the late 1960s, revisionist historians challenged the traditional narrative of the history of education as a story of institutional expansion and progress (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Karier, Violas, & Spring, 1972; Katz, 1968). Their work questioned core premises about state-sponsored schooling—that it was a necessary and social good, that it represented democracy and equality, that it reflected the will of the people—and mirrored criticisms emanating from Black and Latino communities throughout urban America. In the decades that followed, historians of education often built on revisionist work by delving into the educational experiences of historically marginalized people and communities—including women and racial and ethnic minorities. The best of these histories both uncovered previously untold stories and reshaped the broader historical narrative.

Most notably, the past quarter century has seen the development of a robust body of literature on the history of African American education, building on the important work of James Anderson, whose *Education of Blacks in the South* (1988) combines a revisionist-like analysis of economic forces with careful documentation of African Americans' participation in and (limited) agency over the development of their

educational institutions (see also Butchart, 2010; Douglas, 2005; Fairclough, 2007; Rury & Hill, 2012; Walker, 1996, 2009; Williams, 2005). Other scholars in recent years have sought to fill in our knowledge about the classroom experiences of other historically marginalized groups—including Mexican Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and non-native-English speakers, although to be sure, many gaps remain (Adams, 1995; Amerman, 2010; Blanton, 2004; Blount, 2005; Donato, 2007; MacDonald, 2004; Osgood, 2005; Pak, 2002a, 2002b; Ramsey, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). As our understanding of the history of teaching has both deepened and widened in recent decades, however, the absence of an integrated narrative that offers some coherence—a forest from all these trees—has become all the more glaring.

Finally, I believe that we lack a broad narrative on the history of teaching because, as a group, historians have been conceptualizing the notion of "teaching" too narrowly. When Tyack reviewed what was known about the history of teaching 25 years ago, he and others understood the term to mean the actions taken by teachers with the intention of imparting knowledge or skills to students or for the purpose of guiding students to acquire knowledge and skills through a more active process. The question of how teachers taught, then, was really a question of what teachers did, and most historical scholarship on teaching focused on teachers' experiences and the social contexts of their work (Cuban, 1984/1993; Tyack, 1989;Warren, 1989). In the past several decades, however, researchers of classroom instruction have broadened our understanding of "teaching" to encompass what is commonly referred to as the instructional triangle—that is, the interaction that occurs between students and teachers around content, in particular contexts (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003; Lampert, 2001). Although the notion that

teaching is an interactive process dependent on multiple variables is hardly new, as a group, historians have been somewhat slow to consider the broader implications of the instructional triangle—namely, that it frames teaching as a social construct dependent on institutional context *and* the individuals in the room. Moreover, using the instructional triangle as an analytic tool allows us to acknowledge variations in the history of teaching that have mattered to groups and individuals while not ignoring the many commonalities that have existed across time and place. Put another way, applying the instructional triangle to historical analysis allows us to consider the role of each teaching variable—teacher, student, and content—throughout history and begin to construct a grand narrative.

And in fact we have a strong body of historical scholarship on each corner of the instructional triangle; we know quite a bit about who taught, who was taught, and, to a lesser degree, what was taught in American classrooms through time, but we have not focused sufficiently on how these parts have interacted to create a whole. For this review of research on the history of teaching, I use the instructional triangle as an organizing tool and frame of analysis. I consider what we know about the history of each variable in the triangle and how that knowledge informs our understanding of the history of teaching more broadly. I focus on studies published in the past quarter century, but some older publications remain too seminal to the field to ignore. Tyack's *The One Best System* (1974), for example, and Carl Kaestle's *Pillars of the Republic* (1983) both continue to serve as nearly definitive books on the development of schooling in the Progressive Era and antebellum period, respectively. I have for the most part limited this review to research on the history of teaching at the K–12 level and in public schools, although these

categories are more clearly defined today than they were in earlier eras, and so in some cases I stray beyond those boundaries. Even within these broad limits, the task that I have set is clearly enormous, and I can hardly do it justice in one essay.[2] Yet, given these caveats, my review has uncovered several themes about the history of teaching, which, taken together, being to form a grand narrative.

In the first section of this chapter I review historical research on who taught in American classrooms. One overwhelming theme throughout this literature is that policy makers, school leaders, and the general public have historically cared a great deal about *who* a teacher was, often basing their preferences on the belief that a teacher's social characteristics would shape his or, more often, her teaching practices. We have little evidence to support the notion that teachers' use of particular pedagogical strategies has consistently varied according to their gender, race, ethnicity, or class origins, but the historical record does suggest that teachers' social characteristics at times affected classroom teaching in other ways. Specifically, recent research on the history of teachers from oppressed or marginalized communities makes a fairly strong case that teachers' personal commitment to and belief about the purposes for their teaching often shaped their relationships with students and the interactions that occurred in their classrooms.

In the second section of the chapter I review research on the history of who was taught. We have a strong historical record on the ways in which students' teaching

[2] Areas of scholarship on the history of teaching that I was not able to address here include literature on the history of teacher training, the history of teaching students with recognized disabilities, and the history of arts education, among many others.

experiences have varied according to their race, class, and ethnicity, as well as the time and place they attended school. Often these different teaching experiences can be explained by school structures such as segregation and tracking, which functioned to reify social and economic inequities. At the same time, however, recent scholarship reveals that students (and their families) have also played an active role in shaping their teaching experiences—from challenging structural barriers, to contesting curriculum, to influencing teachers' perceptions of their students and their purposes in teaching them.

In the third section of the chapter I review research on the history of what was taught—a somewhat smaller body of literature than the other two, perhaps because it is more directly related to classroom practice. We have a much better record of what education leaders and reformers *believed* should be taught in school than we have of what actually transpired in classrooms. Nonetheless, what evidence does exist makes clear that teaching students how to behave has historically been a central purpose of education, although the specific means and ends of this behavioral training have varied. Teaching has also involved academic content, and recent subject-specific histories of teaching suggest that teachers' understanding of that academic content and their purpose in teaching it has often shaped classroom instruction as well.

These themes were not derived by ignoring differences in the history of teaching across place and populations but, rather, by investigating what those differences tell us about the history of teaching as a whole. The grand narrative that I have assembled is neither neat nor simple, and it is certainly not complete, but it captures the tumult and turbulence that constitute the history of teaching. It is a story of constancy and change and a tale of variation and commonality. More than anything, however, the history of

teaching is a history of contest and negotiation. Teachers, parents, elected officials, administrators, reformers, students, citizens, and communities have battled on stages both large and small over what it means to teach and what the role of public education should be in our American democracy. History does not predict the future, but it does hold lessons for today and, as Tyack suggested, provides a map to which we can look for guidance—especially as current battles over teaching have so many precedents in the past.

<h1>Section I: Who Taught in American Public Schools

Research on the history of teachers has grown enormously in the past quarter of a century. Prior to the 1980s, historians of education did not spend a great deal of time or thought considering the lives, circumstances, or actions of teachers. This began to change in the mid-1970s with the publication of Geraldine Clifford's *The Shape of American Education* (1975) and Paul Mattingly's *The Classless Profession* (1975)—both of which considered the development of teaching as a profession and teachers themselves as legitimate historical subjects. In the decades that followed, historians have often studied the history of teaching through teachers' experiences—especially as the rise of social history brought new attention to teachers as historical actors at the same time that the use of quantitative methods, on the one hand, and oral histories, on the other, gave historians new tools of inquiry. John Rury's (1989) essay on who became teachers, for example, used data on teachers' social characteristics—especially those related to class, geographic location, and gender—to paint a broad picture of the changing nature of the profession. Studies by scholars such as Kate Rousmaniere (1997) and Kathleen Weiler (1998) used

teachers' own voices to illuminate their experiences in the classroom and beyond and offered a more complete understanding of what it has meant to "teach" in particular historical moments and places. More recent scholarship has focused on the experiences of teachers historically marginalized—by American society in their own time and by researchers in the decades since. Adam Fairclough's (2007) study of African American teachers in the pre–civil rights South is the most prominent of this newest body of literature, but it is one of many that broaden our understandings of the history of teaching by extending the scope of our knowledge about who taught.

In general, teaching in American public schools has been done by women. But this was not always the case, nor has women's domination in the classroom gone uncontested. As many scholars have made clear in recent decades, it is impossible to separate the history of teachers from the feminization of teaching, as the identification of teaching as women's work has shaped both who entered the classroom and what they were expected to do once they got there. In the first part of this section I summarize what we know about the history of teachers through the lens of gender. I draw on a body of literature that has greatly expanded in the past quarter century, as scholars have debated why women taught and what effect their doing so had on the profession. This literature, which is focused primarily on the mid–19th to mid–20th centuries, tells us less than we might expect about what occurred in classrooms, but it tells us a great deal about how policy makers, school leaders, the general public, and teachers themselves have understood what it meant to "teach" at different moments and places throughout American history, and it demonstrates how perceptions of teachers in turn shaped their role in the classroom.

In addition to being women, the vast majority of public school teachers in the United States have historically been White, ranging officially from 95% of teachers in 1900 to 83% in 2008 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014; Rury, 1989). Yet many teachers—likely many more than we realize—were not White, or were not perceived as White at the time, and scholarship on their experiences—including their battles to even get in the classroom door—tells us a great deal about how the purpose and process of teaching have been understood and enacted more generally. In the second part of this section I review what we know about the history of teachers who were not considered "White" by larger society at the time, drawing on a new and rich body of literature documenting the experiences of African American teachers, as well as a considerably smaller trove of studies on the history of teachers from other racial- and ethnic-minority groups. As a whole, this scholarship makes a compelling case that teachers' social backgrounds did matter in their teaching—not in terms of the specific pedagogical strategies they used but in how they viewed and related to their students and their larger purpose as teachers.

<h2>Teachers and Gender: The Construction of a Profession

Teaching was not always considered women's work in the United States. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, teaching was usually conducted by men seeking to either supplement their incomes as laborers or craftsmen or support themselves while they prepared for more prestigious and lucrative long-term careers in areas such as the ministry, law, or medicine. Teaching was not considered a career but, rather, in the words of one commentator looking back from later in the 19th century, "a half-way house for

those bound for the learned professions, and a hospital for the weak-minded of those who have already entered them" (Hoffman, 1981/2003, p. 28).

This somewhat low opinion of teaching stemmed in part from the fact that there were very few requirements to become a teacher in the postcolonial era; school terms were short, attendance was irregular, and pay was relatively low. In general, one had to be willing to do the job, possess a level of education that exceeded that of those in the classroom (although often not by much), and agree to whatever rules the local parents and school board imposed on both the operation of the school and the teacher's personal life. Well-educated men willing to teach for meager salaries, endure difficult working conditions, and withstand a great deal of instability were hard to come by; those who did teach were often criticized as poorly educated and uninspired instructors—men who found themselves in front of a classroom because they had nowhere else to go. As one critic remarked in 1842,

> <ext>At least four-fifths of the teachers in the common schools in Illinois would not pass an examination in the rudiments of our English education, and most of them have taken to teaching because they hadn't anything in particular to do. (Kaestle, 1983, p. 21)

Teachers of the early 1800s were often remembered as drunkards as well as dim-witted, and because many used harsh disciplinary methods in an effort to maintain control of the schoolroom, they were frequently recalled as cruel as well (Clifford, 1989).

The stereotype of the incompetent and sadistic male schoolteacher was only one side of the story, however. Kaestle (1983) reported that most rural communities were happy with their "transient, low-paid, inexperienced teachers," who were hired to "provide children with rudimentary instruction at low cost under firm community control" (p. 21). Local districts hired their teachers in an open market; board members or district supervisors determined what qualified an individual to teach, what salary would be offered, and what duties teachers were expected to fill. In many rural schools then, "teaching" meant chopping wood, painting chalkboards, drawing water, and many other physically taxing duties in addition to ensuring that students learned basic skills in literacy and numeracy and a common set of values and behaviors (Finkelstein, 1989; Kaestle, 1983; McClellan, 1999; Sedlak, 1989; Zimmerman, 2009).

In general, the most important task assigned to early American teachers was to ensure the moral character of their charges. On this local school boards and state-level reformers tended to agree: Teachers were to instill in their students the values of hard work; respect for authority; and loyalty to God, family, and country. Early proponents of public schooling believed that the United States depended upon the morality of its citizens to self-govern and that, in the face of weakening social ties brought on by urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, schools represented a last line of defense against the destabilizing forces of indecency and impiety. As common schools proponent Orville Taylor wrote in 1835, "Instructors not only form a character for this world and one that will be estimated by men, but likewise a character for eternity, and one that will be estimated by a holy and righteous God" (p. 114).

When early 19th-century school reformers expressed concern about the purported poor quality of the nation's teachers, then, it was not instructional strategies that concerned them but teachers' "character"—a quality, according to Mattingly (1975), that they never fully defined but believed was the primary determinant of a teacher's effectiveness. A good teacher was understood first and foremost to be a good person, whose moral character would stand as both model and guide for his students. A teacher's moral standing in the community thus mattered more to most education leaders and local board members than any kind of academic knowledge or pedagogical skills he may have possessed. In fact in many towns the local minister determined who was fit to teach—no doubt often basing his decision on what he knew of the candidate's family and reputation (Herbst, 1989).

The schoolteacher was thus something of a contradictory figure in early America: portrayed as both an incompetent drunkard and a moral guide, he needed to be physically capable of chopping wood and disciplining his students but not necessarily well educated or trained to teach (Clifford, 1989; Kaestle, 1983; Mattingly, 1975). This conflicted representation of teachers as both models and scourges shifted in tone as women began filling most teaching positions across the country but never dissipated. Instead, teachers' purported strengths and failures became inextricably linked to the notion of teaching as women's work.

In truth, even as men held most teaching positions in the early 19th century, women were not absent from their ranks. Women often held private "dame" schools for very young children in the towns and cities of postcolonial America, and by the early 1800s women were hired across much of the rural North to teach young children in the

summers, while older students—especially the boys—were needed in the fields. Some of these women summer school teachers began to teach regular "winter" school as well, although they were in the minority. In the 1841–1842 school year, for example, women constituted 93% of all summer school teachers in Massachusetts and 35% of those who taught winter school; in Connecticut in 1839, 80% of summer school teachers were women, while in the winter their ranks fell to 23% (Tyack & Hansot, 1990). Yet the proportion of teachers who were women soon swelled—in some cases seemingly overnight; by 1850, a majority of teachers across the country were women, and in the Northeast and Midwest the figure was at least 80% (Rury, 1989).

Historians offer a variety of explanations for why women came to dominate the teaching profession, pointing to changes in the labor market that made teaching less financially rewarding for men than other jobs; the bureaucratization of teaching, which created supervisory positions for men and relegated women to positions of decreasing autonomy in the classroom; domestic and economic changes that allowed middle-class women to procure employment outside the home; and the financial advantages for districts that hired women, who could be paid substantially less than men in the same position. Historians have also considered why women chose to enter the teaching profession, noting that teaching brought many women freedom and independence, an opportunity to contribute financially to their families, a justification for pursuing their own education, and a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their work (Blount, 1998; Carter, 1986; Clifford, 1987, 1989; Hoffman, 1981/2003; Nolan, 2004; Rury, 1989; Strober & Lanford, 1986; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998).

At the time, those who argued the benefits of hiring women to teach America's children offered two primary rationales: Women were naturally better teachers than men, and women could be paid much less than men. The idea that women were naturally better at teaching than men was put forth by reformers often associated with the common schools movement and what was sometimes referred to as a "new" form of teaching—one that emphasized learning experiences over memorization and taught character through moral suasion rather than physical coercion. Influenced by the ideas of Johann Pestalozzi of Switzerland and the German Friedrich Froebel, New England educators such as Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, Francis Wayland, and Elizabeth Peabody promoted teaching strategies that were intended to instill in youth a natural love of learning and sense of social responsibility; teachers were expected to build on students' existing knowledge of the world and to guide them to learn by doing rather than merely reading or being told about something. In addition, while these mid-century reformers agreed with the prevailing wisdom that teaching was first and foremost about developing moral character, they believed that this goal could be accomplished more readily, and more effectively, through affection than through fear or competition (Hogan, 1990).

For proponents of this kinder, gentler form of teaching, women were preferable to men as teachers because patience and kindness were understood to be instinctive for women; advocates believed that if left to their own devices, women would naturally choose to maintain order through moral suasion instead of forced submission. As Horace Mann explained: "The greater intensity of the parental instinct in the female sex, their natural love of the society of children, and the superior gentleness and forbearance of their dispositions" led female teachers "to mildness rather than severity, to the use of

hope rather than fear as a motive of action, and to the various arts of encouragement, rather than to annoyances and compulsion, in their management of the young" (Hogan, 1990, p. 29). These reformers acknowledged that men could also use encouragement and moral suasion to teach youth how to behave and how to learn—Mann had observed men teaching in just this manner in Prussia—but they believed that these instructional methods came far more easily to women.

Some also argued that teaching was beneficial to women, as it would help prepare them to make the progression from girlhood to wife and mother. As Catharine Beecher, an early advocate of teaching as a natural part of womanhood, explained: "The great purpose of a woman's life—the happy superintendence of a family—is accomplished all the better and easier by preliminary teaching in the school" (Weiler, 1998, p. 12). Thus not only was teaching considered natural for women, but it was viewed as essential to their own development. In this sense, as Weiler pointed out, teaching was "redefined to match existing definitions of women's 'true' nature," and "teaching came to be viewed as simply part of a woman's life cycle" (p. 13). Indeed, in some parts of the country teaching soon became an unremarkable stage in life for many women. Geraldine Clifford reported that between 1830 and 1880, a full quarter of all native-born White women in Massachusetts had been schoolteachers at some point in their lives (cited in Hoffman, 1981/2003, p. 8).

If women seemed a natural fit for teaching the very young, however, local school boards were often wary of women as teachers for older youth—especially for older boys. First and most prominently, many board members and local citizens worried that women would not be able to control their older male charges, who reportedly often physically

challenged teachers and were unlikely to submit to the authority of a woman. In addition, some believed that women were intellectually inferior to men and therefore would not be able to teach more advanced material. Districts willing to give women teachers a try, however, reported remarkable results: Boys once wild and uncontrollable supposedly became tamed under a woman's influence; schools once in constant states of mutiny became cheerful places of learning with a gentle female teacher at the helm (Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998).

It is difficult to know what to make of these reports, some submitted by district administrators and school reformers who supported the hiring of women teachers, others from women teachers themselves. One such advocate, for example, claimed that wild boys were fascinated by dainty women and deferred to them out of a sense of duty; she concluded that a woman teacher ruled "the turbulent boys in her school very much as the shrewdest and wisest of her sex rule men outside, by seeming not to do it." A Massachusetts school district reported in 1838 of a school that had been unmanageable until a woman took over:

> <ext>To see a school of 50 or 60 in this condition, taken by one of the gentler sex, and brought within a few weeks to willing, ready, cheerful, energetic performance of every school duty, was indeed surprising, and the more so as it was done by one of mild and gentle spirit, and apparently of physical force and courage scarcely to brave a mouse. (quoted in Tyack & Hansot, 1990, p. 67)

These characterizations of women teachers as “mild and gentle” and full of love and affection for their students both conformed with and promoted gender stereotypes that served to limit women’s career and civic options even as they opened classroom doors. And certainly not all women, or students of women, agreed with these generalizations. Memoirs from the period are full of recollections of women teachers “as hard-boiled as any man” (p. 68), as well as teachers’ characterizations of their students that sounded neither loving nor maternal (Biklen, 1995; Finkelstein, 1975; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998; Zimmerman, 2009).

For reformers, women’s reported success in the classroom served to affirm the superiority of their new, modern instructional methods. “It is now admitted,” wrote one such reformer in 1843,

> <ext>that in the government of schools, moral influence should be substituted, as far as possible, in place of mere coercion. . . . [T]he teacher ought to aim, first of all, to cultivate the higher sentiments of our nature, to awaken self-respect, and to induce the child to become a law to himself.

Women, he continued, were naturally disposed to use these instructional methods, to good ends:

> <ext>Their very delicacy and helplessness give them a peculiar claim to deference and respectful consideration. . . . [T]hey are honourably distinguished from the other sex by warm affections, by greater faith in human nature, and in its

> capacity for good, and by disinterested and untiring zeal in behalf of objects that they love. (Tyack & Hansot, 1990, p. 68)

Framing women as natural teachers because they were "of purer morals" than men also affirmed moral character as a prerequisite in teaching and allowed districts to ignore other forms of qualification in a teacher candidate, such as advanced education or even literacy (Weiler, 1998, p. 13). As one district leader explained, a woman's "ignorance of syntax and low level of scholarship" might be forgiven when she applied for a teaching position if she had "common sense and a good heart" (McClellan, 1999, p. 24).

At times it can be difficult to distinguish true reformer enthusiasm for the natural superiority of women as teachers from administrative justifications for hiring what amounted to cheap labor. In urban districts, women were paid considerably less than men to fill the same position—from 1850 to 1900 women teachers were paid about one third the weekly salary of men (Tyack & Hansot, 1990, p. 84). Thus schools and districts that hired women, explained Ohio schools superintendent Samuel Lewis, were "able to do twice as much with the same money" (Kaestle, 1983, p. 123). In rural districts the pay differential between men and women was considerably smaller, and much of it was explained by years of experience (women teachers tended to have relatively little teaching experience since most only taught for a few years until they married). Yet hiring women teachers represented a savings to district boards nonetheless (Rury, 1986). It is perhaps no wonder, then, that the teaching force became increasingly feminized at the same moment that student enrollment and demand for new teachers were growing exponentially. The trend was most extreme in the booming cities of the Northeast and

Midwest. In St. Louis, for example, there were five male and five female teachers in 1844, but by 1858 those numbers were 20 and 108, respectively. In Cincinnati, the city employed 21 men and 38 women as teachers in 1840; a decade later 34 men and 108 women were teaching in the city's schools. By 1890, 92% of teachers in large cities were women (Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

Yet, while teaching was quickly becoming women's work as the 19th century drew to an end, the feminization of the profession did not occur uniformly. High school teaching remained a male domain well into the postbellum era; men still constituted about half the high school teaching force as late as 1900 (Rury, 1989). The rate of feminization also varied somewhat by race. During Reconstruction about half of the nation's African American teachers were men, but once Southern Whites gained control over Black schools, the number of men teaching in them rapidly shrank. In 1890 just 52% of Black teachers were women, by 1900 their percentage was 64, and by 1920 women constituted 82% of the Black teaching force nationally (Rury, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1990). The South was a regional outlier in the gender composition of its White teaching force as well. Although 80% of teachers in the Northeast and 82% of teachers in the Midwest were women in 1850, women constituted only 35% of all teachers in the South at the time and only 67% by 1900 (Rury, 1989). Historians have offered numerous explanations for this regional variation. Some have looked to cultural differences between the South and the rest of the nation and concluded that the South's more traditional values explain why men continued to teach at higher rates there. Others have focused on differences in the labor market, noting that educated men had more job opportunities in the urbanizing North and Midwest than they did in the South; still others have connected

the feminization of teaching to the formalization of schooling, theorizing that the longer school years in urban systems made it difficult for men to combine teaching with other employment (Carter, 1989; Hoffman, 1981/2003; Rury, 1989; Strober & Lanford, 1986; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998).

Even with these variations, however, by the 20th century teaching had become firmly established as women's work. In 1920, 85% of all teachers were women, and while the South still lagged behind the rest of the nation in the feminization of the teaching force, and cities tended to have a much higher percentage of women teachers than did rural areas, by the mid–20th century most of those distinctions had disappeared. Women constituted about 75% of teachers across all regions in 1950; those percentages changed somewhat in the decades that followed, but in general women have made up somewhere between 75% and 80% of the national teaching force ever since (Clifford, 1989; National Center for Education Statistics, 2014; Rury, 1989).

Whether women actually taught differently than men remains an open and perhaps unanswerable question. Memoirs and observations suggest that the "new" pedagogy reformers hoped to see widely implemented in American classrooms was more popular rhetorically than in practice (Reese, 2005). Barbara Finkelstein (1989), in her extensive review of primary-source documents detailing 19th-century teaching in schools for White children, did find evidence of a form of teaching that she termed "cultural interpretation," in that it involved explaining material to students and in some cases even using objects to demonstrate concepts; yet she, too, noted the rare appearance of this kind of teaching in descriptions of 19th-century classrooms run by either men or women. There is certainly documentary evidence that many 19th-century women did not use

corporal punishment in the classroom, and that some even used moral suasion in precisely the way Mann prescribed, but the same can be said of men—particularly in urban schools as the use of corporal punishment became less accepted there (Finkelstein, 1975, 1989).

Women teachers were certainly not treated with kid gloves by students or their parents. Reports and memoirs from the 19th century suggest that many women teachers were confronted by angry parents and physically challenged by older students just as men teachers were, although the precise means and methods of those confrontations may have differed. In many communities, male and female teachers alike were subjected to the common ritual of "barring the door," in which students would ceremonially prevent their teachers from entering the school and the teachers were expected to use physical force, negotiation, and bribery to regain access—often with an audience of adults and children looking on (Finkelstein, 1975; Zimmerman, 2009).

Yet, regardless of how much or how little their gender shaped what actually happened in the classroom, debates over the propriety and attributes of women teachers reflected popular beliefs about how women differed from men in general, and those beliefs undoubtedly helped shape teachers' interactions with students and their families. Indeed, 19th-century students often recalled their male teachers in hypermasculine terms, as individuals who could "fight for and with his flock even to the extent of engaging in duals" or "beat them all at ball, jump a great distance and keep order" (Finkelstein, 1975, p. 357). Women teachers, on the other hand, tended to be recalled as either conforming with or departing from the expectations placed upon their sex. Recollections of a Kansas teacher who beat her male students until they cried in pain and then joined them in their

tears out of shame that she had resorted to violence nicely capture both types of portrayal in one (Zimmerman, 2009).

The notion that women teachers inherently taught differently than men remained widespread throughout the 19th century and much of the early 20th—often in ways that were highly critical of women. Indeed, drawing on the same assumptions about biological and social differences between men and women that others used to promote women as teachers, critics of women as teachers argued that they were unsuitable for the classroom—especially classrooms containing older boys—precisely *because* women were too feminine, too soft, and too emotional. Observers were especially concerned because boys were dropping out of school at a much higher rate than girls: One study from 1909 found that 17% more girls than boys finished elementary school; another from 1907 showed that by the end of high school boys constituted only 39% of their grade (Tyack & Hansot, 1990, p. 171). Some critics claimed that the dominance of women in the classroom and the overly feminized environment they purportedly created were to blame. Thus women's so-called natural maternalism and their supposed inclination to cultivate learning through love and affection were often portrayed as liabilities rather than strengths; their reported reticence to impose physical punishment as well as their apparent intention to use teaching as a stepping-stone to marriage and motherhood were deemed morally weak and unprofessional (Hoffman, 1981/2003; Kaestle, 1983; Rury, 1991; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998).

Reaching its apex in the early 20th century, when the belief that women teachers were either feminizing their male students or scaring them away from schooling was termed "the woman peril" and announced as a national crisis, this critique of women

teachers underscores the degree to which teaching was still understood primarily as a process of character formation and one that happened through modeling rather than direct instruction. In this construct, women by definition could not serve as moral exemplars for boys in need of lessons on manhood, because women could never appropriately model male character. Admiral F. E. Chadwick articulated this view in an influential 1914 article about the problem of women teachers:

> <ext>No woman, whatever her ability, is able to bring up properly a man child. . . Men think in terms of steamships, railways, battleships, war, finance, in a word, the greatest energies of the world, which the woman mind never, in a practical way, really concerns itself with, nor can it do it. (Weiler, 1998, p. 24)

The woman peril was clearly based on popular beliefs about biological differences between men and women at the time, but it also grew out of two related concerns of the period: anxiety about the dismal state of American masculinity, on the one hand, and women's growing autonomy, on the other. Progressive Era leaders and dignitaries ranging from respected child psychologist G. Stanley Hall to President Theodore Roosevelt expressed concern that women teachers were softening future generations of men, rendering them overly civilized, weak, and incapable of defending the nation in battle (Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998). The New York City Male Teachers' Association argued in 1904 that in order for boys to learn masculinity, they should only be assigned male teachers after the age of 10:

> <ext>If it is granted that a boy should, during his school life, gain above all true, sterling, manly character, then we are left to aver that he must come under the immediate control of its only embodiment—a just, capable, and devoted man. (Tyack & Hansot, 1990, p. 159)

Although the New York City Board of Education chose not to adopt the association's proposal (which included higher pay for male teachers), it did not dispute the idea that more men were needed in the teaching profession. Indeed, many school districts and states actively worked to recruit more men into teaching; Philadelphia even started a normal school exclusively for men (Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

Yet, despite the rhetoric condemning women teachers and calling for more men to enter the field, men did not flock to the classroom. Teaching was already seen as women's work, and men could usually earn better salaries in a different job. Some even argued that teaching was inherently unattractive to men, who by their very nature would rather interact with adults than with children and rather be in a position of authority than required to follow the orders of others. In an essay titled "Why Teaching Repels Men," for example, C. W. Bardeen wrote confidently in 1908:

> <ext>Teaching usually belittles a man. . . . His daily dealing is with petty things, of interest only to his children and a few women assistants, and under regulations laid down by outside authority. . . . As a rule men teachers are uncouth, crude, ill at ease in company. (quoted in Clifford, 1989, p. 325)

This portrayal of teaching as work that offered little autonomy or intellectual stimulation became increasingly common in the 20th century. Teaching had become women's domain and thus, while perhaps still considered noble, was often portrayed as undignified and unworthy work for a man.

Early 20th-century concerns about American men's waning virility coincided with the rise of the women's movement and women's growing domestic and economic independence. Women's participation in the workforce was on the rise in general, and a woman's desire to work for wages—either out of economic necessity or for self-fulfillment—had become more socially acceptable, though it was also seen as threatening to the male-dominated social order. Critics worried that women were taking jobs that should have gone to men and that by finding meaning in their work, women were delaying or even shunning their rightful roles of wife and mother. In this context, as many historians have pointed out, the denigration of women teachers was part of broader national concerns about women's growing political, economic, and social autonomy (Carter, 1989; Hoffman, 1981/2003; Rury, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1990; Weiler, 1998).

Yet teaching was also viewed as distinct from other kinds of women's work, in that it was widely portrayed as a moral calling—second perhaps only to motherhood in its contribution to society. "We can conceive of no more sacred duty," pronounced Chicago superintendent of schools George Howland in 1882, "than that of choosing the teachers of our public schools." Teachers may have been ridiculed "throughout ages," he conceded, but they, "above all others, mold the character of the young—the future of all society" (Nolan, 2004, p. 110). The role of teaching was not to be taken lightly, then, or, according to those who hired teachers, undertaken for pecuniary gain. As a (female)

school reformer told Boston elementary school teachers in 1880, at a time when their wages were falling relative to other sectors, “If you merely want high wages, and teach only because you can get your living by it, you are not a teacher in any high sense of the term” (Leroux, 2006, pp. 174–175). School districts’ hesitancy to increase women teachers’ salaries was buttressed by the perception that women teachers were supported by their families and essentially worked for “pin money” (Carter, 2002, p. 19; Leroux, 2006).

Most women teachers in the 19th and early 20th centuries did in fact hail from what Rury (1989) termed “middling” backgrounds (p. 29) as the daughters of farmers or urban professionals, but many nonetheless needed their teaching incomes to support themselves and sometimes even their families. Polly Kaufman (1984) found, for example, that women who went West to teach as missionaries in the antebellum era overwhelmingly had economic motives for taking their positions. Many had lost parents or were self-supporting for other reasons, although they often apologized for having financial needs and promised that they also hoped to achieve the loftier goal of “doing good” as well as earning a living as teachers (p. 14).

Decades later, Lotus Delta Coffman’s (1911) survey of the social composition of the national teaching force documented, much to his dismay, the relatively low economic status of turn-of-the-century teachers. Although most teachers came from families of some economic means, since they had been able to attend school long enough to become teachers themselves, they often had deceased parents or had otherwise fallen on bad times and were in need of an income. In urban districts, Coffman found that many teachers were likely using part of their salaries to help support a relative (Carter, 2002). “The

classes with the least income are contributing the largest percentages of teachers," he noted (Coffman, 1911, p.77). To Coffman, the low social status of new teachers was troubling because as members of the lower classes, these new teachers did not in his view (and in the view of many others) represent the ideal moral character that American children were supposed to emulate. "The kind of people we have in teaching," he explained, "necessarily affects the kind of teaching we get" (Coffman, 1911 p. 14. As Janet Nolan (2004) made clear in her history of Irish and Irish American teachers, Coffman was particularly concerned about the incursion of Irishwomen into teaching, as he believed that they were unable to transmit the right values and norms to their students because of their own cultural deficiencies.

For Coffman and others, teaching remained an act of moral transfer. It was not what teachers knew or their pedagogical strategies that mattered but *who* they were in terms of culture and class. Thus 20th-century efforts to raise teacher "quality" by increasing education requirements for the profession have been viewed by many historians as intended to limit entry into teaching. Attending high school and then normal school was less about what was learned than about the ability to defer work for an additional two to six years of education before earning an income (Nolan, 2004). Moreover, school districts continued to consider aspiring teachers' so-called moral character when making hiring decisions and often deemed ethnic backgrounds a potential indicator of low morals. In New York City, for example, an independent Board of Examiners was established in 1896 supposedly to reduce local patronage in hiring practices. The board screened for moral character and ethnic accents as part of its

"merit"-based hiring system and often barred Jewish candidates from teaching positions based on the way they spoke (Collins, 2011; Markowitz, 1993).

Nonetheless, first- and second-generation immigrants from a variety of countries were increasingly turning to teaching as a means of social mobility in the early 20th century—by one account 43% of teachers in 1911 were second-generation immigrants (Hoffman, 1981/2003). For many, immigrants' new role as teachers confirmed their commitment to the American ideal, but to critics, their presence was cause for concern precisely because they did not seem American enough.

Teaching remained a two- or three-year job for most women at the turn of the century rather than a lifelong career, but that, too, was beginning to change—especially in large cities, where daughters of immigrants may have been reluctant to give up either the income or the relative autonomy that came with their work as teachers. Weiler (1998) cited studies finding that the mean length of service for teachers hired in 1880, for example, was more than 19 years in Boston and 14 years in Providence, Rhode Island. In Indianapolis around the same time, the average tenure for teachers was eight years. Some women taught most of their lives—in Boston 18% of women teachers taught more than 40 years. Since in most of the country teaching and marriage were mutually exclusive life options for women, as married women were barred from teaching, women who taught for long periods of time had essentially exchanged their expected role as wife and mother for that of teacher. To some observers, the development of a corps of teachers, totally devoted to their work and not distracted by the search for a husband, was good for the profession (Leroux, 2006). As George Howland, superintendent of the Chicago schools, maintained: "This school-keeping of ours is not a make-shift . . . means for tiding over an

unforeseen bar in our business career, a ready resort from the tedium of housekeeping . . . but a high calling" (Nolan, 2004, p. 110).

Some women teachers certainly enjoyed the independence and autonomy that came with teaching. As Weiler (1998) found in her study of rural women teachers in California, while most taught only briefly, contributing to their families' income until marriage, other women "used teaching to build lasting careers and to gain independence, power, or adventure" (p. 126). Indeed, even before they had the right to vote for themselves, women could be elected or appointed to political and supervisory positions within the growing educational bureaucracy (Blount, 1998; Carter, 2002; Murphy, 1990; Rousmaniere, 2005; Weiler, 1998, 2011). And while most women teachers either lived at home or with relatives, or boarded with families that kept a close watch over them, many were able to achieve a level of previously unknown freedom by virtue of their incomes (Pieroth, 2004; Rousmaniere, 1997; Weiler, 1998, 2011).

Yet many observers found the notion of a cadre of women who never married and with no intention of living a traditional domestic life highly problematic as moral models for American children. Indeed, as anxiety about gender roles continued to escalate as the 20th century progressed, women who chose economic independence and a teaching career over marriage and motherhood were increasingly considered suspect. Critics speculated that those who remained in teaching rather than fulfilling their natural role as wives and mothers might be unfit for the job of moral exemplar. The career teacher came under particular scrutiny in the years following World War I, as critics conflated fears of homosexuality with apprehensions about female independence. "Some of them [spinsters] are teaching our daughters," explained one such critic in 1932:

> <ext>They are responsible for the next generation of mothers. . . . Can womanhood be taught by women who, in the main, have grown old in a bewilderment of sterility. . . . Can it be taught by those who consistently belittle the feminine mind-stuff of their pupils? (Blount, 1998, p. 100)

Those who worried about spinster women as teachers were again viewing teaching as a transfer of character and believed that by definition married women represented a better type of femininity to which boys should be exposed and a better role model for girls. As a 1937 school bulletin promoting the elimination of marriage bars for teachers in Kentucky explained:

> <ext>The attractive woman who finds it easy to marry and establish a home is the kind of woman that the schools need and cannot secure or retain. . . . Married women tend to have saner views on sex, and are less likely to become “queer” than single women. (Blount, 1998, p. 102)

Weiler (2011) maintained that in fact teaching did provide the opportunity for single women to pursue same-sex romantic relationships with relatively little scrutiny. As part of a professional network of career women, teachers would dine, travel, and even live together without too much outside attention until roughly the 1940s, when fears that spinster women could be sexually attracted to one another and perhaps even sexually active began to take hold.

Pressure to eliminate marriage bars for women teachers (typically no such bar existed for men) to ensure more womanly role models in the classroom mounted, and the teacher shortages brought about by World War II provided a practical impetus: Schools needed teachers, and married women were available. Within a few short decades, the composition of the national teaching force changed drastically. While in 1940, 69% of women teachers had never been married and an additional 17% were divorced or widowed (Blount, 1998), by 1960, the spinster teacher had largely been replaced; almost 60% of women teachers were married, which was roughly twice the proportion of married women in the general workforce (Blount, 2005). Thus while women continued to dominate the teaching ranks in the second half of the 20th century, the *kind* of woman who taught had changed.

Concerns about teachers' gender did not dissipate once the majority of teachers complied with (female) heteronormative expectations, however. Indeed, as Blount (1998, 2005) documented, in the years following World War II, growing anxiety about the prevalence of homosexuality among American boys, along with a severe teacher shortage, helped feed a nationwide campaign to bring more "manly," married men into the teaching profession. During the war years many men who had been teachers left the classroom to either join the military or pursue more lucrative opportunities elsewhere, and few seemed interested in returning to the relatively low-paying job once the war had ended; by 1945 the American teaching force was only 17% male (Blount, 1998). As districts and schools faced booming student enrollments and growing teacher shortages, they were cognizant of concerns about the teaching force and made a concerted effort to bring more men into teaching. Their recruitment methods, which included promising men

easy ascension to high-paying administrative jobs, placing them in high school positions that often paid more than elementary school positions, and supplementing their teacher's salary with payment for coaching, proved successful. The percentage of American teachers who were men increased to 27 by 1955 and nearly 32 by 1965 (Blount, 1998).

Yet, even as the number of men in teaching grew, concerns that teaching remained a female or feminized profession continued. In the 1960s and 1970s, this concern was at times framed in technical terms: critics asserted that women and men taught differently and that men's techniques were more appropriate or effective. A 1964 study, for example, found that male elementary school teachers had "more favorable attitudes toward democratic practices in classrooms, more permissiveness, more child-centeredness in educational views, and more emotional stability than female teachers." Patricia Sexton, in her 1969 book about the decline of manliness in America, echoed earlier generations when she wrote that because women teachers were not interested in "boy games," they could not engage boys in a matter that interested them and thus "this intense inner life of boys is given little chance for exposure in the academic classroom" (quoted in Ellenburg, 1975, pp. 330–331). Sexton's critique was linked to a more ominous warning about the moral threat that female—or feminized—teachers posed to boys and men. Indeed, Sexton cautioned that putting the "wrong" male in the classroom—a feminine, even potentially homosexual man—would cause more harm than good in not providing boys with a manly role model from whom to learn.

Fears of homosexual teachers—and homosexual men in particular—went hand in hand with moral definitions of teaching at a time when fears of homosexuality were growing. Teachers were targeted both because they were seen as uniquely positioned to

recruit youth into a purportedly deviant way of life and because "many believed teaching to be a profession that held particular appeal for homosexuals" (Blount, 2005, p. 94). Policies and practices aimed at purging schools of homosexual teachers in the postwar era defined teaching not as a technical act but as a moral one. As a California court ruled in response to a teacher who had been fired for homosexual activity in 1962 because homosexuality violated community standards of decency, by definition anyone found to have engaged in such activity was not fit to teach (Blount, 2005). Public campaigns to bar homosexuals from teaching in the 1970s also hinged on the argument that teachers were, above all, role models for students. That is, no one questioned gay or lesbian teachers' pedagogical practices or suggested that their ability to teach children how to read, do math, or master other academic content was somehow impaired by their homosexuality; rather, proponents of laws banning homosexuals from the classroom argued that gay teachers posed a threat to the moral character of their students just by being there. It was not how they taught but what they represented that concerned antigay activists such as Anita Bryant (Graves, 2013).

In the last several decades of the 20th century, public disquiet about the lack of male heterosexual teachers in American classrooms was heightened by rising divorce rates, single motherhood, and the number of boys (and girls) without a father figure in the home. Concerns about the absence of male role models in the classroom often intersected with concerns about teachers' race. Specifically, policy makers advocating for the hiring of more male teachers often argued that there was an acute need for Black and Latino male teachers to work in inner-city schools, where they could serve as positive role models for Black and Latino boys without fathers in their homes (Ellenburg, 1975).

Concerns about how few male role models enter and stay in the classroom continue today. The male teacher shortage has remained particularly acute at the elementary level, where men constituted about 17% of all teachers in 1975 and only 9% in 2007 (Ellenburg, 1975; Scelfo, 2007).

Teachers have, of course, been subject to criticism for reasons that were not specifically about gender. Teachers' supposed inadequate or inappropriate preparation for their work in the classroom is a perennial target of school critics, and questions about teachers' innate intelligence are raised on a regular basis. State-level reformers in the 19th and early 20th centuries attacked teacher quality in part as an effort to wrestle control over schools away from local towns and municipalities and at times in the hopes of reducing the number of immigrants and lower-class women entering the classroom. In the postwar era, just as possession of a college degree became a standard prerequisite for teaching, critics questioned the appropriateness of colleges and universities to train the teaching force (Fraser, 2007). Today, teacher unions are under attack—supposedly for protecting the jobs of incompetent teachers and draining public coffers with expensive pensions. Yet, even if criticisms about the low-quality teaching force are no longer explicitly about gender, the feminization of teaching is necessarily implicated, given that teaching remains a predominantly women's profession.

This is not to suggest that teachers have remained passive targets of reform. Teachers often participated in debates about the nature of their profession and formed mutual aid societies, professional associations, and labor unions to both protect their interests and advance knowledge about teaching (Carter, 2002; Murphey, 1993; Murphy, 1990; Rousmaniere, 2005). Teachers have at times conformed with and at other times

resisted or even subverted expectations about what it meant to teach and what it meant to be a teacher. At times, as I will discuss in section II of this chapter, teachers' perceptions of their work and their purpose in the classroom were informed by interactions with students. But teachers' beliefs were also shaped by their own backgrounds and personal experiences—especially for those who were from oppressed or marginalized racial or ethnic communities.

<h2>Teachers, Race, and Ethnicity

Non-White teachers of any gender were somewhat rare in early American public schools. In the North, the "common" schools that developed mid–19th century across the Northeast and Midwest—primary-grade schools funded by local taxpayers and open to all White boys and girls in the neighborhood—hired only White teachers. Even when northern towns provided some kind of public education for Black children, their teachers were usually White (Douglas, 2005). This held true even though most Black children attended segregated schools in the antebellum North. According to official census records from 1850, for example, there was only one Black teacher in all of New Haven, Connecticut, despite the existence of several schools for Black children at the time (Moss, 2009); no Black teacher was hired at any of Philadelphia's several Black schools until 1862 (Douglas, 2005).

In the pre–Civil War South, slaves were often forbidden from learning how to read, and some states also banned the education of free Black youth and adults. Nevertheless, Black teachers existed, often running clandestine schools for adults and children alike (Williams, 2005). Freedmen's Bureau officials and northern missionaries

who arrived in the South to aid in the education of former slaves during and following the Civil War were surprised by the number of Black teachers they encountered (Fairclough, 2007). Ronald Butchart's (2010) groundbreaking study on the education of freed southern Black Americans from the beginning of the Civil War through Reconstruction verified this. In a careful examination of both archival records and a database that he and his colleagues created of more than 11,600 individuals, Butchart found that alongside schools established by the Freedmen's Bureau and church missionaries, newlyfreed men and women often established their own schools in the Civil War and post–Civil War South—in some cases expanding clandestine schools they were already operating and in other cases starting new schools. As Butchart noted, although some southern Black teachers "wrote awkwardly," as did many southern White teachers, others "wrote with flawless grammar and spelling" and had clearly been well taught by someone (p. 23).

Yet, while Black teachers may have been willing and able, the White men and women who ran freed-people's schools during and after the Civil War usually preferred to hire White teachers. As Linda Perkins (1989) reported, qualified Black teachers were often denied teaching positions by missionary organizations working in the South. One study revealed that the largest of these organizations, the American Missionary Association, while theoretically supporting the notion of Black-run schools, "rarely relinquished control," believing that "blacks were not yet capable of assuming that responsibility" (p. 348). Fairclough (2007) found confirmation of this view. Missionary leaders and Freedmen's Bureau officials alike were often disdainful of Black teachers, whom they characterized at best as illiterate and at worst as parasites, preying on Black

communities' desire to acquire an education and their belief that Black-operated schools, and Black teachers, were better for Black children.

There was no question that the newly freed people often preferred Black teachers to White teachers—especially to White southern teachers who not so long ago had been supporting and even fighting for their enslavement. Yet opposition to White teachers went beyond historical racial resentments; Black parents and community leaders grounded their resistance to White teachers in observations and reports of appalling teaching practices, which included derogatory language and physical abuse. As a Black agent for the Freedmen's Bureau explained to his superiors, Black families objected "to paying persons who continually insult them, called them 'Niggers,' rap their children over the head with heavy sticks, and totally neglect everything connected with their vocation except the collection of the salary" (Fairclough, 2007, p. 64).

Black opposition to White teachers was not limited to the South. Northern Black communities sought Black teachers for their children as well. In towns and cities that provided segregated schooling for Black youth, parents believed, for good reason, that Black schools were assigned the least-competent teachers—those who were unqualified or deemed undesirable for White students (Perkins, 1989). Even when White teachers' qualifications and mental fitness were not in question, however, many Black community members believed that only a Black teacher could adequately understand the Black child and the racial uplift that his or her education was intended to provide. As one advocate for Black teachers explained in 1865:

> <ext>We know by experimental knowledge that colored children make greater advancement under the charge of colored teachers than they do under white teachers, therefore we consider it to be our incumbent duty, as lovers of the advancement of our race, to see to it, that our schools are under the charge of colored teachers. (Douglas, 2005, p. 49)

In this view, the primary benefit of having Black teachers instruct Black youth was a matter of mutual understanding: Black teachers, their advocates maintained, understood Black students' experiences and would thus interact more positively with them. "Colored persons, their literary qualifications being sufficient, should receive the preference" in hiring for Black schools, argued the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League in the early 1860s, "not by reason of their complection, but because they are better qualified by conventional circumstances outside of the school-house" (Douglas, 2005, p. 50).

While 19th-century reformers who advocated for the hiring of women teachers often asserted that women inherently used different instructional strategies than men used, proponents of Black teachers for Black students made a slightly different argument: Black students would do better in school if instructed by a Black teacher—not because of specific content knowledge or pedagogical techniques but by virtue of the relationship they would establish as members of the same racial community. In fact, based on the very little that we know about how 19th-century teachers conducted their classrooms, it appears that Black teachers' instructional strategies were often similar to those used by White teachers at the time. Traditionally, in small, rural, ungraded classrooms this meant

that students were grouped by age and ability and taught through rote memorization and recitation, at times with older children helping to monitor the younger ones. Teachers expected to manage and control their students' behavior through a combination of physical punishment (or the threat of punishment) and academic competitions that encouraged students to focus on their lessons (Douglas, 2005; Finkelstein, 1989). Moreover, as the century progressed and more and more Black teachers received instructional training at normal schools or from graduates of normal schools, they were exposed to many of the same pedagogical ideas as their White counterparts: that is, teacher trainees of both races were encouraged to become objects of affection rather than objects of fear, to draw on their students' experiences and existing knowledge when teaching new material, and to make their lessons concrete rather than abstract (Fairclough, 2007).

Yet to suggest that Black and White teachers may have used some of the same instructional strategies—and in fact taught much of the same formal content—in 19th-century schools is not to suggest that the teaching that occurred in classrooms with Black teachers was the same as the teaching that occurred in classrooms with White teachers. Black teachers' perspectives of their students and their beliefs about their purpose in teaching wrought a qualitatively different experience for their students. This was partly because of how teachers interacted with their students and partly because of unofficial curricular differences in their classrooms. Butchart (2010) referred to these unofficial curricular differences as the "intangible lessons" that teachers of different backgrounds offered their students, and he distinguished among lessons wrought by teachers who viewed education as part of the emancipation process, teachers who wanted to be useful

to former slaves, and teachers who wanted to "extend subordination" through schooling. "All sorts of teachers could contribute to [the freed-people's] literacy and engage them in the elementary sciences," he argued, "yet each sort would have conveyed quite different lessons about compassion, commitment, race, democracy, justice, and human possibility" (p. 121).

Butchart (2010) pointed to differences in teachers' commitment to teaching (most White teachers promised to teach for one or two years only) as well as their beliefs in the purpose of teaching (documented in letters, memoirs, and teaching applications) to posit that teachers' race mattered in freed -people's schools, noting that "teachers' perceptions and intentions are important even though students may make something very different out of their education than teachers expected" (p. 122). Commentators at the time made similar arguments based on a combination of gut feeling, anecdotes, and their own observations. Black Americans and White Americans alike were well aware of the national racial caste system, and proponents of Black students' interests felt confident that racial relations impacted classroom interactions. As Bishop James Walker Hood argued to the North Carolina constitutional convention in 1869,

> <ext>It is impossible for white teachers, educated as they necessarily are in this country, to enter into the feelings of colored pupils as the colored teacher does. . . I do not think that it is good for our children to eat and drink daily the sentiment that they are naturally inferior to the whites, which they do in three-fourths of all the schools where they have white teachers. (Fairclough, 2007, p. 61)

His words indicate a belief that teaching was not just the delivery of formal content but a social relationship and that teachers' views and orientation toward their students mattered.

As the 19th century turned into the 20th, much of the debate over the value of a Black teacher for Black students moved north, where it was complicated by its entanglement with the larger question of racial integration. Outside of the South, Black teachers remained something of a rarity in the early 20th century. Nationally, only 5% of American teachers were Black in 1900, even as African Americans constituted about 11% of the population at large, and almost all American Black teachers were working in the South. This underrepresentation in part reflected the unequal education afforded Black students, who tended to have larger class sizes than their White peers and lower enrollment rates. But African Americans were also underrepresented in the teaching force because they were almost never permitted to teach White students (Rury, 1989). Thus as northern Black communities fought to desegregate their schools in the late 1800s, they usually lost their Black teachers in the process. As one Ohio superintendent explained after the state passed legislation banning school segregation there in 1887, "Negroes gave up their teachers when they gave up their separate schools" (Douglas, 2005, p. 111).

For many Black parents and leaders, then, school integration appeared to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, allowing Black children to attend the same schools and classrooms, and access the same materials and educational opportunities, as their White peers seemed essential for achieving racial equality; on the other hand, ensuring that Black students were instructed by Black teachers also seemed crucial to their success. As a supporter of segregated schools explained, "It is very necessary that

[the Black child's] teacher have sympathy, patience, interest and love. The teacher that can best meet these requirements is the Negro." A Black teacher, according to this logic,

> <ext>knows the peculiarities of his students, their nature; understands their modes of expression, their temper; can read their emotions far better than anyone else. . . . Being naturally interested he will discern the child's tendencies in their earliest stages and provide remedies accordingly. (quoted in Douglas, 2005, p. 173)

Quite similar to descriptions of teaching presented by 19th-century reformers insistent on the superiority of women teachers, this view emphasized teaching as a personal relationship, based on affection and understanding. That most White teachers would not possess the required love, sympathy, and patience for Black students was understood.

Thus in some northern communities, Black leaders and parents believed that the benefits of school integration were not worth the cost of exposing their children to teachers whose demeanor ranged from aloof to downright hostile. In some districts—particularly in southern New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio—Black communities actively sought to maintain or establish racially segregated schools in an effort to ensure that their children would be educated by teachers of their own race (Douglas, 2005). By the 1930s, the collective wisdom in many communities held that Black students excelled only when instructed by Black teachers. As W. E. B. Du Bois famously articulated in his 1935 essay "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?":

> <ext>The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils, and between teacher and pupil, on the basis of perfect social equality, as will increase this sympathy and knowledge. (p. 328)

For Du Bois and many others, to subject Black children to the prejudice of White teachers, who neglected Black students, bullied them, or "literally rendered" their lives "a living hell" in the name of equality, was both illogical and unwise (p. 330). Certainly evidence at the time suggested that Black students taught by White teachers often did not fare well. Davison Douglas (2005), in his study of northern school segregation in the Jim Crow era, documented numerous reports of racial prejudice, harassment, and abuse visited upon Black children by their White teachers—often in front of White peers. And several research studies at the time found that Black students attending Black schools with Black teachers remained in school longer and were more likely to graduate than their peers in racially mixed schools with White teachers.

Maintaining segregated schools did not guarantee the presence of Black teachers in the North, however. In Pittsburgh, for example, the city school district refused to hire any Black teachers in the early 20th century—even to teach in Black schools. Once the city did begin to hire a few Black teachers in the late 1930s, it assigned them to teach nonacademic subjects such as physical education and industrial arts in Black schools (Douglas, 2005). Even in northern cities where Black teachers *were* hired to teach in all-

or predominantly-Black schools, their numbers often did not reflect student enrollment rates. In Cincinnati 11.8% of the student body was Black in 1928, but only 6.5% of its teachers were African American. On the other hand, some cities, such as Indianapolis and Gary, Indiana, hired Black teachers at a somewhat higher rate than the student population (Douglas, 2005).

In truth the value of Black teachers was often highly contested—even within Black communities. Indeed, as Michael Fultz (1995) has pointed out, African Americans' fight for educational equality "often inadvertently slighted the contributions and accomplishments of African American teachers in order to emphasize the discriminatory neglect and impoverishment of African American education generally" (p. 421). To fight segregated schooling frequently meant to devalue African American teaching, since the two were inextricably linked—particularly in the South. Thus Charles Thompson, dean of the School of Education at Howard University, published a study in 1935 refuting the notion that Black students fared better in segregated settings by demonstrating that those who attended racially mixed high schools had higher graduation rates than those who attended all-Black schools (Douglas, 2005). Others pointed out that Black educators on average were not as well educated as their White counterparts—especially in the rural South. A 1933 report, for example, found that 22.5% of Black elementary school teachers had no education beyond high school, compared with only 5.7% of White elementary school teachers (Fultz, 1995).

Within a few decades, however, the education gap between Black and White teachers in the South had largely disappeared, and by the mid–20th century Black teachers in many southern states had received, on average, *more* training than their White

peers—often because well-educated Black men and women had few other professional opportunities. Some teachers at the region's highest-profile Black high schools even held PhDs from prestigious northern universities. It is no wonder, then, that many Black Southerners took great pride in their teachers, even if, as Fultz suggested, their worth was often not recognized by Black activists and scholars working for school desegregation (Rury & Hill, 2012; Walker, 2000).

Tension within the African American community over the intrinsic value of Black teachers in the pre-desegregation era has to some degree been repeated by historians. The loss of Black teachers, or teaching positions available to African Americans, as a result of school desegregation in the South has been well documented. In almost every state and district that underwent court-ordered desegregation (as well as most border states that underwent desegregation immediately after *Brown*), Black teachers were demoted, failed to have their contracts renewed, or were outright fired as Black students were sent to White schools, with White faculty, White administrators, and White staff. While in absolute terms their numbers may have grown with the expansion of schooling more generally (and in fact nearly doubled between 1954 and 1970), in relative terms the ranks of Black teachers shrank as White teachers were hired at a much higher rate (Fultz, 2004). A widely used estimate puts the total job loss of African American teaching positions in the South at more than 30,000 from 1954 through the early 1970s (Ethridge, 1979), and in recent years a growing body of scholarship has sought to document the ways in which the loss of Black teachers was harmful for Black youth. Vanessa Siddle Walker's *Their Highest Potential* (1996) is probably the best known of this body of work, but it has been joined (and preceded) by other scholarship—most of which largely draws

on oral histories to gain a better understanding of the teaching that occurred in segregated Black schools (Cecelski, 1994; Fairclough, 2007; Foster, 1997; Sowell, 1974).

One prevalent finding is that Black teachers taught in ways that were seen as particular to the needs of their Black students. Specifically, Black teachers teaching in segregated Black schools have been characterized in much the same way that their 19th-century advocates foresaw—as attentive to both the instructional needs of the individual and the larger goal of education as a means of racial uplift for an entire people. In a review of scholarship on Black education in the South from 1935 to 1969, Walker (2000) consistently found reports of southern Black teachers as having "high expectations" and "making" students do their work. Moreover, these teachers reportedly

> <ext>assumed the responsibility of interacting with students beyond the confined class periods and interceding when external difficulties could prohibit the objectives they held for a particular child. Teachers held extracurricular tutoring sessions, visited homes and churches in the community where they taught, even when they did not live in the community, and provided guidance about "life" responsibilities. They talked with students before and after class, carried a student home if it meant that the child would be able to participate in some extracurricular activity he or she could not otherwise participate in, purchased school supplies for their classrooms, and helped to supply clothing for students whose parents had fewer financial resources and scholarship money for those who needed help to go to college. (p. 265)

In this view, Black teachers not only took responsibility for the technical, academic instruction of their students but also held themselves responsible for their students' life success—and for the long-term success of the African American people. Black teachers were characterized as both demanding and dedicated and as exhibiting the very moral and political characteristics that their advocates claimed they would. This "cultural teaching style," according to Walker, was a product of African American teachers' training and of their professional networking. Rury and Hill (2012) made similar arguments about the reported teaching styles of Black teachers in the context of celebrated Black high schools in the North.

Other historians have encouraged caution in analyzing the positive memories of former Black teachers and their students. Most prominently Adam Fairclough (2007), in his book on Black teachers in the segregated South, argued that while those "recollections tell an important part of the story," they overlook other aspects of the Black teaching tradition that were harmful—especially the use of corporal punishment (p. 288). Physical coercion was not uncommon in schools for any race in the early 20th century—despite official condemnation of the practice by most teacher educators and many district administrators. Yet Fairclough claims that beatings, whippings, and other forms of physical punishment were administered more often in Black southern schools than in White ones in part because the practice was more accepted among Black families and in part because Black parents lacked any influence over White school boards had they wanted to complain. Data on school discipline rates prior to the late 1960s are relatively scarce, and it is difficult to ascertain the reliability of the two sources upon which Fairclough relied—one from the city of Birmingham, which tracked recorded instances of

school suspensions and the use of corporal punishment in its schools in the late 1800s, and one from a six-week period in Columbia, South Carolina, in the late 1920s—to support his claims that Black teachers used corporal punishment more frequently than White teachers. Yet his larger assertion—that Black teachers at times inflicted physical punishment on their students and that not all youth flourished under such circumstances—is undoubtedly true. Others have pointed to the prejudices that some Black teachers themselves held—particularly against darker-skinned Black students (Foster, 1997)—or noted that participants in oral history interviews are more likely to have positive recollections of their experiences than the population as a whole (Rury & Hill, 2012).

What historical scholarship on Black teachers makes clear, however, is that for the most part Black teachers teaching in segregated Black schools played a particular role in the history of teaching. They taught within a system of oppression, and yet many sought to subvert that system. The best of these teachers shared life lessons with their students as well as academic ones and represented a degree of social and economic success within struggling communities—even as they pushed their students to achieve more. We need not romanticize segregated settings or sanctify Black teachers—some of whom surely were incompetent, cruel, and uneducated, just like some of their White peers—to recognize both their importance and what their history tells us about the history of teaching more broadly. Specifically, White teachers may have used similar pedagogical techniques and taught a similar formal curriculum as Black teachers, but the interactions that occurred between teachers and students, and the sense students made of those interactions, often varied considerably. Teachers' orientation toward their students

and their beliefs about the purpose of teaching, as well as students' perceptions of their teachers, shaped what happened in their classrooms.

Historical literature on African American teachers in the post–civil rights era tells a similar, if less detailed, story. Christina Collins (2011) described the difficulties that Black teacher candidates faced getting hired in New York City schools in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and the battles waged over teaching assignments that tended to place those who were hired in predominantly-Black schools. In other cities Black teachers were hired at rates more consistent with the local Black population and percentage of Black students in the school system, but African American teachers in these cities were also primarily assigned to predominantly-Black schools, which were often chronically underresourced, overcrowded, and largely considered the most difficult placements by teachers of all races (Collins, 2011; Dougherty, 2004; Neckerman, 2007). In general, the experiences of Black teachers in the latter part of the 20th century have not been as well researched as those from the pre–civil rights era. The historical scholarship that does exist, however, indicates that many Black teachers continued to feel a particular obligation to their Black students, even as, in desegregated settings, they also felt a responsibility to represent their race to White teachers, students, and families (Foster, 1997; Wilson & Segall, 2001). At the same time, Michele Foster's (1997) oral histories, which provide a rich set of narratives about Black teachers' perspectives on teaching, also suggest that Black teacher–student relationships may have been shifting in the last decades of the 20th century, even in highly segregated settings, as class differences may have begun to trump feelings of racial solidarity. Jean Anyon's ethnographic *Ghetto Schooling* (1997) depicted particularly troubling interactions between Black teachers and

their Black students in a segregated school, including clear descriptions of abuse. Hopefully historians of education will continue to explore and document the experiences and role of Black teachers in the classroom and extend our current body of knowledge into the late 20th century.

Historical scholarship on other groups of "non-White" or minority teachers in the United States is not as extensive as that on African Americans, but the literature that does exist contains many of the same findings: teacher–student mutual understanding, borne of a shared culture, language, or ethnic identity, often shaped how teachers viewed their role and how they taught in their classrooms. Literature on Native American teachers, for example, demonstrates that while always in the minority in schools operated by the federal Indian School Service, Native American teachers were nonetheless a significant presence in the education of Native American youth in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact, some Native groups established their own common schools and teacher academies even before the U.S. government took an interest in their education (Fraser, 2007; Gere, 2005; Mihesuah, 1993). When the United States created day schools and boarding schools for Native children, with the goal of addressing the so-called Indian problem through cultural assimilation, those schools were mostly staffed by White teachers.Yet many Native American parents, teachers, and youth and their advocates believed that Native American students would be more successful academically when instructed by members of their own race and culture. They maintained, as Ann Ruggles Gere (2005) explained, that "race-based identification between student and teacher would enhance learning, and that students [would] be more drawn to schooling when they encounter[ed] teachers with whom they share[d] a common cultural heritage" (p. 43). In

the 1890s those in charge of the Indian Service schools appear to have agreed; the Indian Service officially changed its hiring process to favor teacher candidates who demonstrated an understanding of the Native American experience, and as a result the proportion of Native Americans hired by the Indian School Service soon tripled to 45% (Ahern, 1997; Gere, 2005).[3]

Once hired, Native American teachers often found themselves at odds with government rules and policies. In particular, Native American teachers disagreed with, and often disregarded, the English-only policy that the U.S. government adopted for its Indian schools in 1881. At the same time, records indicate that many Native American teachers found ways to work both within and against the government-run schools' goals of cultural assimilation: "As one teacher put it, 'I try to show my Indian heart [and] at the same time my white man's head'" (Ahern, 1997, p. 275). This testimony suggests that Native American teachers found ways to teach differently than their White counterparts—either through their personal relationships with students or by teaching additional content including tribal pride and cultural traditions.

In later years, most Native Americans hired to teach in Indian Service schools were themselves graduates of similar—if not the same—institutions; yet, although their employers hoped that Native American teachers would continue the project of Americanization and assimilation, researchers have found the story far more complex.

[3] Ahern (1997) reported that while many new hires were "Indian Assistants," more than "five hundred were in titled positions, including 128 teachers and matrons" (p. 272).

Many Native American teachers sought to balance their obligation to help convert their fellow tribespeople to Christianity and to White America's way of life with a desire to honor their local traditions and heritage (Ahern, 1997). Others found themselves questioning the entire assimilationist project of Indian Service schools. Jessica Enoch (2008) offered details about one such teacher, Zitkala-Ša, who wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* about her teaching experiences and ultimate rejection of the Indian schools' mission, which she characterized as "self-preservation" of the White race (p. 73). For many Native American teachers, then, as for many African American teachers, their beliefs about their students and the purpose of their teaching guided their actions and interactions in the classroom—to the point of, at the most extreme example, abandoning the enterprise entirely.

The historical record of Latino teachers is not very robust for a number of reasons—not the least of which is the inadequacy, or imprecision, of the label "Latino," a collective term often used to denote a diverse group "including Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Latin Americans who are linked to U.S. history through immigration, acquisition of lands, or political upheavals" (MacDonald & Garcia, 2003, pp. 18–19). Government agencies have used a variety of labels for this group at different times, including "Spanish surname," "Mexican," and, most frequently, "White," until the pan-ethnic term *Hispanic* came to prominence in the 1970s (Mora, 2014). Thus official historical counts of Latino teachers are generally either absent or unreliable. We have some information about Spanish-speaking teachers in 19th-century southwestern schools, although the evidence is more suggestive than conclusive in terms of who these teachers were. Scholars have documented, for example, that many 19th-century public schools in

states and territories that had recently been part of Mexico were bilingual or were taught exclusively in Spanish, indicating that their teachers were likely native Spanish speakers (Blanton, 2004; MacDonald, 2004). In New Mexico, *Hispaῆos* resisted centralized control of local schools in the 1850s and were able to maintain Spanish-language instruction, conducted by fellow *Hispaῆos*, for several decades (Getz, 1997; MacDonald, 2004). Carlos Blanton's (2004) study of bilingual education in Texas suggested that Mexican American teachers were the norm in many Texas communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, since state officials made repeated efforts to enforce English proficiency standards for teachers, to no great avail. Yet to date we have little information about who these teachers were, how they were trained, and how they taught—other than the fact that their supervisors believed them to lack proficiency in English.

In recent years a few scholars have begun piecing together some very preliminary work on turn-of-the-century Mexican and Mexican American teachers. Laura Muñoz (2006) located data on 77 Mexican American teachers (mostly women) who taught between 1888 and 1930 in one of three Arizona counties, and Lynne Marie Getz's (1997) study of education in Progressive Era New Mexico showed that even as state legislators battled over English-only policies, most *Hispaño* communities—especially in rural areas—continued to hire *Hispaña* teachers for their schools. These studies reveal little information about the teaching that may have occurred in their classrooms, but Jessica Enoch's (2008) work based on articles published in a Spanish-language newspaper in Laredo, Texas, in 1910 and 1911 offered some insight about how Mexican American women teachers in that town viewed their teaching. Drawing from the writings of three teachers, Enoch argued that there was likely "a critical mass of politicized Mexican

female teachers working in Laredo" who actively challenged the notion that the primary purpose of their teaching was to "Americanize" Mexican children for their role in Anglo-American society. These teachers did not oppose teaching their students English but argued that they should do so in a bilingual context and not at the expense of teaching Spanish or Mexican civics and culture (p. 159). Enoch's assertions are based on a deep textual analysis of a limited number of essays, none of which are reporting on teachers' own classroom practices. But given Laredo's proximity to Mexico and the relative absence of state supervision of the town's schools, her case is certainly a plausible one.

One reason we know so little about the history of Mexican American teachers is that once state-level school reformers centralized control over education in much of the Southwest during the Progressive Era, Mexican American teachers soon became very rare. New certification rules requiring high school diplomas, normal school attendance, or other kinds of formal training put teaching out of reach for most Mexican American men and women, who were often excluded from their local high schools based on their skin color, ethnicity, and/or home language (MacDonald, 2012–2013). And those who were able to acquire certification found securing a teaching job—even in their own communities—difficult to impossible. For example, Tucson, Arizona, one of the few districts that had a policy for hiring Mexican Americans to teach in its segregated schools in the 1940s, established a 10% quota for Mexican American teachers, yet it reportedly never hired anywhere near that many candidates (Getty, 1976). Similarly, Blanton's (2004) discussion made clear that by the 1920s most teachers of Mexican American Texans were Anglo and viewed their students as outsiders or foreigners to be Americanized. San Miguel's (2001) study of the Houston public school district found

nearly no Mexican American teachers working there until the late 1950s, when 25 teachers of Mexican descent were employed in the city's schools.

The most notable exception to the dearth of historical research on Latino teachers and their teaching practices is Virginia Sanchez Korrol's (1996) study on Puerto Rican "substitute auxiliary teachers" (SATs) in New York City in the postwar decades. These SATs, most of whom were women and many of whom held teaching certifications in Puerto Rico, were hired as Spanish-speaking community liaisons in schools with heavy Puerto Rican student populations beginning in the late 1940s. In the early years, their primary duties were to explain school programs and events to Spanish-speaking parents and to explain students' backgrounds and prior educational experiences to teachers. The SATs were soon assigned more traditional teaching duties, however, as their value in the classroom became apparent. Their numbers in the district rapidly grew from only 10 in 1949 to 100 by 1960 and 234 by 1970, by which point their formal title had been changed to "Bilingual Teacher in School and Community Relations" and their ranks included Chinese-speaking teachers as well (p. 93). Although brief, Korrol's study highlighted how "teaching" duties for New York City's SATs were initially outside of the classroom. They were expected to represent the school to Puerto Rican parents and the Puerto Rican community to the school, to be knowledgeable about social services in the community, and to function as guidance counselors for Puerto Rican youth. When SATs began taking on classroom roles, they were valued primarily for their ability to understand and connect with Puerto Rican students. As one early SAT explained,

> <ext>I began to teach them English. Then I started to teach them to read, to speak. When I read a word, I would immediately write it, and I had to use both languages, which was what the American teacher could not do. (p. 97)

The SATs were thus expected to play a particular pedagogical role with their Puerto Rican students as well as to establish personal relationships that the district believed were beyond the scope of what a regular, "American" teacher could or would do. For Puerto Rican teachers in postwar New York, then, as for other teachers who were part of racial- or ethnic-minority groups throughout American history, their ability to understand and connect with students whose backgrounds were similar to their own was seen as central to both who they were as teachers and their teaching.

The Dade County public school system in Miami initiated a similar teacher's aide program for Cuban refugees in the early 1960s, hiring both experienced and aspiring Cuban teachers to serve as assistants and interpreters in newly established Spanish-language classes for Cuban children. Thanks to assistance from the federal government, however, many of these aides were able to attend Miami University to become certified teachers, and they found themselves in high demand in the Dade County schools, which were absorbing thousands of Cuban exile children a year. We do not know as much about the experiences of Cuban aides and teachers in Miami as we do about those of the SATs in New York, but it is clear that once hired, Cuban teachers were not exclusively consigned to teach in Spanish-language classes like many other Latino teachers; they were used to address teacher shortages throughout the system. Indeed, one former Cuban teacher, who ultimately taught in the Dade County schools for 32 years, recalled being

terrified to teach American students when she started out: “The anxiety was horrible. It was just so difficult to get up in front of a class of American children and try to teach them in a language that wasn’t your own” (García, 1996, p. 27). Cuban teachers’ experience in Florida seems somewhat unique, in that their training was federally funded and their entry into the classroom was encouraged by government officials. Yet there were many similarities between their experiences and the experiences of other non-White teachers—in particular the expectation that they would be able to both translate for and connect with Cuban students and parents.

The historical record of how teachers from other racial- and ethnic-minority groups viewed their teaching and relationships with students in the pre–civil rights era is even thinner than that of Latino teachers. The history of Asian American teachers is an area particularly ripe for future research, although their numbers in the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth century were relatively small. While Asians and Americans of Asian descent constituted substantial communities in some areas of the West during this period, they were usually excluded from local public schools; when Asian American students did gain school admittance, they were usually taught by White teachers in segregated settings. In San Francisco, for example, home to a sizable Chinese and Chinese American community by the late 1800s, Chinese families had to fight for the creation of a public school for their children, and for the first several decades of its existence the school was staffed by White men and women (Low, 1982). The San Francisco district finally hired three Chinese American teachers in the late 1920s, and, according to Low (1982), they remained the only teachers of Chinese descent in the district for another decade. When San Francisco schools began hiring more Chinese

American teachers in the 1930s, the new hires were primarily expected to help Americanize Chinese American students and serve as translators and cultural mediators with Chinese American families—similar in many ways to the Puerto Rican SATs in New York City decades later. By the 1950s there appears to have been a quota for Chinese American teachers in San Francisco Chinatown schools, and almost no school had more than three teachers of Chinese descent—perhaps because by then placement in Chinatown schools was considered a plum assignment based on Chinese students' reputation for being well behaved. Similarly, Kang (2007) reported that in Seattle no Asian Americans were hired as teachers until the early 1950s, and even then their numbers were quite small. Perhaps because of their small numbers, then, while there is a growing body of research on the history of Asian American *students'* schooling experiences (Pak 2002a, 2002b; Tamura 2003), we still know very little about the history of Asian American teachers and their beliefs and teaching practices.

On the other hand, while we know quite a bit about "White ethnic" teachers—that is, teachers who were not Anglo-Saxon Protestants and were often viewed as racially distinct from Americans who were—who taught in great numbers in the nation's city schools in the early 20th century, there is very little historical scholarship about their experiences teaching students of their same ethnic background. Janet Nolan's (2004) book on the history of Irish and Irish American teachers, for example, primarily focused on the political battles Irish immigrants fought to acquire some control over city schools and the ways teaching became a means of social and economic mobility for the daughters of Irish immigrants. Nolan's book made clear that Irish teachers faced many of the same prejudices as teachers from other minority groups in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries—namely, that Anglo-Saxon Protestants believed the Irish were of a separate and inferior race and should not stand as moral exemplars before children. Yet, despite any prejudices against them, Irish and Irish American teachers were hired in large numbers in many cities at the turn of the last century—in no small part due to the growing political power of the Irish immigrant community and its ability to control school hiring practices. Thus, as Nolan pointed out, by the early 20th century Irishwomen

> <ext>had become one of the largest single ethnic groups among public elementary school teachers in Providence and Boston, and fully a third of the teachers in New York and Chicago. By 1910, women with identifiably Irish last names were an astounding 49 percent of San Francisco's primary and grammar school teachers. (p. 2)

Yet Nolan had little to say about how Irish teachers interacted with Irish students or how their identity as Irish Americans shaped their teaching practices in the classroom.

Stephan Brumberg (1986) told a similar story about early 20th-century Jewish teachers in New York City: Although they, too, experienced great prejudice and were not always granted the same educational opportunities as their Anglo-Saxon Protestant peers, Jewish immigrants nonetheless had access to New York City grammar, high, and normal schools, and many were able to use their educational credentials to find teaching jobs once they had completed their training. By some accounts Jewish teachers often made up more than half of the faculty at many predominantly Jewish schools in the first decades of the 20th century (Collins, 2011). Yet what we know about their teaching experiences

offers little to distinguish Jewish New York City teachers from their non-Jewish colleagues. Ruth Jacknow Markowitz (1993) drew on the oral histories of 61 daughters of Jewish immigrants who taught in the city's schools in the interwar years to present a fairly detailed portrayal of how and why Jewish women chose to become teachers and what their working lives entailed. Yet Markowitz could only speculate about how Jewish teachers' identities and backgrounds may have shaped their teaching, commenting that "having Jewish teachers must have had some effect on their pupils, especially the Jewish ones. But their impact is difficult to measure" (p. 112). Markowitz theorized that Jewish parents probably liked the fact that their children were instructed by Jewish teachers, but she had no evidence to support this supposition.

In fact Brumberg (1986) found that Jewish former students of New York City schools could recall no Jewish teachers from their childhoods, even though records suggest that they likely encountered some. The conclusion Brumberg drew from this discrepancy perhaps describes the experiences of other "White ethnic" students encountering teachers of similar ethnic backgrounds:

> <ext>It would appear that students who saw teachers who spoke, dressed, and behaved in the American fashion, considered them to be "Americans." . . . Rather than be perceived as ethnic role models, Jewish teachers also served as the very models of Americanhood. (p. 138)

In other words, White ethnic teachers often entered the classroom as graduates of a system that had worked to make them look, sound, and act like "regular" White

Americans. Whatever kinship they may have felt with students of the same religious or ethnic background may not have been expressed in their teaching in ways that distinguished them from other teachers. As Julia Richman, a daughter of Jewish immigrants who helped spearhead many Americanization programs in her position as a New York City school official, famously explained in 1900: "In this country we are not Jews first and Americans afterwards; we are American Jews, imbibing loyalty to our country in our American schools and under American influences" (p. 13). As a local superintendent, Richman sought to accelerate the speed of assimilation of Jewish students in the Lower East Side by forbidding the use of Yiddish and assigning teachers to "patrol lunchrooms, restrooms, and schoolyards . . . to give demerits when the hated 'jargon' was heard" (Berrol, 1982, p. 37).

This is not to suggest that White ethnic teachers never drew on common heritage when interacting with students and families or that their ethnic identities did not shape their teaching practices in some way. Several scholars have documented the work and life of Leonard Covello, who as both a teacher and a principal used his own experience as an Italian immigrant to inform how he related to his mostly first- and second-generation Italian American students and their families—honoring their heritage and language while helping them acclimate to their new country and its ways of life (Johanek & Puckett, 2007; Perrone, 1998; Tyack, 1974). Marjorie Murphy (1990) asserted that in Chicago, Progressive Era school reformers were concerned about the ties that ethnic teachers formed with families and students of their same ethnicity and noted that a Czech teacher was transferred from her school purportedly because she had become too close to her ethnically Bohemian students (p. 10). And surely there were other White ethnic teachers

who, like African American, Native American, and Latino teachers, believed that part of their teaching duty was to instill in students ethnic pride and a sense of social responsibility to their immediate community. In fact New York City schools superintendent William Maxwell promoted a "community" schools model at the turn of the 20th century, convinced that students and families benefited from, or were more comfortable with, teachers of the same ethnic background as their own (Rousmaniere, 1997). Yet this is an area where much research is left to be done. Scholarship on the history of African American and, to a lesser degree, Native American and Latino teachers suggests that the relationships formed between students and teachers of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds often shaped classroom teaching in meaningful ways and were often based on mutual understandings of the purpose of teaching and on common life experiences outside of the classroom.

Overall, scholarship on the history of who taught highlights how the meaning of teaching has often been contested through the role of the teacher. What it means to teach has been defined by gender, race, ethnicity, and marital status, but it has also been defined by teachers' interactions with students in classrooms day after day and by parents' and communities' perceptions of what was being taught through those interactions and why. In the next section of this chapter I turn to research on the history of who was taught and explore the role that students have played in shaping both the teaching that occurred in their classrooms and its purpose.

<h1>Section II: Who Was Taught in American Public Schools

While the history of teachers tells us a great deal about the history of teaching, the analytic power of the instructional triangle is derived in part from its assertion that teachers are only one component of the teaching process. What they taught mattered, as did who they taught. We have a strong body of scholarship documenting the ways that teaching has often differed for students of different social characteristics such as race, class, and ethnicity—in part because schools were organized differently for different kinds of students and in part because educational leaders and teachers viewed the purposes of teaching differently for different kinds of students (Anderson, 1988; Fass, 1989; San Miguel, 1987; Tyack, 1974). Until recently, however, few histories of teaching had considered what students themselves did to shape their own experiences.

Educational theorists have long recognized the student as an active participant in his or her schooling, while sociologists such as Mary Metz (1978) and Paul Willis (1977) began studying students' role in shaping classroom interactions in the late 1960s and 1970s, arguing that students both actively negotiated with teachers over the process and substance of teaching and acted in ways that supported and even promoted their immediate self-interest. Historians, however, have been somewhat slow to acknowledge the active role that students play in the teaching process. Don Warren's (1989) edited volume on the history of the teaching profession, for example, did not include a single chapter that focused on students. More recent scholarship on the history of teaching has taken students' role in the process more seriously; in particular, historians have become interested in ways that students from marginalized communities were able to actively resist culturally hegemonic teaching and influence curriculum and pedagogy—both in the classroom and beyond (Adams, 1995; Amerman, 2010; Coleman, 1993; Donato, 1997;

Grant, 1988; Mirel, 2010; Rury & Hill, 2012; San Miguel, 1987; Warren, 2010; Williams, 2005).

This section reviews what we know about the history of who was taught in American public schools and how who was in the classroom shaped the teaching that occurred there. I begin with the early 19th century and scholarship detailing the ways that students' geographical circumstances—and specifically whether they lived in a rural or urban setting—structured their teaching experiences. I then look at teaching differences that extended beyond geography and were often shaped by students' social characteristics, as well as by their own actions and demands.

<h2>Teaching in the Common Schools Era: Students' Rural and Urban Experiences

The term *common schooling* was meant to connote a commonality of student experience: all children in an area would be taught the same formal content, together, and thus share in the process as well as the knowledge wrought by their education. Yet, for much of the 19th century, students' "common" teaching experiences varied considerably depending on where they lived and, to some extent, what kind of school they attended. Most historians of 19th-century American education distinguish between the teaching that occurred in rural schools and the teaching that occurred in city schools in several key ways. Most generally, while teachers in rural schools tended to conduct one-on-one instruction and use physical coercion to maintain order, teachers in urban settings were more likely to conduct lessons with the whole class at once and to rely on systematized means of control rather than corporal punishment. Historians usually explain these

instructional differences as the result of organizational imperatives: Rural teaching mostly occurred in one-room schoolhouses, while in urban schools by mid-century students were already often separated by age and social background. In other words, who was in the room, along with expectations about what they were supposed to learn, to some degree determined classroom practices (Butchart, 2010; Finkelstein, 1989; Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

In rural areas, White students of all ages and backgrounds attended school together. Their attendance was often sporadic, and older children tended to come only in the winter when they were not needed on their family farms. Parents expected students to learn what they themselves may have been taught by their own parents—basic literacy and numeracy; in some areas parents sent whatever books they happened to own, often a copy of the Bible, for their children to use in school. Some parents also sent toddlers along with older siblings as a means of child care, which meant that students in rural classrooms could be anywhere from age 3 to 15 within the same room. With class sizes ranging from one dozen to close to 100, teachers did their best to maintain some semblance of control—usually by relying on a combination of corporal punishment, memorization, and recitation as their core teaching strategies (Finkelstein, 1989; Kaestle, 1983).

Barbara Finkelstein's *Governing the Young* (1989) remains the best and most thorough source on 19th-century teaching practices, and her review of documentary evidence from the era revealed that for the most part, in rural schools, students were assigned material to memorize on their own or as part of a group of similarly-aged youth; when it was their turn to meet with the teacher, students were expected to recite their

lessons word for word. In some schools, these recitations and call-and-response exercises were done publicly and even competitively; in other schools, students presented privately or in small groups. In either case, the teacher would try to simultaneously listen to their lessons while monitoring the remainder of the class—to varying degrees of effectiveness. A visitor to a Connecticut school in the 1830s described a scene that seems to have been fairly typical of rural schooling throughout the country at the time:

> <ext>The teacher was mending pens for one class, which was sitting idle; hearing another spell; calling a covey of small boys to be quiet, who had nothing to do but make mischief; watching a big rogue who had been placed standing on a bench in the middle of the room for punishment; and, to many little ones, passionately answering questions of, “May I go out?” “May I go home?” “Shan’t Johnny be still?” “May I drink?” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 17)

As the above description reveals, rural schoolchildren were hardly the still, compliant youth often portrayed in popular memory. So-called mischief as well as outright defiant behavior were common features of rural schooling, and teachers often resorted to a combination of disciplinary strategies in an effort to maintain order. Corporal punishment was a common feature of the country school and was often encouraged in manuals intended to guide teaching practices (Kafka, 2011; Orcutt, 1858/1871). Reports and memoirs from rural schools throughout the country during this period indicated that teachers administered everything from full-on beatings to whippings, slappings, ear-pullings, and the like. Some teachers, like the one described

above, required misbehaving students to stand or squat for long periods of time in uncomfortable positions or to sit in a section designated for the opposite sex as a means of humiliation. Students were punished for misconduct as well as for not knowing their lessons; in the 19th-century schoolhouse both infractions were considered evidence of moral failure (Finkelstein, 1989). “Persuasion to study and good deportment,” recalled a former student of a freed-person’s school in the post–Civil War South, “consisted of a hickory switch, a cone-shaped ‘dunce’s cap’ and a stool on which the offender must stand on one foot for an enormous length of time” (Fairclough, 2007, p. 109).

Yet, while common in rural schools, the use of corporal punishment and public humiliation was not universal. Indeed, some 19th-century rural teachers found such means of discipline distasteful, while others found them ineffective. And as the notion that teachers could instill discipline in their charges through reason, affection, and moral suasion was gaining some ground in normal schools and teacher training programs throughout the North and Midwest, some teachers brought those lessons with them as they traveled to the countryside. One teacher explained her opposition to whipping her Black students in the rural South, despite community encouragement for her to do so, in both moral and practical terms: “I tell them it is much easier to govern by love than by fear of the rod. I think the race have had whipping enough for the present and all coming generations” (Butchart, 2010, p. 134). Moreover, at times the use of corporal punishment was not well received. Many rural teachers found that their use of physical force could be met with the same; some parents threatened teachers who dared to lay a hand on their children, and reports of older students beating their teachers were not uncommon (Fairclough, 2007; Finkelstein, 1989; Kaestle, 1983; Kafka, 2011; Zimmerman, 2009).

Nonetheless, the use (or at least the threat of the use) of corporal punishment remained common in rural schooling throughout the 19th century.

Most country schoolhouses tended to teach all White children in the area, regardless of their family's economic background. Urban schools in the North and Midwest during that same period were far less heterogeneous in this regard. Parents who could afford to do so sent their children to "pay" schools or private academies, while children whose parents could not afford tuition attended charity or "free" schools run by churches or other voluntary organizations. In 19th-century urban schools, then, students' economic status shaped the conditions of schooling before they even entered the classroom.

Pay schools varied considerably in terms of cost, student composition, curriculum, and parental expectations. Many were single-sex, but some were coeducational. The most exclusive offered lessons in Latin, writing, natural science, French, algebra, and grammar, in addition to drawing, dance, and other artistic endeavors. Others taught only basic academic subjects, while still others provided a modicum of vocational training. Wealthy families expected the teachers they paid, in addition to helping their children develop intellectual capacities and an appreciation for culture and the arts, to prepare their children for higher levels of schooling, professional careers (if they were boys), or the management of an upper-class home (if they were girls). Less affluent families viewed their children's more moderately priced schools as a means of upward mobility; students were expected to acquire the expertise and habits that would allow them to obtain higher-paying and more prestigious jobs than their parents held—a

position in a skilled craft for boys, for example, or as a schoolteacher for girls (Kaestle, 1983; Tolley, 2003; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).[4]

Charity schools, on the other hand, many of which were funded with a mix of public and private sources, were intended to bring rudimentary academic and moral instruction to the indigent. Students who attended charity schools were not expected to continue their education elsewhere, nor were they expected to join a skilled profession; their benefactors hoped merely that these children would be taught to be productive workers and responsible citizens—characteristics the upper classes often believed poor parents lacked and were thus incapable of passing on to their offspring. In many northern cities and towns, Black children were included in this calculus—usually in African Free Schools or other charity schools designated for Black youth. "It is education—it is the cultivation of the mind and the heart, which teaches them to be honest, makes them quiet, and orderly citizens," explained a New York City publication in 1824: "The African Free School . . . is snatching [Black children] from a state of ignorance, superstition, credulity and crime" (Douglas, 2005, pp. 18–19).

[4] A full discussion of the teaching that occurred in academies and other kinds of pay schools is beyond the scope of this chapter, which is focused on the teaching that occurred in tax-supported, public schools. In the past decade historians of education have shown a renewed interest in the history of academies and other private upper-level schools, making the case, as Beadie and Tolley (2002) do in their edited volume, that such schools served as important precursors to, and often foundations for, public high schools.

The educational objectives of charity schools were evident in their curriculum—usually basic reading, writing, and arithmetic—and in the way they were organized. Free schools were often large, overcrowded, and highly regimented. In the first quarter of the 19th century, many adopted the Lancasterian, or monitorial, model of instruction—a bureaucratic system widely hailed for its efficiency and low cost. Lancaster schools utilized prescribed lessons and student monitors to supervise and assess other students, which kept operational costs to a minimum. Indeed, monitorial schools would often hire only one teacher for hundreds of students. In addition, the Lancaster model was thought to help students more quickly internalize behavioral norms since they were under constant surveillance by their fellow students. The schools also relied on student competition as a means of motivation and control; students were publicly recognized for their achievement, sometimes by being promoted to the head of their "class," or to the next class, or to the position of monitor. With their emphasis on standardization, rules, and internalization of expectations, Lancaster schools thus appealed to industrial-era reformers and philanthropists who viewed the model as an effective and not overly expensive way to promote the values of hard work and self-discipline in future workers. By some accounts nearly all African Free Schools in the antebellum period used the Lancaster model (Butchart, 1998; Cuban, 1984/1993; Hogan, 1989, 1990; Kaestle, 1974, 1983; Kafka, 2011).

Many aspects of monitorial instruction—including the regimentation, use of recitation and assessments to label and place students, and reliance on rules and procedures to regulate student behavior—became hallmarks of what David Tyack (1974) famously termed the "one best system" of schooling that came to characterize urban

education at the close of the 19th century. Yet Lancaster schools themselves were on the decline by mid-century—too strongly associated with the teaching of the poor (and especially of Black children) to be fully implemented in the newly developing public school system (Hogan, 1990; Kaestle, 1983).

By the mid-1800s many cities and towns were developing "common" public schools to be attended by all (White) children in the neighborhood at taxpayers' expense. Urban common schools were similar to the one-room district schoolhouse in mission, but the teaching that occurred within them still differed. Urban schools tended to be larger than their rural counterparts and organized their students into "graded" classes grouped mostly by age and occasionally by ability. Rather than conduct individual or small-group lessons while the remaining students worked independently, then, as their rural counterparts did, urban teachers were more likely to engage in whole-class instruction. Students were often expected to memorize material and recite their lessons publicly, like their rural peers, but they spent far less time unsupervised or learning on their own. Urban teachers were also reportedly less likely to use corporal punishment than rural teachers—in part because the practice was increasingly frowned upon by urban school reformers and in part because whole-group instruction offered alternative means of control. Moreover, report cards that classified student performance created their own kind of discipline, as did the threat of being forced to repeat a grade due to academic failure—or, even worse, being consigned to an "ungraded" classroom for the "academically incompetent and indolent" (Finkelstein, 1989, p. 103). Urban schools were far more bureaucratized, in other words, than their rural counterparts, and the schools' organizational differences shaped the teaching that occurred within them (Kaestle, 1983).

As the 19th century progressed, however, certain aspects of urban teaching could increasingly be found in rural schools. Instructional technologies such as maps, globes, blackboards, slates, and class textbooks gradually made their way from cities and towns to the countryside, allowing teachers to engage in more large-group instruction and saving them some time and manual labor. In addition, as teachers who trained in normal schools or teacher institutes found jobs in rural settings, they brought some of the new teaching techniques they had learned with them—including certain aspects of the so-called object method and other forms of experiential learning (Butchart, 2010; Fairclough, 2007). Additional aspects of urban teaching were imposed from above, as district boards adopted report cards and end-of-the-year examinations in an effort to bring greater standardization to schooling (Finkelstein, 1989; Reese, 2005). Yet, even with these modernizations in place, rural teaching remained somewhat distinct. Rural teachers still often enjoyed relative autonomy compared with their more closely supervised urban colleagues (Weiler, 1998), and rural teaching continued to be a largely one-room affair, with one teacher instructing students of all ages in all subjects well into the 20th century. Jonathan Zimmerman (2009) reported that as late as 1913 one half of the nation's students attended schools with a single teacher, and it was not until mid-century that a combination of urbanization and district consolidation led to the demise of the one-room schoolhouse.

For much of the 19th century and early 20th century, then, teaching often varied from school to school based on geographic location and, within cities and large towns, based on students' class and the educational expectations attached to their social standing. For the most part, the differences between rural and urban teaching were not

race-specific; schools attended by Black youth were underfunded compared to those attended by their White counterparts regardless of location, but Black schools in cities tended to have multiple teachers and graded classrooms, longer school years, and superior resources to those in the countryside (Butchart, 2010; Fairclough, 2007; Rury & Hill, 2012). Most differences in rural versus urban teaching were largely a function of size, organization, resources, and parental and community expectations. Yet there were many differences in 19th-century teaching that went beyond the circumstances of geography. Some, such as racial segregation, were mandated by law or policy; others, such as differentiating high school electives by gender, were done by convention; but still others, such as differing languages of instruction, were demanded or otherwise effected by students and their families.

<h2>Language of Instruction: Teaching Non-English Speakers

Until recently, the history of teaching students who arrived at school speaking little or no English was most prominently portrayed as part of a unilateral Americanization process that forced cultural as well as linguistic assimilation—whether students wanted to shed their families' language and traditions or not (Fass, 1989). In recent years, however, scholars have developed a far more complex narrative about the history of teaching students for whom English was not their home language. Much of this newer research has come from scholars interested in the history of education of specific immigrant or language communities, but others, most notably Paul Ramsey's (2010) excellent synthesis of the history of bilingual instruction in the 19th and early 20th centuries, also consider similarities and differences across and within groups. Taken

together, this body of literature demonstrates that the teaching of non-English speakers has varied by student population, policy directives, and teachers' beliefs about what was best for their students—beliefs that were often informed by students themselves.

In the mid-1800s teaching in a language other than English was not uncommon in the United States. In immigrant communities throughout the country, and in southwestern lands recently acquired from Mexico, teaching often occurred in students' native language. Other than English, German and Spanish were the most commonly used languages in 19th-century American schools, but teaching occurred in many other languages as well. Some schools in Louisiana were conducted in French or Creole, for example, and in Scandinavian communities throughout the Midwest teaching occurred in a variety of languages and dialects (Ramsey, 2010; Zimmerman, 2009).

In larger towns and cities many public school systems developed formal programs that included both foreign-language instruction and bilingual education—often in an explicit attempt to attract more students, and thus more public support, to their newly established schools. Cities such as New York, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Milwaukee included both German instruction and some instruction *in* German into their primary, grammar, and even upper schools in the mid-to late 19th century. School leaders often viewed such programs as a method of Americanization, intending to attract German speakers into "immediate and daily contact with the children of Anglo-American birth, and under such educational and moral influence . . . make them a thoroughly homogenous part of our nation" (Ramsey, 2010, p. 40). At the same time, however, city schools frequently segregated English speakers from

German speakers on pedagogical grounds, weakening the argument that bilingual programs would help assimilate German speakers.

For their part, many German immigrants viewed German-language programs as a way to promote their own language and cultural traditions, which they often considered superior to those of their Anglo-American neighbors. Moreover, many German immigrants believed that the pedagogical methods in use in their home country, which had so impressed Horace Mann on his visit, were preferable to American norms of instruction. Thus in many cities German-language classes were portrayed as pedagogically innovative and perhaps even educationally superior to those taught in English (Ramsey, 2010).

Similarly, although the common school tradition was not as well established in the Southwest as it was in New England and the Midwest, southwestern public schools that did exist mid–19th century were often taught in Spanish—either officially or unofficially. In both Texas and New Mexico, where strong traditions of local control meant that individual communities determined what language should be used in their schools, bilingual communities often opted for bilingual instruction, while others chose to have their schools taught only in one language—sometimes English, sometimes Spanish (and in the case of some Texas towns, sometimes German). Even in states such as California and Colorado, where all public schools were supposed to be taught in English, the use of Spanish in the classroom was common (Blanton, 2004; MacDonald, 2004; Ramsey, 2010).

Of course not all 19th-century students who spoke a language other than English received instruction in their native tongues. Especially in communities where children

who did not speak English were the minority, or where immigrant children were of multiple origins without a common language, students tended to be taught exclusively in English. Many teachers taught only in English on principle; they believed that mastering the English language was the gateway for students to adapt to and adopt the American way of life, and they felt that the best way to ensure language mastery was complete immersion. Even had they wanted to, many teachers could not have served as translators or bilingual instructors because they did not speak their students' home languages; some went to great lengths to try to communicate with their non-English speakers effectively, while others appeared relatively unsympathetic to the challenges that non-English-speaking students faced. Memoirs and observations from the period include teachers requiring students to use English at all times—even during recess—and humiliating those who spoke with accents or in their home languages (Reese, 2005; Zimmerman, 2009).

The teaching of English became an increasingly important aspect of American schooling as the 19th century turned into the 20th and more and more new immigrants crammed into the nation's schools. By the early 1900s, youth in most major American cities were largely the children of immigrants—if not immigrants themselves. In 1908 a federal commission reported that 72% of all students in New York City had a father born in another country—in Chicago the percentage was 67, in Boston it was 64, and in San Francisco it was 58 (Tyack, 1974). These immigrants largely hailed from southern and eastern Europe and were perceived by many to be intellectually and morally inferior to "regular," White Americans. School leaders' prejudices regarding turn-of-the-century immigrants have been well documented. In his recent overview of the history of schooling, for example, William Reese (2005) quoted Ellwood P. Cubberley, an

influential school administrator and professor at Stanford University, who in 1909 said of these new immigrants: “Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life” (p. 125).

Yet, even if they thought poorly of their ethnic and genetic backgrounds, many education leaders were optimistic that these immigrant children could be taught the language, customs, and habits that would make them into true Americans. A reporter in New York City seemed to agree, writing in astonishment of students who within days of arriving in the country “melted into the rank and file” and reporting that in less than a year ethnic “types” vanished into “the extraordinary homogenousness of upper-grade children” (quoted in Tyack, 1974, p. 231). Tyack referred to educators’ belief in the power of schooling to eliminate social differences between children of immigrants and children of the native born as “often messianic, a mixture of fear outweighed by hope, of a desire for social control accompanied by a quest for equality of opportunity for the newcomers under the terms dictated by the successful Yankee” (p. 232). The solution to the problem of immigration, in this view, was to use education to make sure that immigrant children adapted to the American way of life as quickly as possible—including replacing their parents’ language with English.

In many schools and classrooms the use of English was inherently value-laden. Students who learned the language were thought to have also adopted American mores and customs, and those who continued to use their home languages were portrayed as obstinately clinging to foreign values, if not purposefully challenging teachers’ authority.

Thus students were often punished harshly for speaking in their native tongue—even to one another. In New York City, for example, Jewish students in some "steamer" classes for newly arrived immigrants had their mouths washed out with kosher soap if they reverted to Yiddish; Mexican American students in the Southwest were sometimes beaten for using Spanish on the playground and expelled for using it in the classroom (Blanton, 2006; Ramsey, 2010; San Miguel, 2001). And while English instruction was supposed to accelerate assimilation, it was also often used to justify segregation, especially for Mexican Americans and the children of Asian immigrants, regardless of their citizenship status or knowledge of the language (Blanton, 2006; Ramsey, 2010; Weiler, 1998).

Proponents of teaching students in "English only" drew on French linguist François Gouin's work teaching foreign languages to adults to support their assertions that non-English speakers should be taught exclusively in English (Blanton, 2006). Speaking to students only in English—the so-called direct method—and barring them from using their own language, even with each other, purportedly accelerated language acquisition by forcing students to work harder to understand English and, in the process, forget their own language. There was little evidence to support its efficacy with children, but English-only pedagogy got a boost from World War I, as anti-German sentiment led to an attack on German bilingual programs—often through the passage of local policies or state laws barring public school instruction in any language other than English. By 1923, 34 states had laws in place requiring English-only in public schools (Mirel, 2010).

Under English-only policies, teachers were discouraged from translating for their students. In fact, according to proponents of the direct method, teachers who chose to translate some words out of sympathy for their students, or because they hoped to make a

personal connection with them, only ended up causing harm. As an English-only advocate and university professor explained in a 1919 bulletin for the federal Bureau of Education, “Every time the teacher resorts to translation in making clear a word or sentence, she is making it easier for herself at the expense of the pupil’s progress” (Blanton, 2006, p. 63). Yet many teachers found English-only instruction unpleasant. Some were unconvinced of its effectiveness, and others found the work of acting out utterances and preparing pictures to help communicate taxing (Blanton, 2006).

It is hardly surprising, then, that even at the height of its popularity, English-only pedagogy was rarely absolute. Historians have found that many students who spoke languages other than English at home experienced bilingual teaching in their classrooms—through both formal and informal means. In New Mexico, for example, where Spanish speakers maintained some political power in the Progressive Era, bilingual education remained the norm in many communities; the state even established the Spanish American Normal School in 1909 to train bilingual teachers (Getz, 1997; Ramsey, 2010). Even in states that banned bilingual teaching from elementary school classrooms, where it had been most prevalent, many teachers continued to use the practice anyway—often because they believed that it was most effective. As a teacher recalled about her years teaching German-speaking children in rural North Dakota during and after World War I, “I told them in English, then in German, and then in English and it was surprising how fast those little tots caught on” (Ramsey, 2010, p. 170). An Anglo-American teacher described a similar process that she used with her Spanish-speaking students in Laredo, Texas, a few years earlier:

> <ext>In my class we translate every word in all the lessons. We read these lessons as if they were in Spanish. The students go the blackboard, I read the lesson in Spanish, and without letting them look in their books, I require them to write the lesson in English. (Enoch, 2008, p. 148)

The teacher maintained that by the end of two years her students knew all of their lessons in both languages—an accomplishment in which she seemed to take great pride. Whether these teachers believed in the benefits of bilingual instruction prior to teaching non-English speakers or developed their views based on experiences with students and families is unknown. What is clear is that official policies banning bilingual teaching did not seem to have much effect on these teachers' classroom practices. Students themselves often became informal bilingual instructors as well, helping classmates understand their teachers and vice versa. This practice was often encouraged by teachers, who would seat a child with no knowledge of English next to someone from the same country who could help translate (Ramsey, 2010).

Proponents of English-only teaching often framed the issue in patriotic terms: To learn and think in the language of America was to become an American; to maintain another language was to reject American values and full citizenship. "If you wish to preserve, in our state, the language and customs of another land," warned the Texas state superintendent of public instruction during World War I, "you have no right to do this. . . . [G]o back to the country which you prize so highly and rear your children there" (Blanton, 2006, p. 68). But for many immigrants and their children, learning English was not an either/or proposition. Jeffrey Mirel's (2010) recent book about efforts to

Americanize European immigrants through education during the Progressive Era and beyond highlighted ways that immigrant youth and their families could embrace the opportunities that Anglo America's schooling afforded while maintaining their own traditions and beliefs. Using the cities of Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago as his primary cases, Mirel drew upon foreign-language press to document the ways in which immigrant communities "were active, creative, and tenacious in their efforts to use Americanization education to further their individual and group interests and to use what they learned in this process to promote a new vision of American society" (pp. 10–11). Immigrant children and their parents maintained crucial aspects of their cultural identity, even as they learned English and developed a deep commitment to the United States, and in many cases they were able to shape classroom teaching in the process.

Perhaps one of the most important ways that immigrants and other culturally and linguistically unique groups transformed teaching was by influencing teachers' beliefs. Susan Yohn (1991) offered a detailed look at how Presbyterian missionary teachers sent to convert Hispanic families in New Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gradually adjusted their goals upon interaction with students and their families. Although the subjects of her study were teaching in church-based schools as opposed to publicly financed institutions, the parallels between their experiences and those of public school teachers are evident. In letters and reports to their colleagues, the missionary women teachers make clear that they soon veered from the Christian curriculum they had been sent to deliver, as they found greater success if they sought to draw on "children's everyday experiences" and find "common ground" with their students as opposed to antagonizing them by denigrating their religion and customs (p. 361). And although

instruction was supposed to be conducted entirely in English, the missionary teachers soon learned that allowing a mix of Spanish and English in the classroom was more effective in helping their students to learn. According to Yohn, by the early 20th century the teachers' employer—the Woman's Board of Home Missions—had begun to rethink its entire mission, acknowledging that the Hispanic culture was less a barrier to students' success than their poverty and the racial and ethnic prejudices that constricted their lives.

Lynne Getz's (1997) history of *Hispañ*o schooling in New Mexico at roughly the same time period covered in Yohn's article suggested that the missionary teachers' change in purpose and pedagogy upon interaction with their students was not an anomaly. Getz detailed the efforts of Santa Fe County school superintendent Nina Otero-Warren to incorporate Hispanic culture and language into the schools' formal curriculum. She encouraged teachers to use popular local games in physical education classes, to use arts and crafts traditional to the area for industrial arts, and to promote bilingualism among their students. As Getz made clear, Otero-Warren's directives reflected ideals often associated with John Dewey—namely, the notion that schools should incorporate and prepare youth for participation in everyday life and should encourage community–school connections. Getz's study did not reveal how Otero-Warren's curriculum and vision for *Hispañ*o education were implemented in the rural classrooms she supervised. But at the very least her tale is suggestive of ways teachers and other educators may have adjusted their pedagogical methods, content, and perhaps even vision of their larger purpose in response to interactions with students and communities.

Kate Rousmaniere's (1997) and Kathleen Weiler's (1998) oral histories of Progressive Era teachers in New York City and rural California, respectively, told a

similar, albeit far less uniform, tale. Although some teachers maintained a sense of cultural superiority and overt prejudice toward their immigrant and non-English-speaking students decades later, others recalled changing their views as they got to know their students and their families and even recalibrating how they taught to better address students' needs. Perhaps the best documentation we have of how students subject to cultural assimilationist policies and teaching practices influenced instruction in their own classrooms is from the increasingly rich and growing body of literature on the history of Native American youth who attended government-run boarding schools. Their story is unique in its social and political context but also demonstrates ways in which students—even those targeted for complete cultural assimilation—were able to shape the teaching they experienced.

<h2>The Case of Native American Students in Boarding Schools

The United States formally took on the project of educating Native Americans in the late 1800s as part of a larger reform movement aimed at the so-called Indian problem—Native Americans' complete exclusion from American society and the American way of life. Government-run boarding schools were not the only formal schooling available to Native Americans. Missionary schools preceded those run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and many philanthropists established or supported seminaries and other kinds of schools aimed at teaching Native Americans White America's language, religion, and culture. The Cherokee Nation even established autonomous seminaries and a common school system within its own territory (Fraser, 2007). For the purposes of this chapter, however, I focus on scholarship about Native American

students' experiences in government boarding schools because it constitutes a strong body of work that reveals a great deal about the interactive nature of teaching and how students shaped their own experiences.

Scholarship on the history of Native American boarding schools has grown in both scope and depth in recent decades. Most works focus on a single institution or the experiences of a particular tribe, but nearly all use a combination of primary-source documents and oral histories to explore students' perspectives and to consider how students themselves helped shape the teaching that occurred in their schools (Child, 1998; Coleman, 1993; Gilbert, 2010; Lindsey, 1995; Lomawaima, 1994; Warren, 2010). The best known of this body of literature is David Wallace Adams's *Education for Extinction* (1995), an impressive book that considered Indian boarding schools at three levels: through policy, practice, and the eyes and experiences of students and their families. As the book's title made clear, Adams' central thesis was that government-run Indian boarding schools—most of which were located off tribal lands and away from students' families and communities—were intended to teach Native Americans to accept and embrace White America's way of life. Students were expected to speak in English, become God-fearing Christians, and adopt the culture and practices of White Americans. Moreover, students were expected to bring these new values, ideals, religion, and language back home, eventually replacing their tribal culture with that of White America. Yet Adams and others also make clear that Native American students were not mere recipients of federal policies but active participants in their own education.

Reports of classroom instruction in Indian schools are similar to those from other schools at the time: Teachers primarily relied on recitation and drill-like exercises, but

some also incorporated instructional strategies that were becoming increasingly popular in teacher training programs in the late 1800s, such as use of the "object method," song and dance as part of instruction, and outdoor "field trips" to observe the natural world. Native American students were also taught a curriculum similar to that of their White peers: The focus was on learning to read, write, and speak English, but students who attended boarding schools were also at least exposed to the other so-called branches of knowledge, including arithmetic, history, nature study, geography, and the arts. Like students in many age-graded urban school systems, children who attended Native American boarding schools were placed in grade levels according to age and often knowledge of English, and, like other non-English speakers, Native children were often taught exclusively in English and punished severely for speaking in their native tongues (Adams, 1995; Gilbert, 2010).

At the same time, there were major differences between the teaching that occurred in Indian Service boarding schools and the teaching that occurred in other public schools at the time. The boarding school itself was a unique institution. By 1900 over 80% of Native children educated by the U.S. government were attending boarding schools, usually far removed from their families and communities (Adams, 1995). For them, then, education was not isolated to their classroom experiences; teaching was something that was happening at every waking moment. Native American students attending boarding school were regulated in their dress, hairstyle, eating habits, and use of free time. They were also often put to work—student labor was essential to the basic operation of most boarding schools, and industrial education was also used to train youth in skills that would allow them to be economically independent as graduates. Students at government-

run boarding schools usually spent at least half of their instructional day conducting manual labor of some sort; boys were primarily expected to learn farming skills, while girls were trained in domestic duties. Many schools taught other skills as well, including carpentry, blacksmithing, and tailoring. Students often found their assigned work mind-numbingly boring and/or physically exhausting, and some school officials worried that industrial education had become drudgery instead of an educative process; nonetheless, the focus on work remained a central aspect of Indian boarding schools. In 1901, the new superintendent of Indian schools declared that industrial education should be infused in all academic subjects, to ensure that all lessons remained relevant to Native Americans and their future role in society. In some boarding schools students were paid through off-campus work programs intended to help them assimilate to American culture while developing work skills and an appreciation for earning a wage (Adams, 1995; Warren, 2010).

The teaching that occurred in Indian Bureau schools was thus largely shaped by directives from the U.S. government. At the same time, however, Native American students, like many immigrant students, also brought their own culture into the classroom and in doing so influenced their teaching experiences. For example, although most Native American schools were officially English-only, students rarely complied with this dictate completely; some were punished for using their native language, but many were not. In fact in many schools teachers themselves provided bilingual instruction or at least translated some words; in other schools teachers openly permitted and even encouraged students to translate for one another, although in schools where students from multiple

tribes and languages converged, this was not always possible (Adams, 1995; Coleman, 1993; Ramsey, 2010).

In addition, Native American students brought tribal customs and traditions to school, and while some were openly discouraged by administrators and faculty, others made their way into teaching practices and ultimately into the formal school curriculum. Indeed, many schools for Native American children allowed and even encouraged the use of tribal songs, sports, and creative arts among their students, and by the turn of the century the Indian School Service had followed suit (Adams, 1995; Szasz, 2005; Warren, 2010). Adams (1995) viewed this shift in government policy with considerable caution, noting that "the new appreciation for Indian folklore and crafts . . . never entertained the possibility that these accomplishments were anything more than aesthetically pleasing, enchanting renderings of a noble race still in the childhood of civilization" (pp. 317–318). Yet, if policy makers did not respect the traditions that they were now allowing—even encouraging—in the classroom, the students themselves surely did. While reformers and school leaders may have continued to view boarding schools as a tool for the complete assimilation and integration of Native children into American society, students were able to reshape the teaching that they experienced into something more comfortable, familiar, and useful to them. As I mentioned in the previous section, the Indian School Service's acknowledgment that Native American students benefited from the presence of teachers who understood their culture and customs (not to mention their language) led to a change in hiring practices that quickly tripled the proportion of Native Americans working in government schools (Ahern, 1997; Gere, 2005). In this sense, Native American students'

insistence on incorporating their culture and background into their schooling experiences led to policy changes that further influenced classroom teaching in their schools.

The case of Native Americans' boarding school experience is unique to the particular historical context and status of Native Americans in the United States, but it shares some commonalities with the experiences of other groups subject to assimilationist efforts—especially with the teaching experiences of African Americans, who, like Native Americans, were often treated as outsiders in their own land. Kim Cary Warren (2010) drew parallels in the teaching of Black and Native American students in Kansas during the Progressive Era and noted that while important differences between the groups clearly existed, both were subject to policies intended to use schools as tools of assimilation without granting full citizenship rights to their communities. Yet Warren's study aptly demonstrated that neither Native American nor African American students were mere recipients of the teaching envisioned for them.

In the case of African Americans, parents and community leaders were often vocal advocates for their children, using the courts and other legal and political means to seek better and more equitable educational opportunities for their entire community. In the case of Native Americans, language barriers and a lack of political power, as well as the fact that their children were living far away from them, often limited parents' ability to influence classroom teaching—although many certainly tried. But Native American students often engaged in active acts of protest on their own. At times they coordinated group acts of rebellion or committed arson, vandalism, or other destructive crimes as individuals. Native American students also committed smaller acts of resistance, such as ignoring or challenging teachers' directives, writing letters of protest to school

supervisors, and continuing to use their home language and maintain their cultural traditions while in school (Warren, 2010).

Warren's (2010) study is an example of ways that new scholars have been able to draw solid historical narratives that cut across multiple student populations while not discounting their differences. In the case of African Americans and Native Americans in early 20th-century Kansas, for example, Warren acknowledged that state reformers viewed the purposes of education for each group quite differently: White reformers hoped that Native Americans would eventually completely assimilate into White America, while African Americans were expected to remain a class of their own. Warren also noted that the two groups each viewed the purpose of their education differently: while African American students and families saw schooling as a tool for middle-class ascendancy and schools as platforms for building middle-class communities within urban centers, Native Americans in Kansas considered schooling an opportunity to build a pan-Indian identity, which they would then transport back to their home communities. For both groups, however, Warren made clear that the teaching they experienced in their classrooms was contested; students did not control how or what they were taught, but they helped to shape both—at times in direct negotiation with their teachers and administrators and at times through less explicit means.

Other scholarship also points to similarities among Native American, Mexican American, and European immigrant experiences in school. The "cultural gifts" movement of the 1920s, for example, was an effort on the part of teachers and teacher educators to recognize and honor their mostly European immigrant students' cultures and traditions by bringing some of them into the classroom, much like boarding school officials allowed

for Native American crafts, games, and music to become part of their curriculum (Burkholder, 2011; Selig, 2008). And while state-run boarding schools were unique to Native Americans, they were eventually phased out and replaced by day schools located on reservations and regular public schools located in nearby towns and villages. When Native American students attended nearby public schools, their experiences became more like those of European immigrants who were expected to adopt the English language and embrace American customs through a common schooling experience (Adams, 1995; Amerman, 2010). In other ways, the experiences that Native American students had in boarding schools and day schools on reservations were more like the teaching experiences of African American, Latino, and, in some cases, Asian American students, in that they occurred in segregated settings. Segregation was historically the ultimate means of differentiating teaching across varied student populations in the United States, as it allowed for and often mandated inequality through formal measures. And yet historical scholarship has also demonstrated that at times official structures intended to differentiate teaching mattered less than the interactions that occurred in classrooms between teachers, students, and content – whether in segregated contexts or otherwise.

<h2>Teaching and Racial Segregation

The inequities inherent in racially segregated schools have been well established, but their impact on children's educational experiences bear repeating. James Anderson's (1988) seminal study on the development of Black education in the post–Civil War South documented the cost and the effort that Black Southerners went through to build and support schools for their children—often using their own resources and labor while

paying taxes for a public education system that their children were barred from attending. Despite these community efforts, the absence of government support, in the context of an unequal and highly discriminatory society, clearly limited educational opportunities for Black youth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1900 only 52% of Black children ages 10 to 14 living in the South were attending school, compared with 76% of White children. By 1940, however, school attendance had risen significantly in the region, and the attendance rate for children in the lower grades was almost the same across racial groups—90% of Black youth ages 10 to 14 and 91% of Whites in the same age range were attending school in the South (Anderson, 1998). Yet, at a time when high school attendance had become the norm among White Northerners and close to 40% of White Southerners attended at least some high school, Black youth often had no educational opportunities beyond elementary school. Less than 15% of Black Southerners aged 14 to 18 attended high school in 1940. This disparity was even greater among Black boys, since Black girls attended high school at a much higher rate than their male peers (Rury & Hill, 2012).

State-sanctioned school segregation was not limited to the South, however. As more and more Black families migrated from the rural South to the urban North at the turn of the century, more and more northern cities allowed—or even required—racially segregated schooling. At times northern school segregation reflected residential segregation, but not always. Davison Douglas (2005), in his extensive study on northern school segregation in the Jim Crow era, documented how school district after school district intentionally created racially distinct schools in the first decades of the 20th century—at times placing buildings for each race next door to or across the street from

one another. In other cities, classrooms within the same building were classified as either Black or White; some districts in Pennsylvania and New Jersey created "Union Rooms" for Black children of all ages, while White students attended graded classes based on their age. Even in states where racial segregation was explicitly outlawed, White residents often elected school boards that pledged to establish racially designated schools anyway. As Black populations in many cities grew exponentially in a few short years, some school districts that had purposefully desegregated schooling in the 19th century used racially gerrymandered attendance zones to resegregate them in the 1920s. In Columbus, Ohio, for example, a once-desegregated district went so far as to create a "portable school" for Black children living in White neighborhoods to ensure that they would not be assigned to a White school. Other urban districts, such as Chicago, combined gerrymandering with transfer policies that allowed White students to switch schools far more easily than their Black classmates, leading to swift segregation; while only 8% of Chicago's Black students attended a school that was 90% Black in 1916, by 1930 over 80% of the city's Black students attended such schools.

White parents, school administrators, and citizens gave multiple reasons for separating Black children from their White classmates. Some arguments for the separation of the races were explicitly racist, making clear that any mixing of Black and White children in the same classrooms or schools would lead to racial contagion and moral degradation. A White principal in Atlantic City, New Jersey, for example, called Black children "little animals" who had yet to be civilized in explaining his support for segregated schools. "They are not as clean. They are careless about their bodies," he explained: "Why should we contaminate our race?" (Douglas, 2005, p. 156). Elsewhere

in New Jersey a school board president justified the need for segregated schools by stating simply that Black children were "objectionable" (p. 156). A principal in Buffalo was more descriptive, explaining, "Other children should not be mixed-up with the colored as their standards of morals is so much lower," while teachers in Gary, Indiana, argued that the "promiscuous association" between Black and White children should not be allowed, "particularly in a school with a large number of foreign pupils. They will soon lose sight of the color line" (p. 155).

But other educators couched the imperative for separating Black children from their White peers in pedagogical terms, arguing that Black students needed to be taught differently than White students. Educators maintained that southern Black migrants arrived at school poorly educated and far behind their White classmates; their presence in age-appropriate classes retarded the progress of their peers, teachers and administrators argued, while placing older students in with younger children created social problems. Some teachers and principals believed that Black children would never be able to achieve at the level of their White classmates and maintained that segregation was thus in their best interest. Segregation offered Black children better educational opportunities, explained Philadelphia's school superintendent, because it allowed them to move at their "own rate of progress through the materials of the curriculum, which rate of progress is in some respects different from the rate of progress of other children" (Tyack, 1974, p. 227). In other words, many school leaders, White voters, and teachers argued that Black students needed to be taught differently than their White peers and that doing so required them to be taught separately as well.

As a growing body of literature on the history of Latino education in the United States makes clear, similar arguments were offered for the segregation of children of Mexican heritage (Blanton, 2004; Donato, 1997, 2007; Gonzalez, 1991; MacDonald, 2004; San Miguel, 1987, 2001; Valencia, 2008). Indeed, historians have found that like Black students in the South, Mexican American children in the Southwest were often denied educational opportunities outright in the post–Civil War era, and when Mexican American students did have access to schooling it was often in segregated settings. Donato (1997) reported that by 1930, 85% of Mexican American children in the Southwest attended segregated schools or classrooms. Just as with Black children, the segregation of Mexican American youth was often justified in pedagogical terms—although in their case Mexican American youth's alleged need to be taught differently was usually framed as a function of language. Many school and district leaders argued that providing separate schools and classrooms for Spanish-speaking youth not only gave them a chance to learn English without holding other students back but created a more comfortable environment for Spanish speakers, where they could be with their own kind (San Miguel, 1987). Yet, as many scholars have pointed out, Mexican students were often officially or unofficially barred from so-called American schools regardless of their language abilities (Carter, 1970; Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009). While not always viewed as a separate race—in fact Mexican American students were often categorized as White for the purpose of desegregating Black schools—students of Mexican heritage were nonetheless considered culturally and genetically distinct. Like their Black peers, they were characterized as dirty, malodorous, lazy, unintelligent, and not morally worthy of a White education. In addition, landowners and growers in states such as California,

Texas, and Colorado openly expressed concerns about the potential loss of cheap and compliant labor if Mexican Americans were provided an education equal to that of their White peers. “The more ignorant they are the better laborers they are,” argued a Texas onion grower: “If these [Mexicans] get educated, we’ll have to get more from Mexico” (San Miguel, 1987, p. 51).

One result of Mexican American school exclusion and segregation was, not surprisingly, low school attainment rates, particularly at the high school level. Statistics on Mexican American school enrollment and graduation rates are difficult to obtain, given that Mexican Americans were not regularly identified in census data, but one recent study estimated that 47% of high school-aged Mexican American youth attended school in 1940 ——compared with 67% of White youth and 56% of Black youth (Martinez, 2007). Indeed, unlike Black Americans, who had some state-sponsored high schools staffed by Black teachers committed to the academic achievement of Black students, Mexican American youth had few opportunities to attend high school well into the postwar era and almost no experience with Mexican American teachers.

In addition to often outright excluding Black and Mexican American youth from public schooling in the early and mid–20th century, when public officials *did* designate segregated schools for minority youth during this period they usually failed to provide sufficient operating funds. In some cases districts reallocated state money from Black and Mexican schools to White ones; in other cases the state itself allocated less money for the education of non-White youth (Anderson, 1988; Rury & Hill, 2012; San Miguel, 1987). As a result, schools attended by Black and Mexican American students were frequently in worse physical shape than schools attended by White children; they tended to have more

students per class and were often staffed by less qualified and less well-remunerated teachers. In New Orleans in the 1930s, for example, only 14% of classes in White elementary schools had more than 40 students, and less than half a percent had more than 50, while in Black elementary schools the percentages were 84 and 42, respectively (Fairclough, 2007). In Texas, segregated schools for Mexican children often employed teachers who did not meet basic requirements for teaching in Anglo schools (San Miguel, 1987).

Yet, while it is clear that public schooling for minority youth was rarely funded at the same level as public schooling for White youth, historians of education also recognize that teaching is not solely a function of resources. Many studies have documented the ways in which teachers' pedagogical practices were often similar across racial settings. Larry Cuban (1984/1993), for example, in his careful examination of the (limited) information available about classroom practices in segregated schools in Washington, D.C., in the 1920s through the 1940s, concluded that teachers of both Black and White students used a "hybrid" of progressive and traditional teaching methods, often combining student-centered projects with teacher-directed lectures. As I discussed in the previous section of this chapter, Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996, 2000) and others have argued that many segregated southern schools offered memorably positive educational experiences to their students, supporting traditional academic studies with high expectations, life guidance, extracurricular activities, and lessons in racial uplift. As Rury and Hill (2012) detailed, the credential gap between White and Black teachers in the South had largely disappeared by the 1950s, meaning that most Black teachers—particularly at the high school level—were as well qualified as their White counterparts,

if not better. Moreover, students' recollections of their time at segregated Black schools—in the South as well as in some northern cities—often highlight the combination of academic instruction and tough love that they received as students, and many credit their schooling for their successes later in life.

There is no denying, however, that segregated settings offered differentiated experiences for students and that these experiences were not always positive. Even in Black-operated segregated schools students could experience racial discrimination, as some teachers and administrators expressed overt preferences for lighter-toned students (Foster, 1997; Frazier, 1967). And aside from elite high schools in which students prepared for college, the teaching that Black students experienced in segregated Black schools often had a different intended purpose than the teaching that occurred within White schools. At times this instruction could include lessons in racial pride, history, and uplift, but Black students were also being prepared for their role in an economic, social, and political system that disenfranchised them and sharply curtailed their opportunities (Anderson, 1988; Warren, 2010).

In the North and Southwest, where Black and Mexican American students attended segregated schools usually taught by White teachers, their classroom experiences could often be miserable. Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto*, published in 1965, famously described in stark terms the student experiences he observed in segregated Black schools of New York City's Harlem. The buildings and classrooms were in poor condition; textbooks and other teaching materials were outdated; and teachers were often unqualified by the city's own standards. But most troubling to Clark were the low expectations of the teachers and the destructive relationships they had with their students:

"The teachers and the students regard each other as adversaries," he wrote: "Under these conditions the teachers are reluctant to teach and the students retaliate and resist learning" (quoted in Neckerman, 2007, p. 1). Gerry Rosenfeld's (1971) anthropological report of his own years teaching in a Harlem elementary school in the 1960s offered a similar perspective in harrowing detail. Rosenfeld documented the low expectations teachers had for their poor Black students, whom they characterized as "slow learners" with "low IQs" who "were not interested in learning" (p. 49). These beliefs about their students, according to Rosenfeld, along with teachers' understanding that "disadvantaged" youth would never be able to perform academically, led them to assign work with little or no intellectual merit. Most troubling for many readers was Rosenfeld's description of the disciplinary tactics teachers used, which included abusive language, humiliation, locking young children in closets, preventing them from using the bathroom, and physical violence. These observations were not aberrations or exclusive to New York City schools. Historians have drawn on similar firsthand accounts from segregated Black schools in cities such as Chicago (Neckerman, 2007), Philadelphia (Spencer, 2012), Detroit (Mirel, 1993/1999), and Milwaukee (Dougherty, 2004) to make clear that the teaching that Black youth experienced in segregated urban schools could be characterized as often degrading, if not abusive.

At times the low expectations teachers expressed about their poor Black students were framed in popular understandings of "cultural deprivation" and the need for schools to provide "compensatory education"—essentially by teaching students the social and psychological skills that middle- and upper-class children learned from their parents at home. As John Spencer (2012) noted in his biography of Marcus Foster, a Black urban

educator who spearheaded compensatory education programs in Philadelphia, proponents of compensatory education were often well meaning, and some programs were actually intended to raise educators' expectations and shift their understandings of the purpose of teaching poor Black children. Yet the overall effect was often damaging nonetheless; even if done well, compensatory programs provided an educational rationale for delaying school desegregation, since their main premise, as a sociologist and critic of compensatory education argued in 1963, was that it was necessary to "upgrade Negro slum children before they are thrown into the more difficult world of the middle class white" (p. 85).

The experiences of Mexican American youth in segregated settings were often similar to those of their Black peers. Even before the term *compensatory education* came into vogue, educators pointed to Mexican American students' need for English instruction and acculturation to justify teaching them in segregated settings. One Texas superintendent explained in the 1940s that Mexican students needed at least "five or six years of Americanization before being placed with American children" (Donato, 1997, p. 13). Yet instruction rarely seemed geared toward actually meeting Mexican or Mexican American youth's needs. Historical scholarship on the teaching that occurred inside segregated Mexican American schools is not as robust as that on the teaching that occurred in segregated Black schools, but what evidence we do have demonstrates that parents, students, community members, and even some teachers felt that Mexican American students received a very clear message in their segregated schools: They were not expected to do well academically, and they were not expected to complete their education. This same message was often communicated to Puerto Rican students taught

in segregated settings in New York (Donato, 1997; San Miguel, 1987; Stein, 1985). As I discuss below, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and African American students, along with many others, often rejected this message and took direct actions to subvert it. Yet there is no question that racial and ethnic segregation was one way that schools and school systems provided differentiated teaching experiences to students and specifically provided experiences that were often explicitly and intentionally unequal.

Schools and educators used other means of differentiating teaching experiences for students—most of which fall under the broad category of academic "tracking." The practice of designating different kinds of students for different courses and content has long been a feature of American education, but formal tracking grew in scope and structure in the 20th century as the bureaucratic organization of schooling expanded and more tools of differentiation became available. The introduction in the early 20th century of intelligence testing as a means of sorting students by apparent ability is an important, and well-documented, piece of this story. Yet formal tracking preceded the use of tests, and recent scholarship makes clear that test scores were often a far less important determinant of students' placements than teachers', administrators', and even, at times, students' (and their families') beliefs about their abilities and purpose in attending school. On the one hand, students' race and ethnicity often trumped their test scores, especially for Black and Mexican American youth, for whom in-school tracking frequently replaced formal segregation in the decades following World War II. On the other hand, students and their families often rejected academic tracking—especially in the case of vocational education, which was not as common as is often supposed.

<h2>Teaching to Difference: Academic Tracking in the 20th Century

As Tyack (1974) and many other historians have documented, Progressive Era schools were simultaneously tasked with treating all children the same and identifying and responding to student differences. The creation of age-based classes meant that students who did not progress academically at the same rate as their classmates could be labeled "retarded" or "delayed" and eventually sent to special classes and schools that were in theory better tailored to their needs, while simultaneously freeing teachers in the regular classrooms from the academic and behavioral challenges such students posed (Franklin, 1994). Some districts even created formal tracks to distinguish among the brightest, the average, and the slowest students, an organizational innovation that they argued was both more humane and more efficient than allowing students of varied abilities to languish together in one class (Ravitch, 1974/2000a; Tyack, 1974). By the close of World War I, school leaders and reformers were able to draw on new tests from the field of psychology that were said to measure intelligence and determine a student's likely role in society as an adult. These tests lent a degree of scientific validity to the academic sorting that was already going on in many schools and districts; the tests were widely portrayed as merit-based and nondiscriminatory, even as students were often categorized in ways that affirmed class, race, and ethnic differences.

Historians have well documented the discriminatory use of both intelligence testing and academic tracking, pointing out the biases built into such testing and the ways that experts often ignored results that did not comply with their preconceived notions of how students would perform. Critics questioned the science behind intelligence testing when the tests were first implemented. Sociologists argued that intelligence tests really

measured cultural differences and prior access to educational opportunities. Some public commentators opposed the use of testing to identify academic ability and career tracks, arguing that such methods were inherently antidemocratic and antithetical to the entire notion of common schooling (Douglas, 2005; Lemann, 1999; Tyack, 1974). Parents, citizens, and labor groups objected as well. The Chicago Federation of Labor, for example, criticized the use of intelligence testing in school: "The so-called 'mental level' ascertained by 'intelligence tests' corresponds in an astounding exactness with the social and economic status of the family," it noted: "Has a new natural law been discovered which binds each individual to a place in society and against which struggle is hopeless?" (Tyack, 1974, p. 215).

Yet developers and promoters of intelligence testing argued that the tests objectively measured mental capacity and, in the process, verified the deficiencies of many racial groups as they were understood at the time, including Black Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans, as well as immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. One testing expert even argued that children from Latin America and southern Europe tested lower than other White children because there was a "considerable negroid strain" in their lineage (Douglas, 2005, p. 160). Indeed, the fact that test results usually reflected existing social and economic distinctions only affirmed the tests' worth to many educators and testing proponents, who understood intelligence to be genetically determined. "There can not be equality," explained one testing proponent, "where nature has made inequality." But, he added, tests could be "used to determine to a fairly good degree what part a child will probably be able to play, so far as his general intelligence goes, in the world of work" (Steffes, 2012, p. 180). Thus schools and

educators used intelligence tests to identify students' ability and then sort them into curricular tracks or specialized programs accordingly.

Most scholarship on the use of intelligence tests and other means of separating students by perceived ability emphasizes the inequities in this system and notes the practice's inherent conflict with the larger civic purposes of schooling (Labaree, 2010; Steffes, 2012; Tyack, 1974). Yet the historical record on how testing and tracking affected classroom teaching in the first half of the 20th century is actually quite slim. Indeed, Judith Raftery (1988), in a study of the use of intelligence testing in Los Angeles in the 1920s, noted that "the claims of theorists are far removed from the actions of rank-and-file classroom teachers" when it came to the ways tests were actually used in the classroom; she urged historians to spend more time looking at how teachers responded to the policy directives they received (p. 74). Raftery found that even in a school system such as Los Angeles, with an extensive testing program, teachers and principals were well aware of the deficiencies and inaccuracies of such tests—especially for their Mexican American students—and often used other measures, as well as their own appraisals, when making decisions about student placement. In fact many teachers found the tests problematic—not only were supposedly scientific exams now replacing teachers' professional judgment about which children were "slow" and which were "fast" but the class and caste implications were clear to anyone working in a city school system (Rousmaniere, 1997).

There were other obstacles to the use of testing beyond teacher opposition. Neckerman (2007) reported that in Chicago the public schools in the 1920s lacked the capacity to track students based on test scores even had they wanted to. Instead, entering

high school students were advised to just "make up" their minds about which course of study to follow and stick with it (p. 114). By the 1930s, when the district had enough organizational ability to use IQ testing to put students into homogeneous groups, many teachers opposed the practice. Some were concerned about its antidemocratic implications and its overemphasis on innate intelligence, while others worried that being assigned a low group of students would hurt the ratings they received from supervisors.

This is not to suggest that students did not experience differentiated teaching in urban school districts in the early decades of the 20th century, but that testing may not have been the cause of it. Even in districts that used tests for tracking purposes, race and ethnicity often trumped test results. In Los Angeles, for example, Raftery reported that although Black students' IQ test scores differed little from those of their White peers, the school board established a segregated high school for Black students in response to pressure from White voters. Similarly, the Philadelphia High School for Girlssegregated all of its Black students in one classroom in 1924—purportedly on the basis of intelligence testing, even though Black students' test scores varied from high to low (Spencer, 2012). In Miami, Arizona, the district superintendent was quite proud of his decision to create a special vocational school for Mexican and Mexican American students after concluding that their low intelligence test scores indicated that such a program would be in their best interest. Yet the vocational school was not promoted as an innovation for low-scoring students of all backgrounds; it was a program created specifically for Mexicans, who were already being taught in segregated settings (Steffes, 2012; Tyack, 1974).

As these examples make evident, tracking was a frequent means of separating Mexican American and Black students from their White classmates in school systems that did not have formally segregated schools, but tracking was also used *within* segregated settings. Indeed, at the height of postwar Black migration, many urban schools and districts sought to distinguish children who were newly arrived from the South from those whose families had been living in the area for a generation. For example, the Milwaukee public school district developed "community adjustment courses" for southern newcomers in the 1950s in order to teach etiquette, manners, and "accepted customs in the city," among other things (Dougherty, 2004, p. 65). The district also created special classes for Black migrants in many Black elementary schools, based on the belief that the newcomers were too far behind academically to be taught in the same room with their northern peers. Some Black schools in Philadelphia created similar tracking programs (Spencer, 2012); and segregated schools throughout the country created "opportunity rooms" or other specially designated settings to place students who frequently misbehaved or were otherwise labeled as in need of special teaching and attention (Kafka, 2011; Nelson, 2005; Rosenfeld, 1971; Tropea, 1987).

Academic tracking clearly distinguished different kinds of students—however identified—from one another. Yet, while historians have well documented the existence of tracking and which kinds of students were assigned to (or chose) specific tracks, we know little about the teaching that they experienced once they got there. Oft-cited reports detailing teaching practices in the early years of tracking—Joseph Rice's classroom visits, for example, or a study of Portland schools led by Elwood P. Cubberley—tend to focus on elementary school classrooms and do not mention tracking by student ability.

Rousmaniere's (1997) study of New York City teachers in the 1920s, which detailed many aspects of teachers' work and discussed teachers' views of tracking, did not reveal much about how classroom interactions may have differed by track. Cuban's *How Teachers Taught* (1984/1993) explored teaching in racially segregated settings but did not address tracking within schools.

Even research that addresses vocational education, which historians often emphasize as a structural means—whether intentional or not—of limiting educational opportunities for minority and poor youth, offers few accounts of the teaching that occurred within vocational tracks (Kantor & Tyack, 1982; Lazerson & Grubb, 1974; Ravitch, 2000b; Steffes, 2012; Tyack, 1974). Indeed, with the exception of scholarship on African American and Native American boarding schools, which documents the ways domestic, agricultural, and trade skills were imparted to students through hands-on, experiential learning that often also served as manual labor for their institutions, there is little historical record of what vocational education looked like in practice (Adams, 1995; Anderson, 1988; Coleman, 1993; Warren, 2010). Rury (1991) and Powers (1992), in investigating the role of vocational training in the context of girls' education, both offered details about the content that was prescribed for various vocational courses for girls, and Powers highlighted the ways that "hard" sciences such as chemistry and physics were supposed to be incorporated into home economics courses (p. 93), but even their extensive studies did not offer much information about what actually happened inside of classrooms.

This may be in part because vocational education was more prominent rhetorically than in practice. As several studies make clear, students (and their parents)

were much less interested in using high school as preparation for industrial or trade work than the politicians and reformers promoting vocational education as a way of keeping students in school supposed. Angus and Mirel (1999), in their careful review of course-taking patterns in one Michigan school district, for example, found that despite an increase in tracking, vocational courses never made up more than 20% of one highly progressive high school curriculum; moreover, they maintained that most of the courses that *were* taken were commercial classes such as bookkeeping and typing, which imparted skills with practical uses beyond job readiness. Looking more broadly at national data, Angus and Mirel found that "by the late 1920s, industrial arts, home economics, agriculture, trade training, and teacher training combined accounted for less than 10 percent of all course enrollments in American public high schools" (p. 47) and noted that many students enrolled in academic tracks also took some of these courses. Indeed, according to Angus and Mirel, increased vocational education course-taking during the 1930s and 1940s was not at the expense of academic subjects.

Similarly, Anderson (1988) found that although White philanthropists sought to develop Black public high schools in the South in the tradition of the Hampton Institute and Tuskegee—that is, with an industrial focus—vocational education never really took off among Black public high school students. Instead, Black students and their parents demonstrated a strong preference for academic, college-preparatory education (see also Rury & Hill, 2012). There is some evidence that Mexican American youth in states such as Arizona and Texas may have actually been enrolled in vocational education courses in higher rates than other youth during this period, but, as Guadeloupe San Miguel Jr. (2001) observed, "because of a dearth of studies dealing with the placement of Mexican

children in vocational education," we have no clear picture of what may have occurred in those classrooms and "whether vocational education actually trained these students to be docile workers or provided them with work skills necessary for advancement" (p. 31).

Nor were vocational tracks popular with girls (Powers, 1992; Rury, 1991). Even courses in home economics, which were supposed to offer school–life connections by helping to prepare girls for their roles as wives and mothers, were taken primarily as electives or requirements rather than as part of a separate and distinct nonacademic track. Although home economics courses were somewhat more popular among rural girls, who may have been more likely to see their futures tied to the domestic arts and agriculture than their urban peers, in general girls—and especially the daughters of immigrants for whom the courses were often promoted—did not attend school to be trained in homemaking or industrial labor. As George Counts remarked after surveying course-taking patterns in more than 14,000 public high schools across the country in 1926, "The girls who were supposed to rejoice at the opportunity of being equipped for the responsibilities of the home and motherhood have been interested in other things" (Powers, 1992, p. 95). Commercial courses that would prepare them for white-collar employment were far more popular among girls, as Angus and Mirel (1999) found in Michigan; but, as Rury (1991) noted,

> <ext>the commercial curriculum generally differed little from the general or academic course. Only about 30 percent of the classes in most commercial curricula were explicitly vocational (those included typing, shorthand, and

> bookkeeping), the rest were standard "modern" academic subjects such as English, mathematics, and history. (p. 197)

It appears that, when given the choice, few students of any background or social characteristic elected to enroll in purely vocational courses in high school. This does not mean that tracking did not exist; it did, just in a different form—and one to which historians have not paid enough attention. The most common method of tracking in American high schools was the creation of "basic" or "general" curricula that in many school systems served as a way of separating students deemed low-performing or of low potential from their more advanced or capable peers. Yet, with few exceptions, we have little historical scholarship detailing this form of tracking or its effects on classroom teaching.

One such exception is the work by Angus and Mirel (1999), which noted that while vocational education may not have played a large role in most Michigan students' high school experiences, in Detroit and elsewhere, Black students were more likely to be relegated to a "general" custodial track that prepared them for neither work nor college. Mirel (1993/1999) made this same point somewhat more forcefully in his earlier study of the Detroit public school system, observing that in the 1940s "school officials placed Black students into the academically deficient general high school curriculum at twice the rate of White students, thus dooming them to four years of watered-down required courses and life adjustment–style electives." Mirel concluded that educational historians have been "remiss in not examining the development of the general track, whose operation in Detroit appears to be far more insidious [than vocational education] in

depriving working-class and minority students of access to high-quality education" (p. 201).

Some historians have explored nonvocational tracking in the context of school desegregation, and a few have even found observational evidence detailing how teaching differed by track. Gerald Grant, for example, in his 1988 study of the pseudonymously named Hamilton High, found that after the school was desegregated in the 1960s, 90% of students enrolled in remedial "basic" classes were Black while only 10% of students enrolled in the college-preparatory track were Black. A researcher who visited a so-called subbasic commercial math class at the school during this period reported low attendance, students "adding long columns of figures, looking bored," and a teacher who seemed to expect very little (pp. 30–31). Others have noted that entire schools became "tracked" as their student population shifted. For instance, Barbara Miner (2013) found in her review of school reform efforts in Milwaukee that upper-level and college-preparatory courses disappeared from some of the city's high schools as their student populations became predominantly Black.

For the most part, however, our knowledge about teaching differences across tracks in the mid– to late 20th century is derived from sociological studies conducted in and across different forms of tracking in the 1970s and 1980s. Probably the best-known and most thorough study we have on how teaching has differed by track is Jeannie Oakes's *Keeping Track,* originally published in 1985 and reissued as a second edition in 2005. After conducting observations, interviews, and document analysis in 25 junior high and high schools in which students were sorted into academic courses based on their perceived skill or ability, Oakes and her team found evidence of stark teaching

differences between high-level and low-level courses in the same subject areas. They noted that students in lower-track classes consistently had access to less content than their peers in higher-track classes, the work they were asked to do was less analytic and less intellectually challenging than the work of their peers, and student–teacher interactions tended to be less positive and less academically oriented in lower-track classes than in higher-track classes.

Oakes' focus was on how tracking creates educational inequities by offering qualitatively unequal learning experiences to differently-tracked youth. Although she acknowledged that Black and Mexican American students tended to be overrepresented in the lower tracks of the interracial schools in her study, her book was not about how students' race or class shaped their teaching experiences but, rather, how the structure of tracking did. Indeed, Oakes (1985/2005) argued that "the differences in what students experienced each day in these schools stemmed not so much from where they happened to live and which of the schools they happened to attend but, rather, from differences *within* each of the schools" (p. 2), suggesting that without tracking greater equity would exist both within and across school settings.

In this sense *Keeping Track* stands somewhat in contrast to other ethnographies of teaching differences across student populations conducted around the same time. Jean Anyon's (1980) study of classroom teaching in elementary schools in what she termed "contrasting social class communities," for example, documented concrete evidence of differences in students' teaching experiences based on social class (p.67). While the work assigned to students attending schools in the working-class communities Anyon studied was primarily procedural and required rote memorization and rule-following, students in

the wealthiest community were asked to do work that developed their analytic skills and required self-management. Anyon concluded that children from different class backgrounds were being prepared for different kinds of work and relationships to the American economic system—an argument that had been made popular at the time by theorists such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Michael Apple (1979), among others, but had yet to be verified by examining actual teaching practices. In Anyon's study it was not formal tracking that explained teaching differences across classrooms but, rather, the social class of the students who attended them.

Ray Rist's (1970/2000) somewhat earlier study of within-classroom ability grouping in an all-Black elementary school, republished with the author's reflections in 2000, was also not about formal tracking, since the students he followed for three years were all in the same classroom. Yet Rist's study demonstrated in great detail how much students' teaching experiences could vary even within the same room when teachers intentionally differentiated between them. Specifically, Rist found that the teachers in his study assigned students to ability groups based on perceptions of the students' social class and that teachers then spent most of their time instructing those placed in the highest group; students in this group tended to receive positive encouragement and were held up to their peers as models for the class. Students in the lowest ability groups, meanwhile, were often ignored or ridiculed by their teachers, did not have access to the same content as their higher-level peers, and tended to conform to the low expectations communicated to them by performing poorly in school. In Rist's study, teachers' perceptions of students' social class were a determining factor in both what students were

taught and how they were treated in the classroom, and those early experiences shaped what students learned and how they were taught in later years.

Arthur Powell, Eleanor Farrar, and David Cohen (1985) offered yet another perspective on teaching differences across tracks, although, as they noted, the term *tracking* (but not the practice) was already being replaced by less fraught terminology when they conducted their research in the early 1980s. In their much acclaimed study in which they likened high schools to shopping malls, with many products to sell and many customers to please, Powell, Farrar, and Cohen argued that in addition to instructional differences shaped by formal distinctions such as course subject (math versus English) and course level ("honors" versus "basic"), teaching often varied class to class within the same high school based on unofficial "treaties" negotiated (sometimes unconsciously) between teacher and students: "Some students and teachers wish to engage a subject to learn and to teach; others wish to avoid subjects as much as possible without the appearance of irresponsibility. Most work out a modus operandi somewhere in between" (p. 4). For Powell et al., the radically varied classroom teaching that they observed on their visits to 15 high schools across the country was the product of both institutional forces that allowed for so many different kinds of courses and gave students the responsibility for choosing among them and students' and teachers' beliefs about the purpose of those courses and the teaching that occurred within them. While some students viewed their high school education as preparation for a demanding college curriculum and professional careers to follow, and some teachers sought to instill lifelong skills such as problem solving and critical inquiry along with content-specific knowledge and know-how, many more students, teachers, and administrators saw attendance and the

attainment of a diploma as students' primary goals in high school, even for those who were college-bound.

Powell et al.'s (1985) study was one of many published in the 1980s aimed at explaining what was "wrong" with American education—the most famous of which is the U.S. government's *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; see also Boyer, 1983, Silberman, 1970,and Sizer, 1984, among many others). These reports must be understood as products of their time and as serving particular political purposes as well as providing observational data; yet, taken together with the works of Oakes (1985/2005), Anyon (1980), and Rist (1970/2000), along with other scholarship exploring teaching differences across various forms of tracking in the 1970s and 1980s (Gamoran, 1986, 1987), this research provides considerable documentary evidence that historians could supplement with oral histories, memoirs, and broader social context to help us better understand how teaching has varied and/or remained consistent across different kinds of classrooms populated with different kinds of students.

In addition to highlighting variations in students' classroom experiences, Powell et al.'s (1985) study was also part of an emerging body of research that recognized the role students played in shaping classroom teaching through their interactions with teachers and content—a portrayal that both acknowledges student agency in the teaching process and implicates youth as partially responsible for the quality of instruction they received (Metz, 1978; Sizer, 1984; Willis, 1977). Historians, on the other hand, have mostly looked beyond the classroom to investigate how students influenced what went on within them. Specifically, in the past few decades a growing body of historical

scholarship has documented the political struggles that occurred over schooling in the civil rights era and beyond, much of which details ways that students and their families and advocates shaped classroom teaching through direct acts of protest (Amerman, 2010; Donato, 1997; Dougherty, 2004; Kafka, 2011; Mirel, 1993/1999; Perlstein, 2004; Perrillo, 2012; Podair, 2002; San Miguel, 2001).

<h2>Student Voices in the 1960s and 1970s

Historians of education make clear that students and families have sought to influence classroom teaching through acts of protest since the inception of public schooling; those who lacked the power to shape school policy through other means often turned to direct action in an effort to change what was going on in classrooms. In Boston, for example, Irish American students in the 1850s conducted walkouts and sit-ins in opposition to their required reading of the Protestant Bible; after a high-profile incident in which a student was beaten for refusing to recite a Protestant version of the Ten Commandments, the requirement was rescinded (Nolan, 2004). In an oft-written aboutincident in 1917, thousands of New York City students and their parents, most of whom were Jewish, fought the so-called Gary Plan, which they believed offered inferior, vocationally oriented education in their schools. Through protests, publicity campaigns, and a widespread school boycott (and the election of a new mayor) they were able to get many aspects of the plan changed (Ravitch, 1974/2000a; Weiner, 2010). And historians have documented ways that African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and other communities have used political protest and the judicial system as means of gaining access to schooling when their entry was barred (Anderson, 1988; Low, 1982;

MacDonald, 2012–2013; Moss, 2009; San Miguel, 1987). In recent years, however, historians have been particularly interested in the school protests of the 1960s and 1970s, which were often conducted by African American and Latino youth and their families in pursuit of a wide range of reforms in both the structure and practices of American schooling. Although many of these protests were aimed at issues of school governance, they also had an impact on teaching, and in fact many were initiated by students' experiences in their classrooms.

In their broadest terms, student and community protesters of the 1960s and 1970s were seeking educational equity and a voice in the education policy–making process, but they were also often seeking specific changes in how their schools and classrooms were conducted. In Detroit in the 1960s, for example, students boycotted several predominantly Black high schools to protest the inferior conditions of their schools compared with those attended by White students and the low-level course content available to them there. As a student from one of the longest boycotts, held for more than three weeks at Northern High School, put it, teachers at the school "look and teach down to Negro students." Another student maintained that the school's teachers believed that "black boys and girls don't want to learn, so therefore they don't put much in their jobs" (Franklin, 2004, p. 141). Students also complained that there was a lack of equipment and resources in the industrial and vocational courses and that students enrolled in higher-tracked classes did not receive a notably different curriculum than those enrolled in regular-level classes. As one student wrote, teachers and administrators assumed that Black students were "willing to accept anything, the leftovers, and this is what we are given" (p. 141). In Los Angeles, more than 10,000 students, most of whom were Mexican

American, boycotted school for more than a week in what is often referred to as the "Chicano blowouts" of 1968. The blowouts are best remembered for their role in helping to expand and gain attention for the growing Brown Power movement, but many of the students' demands were aimed directly at the classroom. These included a more inclusive curriculum; the hiring of Spanish-speaking teachers; updated facilities and textbooks; the elimination of corporal punishment; and a greater voice in local school policy, including student dress and grooming codes (Haney-Lopez, 2003; Kafka, 2011; Muñoz, 1989).

As many historians have noted, student boycotts, walkouts, and demonstrations rarely achieved the broader goals of desegregation or educational equality, but these political protests often did effect changes in classroom teaching—by either reshaping teacher–student relations, influencing what was taught, or transforming the teacher and principal hiring process. Perhaps most prominently, student and community protesters in the 1960s and 1970s were often successful in their demands for more racially and ethnically inclusive curricula—particularly in the teaching of American or world history. In Milwaukee, for example, more than 1,000 Black students walked out of their classrooms in the winter of 1968 demanding a new textbook for American history courses that included Black history. The district responded with a mimeographed booklet called *The Negro in American Life*, which was intended as a supplement to the main textbook. Although some protesters found the district's effort paltry—one student complained that the booklet was nothing more than a "comic book" that only detailed very recent history—it nonetheless represented a real change in what (at least some) students in Milwaukee were taught (Dougherty, 2004, p. 143). Similarly, in Detroit, one of the few material effects of the protracted battle between Black students and families

and the predominantly White school board and administration was the district's inclusion of Black history in the standard American history curriculum (Mirel, 1993/1999). In Houston, a Mexican American school boycott, along with student and community protests, ultimately led to the inclusion of some Mexican American history in the district's curriculum, as well as the development of bilingual programs (San Miguel, 2001). And in Phoenix, African American, Mexican American, and Native American student protests led to, among other things, the district's adoption of more inclusive history textbooks and its official commitment to implementing "minority studies" across the district (Amerman, 2010).

These curricular changes were usually modest and often controversial, and school boards and White teachers often proved resistant to including anything but the most simplistic version of African American and Mexican American history and culture in official school content (Perlstein, 2004; Perrillo, 2012). As Jack Dougherty (2004) observed in the context of Milwaukee, where a high school teacher encountered significant administrative resistance and job insecurity over a course he developed connecting African history to modern Black America, while "school officials did respond to the general demand for black history, they retained considerable power over how it was taught" (p. 144). Nonetheless, there is no question that student and community political protests were directly responsible for the curricular changes that did occur and thus had a lasting impact on what was taught in their schools—as well as the schools and classrooms of many others.

In addition to shaping what was taught in at least some of their classrooms, student and community protesters in the 1960s and 1970s also often influenced who

taught in and who ran their schools. In Los Angeles, for example, African American and Mexican American school protests led to the establishment of a new board policy preferencing the hiring of minority administrators for minority schools. The result was a quick rise in the number of non-White school administrators in predominantly Black and Mexican American schools (Kafka, 2011). In Detroit, student and community protests led to a sharp increase in the number of African American teachers and administrators in the district, and, at least in the case of the teachers, their placement was not limited to predominantly Black schools. Mirel (1999) reported that by the end of the 1966–1967 school year, "every school in the district had at least one black teacher, making the staff perhaps the most integrated of any large city in the nation" (p. 307). In New York City, community activists in Ocean Hill–Brownsville and Harlem were briefly able to directly influence who taught in their neighborhood schools through a community control experiment, although this arrangement was quickly upended by a long and bitter battle with the city's teachers union (Lewis, 2013; Perlstein, 2004; Perrillo, 2012; Podair, 2002). In Phoenix, after first insisting that there were no qualified African American teacher candidates available to hire, the district eventually significantly increased the number of Black, Mexican American, and Native American teachers working there, although minority teachers were still underrepresented compared with the district's student population (Amerman, 2010).[5]

[5] Mexican Americans were particularly underrepresented in Phoenix's teaching ranks, constituting more than 20% of the district's student population in the 1977–1978 school year and only 9.1% of its teachers (Amerman, 2010, p. 148).

Perhaps the most far-reaching effect that student and community protests had on classroom teaching, however, was in the reshaping of student–teacher relationships. In the aftermath of school boycotts, sit-ins, and demonstrations, teachers and students alike asserted that their expectations—of each other and of teaching more broadly—had changed. For their part, teachers often complained that students no longer respected them and that their authority had been compromised by the conciliatory actions of school boards and central administrations. In my research on Los Angeles, for example, I found that although many teachers had supported the blowouts and some even joined their students on the picket lines, many more articulated anger that students who had walked out of their classrooms had not been suspended or expelled. One faculty petition sent to the city's school board maintained that "the image of the teacher [was] hurt by permitting insubordination in the classrooms and condoning the apparent lack of concern for education by students." A teacher representative from another high school complained that a student could now walk into class and say, "I was absent and you can't do anything about it" and he or she would be correct (Kafka, 2011, p. 89). Even teachers from schools relatively unaffected by the blowouts felt that the school board's response to them had undermined their authority in the classroom. A faculty association from a virtually all-White junior high school in West Hollywood, for example, acknowledged that no students on its campus had walked out but nonetheless felt that classroom dynamics had changed: "Our classroom authority and achievement weakens . . . as your guidelines fall flat" (p. 90).

Whether students were truly more likely to challenge or disregard their teachers' authority following political protests is unclear. The fact that students conducted

walkouts and boycotts in the first place indicates that teachers' authority had already been compromised. But teachers clearly felt that their relationships with students had shifted in the aftermath of the protests, and that perception in turn created its own reality. Indeed, Richard Arum (2003 argued in his study of what he termed a "crisis of moral authority" in American schooling that teachers' and students' perceptions of judicial rulings in favor of students' constitutional rights reshaped classroom relations—even if both groups often overestimated the extent to which those rulings limited teachers' disciplinary options.

Moreover, while many teachers felt that student protests and official responses to them weakened their classroom authority, many students and parents believed that it was teachers' own actions that had weakened their moral standing. In cities such as Detroit and New York, where student and community action was met with protracted teacher strikes, civil rights leaders, students, and parents often argued that they could no longer trust that teachers were well intentioned. "As far as black people are concerned," wrote a New York City high school student in the days following the strike there, the city's teacher union was "dead." She added: "It will never be trusted again." A teacher organization that had been in favor of community control agreed. The strike, it argued, "made many students, especially Black students, feel victimized by teachers" (Perrillo, 2012, p. 146). Even where strikes had not occurred, students often felt let down or overtly oppressed by their teachers. In Milwaukee, after a group of Black students at a predominantly White high school organized to demand more Black history courses, the hiring of more Black teachers, and the removal of police from schools, some White teachers openly criticized their behavior and dismissed their demands. The head of the social studies department, for example, wrote a letter to the city's newspaper condemning

the “loud, crude, vulgar speech of many of the blacks—and their rough, unwarranted militant behavior in absolute defiance of all authority” (quoted in Dougherty, 2004, p. 136). Assertions like these only cemented students’ belief that most of their White teachers were not on their side.

Of course student–teacher relations have always been variable, and the notion that students in general had greater respect for their teachers in earlier eras is not historically grounded, as I hope this chapter has already made clear. Yet the sheer number and size of organized student and community protests against school policies and practices across urban America in the 1960s and 1970s set this era apart. Most, but not all, of these protests pitted minority youth and their advocates against White-run institutions, often bringing issues of race and racial difference to the forefront of conversations about teaching. School protests of the 1960s and 1970s also happened in the context of increased urban violence and a series of “riots” or demonstrations that also impacted teacher–student relations. For example, teachers testified that students in South Central Los Angeles were less compliant and more confrontational after the violence of Watts in 1965, while organizers of the Chicano blowouts recalled being in part inspired by those same events to conduct their protests (Kafka, 2011).

In this sense, the student and community school protests of the 1960s and 1970s can be understood as both unique to their period and an extension of earlier actions that students and families took to intentionally change classroom teaching. Taking a long view of the history of who has been taught in American classrooms reveals that while students have often had different teaching experiences based on social characteristics such as their race, class, ethnicity, gender, and language, much about their experiences

has also been similar. Students not considered White have often been taught in segregated settings, at times by teachers who sought to use education as a way of improving the social and economic status of their ethnic or racial community; at times by teachers who hoped to train their charges to adopt the customs, language, and habits of White, Anglo, middle-class Americans; and at times by teachers whose perceptions of their students and their purpose in teaching them shifted—based in part on experiences in the classroom. Students often played a role in this process. At times they explicitly demanded changes in classroom practices and content; at other times their presence alone, and their interactions with teachers and peers, effected changes in what and how they were taught, as well as why. In the next section of this chapter I turn to research on the history of content in the classroom and explore how what was taught—and how teachers, students, and the general public understood why it was being taught—shaped the history of teaching.

<h1>Section III: What Was Taught in American Public Schools

In general, historians of education pay short shrift to what was actually taught in schools. Curricular history tends to be dominated by epistemological and ideological debates, focusing primarily on how and why school leaders and teacher educators came to believe what they did about what should be taught in schools and how battles over curriculum played out in local and national contexts. Herbert Kliebard's *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* (1986/1995) has become a central text in this regard. It is a well-written and widely read book on historical debates about what should be taught in schools from the 1890s through the 1950s. Building on the work of Cremin (1961), Krug (1964), and many others, Kliebard offered a useful analytic lens for talking about the

different camps involved—from the humanists, who promoted what might be considered a traditional curriculum, to three groups of reformers that promoted schooling as a means of either social efficiency, helping children reach their individual potential, or ameliorating social injustice. Yet, while Kliebard's book offered an engaging discussion about the philosophical and ideological roots of these debates, his study told us little about what actually happened inside classrooms. Ellen Lagemann (1989) sought to cut to the chase in her oft-quoted statement that Edward Thorndike "won" and John Dewey "lost" the battle over school curriculum and practice, but as Labaree (2010) pointed out, existing evidence suggests that neither the so-called child-centered progressives represented by Dewey nor the so-called administrative progressives represented by Thorndike had much overall influence on classroom teaching.

Distinguishing what was supposed to be taught from what was actually taught is, of course, notoriously difficult. Sources on philosophical and methodological debates about teaching are far easier to access, and perhaps for researchers with various disciplinary backgrounds more intellectually enticing, than trying to uncover what went on in classrooms behind closed doors. Historians may also be dissuaded from undertaking this challenge by the common refrain that little has changed in American classrooms in terms of teaching practices since the beginning of the last century (Cuban, 1984/1993; Finkelstein, 1989; Katz, 1971; Zilversmit, 1993). Yet the paucity of information that currently exists about the history of what was taught is unfortunate. While teachers and students may be the primary actors in the instructional triangle, their interactions occur around content, and thus understanding *what* was taught is essential to understanding the history of teaching. Indeed, as I discussed in the previous section of

this chapter, students, families and educators sometimes battled over the content of instruction. Moreover, what little we do know about what was actually taught in classrooms across time and location suggests that content—and, crucially, teachers', students', and families' understandings of the purpose of that content—often affected classroom interactions and thus shaped teaching practices.

I begin this section on the history of what was taught with a review of historical research on the teaching of the core curriculum of American public education from the common schools era through the postwar period—that is, the teaching of reading, writing, and math, in addition to some version of moral or behavioral instruction. One clear finding from this literature is that whether termed "character," "discipline," or "citizenship," and whether taught through explicit means or as part of a so-called hidden curriculum, the purpose of teaching has historically been first and foremost about ensuring that students conform with appropriate behavioral norms, and this purpose has often permeated the teaching of all other content. Expectations about which values and behaviors children needed to learn have shifted through time and have never been completely consistent across populations and communities; nonetheless, behavioral/moral training has remained central to classroom instruction.

This is not to suggest that academic content was irrelevant to teaching, however. Indeed, a somewhat small new body of research on the history of teaching within specific disciplinary or curricular domains reveals that content can shape classroom instruction, based largely on teachers', students', and their families' understandings of its purpose. In the second part of this section I review scholarship on the history of teaching in two content areas that constitute part of the expanded core curriculum of American

schooling—early childhood development and science. I find that while teaching in these areas has varied considerably, each has developed certain pedagogical innovations that through time have become traditional in their own domains.

<h2>The History of Teaching Basic Content: Moral Character and the 3 *R*s

A great deal of historical scholarship on what was taught in American public schools makes clear that formal content was often seen as secondary to the process of schooling itself. David Labaree (2010) made this case about the common schools of the 19th century: "Community came from being socialized in the values of a liberal republic and from having the shared experience of schooling. What students learned about math, science, literature, and history . . . was beside the point" (p. 74). Put another way, socialization *was* the primary content of the common schools—the not-so-hidden "hidden curriculum" of formal education that sociologists continue to document and debate to this day (Anyon, 1980; Dreeben, 1968; Durkheim, 1925/1961; Giroux, 1983/2001; Lareau, 1989; Willis, 1977). At times schools' emphasis on socialization and acculturation has been viewed negatively, as failing to prioritize academic achievement (Reese, 2005). At other times, however, and particularly in moments of crisis or national insecurity, schools have been celebrated for their focus on creating and maintaining a particularly American set of values and community. As President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asserted in 1939: "That the school makes worthy citizens is the most important responsibility placed upon them" (quoted in Dorn, 2007, p. 4).

Nineteenth-century teachers were expected to instill a sense of duty to God, family, and nation in their charges and to ensure that students had the work ethic,

determination, and virtue required to live successful, honorable lives (Finkelstein, 1989; Kaestle, 1983; McClellan, 1999; Reese, 2005). For most educators and policy makers of the period, the development of character required the teaching of Christian, specifically Protestant, precepts. “What good is your education, with all its intellectual completeness,” queried a primer on teaching, “if it does not secure that the child shall become the true man, the pure friend, the worthy parent, the noble citizen, to say nothing of the Christian?” (Reese, 2005, p. 35). Reports from the era suggest that many teachers took their responsibilities vis-à-vis the moral training of their charges quite seriously. Teachers forbade immoral behavior even out of the classroom—threatening to suspend students who went dancing at night, for example, or punishing youth who fought one another outside of school (Finkelstein, 1975).

Parents often agreed with the moral standards set by their children’s teachers. As one former teacher recalled of his years in rural Indiana, he and the parents agreed “in requiring children, at home and at school, to cultivate good habits and polite manners, to avoid profanity and all immoral and vulgar language or conduct.” In fact, “the teacher was censured if he did not punish offenses deservedly” (Finkelstein, 1975, p. 366). Even if parents felt that a teacher’s morality lessons were inappropriate, however, school boards usually supported the teacher’s prerogative to deliver them. In fact teachers often sought to chastise parents through the instruction of their young. As Finkelstein (1975) described, urban teachers in particular would often instruct their students on matters of personal hygiene, cleanliness, and good manners—lessons they hoped would make their way home.

Many 19th-century teachers also believed that academic learning was intimately tied to moral development. The dominant learning theory at the time—often referred to as mental discipline—held that minds needed to be trained through practice in much the same way we might today exercise our bodies. Students who learned their lessons were those who worked hard and practiced, and those who fell behind were perceived to be demonstrating a moral failing as much as an intellectual one. A "good" student, then, was one who was well behaved as well as academically accomplished, and pedagogy and content were often viewed as one and the same (Finkelstein, 1989; Hogan, 1990).

Of course, academic subjects were also taught. In fact we have considerable evidence that despite a lack of leadership in the realm of curriculum, and despite great variation in many aspects of schooling, most public schools from the 19th century through today tended to offer the same general academic content, focusing on reading, writing, and basic arithmetic—with some geography and history often added in as well. Barbara Finkelstein's (1989) careful examination of primary-source documents from the mid–19th century remains foundational to our understanding of what was taught during this era, but other scholars have added to and extended her analysis in the past two decades. In order to do so, they draw on two kinds of sources. First, observations and memoirs provide firsthand accounts of the goings-on in a particular school or classroom on a given day; individual accounts, given their self-selectivity, may not be representative or completely accurate, but an accumulation of many can offer general findings and narrative coherence. In addition to firsthand accounts, historians look to popular textbooks to understand what was taught in 19th-century schools. They do so in part because many such books remain accessible to historians, especially those widely used at

the time, such as Noah Webster's spellers and the *McGuffey's Readers*. In addition, textbooks offer formal evidence of the lessons educators hoped students would learn and provide insight into the values and priorities that governed the entire educational enterprise at different historical moments.

Historians have emphasized the content of textbooks for another reason as well. Especially in 19th-century schools, where students were expected to learn their lessons independently for public recitation later, textbooks were understood to be responsible for a fair amount of the teaching. McClellan (1999) may have somewhat overstated the case when he claimed that in 19th-century schools academic instruction "depended less on the efforts of the teacher than on textbooks" (p. 25), but there is no mistaking the central role textbooks played in early American schooling.

Analyses of just about any content-area textbook from the period confirm that regardless of academic subject, 19th-century teaching was centrally moral instruction. The morality that students were to learn from their books was explicitly Protestant-based, with an American-inflected notion of citizenship folded within. For example, geography and history lessons, when they were taught, tended to highlight the superiority of the United States or certain regions within it—often combining information about natural resources and political development with moral judgments and lessons (Reese, 2005). In a study of early 19th-century American textbooks, Margaret Nash (2009) found that most books tended to celebrate regional and state identity rather than national unity, but they did so on moral grounds, highlighting the honor and virtue of one type of people over another. One 19th-century textbook hailed the "hardy, robust, enterprising, and laborious" people of Vermont, for example, while another portrayed the residents of

Rhode Island as “ignorant, irreligious, and loose in their morals” (pp. 429–430). McClellan (1999) noted that even key historical figures were taught as moral exemplars: for instance, lessons on George Washington focused on his integrity rather than on his political or military skill.

Aside from their explicit lessons, most 19th-century textbooks also offered a mode of instruction—usually memorization and recitation in just about every subject. Students were often taught to spell by memorizing lists of words, without any discussion of letter combinations or phonics. They were expected to memorize maps and the information that accompanied them and to repeat what they had memorized back to teachers in either a call-and-response fashion or a direct word-for-word recitation (Finkelstein, 1989). Textbooks were usually written to support this method of teaching, which was often referred to as catechetical because of its common use in religious instruction. A geography text from 1845, for example, offered this exchange: “Q. What are these divisions called? A. Natural divisions. Q. Why are they so called? A. Because they are not made by man but exist in nature” (Tolley, 2003, p. 31). A textbook entitled *The Art of Writing* included the following:

> <ext>Q. How is the Art of Writing acquired? A. By learning to draw and combine six principal strokes. Q. Is it needful to know what these strokes are? A. Yes; for unless we get a perfect idea of each separately we can never write handsomely. (Finkelstein, 1989, p. 44)

Rote memorization of textbook content was apparently so common that many readers included notes to teachers notifying them that students should be encouraged to understand what they were learning to read. As Elson (1964) observed in her review of 19th-century textbooks: “Apparently teaching the child the meaning of the words he had learned to read or spell was not standard practice” (p. 3).

Of course teachers could have used assigned textbooks in a variety of ways, but observations from the period suggest that most relied on catechetical call-and-response and that even when teachers formed their own lessons, they were equally rigid and dependent on memorization and recitation. Teaching in almost all schools was dominated by the “3 *R*s”—reading, writing, and arithmetic. According to Reese (2005), reading was seen as the most important of the three; the ability to read allowed one to access information and, most important, the Bible, which was often used as a primary text in schools for both reading instruction and recitation exercises. The ability to write was somewhat less important for the children of farmers and laborers than the ability to read, but teachers often viewed writing as a disciplinary exercise as much as a tool for communication: students were expected to copy their teachers’ writing precisely—and were often instructed to do so with a particular posture and way of holding their writing instrument (Finkelstein, 1989). Arithmetic—or “ciphering,” as it was often called—was viewed as an essential skill in a country whose economic stability depended on the financial success of family farms and small commercial enterprises. The ability to make small mental calculations would allow students to estimate crop yields, determine sales profits, and maintain their household budgets. Historical evidence suggests that common school teachers tended to teach arithmetic in much the same way they taught reading or

writing: they provided exercises for students to practice and then expected students to demonstrate mastery through public questioning or recitations. How much mathematical theory teachers provided often depended on the textbooks they had available—if they had any at all—but most emphasized arithmetic as an exercise of discipline and speed (Finkelstein, 1989).

As the 19th century progressed, more teachers and students had access to textbooks, and more teachers had experienced some form of instructional training through attendance at either a normal school or a teacher institute, particularly in urban districts (Fraser, 2007; Mattingly, 1975). Yet a great deal about classroom instruction appears to have stayed the same. Probably the best-known observations of 19th-century classroom teaching are those of Joseph Rice, a journalist and pediatrician who at the turn of the century visited hundreds of urban classrooms around the country, cataloging the highly regimented instruction he witnessed. Describing rote and often textbook-dependent lessons, Rice reported that in one classroom students were expected to "toe the line" during recitations, which meant "to stand on the line, perfectly motionless, their bodies erect, their knees and feet together, the tips of their shoes touching the edge of a board in the floor." The teacher, Rice complained, seemed to care as much about the students' toes and knees as about what they were reciting (Tyack, 1974, p. 55).

Reformers such as Rice advocated for a "New Education," which has alternatively been called "student-centered," "modern," "scientific," and "progressive." Similar in many ways to Horace Mann and his compatriots promoting the "new" pedagogy decades earlier, "modern schoolmen" of the Progressive Era believed that effective teaching required students to play a more active role in the process, have an opportunity to engage

with subject matter through investigation and real experiences, and in general enjoy learning. Yet Rice found few examples of this alternative form of teaching in practice, and historians have found little to refute his claims. While the benefits of teaching the "whole child" and organizing instruction around student interest have been discussed and debated by teacher educators, leaders, and philosophers, there is little evidence that these ideas were implemented in classrooms in any meaningful and sustained way (Cuban, 1984/1993; Reese, 2005; Zilversmit, 1993). Most late 19th- and early 20th-century city teachers appear to have engaged in mechanical, even joyless, teaching that required absolute physical as well as mental compliance. When Rice asked a New York City principal if students were permitted to turn their heads in one teacher's class, , he was told, "Why should they look behind them when the teacher is in front of them?" (Cuban, 1984/1993, p. 22).

Education reformers and teacher educators continued to bemoan these didactic, control-oriented teaching practices well into the 20th century. A report detailing observations made in 50 elementary school classrooms in Portland, Oregon, in 1913, for example, described teaching there as "passive, routine, clerical" and noted that with only one exception, "not a single question [was] asked by a pupil, not a single remark or comment made to indicate that the pupil had any really vital interest in the subject matter" (Cuban, 1984/1993, p. 23). Reports from high school observations suggest that there, too, teachers dominated classroom talk and students spent most of their time answering teachers' questions and memorizing text for the next set of questions.

Would-be reformers were not alone in finding this general emphasis on rote learning and behavioral compliance unappealing; it appears that many students often

found this manner of teaching unpleasant as well. Tyack (1974) shared the story of Helen Todd, who in 1909 interviewed 500 children working in factories in Chicago and found that they overwhelmingly preferred their experiences with hard labor to attending school. Noting that Chicago was a hotbed of instructional and social reform at the turn of the 20th century, where people such as Francis Parker, John Dewey, Ella Flagg Young, and Jane Addams were all working to make school more developmentally appropriate and appealing to youth of all backgrounds, Tyack noted dryly: "Obviously there was a gap between what leaders intended and what children perceived" (p. 179).

Historians have found that even as subjects such as health and hygiene, physical education, sexual education, and social skills were added into the formal curriculum, teachers tended to use the same didactic pedagogical methods to teach them. Indeed, Jonathan Zimmerman (1999), in his study of temperance education during the Progressive Era, concluded that teachers were even less likely to try innovative instructional techniques when teaching content with which they were not familiar. Since many turn-of-the-century teachers lacked even a rudimentary knowledge of physiology and hygiene, he explained, they usually relied on whatever temperance textbooks they received—requiring students to memorize and recite information without any discussion or explanation of meaning. The introduction of new technologies does not appear to have interrupted this pedagogical pattern. For example, Rousmaniere (1997) reported that in a 1920 elementary classroom in the Bronx, a teacher was seen quizzing students about the content of a film on irrigation in the same manner she would have had they read the lesson in a textbook. As school districts began formalizing various forms of "citizenship" education with curricula and textbooks, this subject, too, was often taught through

didactic, teacher-centered means. Neckerman (2007) reported that "character education" in 1930s Chicago, for instance, "was often taught without much subtlety. . . . [S]tudents memorized slogans and pledges or extracted moral lessons from bits of history or literature" (p. 155).

Scholars have devoted considerable effort to explaining the dominance of didactic, call-and-response teaching practices that emphasize memorization and rule-following over discourse and inquiry. Larry Cuban (1984/1993), at the conclusion of *How Teachers Taught,* proffered a thesis that he termed "situationally constrained choice." Cuban argued that the institutional context of schooling, the "long-term cultural beliefs about the nature of knowledge, what teaching and learning should be, and the social setting (the ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds of the children attending school)," combines with the organizational realities of individual classrooms and schools to shape teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices (p. 260). It is a thesis that identifies teachers as active participants in the teaching process while recognizing the many structural factors that necessarily limit their autonomy.

Labaree (2010) presented a far more intentional explanation, arguing that once teachers

> <ext>have worked out a personal approach for managing the instruction of students within the walls of their classroom, they are likely to resist vigorously any efforts by reformers or administrators or any other intruders to transform their approach to teaching. (p. 154)

In Labaree's view, then, teachers' resistance to curricular or pedagogical reform is grounded in a belief that their existing methods are effective and that any change might upset the careful balance they have created in their classrooms. Rousmaniere (1997) offered a similar theory. She maintained that in Progressive Era New York, teachers were overwhelmed by large classes filled with students from a variety of backgrounds, "expanded curricular expectations, and multiple bureaucratic responsibilities" and that faced with contradictory guidelines that often made little sense within the context of their classrooms, they developed instructional strategies in negotiation with their students, who were "both the subject of teachers' work and the tools for that work" (p. 112). Neither Labaree nor Rousmaniere addressed why the pedagogical methods teachers developed independently in their own classrooms bore such striking resemblance to the methods of their colleagues and of those who came before them, but they may well have pointed to Dan Lortie's (1975) notion of teachers' "apprenticeship of observation"—the idea that teachers often teach as they believe they were taught (p. 61). Alternatively, teachers may have developed similar instructional strategies intentionally, as new teachers received guidance and informal mentoring from their more experienced colleagues. Markowitz (1993), for example, reported that all of the former New York City teachers she interviewed "cited the importance of having a more experienced teacher serve as advisor" to show them "the ropes" in the classroom (p. 105).

Another explanation for teachers' reliance on regimentation and authoritarianism as methods of instruction is that teachers understood their primary purpose to be behavioral training rather than intellectual development and therefore focused on achieving compliance rather than acquiescing control. Certainly many early teachers

believed that behavioral training and academic instruction were one and the same, and even in later years, at the same time that reformers were promoting "student-centered" instruction, teachers were continually reminded of the importance of teaching their charges how to behave. William T. Harris, for example, speaking as the superintendent of St. Louis schools in 1871, declared: "The first requisite of the school is *Order*: each pupil must be taught first and foremost to conform his behavior to a general standard." Pupils should learn to have their "lessons ready at the appointed time," Harris continued, to "rise at the tap of the bell, move to the line, return; in short, go through all the evolutions with equal precision" (Tyack, 1974, p. 43). More than 50 years later, William O'Shea, superintendent of New York City schools, used military rather than industrial metaphors, but the message was largely the same: "You need discipline in the teaching of students just as much as you do in the army," he explained: "They must be orderly and quiet before they can be taught" (Rousmaniere, 1997, p. 116). From this perspective teachers' didactic, authoritarian pedagogical methods matched their larger purposes quite well. Whether student-directed inquiry and hands-on activities might produce deeper understanding of academic content was largely beside the point; these instructional strategies were unlikely to teach submission to authority and behavioral conformity. A teacher's manual issued by California's rural Tulare County in 1911 made this point explicitly:

> <ext>Practical morals and manners depend more upon habit than upon knowledge. It is not sufficient to know what is right, but one must habitually do what is right. A teacher's attention should be directed rather to the formation of

> the habit of right thinking, right speaking and right acting on the part of pupils than the formal teaching of the subject by set lessons. (Weiler, 1998, p. 117)

I do not mean to suggest that teachers merely followed directives from above; we have ample evidence that teachers often ignored or subverted instructional guidelines and policies with which they disagreed and that teachers could often be unaware of various rules intended to regulate their practices. But behavioral and moral training was not a new fad or something teachers could simply disregard; it was a historically grounded central aspect of their work, and fellow teachers, parents, and even students expected it to occur. Indeed, the teaching of behavioral norms was so widely accepted as crucial to schooling that when teachers theoretically gave students more control over the classroom, pupils tended to replicate the systems and structures to which they had grown accustomed. For example, student self-governance—often referred to as "democratic discipline" because students were put in charge of establishing and enforcing behavioral norms—was briefly popular in the Progressive Era as a way to elicit appropriate student behavior through social censure rather than adult imposition; yet students' governance systems usually mirrored those of the adults (Kafka, 2011). In Chicago, 95% of junior high schools, 83% of high schools, and nearly two thirds of elementary schools had some kind of student government in place by 1933, and they all tended to impose similar behavioral expectations and means of control. Many used student monitors to maintain order in the halls and classrooms; their work was so effective that one principal declared that there was no class at her school that was "not proud to be able to conduct itself even if no teacher is present" (quoted in Neckerman, 2007, p. 156).

Moreover, the historical record suggests that when teachers and schools veered from emphasizing rigid behavioral norms, parents and community members often demanded that they reconsider. Indeed, much of the backlash against progressive education in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s stemmed from the belief that schools were no longer teaching students how to behave or the importance of submission to authority (Bell, 1949; Kliebard, 1986/1995; Ravitch, 2000b). In the 1930s, for example, as various conservative groups grew critical of what they perceived as "radicalism" infiltrating American school curriculum, they were also concerned that allowing for an open exchange of ideas rather than requiring the adoption of an American worldview would weaken students' loyalty to the nation and diminish their respect for its institutions. As the Daughters of the American Revolution argued in 1937, "We want no teachers . . . who say there are two sides to every question" (Erickson, 2006, p. 494). From their perspective, there was no place for critical inquiry in the American classroom; telling students what to think and whom to obey was the very definition of teaching.

Even when parents and community members were not worried about the threat of Communism, they often found nontraditional instruction suspect. For example, Barry Franklin (1986) found that while parents' opposition to the "Common Learnings Program" implemented in Minneapolis schools in the late 1940s was based in part on their belief that the 2-hour block of social studies and English curricula integrated around real-world problems represented a lowering of academic standards, they were "equally concerned about the values and attitudes which they believed their children were being taught in Common Learnings classrooms" (p. 157). One mother complained that in the class she visited students were "wandering around the room" and that there was so much

talking that she could not hear the teacher; another argued that the program put "too much emphasis on the child's interest rather than on what is best for him" (pp. 157–158).

Indeed, many parents in the postwar era were concerned that nontraditional instructional practices were overly permissive and that teachers and schools using them were failing to fulfill their central mission of teaching students how to behave. A teacher identified this parental concern as a stumbling block in trying to implement progressive pedagogical reform in 1955, writing in the pages of the *New York Times* that "large sections of the public believe that the progressive school is a 'do as you please' school in which there is no discipline and in which pupils run riot over the teacher and over each other" (Melby, 1955, p. 36). In the 1960s and 1970s, when some schools and teachers tried instructional reforms intended to give students more control over their experiences in the classroom—often through flexible scheduling and self-directed, interdisciplinary projects—they frequently met similar resistance from parents concerned that their children were being indulged rather than inculcated in the virtues of hard work and self-control (Ravitch, 2000b). A parent in Portland, Oregon, for example, registered this scathing review of a local high school attempting new student-centered instructional strategies in 1970: "[The school] does not teach respect for authority, discipline, basic scholarship, or orderly use of time. The school teaches gross egotism, extreme self-centeredness, myopic self-delusion, and general anarchy" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 105).

Whether parental and community rejection of so-called progressive or student-centered pedagogies was due to political folly on the part of professional educators, who failed to build and maintain alliances that supported them, or a reaction against what was

actually occurring in classrooms, as teachers who implemented new pedagogies did so in ways that may or may not have been effective, remains uncertain (Cremin, 1961; Cuban, 1984/1993; Ravitch, 2000b; Zilversmit, 1993). What is clear, however, is that behavioral/moral training, and specifically training that emphasizes respect for authority and acceptance of dominant social values, was and largely remains a central purpose of teaching in the United States, and this purpose has often permeated the teaching of other content areas.

Yet, while historians of education often emphasize the constancies in teaching practices through time, and have been especially attentive to the notion that content continues to be "delivered" to students through text or lecture, it is also clear from reviewing research on the history of what was taught in American classrooms that there *have* been some changes in teaching practices through time—although not uniformly so. The challenge for historians is in determining the scope of these changes: Which have been short-lived fads or isolated examples, and which were widespread and long-lasting enough to constitute real, meaningful change? One way to explore this question is through the history of teaching in specific content areas, which allows us to more easily compare how teachers have sought to accomplish similar instructional goals through time and place and to consider how the goals themselves may have changed. In general we have limited information with which to make these comparisons to date, since, as I have already mentioned several times, most research on the history of school curricula tends to

ignore classroom practices. [6] In my review of research on the history of what was taught, however, I found scholarship on the history of teaching in two content areas—early childhood development and science—that offers some evidence about sustained changes in classroom practice. Neither of these bodies of literature is particularly large or comprehensive, but taken together they suggest that content itself can drive changes in classroom teaching, particularly when teachers' understandings of that content and their purpose in teaching it align with expectations of students, families, and subject-area specialists.

<h2>When Content Shaped Teaching: Kindergarten and the Natural Sciences

One area of schooling that has probably seen the largest institutional shift in teaching norms in the United States is that of the teaching of young children. Very young children sometimes attended rural schools in the early 1800s, but they tended to receive little instruction and spent most of their time sitting idly and trying to stay awake and out of trouble. Young children received more instructional attention at private dame schools,

[6] Educational researchers interested in subject-specific pedagogy and the role that subject areas play in teachers' work more broadly have also posed the question of how content affects instruction. Their scholarship primarily focuses on comparing teachers' experiences in and out of the classroom across subject areas rather than through time, but as a group this work affirms the notion that course content and subject-identification can affect how teachers conceptualize and enact teaching. See, for instance: Grossman &Stodolsky, 1995; Siskin & Little, 1995; Stodolsky, 1988; Stodolsky & Grossman, 1995.

but their purpose in attending either form of schooling was primarily custodial (Kaestle, 1983). Today, however, most public schools have classrooms and teachers specifically designated for their youngest students; these classrooms are usually called kindergarten, and the teaching that occurs within them often differs from the teaching that occurs elsewhere in the building in crucial ways.

Kindergartens emerged mid–19th century first in private settings for the wealthy and then as charity programs for the poor, and were eventually incorporated into public schooling in the Progressive Era. Much has been written about kindergarten as a structural innovation that slowly became fully integrated into traditional schooling (Beatty, 1995; Russell, 2011; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In the context of this chapter on the history of teaching, however, I use kindergarten as an example of how the content of instruction and teachers' beliefs about its purpose helped shaped the teaching that occurred there. As Barbara Beatty (1989, 1995) has made clear in her extensive work on the subject, the purpose of kindergarten both differed from and was similar to that of schooling for older children. As in primary, grammar, and, eventually, high schools, the purpose of kindergarten was to prepare youth for life—to "provide children with a grounding in the moral, social, and mental habits" that they would need to be successful in the future (Beatty, 1989, p. 65). Yet, while schools for older children attempted to teach these habits through academic subjects, kindergarten teachers ("child gardeners") did so through art, music, gymnastics, and other physical and manual activities. Early kindergarten teaching in the United States was largely guided by Froebelian ideals. As his ideas spread in popularity, educators began adjusting his methods—sometimes based on new scientific knowledge about how young children learn (for example, the difficulty

young children have with fine motor skills) and sometimes based on teachers' own beliefs (offering children more flexibility in how they engaged in play, for instance) (Beatty, 1995). The principles behind child gardening, however, remained intact and were based on the understanding that young children would best develop the skills they needed later in life through activity and interactive play. In the case of kindergarten, then, content and method were often one and the same, and these teaching principles remained relatively constant across student populations.

In some communities the creation of public kindergarten in the late 19th century was framed as a means of socialization for the poor. In 1897, for example, the schools superintendent in Haverhill, Massachusetts, argued that a kindergarten

> <ext>should be established not for the benefit of those children who come from homes of culture and refinement; but on the contrary, it should receive those children that have had little, if any, good home-training. If it were . . . properly conducted, it would furnish a happy transition from those homes and the unwholesome influence of street life to the healthful schoolroom surroundings. (quoted in Lazerson, 1971, pp. 121–122)

Yet, while school leaders often justified the expense of establishing public kindergartens as a form of compensatory education, kindergarten teachers and proponents generally maintained that early childhood education was something from which all children—regardless of race, economic status, or language—could benefit equally. "Though the thought may be humiliating to some," remarked an advocate of free

(charity) kindergarten in the late 1800s, "psychology reveals the fact that the Creator has seen fit to develop the mind in all classes of society by the same laws." It was "wonderful," she continued, "to see the extremes of society . . . unfold and blossom, not only under the same laws and principles, but even in some cases under the same methods" (quoted in Beatty, 1989, p. 76). Reports from kindergartens in Mexican American communities in the Southwest and on Native American territories reveal that even when kindergarten was intended to compensate for apparent maternal deficiencies among the poor, their teachers maintained a belief in the benefits of role-playing, music and dance, gardening, and other active modes of learning (Beatty, 1995).

Gradually kindergartens were incorporated into public school systems and were largely portrayed as important preparation for later grades. Yet, even as kindergartens became part of traditional schools, the teaching that occurred within them remained distinct, with a greater emphasis on student choice and freedom of expression; play as a means of development; and more music, art, and student-directed inquiry (Beatty, 1989). Battles today over kindergarten instruction highlight its distinct place within the public school system. Critics of new accountability and "school-readiness" measures warn about an overemphasis on literacy in kindergarten and an apparent reduction in student choice and unstructured play, aspects of teaching that have become institutionalized for kindergartners (Miller & Almon, 2009).

In the case of kindergarten, teachers, educational theorists, and school directors alike believed that younger children had distinct needs that dictated both the *content* they were taught and how they were expected to learn it. Teaching was shaped by students in the sense that it was geared for young children, but even more so it was shaped by

teachers' understandings of their purpose: to help young children develop social and intellectual skills, which they understood to be best accomplished through particular, "play-based" activities. Scholars have found a somewhat similar, albeit far more limited, story in the history of teaching science. While its narrative is not nearly as coherent or consistent as that of kindergarten, it is clear that the teaching of science has at times involved experiential learning and student inquiry and that these practices were more likely to be enacted when teachers and others believed in their instructional value.

Much has been written about the history of scientific thought and scientists' attempts to bring scientific knowledge and scientific ways of thinking into the American classroom, but very few studies have considered how these ideas were (or were not) actually implemented by teachers. The small body of literature that does exist, however, suggests that over time there has been a slow but steady use of hands-on and experiential teaching strategies in many science classrooms—strategies often encouraged and even supported by professional scientists, textbook writers, district administrators, and teacher educators (DeBoer, 1991; Donahue, 1993; Kohlstedt, 2008, 2010; Rudolph, 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2012; Tolley, 2003). In the early decades of the 19th-century science of any sort was often seen as an extra flourish to the traditional 3 *R*s of common schooling. Yet in private schools and academies, and then eventually in high schools, the study of certain aspects of the natural world permeated the curriculum and eventually made its way into public schooling. As Kim Tolley (2003) explained in her important history on the science education of girls, the study of geography, which usually combined geology and natural history with some political science, was often the first science introduced in schools—both for boys and for girls. Many geography textbooks popular in the mid–19th century

maintained the catechetical tradition prevalent in other subjects, but others promoted what they termed the inductive method of teaching geography, which called on teachers to have their students study their local environment and to use what they observed as building blocks for understanding geographical concepts. Similarly, a popular botany textbook first published in the 1820s and reprinted through the 1850s encouraged teachers to take students out for field trips or, if that was not possible, to bring flowers and other specimens into the classroom for examination (Kohlstedt, 2010).

Although hands-on and observational lessons in science were much more common in mid-19th-century private schools or academies than in public school settings, these more inductive and less didactic practices eventually made inroads into public schools—aided in large part, as Deborah Jean Warner (1988) demonstrated, by the emergence of a new commercial industry eager to sell science-related apparatuses to schools and districts. These companies were supported in their efforts by school reformers seeking to promote the use of the "object" method and other aspects of the "new" education inspired by Pestalozzi, Froebel, and others. Henry Barnard, for example, encouraged the use of scientific apparatuses "so as to employ the eye, more than the ear, in the acquisition of knowledge" (p. 391). While few purchase records from the period remain, and those that do cannot reveal how the apparatuses were actually used in classrooms, it is clear that items such as globes, microscopes, telescopes, air pumps, and various maps and graphs intended to encourage science instruction through student observation, inductive reasoning, and hands-on experiences made their way into many 19th-century schools. Every grammar school in Boston, for example, was authorized to spend $260 at a city store selling scientific apparatuses in the 1850s. During that same

time Ohio reported having spent nearly $16,000 on “orreries, telluriums, terrestrial globes (both solid and hemispheric), outline maps, numerical frames, geometrical solids, and chemical and philosophical apparatus” for its schools in a 15-month period (p. 394). And for schools and districts of more limited means, many companies made sure to have inexpensive versions of their products available—small globes instead of large ones, for example, or atlases in place of globes.

Sally Gregory Kohlstedt (2008, 2010) has shown that, in addition to the use of new apparatuses, science instruction in the late 19th century increasingly featured explorations of the natural world through the maintenance of school gardens and other activities that were broadly known as part of the “nature study” movement. Drawing on reports from teachers and local supervisors, district-level curriculum and board mandates, and the archives of institutions such as zoos and natural history museums that often worked with schools to implement nature study, Kohlstedt argued that by the late 1800s nature study was widely implemented and viewed as the primary form of science instruction at the elementary school level. Although there was great variation in how nature study was taught, most programs promoted the use of observation and experimentation in pursuit of scientific knowledge. Teachers took students out of the school building to observe fauna and flora in their natural environment and also brought natural specimens in for study. School gardens became local laboratories, where students and teachers could both observe plant growth and experiment with altering growing conditions, soil, and water. In urban centers, where access to nature was often more limited, teachers relied on drawings in textbooks for observational study, but they also grew small gardens on their windowsills. In addition, many urban school systems

throughout the Northeast, Midwest, and West partnered with museums of natural history, zoos, and city gardens to help students access nature; Kohlstedt (2010) found that not only did these institutions provide student tours and lend items from their collections so that scientific materials could be used in classrooms, but many also hired nature study teachers and coordinators to train regular classroom teachers and help them implement nature study curricula. In rural areas, where students were arguably more familiar with animals and plants, nature study was often viewed as a way to help revitalize and honor agricultural and country life and offer students a greater scientific understanding of their surroundings.

Nature study was often promoted and supported by professional scientists hoping to expand the public's understanding of and appreciation for the natural sciences, but it was also a favorite among proponents of "hands-on" and "inquiry-based" instruction more generally. For Progressive Era reformers who sought to make school more appealing to students and more connected to real-life problems and experiences, nature study held obvious appeal. One widely publicized nature study unit in Worcester, Massachusetts, involved students studying the life cycle of mosquitoes in an area plagued by malaria. The students' findings eventually led to a drainage project in the community that stemmed the spread of the disease (Kohlstedt, 2010; Tolley, 2003).

Kohlstedt's (2010) book on nature study is particularly instructive in helping us understand how content can through time influence classroom teaching. She argued that nature study came to prominence in the late 1800s as the result of a number of intersecting factors: More and more teachers were receiving formal training and were exposed to educational theories positing that students learned best through hands-on

student experiences, at the same time that school reformers sought to institute greater curricular standardization in schools, while professional scientists hoped to use schools to spread scientific knowledge, at a moment when an increasingly urbanized American public was nostalgic for a more rural way of life that more regularly interacted with the natural world. As Kohlstedt made clear, the study of nature lent itself more readily to observational and experiential-based teaching than did other subjects, but the movement's success also depended on teachers who were interested and highly engaged with the subject, believed that hands-on nature study was an effective form of instruction, and were willing and able to utilize it in their schools and classrooms. Kohlstedt concluded: "Ultimately, nature study was introduced widely because many teachers enjoyed teaching the subject and many children enjoyed learning it" (p. 174). In the case of nature study, then, teacher knowledge of the subject and beliefs about how best to teach it interacted with student interest to shape classroom (or out-of-classroom) teaching.

Yet, despite its popularity across most of the country (Kohlstedt, 2010, reported that it was not widespread in the South), nature study did not have the lasting power of kindergarten. By the 1920s it was beginning to lose ground to other, more formalized science curricula at the elementary school level, perhaps in part because it was understood to be a particularly feminine form of science instruction, conducted, organized, and largely promoted by women (Tolley, 2003). By mid-century, hands-on study of nature had largely moved outside of schools, to extracurricular clubs such as 4-H and scouting. They were soon joined by science fairs and talent searches, which were also predominantly conducted outside of the regular classroom and focused on hands-on

activities and inquiry tied to real-life problems and applications. Thus, although no longer widespread or available to all, activity- and inquiry-based science instruction persisted in American schools and public spaces, if only through extracurricular and voluntary clubs and institutions. Indeed, long after its dominance in elementary classrooms had faded, proponents of nature study remained active in many schools of education, museums, gardens, and zoos, where they continued to advance science as a process of discovery and observation to both teacher candidates and the public at large (Kohlstedt, 2008, 2010; Terzian, 2013; Tolley, 2003).

Even as the nature study movement waned and experiential teaching methods moved out of the regular classroom, some evidence suggests that in-school science lessons were at times more hands-on or inquiry-based than the teaching of many other subject areas. In a 1914 New York State commissioner of education's study of teaching in Buffalo high schools, for example, classroom observers found most of the instruction they witnessed overly routinized, but they were impressed with what they saw in science classrooms. Teaching was divided between lab time and recitation, and in most of the labs students appeared to have enjoyed some level of inquiry-related freedoms. "There was little evidence," according to the report, "of slavish following of directions" (Cuban, 1984/1993, p. 37). Even the recitation sessions seemed to pass muster, as observers reported that teachers often asked thoughtful questions that required students to apply scientific principles.

While this is just one example, it is clear that many science textbooks and curricula encouraged hands-on learning at the high school level, even if their suggestions were rarely carried out as intended. For example, John Rudolph (2012) described high

school biology teacher manuals from the first decades of the 20th century that promoted the use of science laboratories as effective tools of instruction and listed materials needed for the collection, dissection, and classification of plants, bugs, birds, and small mammals, as well as directions for setting up student labs and procuring specimens for observation and study. Prescriptions do not always—or perhaps often—lead to practice, and we still know very little about how teachers used these materials to teach biology even when they had access to them, but well-stocked and well-designed science labs were clearly the aspirational ideal for early 20th-century high school biology instruction, if not the norm.

In truth, the historical record contains plenty of descriptions of didactic, lecture- and textbook-based science lessons, particularly at the high school level and especially in fields of science that were primarily taught solely for college admissions. David Donahue (1993), for example, reported that despite the many ways that physics could be related to everyday life, most physics textbooks in the 1930s focused on theoretical rather than practical uses for the science, and classroom observers at the time found that the subject was largely taught through teacher lecture and demonstration, with little room for student inquiry.

At the same time, however, Donahue (1993) argued that the teaching of physics changed slowly and steadily between World War II and the 1960s, as reformers of varied backgrounds, including progressive educators, professional scientists, teacher educators, and, particularly during the Cold War, the federal government, sought to make the subject more relevant to students and the teaching of it more hands-on and inquiry-based. Donahue's study is somewhat unique to the field, in that he considered the history of

what was taught in high school physics classrooms rather than the history of physics curricular reform efforts, noting that "curriculum reform is as much a product of teachers' actions as of reformers' intentions" (p. 322). His research suggests that the teaching of physics has historically depended on a variety of factors—including teachers' knowledge and the training they received for new curricula, as well as their beliefs about the value of the material they were being asked to teach and whether or not their students would be able to grasp it. A new physics curriculum developed in the late 1950s with the intention of encouraging inquiry and giving students more control over the discovery process, for example, was praised by some teachers as requiring their students to think more carefully and criticized by others as utopian and impractical for real classroom situations. Yet midway between these two groups, Donahue contended, were teachers who selectively enacted what they liked about the curriculum while rejecting what they believed would not work. He concluded that while teachers did not always use newly developed curricula as reformers intended, even in modified form teachers' use of new textbooks and lab materials represented a shift toward greater inquiry and less memorization in the teaching of physics.

I do not want to overstate this case. Barry Franklin and Carla Johnson (2008), in their review of American school curriculum since the 1950s, maintained that the teaching of basic skills dominated instruction in classrooms of all content areas in the final decades of the 20th century, and they cited John Goodlad and associates' observations of more than 1,000 classrooms in the late 1970s to support their assertion that little inquiry-based or student-centered instruction was common in any subject at the time, including science. At the same time scientists, environmentalists, and teachers have continued to

promote the notion that students need to observe and experience the natural world in order to understand it andto think about their role within it. Moreover, as Kohlstedt (2010) noted, “the legacy of nature study remains in the special corners, tables, and window ledges of elementary school classrooms devoted to natural objects—birds’ nests, rocks, salamanders, shells, leaf collages, and more—brought in by children for show and tell” (p. 9). At the very least, as with the teaching of kindergarten, research on the history of the teaching of science in the United States suggests that content can shape classroom practices, particularly when teachers believe that its purpose aligns with particular pedagogical strategies and when those beliefs are supported by administrators, teacher educators, students, and others.

<h1>Conclusion

History is rarely straightforward, as this review of research on the history of teaching makes clear. Every accepted wisdom can be matched by countervailing evidence, and the fact that we can never separate our interpretations of the past from our understandings of the present has caused many to dismiss the notion of historical grand narratives entirely. And yet each piece of the past is part of something greater; to burrow in on the specific without considering the larger landscape ultimately weakens the entire field. Reviewing scholarship on the history of teaching through the lens of the instructional triangle has highlighted what we know about that history and what questions have yet to be answered. We have good historical evidence on the lived experiences of a wide range of actors, and we know a fair amount about what was expected of and by teachers and students at different moments and places. At the same time, we know

considerably less than we would like about what actually occurred in classrooms between teachers and students around content, and our lack of knowledge is far more pronounced in some areas than in others.

Research on the history of teachers reveals that political battles over who should teach have had minimal impact on classroom practices. But debates about what kind of person should teach were also debates about what it meant to teach, and these debates both reflected and helped to shape common understandings of teachers' role in the classroom. For much of American history teachers were expected to serve first and foremost as moral exemplars. Critics of the teaching force were often less concerned with which pedagogical strategies teachers used than they were with teachers' gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Yet, although teachers often used the same instructional techniques regardless of their social characteristics, their beliefs about why they were teaching and what they hoped to accomplish often mattered a great deal to their students and the communities in which they taught. This was especially the case for teachers from oppressed or marginalized communities: teachers' beliefs about their students as learners and about their role in American democracy shaped classroom interactions in ways both subtle and profound.

Yet teachers' understandings of their purpose in the classroom were rarely static—even for those who taught for only a brief period. Experience surely edified all but the most hardheaded novices, and a review of research on the history of who was taught makes clear that students played an active role in shaping what occurred in the classroom—at times influencing teachers' perceptions of them in the process. Variation in students' experiences in school has been dictated by the happenstance of a number of

factors, including geography, but students' experiences have also been intentionally structured to ensure and reinforce social and economic inequalities. At the same time, some variation in classroom teaching has been the direct or indirect product of students' (and their families') actions—such as political protest, contestation of authority in the classroom, rejection of specific curricula, or merely the give-and-take of daily interactions with teachers around content.

At times students' actions helped make the teaching they experienced more relevant, more enjoyable, and more respectful of their cultural backgrounds, but students' and families' role in shaping classroom teaching was neither wholly positive nor always change-oriented. In many communities school segregation was borne out of the demands of White families, and parents at times challenged instructional innovations they perceived to be intellectually flaccid and/or overly permissive. Some students entered into informally negotiated truces of low expectations with their teachers, while others pushed back against supposedly democratizing reforms such as vocational education and English-only pedagogy. Yet, while students' role in shaping classroom practices did not follow a linear trajectory of either promoting progress or effecting regress, this review makes clear that students (and at times their families) were key participants in the teaching process and that their expectations as well as their actions helped to construct the history of teaching.

Lest we dismiss the content of teaching as irrelevant to its history, what was or should be taught in American classrooms has often been at the center of local and national debates over education. While literacy, numeracy, and behavioral training have been the core subject areas for most of the history of schooling, parents, students,

teachers, administrators, politicians, and social commentators have had a great deal to say about what other content areas should be added or adjusted, for whom, and in what way. Early arguments over the place of the Protestant Bible in American classrooms gave way to questions about moral instruction more generally. And while it is true that in many cases how teachers taught varied little from subject to subject, as didactic practices were adjusted only minimally for different content areas, research also suggests that when teachers were convinced of the value of other pedagogical methods for the teaching of particular content, they were more likely to employ them.

The grand narrative I have assembled for this review is hardly complete; yet I think that its core assertions will stand. Teaching is fundamentally an interactive process involving teachers, students, and content, and any narrative of the history of teaching must look first and foremost to classrooms and the interactions that happened within them. Recognizing differences in teaching across populations, places, and time does not detract from the strength of the grand narrative but enriches it. Indeed, the more we learn about the teaching experiences of previously marginalized or ignored communities, the more commonalities we find, and the more we understand about the history of teaching more broadly. Our historical map, to use Tyack's (1989) phrase, may not be completely "accurate," but we gain far more in trying to develop a grand narrative than we do by dismissing the task out of hand.

Having a better understanding of the past certainly does not allow us to predict the future, but it can give us a better understanding of today's conflicts over teaching and greater insight into the potential strengths and weaknesses of current reforms. First and foremost, this turbulent grand narrative of the history of teaching should disabuse anyone

clinging to the notion that there was once a golden era of schooling, in which consensus ruled and teachers were highly regarded. The history of teaching is a history of contest and negotiation, and teachers have always been targets of criticism and reform. Today's efforts to improve teaching by changing who enters the profession and who is allowed to stay there are neither novel nor unique when placed within this larger narrative. Yet current policy makers' understanding of what it means to teach does seem to represent a break from the past in two important ways. First, in many states today teachers are evaluated based at least in part on their students' performance on standardized achievement tests. Setting aside concerns about their validity and reliability, so-called value-added measures capture a fairly narrow slice of what teaching has historically entailed and far less than what families, students, administrators, and the general public have expected of their teachers. Second, in viewing student test scores as the result or evidence of teachers' actions or abilities, current policies ignore the interactive nature of teaching and the role that students play in the teaching process. Whether "value-added" measures prove to be flash-in-the-pan initiatives that enter the annals of history as a tried and discarded reform or have staying power beyond this current iteration will largely depend not on their technical merit but on whether the general public accepts this new, narrower, definition of teaching.

Our historical map also makes clear the degree to which students have been intentionally sorted and segregated throughout our nation's history. Despite its roots in the "common" district schools, public education has largely been a system of differentiation, in which students' experiences have been shaped in part by their racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds. At first blush, today's school choice movement seems to

address these historical structural inequities head-on. Rather than allow for discriminatory attendance zones or student placement decisions that purposefully distinguish between different kinds of students and provide them qualitatively different kinds of teaching experiences, school choice purports to give students and families greater voice in determining where children will attend school. By permitting—or in some urban districts today, requiring—students and parents to select their school, choice systems allow families to influence teaching through the market mechanism of consumer demand. Yet teaching has always been an interactive process, and students have historically influenced classroom practices through day-to-day interactions, negotiations, and, at times, acts of protest—often as members of groups or communities. From this perspective even the most equitable forms of choice may actually weaken students' influence in the classroom by limiting the scope of their agency to the choice process itself: students and parents are expected to seek out a preferable alternative if they are unhappy with the teaching in their school, rather than seek to influence the teaching itself. Moreover, choice does not seem to interrupt existing patterns of school segregation and in fact may serve to exacerbate them. Reformers who hope to expand student and parental agency through mechanisms such as vouchers, charters, and public school choice may want to look more closely at the classroom to determine if and how these mechanisms are affecting the teaching that occurs there.

A general understanding of the history of teaching may also help to illuminate current battles over implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Much of the debate to date has been on who should determine what is taught in school and if and how teachers and students should be held "accountable" for subject-area mastery. Lately,

however, parents and teachers have been raising more explicit concerns about the content standards themselves and their effect on classroom practices. Defenders of the Common Core argue that content standards dictate neither curricula nor how content should be taught in classrooms, and certainly much of the history of teaching affirms this view: Curriculum is enacted in the classroom, in interactions between teachers and students, and there is very little in the historical record to suggest that teachers will abandon their existing practices in order to accommodate new directives from above. At the same time, however, classroom interactions occur around content and are shaped by teachers', students', and their families' understandings of its purpose. Policies assigning high-stakes consequences to the results of standardized tests aligned with the Common Core are specifically intended to shift teaching practices in terms of both what is being taught and how—in part by reframing teaching as an act of test preparation. History cannot predict the fate of the Common Core, or of the high-stakes tests attached to it, but recent complaints about Common Core math standards, or perhaps more accurately, complaints based on perceptions of Common Core math standards, suggest that parents may be unwilling to accept an emphasis on test preparation in their children's classrooms if they do not understand the purpose of the content to be tested.

In the end, I realize that many policy makers may not be interested in the nuance contained in even the grandest of historical narratives, let alone one as complex as that which I have presented here. And policy makers' interest in getting their history "right" is likely overshadowed by an interest in finding historical analogies to support their existing ideological positions. But to the degree that policy is created through a democratic process, and policy makers are accountable to constituents through elections or

appointments, understanding the turbulent history of teaching, and how teachers, students, and content have interacted in various contexts throughout history, should be of use to all of us as we try to make sense of teaching today through a better grasp of the past.

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