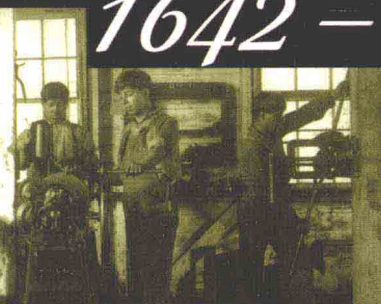
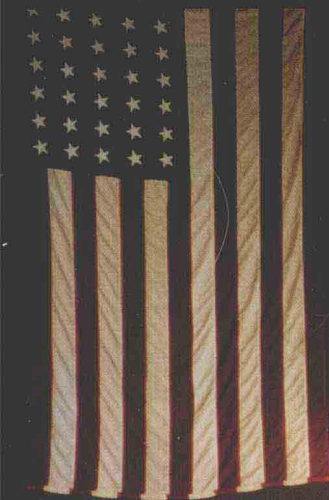


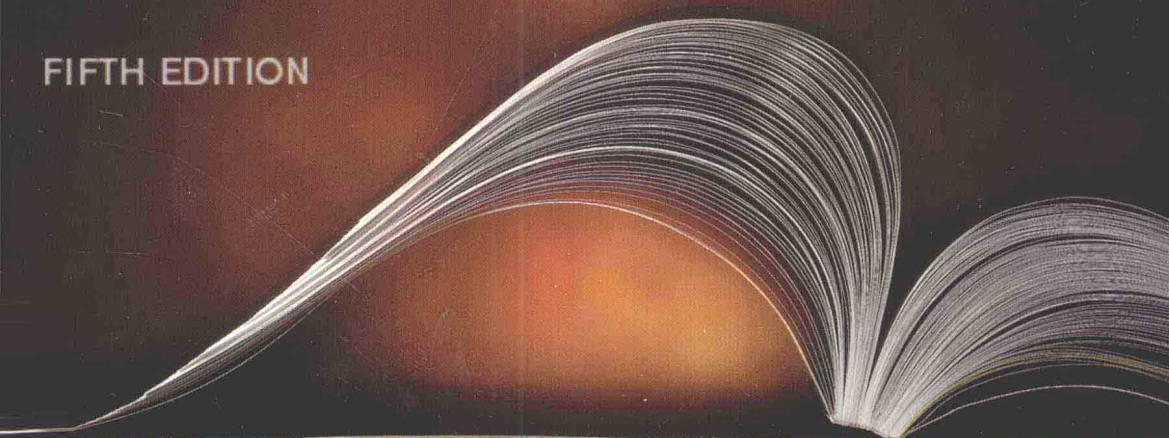


THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

1642 – 2000



FIFTH EDITION



Joel Spring

FIFTH EDITION

The American School: 1642—2000

Joel Spring

State University of New York
College at New Paltz



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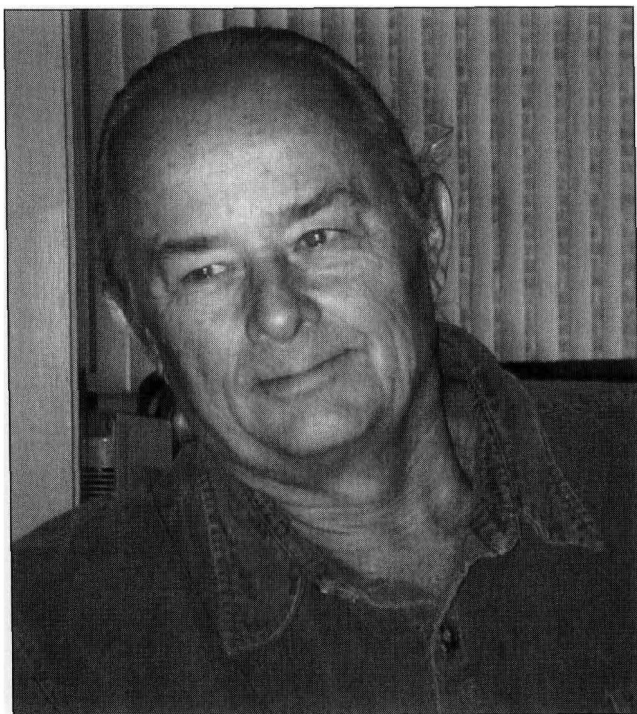
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About the Author



JOEL SPRING, professor of education at the State University of New York—College at New Paltz, received his Ph.D. in educational policy studies from the University of Wisconsin. His major research interests are the history of education, multicultural education, Native American culture, and the politics of education.

Professor Spring is the author of many books including *The Cultural Transformation of a Native American Family and Its Tribe 1763–1995: A Basket of Apples*; *Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television*; *American Education* (now in its ninth edition); *Wheels in the Head: Educational Philosophies of Authority, Freedom, and Culture from Socrates to Paul Freire*; *The Intersection of Cultures: Multicultural Education in the United States*; *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy* and *The Universal Right to Education: Justification, Definition and Guidelines*.

Preface

In this fifth edition, I have highlighted the similarities between the story of the American school and changing concepts of American citizenship. Similar to early citizenship laws, the doors of the public schoolhouse were open only to a select few. Racial and cultural struggles for admission to the schoolhouse paralleled struggles for admission to full U.S. citizenship.

Understanding the social and legal construction of racial concepts *and* knowing the story of the American school clarifies the cultural tensions that persist in U.S. education. Rogers Smith's *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* helped me to understand the importance of racial ideas in defining the destiny of the nation and schools. Concepts of citizenship are central to the purpose of U.S. schools and, as Smith points out, define who is and who is not a beneficiary of a republican form of government. As Smith explains, from the American Revolution to the late twentieth century large numbers of residents were excluded from citizenship, including women, Native Americans, Asians, Africans, and Hispanic/Latinos. The 1790 Naturalization Law that limited naturalized citizenship to "free whites" reflected the belief of the founding fathers that the new republic could survive only if full membership were limited to white males. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, debates raged about opening the doors to citizenship for all residents. As late as the 1940s, Asians were still barred from becoming naturalized citizens.

I have added new text and time lines to illustrate the parallels between educational history and concepts of race and citizenship. For instance, I would argue that one cannot understand the cultural and political purposes of the opening of the first common schools between 1830 and 1860 without considering the large numbers being excluded from the schoolhouse and citizenship. During this period, as Horace Mann preached the gospel of universal schooling, the federal government was practicing genocide against Southern Indians by forcing them off their lands and onto the Trail of Tears. In some Southern states, Native Americans were

replaced with enslaved Africans who were without citizenship rights and who were denied schooling by state laws. During the same period, members of Congress declared Mexicans an inferior race and launched a war against Mexico that netted lands for the United States from Texas to California. And, as the common school system expanded prior to the Civil War, Chinese landing in California discovered that they could not be citizens and that they did not have full protection under the U. S. legal system.

Given these circumstances, Horace Mann's call for common schooling can be interpreted as meaning universal schooling for "free whites" only. And, even in this definition, "free whites" might be limited to "Protestant free whites" when considering the conflicts between slaves and non-slaves during the development of the common school.

Of course, race and culture are only part of the story of the American school. Of equal importance are the evolution of the organization of schools, the teaching profession, the content of instruction, and the expanding economic and social welfare functions of education. And, as I discussed in the first edition, schools should be treated as a form of ideological management.

Actual changes to this fifth edition include the following:

1. Integration throughout the book of discussions of the meaning of race and racism based on citizenship laws, education laws, and court rulings
2. The addition of citizenship and education time lines
3. The addition of time lines that integrate material from several chapters
4. The addition of new material about Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and the high school
5. The renaming and refocusing of Chapter 8 from "Education as Deculturation: Native Americans and Puerto Ricans" to "Educational Racism: Native Americans and Asian Americans"
6. The renaming and refocusing of Chapter 9 from "Education and Segregation: Asian Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans" to "Hispanic/ Latino Americans: Exclusion and Segregation"
7. The addition of a new Chapter 10 devoted to "Education and Segregation: African Americans"
8. The renaming and refocusing of Chapter 10 of the previous edition, "Schooling and the New Corporate Order" to Chapter 11, "Growth of the Welfare Function of Schools: School Showers, Kindergarten, Playgrounds, and Social Centers"
9. The renaming and refocusing of Chapter 11 of the previous edition, "Education and Human Capital" to Chapter 12, "The School and the Workplace: High School, Junior High School, and Vocational Guidance and Education"
10. The integration of Chapter 14 of the previous edition, "Big Bird: Movies, Radio, and Television Join Schools As Public Educators" into the previous Chapter 13 "The Politics of Education." The new Chapter 14 is titled "The Politics of Knowledge: Teachers Unions, American Legion, Radicalism, Movies, and Radio"

11. The addition of a new conclusion and the renaming of Chapter 17 of the previous edition, "Conservatism and the Culture Wars at the End of the Century," to "The End of the Century"

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Thinking Critically About History: Ideological Management and the Culture Wars

I wrote this book with the intention of combining a particular approach to teaching history with a broader perspective on the content of the history of education. The reader will be presented with a variety of historical interpretations and historical issues. The presentation of material in this fashion allows the reader to think about history as opposed to being a passive recipient of facts. The reader should decide which interpretation of history is correct.

The most important interpretive question is “**Why?**” For example: Why were public schools established? Historians might agree on dates and personalities involved in historical events, but they might not agree upon motives. For instance: Were public schools established to ensure that all citizens would be able to protect their political and economic rights? Were public schools established to protect the power of an elite by controlling the economic and political ideas taught to students? Were public schools established to ensure the dominance of Protestant Anglo-American culture over Native American, Irish American, and African American cultures? Were public schools necessary to ensure the education of the whole population? These questions exemplify issues debated in the writing of history.

The answers to these questions have important implications for a person’s future choices and actions. The answers shape images and feelings about the past. Many people do not remember the details of history, but they do develop images and emotions about past events. For instance, if a person concludes that public schools were established to protect the political and economic rights of citizens, then their attitudes and feelings about public schools will be quite different from those of a person who concludes that public schools were established to protect the political and economic power of an elite. Or, for example, if a person concludes that the establishment of public schools was necessary for the education of all children, then their attitudes regarding privatization of schools will be quite different from those who conclude the opposite.

Therefore, thinking about history involves both an intellectual consideration of conflicting interpretations, emotions, and images of public schools. For example, at an early age a person might be taught a history that is designed to build an emotional attachment, in the form of patriotism, to the political and economic organization of the United States. Later in life this person's emotional feelings about the United States might be challenged if the person reads a critical history.

One's knowledge, images, and emotions regarding the past have an impact on future actions. Individuals often make decisions based on what they believe to be the historical purposes and goals of an institution. The varieties of interpretations presented in this book provide the reader with an opportunity to judge past events and think about future actions. Like historians who weave together the drama of the past, consumers of history have their own political and social opinions. By engaging in an intellectual dialogue with the historical text, readers should be able to clarify their opinions about educational institutions and about the relationship of education to other institutions and to social events.

THERE IS NO CORRECT OR RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Unfortunately, there is no right answer but only differing opinions about which historical interpretation is correct. *You must make the decision* based on your own social and political values.

My goal is to provide a variety of ways of viewing educational history. You might find some of these interpretations to be personally offensive. From my perspective, I think this is good because it will result in critical thinking about history and schools.

THEMATIC TIME LINES

In order to focus on a particular related set of events in educational history, I have written thematic chapters rather than a purely sequential rendition of history. Since many of the chapters are thematic and cover similar periods of time, such as Chapter 2 on colonial education and Chapter 3 on Native American education, I have added time lines at various intervals in the book that will help the reader integrate the differing sequence of events.

MY PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

While this book contains a variety of historical interpretations it is dominated by what *I* consider are important historical themes. These themes are my interpretative perspective. Similar to other perspectives referred to in the book, *you must decide* whether or not my interpretative framework is correct.

My interpretative framework includes:

- A major part of the history of U.S. schools involves conflicts over cultural domination.
- Schools are one of many institutions that attempt to manage the distribution of ideas in society. I call this process ideological management.
- Racism is a central issue in U.S. history and educational history.
- Economic issues are an important factor in understanding the evolution of U.S. schools.

In the following sections I will elaborate on the different elements in my interpretative framework.

CULTURAL DOMINATION AS A CENTRAL THEME IN EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

A major part of the history of U.S. public schools is the attempt to ensure the domination of a Protestant Anglo-American culture in the United States.¹ The struggle over cultural domination in the United States began with the English invasion of North America in the sixteenth century and continues today in the debate over multiculturalism.

The “culture wars,” a term originating in the work of Ira Shor, is a distinguishing characteristic of American history.² English colonists declared their superiority over Native American cultures and attempted to impose their culture on Native Americans. In contrast, Native Americans found English culture to be exploitative and repressive, and they resisted attempts by colonists to transform their cultures. The hope of the leaders of the newly formed United States government was to create a national culture that would be unified around Protestant Anglo-American values. One reason for the nineteenth-century development of public schools was to ensure the dominance of Anglo-American values that were being challenged by Irish immigration, Native Americans, and African Americans. Public schools became defenders of Anglo-American values with each new wave of immigrants. In the twentieth century, the culture wars were characterized by Americanization programs, civil rights movements demanding representation of minority cultures in public schools, and the multicultural debate.

The concept of cultural perspective is important for understanding the culture wars. For instance, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some Native Americans decided that literacy might be an important tool for protecting their tribal lands and culture. In contrast, many whites considered the education of Native Americans as a means for acquiring Native American lands and transforming Native American cultures. This difference in perspective resulted in both major misunderstandings and a cultural war that continues to the present.

The mixture of cultures in the United States has resulted in the necessity of constantly asking: How do other cultures perceive this event? In the nineteenth century, many Irish Catholics believed the public schools were attempting to destroy the Catholic faith. In the twentieth century, many educators considered the

development of separate curriculum tracks in high school a means of serving individual differences. In contrast, many African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans considered separate curriculum tracks as another means of providing them with an inferior education.

SCHOOLS AS ONE FORM OF IDEOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT

The culture wars are one aspect of what I call ideological management. Ideological management involves the creation and distribution of knowledge in a society. Schools play a central role in the distribution of particular knowledge to a society. Public schools were established to distribute knowledge to children and youth. Because knowledge is not neutral, there has existed a continuing debate about the political, social, and economic content of schooling. Presently, for example, there is a heated debate over the content and purpose of multicultural education in public schools. How this debate is decided will have important implications for shaping a student's perspective on the nature of society and politics in the United States.³ Also, in the 1990s, a major debate erupted between liberals and conservatives led by Newt Gingrich over the role of public schools in providing equality of opportunity.

Recent historical interpretations stress the importance of the influence of differing political and economic groups on the content of knowledge and the cultural values distributed by schools. In the same fashion, political and economic pressures influence the knowledge and cultural values distributed by sources other than educational institutions. Ideological management refers to the effect of these political and economic forces on the ideas disseminated to society.

I include mass media along with public schools as important managers of ideas and cultural values disseminated to children and youth. Consequently, this book includes sections on the development of movies, radio, and television. In the twentieth century, the media is considered the third educator of children along with schools and the family. Currently, schools and the media compete for influence over children's minds and national culture.

In the book's conclusion, I discuss the importance of ideological management and cultural values. In the framework of ideological management, the current question is: What should be the culture or cultures of the public school curriculum? Should the population of the United States be united by a single culture or should the United States be composed of distinct cultural traditions? What would North America be like today if English colonists had adopted the cultural values of Native Americans?

THE ROLE OF RACISM IN U.S. HISTORY AND IN THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Certainly, a major strand of American history has been the quest for democracy and equality. However, there is another strand dating from the first arrival of