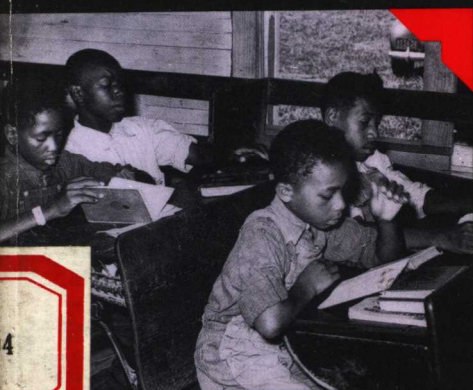




**THE
AMERICAN
SCHOOL
1642-1993**
THIRD EDITION
JOEL SPRING



The American School

1642–1993

THIRD EDITION

Joel Spring

*State University of New York
College at New Paltz*

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THE AMERICAN SCHOOL
1642-1993

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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 father was born a citizen of the Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory prior to the abolishment of the Choctaw government and the creation of Oklahoma. Professor Spring's current interest in Native American culture and history is a reflection of his Indian background.

Professor Spring is the author of many books including *Images of American Life: A History of Ideological Management in Schools, Movies, Radio, and Television*; *American Education* (now in its sixth edition); *Wheels in the Head: Educational Philosophies of Authority, Freedom, and Culture from Socrates to Paulo Freire*; and *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*.

Preface

To help the reader understand the role of education in relationship to dominated cultures in the United States, I have added three new chapters to the third edition. Chapter 6, "Education and Deculturalization: Native Americans and Puerto Ricans" documents how the educational policies of the U.S. government attempted to destroy the languages and cultures of these conquered peoples. Chapter 7, "Education and Segregation: Asians, African Americans, and Mexican Americans," demonstrates how educational segregation is part of a pattern of economic exploitation. Chapter 13, "The Great Civil Rights Movement," traces the struggles of dominated cultures in the twentieth century to gain equal educational opportunity.

To emphasize the importance of mass media as a public educator in the twentieth century, I have added a section on "The Children's Television Workshop and Sesame Street" to Chapter 12 ("Big Bird: Movies, Radio, and Television Join Schools as Public Educators"). To the last chapter of the book, Chapter 15, I have added sections on "The Bush Years: National Standards, Choice, and Savage Inequalities," "Choice," and "Human Capital Triumphs."

Throughout the volume, I have rearranged and rewritten sections on historical interpretations to make them more accessible to the reader. In addition, I have updated all chapters.

I would like to thank Caroline Izzo of McGraw-Hill for her careful and thoughtful role in supervising the editing and production of this book and my editor, Lane Akers, for encouraging the addition of chapters on dominated cultures. Also, I would like to thank my wife, Naomi Silverman, for her editorial expertise and criticism, and my daughter, Dawn Togliola, for doing the arduous task of indexing.

Joel Spring

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Introduction to the Third Edition: Instructional Methodology and Historical Interpretations

I wrote this book with the intention of combining a particular approach to teaching history with a broader perspective on the interpretation of the history of education. First, as I will explain in more detail below, my pedagogical method is based on the idea that the reader should be presented with a variety of historical interpretations and historical issues. The presentation of material in this fashion, I believe, allows the reader to think about history as opposed to being a passive recipient of facts.

Second, I am concerned about the broader meaning of the history of education. The history of education is one aspect of the study of the dissemination of knowledge. In modern times, educational institutions are one of the major distributors of knowledge to society, but they are not the only distributor of ideas. Recent historical interpretations, as I discuss in this book, stress the importance of the influence of differing political and economic groups on the content of knowledge that is distributed by schools. In the same fashion, political and economic pressures influence the knowledge distributed by sources other than educational institutions. I use the term *ideological management* to describe how these political and economic forces shape the dissemination of ideas in modern society.

In the conclusion to this book, I discuss the importance of ideological management in a world in which the control of ideas is considered a source of power. What people know, what they believe in, and how they interpret the world have an important effect on their choices and, consequently, their actions. In countries under centralized control, a central bureau might control the ideas distributed to the public by the public schools and the media. In

China this central bureau is known as the Ministry of Truth, while in Ethiopia it is known as the Ministry or Department of Ideological Management. In countries such as the United States, ideological management is a product of struggle between differing political and economic groups ranging from students and bureaucrats to business interests and social advocacy groups. This is why most recent historical writings present the public school as a contested arena. Recognizing that knowledge is power, different groups struggle for influence and control over the public schools.

To achieve the instructional goals of this book, I discuss various interpretations of historical events. My purpose is to help the reader understand that historical texts are created by historians who are concerned about particular problems and who are influenced by their own histories. I use the discussions of historical interpretations as a means of raising issues about each historical period.

For instance, the history of education in the nineteenth century could be written in a manner that does not question the social value of public schools. This type of history might result in an uncritical acceptance of public schooling. But, on the other hand, when one begins to examine the differing historical interpretations as to why public schools developed in the nineteenth century, a host of questions is raised regarding the necessity and goals of government-supported public schooling. Issues raised in this manner often force readers to think through assumptions they might hold about institutions, ideas, and the organization of society. In this manner, the reader of history becomes engaged in a dialogue with the text.

Out of this dialogue, the reader will begin to formulate his or her own interpretations about the past and present. In part, this process will involve a reshaping of 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. Therefore, thinking about history involves both an intellectual consideration of conflicting interpretations and issues and reflection about emotions and images. 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 of the American past.

In addition, I believe that 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.

IDEOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT, DECULTURALIZATION, AND MASS MEDIA

In this third edition, I have added chapters on "Education as Deculturalization: Native Americans and Puerto Ricans" (Chapter 6) and "Education and Segregation: Asians, African Americans, and Mexican Americans" (Chapter 7) to provide an understanding of how the management of ideas can be used for the purpose of exploitation. In the case of Native Americans and Puerto Ricans (Chapter 6), the U.S. government, after conquering Native American tribes and Puerto Rico, attempted to gain the allegiance of these groups by instituting educational policies designed to strip them of their cultures and languages. The segregation in schools of Asians, African Americans, and Mexican Americans (Chapter 7) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries highlights how the management of ideas can be linked to economic exploitation.

In addition, I have added a section on "Children's Television Workshop and Sesame Street" to Chapter 12 ("Big Bird: Movies, Radio, and Television Join Schools as Public Educators"). The new section focuses on the increasing role of media as the third educator along with schools and the family. In general, the chapter is designed to provide an understanding of ideological management in the twentieth century. It deals with the link between educators and the development of radio and movies during the first half of the twentieth century. The chapter demonstrates how the interaction of political and economic forces similar to those affecting schools also influenced the ideas and values distributed by the movie and broadcasting industries. In addition, I discuss the concern of educators about the competition between public schools and these media for influence over children's minds and national culture. As a result of this concern, educators have also influenced the content of ideas distributed by movies and radio.

These additions to the book strengthen its pedagogical and interpretative purposes. Readers will find a richer set of interpretations of educational history and a broader consideration of the meaning of education in the framework of how societies disseminate ideas. I believe that the study of history is essential to understanding our society. A comprehension of history is also essential to making critical decisions about the future. To be a critical thinker about American schools requires being a critical thinker about the history of education.

Religion and Authority in Colonial Education

Colonial education illustrates important roles that education can play in a society. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, education in colonial New England was used to maintain the authority of the government and religion. People were taught to read and write so that they could obey the laws of God and the state. In addition, education in Puritan New England, with its emphasis on individual conduct, bore the seeds for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century view of education as a panacea for society. This view can be traced to the Protestant Reformation, one result of which was an emphasis on individual instruction for the development of piety with the goal of creating "the good society." Whether or not education can create the good society continues to be an important question.

In addition, education in the colonies helped to maintain social distinctions. For many, the learning of Latin and Greek in grammar schools or with tutors and attendance at a college were a means of maintaining or gaining elite status. For others, attendance at an academy was the key to social mobility. From the seventeenth century to present times, there has been a continuous debate on the role of the school in creating social classes and providing for social mobility.

Also, education was increasingly considered a means of improving the material prosperity of society. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some colonialists and Europeans believed that scientific research would improve the quality of life for all people. They believed that the key to scientific research was freedom of thought and the freedom to pursue any form of inquiry. In England, the quest for intellectual freedom resulted in the establishment of academies which, eventually, were transplanted to the American colonies.

The concern about the advancement of science and intellectual freedom raised issues regarding the control of education. As I will discuss in this chapter, some people argued that intellectual freedom could be achieved only by separating schools from religious organizations that were supported by governments. It was argued that government-supported church schools pri-

marily taught obedience to God and the state and, consequently, limited freedom of thought. Others argued that any control by government over education would result in despotism over the mind and a limitation of free inquiry because government officials would always use education to support their own power. The concern about freedom of thought sparked debates about whether or not education should be secular and controlled by government. Similar debates about the role of education in providing material benefits to society and the control of schools continue to present times.

Colonial education also illustrates the relationship between education and concepts of the child and family. Throughout the history of education, concepts of childhood and youth have played important roles in determining methods of instruction. A child who is thought of as being born good is treated quite differently than one who is considered to be born evil. The authoritarian quality of colonial education reflects an authoritarian family structure and a belief that the inherent evil of childhood needed to be controlled.

In summary, these themes in colonial education continue to the present. Education is still considered a means of preparing children to obey the authority of the government. People still think that education can function as a social panacea by eliminating crime, immorality, and poverty. Education is also still considered a means of maintaining social class differences, though many people still believe in the power of schools to provide social mobility. Debates continue about the potential of government-operated schools to inhibit intellectual freedom. And, increasingly through the twentieth century, public schools have adapted to the changing needs of the family.

My discussion of these themes in colonial education will begin with the role of authority and maintenance of social differences by schools in colonial New England. The next section of the chapter, "Colonialism and Educational Policy," will examine educational developments throughout the colonies. The following two sections will deal with the development of academies in England and the colonies. Important themes in these sections are intellectual freedom and social mobility. And the last section of the chapter will explore concepts of childhood and the family.

Throughout this chapter, I will be relating these themes to different historical interpretations of the colonial period. As I discussed in Chapter 1, one goal of this book is to help readers understand the importance of a historian's interpretation of our images of the past. Different historians have emphasized different themes in interpreting the development of colonial education.

AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL STATUS IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

When the Puritans settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s, they considered themselves to be creating a model religious commonwealth in the wilderness. Early Puritan leader John Winthrop told his fellow colonists in

1630, "We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."¹ Their goal was to create the good society, which meant a well-ordered religious society that would win God's approval and be used as a model by the rest of the world.

The importance of religion in New England colonies has led some historians to emphasize the Protestant nature of colonial education and the effect of that legacy on the development of public schools in the nineteenth century. Most historians who offer this interpretation of education in seventeenth-century New England emphasize the colonists' growing faith in education as a panacea for social problems.² Other historians have stressed the authoritarian nature of colonial education as an example of schooling being used to maintain the power of established leadership.³

Ellwood Cubberley, who has portrayed the rise of the public school as a struggle between the forces of good and evil, argued that since their origins in colonial times, schools in America have gradually been transformed from instruments of religion into instruments of the state.⁴ "The first schools in America were clearly the fruits of the Protestant Revolts in Europe." And of all the Protestant groups that settled in colonial America, according to Cubberley, "the Puritans who settled New England contributed most that was valuable for our future educational development."⁵

The view that the roots of American public schools lie primarily in the Protestant church and in New England has had a profound impact on the history of education. Historian Carl Kaestle has recently argued that the public school movement in the nineteenth century was essentially a result of a desire to protect a Protestant orthodoxy.⁶ Catholic groups in the nineteenth century rebelled against the Protestant quality of public schools and established their own school system, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Catholics referred to public schools as Protestant schools. Even in this century, after Bible reading and school prayer were banned by the U.S. Supreme Court, many religious groups protested the loss of what they believed to be the traditional Christian morality of the public schools. From the viewpoint of a historian like Cubberley, the secularization of public schooling did represent a break with tradition.

Not all historians agree with the idea of a continuity of development in schools from colonial times to the emergence of public schools in the nineteenth century. Rush Welter argued that the public school movement of the nineteenth century resulted from a consensus about the need for educated citizens in a democratic society. Welter found little in colonial education that contributed to a democratic theory of education, and he viewed colonial education as a "false start from which it was necessary to turn away before education could become a key principle of democratic faith."⁷ According to Welter, colonial education was oriented toward teaching respect for authority and maintaining the existing social and religious order. This orientation was contrary, in his opinion, to the later educational emphasis on preparing citizens for independent democratic behavior.

While differences in historical interpretations of colonial education exist, no one denies the important role of religion. Within the context of the