NEITHER GOSPEL NOR METHOD: AN HISTORICAL CASE STUDY OF PROGRESSIVE TEACHERS INVOLVED IN THE EIGHT-YEAR STUDY SUMMER WORKSHOPS, 1936-1939

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Dedication

To my mother and father, Lin and Jim Ruda, who supported and encouraged my educational pursuits from preschool through graduate school. As the culmination of my formal education, this thesis embodies the perseverance I learned from you, and the encouragement and love you have always shown me.
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Abstract

The twentieth century encompassed a wide variety of progressive educational reform initiatives—many of which revolved around the implementation of new curricular content and pedagogical techniques. Teachers’ work has always occurred at the frontlines of these reforms, yet even for those who taught in many “progressive” school environments, teachers have been left out of conversations defining what “change” meant in relation to their work. Further, early twentieth century pre- and in-service teacher training programs seldom provided opportunities for teachers to develop the intellectual, social, and personal traits which progressive reformers thought necessary to carry out educational change initiatives.

While the historical literature on teaching exposes many of the professional challenges confronting teachers, such as unequal pay and constraints on teachers’ personal and academic freedom, this literature tends to focus on the extent to which teachers used mechanisms such as unions or teachers’ institutes to collectively vie for change. Absent from this history are examples of pre- or in-service teacher education which helped teachers contemplate their role in relation to change and see it as integrally connected to it.

This historical case study examines the Progressive Education Association’s (PEA) summer workshop program between 1936 and 1939. These workshops were an outgrowth of the PEA’s Eight-Year Study (EYS)—an experiment in school and teacher-driven curricular reorganization. Though the PEA never attempted to quantify or describe exactly what progressive teaching or curricula ought to look like, it believed teacher experimentation occupied an important place within the broader educational scheme. The Eight-Year Study summer workshop program provided the time, space, and opportunity for teachers to actively investigate their role within this scheme. By highlighting this unprecedented example of in-service teacher
development, this study aims to enrich our historical conception of teaching and offer insights that may be of value for modern-day educators.

This case study uses standard protocols for historical investigation to examine archives-based primary sources in addition to secondary sources. Critical theory provides the theoretical framework in which the analysis of these findings is situated. Three key findings emerged as a result of this research: The first describes the qualities and roles that the PEA attributed to progressive teachers and teaching, and explores the extent to which these characteristics resonated with participating teachers. The second finding illuminates several dominant strands of educational thinking in the 1930s and provides specific examples of how the workshops embodied those strands. The third finding discusses the PEA’s strong emphasis on “humanizing” the learning process for teachers and describes teachers’ responses to these approaches.

The final chapter discusses the implications of these findings for critical theory as well as for the historiography of education and teaching. It provides suggestions for how modern-day educators might rethink the role of professional development as one that helps teachers develop a capacity for risk-taking and feelings of efficacy in relation to change. It discusses redefining professional development to include experiences that encourage and enable teacher growth, ongoing reflection, and an understanding of how noninstructional forms of educational work may complement and support their own work.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This qualitative, historical case study attempts to enrich our historical conception of progressive teachers and teaching practice in the 1930s. It does so through an examination of teachers’ experiences in the Progressive Education Association’s (PEA) summer workshop program—a six-week residential, professional development experience for secondary school teachers participating in the PEA’s Eight-Year Study (EYS). As this research attempts to show, the workshops are historically unique for a number of reasons. For many of the participating teachers, the experience raised important but seldom-explored questions about a teacher’s “place” within the educative process. Questions such as: what role does a teacher play in curriculum-making? To what extent is one’s own life experience relevant to one’s teaching practice? What does it mean to be part of a professional community of teachers?

The summer workshop program brought teachers from diverse geographical and school settings together for an intensive learning experience aimed at not only the professional but also the intellectual, social, and personal growth of the teacher. It facilitated collaboration between university researchers and secondary school teachers in a setting that was structured to promote autonomy, risk-taking, and intellectual stimulation. For these reasons, the workshops provide a rich backdrop against which to examine the following question:

In what ways does the PEA’s summer workshop program contribute to our historical understanding of what it meant to be a “progressive” teacher in the 1930’s?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold: First, it aims to provide new historical insights on progressive teachers and teaching practice in the early twentieth century. Second, it attempts to identify and describe the manner in which the workshop experience encouraged risk-taking and
growth among teachers. Both of these objectives stem from a belief that modern educational practices and policies bear the marks of previous eras. By engaging with the past, researchers can better understand the attitudes, beliefs, circumstances, and behaviors that promoted or inhibited change. In this sense, history shines a light on factors that may impact decisions and actions in the present.

**Significance of the Study**

This project examines a period in educational history not unlike the present. Now as in the 1930s, teachers are confronted with significant change both within their field and more broadly within society. Change is now a realistic and irreversible component of educational practice at every level—from preschool through graduate study. Teachers’ work occurs at the frontlines of the educative process, placing them and their students at the center of change. For over a century, a teacher’s professional worth has been evaluated in part by how effectively the teacher implements and enacts new instructional methods or curricular material. Yet the teacher has largely remained on the sidelines of defining what these changes mean in relation to his or her teaching practices, beliefs, and evolving skills and knowledge.

For many of the participants, the value of the PEA’s summer workshop experience was greater than the sum of the skills and knowledge they gained from it. Rather, it was the manner in which the experience helped some teachers take new risks, make intellectual and creative decisions, and co-define change in relation to their schools, students, and personal values that make the summer workshops historically unique. Understood in this way, this study can provide modern educators and administrators with valuable and rich examples of a professional development model that cultivated teachers’ capacity for taking professional risks and leading change within their schools.
Theoretical Framework

Several theories offered potential frames for examining the research question. These included situativity theory, organizational change theory, and critical theory.

Situativity theory suggests that learning is meaningfully connected to the social context in which it occurs (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Owen, 2004). Drawing on the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology, situativity theory is often used as a framework for research on teacher professional development because of its dual emphasis upon the individual teacher as both a learner, and as a member of a larger professional learning community (Borko, 2004). Organizational change theory explores the myriad pathways to change and the factors that promote or constrain change within organizations. It views organizations as dynamic social systems and investigates how change impacts the various groups within that system (Burke, 2008).

Situativity and organizational change theory may have provided valuable frames for analyzing the extent to which the workshop context shaped participants’ conceptions of progressive teaching and how, in turn, this may have changed their approaches to practice. However, the focus of this research centers on describing the nature of the transformations some teachers experienced as a result of participation in the workshops, and the manner in which these experiences shaped how they perceived themselves as progressive teachers. With its attention to the notions of individual agency and personal identity, critical theory provides a useful framework for examining these factors. More specifically, three closely-connected strands of critical theory stand out as especially pertinent to this research. They include the notion of teachers as intellectuals; teacher identity and agency; and education for democracy. Each strand enables us to examine the variety of ways in which the workshop experience transformed the
thinking, attitudes and beliefs of participating teachers, and how these transformational experiences in turn affected their conceptions of themselves as both teachers and individuals.

**Teachers as intellectuals.** What is meant by the intellectual work of teaching? The work of Kincheloe (1993), Freire (2009), and Pinar (2010) provides guideposts by which to examine this notion. For example, in discussing the environment of teacher education at the end of the twenty-first century, Kincheloe described the persistent emphasis on teaching as a “technical” process, that is, as a collection of correct or incorrect methods, assumptions, processes, and performances that can be observed, replicated, and mastered by aspiring teachers. These approaches reduce teachers’ capacity for independent thought and restrict their ability to exercise their own judgment and act purposefully in response to their environment. Absent opportunities to question underlying institutional and curricular arrangements of schooling as they learn the craft themselves, many aspiring teachers enter the profession with a passive acceptance for the status quo that is sustained throughout their teaching career. Kincheloe’s critical analysis of teacher education provides a stepping off point for analyzing the extent to which specific workshop activities helped teachers engage certain intellectual qualities including a capacity for critical analysis, reflection, and interpretation, both individually and in collaboration with others.

Freire (2009) wrote about certain indispensible “human qualities”—tolerance, decisiveness, and humility, among others—that support the intellectual work of teaching while enabling teachers to enact more democratic teaching practices. For Freire, these human qualities are more than mere spiritual inclinations of well-intentioned educators; rather, they are imbued with tensions and contradictions that critical educators must grapple with throughout their professional practice. Darder (2009) describes one of these tensions as patience and impatience, such as when educators experience the pressing desire to resolve conflicts within the classroom
but temper this desire with more thoughtful and measured responses and actions. In these
instances, teachers engage both the humanistic and intellectual dimensions of consciousness—
both important qualities for critical educators.

Freire’s (2009) dual emphasis on humanistic and intellectual qualities resonates with the
variety of experiences participants had in the summer workshops. For example, one participant
in the 1938 Rocky Mountain workshop described teachers’ tendencies to deviate now and then
from their intellectual tasks and engage in creative arts, games, and cultural experiences in which
they explored and exercised different dimensions of themselves, writing: “[Teachers] doffed our
dignity and restraint and dared to do what we had never done before, dared to express in clay,
paint, and chalk, ideas which we had never before let anyone know we had…[There] was no
tenseness, no strain; only freedom and good fellowship” (Kridel & Bullough, 2007).
Undoubtedly, as Freire suggests, these very human activities and expressions would have
complemented and complicated teachers’ expanding vision of themselves in relation to their
work as educators.

Finally, Beane & Apple (1995) and Pinar (2001) emphasize the importance of teacher
involvement in curriculum development, asserting those who are responsible for delivering the
curriculum should participate more fully in determining what that curriculum is, how it is taught,
and what measures ought to be used to gauge students’ understanding of it. To realize this vision,
teachers must actively engage with the world of ideas, both intellectually and practically, in order
to gather diverse perspectives and voices to share with their students. When this occurs, the
teacher becomes more than a wellspring of information. By developing his or her intellectual
capacities for making new connections between familiar concepts, the teacher is better able to
facilitate these kinds of learning experiences for his or her own students. In this sense, nurturing
one’s own curiosity and desire for knowledge constitutes an important part of the intellectual work of teaching.

While Beane & Apple’s (1995) and Pinar’s (2010) ideas follow the workshops by more than a half-century, they echo the views of the EYS curriculum associates who acknowledged the importance of developing “the whole teacher.” After observing the strong sense of community that emerged as teachers discovered new dimensions to their work and themselves, the PEA expanded its program of the summer workshops to include more time and space for similar types of enriching activities (Kridel & Bullough, 2007).

**Identity and agency.** Questions of identity are an essential component of critical discourse. Critical theorists reject the tendency to view identity (whether it is the identity of a group or of individuals) as a singular, static quality, arguing that this view underestimates the many ways in which groups and individuals transcend circumstances that traditionally limit their power (McLaren, 2009; Toshalis, 2010). At the heart of this research are questions of identity and the ways in which the summer workshop experience enabled teachers to transcend certain realities of the profession. While much of the historical literature about the EYS has focused on the Study’s outcomes (e.g., curricular changes and their legacy to progressive education), this research examines the transformational aspects of the workshop experience as they relate to the teacher-participants. Accordingly, it considers a range of factors—including the material, social, personal, and experiential—and attempts to understand how each contributed to teachers’ understanding of their role in curricular and pedagogical experimentation.

Closely related to identity is the concept of teacher agency. In this context, the term “agency” refers to a teacher’s unhindered ability to practice his or her craft in a purposeful and self-directed manner, as opposed to a manner dictated and prescribed by those with greater
authority. Critical theory calls for probing of dominant institutional arrangements in order to expose the hierarchical relationships they tend to impose. It investigates the manner in which less powerful groups or individuals attempt to subvert these hierarchies and gain power, and examines alternate sites in which teachers exercised authority (McLaren, 2009).

Historically, teachers have lacked agency, particularly in relation to their own practices (Dewey, 1997; Cuban, 1993; Kincheloe, 1993). The summer workshops stand apart from other forms of professional development from the same period because the workshops focused on the intellectual, social, and professional growth of teachers. As the findings suggest, those who envisioned the summer workshop program considered these realms to be interrelated and critically valuable to the work of progressive teaching. In fact, the workshops were designed to provide space and time for personal risk-taking and self-directed learning, reflecting the PEA’s belief that this in turn could enhance teachers’ willingness and ability to engage in experimentation in their schools. As Kridel and Bullough (2007) explained in *Stories of the Eight-Year Study*:

> Many of the teachers needed assistance to reimagine themselves as scholars and academics… Through a series of planned experiences—all oriented toward fostering discourse, examining ideas, clarifying values, and attending to consequences—teachers and staff were able to come together and reimagine themselves and their work as educators. (p. 190)

Understood within the context of the 1930s American public school system, this “reimagining” was itself a remarkable act. The bureaucratic structure of most twentieth century public schools chronically undervalued qualities such as intellect, judgment, and independent thought among teachers, though these traits were considered necessary for administrators and
other nonteaching educational experts (Cremin, 1964; Cuban, 1993; Callahan, 2002). Understood in this way, the premise of the workshops was somewhat radical from the beginning. By providing space and time for teachers to cultivate interests, have new personal and professional experiences, and interact socially and intellectually with peer educators, the PEA carved out a place within the broader educational system where EYS teachers could exercise unlimited autonomy. As Chapter 6 discusses, the extent to which teachers were able to draw upon this newfound sense of agency and lead change in their schools after the Study ended is unclear, though it raises several interesting questions from a critical theoretical perspective.

**Education for democracy.** The theme of education for democracy recurs throughout the literature on the Eight-Year Study, and is one of enduring interest and debate among critical educators. As a social ideal, democracy’s relationship to education has been interpreted differently by traditionalists and by pedagogical progressives, but the relationship itself is accepted on either side as quintessential to the institution of public schooling in the United States (Ravitch, 1978).

One way critical theory contributes to our understanding of this relationship is by illuminating how democratic values are construed by those with varying interests in education. A particularly salient historical example can be found in Spring’s discussion of the distinction between Dewey’s and Scott’s interpretations of the importance of group activity in *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State* (1972). Dewey, Spring argues, saw in group activity a means of enabling learners to gain a deeper understanding and personal connection to the purposes and functions of that group. Importantly, Dewey simultaneously emphasized interactions not only between individuals but between groups from experientially different backgrounds. He argued
this leads to greater empathy and understanding between groups, as well as opportunities to identify commonalities (Dewey, 2003).

While Scott and Dewey both saw the democratic ideals of cooperation and community-mindedness realized through participation in group activities, for Scott the true value of group work was to teach individual members to get along with one another, and to cooperate and uphold the standards of the group. This, according to Spring, reflected a broader social efficiency agenda where the ultimate aim of education was to create an ever more productive workforce. This could be accomplished in part by modeling efficiency in social organizing for children at an early age (Spring, 1972). By demonstrating this subtle but significant difference between Dewey’s and Scott’s perspectives on activity work, Spring complicates the notion of democracy as a static principle.

Further, as Ravitch explained in The Revisionists Revised (1978), since the 1960s, radical historians and other scholars of education have been sharply critical of the notion of schools as benevolent, democratizing institutions. Instead, Ravitch argued, schools function “to mask the ‘oppressive’ features of an undemocratic society” (Ravitch, 1978, p. 3). In relation to the EYS specifically, Pinar (2010) critiqued the PEA’s conviction that curricular experimentation would catalyze the democratization of schools. In the PEA’s view, experimentation enabled schools to cultivate new teaching practices which they believed would, in turn, lead to the proliferation of democratic ideals. Pinar takes issue with the PEA’s failure to consider the manner and extent to which the institutional context of the experiment shaped and constrained the outcomes of the Study (Pinar, 2010). More specifically, Pinar argues this institutionalized form of experimentation limited the intellectual growth of teachers.
The three strands of critical theory presented in this chapter—teaching as intellectual work; identity and agency; and education for democracy—intersect in important ways. For example, research suggests teachers often feel insecure when there is a wide gap between how they view themselves and how students view them. This insecurity can impede one’s practice (Toshalis, 2010). For instance, if a teacher views herself as an inspiration to her students, but her students think of her as didactic and boring, her effectiveness in the classroom may be diminished by her struggle to make sense of that gap in perception. In a similar vein, the democratic “opportunity” to take ownership of one’s practices and experiment with curriculum presented a double-edged sword for some teachers: on the surface it gave them greater agency within an institution where they lacked power. On the other hand, it required a fundamental shift in how they viewed their role within the educative process. As one teacher commented, “We have come to love our chains” (Kridel & Bullough, 2007, p. 190). Could this “identity gap” have played a role in restricting teachers’ abilities to fully embrace the freedom given to them by the Eight-Year Study? If so, how and to what extent did the experience of the Workshop alleviate this gap in perception? These types of questions are ripe for critical analysis.

**Research Design**

This thesis utilizes an historical case study methodology to examine how the PEA’s summer workshops occurring between 1936 and 1939 contribute to our historical understanding of progressive teaching and teachers in the 1930s. The historical case study design draws boundaries around a specific phenomenon occurring in the past. In so doing, it enables the researcher to identify a rich but limited context in which to examine that phenomenon. In this study, the teachers who participated in the workshops represent the “unit of analysis,” or the main focal point of the research. The workshops provided the catalyst which enabled teachers to
consider progressive ideas and practices in relation to their own work and identities; for that reason, it provides the specific, bounded context for this study.

**Why study workshops?** In order to appreciate how the PEA’s summer workshop program informs our historical conception of progressive teaching in the 1930s, it is necessary to understand the genesis of the program and what it represented to those who participated in it. The workshops were born out of the PEA’s Eight-Year Study—a multifaceted experiment with curricular experimentation and reorganization at the secondary school level lasting from 1932 until 1940. The PEA’s original intent in offering summer workshops was to provide participating teachers with the knowledge and professional competencies it believed they needed in order to fulfill the Study’s mandate to experiment with curriculum and instruction. The relationship between the EYS and the summer workshop program is integral to this study as the EYS provided both the impetus and the philosophical orientation of the workshop model. Given this important linkage, this case study examines only those workshops most closely connected to the Eight-Year Study, i.e., those occurring between 1936 and 1939.

In order to develop its workshop program, the PEA needed to articulate what it believed progressive teaching was and then consider those attributes in relation to the needs of participating teachers. In this way, the workshop program served as a bridge between the PEA’s aspirational views of progressive teaching and teachers’ realities. This study is attuned to how the different groups involved in the workshop program (teachers, curriculum consultants, PEA leaders) made meaning of the teachers’ role within progressive education.

**Data collection.** Five different archival locations in New York and Illinois provided most of the primary source data analyzed and presented in this study. Each of the archives contains collections of material directly relevant to the PEA, the Eight-Year Study, and/or specific
individuals associated with the participating schools. I also located a number of primary source materials through Northeastern University’s interlibrary loan system, Google Books, the Internet Archive, or in print from rare book vendors.

I obtained secondary sources from a variety of digital and print collections and contacted a number of the participating schools, as well as the host universities or colleges where the summer workshops were held to determine whether they had materials pertaining to this research. In one instance, I communicated by telephone and e-mail with a volunteer archivist in Tulsa, OK, obtaining information pertinent to the study from our conversations, as well as from the photocopied archival material she sent by mail.

Finally, I connected with several senior educational historians with research interests similar to my own by e-mail or in person at the History of Education conferences in Boston, MA, and Chicago, IL. With their guidance, I identified archival locations with collections relevant to my topic.

Data analysis. As Chapter 3 describes, I used thematic indicators (e.g., “the roles and qualities of progressive teachers”), to categorize data according to broad, recurring themes emerging from the sources. Using a micro, mezzo, macro classification system, I labeled these sources according to their proximity to the unit of analysis, i.e., the teacher. This system allowed me to ascertain the themes from which my findings ultimately emerged and analyze how the substance of these themes varied across different contexts, personalities, and groups.

Limitations of the study. While there are many affordances to the case study method for historical research, there are also important limitations. First, the case study approach provides researchers with the opportunity to investigate a bounded phenomenon as it occurred in a specific context. Yet, the observations one makes through this type of analysis are specific to that
context only, meaning they cannot be extrapolated beyond that setting in order to describe all instances where a similar phenomenon occurred.

As an experiment in progressive education, the Eight-Year Study summer workshop program offers a setting in which to examine the views and beliefs of teachers and others associated with progressive education. Yet, the twenty-nine participating schools represent only a fraction of the total number of American schools and teachers who identified as “progressive” in the 1930s. As such, the extent to which this study can enrich our historical understanding of what it meant to be a progressive educator is inherently limited.

That said, case studies are derived from the lived experiences of real people and actual events. They allow us to glimpse the dynamic interplay of circumstantial and human factors, providing a multidimensional view of an historical phenomenon. In so doing they compel historians to grapple with the complexities and contradictions of lived experience by focusing on how those elements shape our understanding of what we seek to know.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review casts light on key sociohistorical themes that influenced teachers’ attitudes toward change and experimentation in the decades leading up to the Eight-Year Study. It is organized into three main bodies with related subsections. The first body describes different forms of teacher communities and discusses the variety of ways in which these communities shaped the development of the teaching profession. The second body addresses the influence of scientific thinking on the management of schools, as well as its implications for teachers during the first half of the twentieth century. The third body discusses how these shifts in social, educational, and scientific thought influenced the creation of the Eight-Year Study. These themes call attention to areas where this research might enhance our understanding of progressive teachers and teaching in the 1930s.

Sources Consulted

This literature review includes primary and secondary source materials that address social and economic conditions, political circumstances, and cultural trends that impacted teachers and their work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Given the engagement with critical theory in this case study, I was particularly attuned to certain themes within these specific bodies of literature. These themes include empowerment, identity, gender, resistance, and professionalization. Importantly, I found a combination of the general (broad social themes) and the particular (case studies focused on particular events or people) shed the most light on the complex dynamics among teachers, school administrators, and the social environments in which they worked.

I consulted diverse types of historical writing, including revisionist educational histories, historical case studies documenting organizational change initiatives in schools, journal articles,
dissertations on teacher institutes and early twentieth century teachers, and studies pertaining to
the settlement house movement and teacher unions. Each source contributed to my
understanding of the social dynamics that shaped teachers work while raising new questions that
warrant further historical investigation.

The United States in Transition

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the United States had shifted away from an
agricultural economy and was moving toward an industrialized future—especially in the
east (Bensel, 2000). The application of scientific knowledge and technological
advancements to manufacturing ignited this growth. Between 1890 and 1913 alone,
manufactured goods jumped from 20% to nearly 50% of the nation’s exports (Irwin, 2006). The
growth of manufacturing, together with pro-business public policies, created fertile ground where
the burgeoning business economy flourished (Chandler, 1977, in Bensel, 2000).

At the same time, the ethnic and racial composition of the United States population was
diversifying at unprecedented speed. Twenty-five million Europeans immigrated to the United
States between 1880 and 1924 (Barrett, 1992), providing a robust labor market to sustain the
nation’s economic growth. Significant demographic shifts occurred across the United States,
particularly in northern cities. Though the First World War slowed the rate of European
emigration, the demand for factory labor remained high. These opportunities drew Mexican and
African American workers north, and between 1910 and 1920 alone, the African American
population in Chicago increased by 150% (Lazerson, 1984).

These economic and demographic changes transformed the social and political landscape
of the United States in important ways. A host of new practical and ideological challenges
confronted public institutions such as government, health care, and education. Even though the
country was founded as a democracy, Americans grappled to understand what that meant within a newly pluralistic society.

**Teacher Communities**

Some historians have characterized teaching in the early twentieth century as an isolated profession (Cuban, 1993; Rousmaniere, 1997). Most often, the notion of community appears in the literature as a mechanism for teachers to resist this isolation and enhance their professional status and working conditions. In this way, community serves as a frame for exploring how power dynamics between institutionalized groups such as teachers’ councils and unions, policy makers, and school systems shaped the teaching profession and the experience of teaching in general (Tegnell, 1997; Urban, 2001).

Less frequently attended to in the literature is the question of what role these communities played in influencing the growth of teachers and in supporting and encouraging curricular and pedagogical change. The summer workshop model stands out from other historical examples because it represents an exceptional form of teacher community during this period. Unlike most teacher training and professional development programs in the early twentieth century, the workshop model brought teachers together to focus on the craft of teaching. They were guided by a philosophy of teaching as an intellectual and moral process and as an iterative endeavor (Bullough, 2003, 2007; Kridel & Bullough, 2002). In contrast to many of the documented examples of community as a reactive and resistant force, the summer workshops were constructive and productive. In this way, they add a new layer to our understanding of how certain types of teacher communities can positively influence the intellectual and personal growth of their members.
Communities in relation to context. The social context in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributes to our understanding of how and why teacher communities came into existence at specific historical moments. For decades, historians of education have discussed the connections between European emigration to the United States, overcrowded and under-resourced schools, and the ensuing political and ideological debates over school reform (Butts & Cremin, 1953; Cremin, 1964). More recently, historians have focused greater attention on how these circumstances affected the working conditions of teachers, especially teachers in large urban areas (Strober & Tyack, 1980; Warren, 1989; Cuban, 1993; Rousmaniere, 1997).

Other explorations of teacher organizing at the turn of the century reflect teachers’ participation in the social and political milieu of the Progressive era, when professional labor organizations provided venues for workers to advocate collectively for their rights. As differing progressive ideologies fueled debates over education reform, teachers, curriculum, and pedagogical practices were often caught in the middle (Cuban, 1993; Rousmaniere, 1997; Kliebard, 2004; Reese, 2005; Connelly, 2008). Increasingly, issues such as teachers’ dissatisfaction with hierarchical structures, unequal wages, mandated curricular changes, and other occupational inequities drove teachers to organize.

For those historians writing from critical perspectives, questions about power and control are integrally connected to the mission, values, and ultimately the outcomes of teacher groups (Lazerson, 1984; Tegnell, 1997; Urban, 2001). While some historical case studies analyze the relationship between organizational structures and power dynamics in more general terms, others use specific historical examples to explore how these relationships were experienced by the people involved. For example, in City Teachers (1997) Kate Rousmaniere described how increasing demands on teachers in New York City's public schools during the 1920s contributed
to their growing sense of isolation throughout this period. Through her use of first-hand accounts with teachers, Rousmaniere documented the feelings of alienation and the inadequate support and training teachers received from administrators. This work describes the manner in which unions and other professional organizations served as vehicles for teacher advocacy.

In some cases, historical researchers engaged critical theory in order to throw light upon the sometimes unanticipated value of teacher communities on a smaller, more localized scale. For example, MacDonald’s (1999) case study documents the manner in which an apprenticeship system among female teachers in mid-nineteenth century Providence, RI paved the way for strong personal and professional bonds and greater cohesion to exist among the faculty. In her final analysis, MacDonald describes how this sense of community deepened teachers’ sense of professional identity and may help explain why more teachers remained in the profession during this period.

The theme of teacher community has also been examined through the lens of popular culture. According to Zimmerman (1994), the parable of "Miss Jolly"—a character serialized in the 1890s by an anonymous schoolteacher from Michigan—offers an example of how teacher solidarity functioned as a means of resistance. Through this fictional character and her associations with school administrators and members of certain conservative community groups, Miss Jolly resisted their attempts to control the substance and manner of her teaching by repeatedly demonstrating how her own professional judgment—not the whims of popular opinion—served her students best. Zimmerman’s analysis suggests the act of banding together under the banner of professionalism allowed teachers to resist pressures from external groups to control the curriculum and compel them to teach in certain ways.
**Gender and teaching.** Within the critical historiography of education, the social status of women and notions of femininity in the early twentieth century are deeply entwined with the history of teaching and teacher organizing. These histories help us track gender’s indelible mark upon the teaching profession. In 1980, Strober and Tyack described a connection between the economic and ideological factors that further contributed to the feminization of teaching in the nineteenth century. The authors addressed how prominent advocates of women’s education (e.g., Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon, and Horace Mann) leveraged Victorian ideas pertaining to the “natural” relationship between motherhood and teaching to advance the role of women in education. Considered in relation to the economic realities of that time, including the availability of women willing to work for low wages and the increased need for teachers during the mid-nineteenth century population boom, Strober and Tyack argue the convergence of institutional factors and Victorian ideologies shape the teaching profession in gendered ways.

Neorevisionist histories build on these explanations, revealing a more nuanced portrait of the female schoolteacher at the turn of the century. Often these studies examine the contradictory notions of femininity teachers were expected to embody. In so doing, they reveal different ways in which women leveraged values attributed to their sex to gain power and forge new paths (Scott, 1979; O’Connor, 1980; Teed, 2004). In one example, Scott (1979) described Emma Willard’s efforts to promote the Teacher Institute movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century and provide formal avenues for teacher empowerment through the dissemination of best practices. Simultaneously, Scott suggested, the Institutes fostered positive professional relationships between teachers, enabled leaders to emerge, and contributed to teachers’ ongoing engagement with their work. More recent studies further enrich our understanding of the political savoir-faire and philosophical diversity of pioneering teacher-
leaders like Willard and Mary Lyon by comparing and contrasting the nuances of their educational and feminist ideologies and leadership styles (Turpin, 2010).

These studies provide a multidimensional view of these nineteenth century educational leaders and offer new insights into the fruits of collaboration. Taken together, they reveal the myriad ways teacher communities have evolved historically in response to gendered expectations and demands of the profession, and how they have provided female teachers with avenues to resist patriarchal authority structures. In so doing, they enrich our understanding of how female teachers’ participation in professional communities strengthened their sense of professional identity and status, and in some cases facilitated personal growth (Quantz, 1985; Rousmaniere, 1997; Crocco & Munro, 1999; MacDonald, 1999; Tozer, 2001).

**Professional status.** The professional and social status of teachers and the extent to which they could enhance their status within the schools through networking and solidarity with other teachers has long interested scholars. In her dissertation entitled *Isolation in the Schools* (1900), Young bemoans the stagnancy of both teachers who are not given opportunities to come into contact with new ideas and practices, and school leaders who guard against discussing opinions or ideas that may differ from their own. “The tyranny of an intellectual superiority,” Young wrote, “is immeasurably severer than that of social class superiority” (p. 38). In 1952, sociologist Howard Becker (1952) conducted a study examining how social class shaped teachers’ school-based experiences. Becker argued that domineering groups such as upper-class parents or overbearing administrators threatened teachers' authority. According to Becker, a teacher's only hope of escaping negative working conditions was to transfer to another school—a move that was, in most cases, entirely lateral for the teacher. Becker concluded a teacher's
integration into the school community was important to his or her success in that environment because it allowed him or her to gain respect among other teachers and parents.

Similarly, in her 1953 analysis of teacher induction problems, Elsie Gibbs (1953) concluded community was critically important to teachers’ work, professional identity, and sense of personal satisfaction. Her study underscores the importance of the environment in which teaching and learning occurs. Forty years later in How Teachers Taught (1993), Cuban evokes this same connection between learning and social environment, writing, “The occupational ethos of teaching funnels both newcomers and veterans into rituals that the wisdom of the craft reinforces as essential for classroom survival. In an occupation where every practitioner faces the class alone, there is less opportunity for teachers to cooperate to alter these rituals” (p. 261).

**Noninstitutionalized communities.** Teacher experimentation in the Progressive Era was not confined to institutional settings such as schools (Crocco, Munro, & Weiler, 1999; Reese, 2005). Women's clubs and settlement houses provided venues for some progressive educators to experiment with new forms of teaching and learning outside the traditional school context. They offered autonomy from institutional constraints and norms while enabling participants to experience education as a component of community participation and social activism. These types of communities provide an interesting contrast to the teachers’ council movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Teachers’ councils were institutionalized efforts to involve teachers in such matters as the development of new curriculum and school governance. In many cases, the councils reinforced hierarchical relationships between administrators and teachers (Tegnell, 1997).

Examining these differences calls attention to the context in which teacher communities arise and how this shapes their purpose and outcomes. In relation to this case study, while the
PEA summer workshops represented a radical alternative to traditional forms of teacher education, those who participated in them were nevertheless tethered to the institutional context and broader educational milieu to which they inevitably returned. This raises important questions about how the context of the summer workshop program influenced the manner in which participants made meaning of their experiences in them.

**Intellectual engagement.** As Giroux (1988) observed, the particular conditions under which teachers work either constrain or promote the intellectual dimensions of their work. While many studies acknowledge the lack of teacher involvement in school reform initiatives, there is a paucity of historical research exploring teachers’ intellectual contributions to the field of education through collective work endeavors. Among the historical studies documenting formal and informal teacher communities, there is little evidence these communities formed around problems of practice or promoted the intellectual growth of teachers. Though the reasons for this are unclear, much of the literature on teaching in the early twentieth century suggests it is not surprising. A teacher’s intellectual growth was simply not as important as his or her development in other areas including personal virtue, the ability to transmit curriculum, follow the orders of administrators, and manage a classroom.

Even in the few documented examples of teacher participation in intellectually-focused communities of practice, little attention is given to how these communities impacted teachers’ conceptions of their work. Though one historical case study (Peltier, 1967) addresses teacher involvement in curriculum design in the Denver public school system in the late 1800s, the study’s author focuses less on teacher involvement and more on the progressive leadership of the city’s superintendent, Jesse H. Newlon. Newlon believed, Peltier argued, teachers should have greater control over curriculum and pedagogy, and for this reason he took steps to actively
involve them in the redesign of Denver’s public school curriculum. While this study highlights
the importance of supportive school leaders who nurture teachers, it does not directly address
how teachers themselves contributed to these positive changes through their work together, nor
how their involvement impacted their teaching in the short or long term.

Given the limited amount of historical information about the intellectual contributions of
teacher communities, one account of professional development in Baltimore County, Maryland
stands out. Published in 1912 in the “Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of
Education,” the model described the school district’s innovative strategy for organizing teachers
into groups resembling modern day learning communities and disseminating what these groups
learned for the benefit of other schools in the district. Perhaps most striking was these
approaches to teacher collaboration, mentoring, and ongoing reflection and peer review were
supported by the administration and therefore institutionalized across the district. This account
provides important historical evidence of teachers’ direct involvement with substantive work
such as curriculum-making, and they raise important questions about why these types of teacher
communities were so uncommon.

The Mainstreaming of Science

In addition to broad social changes, science had a significant influence on education.
With its explanatory power and perceived ability to bring order to chaos, science had a normative
effect on public discourse during this era of transformation. This was especially true as it related
to social reform (Cotkin, 1984; Westhoff, 1995). For many nineteenth century Americans,
science provided proof that change was not only likely but inevitable (Graham, 1967). With the
proliferation of mass communications media, scientific (and pseudoscientific) information could
be disseminated to eager audiences at unprecedented rates. This, combined with an upward trend in literacy rates, no doubt hastened its infusion into the mainstream consciousness.

Of the many science-based ideas emerging at the turn of the century, there is one in particular that captured the imaginations of policy makers, business leaders, and educational reformers due to its perceived applicability to each of these realms. “Scientific management theory” would leave an indelible mark on education and many other institutions well into the future. Proposed by an American mechanical engineer named Frederick Taylor, the central premise of scientific management holds that there is a single, scientifically-derived “best” method for accomplishing every discrete task. Distilled from his years spent on factory floors observing the work performance and division of labor between workers and managers, Taylor argued the consistent application of these methods to factory settings would enhance worker efficiency and ultimately increase the manufacturer’s profits (Callahan, 2002).

While a discussion of the nuances of scientific management theory is beyond the scope of this paper, the central tenets of the theory are important to note in light of their influence upon progressive education reform in the second decade of the twentieth century and beyond. The theory is anchored by four fundamental principles: First, each task a worker performs should be scientifically evaluated with the goal of discovering the quantifiably best and most efficient way to accomplish it with maximum efficiency. Second, workers should be matched to tasks which best suit them and then be trained to accomplish them in the most efficient manner. Third, managers and laborers must cooperate in order to ensure that tasks are performed in the scientifically prescribed manner. Fourth, an equal division of labor between managers and workers should be established to ensure workers concentrate exclusively on carrying out tasks
while managers focus on planning tasks and enforcing rules that govern how those tasks are executed (Taylor, 2007).

The extent to which Taylor (2007) would have approved of the application of these principles to enterprises beyond manufacturing is not clear as he died within five years of the publication of his book (New York Times, 2010). Nevertheless, the notions of efficiency, standardization, hierarchical organization, and scientific measurement the theory promoted resonated with reform-minded citizens. In particular, it was the seemingly logical notion of mapping curriculum to the needs of the society—and likewise matching instruction to the needs of the individual learner—that appealed to some reformers. If increased efficiency on the factory floors could enhance productivity, some believed, then “social efficiency” within schools could enhance public education. As Kliebard (2004) observed, “[I]t was social efficiency that, for most people, held out the promise of social stability in the face of cries for massive social change, and that doctrine claimed the now-potent backing of science in order to insure it” (p. 76). The zeal for efficiency combined with ardent public criticism of the inefficiencies within the education system writ large paved the way for scientific management to enter into the discourse around school management and curricular reform in serious ways (Callahan, 2002).

Science and progress. As Chapter 4 describes, advancements in science and technology in the early twentieth century significantly influenced all spheres of the American experience, from business and industry to entertainment and domestic life (Smiley, 2010). According to some historians, this fervor for science and technology infused both American culture and public policy throughout this period, thus creating close linkages between the notions of “scientific advancement” and social “progress” (Cotkin, 1984; Lazerson, 1984). Callahan’s 1964 book, Education and the Cult of Efficiency, describes how “scientific management”—a management
theory developed to increase labor efficiency, and divide tasks between managers and laborers—had a profound and lasting impact on the organizational ethos of the American school.

Callahan (1964) suggested the educational reform movement of the early twentieth century reflects certain core principles of scientific management, such as increasing organizational divisions between those who managed tasks (school boards, principals, superintendents) and those who executed them (teachers). The legacy of scientific management reverberates across the historiography of education, from the towering influence of scientific thought on the practice of teaching to the rise of the University-credentialed “expert.” Tyack (year), Cuban (year), Kliebard (year) and others expounded on Callahan’s work, describing scientific management’s impact on school culture, instructional practices, public policy, and curriculum. This body of scholarship continues to provide an analytical springboard for historians and others who argue this legacy reinforces and sustains the authoritative and intellectual hierarchy that exists in schools (Whitescarver & Cossentino, 2008; Fallace, 2011).

To be clear, there were exceptions to this rule, and some examples appear in the literature on this period. However, such accounts tend to highlight exceptional teachers or leaders whose actions challenged the status quo. One of the earliest examples of teacher resistance is Ella Flagg Young’s resignation as District Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools in 1899. Young’s departure came in response to the Board of Education’s appointment of a new superintendent who derived his management philosophy from business and industry, and whose polices minimized and undermined the role of the teacher. As Young’s biographer wrote: “She refused to work under a regime which reduced school work to the lines of a business corporation and made mere tools and clerks of teachers” (McManis, 1916, p. 96). Scholars have suggested Young’s iconic resignation was an historic act of resistance against the notion schools should be
managed like businesses or factories. Second, it demonstrated Young’s conviction—shared by Dewey—teachers ought to have authority and intellectual freedom where matters related to instruction, curriculum, and school practices were concerned (Dewey, 1910; Dewey in Mayhew & Edwards, 2006; Lagemann, 2002).

Importantly, these beliefs resonate with the philosophical underpinnings of the summer workshop model in which curricular and pedagogical decisions were understood as the teachers’ purview (Bullough, 2007). Viewed from this perspective, this study may provide new insights on how the workshop setting contradicted traditional educational hierarchies. Further, it enables us to examine the dynamics between teachers and nonteaching educational experts within these environments.

**Evaluating teachers’ work.** Another well-documented legacy of scientific management is its influence on the burgeoning field of teacher evaluation (and evaluation in general) during the first half of the twentieth century. Many progressive educators believed teaching could be reduced to a set of measurable functions that could be broken down and streamlined for efficiency (Tyler, 1930a; Cuban, 1993; Callahan, 2002). Accordingly, teachers were often evaluated on their ability to carry out certain tasks efficiently and their performances measured against a standard set of variables. As the literature suggests, this persistent emphasis on efficiency coupled with the centralization of bureaucratic authority indicates a teacher’s role in the first decades of the twentieth century was not designed to be intellectually rigorous, autonomous, or collaborative (Altenbaugh, 1991; Rousmaniere, 1997; Reese, 2005; Fraser, 2007; Perrillo, 2007; Tegnell, 1997; MacDonald, 1999; Tyack, 2001). In fact, taken together with deeply rooted gender inequities, cultural stereotypes, and the persistence of public policies that denied teachers certain rights, these factors perpetuated a certain social conception of teaching
and teachers (Quantz; 1985, Perrillo, 2007). As the historiography suggests, teaching was neither an intellectually substantive nor creative profession; rather, as Rousmaniere described, most considered it a “sacred calling for sacred women” (Rousmaniere, 1994, p. 49).

**The Rise of the Academic Expert**

With a nation eager for school reform and science providing the “intellectual coin” so eagerly sought after by reformers (Cotkin, 1984, p. 202), the social sciences gained credibility within a number of professional domains. Those with terminal degrees in disciplines including psychology, political science, anthropology and sociology, saw rich opportunities for studying the many practical problems facing modern society. Not surprisingly, universities began to carve more permanent niches for the social sciences, and from them emerged newly-minted experts whose discipline-specific knowledge and training in scientific research methodologies made them well-poised to tackle these social problems (Cotkin, 1984; Lagemann, 2000; Westhoff, 1995).

The public’s positive view of science, together with the perceived ability of social scientists to consider problems objectively, set them apart from the reform movement of the late nineteenth century typified by activists such as Jane Addams. Addams’s grassroots approach to reform was effective in part due to her ability to cultivate diverse networks of professionals, lay people, and academics, and then leverage these networks to advocate successfully for social change (Lagemann, 2000; Westhoff, 1995). This activist-oriented approach centered around core humanist convictions that diverse social groups could be brought together in support of democratic and ethical ideals of interest and value to all.

While social scientists were no more or less likely to be motivated by humanistic or ethical values, their objective, scientific approach to social reform contrasted with the activist-
oriented reform movement that had been in full swing at the turn of the century. This difference speaks to a larger shift in progressive thought occurring in the early decades of the twentieth century; the humanistic values and social advocacy that had defined Addams’s era of progressivism were tempered by increasingly scientific attitudes toward progressive reform.

In the realm of education, the underlying goal of progressive reform remained focused on school improvement, yet the number of pathways leading to improvement had begun to multiply. As my research suggests, the influence of the social sciences upon many of the activities and approaches used throughout the Eight-Year Study is clear. The PEA Commission on Secondary School Curriculum’s hallmark “Study of Adolescents,” provides a powerful example. The genesis for this study reflected the Commission’s core belief “new knowledge” about the needs of adolescents compelled teachers to reexamine their existing pedagogical and curricular approaches, and identify how they might reconstruct them to fill these needs better. This new knowledge included work by cultural anthropologists such as Margaret Mead among other psychologists and sociologists (PEA Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, 1935).

Chapter 5 presents specific examples of the Commission’s attempts to involve teachers in this research and highlights how teachers and researchers responded to this comingling of professional realms. These examples illuminate assumptions and attitudes of both groups toward the role and qualities of progressive teachers.

**Progressive Educational Thought: Educating for the World “As it Was” vs. “As it Ought to Be”**

The movement toward a science of education becomes more apparent when considering the reframing of education within higher education as a professional, research-oriented discipline. In *An Elusive Science* (2000), Lagemann documents the shift in many American
universities away from education as a philosophical study and toward a more research-oriented discipline. This change, Lagemann argued, reflected an overall emphasis toward building an education system meant “to prepare students for the world as it was rather as was the case with [philosopher John] Dewey, for the world as it ought to be” (p. 67).

As noted previously, the “world” or more specifically, the United States in the early decades of the 20th century was an increasingly modern place. While this modernity created opportunities for many, it contributed to a veritable crisis in education. Between 1890 and 1918 alone, high school attendance in the United States increased by 711% (Tyack, 2001, p. 183). While the genuine desire for schools to accommodate the needs of learners was an impetus for early calls for reform, many had also begun to question the fundamental purposes of the school in society and the relevance of the existing curriculum to modern life. It was this questioning that ultimately set the stage for the PEA and others to initiate experimental programs. The economic stability of the 1920s contributed to an overall sense of confidence and stability, leading many to embrace an experimental mindset (Lagemann, 2000).

Experimentation is an undisputed hallmark of progressive education in general. Some historians have focused their interpretations of progressive education around different types of reforms the movement inspired. For example, the reforms that were primarily structural tend to be classified as “administrative” (Tyack, 2001, p. 127), while those that center on curricular and pedagogical change are considered “pedagogical” (Tyack, 2001, p. 197). These distinctions bear explaining, as they have framed much of the historical analysis of this era.

**Administrative progressivism.** Reformers who sought to replicate the efficiency and standardization measures that had been successfully applied in business and industrial contexts in educational settings are generally classified as administrative progressives. As Susman (1984)
observed, “it was perhaps only logical that a tradition of reform should develop dedicated to the use of new instruments being forged by the newly emerging social order itself, tools already being used with stunning success in business and industry” (p. 145). The figurative “tools” to which Susman referred were science, efficiency, and the notion of the expert; each in its own way was inextricably linked to modernization and to an ideological certainty in the American way of life. Administrative progressives focused on strategic structural reforms, often involving increased bureaucratic control, more supervision of teachers, a greater emphasis on curricular standardization, and school boards composed primarily of men with business experience and/or university credentials (Susman, 1984).

Reflecting the scientific management zeitgeist that gripped the country, administrative progressives stressed objective measurement as an effective means for assessing teaching and learning. Tracking and sorting students according to standard measures, they argued, would in turn enable educators to guide students toward success. Despite these attempts at objectivity, evidence suggests teachers seldom made distinctions between the social and cognitive aspects underlying students’ behavior (Finkelstein, 1970, in Tyack, 2001). Instead, external pressures often dictated decisions about how best to manage the teaching and learning process. As a result, certain educational decisions were made hastily and without the benefit of understanding their long-term impact on the learner. In one example, Rousmaniere (1997) described the challenges facing New York City schools in the 1920s in the wake of compulsory education and child labor laws that drew even more students into the already over-burdened system. In response, the schools segregated or tracked students, deeming some “‘incorrigible,’ mentally deficient, ‘backward,’ or ‘laggards’” (p. 57), and separating them from other students.
At the heart of administrative progressivism was the belief that by applying scientific theories of organization and management to school settings, the educational system would serve students’ diverse needs more effectively and efficiently than traditional schools. This perspective differed fundamentally from pedagogical progressives who believed the child and the child’s needs and experiences should direct the organization of the school and curriculum.

**Pedagogical progressivism.** Unlike administrative progressives, pedagogical progressives tend to be associated more closely with the ideas of the American philosopher, John Dewey. Dewey believed the child and the child’s interests, experiences, and views of the world, resided at the center of the learning process. Accordingly, he argued, the child’s own life experience ought to provide a natural jumping-off point for continued learning. For Dewey, learning was a fundamentally social process; therefore the means and methods for educating children ought to be derived from contexts that are meaningful and familiar to them (Dewey, 2001).

There is sense of connectivity that runs through Dewey’s pedagogical philosophy; a sense the child is connected to the activities and people around, and likewise, that the curriculum is also connected to these things. Dewey, and many of the pedagogical progressives who formulated their views of progressive education through a “Deweyan” lens, believed these connections should inform the basic curricular and organizational structure of the school. This view is fundamentally different from administrative reformers who sought to increase bureaucratic structures and implement tracking measures, both of which were focused on increasing efficiency and sorting students across different curricular (and ultimately, life) tracks.

Dewey believed although learning ought to stem from what interests the child, there was an equal need to “take hold of his activities...” so “[t]hrough direction, through organized use,
they tend toward valuable results” (Dewey, 2001, p. 24). Critical, then, to achieving this vision were teachers. In Dewey’s view, teachers served as both “indispensable guides and organizers of the educational process” (Lagemann, 1996, p. 172). This signals another distinction from administrative progressivism; for Dewey, the teacher was more than just a functionary within an organizational super-structure; rather, the teacher should be considered a linchpin holding together the entire system as Dewey envisioned it.

As Cremin wrote: “[T]he key to what was new in Dewey’s analysis is his social reformism. The school is recalled from isolation to the center of the struggle for a better life. Dewey realized that a new society was coming into being, and he had a vision of a new kind of education that might spell the difference between the success or failure of that society measured in human terms” (Cremin, 1964, p. 119). Though Dewey’s ideas about education provided many of the intellectual underpinnings for the progressive experiments attempted during the first half of the twentieth century, as a philosopher first, his vision was never embodied by any single progressive experiment.

Perhaps the best-known experiment in pedagogical progressivism was one that drew explicitly upon Dewey’s ideas. The “project method,” developed by William Heard Kilpatrick, who had been Dewey’s student at Columbia University, stressed engagement in projects selected by students and based upon topics of interest to each student (Zilversmit, 1993). A project could be defined as any purposeful activity that captured the child’s interests and motivated the child to engage. For Kilpatrick, the teacher played a critically important role in guiding students toward projects that spoke to their interests.

While the project method paid homage to Dewey’s vision that the child’s experiences and interests provide the impetus for learning, and that the teacher should play a critical role in the
educative process, Kilpatrick placed less emphasis on subject matter than Dewey. As Zilversmit (1993) explained: “Good teachers, Dewey argued, needed to understand children but they needed first to have…a deep understanding of subject matter” (p. 15). In this way, teachers could draw upon their deep knowledge of the subject matter and contextualize it within the needs, interests, and abilities of students. For Kilpatrick, the teachers’ knowledge of subject matter was of secondary importance to their ability to gauge students’ interests and guide them accordingly (Zilversmit, 1993).

Though Kilpatrick is generally viewed as a devotee of Dewey’s, and historically the project method is considered an exemplar of pedagogical progressivism, the subtle nuances and outright differences between Kilpatrick’s and Dewey’s ideas remind us there can be no single definition of pedagogical progressivism. Similarly, though the distinctions between pedagogical and administrative progressivism can be useful when the goal is to situate certain kinds of reform within a broader progressive context, they are blurred when we attempt to consider what it meant to be a progressive educator in practice.

The progressive teacher: pioneer or pawn? The Eight-Year Study provides a number of examples of the nuanced, and at times seemingly inconsistent, notions of progressive education. It reveals the fundamental challenge facing those at the forefront of the movement to move progressivism out of the realm of theory and ideals and into a concrete set of practices. As subsequent chapters suggest, some of this difficulty might be attributed to the disjunction between the expectations of progressive teachers and the social and institutional realities in which they worked.

Just as viewpoints on education reform varied from one progressive educator to the next, so too did perspectives on the teacher’s role within this “new education.” Progressive-minded
reformers touted the importance of a teacher’s inventiveness, optimism, poise and warmth, arguing these qualities would help prepare students to succeed in a complex and changing world (Perrillo, 2004). As one self-described progressive schoolteacher wrote: “Teachers will be buoyant, stimulating frontiersmen in their classrooms, creative craftsmen, artists in device and procedure, and not mechanics trained to practice stereo-typed and regimented techniques” (Mones, 1937, p. 359). In addition to this role as untethered guide, others expected the teacher to serve as a moral compass for the child; “to take hold of the moral problems with the children, to dissect them, advise, instruct, yes, even teach…the truths about morals which do not change from the age of cave man to the epoch of robot” (Girdler, 1935, p. 36).

Despite the intangible nature of so many of these qualities, superintendents and principals—often at the direction of school boards—were compelled to establish metrics to measure and quantify teaching efficacy (Callahan, 1962; Tyack, 2001; Perrillo, 2004). Here the influence of administrative progressivism and social efficiency created a paradoxical situation for teachers and those who supervised them. Even if the administrator was inclined to consider the work of a skillful teacher to be of paramount importance to the learning process (as Dewey saw it), the administrator was nevertheless forced to establish scientific means for objectively measuring the teacher’s work (Callahan, 2002, p. 100). This emphasis on systematizing teaching and supervising teachers encapsulated the spirit of Taylor’s fourth principle of scientific management. As Taylor described it:

The development of a science…involves the establishment of many rules, laws, and formulae which replace the judgment of the individual workman and which can be effectively used only after having been systematically recorded, indexed, etc…Thus all of the planning which under the old system was done by the workman, as a result of his
personal experience, must of necessity under the new system be done by the management in accordance with the laws of the science. (Taylor, 2007, pp. 37–38)

Although Taylor had factory workers—not teachers—in mind when he wrote these principles, they had nevertheless managed to influence educational decision-making in concrete ways. Many progressive reforms effectively subjugated the experience and judgment of those performing the work to methods that had been scientifically identified and derived. In reality, these attempts at supervising and evaluating the work of teachers seldom contributed positively to the professional growth of teachers or lead to better student outcomes. A 1930 study identifying unsuccessful efforts in supervision of North Carolina teachers paints a disturbing picture of the abuse of supervision by certain school administrators. This study, conducted by Ralph Tyler, who would become one of the chief engineers of the Eight-Year Study, cited teachers’ frequent feelings of humiliation (“[the administrator] tells the people in town that we are ‘dumbbells’”); blatant abuses of power (“she makes us score papers to be used on her Master's thesis”); a lack of support and constructive feedback (“she says our teaching is all wrong, but does not suggest a definite plan to improve”); and the use of evaluation criteria that do not reflect the tasks actually performed in the classroom (“she judges us by tests which do not cover what we teach”) (Tyler, 1930a, p. 335).

To be clear, not all efforts to supervise and evaluate teachers resulted in such significant abuses of power. The extreme examples from Tyler’s research highlight just how far from Taylor’s original principles of scientific management, with its intended audience of industrialists, had strayed in the decades since its publication in 1911. Without a doubt, other forces, such as sexism, ethnocentrism, and the influence of big business in education further limited the authority and autonomy of teachers. Yet the notion of quantifying a teacher’s work and
separating it from the role of decision-maker illuminates one of the great paradoxes embodied by progressive reform.

As the new century marched forward, no single group did more to promote progressive ideas on a national scale than the PEA. Ironically, despite its growing membership throughout the 1920s and ‘30s, and its influence upon teacher training schools and programs, the PEA struggled to define what it meant to be a progressive teacher.

**Essential Themes in Progressive Education**

The first half of the twentieth century is a particularly fascinating period in the history of American education. From both an ideological and a practical standpoint, by 1932 when the Eight-Year Study formally began, public discourse around education reform bore the marks of progressivism, especially in urban areas. The EYS embodied and explored many of the essential questions of the time: What subjects are worth learning? What role do teachers and principals play in the educational process? How can the public school system serve as a bastion of democracy in an uncertain world?

While there are many possible frames for understanding the social context in which the summer workshops occurred, the scientific management zeitgeist and its specific influence upon education is a persistent theme in the historiography of education and teaching during this period. Most often, historical interpretations utilize this theme in describing how teachers and administrators conceived of their respective roles within the overall system of education. As such, the scientific management theme provides one of many possible starting points for examining how the summer workshop experience contributed to, changed, or challenged these conceptions.
Summary of Key Learnings

This literature review shaped the scope and orientation of this study in important ways. First, it exposed several areas where this historical case study can enrich our existing conception of teachers’ work in the first half of the twentieth century. While much of the existing literature on early twentieth century teaching focuses on collaboration as a mechanism for political change, the example of the summer workshops presents examples of teacher collaboration that enhanced the intellectual growth and professional agency of the teachers involved. Furthermore, a case study approach allows us to examine how the specific themes explored here played out within the context of the teacher workshops.

Finally, though the Eight-Year Study is well documented, the summer workshop model has not yet been thoroughly examined. By all accounts, the workshops were unique and, at the time, unprecedented events; as such, they represent an important milestone in the history of professional development. A qualitative historical case study approach helps us understand how teachers made meaning of their experiences, providing new insights on what it meant to be a progressive teacher during a period of considerable social change.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Qualitative Research Approaches

Researchers concerned with the history of education engage in an analytical process which shares certain features of qualitative methodology, but which also includes some notable differences. This chapter attends to these distinctions and describes the methodological approaches utilized in this study.

First, what is meant by qualitative research in the social sciences? In its broadest sense, a researcher engaged in qualitative inquiry begins by identifying a problem to investigate and developing specific questions that help define the scope of inquiry, sources of data, and methods of analysis. In contrast to quantitative research studies, which aim to test one or more hypotheses by measuring and analyzing data relating to a set of variables (Creswell, 2009), qualitative research aims to illuminate, elaborate upon, discover, and/or explore specific themes relating to a defined problem or phenomenon.

Historical research most closely resembles qualitative inquiry in this regard; both historical and qualitative inquiry cast light on a phenomenon—albeit for historians, a phenomenon that occurred in the past. Given the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry, historians and social scientists accept that their research can at best illuminate aspects of a phenomenon and provide one of many possible explanations or interpretations. In both qualitative and historical research endeavors, there is an important relationship among the researcher’s goals, the specific problem or question posed, and the theoretical framework and methodology used in collecting and analyzing data. The validity of the study depends in large part on the clarity, consistency and strength of this relationship (Maxwell, 2005).
Defining historical “sources.” Despite these important similarities, historians face specific challenges that require distinctive research protocols. One central and unique challenge for an educational historian is the availability of “data,” also referred to as historical sources, evidence, or artifacts (Danto, 2008; Rousmaniere, 2004). In qualitative and/or quantitative research studies conducted in the present, the research participants are usually living; thus data sources may include interviews, surveys, observation, and other techniques that involve interaction between the researcher and the participants.

For historians, qualitative source materials such as personal diaries, transcripts of interviews, memoirs, and other material that may provide insight into the experiences of ordinary people living in the past are not always available or complete. In many cases, this reality compels the researcher to use a combination of historical materials that are available—some qualitative and some quantitative—to inform an understanding of the problem studied (Rousmaniere, 2004). For example, archival collections, newspaper accounts, personal or professional correspondence, institutional records, meeting minutes, census data, school newsletters, etc., may all contribute information that ultimately shapes the historian’s interpretation and analysis.

Ensuring validity. This practice of collecting data from multiple and diverse sources is not simply an adaptation strategy borne out of the problem of limited source material; it represents an important validity strategy for historical researchers. Comparable to the qualitative concept of data triangulation, in which multiple sources are used to build a plausible argument and/or to explain the significance of a particular theme (Crewsell, 2009), historical researchers seek multiple sources of historical evidence as a means of corroborating the validity and robustness of each source. Through this process of asking the same research questions of
multiple sources of data, historical researchers can draw informed conclusions that build historical understanding (Rury, 2006).

In addition to including multiple and varied source material among the evidence they collect and analyze, historical researchers engage several other protocols to ensure the validity and integrity of their analyses. One such protocol is attention to context; it is important for historical researchers to establish why a past event is considered significant, and how it may enrich or inform our understanding of a particular historical moment. In the context of this study, for example, examining the major strands of progressive educational thought in the 1930s contributes to our understanding of how the PEA conceived of the role of a progressive teacher. Similarly, it is important to consider how the social context(s) of the period shaped the actions, motives, behaviors, and feelings of individuals and groups. This protocol is particularly important because it helps establish the reliability of historical sources. For instance, two sources documenting the same event but authored by different people may reflect the particular biases, concerns, attitudes, and motivations of each author. A teacher and a school administrator who both attended and kept notes on the same school board meeting, for example, may have described that meeting in very different ways. The inclusion and exclusion of information from these accounts demonstrates the subjectivity of the author. This subjectivity does not necessarily invalidate the source; rather, it allows the researcher to situate it within a larger social context.

Close attention to the author’s motivations and perspectives, as well as to the broader context in which a source was created, helps the researcher determine whether that source may be considered reliable. “Reliability” in an historical research context describes the extent to which a source represents the perspectives of individuals or groups who share certain characteristics with the author. For example, an historian might consider the viewpoints
expressed in a newspaper editorial by the leader of a local teachers’ union as representative of
the views held by a majority of the teachers within that union. In this sense, reliability in an
historical research context differs from its meaning in a purely qualitative research context. In
the qualitative sense, reliability refers to the consistency of the researcher’s data collection
approaches across all aspects of the research. For example, by ensuring that research codes are
applied consistently across all data sources, the research helps ensure the reliability of this data
(Creswell, 2009).

Finally, historical researchers must tread carefully when discussing historical “patterns.”
While in some instances it is instructive to acknowledge how certain themes appear to emerge
and re-emerge across different times and spaces, it is critically important that a historian
consciously acknowledges and explores how these themes change within new contexts, and in
the presence of different historical actors (Jenkins, 1991; Seixas, 1996; Stoskopf, 2009).
Contriving a thoroughly contextualized analysis of past events and actors in situ, and without
regard to comparable eras and events is a challenging—but not impossible—task for the
historian. Recognizing themes established by other historians allows the researcher to address
proactively one’s own preconceived notion of the past, and in so doing, avoid “presentism,” or
the tendency to apply one’s present-day understandings and attitudes toward an understanding of
the past (Kaestle, 1997).

Historians construct their interpretations of the past based not only on the evidence they
collect, but on the kinds of questions they ask of their sources, and the ways in which they
arrange evidence to build logical conclusions (Stoskopf, 2009). Thus, while researchers may
perceive similarities or make comparisons between temporally different circumstances or
phenomena, they must take care not to extend these conclusions too far beyond the immediate
context of their study. Doing so may lead to deterministic and/or anachronistic interpretations that distort rather than illuminate the past.

**The Historical Case Study**

This thesis utilizes a qualitative historical case study approach to investigate the following question: *In what ways does the PEA’s Eight-Year Study contribute to our historical understanding of what it meant to be a “progressive” teacher in the 1930s?*

The case study method enables the researcher to examine complex social phenomena as it occurs (or occurred) in a real-world setting (Yin, 2009). While a single case study provides only a limited glimpse of a specific time or event, it can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of historical phenomena while revealing avenues for further investigation (Danto, 2008).

Several factors influenced the decision to utilize an historical case study design for this project. First, the PEA was the most prominent national mouthpiece for progressive education during the 1930s. As such, it is a rich source of information about progressive thinking and practices during that period. Second, the PEA’s Eight-Year Study and the summer workshop program that stemmed from it constitute a bounded phenomenon; these events occurred during a particular time period, with specific groups of educators, and under certain circumstances. They provide a rich and well-defined context in which to examine how teachers made meaning of progressive ideas and practices in relation to their own work. Third, by focusing attention on a specific context and time period has allowed me to clearly define the scope of inquiry. As a parent, part-time doctoral student, and full-time employee of Northeastern University, it has been important for me to pursue a project with a modest scope so that I could successfully complete it while

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1 In her history of the PEA, Patricia Albjerg Graham described the PEA as “a sharp focal center of activity within the larger context of that comprehensive nationwide development we call the progressive education movement” (Graham, 1967, p. 58).
balancing other parts of my busy life. Finally, the research question I posed, and the time period in which this study is situated, has allowed me to explore my abiding interest in how teachers have resisted and embraced change historically.

**Study setting and participants.** This study examines data from, or pertaining to, the summer workshops that occurred in the four summers between 1936 and 1939, as this was the period during which the PEA was directly involved with the program. Despite the fact it continued to grow in popularity, the PEA ceased to sponsor the workshop program after 1939. This was in part due to concerns the model was shifting away from what the PEA had originally envisioned when the workshops were more closely connected to the EYS in those initial years from 1936 through 1938.²

The participants in this study include the EYS teachers who attended the workshops, as well as the curriculum staff, PEA leaders, and school administrators whose interactions with and impressions of teachers are documented in the source materials I consulted. Table 1 lists the workshops that took place between 1936 and 1939, and describes the participants and focus of the workshops during each of those years.

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² In the summers of 1936 and 1937, the General Education Board provided the PEA with funding to support summer workshop programs populated by teachers from the 29 schools participating in the EYS. Based on that workshop’s success, the PEA held similar programs in three regions of the United States during the summer of 1938. The PEA also allotted some of its workshop funds to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for a Southern Conference held in Nashville, TN; however, this conference was not a part of the PEA’s program. Based on demand by teachers and administrators outside of the 29 schools, the PEA expanded enrollment to include teachers and faculty members from schools not affiliated with the EYS. The growth and popularity of the workshop model continued the following year; in the summer of 1939, the PEA sponsored 11 workshops in as many different locations (Kridel and Bullough, 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Length</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Workshop Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1936 6 weeks</td>
<td>Ohio State University, Columbus, OH</td>
<td>35 “expert” teachers in science and mathematics, selected by Study officials.</td>
<td>To critique a PEA Commission’s report on Science in General Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1937 6 weeks</td>
<td>Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY</td>
<td>126 teachers from the EYS schools. EYS staff.</td>
<td>Focus on clarifying educational aims; test construction; the problems of individual teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1938 6 weeks</td>
<td>The “Rocky Mountain Workshop” at Colorado Women’s College, Denver, CO</td>
<td>Primarily teachers from the 30 schools (most of them from Denver, Des Moines, and Tulsa). Teachers from nonparticipating schools. Study staff, including arts and sciences faculty from various universities.</td>
<td>The growth of teachers, particularly through exposure to arts and recreation; talks by specialists representing a variety of disciplines (e.g., adolescent psychology, guidance, etc.). Subject area groups on core curriculum, home economics, and foreign languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1939 6 weeks</td>
<td>University of Chicago, Claremont Colleges, Colorado State College of Education, University of Denver, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Northwest Workshop at Reed College, Stanford University, Syracuse University, Teachers College, Columbia University. EYS and non-EYS teachers. Study staff from various universities. EYS and non-EYS teachers. Study staff from colleges and universities.</td>
<td>EYS and non-EYS teachers. Staff members, some of them EYS teachers selected to participate as staff members. Faculty from host colleges and universities.</td>
<td>The needs and growth of teachers. Discipline-specific teacher groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources:* PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939b; “Institutions Affiliated with the Program and Financial Contributions to Each,” in PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1940, p. 2; and Kridel and Bullough, 2007.
Data Sources

Given the historical nature of this research, I collected the majority of data at five different archival locations. Each location holds collections of material that relate directly to the PEA, the Eight-Year Study, and/or to specific individuals who were closely associated with EYS. The archives I consulted were The Rockefeller Archives Center, the Sarah Lawrence College Archives, the University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center, the Chicago History Museum, and the University of Illinois Archives. The relevant collections from each of these locations are described below.

The Rockefeller Archives Center. The General Education Board (GEB) collection at the Rockefeller Archive Center in Sleepy Hollow, NY, furnished the majority of source material pertaining to the Eight-Year Study. The collection includes PEA Commission and Committee reports, and correspondence or meeting notes between PEA and GEB leaders. It also contains quantitative data related to the workshops, qualitative questionnaire responses related to aspects of teachers’ and administrators’ experiences in the Study, grant-related documents including budgets and funding proposals, and conference reports.

The Sarah Lawrence College Archives. The archive at Sarah Lawrence College houses the papers of its former president, Constance Warren—a strong proponent of progressive education and member of the PEA. Included among the Warren papers are personal correspondence between President Warren and PEA leaders, most notably in regard to the logistics and planning for the two workshops held at Sarah Lawrence College in the summers of 1937 and 1938. Found within the collection were documents providing detailed information pertaining to the workshops, such as a daily schedule of activities and discussion topics and printed brochures advertising the 1938 program to secondary school administrators and teachers.
The University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center. The University of Chicago Library houses the Ralph W. Tyler papers. Though Tyler’s primary involvement with the EYS revolved around its evaluation-related activities, he is credited along with the GEB’s Robert Havighurst with proposing the idea of a summer workshop for EYS teachers (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939b). The Tyler papers include personal correspondence related to the Committee on Evaluation, which Tyler led. It also contains a number of Tyler’s early published writings and a copy of the Thirty Schools Bulletin. Other relevant sources from this archive include material relating more generally to the various PEA commissions and committees of the PEA, particularly those with which Tyler had some connection.

The Chicago History Museum. The Flora J. Cooke papers housed at the Chicago History Museum contain an array of materials pertaining to the Francis J. Parker School, where Cooke served as principal. Cooke was a progressive educator and school administrator whose speeches and personal correspondence provide candid perspectives on what it meant to be a progressive teacher. Cooke also served on the PEA’s Commission on the Relation of School and College. The Cooke papers highlight additional perspectives beyond the institutionalized “voice” captured in PEA reports including, for example, a transcript of a conversation between prospective teachers at Northwestern University and William Heard Kilpatrick about what students expect to learn in a teacher preparation program. Among Cooke’s papers was a letter from Howard K. Beale, an American historian who published a comprehensive study on teachers and freedom for the American Historical Association in 1936. Though these sources did not speak directly to the Study, they nevertheless provide additional vantage points from which to consider the research question.
The University of Illinois Archives. This archive houses a substantial collection of PEA records. Among them are several reports authored by the subject area teacher groups at the Western and Rocky Mountain Workshops. Notably, the report authored by the Arts group included a number of 8 x 10, black and white photographs of teachers engaged in art-making during the workshops. While inclusion and analysis of these images was beyond the scope of this case study, the images were powerful, visual affirmations of the kinds of experiences described by teachers and others in many of the primary and secondary sources I consulted.

The University of Illinois Archives also contain a rich collection of material documenting the PEA’s involvement with issues pertaining to academic freedom. Again, though much of this material was beyond the scope of this project, it nevertheless provided important contextual information about the PEA’s interests and activities in the second half of the 1930s. This ultimately casts light on the findings discussed in Chapter 5.

Additional primary sources. In addition to archival research, I examined several key documents and publications that are available online or via the interlibrary loan program. Among these are several volumes of the PEA’s final report on the EYS; a booklet about the summer workshop program published by the PEA; the dissertation of Frederick Redefer, Executive Secretary of the PEA, which examined the Study’s legacy eight years after it concluded; a guide on writing for teachers which was authored by a Denver teacher and workshop consultant; a book published by students at the Ohio State University Laboratory School; and a social studies textbook co-authored by a Tulsa teacher who participated in several summer workshops. This diversity of material enabled me to further contextualize the Study, include additional teacher voices, and glean more specific evidence of how the workshops impacted participants both during and after the Study.
Secondary sources. In searching for evidence of the Workshops’ impact on professional development practices more generally, electronic database searches revealed a broad range of relevant material located in both academic and professional journals, as well as in popular magazines. A 1942 issue of Life magazine, for example, featured Tulsa public schools in a multi-page article dedicated to progressive education. The Internet also facilitated my connection with Marilyn Loucks, the volunteer archivist for Tulsa Central High School, who corresponded with me by e-mail and phone and sent me several photocopied articles relevant to this research. Ms. Loucks graciously agreed to visit with Joyce Saunders, a retired administrator from Central High School who, at the age of 102, remembered by name several teachers who participated in the Study and provided information about Tulsa public school’s expansive progressive educational program, adding a layer to this research that neither books nor images captured.

Data Analysis

In addition to utilizing standard protocols for analyzing historical data, I identified several indicators suggested from the source materials that inform the research question. These indicators include progressive teachers’ qualities and roles, teacher collaboration and community, and teacher autonomy.

Roles and qualities of progressive high school teachers. This indicator describes the functions, knowledge, behaviors, and activities associated with the work of a progressive teacher from the perspective of the EYS curriculum consultants, PEA Commission and Committee leaders and directors, as well as the teachers and administrators who represented the individual high schools participating in the Study. Many of the sources consulted include descriptions of desirable and undesirable classroom practices or instructional approaches, as well as teachers’ perceived responsibilities toward students, colleagues, parents, and administrators.
Teacher qualities refer to the personal characteristics and dispositions associated with progressive teachers from the perspective of educators and leaders involved with the Eight-Year Study, and/or those affiliated more generally with the PEA. In this context, a teacher’s “qualities” refer to internal characteristics of self that are typically difficult to measure or quantify, as opposed to external qualifiers such as the extent of one's education or experience. This indicator informs conceptions of what progressive educators considered to be the most essential human characteristics for progressive teachers to possess.

Collaboration and community between teachers. Commission reports, consultant observations, and remarks made by schools administrators, teachers, and EYS staff describe instances of professional collaboration between teachers and other Study representatives. These reports connect the personal and professional growth of teachers to the many collaborative experiences they had as Study participants. They also credit collaboration as contributing to the experimental process overall. The extent to which collaboration among teachers occurred serves as one indicator of the perceived psychological and practical development of a progressive teacher and her craft.

Associated with, yet distinct from, the notion of collaboration is the idea of community among teachers. In the context of the Eight-Year Study and the PEA, teacher communities were both professional and at times social. During the Study, teachers in many of the participating schools came together around a number of aspects of curriculum reconstruction and experimentation, as well as the work of establishing a shared philosophy of education. In the workshops, these teacher circles widened to include teachers, and in some cases curriculum consultants and school administrators, from other schools. Communities formed around shared disciplinary interests, teaching problems, and other professional considerations. In many
instances, the nature and function of these communities expanded well beyond professional considerations to include social and personal interests and activities, such as sports, art making, and other recreational pursuits. Thus while the workshops brought educators together for the purposes of collaborative work toward curricular reconstruction, these experiences also seemed to facilitate other kinds of professional, personal, and social connections for those who participated.

**Teacher freedom and autonomy.** In the context of this study, the notion of teacher autonomy refers to the extent to which teachers felt free to exercise professional or moral judgment, personal instincts, and creative capacities in directing classroom activities and devising and implementing curricula. This indicator also captures the perceptions of administrators, curriculum consultants, PEA leaders, and members of the community around the question of teacher autonomy. In certain instances, perceptions and beliefs contradict actual school policies and practices, and in other cases, complement them. Taken together, these perceptions and practices help inform an understanding of the value of autonomy within the progressive conception of the teacher.

**Data Classification**

While the indicators allowed me to recognize key themes emerging from the sources, I used a classification system to determine the proximity of each data source to the unit of analysis, i.e., the teachers’ voice. As described in Table 2, this strategy involved classifying each source as micro-, mezzo-, or macro in order to distinguish variations in the beliefs, values, intentions, experiences, etc., of individual actors, groups, and institutions. The use of indicators and labels together provides the organizational framework from which my findings were derived.
Appendix A presents an excerpt from a much larger matrix of indicators and labels I constructed in order to analyze the data.

As is the case with all qualitative research, the layering of social and cultural contexts, economics, politics, and other factors makes absolute classification, or singular interpretations of sources, impossible. At best, the micro-, mezzo-, macro- labels can be understood as referential categories with permeable boundaries. These “shades of gray” can be intellectually useful when they compel the research to probe the underlying incongruities and make meaning of them.
Table 2
*Macro-, Mezzo-, and Micro-level Classification of Data Sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification:</th>
<th>Examples:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Micro-level</strong> sources are those that capture teachers’ ideas, thoughts, feelings or questions either directly or as recorded by an observer.</td>
<td>Statements attributed to teachers and published in written form; teachers’ responses on questionnaires and surveys related to EYS activities; published results of quantitative studies conducted with teachers; short essays written by teachers and published in newspapers, newsletters, and other printed materials; EYS curriculum materials and reports originating from teacher work groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mezzo-level</strong> sources are those written by, or capturing the point of view of school administrators, other nonteaching educational advisors or researchers. It also applies to institutional records for the PEA and GEB, which typically include correspondence/meeting notes of individual EYS and/or PEA leaders whose role provided them with frequent or sustained opportunities for interaction with EYS teacher-participants.</td>
<td>Published study materials, official meeting minutes, interviews (PEA meeting notes), correspondence, grant-related material, executive summaries, journal articles authored by Study leaders, newspaper clippings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro-level</strong> sources are those that provide institutional points of view, or represent widely-accepted beliefs, practices, and attitudes.</td>
<td>Publications produced by national and/or international organizations; journal articles (non-PEA); newspapers and magazines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Validity and Credibility

With any research undertaking, one’s own biases, experiences, prejudices and prior knowledge can influence one’s decisions about what data to collect and how those data are interpreted (Maxwell, 2005; Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). One of the greatest threats to the validity of an historical study—and to the credibility of its author—is posed by presentism. In the case of this project, my empathy for teachers and awareness of how their work is constrained by institutional limits on their authority informs my understanding of the problem. This awareness, however, should not shape my analysis of what teachers experienced in the 1930s. As an historical researcher, my responsibility is to interrogate the data according to the protocols described previously, and regularly reflect upon the extent to which my existing assumptions shape my interpretation of the past. My aim, through memo writing, ongoing dialogue with my advisor, and strict attention and adherence to historical research protocols, is to ensure the data collection and analysis processes are as transparent to readers as possible.

Additionally, it is important to attend to the role theory plays in influencing one’s historical reasoning. Writing in the May 2011 issue of the History of Education Quarterly, historian Roland Sintos Coloma frames the dilemma theory poses to historical researchers eloquently when he describes the “epistemological innocence of the history of education” (p. 184). Coloma calls for:

A self-reflexive historiography [that] traces the conditions and processes through which historians of education have become subjects who are trained within disciplinary orthodoxies and conventions, and subjects who work within and at times against them…[I]t locates our participation in knowledge construction and circulation as deeply
embedded in power relations, and highlights how dynamics of power shape what we produce and what counts as knowledge.” (pp. 184-185)

In relation to this research, it has been important for me to remain aware of my biases and take steps to understand, and if necessary mitigate, their influence on this work. I must simultaneously acknowledge the theoretical framework underlying this study (critical theory) contains its own “baggage.” As Coloma suggests, imbued within every theory is a set of assumptions and understandings which drive researchers toward certain conclusions or which promote a certain kind of reasoning. In privileging some theories, others are naturally excluded. In social science and historical research, the researcher’s challenge is to acknowledge and make explicit that his or her interpretation is one of many possible interpretations of a phenomenon.

Reflective memos have allowed me to assess threats of presentism throughout the research process. They provided a mechanism for exploring both the possibilities and limitations of critical theory in relation to historical research. It was through the process of memo writing I learned to draw important borders around my study. These borders allow me to see both the limitations of this (or any) study, as well as the opportunities it raises for additional research.

**Avoiding bias.** This study utilizes techniques from qualitative methodologies used in social science research to be reflexive about bias and ensure transparency at each stage of the research process. The first technique is the practice of writing research memos. In this task, the researcher tracks and records his or her evolving ideas in an effort to understand the topic better (Maxwell, 2005). In this way, the research memo serves as a tool for reflecting on, synthesizing, and ultimately analyzing the data the researcher collects.

Another technique researchers utilize is the expert check. As an educational historian and the advisor for this thesis, Dr. Alan Stoskopf reviews my use of data and applications of theory
to ensure the proper use of qualitative historical research protocols. We discuss the extent to which I use primary source materials appropriately in developing historical understanding of the research question and how effectively I have situated my findings within a broader social and historical context.

**Protection of human subjects.** Since the data sources I interrogated are primarily archives-based, and since it is reasonable to assume the participants in the Eight-Year Study summer workshop programs are in most cases no longer living, many of the ethical considerations posed by qualitative research do not apply to this project. Nevertheless, I successfully completed the NIH’s online certification and was approved to conduct this study by Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB).
Chapter 4: The Road to “Adventure in Education”

This chapter aims to orient the reader to the origins of the ideas that led to the creation of the PEA’s Eight-Year Study. The intent of this chapter is to draw the reader’s attention to certain intellectual and cultural crosscurrents associated with the early decades of the twentieth century, such as the mainstreaming of scientific thought, the emergence of the social sciences, and changing conceptions of progressivism. Each theme illuminates aspects of educational thinking at that time and in so doing provides the reader with a broader context in which to situate the findings and discussion presented in subsequent chapters.

The PEA’s “New Deal” for Education

On an April evening in 1919, a small group of lay people and educators gathered in Washington, D.C., at what would be the first meeting of the PEA (Graham, 1967). This group was bound together by the conviction that traditional education needed to change, and that experimentation was fundamentally important to that change. The Association was founded as a mechanism for promoting and supporting that experimentation (Graham, 1967).

Notably, but perhaps not surprisingly, the PEA was not invested in any particular progressive method or approach. It was not driven by a commitment to a particular group or educational vision, nor by the desire to ameliorate widespread educational ills. Rather, the progressive education movement after World War I was associated primarily with middle-class families interested in exposing their children to new educational thinking and practices (Graham, 3).

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3 Robert Havighurst, Director of the General Education Board, expressed surprise at the number of teachers who attended the PEA’s Southern New England Regional Conference in May, 1934, noting: “This was an unusual event, the first conference the PEA has held in New England. About 2000 teachers attended the meetings. The officers of the PEA are somewhat bewildered by the sudden popularity which the Association is enjoying. One explanation is that the general desire for a New Deal in various phases of American life has crystallized in the field of education about the PEA, which was the only organization available” (Havighurst, 1934).
In her 1967 history of the PEA, Graham described the movement after the First World War as having:

manifested itself…in private schools or in public schools in comfortable suburbs;
the pupils were well-brushed children of the middle or upper middle classes…These parents were positively not interested in free hot lunch programs, vocational training, or hygiene instruction for personal cleanliness. They were, however, impressed by the new psychology and social studies. Educators' talk about child-centeredness, individual expression, and creativity caught their ear, and they liked what they heard. These were the areas of educational reform they wished to see extended in their children's schools, and in large measure they achieved this objective. (Graham, 1967, pp. 8-9)

As the PEA grew in membership and influence, it became more difficult to define its core principles, especially considering the scientific and child-centered progressive perspectives were seemingly more irreconcilable than ever. In 1928, John Dewey accepted the honorary presidency of the PEA, and as Graham (1967) speculated, this symbolic connection to the child-centered, pedagogically-progressive perspective may have fueled this dualism between educational science and philosophy even more. Still, there were those who recognized the danger in this dichotomous thinking and warned the PEA to embrace a more holistic notion of progressivism. In a speech to the Association in 1928, Patty Smith Hill of Teachers College, Columbia University, urged the PEA to abandon the thinking that had led many to believe a child-centered, Deweyan approach was irreconcilable with evidence-based, scientific approaches to teaching and learning. “From my point of view,” Professor Hill wrote, “these two great movements are not irreconcilable, and if we can
utilize the contribution from both, great good will come to education and to the children in our care” (Graham, 1967, p. 35).

This reconciliation of perspectives for which Hill and others advocated never quite occurred within the PEA; as the next chapters describe, the experiments which the PEA had been created to promote and support ultimately bore the mark of these ongoing debates about the meaning and purpose of progressive education.

**Between the Extremes: The PEA Attempts to Clarify its Purpose**

The PEA took steps at certain times throughout the 1920s and early 1930s to articulate a single, comprehensive statement of its philosophical and social orientation. This need for clarity of purpose was undoubtedly influenced to some degree by the economic depression in the early 1930s. The stock market crash in November of 1929 had been a wake-up call that caused the PEA, like many other institutions, to look inward.

The ensuing decade was one of enormous ideological flux for the PEA. Its ambivalence toward its own principles was further fueled by Columbia professor George S. Counts’s 1932 address at the Association’s annual meeting in which he challenged the Association to overcome its philosophical inertia, and promote and advocate for social change in the schools. The PEA found itself philosophically divided between those who believed it should adopt the socially reconstructive stance for which Counts had advocated, and those who believed it could do more good by focusing energy and attention on curricular reconstruction in the secondary schools. This divide would remain at the forefront of the association’s collective conscience well into the 1930s. The 1936 Report of the PEA Business Manager and Editor captures the ongoing soul-searching:

How far can we go, then, into the social-economic arena? Where do we stand on such
matters as teacher tenure? On teachers’ unions? … We advocate world peace and there are scores of other organizations advocating it also. But their theories regarding the method by which it may be attained range from complete military preparedness to complete resistance to any form of preparedness and any personal involvement. And between the extremes are the classic fifty-seven varieties of theories and advocated methods. Which specific one does the Association hold and advocate?... All of [these queries] involve a social philosophy, some of them have been asked of the Editor as a representative of the Association, and all of them would furnish material at least for editorial comment were the Association’s social philosophy clarified. (Foster, 1936, pp. 3–4)

By the mid to late 1930s, this question of how far the PEA ought to delve into political and social advocacy had become more than a purely philosophical one; it had grown to encompass larger concerns over the PEA’s enduring value as the voice of progressive education in a risk-averse age. Thus, while Counts’s challenge to the PEA to articulate a social philosophy was originally framed as a moral imperative, many within the association had come to understand it also as a means for preserving the PEA’s relevance and legitimacy in the eyes of the larger educational community. Given the difficulty it had around clarifying a common purpose and vision, it is not surprising that many of the PEA’s initiatives and activities embodied these challenges.

The Eight-Year Study serves as an important example of how the PEA’s philosophical ambivalence played out, specifically in relation to what it meant to be a progressive teacher. As Chapter 5 aims to show, the PEA’s quest to define its own mission also became the challenge taken up by the Thirty Schools. With each school charged with the task of clarifying its broader
aims and educational philosophy, many of the participating teachers found themselves suddenly vested with a share of responsibility for shaping the future direction of school, and perhaps secondary education more generally. For many teachers, this created a fundamental shift in what was understood to be their role as teacher; furthermore, it required them to draw upon qualities of self typically underutilized, if not ignored, in their professional lives. As Kridel and Bullough pointed out in *Stories of the Eight-Year Study* (2007), the open invitation to experiment with new ideas and shape their school’s future direction would prove challenging for many of the participating teachers: “Many of the teachers needed assistance to reimagine themselves as scholars and academics and to change habitual ways of thinking about instruction and learning. Their faith in experimentation and their confidence in themselves and others as being capable of directing reform would have to grow” (p. 190). As discussed in the next chapters, if these transformations were to persist into the future, the institutional culture and social expectations surrounding the role of the teacher would also need to shift in equally significant ways. Instead, the PEA’s Summer Workshops and other, in-service activities and resources provided to participating teachers stirred them to envision new horizons for their work, but stopped short of fundamentally changing the broader professional realities of teaching in the 1930s.

**Origins of the PEA’s Eight-Year Study**

The Eight-Year Study was the first, and perhaps most significant, research endeavor undertaken by the PEA in its 36-year history (Cremin, 1964). Noting the pressing need for curricular change at the high school level, in the fall of 1930 the PEA established the Commission on the Relation of School and College (CRSC). The purpose of the Commission was to investigate the areas in which curricular reconstruction were most needed. In what foreshadows the Study’s own multi-disciplinary approaches, and at times, its seemingly eclectic
sense of purpose, the Commission was comprised of 26 members including teachers and administrators from both high school and college levels, educational philosophers, nonteaching educational experts, and journalists (Aikin, 1942).

After two years of investigation, the Commission produced a report documenting the areas of secondary education in greatest need of re-examination in light of significant societal changes in recent decades. Within this report, two interconnected concerns stood out and shaped the Study’s initial focus. The first issue highlighted high school curriculum was not well suited to the needs of contemporary high school students. As Wilford Aikin, chairman of the Commission, wrote: “Young people wanted to get ready to earn a living, to understand themselves, to learn how to get on with others, to become responsible members of the adult community, to find meaning in living. The curriculum seldom touched upon such genuine problems of living” (Aikin, 1942, p. 7). This last point, Aikin and the members of the Commission concluded, needed to change.

The second issue centered on the Commission’s discovery that those students who graduated from high school and went on to pursue a college education were, by and large, ill-prepared to succeed there. As Aikin noted, most high school graduates were unable to “express themselves effectively either in speech or writing…” (Aikin, 1942, p. 8), and were found to be “without long-range purpose, without vocational preparation, without that discipline which comes through self-direction, and without having discovered for themselves something which gives meaning to living” (Aikin, 1942, p. 10).

Based on its findings, the Commission proposed an experimental study that would focus on two primary goals: (1) developing a cooperative relationship between secondary schools and colleges that would allow for and encourage curricular revision at the secondary level; and (2)
identifying through experimentation the ways in which high schools could be reorganized to better serve students’ needs (Aikin, 1942). Critical to the Study’s success would be the identification and selection of secondary schools willing to experiment with progressive education, and colleges and universities willing to adapt their criteria for admission to accommodate the applicants from these experimental schools.

In 1932, the Committee petitioned over 300 accredited colleges and universities to lift their subject and unit entrance requirements and College Entrance Board Examinations for those students in the participating secondary schools who would enter college in 1936. All but four Ivy League men’s colleges agreed to all the requirements; four Ivies refused to waive the College Entrance Board Examinations. In tandem with this effort, the Commission’s Directing Committee sought to include a cross section of U.S. secondary schools to participate in the Study. Large and small, urban and suburban, public and private schools were recruited; but above all else, the Committee’s primary consideration was that each of the participating schools be inclined toward experimentation and open to change (Aikin, 1942). By 1933, a total of 30 schools from Los Angeles, CA, to Newton, MA, had been selected for the Study, and ultimately 29 of them would complete it.5

4 Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and Haverford did not agree to lift the College Entrance Board Examinations, though they agreed to the other Study criteria (Aikin, 1942).
5 Pelham Manor withdrew from the EYS in 1936 (Aikin, 1942).
An experiment in in-service professional development. As Frederick Redefer (1952), executive secretary and director of the PEA from 1932-1943, described it nearly a decade later, the EYS was an attempt to produce changes in practices that improved secondary education without jeopardizing a student’s chances of going on to college. In a sense, it was the PEA’s attempt to offer “proof of concept” for progressive education. Though the changes to which Redefer referred involved teaching practice, school organization, and curriculum, the PEA was careful not to dictate what these changes were nor how they ought to come about. Instead, they argued these decisions were better left to each school to decide for itself. It was through its summer workshops, conferences, and school visits from curriculum consultants the PEA committed to offering its guidance—not direction—to the Thirty Schools. These professional development approaches underscored the PEA’s own commitment to experimentation; instead of promoting one-size-fits-all paths to change, they opted instead to create opportunities where teachers could examine problems from their own practice, and use these as guideposts for curricular and pedagogical enhancements. As one EYS curriculum consultant described it:

Most curriculum consultants and directors of curriculum laboratories work in terms of their own philosophies, assumptions, hypotheses, and frames of reference. The members of the Staff of the Eight-Year Study were to go to each school on the basis of invitation only and to work with that school on its problems in the light of its philosophy, with due regard to the extent of progress in its educational thinking. The only authority the staff

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6 While at Teachers College, Columbia University, Frederick Redefer completed a doctoral dissertation in 1952 examining the extent to which certain schools sustained and/or expanded upon the experimental programs they developed as part of the EYS.

7 For more on the PEA’s vision of the “new program” of progressive education, see especially PEA Commission on Relation of Schools and Colleges (1933) Bennington Conference Papers No. 6, pp. 1-2, in which the PEA described certain desirable objectives which the schools were encouraged to articulate in their individual plans.
members would have would be the persuasiveness of their criticism and the worth of their ideas. There was never any *ex officio* influence to bolster them, or any *ex cathedra* weight to their pronouncements. (Giles et al., 1942, p. xix)

This freedom given to teachers to define the scope and nature of change within their own schools was, in itself, somewhat radical for the 1930s. The substance, methods, and materials of teaching were typically defined by principals and superintendents, and in some cases, members of school boards who possessed little, if any, direct connection to education (Beale, 1936).

Existing in-service training in the form of summer institutes, Saturday programs, and afternoon or half-day courses during the school year was designed to enable teachers to fulfill certification or advanced degree requirements, but these activities provided little help to teachers interested in enhancing their practice or exploring solutions to specific challenges (Collins, 1940). In recognizing these shortcomings and promoting a model focused squarely on the needs of teachers, the Study was developing a new kind of in-service professional development that reflected the teacher’s important role in a progressive education.

*“Neither Gospel nor Method”: Defining Progressive Teaching*

As discussed in the following chapters, the PEA’s mandate to experiment assumed much about the role of the teacher, the institutional realities of public schooling, and the attitudes and beliefs held by the general public in relation to curriculum and teaching. As the Study got underway, it became clear these assumptions were not always compatible with the realities of what the job entailed, and the broader institutional and cultural environments in which teachers, administrators, and students operated. Further, these assumptions reveal much about how progressive teachers and Study leaders understood the role of the teacher, as well as the extent to which a teacher’s capabilities, life experiences, and sensibilities were counted among
professional assets.

The PEA was clear improving secondary education depended to a large extent upon the teachers’ ability to effectively implement new curriculum—a task they argued required nothing short of the “reeducation” of teachers (PEA, ca. 1937, p. 1). The assertion that teachers should be re-educated suggests a belief among some progressives existing teacher training failed to prepare teachers for the work of progressive teaching. Yet, despite the clarity of this criticism, progressive teaching remained an elusive notion, even to those most closely connected to it. As the notes from a meeting of the PEA’s Commission on Secondary School Curriculum in 1935 attest, Katharine Taylor, principal of the Winsor School in Boston, MA, admitted “she did not know what ‘teaching progressively’ is…It seems to her that she knows negatively that it is ‘neither a gospel nor a method’… She thinks of the present task, not in the sense of one committee handing formula to another, but as an exchange of experiences...It seems to require trying again and again” (PEA Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, 1935, p. 29).

As Chapter 5 discusses, the work of the Commissions compelled Study participants to reexamine not only what was taught, but how the roles of teachers, administrators, and students would need to evolve in order to effect change in schools. As Burton Fowler, Director of the Tower Hill School in Delaware, noted during the third annual conference of the Eight-Year Study in 1935, “we face a paradoxical situation…we cannot have a fixed curriculum, and yet we must have definite goals; and the teacher must not be rigid, but still she must not be uncertain” (PEA, 1935). As the Study pressed on, the enormous complexity of what the PEA was attempting to achieve became increasingly clear, while the original aims of the Study became somewhat muddied. At the center of this stood the teacher who, as we shall see, ultimately embodied many of these paradoxes.
Chapter 5: Report of Research Findings

This research asks: *In what ways does the PEA’s summer workshop program contribute to our historical understanding of what it meant to be a “progressive” teacher in the 1930s?*

Based on a review of primary source materials related to the Eight-Year Study in general, and to the PEA’s summer workshop program in particular, in addition to an examination of the broader context in which these activities occurred, three central findings have emerged. In explaining each, a variety of perspectives are presented — from the teachers who developed and implemented new curricular content and pedagogical techniques, to the social scientists and other, nonteaching educational experts who consulted on this work.

Within each finding the reader will perceive important nuances among how these different groups conceived of the purpose of education, the role of teachers and nonteaching experts, and the dispositions and backgrounds thought best suited to progressive teaching. The evidence presented suggests there is both harmony and dissonance across these varied perspectives.

This chapter is organized to include an explanation of the findings and key themes related to each, followed by an exploration of these themes in relation to the individuals and/or groups whom they represent.
Finding #1: The PEA progressives identified certain personal and intellectual traits as intrinsic to progressive teaching and used the EYS summer workshop program as a means for developing these traits in teachers. The nature and variety of reactions to the workshops suggest what the PEA considered intrinsic was for many teachers a new or different way of conceiving of their work.

A review of journal articles written by PEA members, as well as conference reports, speeches, curriculum material from teacher training programs, seminar transcripts, internal PEA memos and correspondence, and in the final published report on the EYS, suggest the PEA saw a connection between an individual’s broad knowledge and life experience and that individual’s aptitude for progressive teaching (Appendix A).

Further, these source materials highlight other qualities and dispositions the PEA believed were important to progressive teaching. The extended contact between teachers and PEA staff during the six-week, residential summer workshop program provides a setting for examining the extent to which teachers and PEA staff viewed these traits as important.

**PEA Perspectives**

The PEA’s summer workshops could be interpreted as an outgrowth of the Association’s beliefs about what progressive teaching meant and the type of person best suited for the job. In the early days of the Study, Wilford Aikin observed, “[A] very different sort of secondary school teacher is needed...hose preparing for a career in teaching would be best served by broadening their interests and life experiences, rather than deepening their subject-matter expertise” (PEA Commission on Relation of Schools and Colleges, 1933b, p. 3). The PEA’s Committee on the Education of Teachers echoed this sentiment the following year when it called for the “broadening or extension of teacher education in terms of travel, contacts with industry, social
and political participation, [and] creative expression” (PEA National Committee on the Education of Teachers, 1934, p. 7).

**Ability to relate to students.** According to the PEA, rich and varied life experiences equipped a teacher with a wide knowledge base; in turn, this contributed to an ability to enact certain experimental teaching methods. In Volume II of the final report on the EYS, the PEA draws numerous connections between life experience and certain other qualities and dispositions desirable in a teacher. Some of these included a capacity for self-awareness, a sense of adventure, and an enhanced ability to relate to students.  

This ability to relate to students is easily demonstrated by the unique relationship between students and faculty at the Ohio State University (OSU) Laboratory School. By virtue

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8 This importance of a teacher’s broad range of experiences and knowledge appears throughout the PEA’s second published volume on the Eight-Year Study, entitled *Adventure in American Education Vol. II: Exploring the Curriculum* (1942), and is referenced most frequently in Chapter VII: GROWTH BY TEACHERS: ON THE JOB. For example, it is observed “[teachers] must have faith that…every bit of special knowledge, ability, and interest which the teacher has can be used to an even greater degree in a dynamic, life-problem approach to learning than it can within narrow subject-matter boundaries. To repeat, teachers with such faith will live their professional lives creatively and devotedly” (Giles et al, 1942, p. 212). The report also highlights the connection between a teacher’s broad experience and overall perspective on life, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and to be self-critical: “Among the characteristics that help make teachers grow personally and professionally is the sense of values, the perspective that comes through the stimulation of *broad experience*”…Along with the freeing of the adventurous spirit, the varied experience in meeting the demands of many situations can make a substantial contribution to the development of perspective and constructive self criticism” (Giles et al, 1942, pp. 217-218). Finally, the report highlights a direct correlation between the teacher’s ability to express oneself creatively and the ability to effectively carry out certain methods of progressive teaching: “Especially does the teacher grow if he himself works with the materials in a creative way. For example, photography as a hobby has brought new insight into learning and creating...which...may result in greatly broadened experience for teachers” (Giles et al, 1942, p. 244). “The teacher who loves poetry and drama has a larger contribution to make than one who sees in literature only a subject for superficial analysis. The teacher who is physically active and who plays games has a larger equipment for understanding his active and fun-loving pupils. The teacher who mingles easily with all kinds of people and is unafraid of life can bring a real meaning to the investigation of the problem of human relationships” (Giles et al, 1942, p. 258).
of the number of OSU faculty who were closely involved in PEA research initiatives,⁹ the OSU Lab School can be seen as a representation of PEA values.

In *Were We Guinea Pigs?*—a book written and published by the OSU Lab School’s senior class as part of a collaborative project—students described the broadness and variety of their teachers’ interests and backgrounds:

Our faculty is a very unusual collection of teachers… One gentleman spends his summers paddling around Europe in a canoe. One of our married couples spends the summers in an art colony in the wilds of Massachusetts. A mathematics teacher makes musical instruments out of everything from prehistoric bones to modern glass. (Ohio State University Laboratory School Class of 1938, 1938, p. 16)

Students further noted feelings of honesty, equity and mutual trust they developed between themselves and faculty—feelings that seemed to define the culture of the OSU Lab School. Students were well aware of the uniqueness of these relationships, observing, “[a]ll young people may have teachers, but we have teacher-friends…” and “[teachers] gladly discuss with us our problems and we are interested in theirs.” (OSU Class of 1938, 1938, p. 20)

The view that a teacher’s life experience and breadth of knowledge could enhance the quality of relationships with students is also reflected in the comments of aspiring teachers attending progressive teacher programs. A transcript of a PEA-sponsored discussion between William Heard Kilpatrick and students at Northwestern University is consistent with this theme. One student observed, “the object of the teacher is to help the student learn to adjust to his life,

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⁹ Among the prominent OSU education faculty who also served in positions of leadership within the PEA were: Boyd Bode, member of the Commission on Relation of Schools and College Directing Committee; Ralph Tyler, Director of the EYS Evaluation Staff; and Harold Alberty, curriculum associate, Commission on the Relation of Schools and Colleges.
and the only way the teacher can be competent to do that is to learn how to adjust himself to life. The only way he can do that is to have a knowledge of life and become adjusted to life himself” (PEA, 1937b, p. 233). Echoing a similar sentiment, another student remarked teachers ought to be “very broad minded and understanding of human nature, so that they are able to tell or to read what [the students’] interests are... [and] so that they can recognize any little trait of interest, and so that they can enlarge that” (Progressive Education Association, 1937b, p. 197).

The perspectives of these preservice teachers bear a striking resemblance to ones written by in-service teachers who participated in the PEA’s workshops. After meeting for six weeks during the 1938 Western Workshop, the physical education curriculum group reported on the guiding beliefs that had shaped its work:

The [aspiring teacher] should learn how to determine normal development for each child as a distinct entity, how to observe and interpret symptomatic behavior, how to learn what is inherent in the physical education program which alters behavior, and how to set up situations that will bring about desirable changes. He must know not only the nature of the individuals with whom he will deal and their needs, but must know himself and his needs. He should be given every opportunity under skillful guidance to analyze his strengths and weaknesses in educational background and in personality. (PEA Physical Education Group, 1938, p. 45)

Also notable in this short excerpt are the perspectives these teachers had regarding teacher abilities. For example, these teachers made an explicit connection between the ability to distinguish “normal development” from “symptomatic behavior[s]” and subsequently use this understanding to enrich instructional and evaluation practice. Foreshadowing a theme explored in Finding #2, the notion that a teacher’s role was, in part, to foster “desirable changes” (PEA
Physical Education Group, 1938, p. 45) in individual students suggests the teacher carried a certain amount of responsibility for the psychosocial development of students. Understood within the PEA’s broader views on progressive teaching, this suggests some teachers believed certain types of knowledge could help them connect in meaningful ways with students.

**Leveraging experience for progressive teaching.** To gain a clearer picture of how a broad frame of reference might support one’s teaching practice, certain progressive teaching models are instructive. Core teaching is a particularly salient example, as several of the Thirty Schools—including those in Tulsa, Boston and Denver—either implemented or expanded their core programs during the Eight-Year Study (Progressive Education Association, 1943).

Echoing Deweyan notions of the teacher as a guide and the school as a microcosm of society, the core curriculum was organized around “problems of living” rather than around discrete subject areas (Aikin, 1942). Under this scheme, borders between subjects were considered artificial at best; thus in lieu of learning individual subjects, students were encouraged to focus on first identifying, then investigating certain topics or themes that reflected their social experience. Conducted in collaboration with peers and teachers, this exploration of themes was aimed at developing learners’ capacity to think broadly and flexibly, and to solve problems creatively.

Much like the notion of progressive teaching—the core method reflected certain underlying assumptions about what the schools ought to teach, but it stopped short of dictating how it should be taught. Fundamentally, core teaching meant teachers helped students discover meaningful connections across disparate subject areas or topics, but exactly how this method was implemented varied from one school to the next. At Central High School in Tulsa, OK, for example, the core method took the form of a “block” period where students engaged in a Social
Relations course. Working together, students and teachers defined problems relevant to students’ lives emerging from these themes. During the two-hour block period, they studied these problems from various subject area perspectives (*Life* magazine, 1942, p. 81; Progressive Education Association, 1943, p. 644). Though teachers from the subject areas provided guidance, students and teachers collaboratively determined what specific approaches would be used to investigate them. In her annual report to the PEA on progress at Central High School, Lavone Hanna, an instructor in social studies, described the larger aims of the block period. In this example, students were examining the theme of personal health:

> Both students and teachers were concerned not only with the functional information which students acquired concerning health but also with the attitudes which they were developing; the skills with which they could read and interpret data of all kinds; their ability to analyze problems, to collect and organize data, to draw sound generalizations, to apply social and scientific principles to new situations, to think critically, and to be aware of and willing to do something about social problems. (Progressive Education Association, 1943, p.645)

Each of the three teachers involved in this particular experiment shared responsibility not only for organizing and planning the course but for guiding and evaluating the 200 sophomores involved in it. By its very nature, this experiment compelled teachers to think beyond the narrow confines of a single unit of study within a particular subject area. As a curriculum associate would observe about the core approach as it was implemented in a different school:

> [I]t is possible now to see many classes where the English teacher puts considerable emphasis on a philosophy of life, logic, the drama of human existence, the interrelationship of people and things, and a great variety of sources of learning. This
plan achieves best results when it is used as part of a whole faculty effort to make education a continuous process from class to class and from year to year.” (Giles, 1941, p. 115)

Implicit in each of these examples are multiple assumptions about the teachers’ breadth of knowledge and ability to perceive larger connections and help students do the same, and their overall view of education as an integrated and continuous process. As Giles and his colleagues would further observe in Volume II of the final report of the EYS, progressive methods like core teaching required teachers to shift “from guide of a conducted tour to guide of a group of explorers” (Giles et al., 1942, p. 130). Even for those teachers who taught in schools bent toward experimentation, this required significant shifts in how teachers conceived of their role. As Edmund Day wrote, the “teacher no longer conceives his chief task to be the discovery of what a student doesn’t know”; rather, it was to provide “leadership, stimulation, and guidance… []he teacher and pupil are students together.” (PEA Commission on Relation of Schools and Colleges, 1935, p. 6).

**Teachers’ Perspectives**

For many teachers with traditional normal school training, focusing on the broader connections between discrete subject areas and relating learning to contemporary problems was a significant change not only in method of teaching, but also to their existing beliefs about the purposes of secondary education. The workshops were an attempt by the PEA to help teachers widen their existing conceptions of what progressive educational practice looked like and what their role in it was. Though the quantitative and qualitative data collected shortly after the
workshops suggest a majority of teachers found the experiences valuable, other evidence suggests some of the teachers who engaged in the workshops resisted experimentation and/or remained skeptical about the help offered to them by workshop staff. In other words, not all progressive teachers viewed themselves as the “creative adventurers” they were described as in Volume II of the Eight-Year Study’s final published report (Giles et al, 1942, p. 307). For example, some teachers dismissed the core approach as an educational fad or worse as a threat to students’ opportunities for future academic success. As one such wary teacher noted, what teachers needed instead was “real guidance in enriching instruction through teachers’ constantly growing in their own departmental fields and so sending into college better trained boys and girls in recognized academic fields” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 15). Yet, she complained, the EYS staff “works us away from mastery and respect for scholarship in curricular fields in favor of vague and out-reaching intangibles” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 15).11

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10 One PEA report entitled “Results of the Project” cites eight factors which, taken together, support the conclusion the workshop program had a positive and significant impact on participating schools and teachers. These factors included: (1) increasing demand from universities and colleges proposing to sponsor workshops without subsidy in exchange for guidance from the PEA; (2) “increased interest” in modeling “year-round” teacher education programs after the workshops; (3) the number of speeches about the efficacy of the workshop model delivered to prominent national educational organizations; (4) the number of published articles about the workshops in scholarly and/or professional publications; (5) the number of letters (approximately 70 individual and/or form letters per week over two years) inquiring about the availability of workshops; (6) annual distribution of publications related to the workshops; (7) growing demand for “experienced workshop staff” to facilitate summer programs; and (8) a growing number of faculty members (from both secondary and higher education institutions) trained to serve as workshop staff (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1940, pp. 89-90).

11 According to H. E. Hawkes, chairman of the Committee on the Evaluation Staff: “Following the meeting of the Commission [on the Relation of School and College] in Atlantic City on October 10, 1937, [a]…questionnaire was sent to each of the member schools. After a considerable time these questionnaires were all returned, with the exception of one school which did not reply to our letter. A summary of the replies from the schools is given [in the
The reluctance of some teachers to embrace new methods of teaching and/or evaluating students may also have reflected the practical realities and acute demands of teachers’ work. As one seasoned teacher observed:

[T]he majority of teachers whom I have interviewed have said that they are “fed up” on just inspiration. Broadened horizons without the supporting confidence in one’s ability to translate them into effective teaching and a knowledge of methods by which to do it are devastating to a teacher's security. There are many teachers who have come to suspect that people who write only inspirational materials do so because they cannot provide concrete suggestions. (Biddick, 1939, p. 10)

Echoing this point, some of the responses to a questionnaire sent in late 1937 to each participating school about the value of the evaluation program suggest a certain dissonance between the methods promoted by the Evaluation Staff, and teachers’ views on what they felt could be successfully implemented in their programs.

The report on the Evaluation Staff’s work was conducted as a means for ascertaining whether the PEA should pursue additional funds to sustain its work, and it was authored by two secondary school administrators and one faculty member at Columbia University, none of whom were directly involved with the Evaluation Staff. The report deems the Evaluation Staff’s work a success and advocates for its continuation, boasting 24 of the 29 EYS schools were actively making use of the materials they had developed with the Staff. Despite their final analysis, the report includes several comments from teachers and/or administrators who reveal not every participant found the Staff’s assistance valuable. For example, when asked to note any “serious

Committee’s Report]. We are also including, as a part of our report, more extended comments and criticisms which were received from certain of the schools. Some of these criticisms and comments are favorable and others are distinctly unfavorable. We are including them for the information of the Directing Committee” (Hawkes et al, 1938, n.p.).
disadvantages” related to their work with the EYS Evaluation Staff, one teacher admitted, “I’d like to use more of their tests in mathematics but do not want to sacrifice the other objectives at which I know I can arrive” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p.7).

For other teachers, these practical concerns were tinged with cynicism toward the PEA’s research agenda which, to some teachers, seemed at times to supersede its stated interest in helping them find solutions to practical problems. One teacher criticized what he or she perceived to be the Evaluation Staff’s attempts at mechanizing that which comes instinctively to many teachers in order to “make a compendium on the subject” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 8). Another warned, “If the administrators and teachers of good schools learn that the new plan can be worked only by a new type of teacher, trained by Ohio State experts and the products of ‘summer workshops’ where each teacher goes to work out his or her project with eager youthful guides, on the Lancastrian idea, there is not going to be enthusiasm for imitation or experiment” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 16). Echoing this sentiment, yet another teacher quipped, “The Evaluation Staff is one of the several instruments through which we are kept wholesomely less sure of ourselves” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 6).

These comments suggest some teachers found the PEA’s aspirations for progressive teaching unrealistic. It remains unclear from the source material what qualities were considered realistic by those who criticized the PEA’s more optimistic views of progressive teaching.

Staff Perspectives

Teachers’ perceived resistance to what some of them described as “vague and out-reaching intangibles” created dissonance among staff and study leaders who wanted teachers to think more broadly about the connections between subject areas, and teachers who wanted help with the more practical and/or technical aspects of teaching.
Evidence suggests that to certain workshop staff members and study leaders, teachers appeared unwilling, disinterested and at times incapable of making broader connections between what they were learning in the workshops and their own teaching practice. One workshop observer\textsuperscript{12} noted, “[T]oo many workshoppers have found [theoretical] discussions vaguely stimulating and have gone feverishly from one to the other, never attempting to tie these discussions up to their own classroom and community situations” (Rhind, 1940, p. 2). Another staff member posited teachers were unfamiliar with how to bridge the gap between theory and the day-to-day work of teaching: “[T]eachers participating in workshops] were frequently concerned with their lack of understanding as to how their previous knowledge and their newly-acquired knowledge of child psychology and educational philosophy could be applied to practical classroom situations” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939, p. 11). In yet another consultant’s estimation, teachers seemed disinterested in broadening their intellectual horizon: “[A]lmost universally I got the feeling that [teachers] were looking for methods of turning the crank and getting some results that someone could apply a test to. They weren’t at all interested in doing anything down inside to the teacher, that job was finished” (Furnas, 1939, n.p.).

The comments of certain school administrators seem at times to echo the criticisms voiced by Study staff. Some administrators were quick to blame teachers’ resistance to experimentation on risk aversion and/or an unwillingness to be challenged. In the same article in which he praised the group of English teachers who had implemented the core method, Giles reported that overall, “[a]dministrators complain that…the teachers are unwilling to step out

\textsuperscript{12} Flora Rhind of the General Education Board visited six workshops, three of which (Denver, Los Angeles, and Claremont) were cosponsored by the PEA Workshop Committee and the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education (ACE). At Mills College, the arts in education phase of the workshop program was sponsored by the PEA.
from their conventional, habitual, and, therefore, easier patterns” (Giles, 1941, p. 121). Flora Cooke, headmaster of Chicago’s progressive Park School, captured the essence of this thinking in her remarks before the Graduate Teachers College of Winnetka in 1934 in which she stated:

…any teacher who has the right to teach the young must have a surplus, a reservoir of interests and alluring pursuits which there is never time enough to enjoy. He may not use it at all in every day work. It is this surplus which keeps him from becoming thin-lipped, subject to narrow and opinionated thinking, a self-righteous disease to which pedagogues seem to fall easy victim. (Cooke, 1934, p. 4).

**Resistance to Experimentation: Varied Interpretations**

Beyond the many interpretations as to the root of teachers’ mindset toward experimentation, in the second volume of the final report on the EYS, the PEA acknowledged whether a teacher embraced new curricular experiences with an open mind or focused narrowly on enhancing tried and true techniques, the choice lay somewhat beyond the teacher. Accordingly, an open-minded teacher with considerable life experience may still choose a “safe” route if the working environment fails to recognize and leverage these qualities:

Many schoolteachers are using techniques that are traditional, respectable, and repressive rather than stimulating to learning. Why? Because those teachers were taught by those methods, because they are rated by their success in using those methods, because it is easier and safer to repeat time-hallowed mistakes than to blaze new trails and suffer the hardships of the pioneer… (Giles et al., 1942, p. 103)

Again and again, able teachers have been frustrated by being challenged to develop new ideas without having the authority to put them into practice. In some instances, teachers with suggestions to offer have even been denied opportunity to make them heard
effectively. It does not take long for such frustration to convince the teacher that formulating new ideas is wasted effort. (Giles et al., 1942, p. 249)

C. L. Cushman, Director of Research and Curriculum for the Denver Public Schools, echoed this criticism in his preface to a resource guide for Workshop participants written by Mildred Biddick, a Denver public school teacher\(^\text{13}\) in 1939. Cushman pointed out that, despite the significant money spent developing new curricular materials every year, there have been no formal efforts to understand what value these materials have for teachers, how they are used in the classroom, or how teachers feel they might be improved. Put simply, teachers’ perspectives on matters of curriculum and pedagogy were typically ignored.

Biddick’s comments nuance this theme of teacher resistance even further by drawing attention to the differences between new and veteran teachers. “Inexperienced teachers,” she writes “are usually searching desperately for definite materials and methods upon which to rely while they are building up confidence in their ability to ‘handle’ their pupils. Many new teachers have shown by their remarks that they find a sense of security in textbooks, in definitely prescribed courses of study, or in workbooks with day-to-day assignments” (Biddick, 1939, p. 6). Almost as a matter of habit, Biddick explained, teachers continuously seek security instead of attempting to grow in their craft.

By contrast, Biddick observed, experienced teachers derived more “stimulus” from direct contact with other teachers, students, or from teaching in a different subject area (Biddick, 1939, p. 6). Most are open to new ideas, but the extent of this openness tends to be somewhat

\(^{13}\) According to a report to the GEB made by the PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service in 1940, when she began her work with teachers in PEA workshops, Mildred Biddick was an English and social studies instructor at Baker Jr. High School in Denver, CO. She was later promoted to Coordinator of General Education for Denver Public Schools (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1940).
dependent upon the nature of their school environment and whether it is one conducive to experimentation. Fittingly, writing to workshoppers involved in developing new curriculum materials she advised:

If you are writing for teachers who have a great deal of flexibility of program and where there is sympathy with experimental procedures, you will find, as one teacher said to me, ‘As we get more freedom in school set-up, I wonder if we won’t decide that nothing is impossible.’ If, however, you are writing for teachers who are in a more rigid, traditional situation, or for both groups, you must see that your material suggests ways in which teachers can work within those limitations. (pp. 7-8)

The role of school culture. As Biddick observed, experimentation was to a large extent dependent upon the environment in which teachers functioned. Teachers from large progressive school systems like those in Denver, CO, and Tulsa, OK, for example, entered the Eight-Year Study already accustomed to curricular experimentation. Joyce Saunders,\(^\text{14}\) who was employed by Central High School (CHM) in Tulsa from 1936 until her retirement in 1974 (Ballard, 2009), recalled in 2011 CHM had been involved in experimental education and collaborative teacher planning even before the Eight-Year Study. Indeed, \textit{Life} magazine recognized the Tulsa system as one of the most progressive in the country, chronicling some of the same experiments teachers evolved during the EYS in a seven-page photographic essay (\textit{Life} magazine, 1942).

Saunders recalled each of the seven teachers from Tulsa public schools who attended the 1937 summer workshop in Bronxville, NY, noting each was a member of the curriculum committee. Given the lack of state mandates over curriculum in the 1930s, this committee

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\(^{14}\) Joyce Saunders (1909-2012) was the first female to hold an administrative role at the secondary level in the Tulsa public school system. Saunders received her Master’s degree from Columbia University in 1936 and taught for five years. She then served as office manager, and later as an assistant principal until her retirement in 1976 (Ballard, 2009).
maintained significant input into the curriculum. Saunders remarked on the extensive amount of interactions between Tulsa teachers and administrators and described it as not uncommon for teachers to attend workshops in large groups (of 10-12). The expenses for these trips were often paid for or subsidized by the school system.

A number of the Tulsa teachers and administrators who participated in the EYS and/or attended the PEA workshops became recognized leaders in their fields. Several were asked to return to the workshops as staff members, while others held teaching posts in a variety of university settings including Stanford and Harvard (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1940). Lavone Hanna, a social studies and history teacher at CHM who attended the 1937 and 1938 workshops, returned as workshop staff in 1940. Hanna’s career continued to evolve and she eventually became a Professor of Education at San Francisco State College and the author of two books, both published in 195515.

Not all schools enjoyed the benefits of a supportive administration and collaborative faculty during the study, nor did they leave the study and return to schools that embraced experimentation. In fact, faculty turnover in all of the Thirty Schools since the Study’s end had been significant and only handful of faculty members who had participated remained (Redefer, 1952, p. 11). One school cited a lack of administrative support as a significant factor inhibiting the progress of its experimental programs in the decade following the Study, leading Redefer to conclude, “[I]his raises many questions about the ‘power concept’ associated with administrative titles and positions and it raises many questions about the independence of teachers, even when they have actively participated in planning the new curriculum…” (Redefer, 1952, p. 76).

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Evidence suggests there were many external barriers to experimentation that were often woven into the fabric of the school and/or the community in which the school resided. Unsupportive administrators, parent and public backlash, and broader societal restrictions on teachers all conspired to limit the amount of freedom teachers had—not only in relation to their classrooms and curricula, but often in terms of their private lives. The PEA believed restrictions on teachers were violations of academic freedom and worked throughout the mid-1930s to clarify its specific role in helping to ameliorate these problems.\footnote{For example, in late 1934, Frederick Redefer, Executive Secretary of the PEA, organized a meeting of the leaders of various national organizations to address the “complex and difficult problem of academic freedom” in the schools (Redefer, 1934). The goals of these meetings according to Redefer were to “discuss policies … and outline a plan of action which will aid in the protection of elementary and secondary teachers” (Redefer, 1934). In response, Bode, having recently finished an article for a special volume of Social Frontiers on the topic of indoctrination, enclosed a draft of his essay in which he wrote: “The teacher has the right to resist all demands which may be made upon him that subject matter shall be so taught as to safeguard special interest or special points of view. He has the right to organize his work, within the larger frame-work of the actual program, so as to promote initiative and the capacity for independent judgment. He has the right to develop the implications of the democratic point of view in its bearing on social organization and traditional attitudes and beliefs” (Bode, 1935, pp. 5-6). These statements suggest at least some prominent members of the PEA actively sought to clarify a progressive position on teachers and academic freedom.}

As the Tulsa example suggests, teachers in some of the public and private schools involved in the EYS enjoyed more freedom and support from their communities and school administrations than many other U.S. schools during this same period. The PEA was deliberate in its efforts to make the workshop environment one in which teachers were not simply permitted but actively encouraged to express their beliefs and attempt new things. As one participant described them, the workshops provided an “atmosphere of freedom, the opportunity to talk things over informally, the chance to point your activities in the direction of your own needs, the stimulation of meeting people who are frontiersmen in their fields” (PEA Committee on...
Workshops and Field Service, 1939, pp. 5-6). As Finding 3 suggests, it created this atmosphere based on a number of elements aimed at humanizing the learning process for teachers.

Whether a teacher resisted experimentation because of complacency, low self-confidence, habit, or myriad other reasons, it is clear administrators, teachers and EYS staff all considered the specific environment in which a teacher worked, and the extent to which experimentation was valued in that environment, to be a factor in whether teachers embraced experimentation. There was little parity between the summer workshop environment and the school environment in which some teachers worked. The PEA provided a professional development experience that was enriching and empowering, but most teachers returned to a school community and/or social context where they received different messages.

**Summary of Key Learnings from Finding #1:**

This finding reveals the following points:

- According to PEA progressives, one’s broad life experience was more valuable to one’s teaching practice than was one’s subject-matter expertise.

- The growing field of psychology profoundly influenced certain conceptions about the role of a progressive teacher. For instance, some PEA and GEB leaders believed progressive teachers should be able to identify and respond effectively to the emerging developmental needs of adolescents.

- Progressive teaching approaches such as the core method required teachers’ active participation in, and collaboration around, curriculum-making. Neither of these expectations was typically associated with traditional teaching practice.
• Some participating teachers preferred concrete suggestions on how to improve their teaching practice to the abstract/theoretical observations about teaching and learning the curriculum staff tended to provide.

• Some workshop staff members interpreted teachers’ reluctance or difficulty in examining the relationship between theory and practice as an act of resistance to change or as passive acceptance of the status quo.

• The PEA acknowledged certain circumstances external to the teacher (e.g., amount of prior experience in the field or the level of support for experimentation received from school administration) impacted the teacher’s attitude toward experimentation.

Finding #2: Emerging scholarly fields such as adolescent psychology and sociology profoundly influenced how PEA progressives understood the role of a classroom teacher. The PEA promoted certain values (e.g., research and scholarship) through its workshop program, viewing them as part of a progressive teacher’s work. Many participating teachers had not previously conceived of their role in this way.

The belief a teacher’s role was inherently multifaceted resides at the core of this finding. According to my research, many progressives believed the best teachers were those who possessed highly specialized skill sets and sensibilities—some of which were borrowed from other professional disciplines, such as psychology and sociology.

An understanding of the PEA’s focus on adolescent psychology during this period provides readers with the broader context for some of the specific approaches to teacher development catalyzed by the Eight-Year Study. For some teachers, these approaches raised questions about the basis of their work; that is, it compelled some teachers to examine how their
work might connect to and reflect larger theoretical and/or scientific notions about how adolescents learn and grow. Similarly, the workshops raised questions about how teachers could contribute their own knowledge and experience to emerging research in adolescent psychology, and in so doing become active and important participants in scholarly research.

**PEA Perspectives**

EYS progressives placed a high value on a teacher’s ability to identify the composite needs of students at each stage of adolescent development. Further, they believed teachers should demonstrate the sensitivity, and possess the skills needed to affect positively each student’s development.

This preoccupation with the psychological and emotional development of adolescents no doubt reflects the education community’s interest in the psychology of the adolescent. The early twentieth century work of behavioral psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall and Edward Thorndike helped establish the concept of adolescence as a unique and scientifically predictable phase of human development. By the third decade of the twentieth century, a confluence of factors, including the economic depression and its devastating impact on the job prospects for high school graduates, the ideological threat of fascism abroad, and the normative influence of scientific/social science on public discourse, had profoundly shaped the PEA’s conviction curricular reorganization should be considered in relation to adolescent needs. This belief, which was shared and supported by the General Education Board (GEB), led the PEA Commission on the Secondary School Curriculum to establish an interdisciplinary committee to collect and examine case studies centered on adolescent needs and development. Through its Study of Adolescents, the committee collected information meant to inform the Commission’s thinking around the reorganization of the curriculum.
Teachers as scholars. The Study of Adolescents began its work in 1934 under the direction of Caroline Zachary, a teacher and psychoanalyst who had studied under William Heard Kilpatrick at Teachers College and later in Vienna, under Carl Jung. No doubt her proximity to the individuals most closely associated with John Dewey and Sigmund Freud had a deep impact on her intellectual development as well as on her pedagogical views. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Study of Adolescents was intentionally open-ended and loosely organized; yet, despite the many intellectual and educational horizons the study traversed, Zachary’s primary interest focused on how teachers might apply their understanding of adolescent needs and behavior to curriculum-making and the development of pedagogical methods (Kridel & Bullough, 2007; Lagemann, 2000).

Zachary’s focus on developing teachers’ capacity to translate what they are learning into concrete practices directly supported the Commission on Secondary School Curriculum’s interest in framing teaching as an intellectual—and in a sense, scholarly—endeavor requiring the teacher’s active participation. Central to this group’s mission was helping teachers understand that their classroom experiences provided them with unique and significant insights on adolescent development. To that end, they hoped to instill in teachers a feeling their classroom was a “laboratory for continuous study and experiment” (Frank, 1933, n.p.). To that end, during a meeting of the Commission on the Secondary School Curriculum in 1935, Wilford Aikin asked Zachary if she felt the case study materials she and others were developing through the work of the Adolescent Study should be shared with teachers. Sensing their possible resistance, she reportedly responded this “might be dangerous,” and she would instead “urge teachers to do some study of their own children rather than hand them anything formulated when they have not taken part in the formulation” (PEA Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, 1935, p. 29).
Zachary’s statement reflects a theme that arose throughout the Eight-Year Study and is mentioned frequently in the final report. Volume II states, for example, “teachers…must continually study and think within their fields to be capable of leading this work [of curricular reorganization]. They are scholars of literature and life, perpetually studying the subject” (Giles et al, 1942, pp. 224-225). Yet, this notion of the teacher as both practitioner and scholar did not always resonate with how teachers understood their role. In fact, despite Zachary’s earlier instinct teachers would relate better to research with which they had been directly involved, evidence suggests not all teachers were willing or able to bridge the gap between research and practice. In a letter to Robert Havighurst of the GEB summarizing his reactions to the 1937 workshop in Bronxville, NY, Frances Rhind observed, “[a] great many of the teachers seem totally unprepared to deal with the materials given to them for discussion. Few seem to have any conception of what the Committee for the Study of Adolescents is driving at—in fact few seem to understand what is meant by a research job” (Rhind, 1937, p. 1). Rhind further explains Zachary “laid so much stress on the need for studying the adolescent that she failed to put across the specific objectives of the Study” and criticized the fact “a great deal of mimeographed material has been dumped in the teachers’ laps,” much of which was meaningless to them given their lack of background in the “psycho-analytic point of view” that framed the Committee’s work.

Despite this, the notion of teacher as scholar was continuously reinforced throughout the Study. From facilitated discussion groups, to formal talks on a variety of academic subjects, to “office hours” with curriculum staff, the summer workshops were designed to stimulate teachers’ minds and “insure their capacity for independent inquiry” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939, p. 10). In the same way it was attempting to cultivate “teacher-scholars”
through their participation in the EYS, and in the summer workshops in particular, the PEA hoped these teachers would prove capable leading change within their own institutions.

**Teachers as artists.** While the PEA placed a strong emphasis on research-based approaches, another prominent theme emerging from this research is the view a good teacher is akin to an artist. At times the notion of teachers as artists seemed at odds with the view of teachers as scientists; at face value the two metaphors seem to imply vastly different values, sensibilities and skills sets. Ultimately though, the PEA was clear in its assessment that progressive teaching required skills and sensibilities associated with both art and science.

At the Third Annual Conference of the EYS in 1935, Eugene Smith, a private school administrator and widely-published proponent of progressive education, remarked:

> A good teacher is essentially an artist, and frequently it is laborious for her to stand off and view her results scientifically, since no one of us is anxious to dissociate ourselves from preconceived prejudices and ideas. However, we in this experiment have assumed a staggering obligation to take care of the young adolescents in our schools and it must be met (PEA Commission on the Relation of School and College, 1935, p. 10).

Smith and others believed that the success of the Eight-Year Study—and perhaps progressive education in general—depended upon the PEA’s ability to “prove” that those students who had been involved in experimental programs during the EYS were equally if not better prepared for college and life success than those students in nonexperimental courses. As his comment suggests, this “proof” must have a scientific basis; undoubtedly Ralph Tyler agreed with this view, writing at one point in regard to the work of the Evaluation Committee that “our belief, based upon our experience, is that careful and systematic study of student development provides a more dependable basis for evaluating the school program than intuitive or informal
judgments of teachers and school officers” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 10).

While both comments seem to imply science ought to prevail over those things that cannot be quantified (e.g., experience or intuition), ultimately, the PEA’s view of teaching (and likely those of Smith and Tyler) was far more nuanced than these two isolated quotes suggest. Several references to the art and science of teaching in Volume II of the final report on the EYS suggest the PEA in fact viewed them as interdependent as opposed to contradictory: “[O]nly as the teacher strives to become an artist, to put things together in an ever more meaningful fashion, can the scientific approach and the artistic synthesis striven for in these schools become important factors in influencing human development (Giles et al., 1942, p. 123).

Foreshadowing Finding #3, by cultivating teachers’ interests, encouraging risk-taking, and providing opportunities for teachers to stretch intellectually, socially, and creatively during the summer workshops, teachers were encouraged to transform not only how they saw themselves, but how they conceived of their role.

Teachers’ Perspectives

Some teachers were especially critical of what they felt was the Evaluation Committee’s over-reliance on empirical data. “The [Evaluation Committee’s] trait studies,” one teacher commented, “lag behind the facts, like stock tickers in a market boom” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 8). Echoing a theme in Finding 1, other teachers lacked the confidence and/or understanding of exactly how to apply new theoretical insights they gained through their participation in workshops and other activities, to the day-to-day problems of teaching (PEA

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17 See also: “The inner growth of teachers [requires]…a working combination of the habit of thought and action which we call scientific and another combination which we call art…” (Giles et al., 1942, p. 218). “When teachers conceive of teaching as a creative art, based upon scientific method and knowledge, they are transformed from routine workers to creative adventurers. This concept of teaching is thrilling in its possibilities. It deals a body blow to the old industrial, factory pattern of school organization” (Giles et al., 1942, p. 307).
Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939).

In the material I reviewed, rarely did I find statements made by participating teachers indicating they had successfully revised or enhanced their practices as a direct result of exposure to new, research-based approaches to practice. Only in one instance did I find such a statement, made by Ruth Sayward—a science teacher at Beaver Country Day School in Chestnut Hill, MA. The statement appears in the 1937 issue of “Thirty Schools Bulletin”\(^\text{18}\) wherein Sayward wrote:

> [A]fter my experiences in learning how to make tests and in giving them, I am able to understand my students better than I have in the past. My interest in subtle facts regarding their attitudes, their inconsistencies, and their understanding, is quickened, so that my memory regarding the student is keener. In addition to this, I have the many facts regarding the student which the new tests reveal. (Sayward, 1935, p. 32)

The possibility teachers were seldom able to implement Tyler’s (and others’) methods successfully is confirmed further in a statement made by Harold Alberty, a faculty member in education at OSU. According to the notes from the 1938 Atlantic City Conference of the Commission on the Relation of School to College, “Alberty … gave his own analysis of subsequent curricular changes in the 30 schools…” concluding, “(1) that surprisingly little real experimentation is being done [in the Thirty Schools]; (2) that there is no evidence that the schools are suffering from excesses of following the needs and interests of the child (and, if anything, are suffering from ‘the heavy hand of tradition’) (“JLB,” 1938, p. 1).

**Staff Perspectives**

From the earliest days of the Study, the PEA was clear in its view that teachers were

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\(^{18}\) Though the *Thirty Schools Bulletin* was labeled as “[issue] number 1,” (implying the PEA’s intention to publish it on a regular basis) I was unable to locate additional issues of this publication.
important participants in adolescent research and contributed significant insights into adolescent development. On this point, Ralph Tyler and Caroline Zachary seemed to be of the same mind.

In keeping with broader shifts in the field away from philosophy and toward the social sciences, Tyler believed educational workers should adopt scientific attitudes and sensibilities. These views had begun to take shape in Tyler’s mind long before his involvement in the Eight-Year Study; in fact, several of his articles published earlier in the decade attest to his belief educators ought to approach their work as scientists. In one such article, Tyler wrote:

The development of a science of education demands educational scientists. Those who engage in education as a science must possess the personal qualities of a scientist as well as being familiar with the tools and techniques of educational science....devotion to exact truth and willingness to revise beliefs, hypotheses, or theories when these appear incompatible with the facts. (Tyler, R. W., 1930b, p. 222)

Throughout the Eight-Year Study and beyond, Tyler, Zachary and others advocated for approaches that gave teachers a central role in curriculum-making, and believed teachers stood to benefit from their exposure and contact with researchers and research. Tyler argued a more scientific attitude toward their work would empower teachers by giving them the skills and habits of mind needed to examine and solve problems one could scarcely imagine in 1930 (Tyler, 1930b; Tyler, 1943). In fact, it was Tyler and Robert Havighurst of the General Education Board who first proposed EYS teachers spend the summer period working in intensive sessions with curriculum staff (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939).

In addition to empowering individual teachers, the workshop staff—many of whom stepped out of their “day jobs” in the heady new field of educational research to participate in the
workshops—conceived of their role as part curriculum consultant, part role model. As role models, staff were meant to cultivate a belief in teachers that education was a scholarly profession to which their work was integral. In an article documenting his work with schools during the EYS, one curriculum associate seemed to take pride in the general attitudes of the teachers with whom he had worked, writing “An overwhelming percentage of [teachers] merit the high praise involved in saying that their attitude is professional…It is professional to be self-critical, maintain an experimental attitude, develop new ideas, work co-operatively, in short, to have a creative approach to the problems of one's work and to seek searching evaluation of it” (Giles, 1938, p. 238).

The PEA believed a more scientific attitude and approach to teaching would elevate the teacher and the profession while bolstering the cause of progressive education more generally. Responding to a questionnaire in which administrators were asked whether they expected to have trouble securing enrollments for subsequent PEA workshops, one person responded:

Frankly, we needed to have one Workshop in southern CA to overcome the prevailing antagonism to anything labeled ‘progressive’. I am convinced that all who came in contact with our Workshop were impressed with the dependence upon scientific study of educational problems which characterized our Workshop and with the lack of sentimentalism which characterized progressive education ten or twenty years ago.

(Wooton, 1939, p. 2)

**Summary of Key Learnings from Finding #2**

The following list summarizes the main points captured in this finding:

- The emerging field of adolescent psychology profoundly shaped the PEA’s thinking about curricular reorganization at the secondary level.
• Many PEA progressives believed teachers could and should make meaningful contributions to scholarly fields such as adolescent psychology. They believed in turn academic research could and should inform teaching practice.

• Some PEA leaders characterized progressive teaching as both an art and a science. Accordingly, the PEA sought to cultivate in teachers the personal characteristics of both artists and scientists in its professional development activities.

• Teachers often struggled with how to bridge theory and practice, as this was not an aspect of their work for which they had been adequately trained or prepared.

• Many teachers struggled to engage in meaningful ways with the research presented to them over the course of the Study. The PEA tended to point to this struggle when explaining why some schools failed to experiment to any great extent during or after the Study.
Finding #3: The PEA believed the act of “humanizing” learning would allow teachers to grow as professionals and as people. A majority of teachers who participated in the workshops responded positively to this approach, but the long-term impact, if any, it had on their work is unknown.

The analysis of this finding begins with a description of who attended the workshops and how these different groups and individuals viewed each other, as this may have shaped their experiences in the workshop. Next, I introduce the major assumptions PEA/Study leaders made about the professional development needs of participating teachers—specifically, progressive teaching called for nothing less than the reeducation of teachers. This discussion sets the stage for a closer examination of the specific approaches to teacher development utilized in the workshops and the participants’ responses to them.

I then present several features of the Summer Workshop program that contributed to the humanized learning experience. Each element emphasizes the growth of the teacher not just as an educational worker, but as a whole person. I classify the specific elements of this approach according to several themes, including: (1) the workshop structure and setting, (2) the nature of the activities in which the teachers and consultants engaged and how these promoted personality development, social engagement, and intellectual stimulation, (3) the nature of the relationships forged between Workshop participants, and (4) the exercise of creativity and experimentation.

**Pedagogues, Pioneers and Pendants**

For some of the teachers involved in PEA’s grand experiment, the Eight-Year Study occurred at a late stage in their teaching career. Close to retirement and largely satisfied with the classroom techniques they had honed over the course of a career, the notion of professional development must have seemed, at worst, like an unwanted intrusion, and at best, a chore. When
asked to comment on the 1937 summer workshop program, which featured considerable work in evaluation with the PEA’s Evaluation Staff, one teacher remarked: “As a whole the program hasn't been of great use to our school, probably because the teachers were all so busy doing on the whole a good job of teaching that they hadn't time to work very much on the pioneer (and to some impossible) job of testing or evaluating the more intangible objectives” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 12).

Contributing to this sense of disillusionment for some was that the first summer workshops were developed and staffed primarily by university-based social scientists (mostly from Ohio State University)—some with newly minted PhDs but little, if any, high school teaching experience. These “curriculum consultants” were intended to serve a supporting role; as their title suggests, they were hired to consult with teachers on different aspects of their work throughout the Study. Both the internal PEA memos and published Study reports make clear the consultants’ purpose was not to be pedantic or critical of teachers’ existing work or evolving ideas, nor were they meant to force their views on teachers. In fact, consultants were selected not only on the basis of their academic credentials but also because they “were rich, interesting personalities who exemplified in their own lives the type of educational worker considered essential for improved teacher education” (Ryan & Tyler, 1939, p. 10).

Despite the PEA’s efforts to frame the role of the consultants to the teachers, their purpose was not always well understood, nor appreciated. One teacher described a source of her frustration as:

The feeling that if we don't make use of the material sent us in addition to all that we are already doing, we aren’t cooperating or else are complacent. I'd like to use more of their tests in mathematics but do not want to sacrifice the other objectives at which I know I
can arrive. Our attention is so much occupied in declining suggestions, that there remain
to us less time and energy for really considering appropriate improvements that arise out
of our own initiative and experience. Also it is irritating often to have to decline at length
and with reasons services of young men whose experience we lack reason to trust (PEA
Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 7).

Not all teachers viewed their alignment with University staff negatively, nor did all
teachers scoff at the suggestion their work was “pioneering.” As one teacher noted: “Workshop
groups are cooperating with the technicians and this important pioneer work is making a most
favorable start. Only the person who has never tackled a problem in experimental sociology or
social psychology will be critical at this stage” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 11).
Obviously, the varied personalities, experiences, and perspectives of those who participated in
the summer workshops make it impossible to characterize the consultant-teacher relationship in
any general way; there is evidence to suggest some teachers were resistant while others were
eager to absorb the advice consultants could offer, with numerous shades appearing between
these extremes.

The specific views of teachers and consultants no doubt shifted over the course of the
Study as they came to see each other in a new light. As H. H. Giles, member of the Curriculum
Staff and Associate Professor of English Education at OSU, commented for a local newspaper
article about his work with EYS teachers: “[t]eachers too seldom use much intelligence—but
when encouraged to do so, it’s surprising how much they have” (Leader and Press, ca.1939,
n.p.). Assumptions such as these about the abilities and intellect of teachers fundamentally, if
subconsciously, shaped the kinds of interactions between the workshop Staff and teachers; they
also shaped the PEA’s overall conception of the kind of education and/or training teachers required most.

**Defining the Purpose of Workshops**

In a ten-page document proposing a workshop for Eight-Year Study teachers in the summer of 1937, the first sentence states: “The improvement of secondary education involves the reeducation of teachers” (Progressive Education Association, ca. 1937, p. 1). The use of the term “reeducation” raises interesting questions about what the PEA considered an appropriate educational background for a progressive teacher. By 1937, the requirements for becoming a teacher in the United States were more stringent than they had ever been, with over 70% of states requiring some amount of collegiate or normal school training for teachers beyond college (Fraser, 2007). As the report suggests, the PEA did not take issue with the amount of training a teacher had, but was focused instead on depth of understanding and range of abilities: “Progressive schools are committed to a more significant curriculum but the effective operation of the new curriculum depends upon the increased understanding and abilities of the teachers in progressive schools” (Progressive Education Association, ca. 1937).

In the report, the PEA never specifically defines what it meant by “increased understanding and abilities”; however, its description of anticipated outcomes for the 1937 workshop offers some promising clues. These outcomes included: ongoing work in curriculum-making and evaluation projects; articulating an “educational and social philosophy”; and responding critically and constructively to the research findings and materials developed by the various EYS committees. The substantive nature of these activities suggests teachers in progressive schools would assume fundamentally different responsibilities from the ones they had been prepared to carry out. To be sure, a number of teachers came into the summer
workshops having had some prior experience with curriculum development and collaborative teacher planning; Tulsa and Denver schools, for example, had been actively involving teachers in these processes for years prior to the EYS. Yet, for many other teachers, the activities they would engage in, such as making important decisions around curriculum and evaluation, engaging in scholarly discussions with social scientists, administrators, and other teachers, and grounding one’s instructional practice around a social and educational philosophy of one’s own making, set them apart personally and professionally from their peers. Thus, a teacher’s reeducation must include the much-expanded conception of a teacher’s role; for many teachers, a prerequisite to this understanding was a shift in how they viewed themselves both personally and professionally.

**Aspects of the Workshop Experience that Contributed to Teacher Growth**

The summer workshop experience was as much about the personal and professional enrichment of individuals as it was about curriculum reconstruction. The multifaceted work of progressive teaching called for nothing short of the reeducation of teachers; in promoting the growth of the teacher as a whole person, the workshop served as an important mechanism for this reeducation.

As one participant observed, the most valuable aspect of the workshop was the hardest to quantify; rather, it was “[a]n intangible something—possibly it’s inspiration” (Heaton, 1941, p. 29). Based on the accounts of those who attended, there were certain aspects or qualities of the workshop experience that distinguished it from other forms of teacher education and professional development of this same era. Among these were the workshop setting and environment, the nature of the activities in which teachers and staff engaged, and the quality of the relationships that developed as a result.
The workshop environment. The workshop organizers seemed keenly aware of how the physical setting of the workshop could contribute to the overall experience. Though each workshop was held at a college or university, the PEA carefully avoided austere or formal campus settings in favor of more aesthetically pleasing ones. Instead, scenic grounds, spaces for art making and recreation, and close access to cultural resources and/or beautiful natural landscapes were available for the participants to enjoy. In its report following the 1938 workshop in Denver, the arts group touched on the intrinsically motivating affect of the workshop’s Rocky Mountain setting: “In a country splashed with color and heady with distances, a workshop is bound to be different from any other workshop in the world. The night winds off the prairie alone might have made the difference; but there were other factors, too; the Rocky Mountains, air like dry champagne, and an altitude” (Ryan & Tyler, 1939, p. 27).

Further, the immersive format of the workshops meant that for six weeks, teachers and staff lived and worked together on campus. While a small number chose to attend as day students, the PEA reported the residential format provided distinct advantages to participants (Ryan, W.C., & Tyler, 1939, p. 29). These advantages likely refer to the psychosocial aspects of the workshop experience, which some teachers felt contributed to their growth.

Personality development and social engagement. In a report documenting the “Essential Characteristics of Workshops,” the PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Services stated: “Personality development probably depends more on the nature and quantity of personal associations than on any other kind of experience. The more numerous, intimate and diverse such associations are, the greater and more varied are their effects (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939, p. 13).
The summer workshops were designed to promote “numerous, intimate and diverse” social interactions. For instance, at the 1937 workshop held at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, NY, teachers had the opportunity to participate in a weekly community sing, dances, tennis matches, clambakes and barbecues, excursions into New York City, and myriad other coordinated social activities (Ryan & Tyler, 1939). The following summer at Sarah Lawrence provided an equally broad array of intellectual and cultural opportunities (Appendix B). Even more frequent were occasions for teachers to engage with one another informally over meals, as well as in any number of the spontaneous get-togethers that would come to characterize these early workshops.

The teachers themselves recognized the need for emotional release from the heady work being done in the workshops. The following anecdote from one of the subject-matter groups at the 1938 Rocky Mountain Workshop in Denver, CO, reveals one episode where the teachers themselves sought to balance the intellectual work with a bit of spontaneity and impishness:

The second day, just as the most imposing staff member was expounding a great idea about personal and social needs, and all of us were doing a great deal of talking, one of us broke out in a witty little tune; before he could be put out, another began shuffling a cowboy dance under the table, and a third pulled out a piece of moist clay from his pocket and began to model the staff member.

It was clear that needs were not being met. It was also clear that if the subject-matter, source units, and panels were to be saved from extinction under this emotional rebellion, some time would have to be given to living the joyous life. Some place would have to be set aside where we could sing and dance and write poetry and feel clay under our fingers, throw the shuttle through the opening warp, mass bright colors, and sweep a
mural onto a convenient wall (Ryan, & Tyler, p. 27).

Daily, unscheduled periods throughout the workshops allowed for more of this spontaneity. Seldom did teachers enjoy the opportunity to manage their own time or pursue their own interests during the typical school day or year, so for some, this aspect of the workshops was intrinsically motivating. Further, the immersive, residential structure of the six-week program diffused learning and social experiences across a wide range of activities. As a result “learning was taking place at the breakfast table as well as in the conference room or library…” creating a far more unbounded experience for teachers than any other kind of professional learning experience available to them (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939, p. 5).

This immersive yet teacher-centered structure enabled teachers to manage their time and direct it toward those activities of greatest value and interest to them. As such, the very notion of work took on expanded meaning:

“Did we really work? Let me say that we did from early morning to late evening. For instance, one guidance group met at 8:30 in the morning and again at 7:30 at night—as well as in between. Because most of our time during the winter months is so routinized, perhaps one of the most satisfying aspects was the irregularity of many meetings, so that, although I spent long days in lectures, conferences, and study, I was stimulated and refreshed” (Heaton, 1941, p. 32)

Another benefit of the time spent living and learning together as a participant in the workshop was the sense of professional identity and pride this seemed to awaken in some teachers. In the PEA’s *Summer Workshops in Secondary Education* (1939), one teacher commented the workshop had “certainly helped renew my faith in the teachers of our country...”
and “one needs to experience the six stimulating weeks in one to discover why participants often refer to it as ‘An Intellectual Paradise’” (Rideout, 1941, p. 30)

**Respect between staff and teachers.** The notion that teaching is intellectual and iterative work, i.e., inextricably tied to the teacher’s own learning and growth as an individual, was enhanced by the relationships that developed between teachers, and between teachers and members of the staff. The range and richness of the intellectual and social activities occurring throughout the workshops and held together with a common sense of purpose seemed to allow genuine feelings of trust to develop. For some, these feelings contributed to creating an atmosphere conducive to both professional and personal experimentation.

One teacher reflected: “Almost every activity in which I took part had many, if not all, new elements in it. I tried them because there was encouragement from every source to do them without feelings of inferiority” (Heaton, 1941, p. 29). Hilda Kozman, a participant in the 1938 Mills College workshop remarked: “The very happy, pleasant relationships existing between staff and students are assets of the Workshop not to be found in the usual summer school…they made for freedom of expression of real beliefs and ideas. Everyone could feel that a sincere opinion would be respected even though proven erroneous” (PEA Health and Physical Education Group, 1938, p. 8).

The trust Kozman and other teachers developed in other teachers and in the curriculum staff seemed especially important to their emerging sense of self-confidence. When asked to comment on the aspects of the workshop of greatest value to them, one teacher answered, “[s]peaking up [during group discussions] rather than keeping quiet has helped me greatly…” and another remarked, “‘I need to learn to play’ my whole life has centered around work. This is an unfortunate mistake and I have missed much” (Heaton, 1941, p. 29).
Creativity and experimentation. Similar to the relationship between trust and self-confidence, some teachers believed engaging in creative and recreational pursuits would make teachers more attuned to the experiences of their students. Noted the Committee on Workshops and Field Service report: “[S]tudios and shops have been made available where…[teachers] have had opportunities to use a variety of art media and work in various crafts” and “…continuous efforts have been made to afford opportunities for participation in such creative activities as music, dancing, and dramatics” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939, p. 14).

Reflecting on her visits to the regional workshops during the summer of 1940, Flora Rhind of the General Education Board took note of these efforts, describing them as intended to “[develop] the teacher into a well-balanced and happier human being” (Rhind, 1940, p. 2). In addition to these personal benefits, some believed experimenting with a variety of art forms was a form a professional development. In an article published shortly after the Study ended, Ralph Tyler (1943) observed:

, “[T]eachers should have experience, not only in writing and in speaking, but also in painting, in drawing, in sculpturing, in dancing and in working in the handicrafts—all of which will give them some feeling for the various ways in which young people may learn to express themselves and some idea of the value of these varied means of expression.” (Tyler, 1943, p. 210)

For Tyler and other leaders of the PEA, an experimental disposition, coupled with a broad conception of the many possible ways of understanding and evaluating learners, was a critical ingredient for curricular innovation. Thus by creating opportunities for teachers to experiment directly with a variety of art forms, the PEA was providing teachers with yet another window into the developing minds of the adolescent.
Summary of Key Learnings from Finding #3

This finding provides the following insights:

- In the view of some EYS teachers, the PEA’s curriculum consultants provided little advice of any practical value to in-service teachers
- The PEA was critical of traditional teacher training and education programs, and felt progressive teachers required nothing short of a reeducation
- The setting and structure of the summer workshops were for many a critical component of what made it so effective
- By design, the PEA workshops promoted diverse forms of social interaction among all participants regardless of their role (teacher or staff)
- The workshops were designed as safe spaces in which teachers could take personal or professional risks without fear of judgment

Conclusion

This chapter presents three key findings from this research, each of which throws light on what it meant to be a progressive teacher in the 1930s. The findings reveal PEA progressives associated certain personal traits and intellectual qualities with progressive teaching and sought to nurture these through the summer workshop program. The findings also reveal important differences in how teachers and workshop staff conceived of a teacher’s role. The workshops provide opportunities to examine these differences.

Chapter 6 focuses on the implications of the findings in relation to the literature review and theoretical framework presented in Chapters 1 and 2. It highlights areas where additional research may further our understanding, and provides a stepping-off point for examining this study’s relevance to educational practice, especially teacher professional development today.
Chapter 6: Discussion of Research Findings

This historical case study focuses on the following question: In what ways does the PEA’s summer workshop program contribute to our historical understanding of what it meant to be a “progressive” teacher in the 1930s?

Based on the source materials examined, three findings have emerged. They include:

- The PEA progressives identified certain personal and intellectual traits as intrinsic to progressive teaching and used the summer workshop program as a means for developing these traits in teachers. The nature and variety of reactions to the workshops suggest what the PEA considered intrinsic was for many teachers a new or different way of conceiving of their work.

- Emerging scholarly fields such as adolescent psychology and sociology profoundly influenced how PEA progressives understood the role of a classroom teacher. The PEA promoted certain values (e.g., research and scholarship) through its workshop program, viewing them as part of a progressive teacher’s work. Many participating teachers had not previously conceived of their role in this way.

- The PEA believed the act of humanizing learning would allow teachers to grow as professionals and as people. Most teachers who participated in the workshops responded positively to this approach, but any long-term impact it may have had on their work is unknown.
This chapter discusses the ways in which these three findings confirm, contradict, and complicate\textsuperscript{19} the theoretical framework—critical theory—underlying this study. It examines each finding in relation to the bodies of literature identified as most pertinent to this research in Chapter 2 and recommends areas where additional research is indicated.

Finally, it provides an analysis of what this study suggests about educational practice today, especially in relation to the professional growth of teachers and the ways in which schools and professional development practices might encourage and reward experimentation in educational settings. It concludes with a reflection on what I have learned, and how I have grown as a scholar-practitioner, as a result of this project.

**Implications of Findings for the Theoretical Framework**

This section discusses the implications of these three findings in relation to critical theory, which provides the analytical lens for the research question, which asks: *In what ways does the PEA’s summer workshop program contribute to our historical understanding of what it meant to be a “progressive” teacher in the 1930s?* Four interconnected themes within critical theory are especially pertinent to this discussion—teachers as intellectuals; teacher identity; the humanization of learning; and teacher agency.

**Teacher identity.** In the source materials analyzed in this study,\textsuperscript{20} a variety of individuals addressed the theme of identity, specifically as it relates to the notion of *teaching as intellectual work*. Based on this material, certain observations can be drawn.

\textsuperscript{19} Stoskopf’s ‘three C’s’ (confirm, contradict, complicate) are used throughout this chapter as an analytical device for investigating the implications of my research findings in relation to critical theory, as well as for the historiography of teaching in the first half of the twentieth century (A. Stoskopf, personal communication, May 20, 2013).

\textsuperscript{20} Since the original questionnaires in which participants provided feedback on their workshop experiences could not be located (if they exist at all), only those sources that directly quoted or provided representative samplings of teachers’ responses could be used in analyzing
• **Observation 1:** There was a general lack of parity between teachers’ and the PEA’s conceptions of a teacher’s role in a progressive education program.

Critical theory prompts us to question the extent to which EYS teachers and PEA progressives shared similar conceptions of progressive teachers and teaching practices. Statements made by teachers, school administrators, and study staff acknowledged at various points during the EYS suggest that a majority of teachers were unaccustomed to being included in substantive questions about curriculum and pedagogy. As Kincheloe (1993) and others have argued, schools and society have tended to emphasize the technical aspects of teaching and evaluate teachers’ efficacy in relation to these factors. This research supports the conclusion that this was true also for twentieth century progressive teachers, regardless of the profile of the school or community in which they worked.

For many of the EYS teachers, their role in the classroom did not typically involve the kinds of substantive work in which they engaged during the Study and particularly during the summer workshops. It further confirms the view that teachers typically did not have the authority to implement their own ideas or fashion their work in a manner consistent with their own choosing (see Finding #1). Further, over the course of their own education, few teachers had been exposed to the kinds of teachers who exemplified the kind of independent thinking and “surplus of interests which the PEA considered critically important. Even students in the highly-experimental OSU Lab School’s Class of 1938 recognized that the worldly individuals serving

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this particular theme. Similarly, given the anonymity of these responses, specific comments could not be correlated to other factors about the teacher, such as the number of years spent in the field prior to participating in the Study. During a conversation in 2010 about the availability and location of these original questionnaires, Kridel (2007) indicated he did not believe they were preserved as he had not come across them in his own extensive research.
on their faculty represented a “very unusual collection of teachers” (Ohio State University Laboratory School Class of 1938, 1938, p. 16).

According to questionnaire responses, a number of teachers questioned why they ought to spend time in the workshops engaging in intellectual activities such as clarifying their educational philosophy, engaging with new research, or experimenting with new modes of self-expression if none of these activities would ultimately help them perform the practical functions associated with their actual classroom responsibilities. Beyond the external factors such as school and administrative culture, past experience, and social expectations that shaped how teachers understood their roles, other factors internal to the teachers contributed to how they viewed their work. In short, these themes speak more directly to the identity of the teacher in relation to other groups involved with the study.

• **Observation 2:** Teachers, administrators, and staff all exhibited some tendency to allow preconceived notions about other individuals or groups shape their attitudes in various ways.

Critical theory compels individuals and groups to interrogate their own biases. In consciously acknowledging one’s own assumptions, one is better able to shift his or her thinking based on new experiences and enhanced understanding. In the context of this study, all groups (teachers, curriculum staff, and administrators) were complicit in allowing biased thinking to distort their views of other groups. For example, teachers were hesitant to accept help from educational experts whom they perceived (sometimes correctly) as having no direct experience with classroom teaching or with the adolescents they studied. Dr. Zachary, who had worked extensively with preservice teachers, anticipated teachers’ negative reactions to being handed case studies from which they were to extrapolate information that might inform their teaching
practice. For those teachers who distrusted the help of nonteaching experts, the figurative ivory tower created a barrier between those with direct contact with adolescents and those “arm chair” academics who viewed human behavior as a collection of measurable traits. As Biddick observed, teachers—especially experienced teachers—were impatient with those who offered new ideas but no practical advice, leading many to conclude that “people who write only inspirational materials do so because they cannot provide concrete suggestions” (Biddick, 1939, p. 10); or, to state this another way, *those who cannot teach, do research.*

In some instances, teachers’ frustration toward study staff, whose focus seemed hopelessly centered on the impractical, manifested itself in their negative attitudes toward experimentation. Those teachers who expressed this belief felt the practical advice they had hoped to receive had been sacrificed to “intangible and imponderable” questions. Taken to its extreme, it is this defensiveness Cooke characterized as the “self-righteous disease to which pedagogues seem to fall easy victim” (Cooke, 1934, p. 4).

Yet, teachers were not the only ones susceptible to this disease. Indeed, certain off-handed statements made by curriculum associates can be similarly read as expressions of self-righteousness. Perhaps the most salient example of this is Giles’s comment to a local newspaper: “Teachers too seldom use much intelligence—but when encouraged to do so, it’s surprising how much they have” (Leader and Press, ca.1938, n.p.). Though EYS staff may not have consciously exhibited this attitude, it may nevertheless have been perceptible to some teachers. In that same vein, any number of individuals involved in the study could have had negative prior interactions that left them with biased attitudes toward certain groups. These attitudes, in turn, may have been transferred into their experiences in the EYS.
• **Observation 3:** The workshop setting and structure had a positive impact on what some teachers gained, both personally and professionally, from the experience.

As Kincheloe (1993) observed, teacher training has tended to emphasize the technical aspects of teaching while minimizing (if not ignoring) its intellectual dimensions. The summer workshop experience did just the opposite: It engaged teachers in substantive questions about the nature of their work and promoted activities aimed at expanding their personal horizons. It was an opportunity for teachers to live and work together for an extended period of time in an environment that promoted renewal, growth, and the sense that all participants were contributing to something larger than themselves.

When teachers commented on how the workshops had changed them, certain themes came up frequently. For example, the ability to experiment in a safe environment—namely, one free from hierarchy, judgment, and adherence to routine—imbued some teachers with the confidence to try new things for the sake of trying them, as opposed to being judged by their successes or failures. As one workshpper reflected: “There [in the Workshops] one finds a spirit of friendliness, of industry and of co-operation. No trace can be found of the stilted, formal and traditional classroom atmosphere that is frequently very deadening” (Heaton, 1941, p. 5).

Other comments suggest the workshop’s atmosphere of collaboration and community helped teachers conceive of staff in a new light.

[T]here were the social gatherings where we saw our friendly staff at play and saw the spirit of Puck behind these wise, sympathetic guides…We did become acquainted, both with our leaders and with our fellow participants. Already I have enjoyed hearing from several of my fellow workers from Wisconsin, from Illinois, from Ohio, as well as neighbors I had never known, while some of my staff are still generously giving me
advice, help, and encouragement in the continuance of my summer project (Rideout, 1941, p. 33).

Rideout’s use of phrases like “my fellow workers… my staff…and my summer project” [emphasis added] are notable, as they suggest she felt a personal connection to the work and with the people involved in the workshop. For some teachers, this connection was a catalyst for conceiving of their role in new ways. The following comment illustrates this point:

> At the outset I expected to get hints on techniques and classroom procedures: The only formal idea, of course, -- my only previous experience in learning ‘how to teach.’ See how I have changed! A renaissance for me! I feel freer from techniques than I ever did before because my outlook has a highly exciting, individualized aspect! (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939a, p. 4)

- **Observation 4:** The workshop program embodied certain values such as the belief teaching is an act requiring one’s whole self.

This perspective embodies Freire’s idea of teaching as a profoundly human act. Recognizing the dynamic interplay of emotion and intellect it involves, Freire would no doubt have agreed with Smith, Cooke and others who compared good teaching to an art form. As Finding #1 suggests, one’s broad experience, opinions and beliefs—in a sense, one’s humanness—contributed to the ability to help students engage actively with the “world of ideas.”

Progressive educators considered teaching a simultaneously intellectual, creative, and personal act. In his remarks before the National Education Association in 1932, Suzzallo captured this perspective:

> “Hereafter the teacher's human interest, sympathy and understanding will be just as important a part of his equipment as his academic and technical training, and probably
more fundamental…[T]he new type teacher must be a thoroughgoing humanist regardless of his special field of scholarship. He will not be so much a teacher of subjects as a moulder of men and women.” (Suzzallo, 1932, p. 85)

This view of teaching as a deeply human process shaped the structure and spirit of the summer workshops in profound ways. Ultimately, the extent to which the workshop program embodied this perspective was one measure of its success. In its report describing the essential characteristics of the program, the PEA Committee on Workshops highlighted the comments of Dr. Edward Liss, a workshop staff member who observed, “[o]ur whole learning process is based upon its humanization, and it is from that evaluation that one arrived at the conclusion that the Workshop has been uniquely successful” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939a, p. 6).

Critical theory, with its attention to the human dimensions of teaching, helps illuminate the manner in which the PEA’s workshops were catalysts for teachers to conceive of their work in new ways. By stressing free expression, experimentation, and a widened view of the world, the workshops stand in sharp contrast to the restrictions on teacher freedom within society more broadly. In an article published in *Progressive Education*, American historian Howard Beale described many of these restrictions:

> Many communities frown upon certain personal habits like smoking, drinking, dancing, swearing, theater-going, card-playing, and gambling. Others force teachers to remain in town weekends, to participate in local social affairs, to attend church, to conduct a Sunday-School class, and to help with other community activities (Beale, 1934, p. 14)...In the South... no teacher is permitted to seek equality or even justice, or civil or political rights for Negroes or to express any views on the race problem which do not
conform to white prejudices and the community belief in racial inferiority (pp. 18-19).

When considered in relation to these restrictions, it is clear the PEA’s views on the
teachers’ “place,” both within the school and in society more generally, represented a radical
departure from conventional perspectives. Further, in calling for the ‘reeducation’ of teachers,
the PEA foreshadowed ideas about teacher agency and identity critical theorists would develop
further in subsequent decades.

**Observation 5:** The PEA’s workshop program presented teachers with an idealistic, but
not always a realistic sense of what it meant to be a progressive teacher.

As indicated in Chapter 2, few historical studies have examined the extent to which
teacher education contributed to the intellectual or personal growth of in-service teachers, or to
their sense of agency within an educational setting. Similarly, in this study there is little evidence
to suggest the transformative nature of the workshops promoted, let alone addressed, the lack of
agency teachers had within the broader institution of education. Further, despite that teachers
were encouraged to reconsider their roles and experiment with certain organizational shifts
within the existing school day, the PEA did not give sufficient consideration to how those
changes could be sustained without corresponding change at the system level.

The lack of progress by many of the Thirty Schools in developing their experimental
programs after the EYS ended reflects myriad factors beyond the scope of this research. In
reporting on some of them, Redefer (1952) cited the broader social circumstances of the late
1930s and 1940s, which led one school to conclude the “Eight-Year Study suffered as a war
causality” (p. 6). Assaults on academic freedom throughout the 1940s diminished community
support for experimentation, causing some teachers and administrators to revert back to
traditional roles and practices (Redefer, 1952).
Though limited in scope, Redefer’s follow-up study did report some teachers felt their participation in the EYS had influenced their practice in important ways,\textsuperscript{21} perhaps most notably in their inclination and ability to collaborate with other teachers. Still, while the PEA’s workshop program promoted and cultivated skills that helped teachers gain confidence in their ability to lead experimental work within their schools, it failed to address adequately that teachers would return to schools and communities that remained unchanged. Support at the community level for progressive experimentation and the teachers’ role within it was critically important for sustaining change. By failing to address the incongruity between progressive views of the teachers’ role and institutional realities, it is not surprising many teachers resumed their roles as functionaries instead of change agents.\textsuperscript{22}

**Critical Theory in Historical Investigations: Some Cautions**

While critical theory throws light upon several important analytical strands of this study, there are nevertheless certain limits to its value for historical interpretation. One critique of the EYS in particular highlights some of these limitations.

In his review of Kridel and Bullough’s (2007) history of the Eight-Year Study, Pinar states the PEA’s directive to each school to articulate its social philosophy seemed “strangely

\textsuperscript{21} According to Redefer: “[W]hen asked whether, in your present teaching, there were aspects that could be traced back to the Eight-Year Study…twenty-one [teachers] claimed that their teaching today was influenced by the Study. Seventeen stated that their teaching had been somewhat influenced…Nine replied that they now give more attention of students; three to evaluation of what they did. Three stated that their present program grew out of these eight years of working cooperatively. Six reported that the Study hardly influenced their present teaching while four said it had no influence on them at all” (p. 138).

\textsuperscript{22} Schools like Central High School in Tulsa, OK, demonstrate there were exceptions to this. A number of teachers who had been involved in the study went on to assume leadership positions or move into university settings. Additionally, my research on Tulsa suggests its public school system writ large was oriented toward experimentation, and by and large it enjoyed support from school administration and the broader community (*Life* magazine, 1942; Loucks, 2011).

Understood within the broader context of the progressive education movement in the 1930s, the PEA’s directive to the Thirty Schools could be viewed as part of a much larger, ongoing debate within the PEA. As described in Chapter 4, this debate centered on what responsibility, if any, the PEA had to take an active stance on social issues, as Counts and others suggested it should. Pinar also points to Tyler’s focus on defining objectives and developing the evaluation mechanisms to measure them as additional evidence of the PEA’s attempts to guide experimentation through the filter of the preexisting secondary school system. According to Pinar, these efforts represented the PEA’s desire to “[institutionalize] the instrumentalism of those engaged in the Eight-Year Study” (Pinar, 2010, p. 296).

Pinar argues that because the EYS was designed in a way that enabled the Thirty Schools to frame their experiments within existing institutional arrangements, it did not—and never could have—accomplished the type of fundamental curricular reorganization it set out to do. Similarly, while the workshops promoted growth among teachers and in many cases helped them conceive of their role in new ways, Pinar argues that these benefits were mitigated by the institutional realities to which they returned.

While the critical points presented here add important nuances to this research, they should nevertheless be understood and interpreted within the broader context in which they occurred and in relation to the original aims of the Study. To measure the outcomes of the EYS against twenty-first century models of educational reform, or interpret the PEA’s intentions or
activities in relation to contemporary theories of change, threatens the validity of these interpretations.

When utilized for historical research, critical theory should provide a constructive stepping-off point for recognizing how past actions, events, and circumstances, might inform the present. By exposing the many gray areas of progressive thought and highlighting the ambivalence of many progressive educators toward experimentation and change, this study directly [complicates] Pinar’s conclusion that aspects of the EYS were nonprogressive.

The following list summarizes the key implications of the findings for critical theory. These implications generally confirm critical perspectives in relation to teacher identity, growth, and agency.

**Summary: Implications for teacher identity:**

- Engaging teachers in substantive questions and conversations about the nature of their work promotes ongoing reflection about how they conceive of their role within the larger educational system.
- Promoting activities aimed at expanding one’s personal horizons may in turn enhance one’s ability to take professional risks.
- Providing a safe environment for experimentation free from hierarchy, judgment, and adherence to routine may contribute to a teacher’s sense of personal and professional renewal.
- Emphasizing the development of the whole person allows one to bring one’s full capacities (intellectual, creative, emotional) to the job of teaching.

**Summary: Implications for teacher agency:**

- Administrators, teachers, and nonteaching educational experts need to examine critically the extent to which they are complicit in limiting teachers’ agency in defining and leading change within their schools.
- Lack of support for experimentation at the institutional and community levels are
factors that limit teachers’ agency, especially over time.

- Professional development that ignores the institutional realities shaping teachers’ work provides little value to teachers and the students they serve.

The use of critical theory can be complicated in historical analyses. This study reveals two sources of conflict. First, historians should avoid anachronistic characterizations of the people and/or events they are studying. These characterizations can limit the range of possible interpretations, as it does not allow the evidence to be viewed in context. Related to this, failing to consider evidence within its dynamic context can also limit a historian’s understanding. Those who utilize a critical framework when investigating the past should use caution when categorizing evidence (e.g., progressive vs. nonprogressive). Forcing evidence into fixed categories confines the interpretation to those categories.

**Implications of Findings for Literature Review**

In the historiography of teacher professional development, teacher communities tend to describe professional groups such as unions, councils, and national organizations through which teachers vied for change. Teachers’ unions provide perhaps the most common example of teachers coming together to collectively advocate for their interests and rights as professional workers. As noted in the literature review, these examples frequently highlight how such organizations gave voice to teachers and promoted change within the profession, and the extent to which they did so successfully.

The findings complicate existing conceptions of teacher communities by presenting communities of a very different kind—i.e., those formed around the common experience of the Eight-Year Study. Initially brought together as a result of their participation in the Study, this group of private and public secondary school teachers represented the front line of progressive
education and curricular experimentation. For a smaller segment of this population of teachers, the summer workshops provided additional opportunities to engage more deeply in that community. Just as unions functioned as a means of professional empowerment for teachers, so too did the summer workshops. The difference, however, is the nature and source of that empowerment. The summer workshops attended to both the personal and professional development of the teacher—often framing the two as inherently connected and interdependent. As the final report of the EYS noted:

[T]he personal life determines the professional life. The teacher’s whole being, his perception of the meaning of life, determines his attitude toward his work. If he considers teaching merely as a job, not fundamentally important to him or to society, he will not be likely to throw himself wholeheartedly into the task of developing professionally. (Giles et al., 1942, p. 217)

The PEA recognized not all teachers were comfortable with the view that their work might be enriched by other perspectives. Yet, as the report stated, “by studying and planning with others, teachers widened their own horizons and enriched their own lives… Collaboration enabled them to understand other fields more fully and to see the relationship of their own specific task to the whole work of the school” (Aikin, 1942, p. 41).

**Progressive paradox.** As the historiography suggests and this study further confirms, there were other forces at play—often external to teachers—that tended to mitigate the benefits teachers received through their participation in a professional community. For instance, though many EYS teachers grew to see themselves and their role in new ways, this did not mean individual communities in which they worked had changed. Thus, while the empowerment of teachers is an important component of promoting educational change, fundamentally changing
how the educational system and broader society views the role of the teacher is quite another. As Redefer (1952) wrote in his evaluation of the effects of the EYS after eight years:

In this period in which individual thought is challenged…in which subversive charges are frequently made against innovations in education…it was almost to be expected that the largest single category of the reported forces causing schools to curtail experimental programs was criticism and opposition from outside the school. Fear caused teachers to seek security in tradition. (p. 177)

Despite the progressive mantra of democracy and inclusion that swirled around the Thirty Schools during the EYS, none of the schools was immune to the social tensions and realities of the 1930s. Regardless of how progressive a school was in name or practice, many still resisted certain breaks with tradition. In fact, close to a decade after the EYS ended, some of the participating private schools still denied admittance to African American students (Redefer, 1952). The example of Joyce Saunders offers another salient example of this progressive paradox. After several years of classroom teaching, Saunders became the office manager at Central High School (CHM) in Tulsa. According to Marilyn Loucks (2011), a student at CHM in the early 1960s, Saunders performed the duties of a vice principal and was universally viewed as an integral part of the school’s administrative leadership. Despite this, Saunders’s title was not revised to match her job description until the late 1960s when she became the first female administrator at the secondary level in the Tulsa public school system.

These examples—and no doubt there are many more—compel historians to examine further the paradoxes of progressive education. As the historiography points out, in spite of its enduring devotion to democracy and inclusion, post-War progressivism was primarily associated a white, middle-class enterprise, not the activist-oriented, grassroots movement it had been prior
to World War I. The historiography of progressive education would be enhanced by more case studies that examine the many paradoxes of educational progressivism, and that seek to discover who and what progressivism stood for or ignored. This, in turn, might further enrich our historical understanding of why certain progressive experiments seemed to flourish while others did not.

Avoiding dichotomous and anachronistic interpretations. This research is an attempt to enrich our historical conceptions of progressive teachers and teaching practice through an examination of the PEA’s summer workshop program. As such, it has required a close examination of what progressive education meant to those who promoted and practiced it. Not surprisingly, my research confirms a dominant theme in the historiography that progressive education was, as Lawrence Cremin (1964) described it, a “many-sided effort” meaning “several things” to many different people.

Yet, many historical interpretations of education in the twentieth century seem fixed around certain dichotomies, e.g., progressive vs. traditional education, administrative vs. pedagogical progressivism, efficiency vs. child-centered progressivism. While these dichotomies can provide useful starting points for characterizing the broader ideological strands associated with the progressive movement, they can also constrain our interpretations. For example, figures like Ralph Tyler complicate our views of progressivism. Tyler embodied and promoted certain values that seem at times incompatible with child-centered progressivism. He was a strong advocate for scientific, objective approaches to evaluation who developed the “Tyler Rationale,” which asserts activities must have a defined purpose if they are to be evaluated.

Much of Tyler’s work in evaluation laid the foundation for the modern testing movement typified by the national Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) and the many state-specific
achievement tests such as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Critics of this movement have argued an overemphasis on standardized evaluation practices restrict teachers’ ability to provide input on the curriculum and make curricular experimentation difficult if not impossible for public school teachers. Further, this emphasis on evaluation makes it challenging for teachers to implement genuinely child-centered practices since the curriculum is tied to the tests, and any variation may therefore threaten test scores.

Yet, while Tyler advocated for more scientific approaches to evaluation, his writings reveal he believed, as did Dewey, teachers should be equipped with the intellectual skills and habits of mind to solve problems as they arise (Tyler, 1930; Finder, 2004). Throughout the EYS and beyond, Tyler advocated for greater teacher involvement in curriculum-making, writing, “in a very real sense, the teacher is a curriculum-maker rather than a mere user of outlines and textbooks” (Tyler, 1943, p. 210). Acknowledging the increasing diversity within American classrooms, he recognized the corresponding need for variety in terms of instructional materials and assessment practices, writing:

[A]s the schools have become the institution for the education of all the children of all the people, our previous preoccupation with verbal communication does not properly provide opportunity for all children to express themselves well… [T]eachers should have experience, not only in writing and in speaking, but also in painting, in drawing, in sculpturing, in dancing, and in working in the handicrafts—all of which will give them some feeling for the various ways in which young people may learn to express themselves and some idea of the value of these varied means of expression.” (Tyler, 1943, p. 210)
Tyler’s work—like that of so many other progressive educators—demonstrates the enormous range of beliefs which, when viewed in the present, sometimes appear incompatible. Yet, those who stood at the forefront of educational science could not have anticipated in the 1930s the damaging effects of standardized testing, tracking, and other policies that reward schools and districts that perform well on tests and penalize those that do not. The notion that the science of education has always been ideologically incompatible with the notion of teaching as an intellectual and creative endeavor should be challenged as anachronistic. Rather, historians of education—and practitioners who turn to this history for insights that might help them address problems they face in the present—should critically examine the circumstances that, over time, have lead to these dichotomous perspectives.

While this research confirms many of the themes identified in the historiography of education and teaching, it highlights other themes that have not been sufficiently addressed in the literature. The following questions capture themes warranting further historical investigation:

- What other means for empowerment were available to teachers historically? For example, participation in a teachers’ union represents one mechanism while the summer workshops represents another. Are there other examples?
- Whom did progressive education include and whom did it exclude? What does this suggest about the interplay of ideology (e.g., the belief in democratic education) and social context (e.g., those private progressive schools that did not admit people of color)?
- How can we enhance our understanding of what it meant to be a progressive educator in practice by examining individual educators, teacher groups, and schools?
Significance for Educational Practice Today

The teachers who participated in the Eight-Year Study faced an exciting yet daunting challenge. The PEA’s encouragement and support for experimentation meant the predictable routines and curricular requirements to which they were accustomed had suddenly been lifted like a door off its hinges.

Many teachers struggled with how to embrace this newfound freedom and the shifts in thinking around content, practice, and professional responsibilities it compelled. Other experienced school teachers perceived the offers of help from young men with little to no teaching experience insulting. This constant tension between the experience of practitioners and the research-based knowledge of nonteaching educational experts (N-TEEs) is one that has significant overtones to present day secondary and higher education settings and is one to which I personally relate.

Enduring challenges. In my current role as a director of online programs, I am involved in a university-wide initiative aimed at developing online versions of on-ground graduate programs in engineering and other academic fields. In this role, I mentor instructional designers and liaise with academic programs in an effort to support the overall development of online curriculum and courses. This work is squarely centered on experimentation and change. It involves a number of people across the university with different visions and agendas, experiences, and values. It is an experimental effort situated within an institution that, though poised for change, is nevertheless organized around certain traditional values. It cannot predict, as no twenty-first century educational institution could, the direction in which the arc of that change will bend.
The PEA’s Eight-Year Study, though characterized most often as an experiment in curricular reorganization, was in fact many different experiments under a single, broad umbrella. Much like those of us working on experimental initiatives within higher education today, the teachers and curriculum staff were foot soldiers of experimentation who found themselves involved in a continuous cycle of try > fail/succeed > reflect > change > try again, a cycle which is familiar to many secondary and post-secondary educators today. Though it predates the model, the PEA used the summer workshop initiative in a sense as a training ground for cultivating scholar-practitioners who were capable of leading change in their own school settings. To be sure, the teachers who participated in the summer workshops—like many of those who pursue their doctorate in education—were typically those with a deep interest in and commitment to improving the secondary school experience for all students. Though there are many factors upon which to judge the success and/or legacy of the Eight-Year Study, much can be learned from the unique if not radical experiment in teacher development its summer workshop program represents.

Key learnings. In contemplating the connections between the needs and experiences of teachers involved in the EYS and those of present-day educators involved in change initiatives, several key learnings can be identified. Each is relevant to modern-day scholar-practitioners who are engaged in educational experimentation, whether it takes place at the individual classroom, school or district, or university level. Since the summer workshop program is a focal point of this research, these observations may be especially relevant to those who plan, deliver, or participate in faculty development initiatives.
Each of the observations below responds to a single question connecting each of these observations: What can modern-day educators learn about educational risk-taking and change from the EYS teachers who participated in the PEA’s summer workshop program?

- **Observation 1:** Teachers and N-TEEs should be regularly exposed to educational settings and areas of specialization that differ from their own. Reflecting on how one understands one’s work in relation to the broader educational scheme should be a core component of teacher development.

  EYS teachers conceived of their work differently from many PEA progressives. Likewise, teachers and staff members had a variety of ideas about the type of skills, sensibilities, and knowledge required to engage in experimentation and progressive teaching. The summer workshops were opportunities to explore these differences and to witness the struggles and successes of peer educators. Through exposure to different ideas, contact with varied personalities, and the opportunity to see one’s own work against the larger tapestry of educational visions, many teachers were able to dismantle misconceptions and/or view their work in new ways.

- **Observation 2:** A willingness to revise one’s beliefs based on new experiences and information is a critical competency for educators. Failing to recognize the value of approaches or theories that differ from one’s own thwarts change and creates barriers to trust. On the other hand, when teachers and/or N-TEEs approach their work with an expectation for mutual learning, change is more likely to occur.

  Some EYS teachers and staff members entered the workshops with preconceived ideas about the other participants, the nature of the work, or the value of the experience to their own
practice. Those who allowed their thinking to shift seemed to gain a great deal more from the workshop experience.

- **Observation 3:** Certain qualities and dispositions such as the ability to work collaboratively and reflect on one’s practices are essential to good teaching practice. Faculty (especially in higher education settings) tend to develop these skills within their specific disciplines, but should also be encouraged to develop them in relation to their teaching practices.

Through its humanized approach to faculty development, the PEA promoted the growth of teachers both professionally and personally. While this allowed some teachers to discover new interests and abilities, it also developed certain “habits of mind” (e.g., an openness to risk-taking, a capacity for empathy, a more collaborative approach to work) that, in turn, enhanced their approaches to experimentation.

- **Observation 4:** Dichotomous thinking jeopardizes experimentation when it leads to an us vs. them mentality.

Some workshop participants viewed theory and practice as occupying opposite ends of the spectrum. For example, some teachers became frustrated by the lack of practical, concrete advice provided by curriculum consultants. These teachers struggled to understand how research-based insights such as new ideas on adolescent behavior could help them address certain problems they faced in the classroom. The idea that the curriculum consultants were more attached to theory than practice, or that teachers failed to appreciate the intellectual dimensions of their work, represented a tendency to think dichotomously about teaching (i.e., that thinking is more important than doing, or vice versa). In turn, this perpetuated certain value propositions.
(e.g., *doing* has more value to teachers than *thinking*, or vice versa) while limiting how some teachers conceived of their role.

- **Observation 5:** Certain institutional arrangements, such as those that incentivize and reward scholarship while sidelining teaching practice, perpetuate the dominant institutional belief that teaching has less value than other academic responsibilities. This creates serious barriers to educational innovation.

The EYS could be considered a period of suspended reality for all involved. While the value of what some teachers experienced no doubt served them well beyond the Study, dominant institutional structures and belief systems within the individual schools and at the community level no doubt made *significant* and *lasting* change extremely challenging.

- **Observation 6:** Institutions that want to lead change should take steps to address institutional arrangements and cultural patterns that constrain responsible risk-taking.

While many teachers learned to conceive of their work in fundamentally new ways as a result of their participation in workshops, evidence suggests many of the participating schools ultimately reverted back to their traditional patterns and educational methods. For experimentation and curriculum reorganization to have had a lasting impact on the schools, the larger social environment in which the schools functioned needed to be conducive to risk-taking. Though the PEA’s goal was to reorganize the secondary school curriculum and not to reform the institution of education overall, by attending to certain institutional factors that constrained teachers’ ability to experiment, they might have helped the schools foster a disposition toward taking new risks in relation to curriculum and instruction.

- **Observation 7:** Individuals and educational institutions engaged in experimental work at any level, i.e., within individual classrooms, or at the departmental and/or school levels,
can benefit from redefining failure as a necessary component of success, as opposed to its antithesis.

As one workshop staff member observed from his experiences in the summer workshop, “to observe growth, after struggle, is a rare privilege” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939a, p. 7). One of the greatest strengths of the workshop program was its ability to focus teachers on the processes, not the products, of their work. It nurtured certain habits of mind that were conducive to experimentation, including the view that failure was a necessary component to growth and that the education of the teacher was never finished, but rather was a continuous work in progress. These factors are essential to promoting a culture of responsible risk-taking in schools.

**Suggestions for Educational Leaders**

The mandate to innovate is a double-edged sword. The charge to be innovative simultaneously creates an opportunity to be challenged intellectually and often personally, but at considerable professional risk. As Fullan (2007) noted, “most attempts at collective change in education seem to fail, and failure means frustration, wasted time, feelings of incompetence and lack of support and disillusionment” (p. 93).

Rethinking professional development involves rethinking institutional cultures and policies that constrain teachers’ freedom and desire to experiment on a number of levels. As many in the education industry have discovered in recent decades, a twenty-first century education is as much about curriculum and pedagogy as it is about learning how to navigate one’s way through complex social and technological change. As this research suggests, it must also be about cultivating human capacities for risk-taking and feelings of efficacy around change. Future educational leaders—including those enrolled in EdD programs—study organizational
change theory, educational policy, effective leadership, entrepreneurship, and other topics that strengthen these capacities. Similarly, educational administrators may gain important insights about empowering change in their own settings by examining historical case studies focused on educational reform initiatives, both large and small scale.

“Old” ideas that resonate today. Though social and historical contexts differ, there are nevertheless certain fundamental ideas related to fostering experimental attitudes and embracing new ideas that resonate today. In fact, many of the fundamental principles related to cultivating a culture of responsible risk-taking resonate far beyond the education system. Google’s “eight pillars of innovation” (Wojcicki, 2011), for example, contain notions about humanized learning, professional collaboration, and the synthesis of broad ideas that echo what many summer workshop participants identified as important aspects of their own experiences. This suggests these ideas have a certain timeless appeal and quality, and lends support to the claim they can be of value to scholar-educators today. Table 3 illustrates this point further by loosely mapping six of Google’s “Eight Pillars of Innovation” to quotes that speak to certain of the PEA’s core beliefs.
Table 3: PEA Beliefs and Google’s “Eight Pillars of Innovation”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEA Beliefs</th>
<th>Google Pillar (Wojcicki, 2011)</th>
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<tr>
<td>“The teacher’s whole being, his perception of the meaning of life, determines his attitude toward his work. If he considers teaching merely as a job, not fundamentally important to him or to society, he will not be likely to throw himself wholeheartedly into the task of developing professionally” (Giles, et al., 1942, p. 217).</td>
<td>“Work can be more than a job when it stands for something you care about.”</td>
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<td>Progressive teaching seems to require trying again and again…the idea of considering subject matter in the curriculum freshly again and again, to recondition subject matter and methods with reference to such things as intellectual development, emotional growth, and in the light of more ideas as to how they can secure active, valuable relationships for the individual to the society in which he lives” (Katharine Taylor, in PEA Commission on Secondary School Curriculum, 1935, p. 29).</td>
<td>“Never Fail to Fail”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“It’s okay to fail as long as you learn from your mistakes and correct them fast. Trust me, we’ve failed plenty of times. Knowing that it’s okay to fail can free you up to take risks. And the tech industry is so dynamic that the moment you stop taking risks is the moment you get left behind.”</td>
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<td>“[T]eachers from several schools and teachers from several subjects within the same school have been working together in developing means for appraising outcomes of common concern…These cooperative committees have extended the horizons of the individuals participating in them” (PEA Committee on Evaluation, 1937, p. 4).</td>
<td>“Our growing Google workforce comes to us from all over the world, bringing with them vastly different experiences and backgrounds. A set of strong common principles for a company makes it possible for all its employees to work as one and move forward together. We just need to continue to say ‘yes’ and resist a culture of</td>
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“The atmosphere of freedom, the opportunity to talk things over informally, the chance to point your activities in the direction of your own needs, the stimulation of meeting people who are frontiersmen in their fields” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939a, pp. 5-6).

“It was soon recognized that learning was taking place at the breakfast table as well as in the conference room or library, and that the variety of associations was adding to the enrichment of the personal as well as the professional life of the student” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939b, p. 5).

“Share everything” By sharing everything, you encourage the discussion, exchange and re-interpretation of ideas, which can lead to unexpected and innovative outcomes. We try to facilitate this by working in small, crowded teams in open cube arrangements, rather than individual offices.”

“Look for ideas everywhere” Some of the best ideas at Google are sparked just like that – when small groups of Googlers take a break on a random afternoon and start talking about things that excite them. The Google Art Project, which brought thousands of museum works online, and successful AdWords features like Automated Rules, are great examples of projects that started out in our ‘microkitchens.’ This is why we make sure Google is stocked with plenty of snacks at all times.”

“Strive for continual innovation, not instant perfection” Our iterative process often teaches us invaluable lessons. Watching users ‘in the wild’ as they use our products is the best way to find out what works, then we can act on that feedback. It’s much better to learn these things early and be able to respond

“no’, accept the inevitability of failures, and continue iterating until we get things right.”
observations upon the development of young people as revealed in their classroom experiences. This would mean in a sense enlisting every classroom teacher as a contributor to the study of adolescence and giving him or her a feeling of the importance of the classroom as a laboratory for continuous study and experiment” (Frank, 1933, n.p.).

“The development of a science of education demands educational scientists…[T]hese scientists were willing to change their beliefs without emotional outbursts when their hypotheses were found to be incompatible with the facts” (Tyler, 1930b, p. 222).

“Those who have attended workshops commonly report that one of the greatest values derive from work and association with other [teachers] representing a diversity of fields and backgrounds of experiences. Interchanges with other teachers from varied situations is probably the most effective way whereby the [teacher] can learn of what is being done elsewhere what new ideas work well or fail to work well in practice, and what flaws exist in his own theory and practice” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939b, p. 7).

Be a platform

“There is so much awe-inspiring innovation being driven by people all over the globe. That’s why we believe so strongly in the power of open technologies. They enable anyone, anywhere, to apply their unique skills, perspectives and passions to the creation of new products and features on top of our platforms.”
**Using the past to lead change in the present.** Given the enduring value of certain beliefs, how can policy makers, teacher training programs, and school leaders leverage them to enhance district or school-wide approaches to pre- and in-service teacher development? What might educational leaders derive from them that might help them cultivate a culture of responsible risk-taking within their own institutions? Though shifting school culture alone cannot eradicate the broader institutional and social barriers working against school experimentation, it can provide teachers with a new (or renewed) sense of confidence and agency around risk-taking, and instill in them a belief that risk-taking is a critical component of good teaching practice. The list below includes suggestions for policy makers, school leaders, and pre-service teacher program developers interested in cultivating these attitudes and values among pre- and in-service teachers.

- **Suggestion 1:** Redefine what constitutes professional development (p.d.) by encouraging teachers to pursue p.d. ‘credit’ for activities such as travel, independent research, community service, experiences with athletics or performing arts, etc.
  - Establish grants and other systems of rewards that allow educators to define and pursue activities of greatest interest to them. These opportunities could be structured like research grants, where the educator identifies an interest, applies for funding, and is required to demonstrate how the experience has impacted their beliefs and practices.
  - Reward educators who continuously demonstrate growth in their field by making these self-initiated experiences an important component in the formal evaluation of their work.
• **Suggestion 2:** Make reflection a fundamental and ongoing part of teachers’ training and professional development. Require pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect actively on and document their evolving professional beliefs and/or practices.
  
  o Require educators to document and reflect on experiences that contribute to their intellectual and personal growth in some public way (e.g., as part of an evolving teaching portfolio, as criteria for yearly performance evaluations, presentations to the school board or PTA, etc.). Doing so may encourage teachers to make important connections between their experiences, values, and practices on a regular basis.

• **Suggestion 3:** Expose teachers to noninstructional forms of educational work and encourage them to explore points of congruence/incongruence with their own work. For example, create opportunities for in-service teachers to collaborate with other educational professionals (e.g., guidance counselors, technology specialists, administrators) on school initiatives or projects.
  
  o Candid exchanges and direct exposure to other forms of educational work may help teaching and nonteaching educational professionals gain first-hand insights about the skills, challenges, opportunities, and benefits within a broad range of educational professions.
  
  o Cross-specialization pairings (e.g., teachers with technology specialists) provide opportunities for professionals to foster mutual understanding, identify shared goals and/or challenges, and establish new appreciations for the practical realities of each type of work.
• **Suggestion 4:** Expand a teacher’s professional network by creating cooperative programs between schools. Leverage technology to connect teachers and administrators from geographically-dispersed schools and focus this collaboration around shared concerns or interests.

  - Collaboration centered on curriculum and instruction may provide another means for teachers to enhance their professional identify by situating their work within a broader teaching context.
  
  - Regular exchanges between teachers from different schools allows for a “cross-pollination” of ideas and enables teachers to think beyond the confines of their own school and local contexts.
  
  - Creating concrete goals around these collaborations (e.g., the development of instructional materials, service projects, new evaluation strategies or new tools) focuses these exchanges while producing tangible benefits for each school.

**Implications for Further Research**

Based on the findings from this research, there are two areas in particular where I believe further research is warranted. These areas focus on: (1) institutional and organizational arrangements that promote or inhibit collaboration and risk-taking, and (2) teacher attitudes toward collaboration and risk-taking.

**Institutional arrangements that promote/inhibit collaboration and risk-taking.** A substantial body of research addressing barriers to institutional change exists within the organizational change, leadership, policy, and other research areas. Historical and contemporary case studies focused on the following questions may nuance this body of literature further,
especially when they cast light on external and internal factors that make meaningful collaboration among teachers challenging.

1. To what extent are curriculum committees, teacher teams, and other collaborative teacher groups encouraged, supported, and rewarded by the schools in which they exist?

2. To what extent, and in what ways, do traditional institutional structures (e.g., the graded system, the nine-month school year, and/or the emphasis on standardized testing) inhibit risk-taking at the classroom level?

In addition to offering glimpses of how traditional structures promote or prevent experimentation at the classroom level, these questions might also lead to comparative studies between different institutional structures.

Teacher attitudes toward collaboration and experimentation. A second area ripe for investigation focuses on the attitudes and beliefs of practicing teachers. Longitudinal studies investigating how these conceptions change over the course of teachers’ careers could be especially useful to those tasked with developing ongoing professional development for in-service teachers. Research questions related to these themes might ask, for example: To what extent do teachers include risk-taking and experimentation to be core components of teaching practice?

This question could be further nuanced by including other variables that impact teachers’ perceptions, e.g., length of experience in-service, broader social and socioeconomic factors, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Implications for Historical Research

As mentioned previously, this research confirms what Cremin (1964) and others have
observed: While there are certain characteristics of progressive education that distinguish it from more traditional forms, there was nevertheless enormous variety in what progressive education meant to those involved in it. As our understanding of progressivism in practice becomes more nuanced, classifications such as pedagogical and administrative progressivism become less useful than perhaps they once were.

The historical case study allows historians to investigate what progressive teaching meant in practice. Cases highlighting teacher participation in curriculum committees and other types of cooperative planning groups can provide opportunities for historians to explore how and to what extent these groups benefited teachers professionally. The public schools in Tulsa, OK, and Denver, CO, stand out as rich settings for case studies analyzing how teachers and administrators shared in the collaborative and decision-making processes involving curriculum.

**Next Steps for Research**

This project has deepened my personal and professional interest in educational history and archival research. Though my research questions led me to visit several different states and cities to collect data, three of the schools that participated in the EYS are within five miles of my home and work, and each has an extensive and well-organized archive. These schools include the Beaver Country Day School (BCDS) in Chestnut Hill, MA, the Winsor School in Boston, MA, and Milton Academy in Milton, MA. Additionally, through his own research, Dr. Alan Stoskopf has made me aware of the rich archival resources for the Boston Public Schools available through the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

While the scope of this project and the nature of my research questions did not provide opportunities to investigate these local resources, each school represents a potential setting for case studies on progressive education in the twentieth century. Further, some important but less
well-known figures in the progressive education movement, such as Eugene Randolph Smith, were associated with these schools. Smith, who served as the headmaster of Beaver Country Day School, and was one of the original founders of the PEA, played an important role in the progressive movement and the emerging science of evaluation. Examining his life and work may provide new ways of understanding what progressive education meant to those who practiced and promoted it.

Afterword

The most fulfilling moments of my career to date have been those occasions when my work with a faculty member has been an experience of mutual learning and growth, i.e., where each of us has left a working session feeling as though our individual practice has been enriched in some way by that shared interaction. As a nonteaching consultant to teachers, I have had many conversations with educators who are eager to experiment but who feel their ability to do so is constrained by time, resources, a lack of knowledge, or other professional demands. I have watched teachers develop and implement—often not without some amount of reticence or frustration—technology-enhanced approaches to their repertoire of instructional practices, and witnessed the small but nevertheless important ways in which this expands their practice, ignites new interests, and builds their confidence in taking additional risks in relation to their teaching. In this way, I identify deeply with the comment made by an EYS curriculum associate who remarked, “to witness growth, after struggle, is a rare privilege” (PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service, 1939a, p. 7).

Shaped by my experiences working with teachers, I have always believed good teaching involves a certain amount of risk-taking. As a student in this doctoral program, one idea I will carry with me throughout my career is that thoughtful and deliberate risk-taking, when coupled
with the belief that failure is necessary to bring about positive change, is an essential part of the educative process. I am deeply committed to the notion it must continue to be so.

My desire to pursue an historical case study in a practitioner-oriented doctoral program stems not only from my personal interest and love of history, but also from my desire to ask historical questions about why educators tend to be labeled as risk-averse, anti-intellectual and/or afraid of change. I was motivated to pursue a study of the broader social and institutional factors that have shaped these conceptions over time. By examining these conceptions closer to their roots, my hope was to shed light upon the circumstances that have made it difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to assume a meaningful role in curricular and pedagogical change.

The PEA’s Eight-Year Study was a fascinating setting in which to examine a relatively small group of progressive teachers who, when faced with the freedom to reconstruct their curriculum and practices, were largely at a loss to know how or where to begin. The PEA’s belief that a humanized approach to learning could facilitate important professional and personal transformations among teachers, and that this in turn might allow experimentation to occur throughout the schools, was itself a risky proposition. Yet it can also be interpreted as instructive to those who are presently charged with helping to foster cultures that embrace change in educational settings.

The experience of being a full-time practitioner and part-time scholar has been both challenging and rewarding. At times, I have felt more personally invested in the past than I have been in the future, which is where my work requires me to reside most of the time. Despite this challenge, I remain committed to, and convinced of, the necessity of examining the past in order to make better and more thoughtful decisions in the future. Above all, I remain inspired by the
dynamic and difficult work teachers do and committed to the belief that risk-taking is a skill that must be nurtured, valued, and supported by the institutions in which they work.
References

List of Abbreviations

CHM        Chicago History Museum
F          Folder
FJC        Flora J. Cooke General Papers
GEB        General Education Board
PEA        Progressive Education Association
RS         Record Series
RWT        Ralph W. Tyler Papers
S          Series
SubS       Subseries
UCL SCRC    University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center
UIA        University of Illinois Archives
SLCA       Sarah Lawrence College Archives


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### Appendix A: Progressive Teachers’ Roles and Qualities

This table is excerpted from a matrix of evidence pertaining to the roles and qualities of progressive teachers. It demonstrates the classification of each source as micro-, mezzo-, or macro-, according to its proximity to the unit of analysis, i.e., the teacher’s voice.

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<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Excerpt from source</th>
<th>Keywords/Themes</th>
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<td></td>
<td>“The teacher has always had the leading role in schools everywhere. In democracy’s high school his part becomes even more important. He does not merely play his assigned part; he helps select the play and is concerned with the whole production. Less figuratively, democratic education involves the individual teacher in the whole program of the school. He no longer works in isolation. He shares with administrators and other teachers in determining the school's principles and purposes, in formulating policies and in putting them into practice, and in building the curriculum” (p. 41).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>PEA Physical Education Group (1938). Physical Education in the Secondary School, GEB, S 1, SbS 2, B 279, F 2907, RAC.</td>
<td>Broad-minded; community-minded; autonomous</td>
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<td>“Teacher education is a continuous process. In-Service teacher education … assumes that school administrators, leaders in church and state, parents, the public in general have a direct responsibility to all teachers in permitting and encouraging them to take a vital place in all areas of social life, to become effective members of society, instead of draining their energies and perverting or destroying their initiative, courage, and freedom” (p. 48-49).</td>
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<td>“Schools...that are hewing out new paths in education and using, so far as their ability permits, the best curriculums and methods that have been found, find it exceedingly difficult to get adequately trained teachers--teachers with vision, broad cultural background and thorough professional training” (p. 1).</td>
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“[The socialized recitation exercise] requires that the teacher 1. Have wide knowledge in his field. 2. Conceive for each unit of work a definite, specific, and worthy purpose, related to the major aims of his course, which in turn should soundly based on the general objectives of education. 3. See each problem as a part of a fully conceived plan for the term’s work. 4. Make careful and extensive preparation. 5. Use his utmost skill in directing the assignment. 6. Have and manifest a friendly attitude of leadership and cooperation. 7. Use constant tact. 8. Talk little but effectively, keeping in the background during discussion and emerging only to give needed direction to a meandering current of discussion or to correct an unchallenged statement of fact. 9. Exercise patience and faith in the superiority of tedious learning by doing. 10. Be satisfied when each pupil is working to his capacity whether all achieve the same ends or not. 11. Direct and curb the ambitious and stimulate the backward to appropriate activity and expression. 12. Appreciate the larger social ends of education” (p. 2).

Mezzo PEA Commission on Relation of Schools and Colleges (1933a). Bennington Conference Papers, No. 8, FJC, B 28, F 172, CHM.

“Dr. Counts’ speech assumes that there is an answer, and the group felt that no such answer exists...the group agreed this it was the task of the teachers to present as clear and honest a picture of the world in which we live as it is possible to do. Some questions were raised about the word ‘honest’, as well as about ‘objectives.’ ...“It was also agreed by the group that it was part of the teacher’s responsibility to be an active participant in the life of the community, in doing this reconstructive job. The question of whether or not one had the courage to assume that responsibility was also discussed” (p. 1).


[Notes from the Head Master] “Our procedure, therefore, must include: (a) Careful initial appraisal of the developing aptitudes of each student...(d) Opportunities for the slow student to review a difficult piece of work without feeling that he is penalized for his slowness;...(f) Correlation of work in different departments of study, not by imposition of overloads such as are involved in the preparation of elaborate reports or summaries, but by making sure that every newly
acquired skill is put to use in time-saving ways’... (i) Award of the diploma on the basis of the accomplishment of tasks planned ahead, year by year, for each individual student, with the student himself taking an active part in the planning; the whole scheme being related as closely as practicable to a composite curriculum outline which it is one of the main duties of the faculty to revise intelligently from year to year” (p. 5).

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<td>[In reference to a study connected to the Commonwealth Study, in which rating on the importance of teaching activities were obtained from professors and secondary-school teachers] “In general, the philosophers give greater emphasis to teachers’ activities not directly concerned with classroom teaching. The teachers who are engrossed in class teaching tend to give lower ratings to such duties as teaching pupils to eat proper food, conducting study hall, giving advice and information to parents and the like. On the other hand, teachers give greater emphasis than the philosophers to the giving of tests and examinations...Is it important for teachers to conduct independent research, to give advice and information to parents, to schedule musical and dramatic activities? Teachers say these activities are not important. Philosophers say they are. This conflict of evaluation is a philosophical problem which must be met” (p. 290).</td>
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<td>Pragmatic</td>
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<td>“Another commonly accepted concept of need is that society makes certain demands upon the individual. In other words, the environment not only serves as a medium for the satisfaction of needs, but also creates needs. The teacher's responsibility, then, is to determine the nature of these demands made by society, and to design learning experiences to meet them” (pp. 7-8).</td>
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<td>“The teacher who is constantly struggling to understand the world in which he lives, and who is actively engaged in community problems, must of necessity be giving his intelligence the severest discipline” (p. 258).</td>
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<td>Broad-minded; community-oriented; attuned to adolescent needs</td>
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"I must be a psychologist as well as a painter. Each student is a part of my study. Whatever I say and do, whether it is short and sharp, or painstaking explanation, or words of flattering encouragement, must be sensitively adjusted to the state of mind of the individual with whom I am dealing" (Hans Hoffman, in Giles, et. al, 1942, p. 152).

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<td>[Leon Mones was the chairman of the English department at Central High School in Newark, NJ]. “Teachers will conceive of their function in terms of guidance, direction, production, and adjustment rather than in terms if assignments, recitation, and marking” (pp. 359-360).</td>
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<td>“Teachers will feel that they are in a large and valid sense 'social engineers,' factors in creating an integrated and secure culture&quot;...that &quot;they are not to limit their energies in the development of any single function, aspect, or talent, but that they must seek to integrate all the simultaneous responses of a child's intelligence into a cumulative and integral unity of function and possibility&quot; ... &quot;feel that they are not faculty members of an insulated, self determined institution, but agents of a cumulative program that begins with the birth of a child...” (p. 360).</td>
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<td>[terms used to describe teachers/faculty]: “distinct personality and way of thinking&quot;... &quot;each stands out as an individual person&quot; (descriptions of interests/hobbies) &quot;very well educated&quot;... &quot;Columbia University seems to be very popular with them, for more than half have attended it at some time” &quot;[T]eachers have had...varied background(s)” (p. 16).</td>
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<td>[descriptions of interests/hobbies]: “traveled abroad”....”take part in athletics” ...”hobbies...are many and varied” (p. 18).</td>
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<td>[descriptions of hobbies]: “fine co-operation among our faculty”....“noticeable difference between our teachers...and ordinary high-school faculty is the amount they must do”... “Our teachers are forever going to some educational</td>
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Broad-minded; attuned to adolescent needs
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<tr>
<th>Conference Name</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Terms</th>
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<td>Conference over week ends” (p. 19).</td>
<td>PEA National Committee on the Education of Teachers (November 1934), Redirecting the Education of Teachers – A Plan and Petition, GEB, S 1, SbS 2, B 283, F 2954, RAC.</td>
<td>Broad-minded; community-oriented</td>
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<td>Among the vital topics for investigation by fellows engaged in the Pre-service studies, are the following: ...2. Study of techniques for broadening the experiences of teachers in service to include social and political participation. (pp. 7-8).</td>
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<td>[Kilpatrick] “I think four years of self-directed activity would be far more conducive to resourcefulness in a teacher which would enable her to meet these different situations than these stereotyped methods and courses that don’t require any thought.” (p. 223).</td>
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<td>Statement of the Principle: Mastery of one or two teaching fields is all the cultural background that the public has any right to expect of the teachers...” [where EXPERIENCED TEACHERS N=150 84% disagree, INEXPERIENCED TEACHERS N=100, 87% disagree] (p. 662).</td>
<td>Hill, G. E. (1941). Some professional opinions and beliefs of secondary-school teachers. The School Review, 49(9), pp. 657-667.</td>
<td>Broad-minded</td>
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<td>Miss Cornell said that as a teacher, one must have a rather autonomous; courageous</td>
<td>PEA Commission on Relation of Schools and Colleges (1933a). Bennington Conference Papers, No. 6-8, FJC, B 28, F 172, CHM.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Notable Characteristics</td>
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<td>Mezzo</td>
<td>Gray, W. S., Stratomeyor, F. B., and Alexander, T., 1935, in PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service (1939, December), The Essential Characteristics of Workshops, GEB, S 1, SbS 2, B 285, F 2977, RAC.</td>
<td>Broad-minded; purposeful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mezzo</td>
<td>PEA Committee on Workshops and Field Service (1939, December), The Essential Characteristics of Workshops, GEB, S 1, SbS 2, B 285, F 2977, RAC.</td>
<td>Purposeful; self-reflexive</td>
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equipment as his academic and technical training, and probably more fundamental...[T]he new type teacher must be a thoroughgoing humanist regardless of his special field of scholarship. He will not be so much a teacher of subjects as a moulder of men and women. He will need to be a civilized person if he is to bring all the resources of civilization to bear upon youth, which is to say he will be liberally educated” (p. 96).

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<td>Autonomous; open to change</td>
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[Kilpatrick] "And you must not think that schools are all white or all black, one or the other...[A] very large part of your work, you may be dead sure, is going to be in schools where the rest of the people don't think just the way you do. I don't care what the school is or where it is, you will find when you get there and get to working there that some way, somehow, they don't all agree with you...Then you will have to think through what you are going to do in that relationship, and you may have to change” (p. 191).

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<tr>
<th>Micro</th>
<th>PEA Committee on Evaluation (1937, November 30). Report of the Committee on the Evaluation Staff, GEB, S 1, SbS 2, B 283, F 2950, RAC.</th>
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<td>Open to change; attuned to adolescent needs</td>
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“[in response to the question - Specify what forms of testing and recording have been stimulated, besides those developed by the Evaluation Staff.] Our participation in the Eight Year Experiment has stimulated...our conviction that life is a process of continuous change and continuous readjustment, and that in some individuals important new attributes appear suddenly and develop rapidly. I think our most important gain has been in the realization that we must always be ready to reconsider our appraisals; and that evidence of a change of mind is testimony to the observer’s sympathetic alertness.” (p. 13).

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<tr>
<td>Attuned to adolescent needs; imaginative; broad-minded; autonomous</td>
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See Cooke's 1934 letter to John Merrill in which she describes him as the “artist teacher” of the Parker School. Among Merrill's attributes: “sensitive psychologically so that...
you understand intuitively how young human beings feel and think”, has “imagination, the power to put yourself in another's place, and imagination to me seems basic to any one privileged to work with children and who expects to develop the individual character of each.” [Add to this description Merrill's “work ethic,” his "fine taste and ...great background of study and varied experience" (n.p). Cooke mentions proudly that Merrill had "the freedom to do what you have wanted to do intellectually" (n.p).
Appendix B: Final Program of the PEA Arts Conference, Eastern Workshop, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N.Y., August 3, 4, 5, 1938.

This schedule of events for a special program of the PEA’s Eastern Workshop provides a sense of the diversity of activities, speakers, and topics, offered in the workshops.
1:30 - 4:00  Problems in Art Education  Bates Assembly Room
General Assembly  ............. Bates Assembly Room
Presiding:  ................. Jane D. Welling
Recorder:  .................. Dr. Gertha Williams,
         Council Member International Border Region
         Progressive Education Association.

Informal five minute statements of "problems"
by representatives from various associations
and of various points of view.

........................ Aimee Doucette,
   Vice President, 1939, Eastern Arts
   Association.
........................ Elizabeth Gilpin,
   President 1939, Western Arts Association.
........................ Robert Skelton,
   Member Southeastern Arts Association.
........................ Rosabelle MacDonald,
   Member Progressive Education Association.
........................ Milly Stanford,
   State Supervisor, Crafts Projects W.P.A.
   Michigan.

Discussion by all members of groups.

Statement of Possibilities for
Joint Action by:  ............. Arthur Thurman,
   Eastern Arts Association.

4:00

Free time for relaxation and to get
acquainted with each other.

6:15 - 7:00  Dinner - Tables reserved for Art Bates Hall Dining
            Group.

7:40  An evening in New York City -
        small group jaunts to Theatres,
        Concerts, Moving Pictures, etc.
        (Cars can be provided for trans-
         portation - what do you want to do?)

Planners: ... Mr. Helmut Hangerland and Miss Lillian
         Field, representing the local group.
         Mr. Joseph Marchetti and Miss Ada
         Beckwith representing the visitors.

August 4, Thursday

7:45 - 8:30  Breakfast  Bates Hall Dining
             Room
(August 4 -- continued) - 3 -

8:45 - 11:30
Special Interest Areas in Art Education and What the Progressive Education Association is doing to help solve problems related to them. General Assembly.

Presiding: .................... Frederick L. Redefer, Executive Secretary, Progressive Education Association.
Recorder: ..................... Alma Field, Supervisor of Art, Providence, Rhode Island
......................... Caroline Zachry, Chairman, Adolescent Study Guidance Committee, Progressive Education Association.
......................... Ralph Tyler, Chairman Evaluations, Eight-Year Study, Progressive Education Association.

Discussion by all of the group.


12:15 - 1:00
LUNCHEON - Tables reserved for Art Group BATES HALL DINING ROOM

1:30 - 3:00
What are the Common Problems of the Various Associations and Groups? What Could be done by an Arts Group in the Progressive Education Association to help in solving them?

Presiding: .................... Elizabeth Gilmore, Western Arts Association

General Discussion by all members of the Group

Summary of points by: ............ Esther Huffman, Southeastern Arts Association.
(August 4 -- continued)

3:30 - 5:00  Opportunity for Smaller Group
Discussion if the Interests of
Any Sub-Groups are Strong Enough
To Make this Practical - Otherwise Unplanned.

Committee to arrange for Sub-
Groups  Mrs. Virginia D.
Haskins, Eastern Arts Association.
........................ Dana Vaughn,
Rhode Island School of Design.
........................ Marion Miller,
Department of Art Education, National
Education Association.
........................ Eugenia Radka,
Art Group, Eastern Workshop.

It is suggested that one group may
be interested in having Charles Horn
explain his work in constructing Art
Tests.

6:15 - 7:00  DINNER  BATES HALL DINING
ROOM

8:00  GENERAL MEETING  BATES ASSEMBLY HALL

Presiding: .................. Dr. Harold Rugg,
Teachers College, Columbia University.
Recorder: .................. Joseph Marchetti,
Eastern Arts Association

The Arts in American Life ..... Ruth Reeves

10:00  SONGS  .................. Dr. Rudolph Wittenberg;
at the piano

11:00  Off to the SAVOY in Harlem, New
York City -- inexpensive and
exciting for those who like to
look around -- otherwise unplanned.

Planners: .................. Beatrice L. Harrison
........................ Gordon Dunn,
........................ Edwin Ziegfield

AUGUST 5, FRIDAY

7:45 - 8:30  BREAKFAST  BATES HALL DINING
ROOM