DEBATING THE STUDY OF THE PAST: 
A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN HISTORY CURRICULUM 
AND INSTRUCTION BETWEEN 1890 AND 1920

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandmother, Kathleen Louise Fahrig Schwarzkopf, who died all too soon. But in the years that I was privileged to spend with her, she was my greatest teacher. Importantly, she taught me and to help others when and where I could. Although she did not live to see it, she inspired me to become a teacher and a piece of her is with me every time a take on seemingly insurmountable task. By taking on and completing this research project, I hope I have made her proud.
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Abstract

This paper presents the research design, rationale, and the results of a historical document-based research project to answer the following two-part question: How do popular and dominant political, social, and economic forces affect the creation and delivery of American history curriculum in public schools between 1890 and 1920 and how is this history significant in today’s public schools? This document-based research study employed historical research methods to analyze the discourse between scholars in history and practitioners in education around the formation and delivery of curriculum in American history. A theory of historical understanding was utilized as a framework for guiding analysis of the documents and forming conclusions about the nature and delivery of American history curriculum.

The archives of the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Historical Association (AHA) were particularly scrutinized, as these were the premier professional associations of their day. In addition to these archives, three documentary sources from the time period were analyzed to compromise four distinct conversations between educators and historians. Through an analysis of the documentary record, the following three themes which became the principal findings emerged: 1. American history has been taught to inculcate patriotism is a celebration of American democratic institutions. 2. American history has been viewed as an essential course of study for entrance to college and has been a way to imbue students with other higher-order thinking skills (i.e. the ability to read complex texts, analyze historical literature, evaluate source materials, create an original argument/thesis from historical records). 3. American history has been used to teach lessons in morality and character-building.

The chief findings were also the following: despite a powerful central decision making authority (tantamount to today’s Federal Department of Education), there was widespread
cohesion and similarities between programs of study and curriculum in American history throughout the United States. Informed discussions between and within the NEA and the AHA suggest that historians and educators at the administrative level worked to maintain that cohesion and to guard it against outside political influences, although they were rarely successful. Owing to its proximity to research universities, the Boston Public Schools was the site of many of these curricular innovations and fell victim to tendencies to teach American history in order to *nationalize* immigrants and inculcate a sense of American-style democratic traditions. The discussions between the NEA and the AHA have been under-researched, yet an analysis of their work informs both scholars in history and education practitioners today. In the modern day, under the pressures of federal educational initiatives such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and other funding initiatives, not to mention the testing and accountability movements, it is more important than ever to maintain informed communication between professionals in history and educators in order to perpetuate the teaching of American history. Many of today’s public schools include a goal or mission statement that involves a civic or social mandate. In that light, American history gains increasing importance in an already crowded curriculum and thus an understanding of how this curriculum is shaped and delivered becomes imperative.

*Keywords:* American history curriculum, National Education Association, American Historical Association, historical understanding, curriculum frameworks, curriculum standards, curriculum evaluation.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem and its Significance

In a modern age where the forces of globalization are constantly changing our political, economic, and cultural landscape, students need social studies education and in particular-access to the study of history in order to be civically active and culturally literate. Unfortunately, many students in public schools do not have regular access to social studies curricula (especially in the primary grades) and access to history learning at subsequent levels of public education is further complicated by confounding debates about the nature of learning history and what should be included in the curriculum. In order to ascertain that core knowledge and re-imagine a social studies curriculum with aims appropriate for the 21st century, we must know what has come before us.

The United States at the dawn of the 20th century looked surprisingly like it does today, with massive waves of immigration that provided challenges to and also opportunities for social studies educators to reexamine ideas about what it meant to study history. Today’s curriculum battles in social studies can therefore benefit and be informed by an examination of the curriculum battles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a time period that provides a roadmap for modern and future work in social studies curriculum-making. Many scholars have written extensively on the history of education and in particular social studies curriculum with widely varying opinions, but all eliciting the same call for a reexamination of curriculum and instruction (M. Downey & Levstik, 1988; T. Fallace, 2009; Hirsch Jr, 1996; Ravitch, 1987, 2010b; Tyack, 1974, 1989; Wineburg, 2004; Yilmaz, 2008a, 2008b; Zimmerman, 2002). By examining debates in the making and delivery of American history curriculum, we can find a way forward by looking back at the past.
Social studies education is and has been under-attack by those competing over what knowledge is necessary and worthy to learn. This struggle, or what Apple (2008) calls the *politics of knowledge*, gains increasing momentum as school districts devote more time and energy to meeting the mandates of federal laws (i.e. No Child Left Behind) and state testing. The modern debate concerning social studies curriculum is also occurring in a geo-political environment very similar to the late 19th and early 20th century. Debates about social studies curriculum at this time hold the key to understanding what our students engaged in social studies work need to know and be able to do in order to think critically and civically participate in a global society.

These are problems and questions that we have certainly faced in the past and in particular in the early decades of the 20th century as massive waves of immigration, unprecedented industrialization, urbanization, and geo-political conflicts (e.g. the rise and fall of imperialism, colonialism, and World War I) caused American public education to undertake a new role in preparing citizens for active engagement in their communities (Field, 1976; Fisher, 1987; Goldin, 1998; Graham, 1993; James D. Anderson, Larry Cuban, Carl F. Kaestle, & Ravitch, 2001; Zinn, 2005). Although the author does concede similarities between the past and the present, it is also obvious that we are well into a new millennium full of challenges for the future that are also unprecedented in our nation’s history. This new millennium should provide us pause to reflect on the fact that our future educational prosperity may indeed lie in a closer examination of the past.

**Practical Goals**

This research projects helps me to fulfill some practical goals as a student of history and also as a teacher. The research project examined the history of the work that I do every day and
in doing so it helps me to be a better teacher and leader by informing me of both the positive and negative effects curricular trends and new innovations. This work has informed my work as a curriculum director and instructional coach. I have exposed my fellow teachers to readings on a theory of historical understanding and the websites we have viewed together have helped us to create new lesson plans that allow more students to access the curriculum in interesting and enjoyable ways. This culmination of this research project will also provide me with a degree, which will help me to advance professionally.

**Intellectual Goals**

The research design helped me to fulfill my intellectual goals by providing me with a more nuanced and deeper understanding of how history curriculum has been made and debated. The research design also deepened my knowledge of my work within the larger scheme of historical understanding. It helped me to place my work as teacher in the larger process of the evolution of teaching and learning. My hope is that this work will become part of a much older and ongoing scholarly debate about what it means to form, know, and act on historical knowledge. This work and the significance of the study of history in general is vital to our culture and an understanding of ourselves as “beings who live within some conception of time, some knowledge that certain things have gone before, are changing, and will change in the future” (Fulbrook, 2002).

**Research Question**

I addressed the task above by engaging in a historical archival-based research project. The research project was grounded by this two-part research question: *How do popular and dominant political, social, and economic forces affect the creation and delivery of American history curriculum in public schools between 1890 and 1920 and how is this history significant*
in today’s public schools? Furthermore, the research project was guided by a theory of historical understanding, which served as a useful lens through which to analyze documents and this theory provided a framework through which to draw conclusions. The research design helps to fulfill the practical goals of understanding what it means to teach and learn American history by identifying and analyzing what skills were deemed necessary. In part, this analysis helped to inform and reassure me of my work as an educator. Simply put, it helped me to answer the questions: Why do I study and teach American history and what is its value to students and to the maintenance of a democratic society?

Summary of Contents

The remainder of this thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework, a theory of historical understanding, and it suggests how that framework is significant for interrogating the research question and understanding how to analyze the documentary-based evidence. Chapter 2 reviews the current research on American history curriculum and posits that research into one of three different categories that are informed by the theoretical framework as well as by the practical and intellectual goals described above. Chapter 3 describes the research design in depth. In this chapter, I introduce the concept of historical archival-based research and suggest its usefulness for this particular project as well as some of the “problems of doing history” especially surrounding concepts such as validity and reliability. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of how I will guard against threats to both validity and reliability, the protection of human subjects, and finally I suggest limitations for this research project. Chapter 4 provides historical background information for understanding the context within which debates about the nature, form, and purpose of American history curriculum occurred between 1890 and 1920.
Highlighted concepts include the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration on a growing public school population. It is vital to understand these changes in America in order to understand how the public school responded to them. Chapter 5 begins the analysis of the documentary record. The analysis posits three themes that exist within four different conversations. Chapter 6 describes how these conversations over the purpose and structure of American history curriculum were carried out in the Boston Public Schools. This school district serves as a historical case study for the larger debates going on across the United States. This thesis culminates in Chapter 7 which explains the results of an analysis of the documentary records, gathers some conclusions from this analysis, and it suggests some limitations of this research as well as further research that may be conducted.

**Theoretical Framework**

*A Theory of Historical Understanding*

My doctoral project utilized a theory of historical understanding. A theory of historical understanding guided my research and my conclusions by offering a framework, which allowed me to explore past curriculum documents with a focus on how students come to know and truly understand history. A theory of historical understanding allowed me to move further in my investigation of the literature by helping me to see history learning as more than an educative act, but rather “a cultural act that teaches students about warrant, about the nature of understanding, and about their own role in making historical knowledge” (Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000, p. 3).

A theory of historical understanding is much more than a framework guiding how to understand the body of knowledge we know as history. More importantly, it is a way of understanding how students’ ideas of the past develop as well as their ability to critique the
historiography of narrative literature in the discipline (P. J. Lee, 2005). A theory of historical understanding posits a framework that diffuses across several important processes in the teaching and learning of history. Those processes involve viewing history as a cognitive practice and also learning history as a transformative development where historical content is delivered, understood, reflected upon, assessed, and in some way re-imagined by the learner. More specifically, a theory of historical understanding explains the structure of historical content knowledge at the same time that it models a way in which students can come to learn and understand history as a subject-specific discipline (VanSledright, 2011).

Before beginning a more focused discussion of a theory of historical understanding, it is important to discuss briefly the development of history as a subject-specific domain of knowledge. Certainly, “history as a discipline has its own mode of inquiry, networks of concepts and principles, theoretical frameworks, symbolic systems, vocabularies, and modes of self-regulation” (Lévesque, 2008, p. 7). Following this definition, a theory of historical understanding could be seen to have roots in the reform of history learning during the Enlightenment philosophical movement of the 18th century and in particular in the works of Leopold Von Ranke, who sought to reform the discipline of history by making it less subjective. Von Ranke proposed studying history with a level of detachment and through the use of scientific inquiry (i.e. scrutinizing primary source documents and materials), thereby establishing the first methods for modern empirical historical inquiry. From the Enlightenment forward, history learning has evolved into many forms, but a key component of historical knowledge formation has been the reliance on logical and scientific scrutiny of past evidence to postulate new and workable hypotheses about the past. The objects of study, findings, and methods employed in history learning have certainly changed over time, making the discipline more
complex and more diffuse in the subjects it examines (Lévesque, 2008). However, what remains at the heart of history from which a theory of historical understanding draws is the notion of structured inquiry through the investigation of a specific type of disciplinary knowledge.

History teaching too has its own storied past and a number of researchers have contended that misunderstandings and schisms between those practicing school history and academic historians have further muddied a contemporary understanding of what it means to learn, know, and practice skills inherent in historical investigation (Carretero, 2011; Levesque, 2008; P. Seixas, 1999; Wineburg, 2001; Yilmaz, 2008a). A theory of historical understanding has not been as widely adopted in school classrooms as its proponents would like given that teachers often focus on the simple memorization of facts under the guise that students need a “vocabulary” through which to speak about history (Levstik & Pappas, 1992). Indeed, far too few students today truly learn the skills they need to authentically engage with and understand historical information. Instead, students are provided the “master narratives” often found in history textbooks thereby coming to see history as a fixed phenomenon instead of a moveable and interpretive domain of knowledge. These “muddy waters” notwithstanding, a theory of historical understanding posits a concrete framework for ascertaining how students come to know history that is rooted in part in the history of the discipline itself.

A theory of historical understanding developed in the late 20th century as theorists from differing fields (neuroscience, education, psychology, and history) converged and attempted to understand how students come to learn history in deep and meaningful ways. Implicit in the search for knowledge were a multitude of definitions and debates about what it means to learn history and how history differs from other types of learning that may seem like true historical inquiry such as simple storytelling. Significantly, Nora (1996) contends that there is also a
difference between “memory-history” and “disciplinary history” in which memory history is a living and contemporary knowledge evolving out of a society whereas disciplinary history is a reconstruction of the past which is always fallible. However, Kelly, et al. (2007) suggests that “unlike collective memory, a disciplinary approach to history makes transparent the evidence and methods that are used to construct narratives in the process of arriving at and debating informed interpretations of the past” (p. 121). As such, both Nora (1996) and Kelly, et al. (2007) suggest that historical understanding as a theory differs from historical content knowledge or simply knowing the past. David Lowenthal (1985) also takes up the debate about what it means to learn history as he posits that heritage learning often masquerades as history but is nothing more than a naïve use of the past. On the contrary, Lowenthal suggests, true history learning involves a genuine inquiry into the past using a specific set of skills and a mode of thinking which then elicits a specific type of knowledge. Because a theory of historical understanding suggests a deep knowledge and a critical set of skills to understand and apply historical information, it moves past the above mentioned debates about memory-history or narrative (story-telling) history to encompass a wider set of skills and a more nuanced body of knowledge that ascertains how students come to investigate the past in critical ways.

The variables that every historian must consider in any inquiry (i.e. historical significance and empathy) are also part of the study of history itself and have important implications for a theory, which seeks to transform history into an act in which understanding becomes a historical, developmental and cultural undertaking (Seixas et.al,1996). What is more, history as a discipline has (for over two hundred years) stressed the notion of continuity and change as well as that individual actors and not an almighty and all-powerful being can change society in fundamental ways. The notions of individual agency as well as continuity and change are fundamental to the
theory of historical understanding and constitute (to varying degrees—as will be discussed later) core tenets of the theory. Still, other researchers have posited that it is not enough to know the theories behind historical inquiry and historiography in general because that does not reveal how people think historically (Lévesque, 2008; Barton, 1996). The practice of historical understanding, while involving all of the above-mentioned concepts, demands much more. Lévesque (2008) suggests that “historical thinking is, indeed, far more sophisticated and demanding than mastering substantive (content) knowledge, in that it requires the acquisition of such knowledge to understanding the procedures employed to investigate its aspects and conflicting meanings” (p. 27).

To Peter Seixas (1996), six key elements give form to the nature of history. These elements are: significance, epistemology and evidence, continuity and change, progress and decline, empathy and moral judgment, and historical agency. According to Seixas, these six factors allow the student to move beyond the simple recitation of past facts and see “history as the discipline through which we organize the residua of the past into a form meaningful for us in the present” (p. 777). These six elements of history are the fundamentals, which all students must fully employ in order to know, understand, and indeed manipulate historical data. But, these six principles are not in use by all theorists engaged in the field of historical understanding. There is a general tolerance among theorists for including different core tenets while theorists also acknowledge that core tenets such as: causality, historical significance, and individual agency are key parts of the theory. By acknowledging these elements and allowing for a certain amount of diversity of opinion as to which core tenets are necessary for true historical understanding, students come to know history intimately and use it in order to interpret current and past phenomena. Not understanding history fully is to see the past as fixed, remote, and in
many ways—useless. However, by employing these concepts, the student of history confronts a past that is both human and malleable.

As was mentioned, educational psychologists and neuroscientists have also contributed to a theory of historical understanding by examining the cognitive processes that are engaged when a student attempts to learn history. However, the history of educational psychologists’ research into how students come to know the past is somewhat convoluted. Wineburg (2001) suggests that psychologists, who had been concerned with history learning since the late 19th century, often examined the discipline in vastly different ways. What this means in the present day is that a theory of historical understanding which is derived in part from their work is often difficult to apply to past psychological studies because while researchers may all use the word *history*, they define the concept of history learning in dramatically different ways. This notwithstanding, educational psychologists have made significant contributions to a theory of historical understanding by examining, describing, and assessing how academic disciplines constitute different ways of not only knowing information, but also constructing meaning about the past. These different modes of learning, which are commonly referred to as academic disciplines, engage the learner in the use of different tools of inquiry, vocabularies, and require the learner to establish warrant for truth made in a claim—e.g. the historian’s use of primary sources or the documentary record to make a claim about a past event (Wineburg, 2001).

With the decline of behaviorism in the mid-twentieth century and the rise of the cognitive scientific revolution, educational psychologists (albeit belatedly since studies commenced in the 1990s) began to examine how students come to know and learn history. Cognitive scientists have engaged in a wide variety of research practices concerning the teaching of history, how students learn history, and the use of textbook history. These three major classifications of their research
(Wineburg, 2001) constitute how they have contributed to a theory of historical understanding. Notably, cognitive scientists and psychologists have suggested that students are far from being *tabula rasas*. Students bring into the classroom any number of personal histories and cultural tools for perceiving the past that must be considered when attempting to engage students in true historical understanding. For example, a student from a minority or socio-economically underprivileged background may tend to see the grand and classic historical narrative of American prosperity and progress as false or they may refuse to refute the accepted narrative believing instead and against what experience and the documentary record may show that progress in America is possible for all (Terzian & Yeager, 2007). Here, cognitive scientists have stressed that a theory of historical understanding must take into account variance in individual students. The theory indeed does exactly that by providing a framework where students can investigate the past and see it not as a fixed construct, but rather a series of changing notions that are determined in part by individual perspective.

Researchers have applied a cognitive approach to learning history and in doing so have examined how a theory of historical understanding can help teachers to instruct students in historical content while simultaneously investigating the critical skills that history demands. These studies have all made contributions to a theory of historical understanding by suggesting the skills teachers must focus on in order to engage students fully in articulating a deep knowledge of history. For example, in a research study of Advanced Placement (AP) teachers’ methods of instruction in reading and writing for the AP document-based question essay, Monte-Santo (2008) suggests that not all opportunities to read and write in history are equally valuable.

Furthermore, Monte-Santo (2008) found that opportunities to read and view history as an interpretation of the past and not as an immovable recitation of facts along with repeated
opportunities to engage in the use of primary sources, and repeated practice in composing interpretations of the past using concrete evidence to support ones claims significantly fostered student’s ability to understand history in a deep and meaningful way as well as obtain higher scores on the AP exam. Monte-Santo’s research tests a theory of historical understanding for its usefulness as a teaching method in very significant ways. It suggests that the core tenets of a theory of historical understanding: documentary/evidence-based support of claims, viewing the past as an interpretation, and supporting historical thinking by focusing on notions such as: individual agency, historical empathy, and societal progress are all significant teaching strategies for helping students to both achieve academically and to truly know the past.

Following in this same vein of thought, which posits that history is not a fixed concept, cognitive approaches to studying history learning have also focused on the use of “textbook history”. Research in this field has important connections to a theory of historical understanding since history textbooks are the primary way students come to learn and understand history in the classroom and because textbooks often lack the essential knowledge and opportunities to practice the type of learning that the theory deems essential. Using cognitive approaches, researchers have suggested that textbooks do not allow students to develop and thus practice the critical inquiry skills needed to understand history such as: determining the goal of an event or program, fostering a meta-discourse of history by talking about the implications of judgments made in the past, and indicating that recalling the past is indeterminate at best (Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg, et al., 2007; 2009). Research such as this has helped teachers to engage students with other materials or with the textbook itself in order to practice authentic historical inquiry. As can be seen from the above mentioned description, a theory of historical understanding has deep roots in many disciplines and is interconnected to the historiography of the past.
As such, a theory of historical understanding has important implications for interpreting past documents on curriculum as well as the debate surrounding this curriculum at the turn of the 20th century. It was a useful lens from which to gather insights about how those in the past viewed not only the utility of history learning, but also the debate itself because it allowed me to take into account the fundamentals of history learning such as: historical significance, context, agency, continuity and change, as well progress and decline. The cognitive scientific aspects of a theory of historical understanding guided my perusal of the documentary history to discover what teaching and learning methods were suggested as essential to understanding history. Furthermore, the cognitive elements of this theory guided my interpretations of what the curriculum prescribed for learners. A theory of historical understanding was also useful in interpreting the debate over history curriculum from a learner’s perspective by providing a lens through which to view how curriculum makers actually viewed the learner. This was useful not only in terms of what they should be able to do, but also their individual characteristics and how those learner-specific traits would and should play out in the history classroom (Traille, 2007). Furthermore, this cognitive component of a theory of historical understanding was the framework through which to analyze how individual characteristics were a part of or excluded from the production of student work in history.

Critically, historical understanding helped to explain how interpretations of the past have changed and permeated popular beliefs and culture as well as how these same interpretations have been a product of that culture (Carretero, 2011; Yilmaz, 2008b). By stressing the notions of change, progress, and individual agency, a theory of historical understanding uncovered how curriculum makers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries believed history should be learned and what knowledge within the discipline was important to Americans at this time. The theory
reveals the more subtle nuances of the academic and popular cultures, thereby allowing the project to make some assertions about how American culture in the past might affect current American debates about the meaning, form, and function of school history.

A theory of historical understanding was used in two principal ways. First, the theory was used as a lens through which to code and analyze the documents which led to three principal findings or themes that will be discussed in chapter five. These themes become quite literally the reasons scholars and administrators articulated for why American history should be taught. Second, a theory of historical understanding was used to highlight within the documents how scholars and educators at the administrative level (these people were sometimes, but not always classroom teachers) talked about how to teach American history. The theoretical framework highlighted concepts such as discovering history and asking important questions of primary and secondary sources instead of memorizing data and facts. The use of the theory in this way is particularly important for answering the research question in so much as it helps to partially highlight how past social forces are still at work in the same way today.

An important part of that debate and an interesting window through which to see American culture, both past and present, is through curriculum and its prescribed standards. Schooling in the United States, whether public or private, is the universal experience among all members of society. The curriculum in turn guides that schooling experience, suggesting what the society has deemed important to know and be able to do given the current socio-economic environment. However, there are other important factors besides economics and social norms that mold the curriculum. In general, a theory of historical understanding helped to illuminate those variables which guide and have guided the assumptions inherent in theories about academic bodies of knowledge. Since a theory of historical understanding provided a multi-
faceted approach to interpreting the curriculum and the documentary-base concerning this same debate, the theory provides the most suitable framework through which to guide interpretations and observations while remaining objective and transparent. This research-based approach is crucial and a theory of historical understanding is all the more useful in light of past and current history standards debates which often reveal how contentious history can be and what history means to American society (Kelly, et al., 2007; Seixas, 2001). Portions of this debate are discussed in the subsequent literature review.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

This research project examined how history and social studies curriculum debates in the past might illuminate modern day debates about what is important for students to know and be able to do in history and social studies. The literature reviewed here is not meant to solely illuminate the historical work that has been conducted on curriculum making in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although those broad sketches of American public education have contributed greatly to our understanding of the modern curricular climate in the social studies, this review is organized around the central tenets of the theoretical framework, a theory of historical understanding, as well as the research question: How do popular and dominant political, social, and economic forces affect the creation and delivery of American history curriculum in public schools between 1890 and 1920 and how is this history significant in today’s public schools? The theoretical framework served as guideline for understanding the current body of research.

Previous research reviewed here has examined history teaching and learning by focusing on the following questions:

1. How have ongoing debates on what and how history should be taught influenced classroom practices over time?

2. What skills are necessary to engage in authentic historical inquiry and what does this progression in student knowledge look like when expressed in student work?

3. How do individual social and ethnic differences affect learning outcomes for students in history and social studies classes?

Each of these questions informs the bodies of literature examined below. The first question examines debates about American history curriculum making from a historical perspective with a
focus on how those debates have actually affected classroom practices. This is significant for my problem of practice because it informs me of what scholarly work has been done in the past, and it serves as a repository of what is already known about American history curriculum and instruction. The second question recalls the theoretical framework and links past and current research on a theory of historical understanding with the actual debates and practices of scholars and teachers. This body of literature is significant because it mirrors my research question and helps me to understand what is known about the skills and proficiencies involved in truly understanding American history. The third body of literature takes into account the demographic and social context of American history and teaching and learning. This body of literature draws heavily on the qualitative research tradition. It was extremely important in helping me to understand how context, both internal/student-based and the external/outside environment, affect history teaching and learning over time.

As has been mentioned, past political and demographic/social forces have exerted pressure on curriculum makers in social studies that have both helped and hindered their work. Because these forces are without a doubt intimately intertwined with the historical and social science content under study, research on demographic and social forces and their effects on curriculum making and implementation in the classroom is particularly applicable. With a few exceptions, the research reviewed here was limited to that which addresses social studies and history curriculum at the secondary school level and the debates that occurred about curriculum making at both the local and national levels and within both the urban and rural public school context. Although the doctoral project was limited by time period, the research reviewed here, while focusing on the period of approximately 1890-1920, also includes research in social studies from the modern day and from several points in the early 20th century in order to draw
upon demographic and social trends between the two time periods and establish a continuity of thought on this subject throughout the past 120 years.

**Debates Concerning What History Should be Taught and Why**

In his book, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*, Herbert Kliebard traces the evolution of the public school curriculum by examining the debate between various forces over the content and form of the curriculum. Kliebard (1995) concludes that “curriculum fashions, it has long been noted, are subject to wide pendulum swings” (p. 178). The pendulum swings are the result of competing political interests that seek to remake the mission of public schools in their own mold. These political interest groups have remade curriculum in drastic ways and in doing so have greatly influenced the role of history and social studies education in the student’s daily life. Interest groups have been both advocates and opponents of the inclusion of history and social studies content in the general curriculum. Kliebard further notes that no one popular curriculum current (i.e. humanist, social reconstructionist, or essentialist) ever dies completely, but rather these currents wax and wane as popular support changes for them. This support (or the lack thereof) is often dependent upon American societies’ social, economic, and intellectual needs at any given time. These needs are often defined and then redefined by the changing economy, demographic changes, and social/cultural/intellectual currents (Riley & Brown, 2004). Nowhere is this more apparent than within the social studies and history curriculum because this content area is precisely the realm of study for observing society under change. In other words, it is within this content area that these debates about societies’ demands on public schools emerge and are examined using the historian’s lens.

Kliebard (1995) documents closely the development of history and social studies curriculum, emphasizing how the content area was viewed by these competing interest groups
who had different views as to the ultimate purpose of schooling. For example, in his discussion of John Dewey and the University of Chicago Laboratory School, Kliebard notes that Dewey sought to reconstruct curriculum around the various interest groups and amalgamate all of their interests into one document. But, Kliebard simultaneously suggests that Dewey also believed that “the general aim of teaching history was to lead the child to an appreciation of the values of social life and to let the child see the forces that led to effective cooperation among human beings” (p. 65). This example illustrates the usefulness of Kliebard’s work on curriculum making in history and social studies. He carefully illustrates how Dewey and others (i.e. Harris and Hall and their work on how to define what constitutes separate bodies of knowledge) viewed the purposes of social studies and how they worked together and against one another to forge a modern idea of curriculum making.

Kliebard also makes connections between curriculum making and the wider social goals of political and educational leaders. In a discussion of how social studies education could ameliorate some perceived societal problems at the turn of the 20th century Kliebard suggests that “with concern about an undesirable class of immigrants on the rise, it was to the schools generally and to the social studies in particular that American leaders turned as the most efficacious way of introducing American institutions and inculcating American norms and values” (p. 108). Thus, he indicates that social studies education has often been used as one way for a particular group to respond to the needs of American society.

Echoing Kliebard (1995), Barton et al., 1996 provide insight into why history curriculum remains a highly contested topic in the modern era and why so little curriculum making appears to connect in meaningful ways with research on historical understanding. In a series of essays on the role and relationship between public policy, research, and history curriculum-making, Barton
et al. delve into how history curriculum was used in the late 20th century to meet perceived societal needs. In this series of essays, Linda Levstik notes that curriculum in history remains highly contested because as Thornton (1992) suggested “social studies curriculum is closely aligned with the values of American Society—and the controversy is sometimes subdued at the classroom level” (p. 393). Other essays suggest that more research is needed in the field of history education in general in order to more closely align curricula with a theory of historical understanding (Downey in Barton et al., 1996, p. 397). Still, other essayists suggest that the student perspective on learning history is grossly misunderstood and absent from the debate altogether but could provide a significant framework for understanding how students personalize instruction and the curriculum in order to form new knowledge and practice critical skills (Epstein in Barton et al., 1996, pp. 399-400). Taken as a work of history themselves, these essays suggest that there are continuing and vital connections between public policy, the work of historians, and the work of history teachers in classrooms throughout the United States as well as a need to address history curriculum within a historical context and with a focus on connecting curriculum to how students learn history.

Barton (2008) conducted a broad literature review of previous work on student’s understanding of history in order to fully identify the scope of the work in the fields of history education, social studies education, educational psychology, and literacy. His literature classifies existing research into three broad categories: research which identifies what students know about the past as well as their ability to make connections to past events, research on students’ use of historical evidence, and the social factors which give rise to students’ ideas about history while connecting these ideas to the school curriculum (p. 241). Barton’s third category is particularly interesting because it serves to connect students’ knowledge to classroom learning—the
culmination of the active curriculum. Of particular interest is VanSledright’s (1997) case study of students in grades 5, 8, and 12 which examined students’ views on learning American history with a focus on how students perceived the utility of their history classroom experiences and what they believed was the ultimate purpose of learning history. VanSledright found that there was a certain consensus among the 30 students he surveyed about the purpose of American history which was to learn and memorize a series of putative facts. Even though this view was more pronounced in the elementary grades (p. 549), VanSledright also notes that “the moral lessons history is supposed to hold, according to these students, are subject to a variety of interpretations, arguments and points of view, rendering their moral certainty as elusive as any historical account” (p. 550). This has implications for history and social studies curricula and more importantly for the ways in which students come to know and understand historical information. Moreover, it says much about the context for the inclusion of character education, here defined as the skill of ethical reasoning, into the history curriculum. VanSledright concludes that based upon his case study along with other evidence such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)-1987 and 1994 results are reported, that students’ ideas about the value of studying American history along with what they actually learn signifies that a distinct change in the American history curriculum is needed. VanSledright suggests a move away from the American history survey courses of the past where the memorization of countless facts is common to a course where students are able to learn the contesting views of a given historical event and are provided opportunities to analyze various accounts in order to truly form historical knowledge and utilize that knowledge (p. 554).

Curriculum delivery and the advent of curriculum changes is the subject of Larry Cuban’s (1993) historical analysis of curriculum in American classrooms between 1880 and
1990. Taking a slightly different perspective than Kliebard (1995), Cuban studies the same curricular innovations and the social/political forces that affect these changes but with a focus on classroom teaching and an analysis of classroom observations of teaching. Cuban’s ultimate goal in this work is to ascertain why so few curricular innovations truly make a lasting impact on teacher’s instructional practices. Cuban suggests six reasons related to the structure of school curriculum, administrative policies and school bureaucracies, and social/demographic changes in school populations to suggest that teacher centered curricula and teaching practices persist while child centered and other curricular and pedagogical innovations rise and fall in popularity (pp. 14-20).

In his investigation on history curriculum and instruction between 1890 and 1990, Cuban finds that many teachers still used a recitation and Socratic method to teach history curriculum. He notes that in urban schools in upstate New York, often history instruction was viewed positively and that skillful teachers followed a curriculum that encouraged the use of field trips, maps, debates, and other discussions that connected the student to the text. Educators at this time also noted that history could be too formulaic for some students and that it relied too heavily on a recitation of facts instead of an authentic compilation of knowledge deduced from critical examination of documents, records, and other sources of information. Cuban’s work here is useful because it helps to illuminate how history teachers viewed their own teaching as well as how others observed students’ engagement level and understanding of the content. Similar attention to teacher instruction in history classrooms and the fate of history and social studies as a content area has also been conducted in the late twentieth century.

Ronald Evans’ book, The Social Studies Wars, describes the advent of social studies and history curriculum within the larger context of the development of public schooling in America.
Evans’ thesis is “that what began as a struggle among interest groups gradually evolved into a war against progressive social studies that has strongly influenced the current and future direction of the curriculum” (p. 1). In successive chapters, Evans (2004) suggests that social studies curriculum has always been highly sensitive to societal influences and outside, often politically motivated forces. In turn, these forces have determined what historical content knowledge students learn and the practices of teachers in the classroom which further affects how students learn history. Beginning with the formation of the National Education Association’s (NEA) Committee of Ten in the late 1880s and the subsequent Committee of Seven formed by the American Historical Association (AHA) at the request of the NEA, Evans examines the challenges to social studies education and learning within the context of particular time periods (see also Ravitch, 2000). Vital to our understanding of the relationship between history curriculum and how students actually learn history is Evans’ conclusion that social studies education’s central problem is “the failure of classroom practice to live up to the potential for interesting and engaging teaching worthy of the social issues we face as citizens” (p. 176).

While this is perhaps an oversimplification because there are teachers that are truly engaging students in social studies classrooms across the country with historical and modern problems relevant to them as students, it is also a correct summary of much of the research discussed here.

Further tracing the historical link between curriculum and popular social movements, Fallace (2009) reviews the historical literature and the debate surrounding the influence of the 1916 NEA Committee on the Social Studies Report (CSS). This particular report is important in so much as it is generally recognized as the beginning of the social studies movement in public education. Furthermore, it represents, for the purposes of this study, the beginning of how educators understood the ways in which students learn history and what skills they deemed
important. Fallace examines the literature surrounding the CSS report in order to compose a new interpretation which focuses on John Dewey’s indirect influence over the committee members. Importantly, Fallace maintains that it was Dewey’s ideas about progressive and child-centered education articulated in works such as *Democracy and Education* (1916) that are most present in the report and thus represent the core epistemological thrust of the social studies field. Even though Dewey himself articulated very basic ideas that would later become more complex writings on the nature and purpose of history education, Fallace contends that Dewey’s ideas provided a philosophical bond for CSS members that are present in their recommendations. As a nod to the importance of the report for modern consideration of how students learn history, Fallace suggests that “the CSS report is one of the defining documents of the period. It is not just an important part of our educational heritage, but of our national heritage as well because it demonstrates how progressive reformers reconciled the seemingly contradictory intellectual currents of the period” (p. 603). Fallace’s suggestions have important implications for how we understand the teaching and learning of history as well as how and why educators have compartmentalized knowledge into specific content areas (i.e. history vs. social studies). Here too, research concerning the form of curriculum as discipline specific or interdisciplinary has important consequences for understanding how students learn history.

Gardner and Boix-Mansilla (1994) suggest in their work on the debate between disciplinary knowledge and teaching for understanding, skill, and teaching across content areas that over time human beings have amassed great amounts of information, theories, and other postulations about the natural world and societal phenomena around them. These core ideas are organized into content areas (i.e. history, biology, mathematics) all of which provide students with a different skill set with which to interpret the world around them. The authors prize
disciplinary knowledge as a way of organizing content and curricula because it alone has the power to provide students with these critical skills. However, the authors warn that often mastery of these skills is represented only by “the memorization of facts, which are remarkably bereft of genuine disciplinary knowledge” (p. 207). This has often been the characterization of much of history education and it certainly reflects the classroom experiences of many social studies students. The pedagogical process of history and social studies education is dependent upon a sound curriculum organized around discipline specific knowledge. The authors’ work here is an important reminder that discipline specific curricula in history are important for moving towards great understanding which should be at the heart of public education’s mission.

How students come to know historical knowledge is the subject of Harrison’s (2002) examination of 19th and early 20th century American textbooks. In his examination, Harrison suggests that how students learn history, meaning from what perspective and whether or not students realize that history is not fact-based, but rather interpretive in nature has great meaning for how we understand historical events (in this case: a juxtaposition of the French and American Revolutions) and how what we can learn from past history pedagogy. Harrison examines 15 different textbooks published during the 19th century and used widely in the Indiana State Public Schools, but also throughout the United States. Harrison’s first finding states that all of the reviewed textbooks defined the American Revolution as a war for independence while generally describing the French revolution as bloody war. Harrison remarks that one possible explanation for this was a tendency for Americans to prize their British-Protestant heritage while downplaying and often ignoring completely the contributions of French, Spanish, Irish, and Portuguese Catholics. By the 20th century and especially after 1950, Harrison suggests that textbook views of the French Revolution had softened somewhat and were readily comparing the
American and French Revolutions as similar in cause and effect (i.e. the production of the modern nation-state). For the purposes of this project, Harrison’s work is important because of his examination of how the two revolutions have been written into textbooks and subsequently presented to students is representative of the influence of dominant societal views on ethnicity and tradition (Anglophile vs. Francophile views) on social studies textbooks and by default teaching and learning in history. The relationship between the popular social view of what is acceptable history, the views of historians, and the work history educators has also been the subject of some scholarship.

In his work on the relationship between the NEA and AHA, Hiner (1972) examines how the study of history became an integral part of the core curriculum in public schools and importantly, how history educators helped to enlarge the vision and the responsibility of schools as institutions dedicated to social change. Hiner states that historians and history educators:

institutionalized a fundamental element of nineteenth century thought; they shared a deep commitment to historicism and its two central tenets: the belief that all human life is in a process of continual growth and transformation and the related conviction that the facts and events can be explained only by reference to earlier facts and events. (p. 34)

These fundamental constructs took shape in the work that the NEA and the AHA did in unison. Together, the two groups produced curriculum guidelines for primary and secondary schools and argued for the rightful place of history within the core curriculum in order to produce more intelligent citizens capable of sustaining democratic life. Although much of their work in the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries focused on the reform of college entrance requirements, Hiner points out that the alignment and standardization of college entrance requirements was not the chief reason why the authors suggested that students must study history at the secondary level.
Instead, history was to be the vehicle through which students learned critical thinking skills and as was mentioned above, the necessary skills to be participatory citizens.

Hiner (1972) also describes the relationship between professional historians and educators within the context of changing philosophies about the role of schools at the turn of the 20th century. As social efficiency theorists came to dominate the discourse regarding the proper role of the public school, Hiner notes that historians and history educators in the public schools had to continually examine and justify the inclusion of history in the core curriculum. This, in turn, caused rifts between historians and educators about the content and pedagogy of history curriculum. This changing relationship, characterized by both cooperation and antagonism, affected the form, function, and ultimately the purpose of history education and curriculum as the 20th century dawned. The implicit threat posed by new curriculum theories and philosophies about the role of the school is an important consideration for a project which seeks to understand how curriculum making in history and the societal pressures felt by educators were transmitted into their work in the classrooms.

Whelan (1997) echoes Hiner (1972) in his historical analysis of the Committee of Ten and the CSS. In his introduction, Whelan posits that there is a cause and effect relationship between an individual’s past and present and the significance of this relationship underlies why history has always been an integral part of the core curriculum. Vitally then, this relationship also forms the primary way in which students first come to understand history. Whelan also presents arguments from historians Diane Ravitch and David Warren Saxe who criticize (in both similar and different ways) the Committee of Ten and the CSS as being anti-intellectual (Ravitch) or aimed at reducing the study of history in schools (Saxe). Whelan correctly notes that both Ravitch and Saxe reference and criticize the impact of the Committee of Ten and the
CSS in order to justify a modern call for more history education in schools (Ravitch’s position) or the inclusion of more social issues education (Saxe). Whelan’s work here is an excellent reminder of the role of the professional historian in influencing public school history curricula and thus how students learn history.

Reese (2001) in his history of the relationship between research, philosophical trends, history as a professional field, and public education examines the form of history and social studies curriculum as well as how students learned history in the classroom. Significantly, Reese suggests that history and geography teachers at the turn of the 20th century “used more globes, maps, wall charts, and printed chronologies to relieve some of the tedium of overreliance on textbooks” (p. 87). However, even though textbooks remained at the core of learning history, these “new” innovations helped students to reflect on the relationship between climate, geography, economics, and history. Reese also notes that history and geography classes were important places where students learned to be civic actors—the skills they would need later on in life to be literature consumers of information. As others have noted (Kliebard, 1995; Evans, 2004; Ravitch, 2000), history classes were also used a practice space for nation-building as patriotic paranoia swept American classrooms in the wake of massive immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Indeed, the American history, civics, and geography classroom ultimately became the place where millions of immigrants (adults and children alike) came to learn their adopted countries historical and civic customs. Without a doubt, this wave of patriotic fervor had important implications for the ultimate indoctrination of Americans with a certain vision of the American past.

How historical consciousness is transmitted from one generation to the next, often outside of the classroom (referred to here as the cultural curriculum) is the subject of Wineburg
et al., (2007) intergenerational analysis. Wineburg has suggested that “we learn history everywhere—school hardly possesses a monopoly (Wineburg, 2001, p. 250). With the idea that family and the wider society also teach students important lessons in history, the researchers engaged in a case study analysis of 15 different families across three school districts in order to determine how historical knowledge is communicated from one generation to another. Here, the researchers were also attempting to understand how the construct of the “lived history” of one generation becomes the “available history” of another generation. By examining the forces that affect collective memory, the researchers than suggest that teachers should become familiar with the narratives that students bring to class and use those narratives to promote student learning. In a reference to the types of movies popular in history classrooms, the researchers suggest further that “rather than pretending that we can do away with popular culture, we might try instead to understand how its forces can be marshaled—rather than spurned or simply ignored—to advance students’ historical understanding” (pp. 67-68).

Discerning how students learn history and coming to a fuller understanding of what it truly means to know and do the work of history has preoccupied researchers for the past two decades. In his work on conceptualizing historical understanding, Seixas (1996) reminds us that there are core structures and ideas through which we interpret how students learn history and come to be proficient in historical understanding. Most importantly, the author suggests that “organizing our collective experiences of the past—i.e. the traces and presentations of the past that we encounter in the present—in such a way that they provide a meaning context for our present experiences, is thus the central task of historical understanding” (p. 767). This is vital for understanding and interpreting past history curricula and it is reminiscent of debates among
historians and educators about the purpose of history education (L. Cremin, 1988; Ravitch, 2010a, 2010b; William J. Reese, 2011).

Sam Wineburg, in his book, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, also posits suggestions similar to Seixas (1996) for understanding how students can come to know and benefit from studying history. Importantly, Wineburg (2001) suggests that “there is growing recognition by educators and policymakers that questions of historical reasoning carry implications that go well beyond the curricular borders of history” (p. 51). To be certain, the literature reviewed here shows that there is not only past, but also present interest in investigating how students come to learn history in order promote social, civic, and economic goals. For Wineburg, historical understanding is also dependent on critical skills such as reading and writing (see also: Wineburg, 2006). Wineburg notes that students must be proficient in basic literacy skills in order to truly grapple with the problems of history and civics while applying them to their lived experiences. The skills that students exhibit when learning history and how their knowledge progresses from basic understanding to application and deeper analysis as well authentic inquiry characterizes the second category of research.

The research in this first body of literature suggests that the study of history and social science in the classroom has always been a highly contestable issue. The study of history and social science has caused disagreements between various interests groups not only because the subject matter is very closely linked to society’s ethical and moral beliefs (Evans, 2004; Levstik in Barton et al., 1996) but also because control over the curriculum in history has meant control over what we celebrate about our national past, who we identify as heroes and who we don’t as well as how we inculcate patriotism and foment national unity (Cuban, 1993; Kliebard, 1995; VanSledright, 1997). Curricular debates in history and social studies have not been limited solely
to the purposes of studying history. Certainly, debates about how best to learn history and what constitutes historical learning have continually remerged as popular curriculum fashions rise and fall with the corresponding appearance of new philosophical beliefs about the role of schooling and nature/purpose of education.

**Curriculum Making in History and Authentic Inquiry**

Research on how students acquire new skills that allow for deeper historical understanding is all the more relevant in the modern era where a focus on standardized test scores and measuring achievement is vital to sustaining and defending the validity of the curriculum. Indeed, Lee & Shemilt (2003) suggest that because practitioners must continually defend the need for history and social studies education, a system of analyzing what students know how to do in history which is tied to the curriculum is increasingly important. Lee and Shemilt add to our understanding of what it means to learn history first by defining or in many cases—redefining by presenting contrasting definitions of key concepts in history learning. The concept of progress is clearly important to their assessment model. Here, the authors define progress (which they claim is sometimes confused with ideas such as: change) as not only measuring a student’s ability to think more deeply and critically about history, but also as a set of higher-order thinking skills which allows students to organize their work as historians. At its core, Lee & Shemilt’s progression models attempt to divine students’ preconceptions of history. The researchers suggest that progression models in history are both hierarchical and normative because the models test students’ ideas as they move from a simple to a more complex understanding of history. A progression model in history will not, however give the instructor a neat and easy answer as to whether instruction was successful. Instead, Lee & Shemilt maintain that “a progression model can therefore help us to predict that range of ideas we are likely to
encounter, and the kind of changes we are likely to see as students’ ideas develop” (p. 16). Although the authors caution against using a progression model as a definite and all-encompassing blueprint for student learning, they do suggest that any model should influence the curriculum making process in order to decide how and in what order students’ will learn and practice certain thinking skills in history and also to align the curriculum with national assessments.

Lévesque (2008), in his book *Thinking Historically-Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century*, explores concepts related to thinking historically and creating a deeper historical understanding within the classroom. In his chapter on the use of evidence, Lévesque suggests that “teachers should frame course, unit, and lesson plans as those of modest and realistic historical inquiries, keeping in mind that this method for teaching does not have to frame every lesson or subject” (p. 132). The author recommends that students should be initiated into and have practiced concepts related to historical understanding early in school life thereby making modest inquiries that are tied to curricular learning objectives an enjoyable and practical experience. Lévesque further recommends selecting research questions that would force students to practice skills that lead to a more critical and rigorous application of historical understanding theory. According to Lévesque, this is not an easy process as “students are not educated in a school-history environment that elicits their own thinking about the past, nor does it put students in a situation to collect and select sources and thus struggle with issues of historical meaning and interpretation” (p. 138). To be certain, Lévesque (2008) echoes the other researchers who have viewed school history and the curriculum that guides it as sterile, uninteresting, and void of engagement in the skills students must develop to be literate consumers of historical and cultural information (Barton, 2008; Evans, 2004; Seixas, 1996; Wineburg, 2001; 2006).
Newmann (1991) studied 70 social studies classes in 11 high schools in both urban and rural settings. The researcher attempted to study the impact of classroom thoughtfulness and practice in high-order thinking skills on students’ performance as measured by a post-test persuasive writing examination. Although there are apparent weaknesses in a post-test only research design, chief among them being that there was only one data source available from which to draw conclusions, as well as numerous confounding variables that are not controlled for and pose validity threats to findings. Newmann does compel one’s thinking on what types of learning are important to assess in history and social studies. The essays (the post-test score) were graded similarly to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) essay. The results were congruent with teacher comments that few students knew how to write a coherent and factually correct/logical persuasive essay. For example, only 12% of test takers scored a 4 or 5, which indicates above average proficiency. Newmann indicates importantly that the study of effective social studies education will remain difficult while there is no coherent, organized, and nationally accepted curriculum for the field.

In a historical sense, competing instructional goals are the subject of Scheiber’s (1979) essay on the division between content and pedagogy in the history and social studies classroom. In this essay, Scheiber decries what he terms the “New New Social Studies Movement” for its focus on character education and for its seeming lack of content. Scheiber claims that this over-focus on pedagogy and the new content geared towards the teaching of ethics crowds out the more important historical content within the curriculum. Moreover, it forces students to focus not on the content of history, but rather on what Scheiber views as mindless task-oriented work, not true learning. The remainder of Scheiber’s essay details the relationship between professional historians and educators throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Scheiber’s motive in
describing this history is to suggest that historian’s themselves provided the opportunity for history to take a back-seat to social studies education beginning in the early 20th century. In Scheiber’s mind, the end result has been the abandonment of serious historical inquiry and respect for the field of history as a particular way of knowing and thinking about the natural and social world.

Assessing a student’s understanding of historical significance is the chief concern of two research projects by Peter Seixas (1994; 1997). Seixas (1994) begins with a discussion and definition of historical significance in which he notes that “studying everything is impossible; significance is the valuing criterion through which the historian assesses which pieces of the entire possible corpus can fit into a meaningful and coherent story that is worthwhile” (p. 281). His subsequent case study of 14 tenth graders in a Canadian middle school illuminates our understanding about how students reason about what is significant. Guided by constructivist learning theories, Seixas (1994) selected 14 participants from a pool of 38 possible students by sorting them according to the diversity in their answers about whether or not and why they liked social studies classes. Using a diverse number of participants, Seixas uncovers two major strands in students’ thinking about historical significance: narrative explanations and significance as analogy. Seixas defines narrative explanation by stating that most often students demonstrated that they understood that an event was significant because it has some effect on the contemporary world. Here, students demonstrated that they could easily draw cause and effect patterns from certain events. Seixas explained the concept of analogy by suggesting that students also perceived an event as historically significant if it was something that we must learn from so that it will never happen again. For Seixas and for this project’s purposes this is a troublesome concept because “students speak of these policy lessons as if history were now under control” (p.
294). Although Seixas provides multiple reasoning for this such as students’ faith in progress-based history, or the democratic control of political agenda by a trustworthy populace, Seixas suggests that the interview data are not completely conclusive. The author further notes that students perceived that history was significant for its own sake as an academic subject. This work then constitutes a new way of thinking about history curriculum and how to organize it around new principles associated with historical understanding.

Seixas (1997) tested three different research questions associated with historical significance related to how high school students perceive the concept of historical significance. Using a population of 82 eleventh grade students from four diverse (in terms of race and SES) Canadian high schools, Seixas conducted an exploratory case study using a two-part research questionnaire. Part I of the questionnaire asked students to draw a diagram and rank the most important events in world history in terms of significance and in a manner, which made sense to them. Part II of the questionnaire allowed for reflection on Part I. Seixas’ study elicited a variety of responses that demonstrated that students approached historical significance from many objective and subjective paths. Seixas iterated that this is not surprising given that history and social studies curriculum in Canada is not aligned in any way to the tenets historical understanding, but rather lists dates and facts without any reference to historical understanding reasoning or research. Seixas (1997) concluded with suggestions to teachers to make explicit (within the context of the history classroom) conversations about historical significance in order to foster more critical thinking about historical events and historical understanding.

In an essay on the evolution of historical understanding and how Americans have tested students’ knowledge of history, Wineburg (2004) suggests that the nature and definition of historical understanding still eludes and fascinates us today. Beginning with the earliest tests of
students’ knowledge of history in 1915-1916, researchers have found and Americans have consistently decried our student’s lack of historical knowledge. Wineburg continues by presenting evidence from many sides of this issue, focusing interestingly on comments from Allan Nevins who has criticized such tests as conjuring up a past that never existed. Wineburg continues by calling on the work of statistician Dale Whittington who has suggested that today’s students do about as well on history tests as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. This is a fascinating conclusion given that demographics have changed considerably in 100 years. Importantly for the purposes of this proposal, Wineburg suggests that absent a clear framework for assessing what is meant by historic sense (i.e. historical understanding); test scores will always be abysmal because there is no connection between the curriculum, instruction, the test, and student’s daily lives.

Yilmaz (2008b) suggests new ways to think about history instruction and curriculum-making by drawing on a number of different theoretical and philosophical frameworks in history. For the purposes of promoting historical understanding in the classroom, Yilmaz suggests that teachers must be highly trained in the theoretical foundations of their discipline which is something often overlooked in teacher preparation programs. Yilmaz states, “if teachers lack an adequate understanding of the conceptual foundations of the subject they teach, they are likely to misrepresent content by simplifying it” (p. 38). Yilmaz’s essay, which is for the most part a reflection on the current status of the social studies profession, also focuses on how school history can serve higher purposes and foster historical understanding. The author suggests that the purpose of school history should be to “teach student how to approach and use historical information critically and from multiple perspectives” (p. 40). This is at the core of historical understanding and it suggests that we must build new and different links between the curriculum
and instruction with an eye towards promoting these thinking skills. Yilmaz (2008b) in many ways echoes Evans (2004) who suggests that social studies education is far from a simple academic subject matter, but more importantly it represents a place and context through which Americans have debated about their societies’ values and future.

How students demonstrate their growth in historical understanding is the major theme running throughout the literature discussed here. The research suggests that a number of different skills such as: recognizing cause and effect patterns and understanding the role of context, agency, and significance in the study of history and the design of lesson plans, all promote historical understanding albeit at different levels (Lévesque, 2008). Other research reviewed here has explained how we (historically) have assessed our students’ knowledge of history. The purpose of the literature is to not only understand how our students view history (Seixas, 1994; 1997), but also how we assess historical understanding. Research here has suggested that we need new models to assess and predict student learning that is in line with the tenets of a theory of historical understanding (Lee & Shemilt, 2003) and that we perhaps suffer from ongoing historical amnesia when we decry our students’ lack of knowledge in history as if this deficit were all-together new (Wineburg, 2004). Still other researchers have concluded that a number of curricular enhancements and the better training of teachers in historical content and in historical methods could improve student performance and enhance student’s abilities to think historically (Yilmaz, 2008b). To be certain, this research is vital to understanding what is known about how students learn/have learned history over the past century as our society’s values and our expectations of students have changed with the times.
History Learning Outcomes within Ethnic and Social Contexts

In a historical analysis of culture and power within the 1894 AHA Committee of Ten on Secondary Social Studies, Apple (2002) suggests that it was diversity of thought and different power structures which gave rise to arguably one of the most influential curriculum documents in American educational history. While his analysis does not test, prescribe, or generalize to specific learning outcomes for students within the context of either race or social class, Apple’s essay provides a fascinating lens through which to view subsequent, more modern research on social studies learning outcomes for students. As has been suggested by others, Apple concludes that the main focus for these groups was to create a curriculum document that would allow more students to seek college and university admission as well as bring some uniformity to admissions standards among universities (Cremin, 1988; Kliebard, 1995; Evans, 2004). Each of these competing groups represented different interests and different curriculum philosophies with regards to the formation of a new social studies curriculum. While some wished to preserve the power of classical learning (the humanists) or learning for sake of bettering themselves as individuals, other groups representing the sciences and modern languages were guided by social efficiency theory to form a new social studies curriculum that would teach applicable and useful knowledge.

It is worth noting, as Apple (2002) does, that all members of the committee were male, European-American, and all were college educated. Therefore, it may be concluded that one of the founding documents of the social studies profession is skewed both socially and ethnically because its creators represented a privileged background and because the committee’s composition featured very little, if any, diversity. However, Apple suggests that it is important to remember that the authors of the documents prized diversity itself as a teachable concept and one
that generally was essential to maintaining a democratic society. Apple concludes by suggesting that even though the committee’s recommendations have had little direct effect on public education within the United States, it is within the contents and spirit of this document that one can still find a commitment to diversity of thought and true social innovation which is something social studies curriculum still aspires to today.

Much like Apple (2002), Barth & Shermiss (1980) focus on 19th and 20th century social studies curricular material to suggest how the field has evolved into its modern form. Barth & Shermiss conduct a close reading and analysis of 19th and 20th century history textbooks in order to suggest how the field has developed both culturally and socially. They use this analysis to posit suggestions for how history and social studies textbooks might communicate culturally and socially significant information to diverse groups of learners. The authors suggest that they are not interested in evaluating how interesting textbooks are (the subject of a considerable amount of research), but rather what they can tell us about the evolution and the future of a field, which instructs students on how to think in culturally and social critical and thoughtful ways. Perhaps not surprisingly, the authors find the history and civic textbook content information to be reflective of and worded in ways commensurate with the prejudices of the time period in which they were produced. For example, when comparing texts the authors posit that “another obvious pattern one sees is what we shall call overt celebration. That is, text authors had not the slightest inhibition in editorializing, slanting and recommending American institutions while simultaneously denigrating non-American, i.e., European, African, American Indian peoples and customs” (p. 32). Textbooks, the primary drivers and sources of content knowledge, then can be viewed as truly products of their time ensnared in all the cultural and racial-biases of their time period and not objective tomes of certain and factual information. More importantly, since the
textbook is often the singular source of historical information for students, then student learning outcomes are bound to be affected by whether or not the textbook is biased towards or against that individual student’s social group.

In an effort to connect student learning and social context to a student’s civic participation (here defined as voting), Callahan et al., (2010) conducted a secondary data-analysis of two nationally representative and longitudinal measurements of students’ academic and social performance, the Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement Study (AHAA) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (HEALTH). Using multi-level modeling techniques, the researchers examined how the school might be a facilitator of civic participation for students from diverse economic and social backgrounds. Significantly, the authors found that social studies (particularly American history and civics courses) could be directly and significantly correlated to an increase in a student’s civic literacy and the likelihood that they would vote in the future. These findings also echoed other works that directly linked civic literacy with levels of social and emotional trust (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Yates & Youniss, 1998). However, classes were only influential in selective ways. The authors highlight the necessity of curricular materials to speak to students individual ethnic and social groups in order to promote civic participation and learning. This study is significant in that it represents a modern attempt to assess how well social studies curricular materials meet at least one of the goals of the subject itself: to promote civic participation and knowledge within the added context of the student’s social and ethnic background.

Camicia (2009) examines the influence of students’ social and ethnic backgrounds within the context of a social studies curriculum unit on conflict and change. Using an exploratory case-study method, Camicia focuses on how parents, teachers, and community members frame and
understand the concepts of change within a unit of study for 6th grade students concerning US internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. Camicia used a purposeful sampling method to select parents, community members, and teachers who were proponents of the curriculum as well as opponents of the curricular materials. Through structured interview data and artifact analysis, Camicia examines concepts related to collective social identity (i.e. To whom do we refer to when we say…we?), balancing perspective in teaching historical content, and framing the amount of time spent on teaching one time period. Generally, Camicia concludes that “the present case study illustrates that the context of community can play a significant role in mediating the claims of curriculum challengers and the school’s response to those claims” (p. 125). Although Camicia does not focus directly on these variables, one might surmise that his work points to future research efforts needed to distinguish how community characteristics (i.e. ethnicity, education-level) might also affect how and what social studies curriculum is taught or whether or not it is taught at all thus having a determinative effect on student learning outcomes.

The effect of disciplinary learning on at-risk urban adolescents is the focus of Boix-Mansilla (1997). In a case study involving the author herself as the teacher of a history and autobiography class, Boix-Mansilla examines the role that structured historical knowledge can play in the development of students from less advantaged backgrounds. In her course, students were required to compose a series of essays and other projects all built around their study of recent history and also of themselves as actors within that history. Units of study were built around the following concepts: the study of biography as a literary and historical record, the history of world views and tensions between ethnic groups in America, and the conservative turn in America during the 1980s and 1990s. Through in-class lessons, debates, and essays, Boix-
Mansilla assessed students’ ability to demonstrate historical understanding skills such as providing evidence for positions, making value judgments, and establishing cause and effects patterns. In each unit of study, the author used materials relevant and representative of the class’ diverse ethnic and social groups. The author found that often, but not always, this focused content and these connections helped to promote student understanding and the development of historical literacy skills among students as evidenced by classroom observations of student learning and student work analysis. Boix-Mansilla concludes with an appropriate (for the proposal) claim that her work reminded her of the need “to re-focus our attention on the substantive aspects of our education tasks—that is the kinds of understandings that we would like our students to develop and the rationales underlying our choices” (p. 31). Certainly, her work is a reminder that race and ethnicity affect learning outcomes for students in social studies classrooms.

In his book, *Dewey and the Dilemma of Race*, Fallace (2011) suggests that ethnocentrism was built into Dewey’s pedagogical and philosophical frameworks which guided the University of Chicago Laboratory School. Although Fallace falls far short of calling Dewey a racist and in fact suggests pointedly that Dewey rejected the idea of biological inferiority, he concludes that Dewey’s ethnocentric philosophies had important implications for the manner in which history was taught at Dewey’s Lab school. Fallace suggests that the type of history taught at the Lab School was innovative in so much as it stressed social history (a new idea for its day) and avoided military history and hero-tales as well as folklore. This is logical given that social history melds nicely with the study of occupations and civilizations. However, Fallace takes aim at the manner in which history was taught suggesting that it was ethnocentric because “the past was presented as a simplified version of the present, and past cultures were presented as
simplified versions of present ones” (p. 39). Therefore, students could and did easily make the assumption that white Western civilization had overtaken Native American and African civilizations (deemed inferior) because they could see white dominance of modern society all around them. This embedded expression of ethnocentrism wove itself through the Lab School history curriculum privileging some students while excluding other learners from the process of historical understanding.

Highlighting the need to engage minority and other at-risk students in their education through the use of community service, service learning and social studies learning connected to the core curriculum; Diann Cameron Kelly reviews findings from the CIRCLE national youth study to explore how community service programs foster social trust among high school students. Not surprisingly, Kelly (2009) finds a lack of social trust among youths who live in areas plagued by high crime rates, economic disadvantages, and health disparities. Kelly further suggests that youth who do not have the opportunity to engage in pro-social community programs (i.e. community service) are more likely to engage criminal behaviors and juvenile delinquency. Kelly posits a conceptual model in which active volunteerism, general social trust, and trust in government/community associations can all lead to highly valuable voting practices and the likelihood that student’s will engage in political activism. Her model rests on the premise that youth require social trust and opportunities to become actively engaged in their community in order to adequately prepare them for adult participation in a democratic system of government.

In contrast to the work of Kelly (2000), Schlesinger (1992) in his book, The Disuniting of America, argues that a “cult of ethnicity” or the over-concentration on ethnic diversity and teaching students that America is a nation of groups, instead of individuals, has negative
consequences for our students’ knowledge of history. In this work, Schlesinger articulates that the idea of America as a melting pot has been, historically, the idea which both unified Americans and gave purpose to all who came to this country while simultaneously leading our nation towards progress and fortune. Schlesinger sees this battle occurring prominently in the public schools because it is here that future citizens are trained. Schlesinger suggests that “what students are taught in schools affects the way they will thereafter see and treat other Americans and the way they will thereafter conceive the purposes of the republic” (p. 17). Schlesinger argues that an overconcentration on ethnicity will not unify the country, it will break it apart and it will also lead to a vision of history as fragmented with no grand narrative of national progress and no overarching American identity. Schlesinger articulates the idea the multiculturalism taken too far can become ethnocentrism which is harmful for historical understanding. Indeed, Schlesinger notes that the issue is not teaching African-American history or cultural pluralism as these are legitimate subjects, but rather “the issue is the teaching of bad history under whatever ethnic banner” (p. 75). Other researchers too have suggested that students’ ethnic and social group membership is important only in so much as it helps to create historical understanding that fosters a uniform and singular national identity.

Similar to Schlesinger’s (1992) argument about the role of ethnicity in student’s learning of history and the dangers of an over-emphasis on multicultural education, and recalling Hirsch(1987), Ravitch (1985) suggests that American public schools have been the primary vehicles through which immigrants have gained an identity as Americans and therefore the impetus to excel. Ravitch further suggests that history has long been under attack by critics and by proponents of social studies as a different and superior field of study. Ravitch argues that history as a field constitutes a distinct way of knowing and understanding phenomena in the
natural and social worlds. However, Ravitch’s positivist view of ethnicity and the treatment of immigrant groups in American history suggests that multiculturalism should not be over-emphasized, but simply intertwined within the curriculum so that history may “endow its students with cultural resources on which they may draw for the rest of their lives” (p. 132). For Ravitch, students’ ethnic and social backgrounds are important, but not as determinative factors influencing how they learn history. While a student’s ethnic or social background is not to be ignored, these backgrounds are far less significant than how the individual student adds their own distinction to a shared definition of American identity and history.

Terzian & Yeager (2007) conducted a case study of urban, Latino teenagers in order to discover how they understood the historical significance of major actors in American history. The authors further suggest that “an analysis of minority students’ views on what is important in history can also reveal how they integrate official culture (as articulated by policymakers, textbook publishers, curriculum planners, and interest groups) with their own vernacular perspectives” (p. 54). Terzian & Yeager note that both race and socio-economic status correlate to how students perceive what is important to know about history while coloring one’s knowledge of the historical narrative of American history. The authors also specifically analyzed concepts such as freedom and unity in their work with the students. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the researchers found that these Advanced Placement (AP) students of primarily Cuban descent conformed their values and their answers to questions of historical significance to the tenets of the College Board curriculum. Moreover, students tended to conform their answers to the typical national narrative of continual progress and their political ideals followed those of the teacher and the standard curriculum. The authors provide several reasons for this including: that because these students were members of the ethnic majority group in their
geographic region (e.g. Florida), their answers conformed to the national narrative of continual progress. Also, these students came from relatively affluent backgrounds because the Cuban community where they lived has achieved great economic success. Truly then, this study raises interesting questions about the relationship between the curriculum and students’ knowledge of history as well as their understanding of historical significance.

In a research project, which mirrors Terzian & Yeager (2007), Traille (2007) examines how students from minority groups feel about and connect to events in history involving their ancestors. Traille begins her research discussion with a reminder that the goal of including all students in the engagement and learning of social issues and history has long been a goal of curriculum writers in these fields. Here, her work involves an analysis of how students of Afro-Caribbean descent view issues surrounding slavery and the official narrative of slavery in English history. Traille surveyed 124 students and parents in order to examine how they felt about their ethnic group’s depiction in social studies and history classes. The interview data revealed that students and parents often felt as though history lessons imposed a false identity on Afro-Caribbean people or that it stereotyped them in ignorant and disturbing ways. Students also related that they were much more engaged in history that was about them than when they studied other ethnic groups. Significantly, students reported that they often felt ashamed when a teacher refused to confront students who made rude comments about their national heritage or who simply avoided controversial issues within the classroom. They reported feeling abandoned by teachers who did not address controversial claims during a history or social studies class. Traille draws a cause and effect pattern between this feeling of abandonment and student performance noting that students who do not feel accepted in a classroom will be less likely to actually learn the skills and habits of historical understanding while suffering other academic failures and
social exclusion. To be sure, the way history is presented and the perspective from which students learn can greatly change if the history is not personalized and if those in the classroom are not afforded a deep understanding through the teachers’ trust and their mutual respect.

The research reviewed here suggests that there is a wide range of differing views on the importance of students’ backgrounds to how they learn history and social studies and how they come to truly understand historical content. Kelly (2009), Kahne & Sporte (2008), and Kahne (2008) suggest that the ethnic and social groups to which a student belongs as well as a student’s SES are all important factors contributing to a student’s willingness to engage in civic work or grapple with their community’s problems. Importantly, this research suggests that a student’s ethnic and social background colors how they view and understand historical knowledge. On the contrary, Schlesinger (1992), Ravitch (1985), suggest that while a student’s ethnic and social background are important, teachers forsake national unity and true historical understanding if they overemphasize this label. Still, Terzian & Yeager (2007) and Traille (2007) suggest that the context of both ethnicity and social class have important effects and a causal relationship to how students come to know and learn history. In an age where national demographics are changing rapidly, this research helps one understand how the public school history/social studies classroom has been and can be a facilitator of historical understanding.

Conclusion to the Literature Review

This review has focused on three bodies of literature. The pertinent findings that have emerged from this review are:

1. Identity and power along with all issues pertinent to those constructs transmit themselves into the written curriculum which has implications for not only what kind of history students learn, but also which groups of students actually learn the material.
2. History and social studies curriculum itself is truly a product of its time and context.

3. The history curriculum and thus the history classroom, perhaps more so than any other subject, are the places where the values and beliefs of society are reflected in the instruction.

4. History teaching and learning has not always and today does not (to a large extent) focus on those characteristics necessary for true historical understanding (i.e. understanding causality, historical significance, and individual agency).

5. Instructional practices rooted in a theory of historical understanding have the potential to provide to students both powerful understandings and critical skills necessary for life in America at the dawn of the 21st century.

These understandings are essential for deepening our understanding of American history curriculum and teaching over time. They inform my problem of practice and they are applicable in this analysis of curriculum and instruction in history classrooms at the turn of the 20th century as American society underwent dramatic demographic and social changes that not only put incredibly stress on American public education but also promised to offer new and exciting possibilities for more Americans to learn history and social studies. With these understandings in mind, the history and social studies classroom of the past and the debates about what constituted acceptable curriculum in this subject matter deserves a fresh analysis. This new analysis, carried out through the research design described below, informs work in public education currently, which is remarkably similar as well different from the past, and it also illuminates in part what is significant and valuable about teaching and learning in history today.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Introduction

Historical research design can take many forms depending on what the aim of the historical research is and the nature of the phenomenon under question. Moreover, historical research and historical knowledge is informed by multiple epistemologies in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and the arts, even as it remains a unique way of knowing and understanding social and natural phenomena (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). This research project was a work of both cultural and social history in so much as it attempts to “trace the relationship between an event as portrayed in a descriptive history and that event as conceived by those who experienced it” (Danto, p. 17). Also, it was a work of cultural and social history because it seeks to understand the social event and process of education, which is more or less a common experience for all people. By pursuing this research project from a historical perspective, I sought to examine how professionals understood their practice within the context of their society and what, if any, relationship or influence American society at the turn of the 20th century had on educators who created high school American history curricula.

This research project employed an archival-based research and documentary evidence analysis congruent with both qualitative research methods and historical research methods. I qualitatively analyzed the discussion between historians and educators between 1890 and 1920 around curriculum-making in the field of United States history as well as what these groups believed constituted knowledge in history. My research design utilized elements of both qualitative research and traditional historical research methods. The key elements of qualitative research, such as: inductive data analysis, using multiple sources of data, and engaging the researcher as the key instrument through which data was observed, examined, and interpreted fit
well with my problem of practice and the emerging research question (Maxwell, 2005). Another cornerstone of qualitative research is the use of an emerging research design (Creswell, 2009). Because this research project was historical in nature and archival-based, an emerging research design was very useful because I could know exactly what the documents would suggest and what new information the archives may have revealed. By employing qualitative methods and employing a malleable design to my project, I was more easily be able to scrutinize my research question while also fully utilizing the archives. Additionally, my research problem and my question were focused on participant meanings, which are also a primary feature of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005). By focusing my research on the meanings scholars in history and education brought to their work, I uncovered a more multi-faceted and nuanced knowledge of how and what it meant to know United States history. This nuanced knowledge transmitted between professionals and education and practitioners in history was categorized into four distinct conversations which are described in detail in chapter five. These conversations are labeled as the following: 1. Conversations between the American Historical Association (AHA) and the National Education Association (NEA) through their annual meeting proceedings, 2. Government publications and reports/programs of study for American history issued by the Federal Office of Education, 3. Journal Articles—which represent scholarly conversations, 4. Methods Texts and Professional Development materials in American history.

Qualitative research methods naturally meld well with historical research methods, although there are some distinctive qualities to historical research. Qualitative and historical research methods share in common a focus on the development of holistic accounts and interpretive analysis. Both can be guided by a theoretical framework, and both utilize multiple sources of data (Maxwell, 2005). Although not all historical research uses an explicit theoretical
framework to guide analysis of sources or interpretation of evidence, sound historical research
will discuss at some length the historiography behind the field of inquiry. As McCulloch &
Richardson (2000) suggest, “controversies about the role of theory in historical writing about
education have not taken place inside a vacuum” (p. 57), but rather social scientists have found
theoretical perspectives and historical research methods useful in examining education as an
institution which has the potential to reform the social order. However, even though elements of
both research methods may be employed simultaneously and used to great advantage in
uncovering a qualitative understanding of an educational problem, historical research methods
have some distinct elements compared to most social science methods. For example, historical
research methods interrogate past phenomenon, and even though the use of archival documents
is not the sole jurisdiction of the historian, they rely more heavily on the use of archives than
social scientists who often rely more on statistical tests or other research instruments such as
surveys (McCulloch, 2004). Archival-based research allowed me to scrutinize multiple sources
and this in turn aligned-well with prescribed qualitative and historical research methods.

Documentary analysis also proved to be a useful and qualitative method for uncovering
not a set of facts, but rather a method for illuminating how curriculum makers and other
education professionals perceived their work and gave meaning to the study of United States
history. Indeed, in order to fully illuminate any historical phenomenon from this perspective, a
number of resources must be credibly employed and critically scrutinized in order to confirm
elements of a past phenomenon (McDowell, 2002). Documentary-based research methods are
invaluable for this type of work as the phenomenon under scrutiny was best illuminated by many
of the documents published by national-wide organizations such as the AHA and NEA. Guided
by a theory of historical understanding, sources were scrutinized not only for their applicability
to the research question, but also their reliability and validity. This analysis chiefly involved the qualitative process of coding the documents in order to inductively elicit patterns of understanding or strands of thought which guided these professionals in their debate about American history curriculum and historical knowledge. To be sure, documentary evidence is invaluable to historians and those working in the social sciences in order help them to make claims to understanding phenomenon both in the past and the present. From this coding process, 3 distinct themes emerged which assisted in categorizing documents and also explaining why American history was taught as part of the core curriculum in American public schools from 1890 to 1920. These three themes are discussed at length in chapters five and six and constitute the following: 1. American history taught for patriotic reasons or a celebration of American democratic institutions, 2. American history taught as a pre-requisite for college-level work and to inculcate distinct thinking skills, 3. American history taught for moral or character-building lessons.

The remainder of this chapter is separated into the following sections: the research question and a brief explanation of how it seeks a qualitative understanding of my research problem, a more in-depth discussion of historical research methodology and documentary (i.e. archival) research as it applies to my research projects, a discussion on validity issues regarding documentary/archival source analysis, and a description of ethical issues and how I ensured the protection of human subjects.

**Research Question**

My two-part research question is: *How do popular and dominant political, social, and economic forces affect the creation and delivery of American history curriculum in public schools between 1890 and 1920 and how is this history significant in today’s public schools?*
The research question sought a deeper understanding of how scholars in history and professional educators interacted at the turn of the twentieth century—a time of great change and also a period of social, economic, and political upheaval in American society. The question not only interrogated this relationship within a historical perspective but it was also congruent with the nature of historical research because it sought a contemporary understanding of this relationship for historians and educators today. The research question sought a targeted, but nuanced understanding of how the scholarly community made meaning of their work in American History curriculum at the turn of the 20th century as well as the social and cultural implications of their work for practitioners today.

**Methodology**

My research project employed a qualitative historical research design using documentary and archival based sources to answer the research question. The research design is congruent with the research question, which seeks an historical understanding of the relationship between scholars in history and professional educators in the development and implementation of American history curriculum. Historical research has a long tradition both in popular culture and in academic settings as a method for uncovering knowledge and ultimately an understanding of past phenomena (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). The key to understanding how historians posit theories and draw conclusions is through source selection and analysis. Unlike social science researchers that may create or utilize already made measurement tools (i.e. surveys, test, and inventories), historians must rely upon physical artifacts, documents, and other primary and secondary sources in order to make judgments. Therefore, source selection and the process of analyzing the validity and reliability of a source is of upmost importance to the integrity of the historian’s research design and ultimately their conclusions (Danto, 2008; Howell & Prevenier,
In the search for knowledge of the past, the historian encounters sources of knowledge that are both intentional and unintentional and this too shapes the historian’s conclusions.

Here, it is worth remembering that a key difference that sets historical research apart from social science research is that the past cannot be directly experienced or measured in the same way that social science phenomena is measured (McCulloch & Richardson, 2002). Because the past cannot be re-experienced, historians must be especially critical of their sources while remembering that all sources carry bias and often sources have a tendency to “record dramatic events whereas the passage of unremarkable events which may be of longer-term significance are less likely to have been observed or documented at the time they occurred” (McDowell, 2002, p. 8). While qualitative researchers in the social sciences may directly observe phenomenon, these researchers like historians are ultimately the lenses through which information is interpreted. Certainly, one of this research project’s strengths was that its design utilized aspects of both qualitative social science and historical methods in order to reconstruct a deeper meaning about what it meant to learn American history. In turn, that knowledge informs what it means to learn history today.

**Site and Participants**

This study investigated the relationship between scholars and educators in the formation and implementation of United States history curriculum between 1880 and 1920. To study this relationship, archival based resources were examined. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of archival research to both historical investigations and social science research. Archives are important because they are the repositories of society and even in the digital age, virtual archives continue to transform how research is conducted while informing research.
studies in significant ways (McCulloch, 2004). The archives of the Boston Public School Department, the Harvard University Graduate School of Education-Gutman Library, and the archives of Columbia Universities’ Teachers’ College were of great use to this research project because they contained official documents, professional communications, and other important public records that can shed light upon the nature of American history teaching and learning at the dawn of the 20th century. Documentary sources also came from a number of virtual/electronic archives including Google Books, University of Illinois, University of Michigan, Stanford University, and the Internet Archive-the world’s largest digital database. Before discussing archival sites and other sources of information, it is instructive to discuss how historians classify documentary sources.

Documentary sources may be classified any number of ways, but are generally labeled here as micro—the closest to the actual time period and source of knowledge or experience under investigation. Examples of micro level documents include meeting minutes from AHA or NEA committee meetings or American history curriculum in use in individual districts. Mezzo-level documents consist of commentaries from the time period or afterward, but usually not a direct account or observation. This level of analysis served as an intermediate level of analysis and included historical works from the time period that provide context for understanding the discussions between historians and educators surrounding curriculum-making and assessment. A final classification of documents was labeled macro-level and consisted of accounts published sometime during or after the phenomenon occurred but useful for providing analysis on a national scale. Examples of this level of analysis included National Education Association (NEA) or American Historical Association (AHA) approved curriculum used throughout the country (Danto, 2008; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; McCulloch, 2004). While historians often
place these sources in the above mentioned categories by the proximity in time and place to the original event or subject under investigation, proximity to the event or occurrence does not always render a source more valid or reliable given the confines of the research question (McDowell, 2002). Indeed, of number of conflicting micro, mezzo and macro-level sources were in archival repositories. The site for the majority of this research was the archives of the two predominant groups of scholars and practitioners engaged in this field at the time: the NEA and the AHA. The majority of their conference proceedings (40 out of 60 document sets) have been digitally uploaded by Google in cooperation with various research institutions. The remainder of the un-digitized AHA meeting notes were found in Northeastern Universities’ Snell library archives and the remainder of the NEA’s un-digitized meeting notes were found at the Gutman Library.

As social institutions have done for more than two centuries, the AHA and the NEA kept prodigious records of their activities. These public records were invaluable as they “provided insights into the processes and workings of the social structures in the modern day” (McCulloch, p. 12). The National Archives houses documents from three governmental agencies that sponsored work between the AHA and the NEA: the United States Office of Education (known as the Department of Education after 1979), the United States Department of the Interior, and the United States Census Bureau. It was not necessary to visit the National Archives in Washington, D.C. as all of the requested documentation had been digitized or was requested in digital form and sent electronically. The three government agencies listed above primarily engaged in surveys of schools and teachers throughout this time period in order to track the organizational development of public schools and they all began keeping statistics on public schools and their development in the 1830s. These survey sources provided a fascinating context and sufficient
background knowledge in which to study public schooling between 1880 and 1920 (Bankston & Caldas, 2009; Reese, 2007; Reese, 2011; Tyack, 1974; Cuban & Tyack, 1995).

Books concerning pedagogy in American history have been made available in electronic format through Google. Examples include pedagogical guides and other books recommended at the time by the AHA such as Burke Aaron Hinsdale’s: *How to study and teach American History-with particular reference to the history of the United States* (1897). Google has also made a number of secondary sources from the time period available such as works by John Franklin Bobbitt (1916; 1918), Maurice Walter Keatinge (1921), and Henry Johnson (1922). These works helped to answer the research question by providing evidence of professional discourse about history curriculum making and implementation. Although the publications listed here are by no means meant to be a definitive list, a number of professional publications from the time period such as *The History Teacher’s Magazine* (now entitled: *The Social Studies*) and *The American Historical Review*, published by the AHA, were also examined. Additionally, journal publications which constitute another type of conversation between historians and educators, such as: *The School Review* and *The Forum* were coded and analyzed.

In chapter 6, American history curriculum in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) is examined between 1890 and 1920 in order to provide another level of analysis as to these conversations between educators and historians played out in an actual public school system. The archives of the Boston Public Schools in Roxbury, Massachusetts and the Gutman Library housed all of the documents necessary for the research conducted here. Some examples of documents analyzed are: Boston Teachers’ Club Newsletters, Statistical Records of the City of Boston, Statistical Records of the School Committee of the City of Boston, Meeting minutes of the Boston Public School Committee, books lists for American history, and programs of study
for American history. The analysis of these documents helped me to understand how social and political forces playing out on a national and city level affected the form and delivery of American history education over time.

**Data Collection**

It is worth noting that it is impossible to know with exactitude what one will find in an archive. This uncertainty notwithstanding, the archives mentioned did hold the official publications of the NEA, AHA, and those official documents published by the United States’ Office of Education. What I was most interested in finding were the conference proceedings, meeting notes, and other records of discussions (both official and unofficial) between scholars of history and practitioners in education. I examined the voluminous records (the average page length for one set of documents is 1100 pages) of these conversations in order to ascertain what these professionals believed was important to know in American history and what skills they believed were important for students to be able to perform. Although I did not expect that conversations would directly provide this information, I was particularly interested in discussions that demonstrated how larger societal pressures and events (i.e. immigration, the rapidly increasing pace of life in urban centers, and new job opportunities) informed debates about American history curriculum and teaching.

As the culmination of these conversations, official reports such as the: *The Study of History in Schools* (1900), and *The Cardinal Principles of Education* (1918) were also analyzed to discuss what mandates were placed on history teachers and what suggestions both scholars and practitioners had for teachers of history during this time period. These documents also provided sample curricula, curriculum maps, and other pedagogical guides that helped define the nature of historical content and learning at the turn of the 20th century. Information of this kind
would be supplemented by AHA and NEA meeting notes as well as an analysis of journal articles—all of which are listed above. These sources helped to produce a more comprehensive view of how professionals envisioned and then practiced history teaching and learning.

Data from Department of the Interior, the United States Census Bureau, and Office of Education surveys were analyzed quantitatively or be subject to any statistical tests, but rather they provided a context for making context-based decisions and informed analyses of the nature and role of schooling in America at this time. All three agencies engaged in some form of surveying of both private and public schools to determine the demographic make-up of the school population. These records served as helpful guides to suggest what kinds of organizational and curricular changes were under way in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. This data was only be used in a descriptive and supplemental way to suggest what teaching and learning American history may have looked like at this time (see Chapter 4). Regardless of the type of sources found in either the physical or electronic archives or through other sources listed above, a distinct protocol for analyzing historical documents was be implemented.

Data Analysis

While maintaining some similarities in the analysis of sources, historical research and the social sciences also differ in some specific ways. Qualitative studies in the social sciences engage in an interpretative inquiry into observed phenomena and the researcher’s background influences both their observations and conclusions (Creswell, 2009). While this holds true for historical research as well, historians do not usually observe phenomena first hand, but rather they rely on the careful analysis of first and second hand accounts to interpret phenomena within the context of other documents that may reveal partial evidence (McCulloch & Richardson,
Researchers in the qualitative social science tradition may engage in a process of collecting open-ended data based on their research questions. These researchers write memos that help to situate the information gathered from a source while also engaging in ongoing research. Qualitative inquiry also involves coding data, which is the process by which information from sources is segmented in order to bring meaning to the information and situate it within larger categories of knowledge gleaned from other sources (Creswell, 2009). By writing research memos, coding information, and by simultaneously conducting research which informs new questions, the qualitative social scientist engages in an iterative process of meaning building aimed at discovering the subjective truth for observed participants within a highly contextualized environment (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005).

Historians are engaged in much the same process as they conduct research. The analysis of the context in which an event, a meeting, a discussion, or an official publication or report is delivered is of the upmost importance to the historian who may be concerned with drawing conclusions about cause and effect patterns between events (McDowell, 2002). As mentioned above, historians engage in a process of source analysis and criticism that is different than qualitative social science research. Indeed, it is of the upmost importance that sources in history be carefully scrutinized for their proximity to the time and place of the phenomenon under question and the researcher must scrutinize a document’s authenticity (Howell & Prevenier, 2001).

Documentary analysis not only requires authentication of the external characteristics of a document (the answers to the questions by whom, what, when, and where), but historians also analyze a document’s internal criteria. That is, historians often engage in process of analyzing a document for its intended meaning or whether or not the author had sufficient knowledge to
write about the phenomenon accurately (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Analyzing the internal criteria of a document is a somewhat controversial one with some historians claiming that we can never accurately know the author’s intentions (Fulbrook, 2002; Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Historians also analyze data by determining the genealogy of a document—that is determining whether a record is an authentic one or if it has been manipulated in some manner. This process of determining the originality of the document is part of what historians call source criticism. In the process of criticizing a source, historians identify and scrutinize the author, determine the originality of the document, they determine the trustworthiness of the source, and they begin the process of determining the historical significance of the document by triangulating it with other sources of information. In historical studies, the use of multiple sources of evidence lends more significance to the researcher’s conclusions. But this also helps to establish the reliability of the source itself if one can prove that similar evidence and conclusions have been reached in other reliable sources.

Historical data analysis can also utilize a process of memo writing and coding in order to determine themes and conclusions arising from the multitude of applicable documents normally found through archival research. This coding process allows the researcher to explore the deeper meaning behind a collection of documents while also formulating new research questions as the research process unfolds. This iterative process of meaning making is particularly applicable to this research project because I am seeking to understand the conversation between scholars and practitioners surrounding history curriculum making and implementation. This coding process was very useful in uncovering the meanings behind not only the conversations as they developed over time between professionals, but also those meanings as imbued within official reports and other supporting documents. Coding was particularly useful in discovering themes that emerged
from the analysis of NEA and AHA records and then comparing those themes to the different
tenets of a theory of historical understanding. However, it was impractical to code all documents
since the volume of information available and the time constraints of completing the project do
not allow for this. It is important to note that these documents do not exist within a vacuum; they
are products of a time period that is informed by social phenomena (i.e. immigration,
urbanization, and industrialization) captured in other official reports and in other works of
educational history.

I will began by scrutinizing these mezzo and macro-level sources from the modern day
and from the time period, and then I worked my way closer to the micro-level documents. I
believe this process of working towards the core documentation provided me the much needed
context for understanding and correctly analyzing the primary sources. Also, it is important to
remember that I utilized my theoretical framework in order to maintain the focus of my research
questions as well as the collection and analysis of data (Maxwell, 2005). This process of
analyzing all levels of sources in a systematic way allowed me to explore my question in a
significant manner by providing opportunities for me to analyze meaning, check my observations
and conclusions through memo writing, and then reformulate conclusions as I worked towards
the original sources.

Validity Issues

Notions of validity and reliability in historical documentary-based research differ from
notions of these concepts in social science research. This difference is particularly important
when one examines how qualitative and quantitative social scientists use these terms. Validity,
defined broadly as the accuracy of the research findings, in social science research may be
established quantitatively by using statistical tests to determine whether or not one can draw
meaningful inferences from the scores on those statistical tests (Creswell, 2009). However, validity in a qualitative social science perspective does not carry the same connotations as it does in a quantitative research. In this tradition, qualitative social scientists use protocols such as member checking, interviewer corroboration, and debriefing to check the accuracy of their recorded findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Reliability is also an important concept in quantitative social science research, and can be defined as the consistency of results when the same test is consecutively applied, through methods such as: test/retest methods and inter-observer calculations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). In quantitative social science research, reliability measures whether or not one can consistently replicate one’s original findings (Maxwell, 2005). However, because qualitative social science researchers are engaged in a process of defining the context in which a phenomenon occurs they are not concerned with reliability in the same way as quantitative researchers. Qualitative researchers may evaluate their reliability across different researchers or projects by completing transcript checks and checking inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2009). Here, reliability is measurement of the consistency of the researcher’s approach across different projects. These concepts take on yet another meaning and use in historical documentary-based research.

In historical research, the term validity refers not to the notion that there is a relationship between variables, but to a scrutinization of the sources themselves. Historical sources (i.e. diary entries, census reports, logs, maps, paintings) vary widely in both form and content and therefore pose a number of threats to validity (McDowell, 2002). Put simply, in historical research validity refers to the authenticity of the document itself. For historians, a number of basic questions can establish the validity of a document. A simple question as to whether or not the document is authentic or a forgery is the first question the historian asks when assessing the
validity of the source. But, these questions also concern the nature of the author’s relationship to the phenomenon under study while interrogating the author’s agency, and assessing the perspective of the author in that language. To guard against threats to validity, historians often employ tactics such as coding long strands of data (i.e. subsequent books by the same author, diary accounts, or census reports) or the researcher might look for ways to establish validity by finding multiple credible sources that establish the same or similar narrative descriptions of an event (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). For historians, finding multiple sources of evidence that all discuss the same phenomenon is one method for triangulating data.

Historical research also defines reliability in a different manner. Reliability refers to document itself and whether or not the document is appropriate for the type of question being asked. More importantly, historical significance replaces validity as a measurement for assessing the credit-worthiness of the document given the confines of the research question. For example, I will need to assess the historical significance of NEA or AHA archival documents for how well they help to answer my research question. Threats to validity, reliability, and historical significance also arise mainly from historical anachronism and presentism.

Historical presentism and anachronism have been articulated as defining the past in terms of the present (Fulbrook, 2002). Historical presentism is an overarching terms that historians use to suggest how past documents are interpreted through the social and cultural norms of today (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Historical presentism occurs when researchers apply modern cultural notions to past phenomenon or when they fail to recognize the past as a separate world filled with different cultural values and norms that may not necessarily translate into today’s world. Historians commit presentism when they suggest the existence of objects, persons, or phenomenon in the wrong context, time period, or geographic location. Historians commit
anachronism when they analyze a past phenomenon from the point of view of the future—meaning they make claims to past phenomenon using information that people did not have at the time, much like a fabled fortune-teller makes claims using a crystal ball. It is worth noting that some researchers suggest that all histories are in some manner anachronistic because they attempt a new vision of the past or to revise the work of other historians (Fulbrook, 2009). This notwithstanding, the historical research must vigilantly guard against both presentism and historical anachronism as both pose a significant threat to the proper analysis and use of historical documents.

Any discussion of historical anachronism is suggestive of the ongoing debate within the historical community as to whether or not it is the job of the historian simply to interpret past evidence on its own terms or whether or not they must reconstitute evidence as those in the past would have understood it (Fulbrook, 2009; Howell & Prevenier, 2001; McDowell, 2002). The triangulation of data sources can guard against placing people, items, or phenomenon in the wrong time period, because it allows the researcher to compare and contrast accounts thereby establishing evidentiary satisfaction. Historians also construct notions of the past based upon the historiography of their subject. In other words, historians analyze past historical works in order to suggest how we have understood past phenomenon and in order to build a case for an altered or completely new understanding (McCulloch, 2004). By utilizing a historiographical approach, the researcher can guard against presentism and anachronism through a meta-analysis of the sources. However, an agreed upon conceptual framework is also useful in guarding against presentism or anachronism. A theory of historical understanding was the primary lens for interpreting data sources and will be a source for discussing conclusions. I guarded against
threats to anachronism by utilizing my theoretical framework, which informed my analysis of documentary sources.

My role as the qualitative historical researcher was also significant in the conclusions garnered from the archival analysis. As with all qualitative research, there are some ethical and strategic concerns that arise from the researcher’s role as the sole interpreter of data (Creswell, 2009). While these concerns must be vigilantly attended to, the use of a theoretical framework (in this case: a theory of historical understanding) also helped me become more reflexive about the assumptions that I brought into my analysis and conclusions. Also, the exposure to multiple perspectives of other historians can provide some diversity of analysis. This research project is the continuation (in part) of the work of many other historians; I was informed by them as well as by the census and other data that was gathered from official government reports. By utilizing a theoretical framework, by working from more back and forth from macro to micro levels, and by simply being aware of the threats to legitimacy and accuracy caused by presentism and anachronism, I guarded against pitfalls in both historical validity and reliability.

Archival-based research also presents a number of pitfalls because the evidence record can often be incomplete. Incomplete strands of evidence can be supported by macro-level sources, commentary from other historians, and by other mezzo or micro-level sources. Sometimes incomplete data strands can be pieced together from multiple sources, but that too poses a threat to the internal validity of the original source. Here, the historian must be careful to limit conclusions to only those which are supported by other evidence or the historian must look for ways to corroborate evidence with other reliable sources (Danto, 2008). As discussed in the previous section, I triangulated my archival-based research with macro-level works and with a survey of documents from the Boston Public Schools in order to supply enough sources to reach
historical evidentiary satisfaction. In conducting archival-based research, the historian must also take into account a number of ethical considerations.

**Protection of Human Subjects-IRB**

This research project sought to guard against any unethical use of sources. Before engaging in the research, I had completed the National Institutes of Health online ethics training course as a safeguard against any unethical behavior. Even though ethical conduct is of the upmost significance, it is important to also note that this project utilized no living sources, but instead used only archival documentation created by people who are now deceased. Also, the archival documentation is all a matter of public record. The archives of the NEA, AHA, as well as official government documents and the records of the Boston Public Schools are all open to full public access—meaning that I did not have to gain access to any private information. This notwithstanding, all measures to ensure the ethical use of archival documentation were employed. I do not believe that my treatment of any of the source material or my analyses and conclusion verbalized in chapters 5 through 7 tarnish the reputations of any of the institutions under examination here.

**Conclusion**

My research project examined the historical development of United States history curriculum by analyzing the discussions between scholars in history and practitioners in education. In the modern educational climate, where standards and practices are constantly changing, it is more important than ever for teachers of history to understand the relationship between scholarly knowledge in their discipline and the pedagogy they practice every day. The archival/documentary research design certainly added nuanced knowledge to our ways of understanding what it has meant to learn and know history. The research design was carefully
thought out in order to explore the research question fully. The archival-based design and the use of multiple sources of evidence were utilized in order to bring about more a complete and yet context-specific understanding of the conversation that occurred between those interested in teaching and learning history. By focusing on professional organizations, this research highlights the importance of these organizations not only historically, but also in present day debates.

Current and past literature in the history of education and in particular the history of curriculum making laid important groundwork for this type of study. However, no scholarly work thus far has evaluated the development of American history curriculum using a theory of historical understanding as framework for examining how professional organizations understood and carried out their work. This study has limitations, as does the use of history as a tool for understanding the process of curriculum making. History as a discipline makes no claims to full understanding and neither does this project. However, historical research can uncover a deep and context rich meaning of what it has meant to and what it means to know the past. Certainly, the study of this type of history has the potential to add to our knowledge of what it means to teach and learn American history. It is hoped that this study might be useful to educational practitioners as they seek to not only find meaning in their work as American history teachers, but also to help them find new and creative ways to help their students truly understand their country’s history.
Chapter 4: Curriculum Debates in Past and Modern Contexts

The Context(s) of making American History Curriculum between 1890 and 1920

An analysis of the documentary records surrounding American history curricular debates, curriculum-making, and American history instruction whether in the past or the present has convinced me that the work and discussions these documents record are inseparable from the socio-political forces that shaped the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The work of scholars in history and practitioners in education did not occur in a vacuum. Rather, as chapters four through six will demonstrate, it was consistently influenced by the wants and needs of those they served while simultaneously at the mercy of politicians and industry leaders who provided not only funding for the schools, but also a directive of what was needed from the graduates who would become workers. As educators and historians carried out their work together, they were guided by the social and political forces of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing America. Therefore, a discussion and explanation of the processes of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration is necessary in order to provide knowledge of the context in which these debates took place.

Chapter 4 provides the contextual/background information for an analysis of these curricular debates, while Chapter 5 details my findings after having analyzed the documents. Additionally, Chapter 6 provides an analysis of how these curriculum discussions were actuated in the Boston Public Schools between 1890 and 1920. Finally, Chapter 7 will provide some overarching conclusions, discuss the limitations of this study, make connections to the theoretical framework, and discuss what further research might be fruitful. As will be seen, these debates and the curriculum they forged were especially influenced by a society teeming with new immigrants. In 1915, Scott Nearing, radical economist and educator, suggested that:
the rapid advances of the nineteenth century, challenging the quickest to keep pace, forced upon many institutions surroundings wholly foreign to their bent and scope.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the education system, which had its rise in an age of individualized industry and governmental non-interference, and now faces a newly inaugurated socialization of industry and an impromptu system of government control. (pp. 26-27)

The curriculum produced and the debates between historians and educators at this time reveal this dual struggle to meet the expectations of employers, politicians, and philosophers of education while at the same time satisfying the students’ needs within the confines of the real-world classroom for which no universal definition would be suitable. Here, it is wise to generalize the words of Reese (1981) to this study when referring to working class differences and the writing of history. He cautions the writer that:

at the outset it should be recognized that the "working class" has never been a single, monolithic, or static entity. Since America was populated by individuals with diverse ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds, several working class populations have always existed simultaneously. It is therefore impossible for a historian to identify a single "working class" influence on education, for none has ever existed. (p. 6)

Indeed, it is additionally impossible to attribute industrialization, urbanization, or immigration as the single force affecting schools at this time because there is no one way in which people experienced each movement or its effects on their matriculation to and life within a public school environment. It is not my purpose to prove that one force, be it industrialization, immigration, or urbanization, solely shaped American history curriculum and education between 1890 and 1920. Rather, I suggest that professionals in education and historians were concurrently acted upon and
in turn—they acted within an environment that was shaped by all three ideas. It is my intention to explain as clearly as possible what that environment looked like as a way of helping educators and historians today who grapple with similar questions. This caution notwithstanding, it is possible to explain how these forces wrought dramatic changes in the United States at this time. Each force as well as the competing philosophies of social efficiency vs. progressive education would add a context to the debate about the proper form and function of American history education. The first change under consideration would be a rapidly industrializing United States, which would prove to be rather consequential in affecting the form and delivery of American history curriculum.

**Industrialization.** Historically, the year 1870 marks the beginning of a rapid transformation in the industrial landscape of the United States. Although the Industrial Revolution had come to the United States a century earlier, a lack of reliable and efficient transportation routes, and the most notably, the American Civil War, disrupted large-scale and widespread industrialization of the American economy (D. W. Howe, 2009). Prior to 1870, pockets of industrialized society as we would now recognize it (i.e. reliable roads, factories) were located in urban centers, most notably in the northeastern United States. However, by 1870, American industry, technology, and the American citizenry were quite literally on the march towards of more centralized economic system where heavy industry accounted for most of America’s economic output whereas an agrarian system of single producers had characterized much of the economic activity of the early nineteenth century (Morris, 2005). The turn towards a more regimented working day produced like sociological effects. By 1890, many Americans lived quite differently than they had in the past. Their days were governed not by the seasons and by the amount of sunlight and rainfall as they had been in the past, but rather by gas then electric
light, by the clock, and by what their meager earnings could buy them rather than what they
could produce for themselves (L. Cremin, 1988). This is not to say that all Americans lived this
way. But before 1890, unless one lived in a major city connected by a reliable water-way or
overland transportation routes traveled by railroad cars or horse-drawn carriages, life was much
less regimented and formal education in a classroom setting was much more scarce (James D.
Anderson et al., 2001; Olmstead & Rhode, 2000; William J. Reese, 2011).

It is difficult to underestimate the impact that industrialization had on day to day life in
America. By 1920, many technologies, such as the telephone, gasoline powered engine, and
electric light, all of which had not existed prior to 1870, spread to millions of American
households and businesses. As Zinn (2003) suggests,

between the Civil War and 1900, steam and electricity replaced human muscle, iron
replaced wood, and steel replaced iron (before the Bessemer process, iron was hardened
into steel at the rate of 3 to 5 tons a day; now the same amount could be processed in 15
minutes). Machines could now drive steel tools. Oil could lubricate machines and light
homes, streets, factories. People and goods could move by railroad, propelled by steam
along steel rails; by 1900 there were 193,000 miles of railroad. The telephone, the
typewriter, and the adding machine speeded up the work of business. (p. 253)

This sudden transformation in American economic prowess and technological innovation did not
go unnoticed. Much of the world, and Europe in particular, were surprised to find that the United
States had developed so quickly when 30 years earlier it was emerging from a bloody civil war
with an economy based mainly on the export of agricultural products (Morris, 2005). The rise of
the modern factory system of production, reliable transportation, and a steady influx of workers
educated to perform the task at hand allowed the United States (by 1913) to take a 35.8% share
of the world’s production of raw and finished goods, the largest by far of any nation on earth and a 12.5% increase from 43 years earlier (League of Nations, 1945). This rise in the number of Americans employed in manufacturing was equally fast-paced, more than doubling between 1890 and 1920 from 4.6 million to 10.89 million American workers (United States Bureau of the Census & Social Science Research Council, 1949, p. 64). Along with industrialization, the forces of urbanization helped to give context and meaning to American history curriculum and instruction.

**Urbanization.** During the late nineteenth century, America was transformed not only by industrialization, but by the quickening pace of urbanization. Between 1890 and 1920, American cities with a population of 25,000 inhabitants or more grew by 145% resulting in a total of 54,157,973 Americans living in large cities. Rural areas continued to see growth, but on a much smaller scale with only 26% growth in population during this same time period (United States Bureau of the Census, & Social Science Research Council, 1949, p. 29). The city of Boston grew by 66% in these thirty years, resulting in a total population of 748,060 by 1920 (Campbell J. Gibson & Lennon, 1999). The growth of cities as well as the problems it caused is well documented in historical literature (Arnesen et al., 2006; Zinn, 2005). The sudden growth of large cities such as New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, and Boston brought with it the very human problems of squalor, disease, and poverty. Americans, newly arrived from overseas and from rural America, struggled to find proper housing, food, and work in burgeoning industries such as steel, coal, textiles, meat-packaging, and other finished goods production.

Americans faced many challenges to every-day life. The plight of the poor in urban settings was well documented by reporters and sociologists of the time period. Most notably, Stephen Crane and Jacob Riis employed the relatively new technology of rapid flash
photography to take pictures of life in the slums of large cities such as New York. Jacob Riis, in his seminal work on the effects of urbanization on the poor *How the Other Half Lives* (1901), documented the growth of the tenement neighborhoods in New York City. He explained this development as an outgrowth of the rapid expansion of the city after the War of 1812. By the time the first edition of Riis’ work appeared in 1890, the East Side of Manhattan had become the most densely populated area in the world, with a population of 290,000 people per square mile (Gandal, 1997; Macionis & Parrillo, 2004; Riis, 1901). Beyond just relating dry statistical data, Riis’ work in particular tells the stories of countless thousands of residents. His story of one immigrant family paints a very grim and perhaps all too universal picture of life in the slums of New York:

> Another (example) was the case of a hard-working family of man and wife, young people from the old country, who took poison together in a Crosby Street tenement because they were *tired*. There was no other explanation, and none was needed when I stood in the room in which they had lived. (p. 7)

Riis’ careful documentation of life among the poor in New York City brought an outcry from progressive reformers of the day. His work, along with the work of Stephen Crane and many others became the catalyst for changes to child labor laws, sanitary living laws, housing safety, reforms in crime laws, and the enforcement of long standing and previously unenforced school attendance laws. Crane and Riis’ work occurred in tandem with the work of settlement house founders.

Settlement houses were the precursors to today’s social services agencies. Their founders and workers, often young woman with a progressive political bent who had the financial means to support their work with the poor, were the forerunners of the modern social worker. Hull
House, located in Chicago’s south-side slums, was led by Jane Addams. While Addams’ work was inspired by her experiences at Toynbee Hall, an early settlement house in London, Hull House became the premier example for settlement houses throughout the United States (Tims, 1961). Hull House and Addams’ work is important not only for the contributions this work made to the daily lives of the immigrant poor, but also because of her contributions to American education. Addams’ influence on public education through her own work and through the curriculum offered at Hull House was remarkable although perhaps under-recognized today. Addams understood education as a broad process that incorporated learning through living or experiencing the world around the student, promoting democracy and equality, and one that would prepare the individual for the working world without serving just the needs of industrial giants or corporate management. In adding to and reshaping the debate around the proper role of public education and more generally on the importance of education in the life of an individual, Jane Addams forced American society to confront their own intellectual and ethnic biases. Addams’ expansive definition of education and her unwavering belief that education was literally the best possible safe-guard against poverty forced American society to rethink the proper role of education in the lives of its citizens. Addams’ vision and mission for Hull House, a vision repeated throughout the United States by other settlement houses and public schools who often worked together, was that public education would be grounded in the practical and lived experiences of immigrants and the poor. In turn, this practical curriculum would provide value and purpose to students (Addams, 1902; Deegan, 1988; Elshtain, 2002).

The work of urban reformers such as Riis, Crane, and Addams also spurred a change in public schools and in particular an enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws. Reformers advocated for totally free, public, and universal education of adolescents to take them
out of the streets and the factories. Despite all of the challenges urbanization posed to daily life, both native born Americans and immigrants found it necessary in increasing numbers to attend school. As will be suggested below, Americans found value in public education even though educators and consumers of education had very different ideas about where in the curriculum that value laid as well as how to obtain that value. The reason for the vastly differing opinions lies partially in philosophical differences between immigrants and nativists (here defined as those that advocated for a classical/western-style Anglo-Saxon Protestant inspired curriculum) over what should be included in the curriculum. To be certain, one cannot overlook how the force of immigration, which drastically influenced America’s cultural landscape also spurred new debates over the form and function of a proper American K-12 curriculum.

Immigration. Between 1890 and 1920, immigration to the United States swelled. During these 30 years, the average number of immigrants arriving to America totaled 618,899 persons (United States Bureau of the Census & Social Science Research Council, 1949). The tide of immigration would ebb and flow over the intervening 30 years as immigration was closed off because of economic depression in the 1890s or American entrance into World War I which engendered widespread distrust of immigrants in the United States between 1915 and 1920. However, there were periods, most notably between 1905 and 1910, when over 1 million people would arrive annually (United States Bureau of the Census & Social Science Research Council, 1949). As has been mentioned, the United States was a nation “on this rise” and this rise in prosperity would facilitate one of the largest migrations in human history. The consequences of this migration would be hardest felt by the immigrants themselves as they struggled to make a living in a nation ripe with opportunity, but also abundant in prejudice and discrimination.
During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants, braving the passage from Europe, Asia, and overland from Canada and South as well as Central America encountered a nation at odds with their arrival. These immigrants came for a variety of reasons, either to escape civil war in Europe and Asia or for a better chance at prosperity in a nation teeming with job opportunities. Whatever their reason for the journey, immigrants (depending upon their country of origin) found a nation either hostile towards them or welcoming to them. Racial prejudice abounds even in census reports from the time period which kept wholly separate reports on the number of immigrants from white races (i.e. European) and all other non-white (i.e. Asia, Australasia, the Middle-East, and Central/South America) immigrants to the United States (United States Bureau of the Census & Social Science Research Council, 1949, pp. 33-36). This discrimination found its way into public school classrooms as well and was sometimes centered around the school curriculum.

Amburgy (2002) suggests that newly immigrated Americans advocated in large numbers for the teaching of “special subjects” such as drawing, painting, modern languages, and music. In her report, based upon surveys and archival documentation from the Chicago Public Schools in 1893, Amburgy suggests that German, Polish, and Bohemian-Americans often favored these types of studies because they represented part of a whole or liberal education. Proponents of a strictly classical education, one that would focus on Latin, Greek, mathematics, and English instruction solely, represented anti-immigrant or nativist groups. Her research is corroborated by others who have suggested that anti-immigrant groups tended to use public schools as a way to mold newly arrived immigrants into what they viewed was the proper American (H. B. Clark, 1897; Hogan, 1978; William J. Reese, 1981; Tyack, 1974; Wrigley, 1982; Zinn, 2005). Disagreements over curriculum in the Chicago public schools repeated themselves in New York
and Boston. In both cities, the now minority Protestant Anglo-Saxon residents entered heated and often violent debates with newly arrived Irish and Italian Catholics as well as Jewish Immigrants over the inclusion of religion in the public school curriculum. By 1890, both school systems had removed the bible from the official reading list much to ire of nativists. The effect of immigration on newly ARRIVED Americans’ belief that they too had a voice in the education of their children could even be felt at meetings of the National Education Association (NEA)—the premier professional organization for educators. At the fall 1890 meeting, educational leaders representing nativist sentiments accused Catholic and Jewish educators of “defrauding their children of religious instruction, aided in their dirty work by the foreign element, uninstructed in American civilization” (Tyack, 1974, p. 105). This particular argument certainly occurred prior to 1889 and it would be repeated at subsequent NEA meetings. Over time, these arguments would spill out into the popular press as nativists and immigrants would view for control over the public school curriculum (Dewey, 1908; Jay, 1889; Mayo, 1880; Strong, 1891; White, 1886).

At the end of this 30 year period under analysis, conflicts over the curriculum between nativists and immigrants extended into rural populations as well. The public school teacher’s political beliefs and even their national loyalties were often at the center of many of these conflicts. In 1920, the Graduate School of Education at the University of Nebraska, working with Elwood Cubberley, who would go on to gain notoriety as a pioneer in the study of educational administration, conducted a survey of Nebraska public schools which showed that over half of its teachers were foreign-born. The committee lamented this fact stating:

how can we have a national spirit, in a Commonwealth where there is an infusion of the language and blood of many nations unless there is a very strong effort made to socialize the different elements and weld them into a unified whole…It therefore becomes evident
how important it is that the teacher be an American in sympathy, ideals, training, and loyalty. (pp. 55-56)

It is clear that the construction of a proper public school K-12 curriculum was influenced by the struggles between native-born Americans and immigrants to America. Their differing views and values found a voice in the struggle to piece together a program of study for public school students. As will be discussed later, this very strong effort made to socialize the different elements into a unified whole would infect American public education under the banner of Americanism. Americanism would be a force that would peak around 1915 as the United States considered entering World War I. The decision to enter the war was in no small part affected by anti-immigrant (specifically anti-German) sentiment. That sentiment would permeate the public school system. Moreover, the teachers who were the integral parts of that system would be enlisted to help inculcate students with a common American system of cultural, civic, and moral values. It is also clear that industrialization, urbanization, and immigration had dramatic effects on the form and delivery of public school curriculum at all grade levels. Between 1890 and 1920, perhaps the most dramatic change wrought by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration would simply be the equally fantastic increase in public school enrollment and regular attendance.

**Effects of Industrialization, Urbanization, and Immigration on School Attendance**

Prior to 1880, public school attendance data is rather unreliable and is at best inconsistent. However, beginning with the spread and enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws in the 1880s, a clearer picture of school attendance emerges. In 1880, there were approximately 10 million students enrolled in K-12 schools. By 1890, that number increased by 30% to 13.5 million students (Campbell J. Gibson & Lennon, 1999; Goldin, 1994). What is
more, between 1890 and 1920, the number of Americans attending public (K-12) schools increased from 13.5 million students to 15.7 million students. The greatest percentage increase in public school enrollment came at the secondary level. While the culmination of 8-9 years of education remained the norm for the vast majority of American who regularly attended school, an increasing number of Americans pursued as high school diploma (Conant, 1959; L. Cremin, 1988; Goldin, 1998). The total number of students enrolled in grades 9-12 in the United States increased from 203,000 students in 1890 to 512,000 students in 1920 which represents an increase of 152% over this 30 year period (United States Office of Education, 1920, pp. 400-401). This was due in part to industrialization and the need to train students for jobs in an increasingly automated and more sophisticated workforce where literacy was a necessary skill. Moreover, Fuller (1983) has suggested that industrialization served to keep students in school longer as job opportunities in newly mechanized industries along with a concurrent enforcement of child-labor laws closed-off work opportunities for adolescents. The Boston Public Schools demonstrate this increase in public school attendance at least in part as a result of the need for new job skills perfectly. Between 1890 and 1920 school attendance in Boston rose from 2,890 to 14,017 students—which represents an increase of 385% (BPS, 1890, p. 45; BPS, 1920, p. 57).

During the same period of time, the city of Boston experienced a relatively steady stream of immigration. The average foreign-born percentage of the total population for the city of Boston

1 It is worth noting that the United States’ population increased exponentially during this same time period from 62,979,766 inhabitants to 118,107,150 inhabitants due largely to increased immigration with a yearly average immigration of 618,899 individuals. See Historical Statistics of the United States: 1798-1945, 1949, pp. 25-32 for a breakdown of immigration by gender, age, and country of origin.
between 1890 and 1920 was 34.7% and this percentage remained relatively stable over that 30 year time span (Campbell J. Gibson & Lennon, 1999).

This pattern in increased school attendance was even more dramatic in Illinois where an average of 95% of students, who were male and aged 14 to 16 years, are reported as having attended schools regularly (Hogan, 1978). However, attending school was not every school boy or girl’s wish. Helen Todd, writing in 1913 for *McClure’s Magazine* conducted a study of 500 adolescents who preferred working in Chicago industries to the labor of the classroom. The question: *What value do you see in education and in attending school?*, elicited the following typical response:

> Once I worked in a night school in the Settlement, an' in the day school too," said one child. "Gee, I humped myself. I got three cards with 'excellent' on 'em. An' they never did me no good. My mother she kept 'em in the Bible, an' they never did her no good, neither. They ain't like a pay envelope. (p. 72)

What is clear is that while a number of students saw value in furthering their education, another segment of adolescents did not. They could see the economic value in pay whereas the positive effects of education did not have any immediate value to many working adolescents. For a variety of reasons, many school-aged children had to go to work.

However, the data does show that children went to work in fewer numbers between 1890 and 19020. As the second decade of the 20th century dawned, more school aged adolescents not only regularly attended grammar school, but they saw value in matriculating to high school as well. Although slightly outside the time period under analysis here, a 1921 questionnaire administered by Miss L.F. Merrill of the Department of Vocational Guidance for the Chicago Board of Education reports that in district 7 of the Chicago Public Schools:
Of the 426 children going on to high school, over half were the first in their respective families to have gone beyond the grammar grades; and only 31 parents had ever attended a high school. Many principals have mentioned the definite change that has come during the last few years in the attitude of both parents and children toward further education. The social as well as the industrial value of high school is an important factor in increased high school attendance. (p. 155)

As cities such as Boston and Chicago increased in population, due to immigration, inter-state migration, and natural increases in the birth rate, Boston’s public schools and public schools throughout the United States expanded dramatically to accommodate the needs of new learners.

As has been mentioned, prior to 1880 public schooling was haphazard in much of the United States. Although a number of states, including Massachusetts, had enacted laws making K-8 education compulsory, there was little enforcement (D. W. Howe, 2009; Kliebard, 1995; William J. Reese, 2011). Secondary education remained the privilege of the elite. Even public high schools prior to 1880 featured curriculum that catered to the privileged and wealthy who would go on to study at prestigious universities such as Columbia, Harvard, or Yale. The schools’ curricula was dominated by classical languages such as Latin and Greek, classes in drawing, painting, history, and many public schools even offered courses in Christian theology (Gold, 1917a; Graham, 1993; Rice, 1893; Thatcher, 1898; Tyack, 1974). As has been mentioned, conflicts between native-born Americans and newly arrived immigrants come to dominate the discourse about what constituted proper K-12 curriculum at this time. Before this debate and the changes it wrought, public secondary schools more closely resembled private academies. Just as the forces of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration pressed upon society a new need to
train adolescents in rudimentary literacy and management skills, American public schools also changed to meet that need.

As natural born Americans and newly arrived immigrants crowded into cities looking for work and to connect with those they knew or with others who shared similar customs, public educators debated about how best to teach the swarming new masses of adolescents and even adults. What was certain is that new curricular innovations were needed. No immigrant or illiterate former-farmer would be well-suited for classes in Latin and Greek, nor were these classes necessary for these people to be fully engaged members of society. In Chapter 5, I will discuss American history curriculum in depth, but here it is worth a brief discussion of how not only industrialization, immigration, and urbanization shaped the need to change K-12 curriculum, but how differing philosophical beliefs shaped American public school courses of study. Importantly, this debate would be far from purely philosophical. Rather, it would be a rich conversation about what new innovations in teaching methods were necessary to reach and elevate the new masses of students now sitting in classrooms throughout America. It was also a debate between two major competing philosophies: humanist education, which would morph into social efficiency dominated curricular programs and eventually would come to be known as essentialism and progressivism or child-centered educational programs.

The Philosophical Foundations of Curriculum-Making from 1890-1920

Introduction: diversification in curriculum and instruction. American education at the turn of the 20th century was not only shaped by the forces of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, but also by often competing and conflicting educational goals, practices, and interests. The years 1890 to 1920 would be some of the most challenging for leaders and teachers in public education as new curricular innovations competed for recognition amid a system that
was constantly attempting to adapt to a dynamic social order (Beck, 1954). Curricular innovations ran the gamut from the school gardening movement to the manual training movement popularized by the University Of Chicago Lab-School to innovations in business and secretarial training (Addams, 1905; T. D. Fallace, 2011; Graham, 1993; Kohlstedt, 2008). As happens today, these conflicting ideals played out in newspapers of the time. Newspapers often took an editorial stance on major issues in public education such as the public’s ambivalence towards supporting secondary education, curriculum changes, and just as in the modern day, newspapers followed the actions of school personnel closely (Beck, 1954). As will be discussed below and in chapter 5, professional organizations and schools joined in this debate adding further context to what curriculum was appropriate at each grade level.

This debate is seen in the work of the American Historical Association (AHA) and the National Education Association (NEA) as they proposed and debated new ideas about how to best serve students. Often, these professional organizations would look to the curriculum and work of English, German, and French schools for inspiration on how to prepare students for life after high school. Upon the findings and reports of researchers such as Lucy Salmon, a Vassar College instructor who spent several summers between 1895 and 1897 investigating and observing the teaching of history in European public schools, both the AHA and the NEA would make recommendations for changes in K-12 public school history curriculum (Salmon, 1897, 1899). The debate between these organizations trickled down into individual school districts prompting a widespread change in the courses of study offered and the proliferation of a number of different types of training schools.

The Boston Public Schools exemplify this trend. In 1890, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) included ten high schools with little differentiation among them and the curriculum they
offered besides the separation of students based on sex. By 1920, the number of high schools had increased to fifteen schools, including 2 Latin schools separated by sex and offering a curriculum suitable for college-bound students. The thirteen other high schools, including the Mechanical Arts High School, specialized in trades such as plumbing, carpentry, horticulture, and one high school was devoted to artistic endeavors such as: drawing, painting, and sculpture. Although many high schools in the BPS system included aspects of each of these curricular areas, the trend within BPS and nationwide was towards more differentiation of curriculum based on student needs and the perceived needs of higher education and American industry (Boston Public School Committee, 1890a, 1895, 1920). It was a change that reflected the work of the AHA and NEA, public opinion, and two distinct philosophies that would have a major impact on reforms to the 19th century public school curriculum.

**Humanist and Social Efficiency theories at work in schools.** Although humanist/social efficiency and progressive educational movements would gain a major foothold in America in the 1920s, they both have philosophical roots in the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries as educators discussed the need for teaching methods, materials, and curricula that were appropriate for the student of this time period. Centuries’ old notions came to influence both progressive and classical ideals and strategies. Indeed, E.D. Hirsch (2008), in a commentary on the influence of Romantic ideals on American education practices, suggests that “our nation was born in the Enlightenment, but bred in the Romantic period….Such faith was the aspect of nineteenth century ideas that powerfully influenced our young nation in its beginnings, and still dominates our thinking about education and many other things” (p. 4). Certainly then, Romantic and Enlightenment period ideals also gave inspiration to the curriculum workers, school leaders, and philosophers attempting to reform public education at this time.
The idea that a “tougher” pedagogical style was the best way for students to learn was advocated for in the early-middle 20th century under the banner of essentialism, but it had 19th century beginnings in humanist and social efficiency philosophies (William C. Bagley, 1939; Null, 2007). Humanist philosophies on curriculum and education exerted a great deal of influence on curriculum makers and public educators even well into the 20th century. The humanist philosophy of educational curriculum stressed learning subjects such as English, classical languages, mathematics/logic, religion, and history in order to train the mind in different ways of thinking and inculcate the adolescent into civil society while also teaching the student the collective wisdom of mankind. As a counter-point to humanist curriculum theory, social-efficiency curriculum theory argues for designing curriculum and courses of study which serve the best interests and abilities of all students. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, social efficiency theorists gained much influence as public schools began adopting practices such as grouping students by age and sorting them by ability levels in order to design and deliver curriculum that was tailored to the students perceived abilities and their prospects in life after public school was complete (Schiro, 2008). However, as the first decade of the 20th century progressed, both humanists and social efficiency advocates would move towards an agreement or as Kliebard (2005) calls it “an unofficial détente” with one another over the ultimate goals of public school curriculum.

As industrialization, urbanization, and immigration forced upon schools the need to not only accommodate more students, but also change the curriculum to meet a different type of student need, humanist/social efficiency and progressive educational theorists debated continuously over how and what subjects should change. Humanist influence on public school curriculum has a long history that stretches back to the 17th century universities of Europe and it
was widely-transferred to American public schools and institutions of higher education in the 18th century (George Willis, William H. Schubert, Robert V. Bullough Jr., Craig Kridel, & Holton, 1994). In the late 19th century, humanist curriculum theory found its strongest advocate in Charles William Elliot. Eliot used humanist language and philosophy even as he and others began to compromise with social efficiency educators over the goals of public school curriculum. This debate over what ends the public school curriculum should achieve can best be viewed through Eliot’s internal/psychological and external philosophical/political battle with social efficiency curriculum advocates.

Eliot was the youngest president of Harvard University and served in that role from 1869 to 1909. In that time, he transformed the country’s oldest university into the most modern and preeminent research university in the United States. Elliot, once a professor of chemistry and mathematics, had studied the educational systems of European public schools and universities in depth and sought to reform American education in order to draw industry leaders back into full support of American educational institutions. Eliot, himself an 1849 graduate of the Boston Latin School, was a proponent of a classical/humanistic curriculum that would inspire people to be productive and useful citizens, but he also saw the need to change the curriculum in public schools as well as higher-educational institutions in order to meet the needs of students in a rapidly industrializing society while also preserving the teaching of classical curricular subjects necessary for college admission (Kliebard, 1995; Krug, 1961).

In his crusade to strike a balance between humanist and social efficiency curriculum advocates, Eliot had fiercely battled G. Stanley Hall, educational psychologist and popular vocational education advocate, over whether or not a public school curriculum should focus on preparing students for college or for life after school in their chosen vocation (Dewsbury, 1992).
As most if not all debates of a philosophical, cultural, and political nature go, the end result would be a compromise between the two men who epitomized both sides of the debate. The compromise would be mostly Eliot’s as he moved closer to believing a differentiated curriculum would be the best choice for many students. Kliebard (1995) suggests that “if the humanist values he cherished could not be instilled in the entire school population, as Eliot would have undoubtedly preferred, they could at least be preserved in that segment whose destiny it was to go on to college” (p. 105). Eliot’s about-face in his views, coupled with his preeminence as president of Harvard University, helped to transform public and private education in the early 20th century. Stunningly, Eliot’s and others decision to move away from a purely classical curriculum in order to at least in part preserve that curriculum was a complete repudiation of the NEA’s 1890 Committee of Ten Report, for which Eliot was the author. As Eliot, Hall, and others advocated for an education that would prepare students for life, including but not exclusive to college preparation, vocational education and the differentiation of curriculum began to spread widely in America’s public school institutions.

**Progressivism: from theory to practice in schools.** Just as the compromise between humanist and social efficiency curriculum advocates helped to guide American public secondary education in the direction of rigorous study and high academic standards, progressive educational philosophy served to mold American public schools into a new type of institution. This new organization, the 20th century American public school, would be one that could serve the multitudes of new immigrants and their children and could foster a climate where those students would be prepared for work in the industrial economy. Advocates of progressive educational philosophy such as: John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, and Edward Thorndike arrived on the scene as they believed that traditional, teacher-centered classrooms were an inappropriate
way to teach. Progressive philosophy in education stressed a trial and error or experiential way of learning that they believed provided the most appropriate way for students to learn (Dewey, 1902). Although these three men, and other members of the Progressive Educational Association (PEA) were almost always embroiled in philosophical conflict with one another over what it meant to be progressive, they did agree that secondary education needed to change to fulfill the needs of a growing industrial economy that required skilled workers and administrators (Overton, 1966).

Progressive educational theory is not easily defined. Like all similar historical movements that adopted the moniker of progressive, this movement was simply new and advocated a change in the curriculum to meet the needs of not only an emerging industrial economy, but also to meet the needs and interests of the students it served. The historical ambiguity over the term progressive especially when applied to this group’s goals in education is also at least partly due to the fact that many progressive proponents of education (Dewey being chief among these) disagreed on a universal definition and implementation of progressive strategies. Dewey would himself raised questions about the definition and aims of progressive education when he accepted the presidency of the PEA in 1928. But more than two decades before Dewey would question the philosophical underpinnings of the organization, progressive education would come to influence curriculum makers and educational psychologists concerned with the well-being and interests of the whole student.

Kliebard (2005) suggests that the PEA was probably born in the work of Marietta Johnson who, in 1907 started as school in Fairhope, Alabama. The Organic School of Fairhope was run on the principles of developmental appropriateness of activities and eliminated the sorting of children into grades by age. The curriculum was based almost solely on the interests
of the students and was guided by Johnson’s belief that “the education program should aim to
meet the needs of the growing child. We believe that childhood is for itself not a preparation for
adult life” (Kliebard, 2005, p. 159). Johnson’s creed would influence Dewey’s work and others
who believed that learning should be directed as to bring out children’s interests. Like
experiential learning programs today, progressive curriculum sought to create the conditions
under which a student could discover what interested them. Once interested, a student could
pursue deeper study and hone those skills into a career which would at the same time fulfill their
personal needs and help them be a contributing members of civic and social life. This movement
arose in philosophical opposition to the humanist/social efficiency movement which under the
banner of vocational education had become increasingly popular especially in the urban
Midwestern United States (Kliebard, 1995; Tyack, 1989; Wittenburg & Johnson, 1982).

In speeches, journals, and newspaper editorials, advocates of progressive education such
as John Dewey and Jane Addams defined this movement in sharp contrast to advocates of
industrial education such as David Snedden. In 1915, Dewey and Snedden argued famously in
_The New Republic_, each extolling the virtues of the progressive and industrial educational
movements while critiquing each other’s positions. For his part, Dewey suggested that industrial
education provided a separate tier of education for one group that would leave them at a
disadvantage for learning in the future. He argued that industrial education promoted the
“identification of education with the acquisition of specialized skill in the management of
machines at the expense of an industrial intelligence based on science and a knowledge of social
problems and conditions” (Dewey, 1915, p. 42). For his part, Snedden argued that industrial
education served the purpose of increasing economic efficiency, but that the rewards gained by
increasing economic efficiency would also be shared by workers. He further added that whether
or not vocational education, a movement virtually unchallenged during the first decade of the 20th century, was a separate or integrated part of the whole school curriculum was solely up to each individual school system and that it should be implemented in a manner which increased the school’s overall efficiency (Snedden, 1915). Jane Addams was perhaps even more outspoken than Dewey in her view that industrial education deadened a child’s intellectual life.

Jane Addams’ progressive mandate for a new type of education, one that would provide the many poor immigrants she worked with on a daily basis with a personal and professional measure of value and that would meet her ideal of a democratic and just society went (in her view) unfulfilled by public schools. Through the lens of history, it is perhaps easy to view Jane Addams as a proponent of industrial education—a type of curriculum which was quickly replacing classic studies in history, art, mathematics, and languages as the premier method to educate the masses of people needed to work in the new industrial economy (Deegan, 1988; Levine, 1971). Addams has even been viewed as an anti-intellectual; however, nothing could be further from the truth (Lasch, 1965).

Addams’ pragmatic view about education’s role in the lives and future prosperity of American youth led her to partially reject industrial education because she believed that it violated her view that education should seek to provide value to a person within their society. What is more, Addams believed that this type of education should also provide people with a real and valuable connection to their work. Industrial education, in Addams’ view, separated the man from his work and while it taught him useful skills, it did nothing to connect him to his work, family, and to the increasingly complex and interdependent industrial system itself. Addams suggests that “if you teach a man to feed a machine with a material of which he has no knowledge, producing a product which is totally unrelated to the rest of his life, without in the
least knowing what becomes of it, or its connection with the community, you will, of course, unquestionably deaden his moral and intellectual life” (Addams, 1902). Conversely, Addams proposed to turn industrial education upside-down.

What Addams proposed was that people should be trained to see machines as a way of being educated in a broad sense and in doing so to connect that work with their lives, heritage, and culture. Addams further argued that “no child should ever be put into a school simply to memorize what a professor thinks is important, then put into a factory to produce what the manager thinks is important, and even worse to have no relationship between the school and the factory (Levine, 1971). Addams further defined industrial education as “just the old paths of education with manual training thrown in” (Levine, 1971). Perhaps most importantly, she asked a very simple and yet never before thought of question: why should the public spend money to supply industry (which has enough resources of its own) with trained workers? (Farrell, 1967).

In a final analysis, it can be argued that Addams viewed industrial education as producing only automatons, capable certainly of earning a living in a manufacturing world, but incapable of carrying out the spirit of democracy key to sustaining positive political, moral, intellectual, and social life. Simply put, Jane Addams worried about the children around her and she knew that the type of industrial education touted by the industrial barons of the time (i.e. George Eastman, John D. Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie) would not solve the pressing problems caused by broken and inadequate families, health, delinquency, morality, poverty, neglect, and discrimination. Addams did not worry about these children for purely altruistic reasons; she worried about them out of an intense fear for the country’s democratic future (Grimm, 1997). Building a just, equal, and democratic society that would incorporate the
Theoretical frameworks challenge and change American public schools. Between 1890 and 1920, public school curricula underwent an enormous amount of change. Institutionally and administratively, public schools became far more common as the American population increased dramatically. This breathtaking increase in school population was the direct result of increased immigration and the enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws. As political and social progressives won a number of victories which would see child labor end, crime-levels lower, and would enforce safety and cleanliness laws for urban dwellings, the number of children attending public schools skyrocketed. Faced with overcrowded classrooms in which students spoke many distinct languages and charged with educating adolescents for any number of reasons, educators looked to profession psychologists, educators, law-makers, philosophers, and experts in industrial efficiency to help them craft many different curricula which would satisfy students’ teachers’ varied needs while playing positively in the public-political sphere outside the classroom. Early on, proponents of humanist educational programs and advocates of social efficiency in educational programming teamed up to offer a program of study that would provide a curriculum with more options for students who would go on to work in factories and others that would pursue higher education. The number of movements that morphed into the industrial education movement met fierce opposition from progressive educators who saw their curriculum as deadening an individual’s intellectual life. Progressive educators on the other hand, wanted a curriculum to provide students with opportunities to learn how to think, do, and interpret the social, economic, and political phenomena of the world around them.
The changes that public schools faced and the challenges that they overcame during this 30 year period are remarkable. Many public schools, especially in the urban northeastern United States, went from educating only a relative few, college-bound white, English-speaking males on a regular basis, to educating a significantly more diverse population. This diversity, which appeared in almost every manner possible, challenged educators in the past as it challenges educators today. If one does not understand the forces which gave form and context to public school curriculum work in this time period than one cannot understand our inheritance of it today. As an example, Labaree (2005) has suggested that the legacy of progressive education in today’s schools is that “the administrative progressives won the early struggle for control of America’s secondary schools and they reconstructed the organization and curriculum of American schools that has lasted to the present day” (pg. 276). This is certainly true when we examine the forces which influence modern American public schools. In this analysis, one can find many of the same challenges which vexed educators in the past and also many of their solutions that we have inherited and that keep our current national dialogue about American history curriculum fresh, enlivened, and full of new inquiry.

**The Modern Contexts of American History Curriculum-Making**

**Introduction.** To be sure, educators and historians living in modern-America are living in a far different world than their counterparts did more than a century ago. That being said, those struggling today to create and enact quality history curriculum and instruction are subject to many of the same forces that have affected the delivery of American history curriculum in the past. While we do live in a post-industrial economy, our educators are challenged to deliver a program of study that will prepare student for a *knowledge economy* (Bowles & Gintis, 2013; Friedman, 2007). Definitions of knowledge economy are prolific, but most define this modern
economic system as one which focuses on the production of goods and services which are primarily knowledge-based and are associated with advancements in science and technology (Powell & Snellman, 2004). Just as industrialization challenged an agrarian economy and educational system to advance rapidly to meet its demands, so too does the modern economy challenge American public educators and historians to craft a program of study that is appropriate to the modern day and one which will provide students with the necessary skills to be successful in the modern and future workplace.

Just as in the past, both urbanization and immigration play vital roles in shaping the modern educator’s work. Throughout the 20th century, Americans continued to move into urban areas while establishing suburban areas as well. As of 2010, 83.7% of Americans lived in one of the United States’ 366 metro areas—an area defined as having a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants (United States Bureau of the Census, 2010). As the majority of Americans continue to live in or move to urban areas, public schools and city resources are strained to take care of the adolescents who are legally required to attend school. Urban public schools face a number of physical and human resource problems from outdated buildings to an inability to attract and retain talented teachers. Like all public schools, urban school districts often face the challenge of insufficient or ever-changing budgets which restrain their abilities to teach the diverse students who flock to cities. Insufficient budget allocations, little to no classroom support for struggling learners, a diverse student population, and a lack of proper preparation to teach this population continue to challenge American public education in the modern era (Tamir & Neumann, 2013).

The United States is also home to a population just as diverse as it was at the turn of the 20th century. As of July 2013, the United States’ Department of Homeland Security estimates that the US foreign born (legal) population consists of over 13 million people, who have
immigrated mainly from Mexico, China, and India (Rytina, 2013). With an estimated population of slightly over 300 million Americans (as of 2012), the legal immigrant population is estimated to be 4.3% of the total population. Although this percentage of foreign-born permanent legal residents seems relatively small, it worth remembering that when non-permanent, but legal residents are added to the calculation, the total foreign born population is estimated at 12.8% (Rytina, 2013; United States Bureau of the Census, 2010). The picture becomes even more complex when examining the number of households in which English is not the primary language spoken. The 2010 United States’ census estimated this number at 20.3% of all households. This is to say nothing of illegal immigration to the United States for which no calculation is exact. What all of this adds up to is a complicated and intricate demographic picture for educators to examine. Today’s educators face the added challenge of crafting curriculum for English-Language Learners and scaffolding American history instruction so that students can effectively learn about their adopted country. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, a number of pervasive beliefs about the purpose of American history education exists today. Urban public schools struggle as well with a diverse population, scarce resources, and an inadequate numbers of highly trained staff members to teach its most needy students. However, unlike a century ago, increased federal government intervention has provided resources, mandates, and challenges that shape modern curriculum in ways very distinct from the past.

2001: The No Child Left Behind Act and an increased focus on assessment. Just as in the past, the modern context of making curriculum and delivering instruction in American history is complicated by political, social, and economic forces all of which (to varying degrees) shape how and what students learn in this subject. No discussion about curriculum making in the present day United States would be complete without a discussion of the No Child Left Behind
Act (NCLB). NCLB was enacted in 2001 as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and its most impactful mechanism was the reauthorization of Title 1 funding for public schools. NCLB gained wide and popular support among both liberal and conservative politicians and it stressed standards-based education and reform as well as a focus on assessments that would measure the success of these standards and whether or not students learned the content of the standards-based curriculum. Although this was certainly not the advent of standardized testing in American public education, NCLB did usher in an unprecedented focus on standardized testing of student achievement.

NCLB has promoted many positive reform practices that some claim have reduced the poverty gap in the America’s schools (Gamoran, 2007). However, NCLB has also generated a large amount of negative publicity. Most notably, principals, district administrators, and teachers in several large American school districts have come under investigation for altering student’s test scores in order to secure their jobs or bonus pay (Dessoff, 2011; Finn & Frone, 2004; Jonsson, 2011). Although we are far-enough historically removed from the advent and effects of this law, it is appropriate to suggest, as some have, that “NCLB has been a dismal failure, but it has succeeded in forging a political debate about reforming failed schools and vilifying the people who work for them” (Strauss, 2013 p. 17). Cheating scandals along with a change in national leadership evoke a strong response among educators who agree with the sentiment of NCLB, but not necessarily with its tactics. Under President Barack H. Obama, a new program entitled Race to the Top (enacted in 2010) provides waivers of the regulations within NCLB for states that are willing to adopt a set of national curriculum standards. Along with this waiver, states are given large payouts in Title 1 and Title 3 funding to help secure teachers, materials, and supports for students who are deemed “at-risk” for learning. Just as NCLB produced
proponents and opponents, the relatively new national curriculum standards and the Federal Department of Education’s Race to the Top program have renewed a national debate about the quality, form, and function of American public education.

2010: the Common Core State Standards and history education. At the heart of the modern debate in curriculum-making is the relatively new development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Delivered to participating states and schools in 2010, these national curriculum standards, developed with funding from the federal government and under the direction of the National Governor’s Association as well as the Council of Chief State School Officers, prescribe a set of content specific standards in English-Language Arts and Mathematics. The English-Language Arts standards incorporate reading and writing standards for History/Social Studies and Science, but they do not prescribe history or science content. Rather, they focus solely on the reading and writing skills students should learn in history and science classes. These standards have come under fire from a number of researchers who question the efficacy of the political process which developed them as well as the fact that they were delivered to schools having never been field-tested (Ravitch, 2013b; Strauss, 2013). Yet, other researchers and the federal government have hailed them as a vehicle to raise educational standards and prepare American students for the knowledge economy of the present and the challenges of the future (Brady & Hirsch Jr, 2012). Researchers and practitioners in history and social studies education have been particularly critical of the CCSS, suggesting that they do not address the issue of citizenship—a vital construct for students to know and be able to practice in order to perpetuate a democratic society (Kist, 2013).
Recently, there have been many vocal opponents of the CCSS. Craig Thurtell has been outspoken in his commentary. He has echoed the work of other history curriculum researchers (such as Sam Wineburg and Diane Ravitch) suggesting that:

aside from the NCHE’s (National Council for History Education) praise few critics have evaluated the impact of the CCSS on teaching the humanities, or more specifically, on the teaching of history. It is my contention that the CCSS express an antipathy to the humanities in general and insensitivity to the practice of history and that this problem is closely related to their non-historical approach to historical texts. This approach permits the allocation of historical texts to English teachers, most of whom are untrained in the study of history, and leads to history standards that neglect the distinctiveness of the discipline. If implemented as their authors intend, the common core will damage history education. (Thurtell, 2013, p. 8).

Here, Thurtell contends that the Common Core State Standards do not teach historical thinking. Rather, the standards treat non-fiction literature of a historical nature as purely a document with which students can practice skills such as analysis, synthesis, and determining the validity and reliability of the account. Unguided in the process of developing students’ skills in true historical thinking, educators in American history and curriculum makers are challenged in the modern context to produce student learning results using these standards as a framework. American history curriculum makers and educators also face other modern challenges stemming from the fact that their subject matter is difficult at best to test effectively and at worst perhaps impossible to test efficaciously using standardized methods.

Today’s history teacher remains on the front lines of this battle. It is these individuals who now faces a number of challenges and confusions to delivering high quality instruction in
history. While standards-based instruction is the acceptable norm in the classroom and curriculum is designed with these norms in mind, the modern teacher instructs in a context that is complicated by confusion over which standards to use or how to incorporate both content and skill standards. Professional associations like the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) or the Organization of History Teachers (a sub-group of the American Historical Association) abound to help educators. However, the professional development they produce only provides some temporary answers to confusion over the standards-based curriculum. While opportunities for professional development in history education abound, it often takes place out of the context of the teacher’s actual classroom which makes it of little actual relevance for the educator. Furthermore, the often heard statement “if you can’t test it, it doesn’t count” plagues social studies educators in particular because aside from the non-binding National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in history, many states require no test in history. The hyper-focus on assessment in English, Mathematics, and Science leaves little room in constrained school budgets to hire and retain talented history teachers as well as develop high quality instruction in American history. Simply put, in an age of constrained resources, a mathematics teacher is often deemed more important than a history teacher.

**The crowded curriculum and a lack of resources.** The economic downturn of the past 5 years, precipitated by a number of economic forces, has caused a concurrent tightening of resources in school districts across the United States. Public school districts and the teachers, administrators, and other staff who work for these organizations have not only experienced layoffs and a reduction in benefits, but they have also been constantly vilified in the media as greedy and inadequate (DeAngelis, 2012). Having been attacked on many fronts for everything from a lack of producing adequate test scores to questioning whether the common core state
standards are just another “curriculum fad”, teacher stress and attrition which has always been rather high, has reached a zenith in the last 7 years (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Many school districts, spurred mainly by the Common Core’s focus on non-fiction text, science, and mathematics education have put more resources into the teaching of these subjects which has crowded out the number of classes that history and social studies teachers can offer. Although the focus at the high school level on more curricular choices, especially as students matriculate to the upper levels of high school, helps to broaden the number of social studies classes that are offered; time allotted to social studies instruction in the primary grades has been and remains a vexing issue (Paul G Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Ravitch, 1987). This struggle to find time in the school day for social studies education along with a number of competing pressures of which the struggle to properly assess students’ knowledge and skills is paramount, certainly characterizes the lived experience of many social studies educators today. It is very important to understand this context because it is the environment in which American history curriculum is envisioned, defined, purposed, and delivered.

The modern context of social studies education is defined by a hyper-focus on standards based instruction, assessment, and accountability that stretches back to the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and arguably further than that. The recently enacted Common Core Standards are also having a mixed effect on social studies curriculum creating a renewed focus on education in non-fiction for which historical documents are most often used as resources at the secondary level, but also constraints on time at the elementary level. The wholesale elimination of social studies education at the elementary level is apparent when one examines the sheer amount of standardized testing that is performed in kindergarten through fifth grade. Even with a renewed focus on American historical literature and other social studies
curricula, researchers and educators remain skeptical of the Common Core’s treatment of historical texts. Present socio-economic forces, the current educational mandates listed above, along with a changing student demographic show that an examination of discussions between professionals in history and public school educators is timely, urgent, and essential to give modern American history teachers a renewed purpose to their work and to work through and within their modern constraints.

The Research Question: The Importance of the Past on the Present

As the discussion above indicates, American public education suffered from a kind of “crises of definition” between 1890 and 1920. Discussions between professionals in history and educators, as will be illuminated in Chapter 5, reveal three themes or trends in American history education that are situated quite literally within the actual curriculum while informing the work of teachers who were often poorly trained if trained at all in teaching American history. Educators and historians enjoyed a close professional relationship in the past and that gave the curriculum a surprisingly universal direction and form throughout the country. The themes I will focus on will be:

1. Patriotism/celebration of American democratic and religious institutions,

2. History education as necessary training for college-level work/thinking skills,

3. American history used to teach morality/character education.

I will argue that each of these themes deserve some consideration today as we ponder the form and function of American history curriculum and pedagogy.

For the reasons stated above and for reasons such as an increased focus on special education populations, students coming to school inadequately prepared at home with few resources, ELL needs, and psychiatric/other social problems that need to be worked out during
the school day, schools find themselves overtaxed as they frantically try to serve many purposes much as they did in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Not only is the curriculum crowded, but time during the school day to devote to the study of American history has come under attack. A look back at the discussions and the work between historians and educators around American history education may provide some direction to balance or organize competing objectives and the diverse students’ needs within a modern context. But a word of caution is also in order: this examination will be useful as long as we do not simply take the past and paste it onto the present.
Chapter 5: Conversations between Historians and Educators

Introduction

This historical-documentary analysis poses the following research two-part question: How do popular and dominant political, social, and economic forces affect the creation and delivery of American history curriculum in public schools between 1890 and 1920 and how is this history significant in today’s public schools? In order to answer this question fully, one must examine the scholarly conversations between teachers and historians during this time period. To be sure, one cannot know the significance (either in the past or the present) of relationship between historians and teachers unless we analyze the conversations they had with one another. Fortunately, we have a plethora of historical sources that best represent or in some cases are the literal conversations these professionals engaged in a century or more ago. For the purposes of this project, these historical documents fall into four discreet categories and are examined (with few exceptions) only between the years 1890 and 1920. The four categories are labeled in the following manner: Conversation 1-The conference proceedings of the American Historical Association (AHA) and the National Education Association (NEA). Conversation 2-Official government publications, often an outgrowth of the work of the NEA and AHA, which include documents such as the US Department of the Interior’s (USDI) 1915 publication: The Teaching of Community Civics. Conversation 3-Journal articles and other scholarly conversations. Conversation 4-History/Social Studies methods texts and other professional development materials for history teachers. Each set of documents also represents an important type of official conversations between historians and educators. These conversations are all part of a dialectical relationship between the educator and the professional in history. Through these conversations, scholars and practitioners in history and education debated the form, structure,
and purpose of American History curriculum and pedagogy ostensibly to improve it and to mold it to the purposes they deemed appropriate in their day.

For the purposes of this study, Conversation 3-Journals and other scholarly conversations, includes materials from *The School Review* that reference history and social studies curriculum. The journal, published by the University of Chicago, began in 1893 and today is known as the *American Journal of Education*. During the time frame under investigation, this journal was the premier reference source for secondary educators. Additionally, I will analyze several studies published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* between 1915 and 1920. This journal was significant in so much as it addressed testing concerns among teachers since history pedagogy and curriculum was in a constant state of reevaluation. Last, I have included the *History Teacher’s Magazine*, also known as *Historical Outlook* (after 1909), as a primary source of conversations between practitioners in education and professionals in history over the form, substance, and purpose of American history curriculum.

In analyzing and drawing conclusions from documentary evidence, it is wise to heed the words of other researchers in history who have suggested that “the evidence which comes before the historical student is concerned with probabilities, not certainties” (Fling & Caldwell, 1897, p. 325). To be sure, the evidence examined here, for which some conclusions will be drawn in later chapters, cannot be viewed to be in any way definitive or certain. However, in Chapter 6, I will examine programs of studies in American history, curriculum documents, and discourse between teachers, historians, and administrators through an analysis of documents from the Boston Public School System. The Boston Public schools will serve as a quasi-case study group for analyzing how the conversations and themes discussed in this chapter actually played out in a school system that was at the forefront of these conversations.
Themes in American History Curriculum and Instruction

An analysis of the four different types of documents listed above revealed three themes that have persisted in the teaching of history today and inform discussions between historians and educators. These themes represent the three main purposes that gave meaning to the curricular work historians and educators performed between 1890 and 1920. Conversations between the AHA and the NEA as well as other documents examined here fall into the following categories: teaching American history to inculcate patriotism or as a celebration of American democratic institutions, teaching American history as a college entrance requirement or the perceived learning outcomes of teaching and learning American history, and teaching American history for moral/character building purposes. It is important to note that all of these themes persist over time even though they wax and wane in importance. For example, the first theme: patriotism peaked as a theme in discussions between historians and educators between 1915 and 1920 as the First World War began and American’s decided whether or not they would become directly involved in the war, but it had been part of discussions about the purpose of American history education since at least 1890 and arguably far before this date. The three themes resulted from coding of all the documents listed in the four categories/conversations above. Furthermore, the themes represent at least in part—the intended outcomes of education in American history and why historians and educators believed the study of American history was vital. In this chapter, I will discuss each of these themes as they appear in each conversation. The themes serve as the primary organizational label for discussing the documents. Before discussing these themes through the documentary records listed above, it is helpful to discuss briefly how American history came to be taught in schools as well as a short history on the rise of the NEA.
and the AHA as the premier professional organizations and educational policy influencers of their day.

**A Brief History of American History Curriculum and Instruction in Public Schools**

In 1922, Henry Johnson’s book, *Teaching History in Elementary and Secondary Schools*, which built upon the earlier work of Hinsdale (1897) and others, chronicled the study of history in general and American history specifically in order to provide professional development to teachers who were often poorly trained if trained at all in the methods of historical study. In his book, Johnson devoted multiple chapters to chronicling the study of American history in public schools throughout the United States. He and others saw their work as important in advancing the study of American history in schools and crucial to their work with teachers who were struggling, as they do today, with the goals of American history curriculum. According to Johnson, the study of American history in public schools goes back to at least the late 18th century when the first public school textbooks were published by Noah Webster (of Webster’s dictionary fame) and others. In the late 1780s, Webster published *Grammatical Institutes of the English Language*, a book that was a mix of readings in American history, spelling, and English grammar instruction as well as literature suitable for grade school children. This book, along with the 1788 publication of Morse’s *Geography* were the first American-made school textbooks to feature on a strong American history component. Before this period, American history was scarcely studied in private academies or the free public schools in Boston and Philadelphia even though the study of history was strongly advocated for by patrons and supporters of free schools such as Benjamin Franklin (Russell, 1914).

By 1827, as free public schools were becoming more common throughout the Northeastern United States, Massachusetts established a law to make the study of United States
history mandatory in all places where there were more than 500 residents (Martin, 1894). Although this law was not enforced, by the middle of 19th century, United States’ history was the course found most often in a review of public school courses’ of study throughout the Commonwealth (Johnson, 1922, p. 129). Indeed, some scholars have insisted that Massachusetts led the way in suggesting instruction in American history and that the course of study in schools such as Boston’s English and Latin High Schools became the “gold-standard” for teaching a rigorous course in American history (Gold, 1917b; Osgood, 1914). Although states were slow to set up regular, free public schools throughout most of the 19th century, once the tribulations of the Civil War had ended, community supported public schools became firmly entrenched and their courses of study regularly featured the study of American history. Although there was variation throughout the United States, programs in American history in primary schools normally consisted of the study of moral lessons and holidays (i.e. Thanksgiving, a tale of perseverance via the travels of Lewis and Clark), stories of hero worship (namely, President George Washington), and in grades six through eight, American history told from a European perspective and an American-nationalistic perspective became the model format for a program of study (Russell, 1914). In secondary schools, there was much more variation depending on the size of the school. In larger school districts, teachers were separated by department as is the norm today. However, in smaller high schools teachers often taught more than one content area which necessarily restricted what courses could be offered (Gold, 1917a; McManis, 1900). This notwithstanding, the program of study in American high schools generally tended towards at least two consecutive years of study in European and American history. Some schools mandated the study of specific countries such as Great Britain and France along with a study of modern American history and civil government, but as a rule American history and government was
studied in the 11th or 12th years of secondary school (Bolton, 1901; Gold, 1917b). As will be seen later, reports from the AHA and NEA would mandate that far more history be required in secondary schools as way to train minds for college study and to provide a common set of cultural values to the many immigrants pouring into the United States in the first decade of the 20th century. In fact, the AHA and the NEA would be the premier associations to influence curriculum making and educational policies between 1890 and 1920. In the absence of a fiscally influential federal government, as is the case today, it was the AHA and NEA who not only advocated for the inclusion of American history in the core curriculum, but they also provided a great deal of curricular and pedagogical support to teachers and administrators struggling to provide quality instruction in American history.

A Brief Institutional History of the AHA and NEA

Since the AHA and NEA are the two organizations under primary analysis here, a brief discussion of both organizations is appropriate in order to provide context to an analysis of the conversations occurring at their respective conventions and the reports they generated on American history curriculum and instruction between 1890 and 1920. The American Historical Association (AHA) was founded in 1884 in order to promote the study of history throughout the United States. It was incorporated by Congress in 1889 and today, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., it serves over 14,000 members (American Historical Association, 2013). The institution is one of the oldest professional organizations of its kind and has (with few exceptions) held annual meetings each year in Washington D.C. and in locations throughout the continental United States. From its inception as an organization promoting the study of history to the modern day, the AHA has focused on advocating for the teaching of American history in K-12 schools. Part of this focus has been a dedication to bringing together scholars in history
(usually university professors) with educators and policy makers to discuss not only why history is an important subject for students to learn, but also the scope and sequence of a rigorous program of study in American history. The AHA has often been the organization the United States’ federal government has looked to in order to create curriculum guidelines and other policy documents surrounding the study of history (i.e. *The Study of History in Schools*, 1900; *Cardinal Principals of Secondary Education*, 1918). In their advocacy for history education, they have often been joined by the National Education Association.

The National Education Association (NEA) was founded at a meeting of 43 educators in Philadelphia, PA in 1857. The association was founded to advocate for high-quality, free public schools for all children and for better working conditions for teachers. In the 156 years since its inception, the NEA has grown to over 3 million members (National Education Association, 2013). As a professional organization, it differs somewhat from the AHA because it is also a labor advocate for teachers. While the AHA is strictly a scholarly organization, the NEA represents a hybrid organization: part scholarly organization and part labor union. Nonetheless, both the AHA and the NEA remain focused on advocating or denouncing a wide-range of issues affecting public schools today.

The NEA and the AHA have often worked closely with one another and have been the catalysts for bringing together professionals in history and public school educators to discuss American history curriculum and instruction. Their importance also lies in the fact that because they were and continue to be the largest organizations of their kind, they can harness more intellectual, human, and financial capital than similar, but smaller regional organizations. This intellectual and human capital was often brought together in the dialectical process known as the *annual meeting*. It was here, that the organizations, both in their separate meetings and at the
invite of one another, could bring together professional historians and educators to discuss American history and craft new programs of study to meet the needs of an ever-changing student population. As has been mentioned, the complete meeting records of both organizations survive and they offer insight into the work of creating American history curriculum. The most compelling insight and the information that is most useful in answering the research question comes from an identification of the purposes of American history education. The three purposes are identified, discussed, and analyzed below. The first theme/purpose identified is patriotism or a celebration of American democratic institutions which has long been the most often cited reason why American history is included in the core curriculum. As will be seen, this purpose has also been the theme most subject to popular political and social forces and geo-political events external of the public school classroom.

**Patriotism or a Celebration of American Democratic Institutions**

*Conversation 1: the annual conference proceedings of the AHA and NEA.* In 1890, as the AHA convened its annual meeting in Washington, D.C., AHA President John Hay addressed the 108 attendees by demanding that more American history be required in public elementary and secondary schools as well as at the university level. In his opening remarks, Hay characterized history as a field of study which connects the past with the present and one which can teach: democracy, unity of purpose for a nation, and moral development among our youth (pp. 17-29). Hay further suggests that “American history has been taught very badly or not at all and that this is unsuitable for a nation that occupies an area greater than that of Ancient Rome” (p. 26). In mentioning this, Hay stressed that as America became an imperial power, it was necessary that the country inculcate its youth with a sense of shared tradition and culture, meaning that a strategically taught and well organized curriculum in American history was not
just pedagogically important, but rather this curriculum also had pressing implications for both domestic and foreign policy. Hay called upon delegates to focus on crafting suggestions for a program of study in American history that would be borne out of a sense of national pride as America emerged as a global power. Moreover, Hay quoted Goldwin Smith by defining history as “a series of struggles to elevate the character of humanity” (pg. 28). In his opening remarks, Hay would set forth the unofficial parameters for what would characterize conversations between historians and teachers over the next 30 years. As historians and educators conversed with one another over the form and structure of American history curriculum, patriotism as a reason for teaching American history would re-emerge consistently.

The following year, the NEA met in Toronto, Canada and featured Jr. Preston, State Superintendent of Education in Mississippi, who spoke about teaching patriotism through history. He stressed that the school was the chief purveyor of patriotism suggesting they “make a citizenship whose intelligence, moral rectitude, and steadfast virtues will counteract these disintegrating forces and social disorders” (Preston, 1891, p. 104). Preston continued by suggesting that a curriculum in American history and democratic/civil government was necessary to fight municipal corruption, poverty, overcrowding of cities, waves of foreign immigration which “confused” national sentiments in the United States, and even disease. To Preston and others, the forces of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization were imprinting upon the American social landscape a disorder which they believed needed to be rectified through a common education in history and civics. Preston’s sense of urgency to teach patriotism was shared by his audience. In the discussion which followed Preston’s speech, A.H. Mackay, Secretary of Education for Nova Scotia, reiterated Preston’s call for an intelligent teaching of patriotism which would require teachers to both know and understand history as a
distinct content area. In a prescient commentary, Mackay suggests that if history were taught with an eye towards patriotic duty than “in that way we would live together; although we are separated by little political lines, we would be united in our method of teaching patriotism and so we would be practically united in every way” (Mackay, 1891, p. 112). Further analyses of this continuing discussion revealed that participants wanted to formalize a common method for studying national histories whether Canadian or American, and in doing so to inculcate their youth with a common knowledge of national character which they could act upon.

Discussions around teaching American history as a way of bestowing to students a sense of national pride continued at the NEA’s 1892 convention in New York City. Here, the conference papers first mention the word: Americanism. This is significant, since the term would come to embody a way of teaching American history, politics, and ideals to provide students with a sense of shared cultural values. Americanism has negative connotation to it as well since the term was often used to describe programs filled with propaganda against certain ethnic groups deemed “un-American” and in need of patriotic or civic reprogramming. In 1892, Francis Bellamy, the author of the Pledge of Allegiance, spoke to teachers gathered at the NEA’s annual convention. In his speech entitled, *Americanism in Public Schools*, Bellamy (1892) suggested that:

> the demand upon the public school today is the systematic training of citizens. American citizenship should be made part of the curriculum—it should be taught picturesquely and with enthusiasm. The normal schools and institutes should begin to train teachers specifically and carefully for the luminous teaching of civics. (p. 63)

Bellamy went further to specify which holidays should be celebrated and that school should take the lead role in public demonstrations of patriotism. He urged teachers to make American
history, a subject he said he long thought of a “dry as dust” because of the mind-numbing way it had been taught, come alive. Importantly, he charged American teachers with the responsibility to “organize the unorganized impulses of many immigrant races into system which shall develop a new race of Americans” (Bellamy, 1892, pg. 66). For Bellamy as for others, American history was a crucial part of the curriculum because only it alone had the ability to develop the skills needed to perpetuate American-style democracy.

By 1896, the AHA was again taking up the idea of teaching American history in public schools to promote patriotism in American youth. Herbert Adams, professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and history curriculum researcher for the Federal Office of Education, addressed the attendees by suggesting that American history has too long been taught sufficiently only at the university level. Although the majority of his speech concerned comparisons of teaching history with European universities, Adams (1896) suggested that work in American history needed to begin much earlier. He proposed that American history could teach not only literacy skills to our youth, but also a sense of civic duty. It was a call echoed by the presenters at the NEA’s 1896 convention later that same year. At the NEA’s convention, Frank Louis Soldan, superintendent of the St. Louis Public Schools, reiterated this call when he suggested that high schools should awaken in their students a sense of civic pride and duty. To do this, Soldan suggested that high schools revisit their course offerings in American history and where necessary, make it a part of the core and required curriculum (Soldan, 1896). Soldan’s call for a revision in the high school curriculum in order to promote patriotism and civic duty was part of a
chorus of educators calling on administrators, state offices of education, and normal schools, to mandate and train teachers in American history content, methodology, and pedagogy.²

Although discussions concerning patriotism as the culminating effect of the study of American history pepper both the NEA and AHA convention records through the remainder of the 1890s, it wasn’t until 1902 at the NEA convention that Henry P. Emerson, Superintendent of Schools in Buffalo, NY, again made the case for a stronger curriculum in American history and civics that would prepare students to be good citizens. Emerson (1902) began his call for increased rigor in the teaching of American history by citing what was at that time a lesson in current events. He suggested that both the home and the schools had failed Leon Czolgosz, President McKinley’s assassin. Having spent 25 years as an educator, Emerson remarked that he found it baffling that an American citizen could kill his own President. Emerson actually contacted the public and parochial schools in communities in which Czolgosz had lived. Finding that he had attended school only sparsely, Emerson (1902) concluded that:

> our compulsory-education laws are based on the theory that a community for its own protection as well as for the good of the child, must make it impossible for any boy or girl to grow up in ignorance, a stranger to the ennobling influences which every good school exerts. (p. 192)

Although Emerson’s discussion is about much more than just American history curriculum and stresses increased communication between the home and the school community, the bulk of his argument relies upon work he cites within his own school district. Emerson cites the Buffalo,

² The NEA convention in 1896 featured a “history heavy” agenda with three roundtables discussions in history education at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. The convention also featured multiple speeches about the ethical value, social value, and the intellectual value of history by Salt Lake City Superintendent of Schools: J.F. Millspaugh, Cornell University Professor H. Morse Stevens, and William T. Harris-United States Commission of Education.
New York school system’s innovative program in American history and civics that stresses civic duty and importantly (especially for his earlier example of Czolgosz) the subordination of individual wants to the greater needs of the community (p. 202).

The shock of President McKinley’s assassination and the pressures of increased immigration and urbanization in America can still be seen in the 1904 AHA conference proceedings. The roundtable in history education at the primary and secondary level was filled with discussion about the usefulness of teaching American history to connect with students own civic knowledge and to promote Americanization. Advice to state superintendents of education from normal school and university professors was prolific. Professor A.H. Stanford of the Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Normal School suggested that a more practical and general program of education in American history should be worked out among all the states. Professor J.B. McMaster of the University of Pennsylvania believed that the purpose of American history was to fill foreign students’ minds with the facts of American history which “they may not understand, but which they must take as so much medicine” (McMaster, 1904, p. 203). Some of the speakers disagreed with McMaster’s methodology, but not with his goals. Others declared that the mere accumulation of facts was of little use, but there appears in the documentary record a general agreement on the wisdom of a wide and substantial program in American history for primary and secondary schools. It is interesting that McMaster and others in this conference refer to American history as “medicine” which suggests that the student is a patient who is sick or wanting in patriotic/civic knowledge. An analysis of the documents suggests that these professors and their K-12 colleagues believed that a strong American history curriculum would indeed provide the cure for a seeming lack of patriotism among American students. Charles H. Haskins, secretary of the AHA, summarized the discussion from the roundtable committee
meeting and noted that “committee members believe that regular and intense study of American history is the best preparation for the comprehension of the meaning of American society in which the boys and girls of the schools are called upon to pass their lives” (Haskins, 1904, p. 29).

In 1906, the AHA once again took up the discussion of teaching American history in elementary schools at its annual convention in Providence, Rhode Island. In a discussion of the program of study laid out by the committee, Herbert Forster, professor of history at Dartmouth College, was critical of what he saw as overly-zealous patriotism. Forster stated that “this outline makes commendable effort to give the child background; but it still leaves the child in danger of being bred on a false patriotism and on an unhistorical estimate of his own country” (Forster, 1906, p. 95). The following year, Forster and others such as James Sullivan, a history teacher at Commerce High School in New York City, were in the audience at the NEA convention in Los Angeles, California listening to Nathan Schaeffer, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Pennsylvania, who suggested that teaching patriotism correctly could aid the movement for peace between nations. Schaeffer (1907) suggested that:

> our teaching of history should create the kind of public sentiment that will make it unpopular, if not impossible, for a ruler or a government to wage war except for the maintenance of justice, law, and order among the nations. (p. 59)

Forster and Sullivan joined in the discussion by echoing Schaeffer’s message that teaching patriotism was one goal of American history education, but it should not be unrestrained or the only goal. Rather, these educators represented a sub-set of practitioners in history and educators who wanted a more balanced approach promoting patriotism through American history education.
By 1908, as immigration levels to the United States were reaching almost 20,000 persons per year, the AHA Annual Convention in Washington D.C. featured a large number of speakers who devoted their time to explaining the methods and purposes of teaching American history in public schools. Andrew McLaughlin, professor of history at the University of Chicago and leader of the AHA Committee on History in Secondary Schools, led a roundtable discussion about the committee’s findings. While there was a wide variety of opinions as to the purposes of teaching American history, one voice stood out as the loudest proponent of the ability of American history to Americanize immigrants. Professor J. Herbert Low of the Manual Training School in Brooklyn, New York suggested to the committee that there were a large number of newly arrived immigrants whose contributions to the American political process had gone unsolicited. Low (1908) suggested that the best solution to the problem of an “alien and foreign presence” in American cities was to teach them American civic virtues through a rigorous course of study in American history and politics. However, Low did not advocate for a traditional type of patriotism that stressed American military success and achievements. Rather, Low (1908) articulated a third aim of American history education which was to:

make the present day students a future citizen who shall recognize his responsibilities as well as his privileges. A sincere education in American history will do away with that superficial idea of patriotism, namely, that patriotism means fighting and singing and bragging, and will yield to a realization that civic duties performed quietly from day to day best prove the loyalty of a man to his country. (pp. 70-71)

In this same year, Low was joined by M.G. Brumbaugh, Superintendent of Schools for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who at the NEA convention suggested that we must not forget that:
the primary purpose of the public school is to make illiteracy impossible, and by doing so make democracy possible. The thinking man—the product of the school—may be a menace to gang rule but he is the one genuinely competent guardian of our national life.

(Brumbaugh, 1908, p. 103)

Both Low and Brumbaugh advocate for a different type patriotism, one rooted in Americanizing our youth—both foreign born and domestic. Their commentary and the discussion at and between those present at the AHA and NEA conventions represent a multi-faceted reaction to increasing immigration and a concurrent need to promote patriotism through the study of American history.

As the second decade of the 20th century dawned, both the NEA and AHA annual conventions featured speakers and papers that consistently examined the state of American history education and the need to revitalize it so that schools could produce sound and intelligent citizens. In 1909, Nicholas Butler Murray, President of Columbia University, called upon educators gathered at the NEA conference in Denver, Colorado to “prepare intelligent citizens to take up each his own share of the nation’s responsibilities” (Murray, 1909, p. 77). In 1911, Fannie Fern Andrews, history teacher in the Boston Public Schools, reminded NEA members that public schools were in her words “the bulwark in creating standards of citizenship” (p. 250). She went on to suggest that all public schools needed a rigorous program of study in American history in order to teach a type of patriotism to the many disparate ethnic groups that would ground them in American civic virtues and duties. In this way, both Murray and Andrews echo the slightly earlier work of Low and Brumbaugh. As the 20th century wore on, American educators and historians grappled with the many civic purposes of teaching American history—all of which could fall under the umbrella term of patriotism.
A different type of patriotism, one centered on the need to promote American style democracy against the backdrop of the First World War would become very apparent in discussions between educators and historians from 1916 to 1920. In 1917, the AHA convened its annual meeting in Philadelphia against the backdrop of war-time hysteria. As Europe was engulfed in war and Americans debated whether to stay out or get involved in the conflict, anti-German, anti-Imperialist, and anti-Communist propaganda filled American newspapers and was plastered on broadsides throughout the nation. The same hysterical language penetrated the AHA’s meeting that year. Professor Henry Johnson of Columbia University presided over a debate within the *Roundtable Discussion on the Teaching of History* which suggested his findings from research in American public schools and universities. Having surveyed a number of public school history teachers and historians in the American Northeast and California, Johnson (1917) concluded that:

on the other side we have the disagreeable discovery of divided allegiance and a growing demand, in which some historians share, that history in school should, with all possible courage and all possible devotion, be turned to the one great task of building up a national patriotism. (p. 223)

Johnson concluded his discussion by pointing out that history is about far more than just simple patriotism. In a connection that mirrors the tenets of a theory of historical understanding, Johnson believed that history was about scrutinizing sources of information within context and over time and he cautioned against historical blindness or over-simplification. In this case, Johnson was joined by Herbert Forster and others who believed that we should not study American history out of context to promote a type of blind patriotism spurred forth by hatred for a foreign enemy. At the end of his conference address, Johnson stresses the need for the AHA
and history teachers associations to work together. In what is telling remark reiterated by many in the commentary which follows his speech, Johnson (1917) affirms his belief that “it would not be wise for us to abandon, in the stress of war times, all the things that we stood for, for so many years before the war came” (p. 233).

The same patriotic spirit that Johnson warned teachers about permeated the NEA convention in 1918. The theme of Americanization featured heavily as America became embroiled in what would be the final year of the First World War. Franklin Lane, Secretary of the Interior, addressed the members of the NEA by suggesting that Americanization, patriotism, and love of country must pervade all subjects. However he further stressed that teachers served the country by teaching American history and notably by teaching “that those men in America are noble who contribute to the elevation of American ideals, and that those men are ignoble who do not add to the march of this philosophy of mankind” (Lane, 1918, p. 106). Lane’s speech represented the culminating sentiments of a nation in the midst of wartime hysteria and unable to reconcile this hysteria with the challenges presented by immigration. His speech represented many American educators’ fears. These were fears borne out of concerns about how to teach American history amid this hysteria. Importantly, his speech and the ensuing debate represented the type of blind-patriotism that Johnson and others had warned about. This type of patriotism circumvented the rigor of true historical study in favor of what was momentarily popular and politically advantageous. As will be seen in further documentary analyses, this divide over the rigor and purpose of historical study would be a topic of much debate and would continue to divide historians and educators.

**Conversation 2: official reports and government sponsored studies.** By the late 19th century, both the NEA and the AHA had convened committees of concerned educators and
historians several times to debate the nature of historical study and to craft a sample program of study for public schools. However, their plans, although widely considered by a number of school districts and in practice (at least partially) throughout the country, were not fully implemented anywhere. Annual conference meeting notes from the NEA prior to 1890 reveal that logistical and human resource constraints such as the inability to find well trained teachers, not enough time in the school day, and the competing suggestions and input from local educational authorities made the wholesale adoption of suggestions from the NEA and AHA impractical (Richards, 1892). Although these were problems that would continue to haunt the NEA and AHA and are ones that still perplex educators today who try to craft a program of studies for nation-wide implementation, these are not difficulties that would stop the AHA and NEA from revising a program of studies in American history throughout the late 19th and into the first decades of the 20th century.

The NEA’s Committee of Ten Report-History Subcommittee (1894) was the organization’s first attempt at this work within the time period examined here. This was work undertaken in concert with the AHA. The Committee of Ten Report or the Madison Conference, as it was generally called, was not specifically focused on patriotism as a necessary outcome of instruction in American history, however they did consider the study of civics and government to be of the upmost importance (NEA, 1894, p. 180). The following year, the NEA convened a conference on elementary education. While the document is more of a philosophical statement on the nature of primary education than a straightforward plan for the organization of subject matter to be taught in grades K-8, the committee’s statement offer some insight into what these educators believed to be the significant outcomes of a program of study in American history. For those crafting the plan, known as the Committee of 15, the goal of historical study was to
train a student for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The plan, crafted by this committee and adopted by a vote of the NEA membership present at the 1895 Convention, stressed that students at the primary level should study US history and Civil government in grades six through eight so that they could “uphold the laws which provide a common good to all men and support their allegiance to their country” (NEA, 1895. pp. 66-67).

The intertwined themes of citizenship and patriotism continued to be considered the chief outcomes of the study of history in public schools and it can be seen in the work of the AHA. In 1898, the AHA convened a group, known as the Committee of Seven, to examine historical study in public secondary schools. The Committee was led by A.O. McLaughlin, a former high school history teacher and now professor of history and education at the University of Chicago. This committee’s work was important in so much that it established a program of study that was (at least in part and where feasible) followed by many public secondary schools well into the twentieth century (Barth & Shermis, 1980; Lybarger, 1983). The committee’s influence and study of schools was wide-ranging since their work was based on a comprehensive study of secondary schools throughout the United States with a focused comparison of practices in the study of history between the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany. This is a comparison that would characterize much of the NEA’s and the AHA’s work from 1890 to 1920 as educators and historians looked to Europe for guidance in the deficiencies they saw in their own domestic curriculum in history. This comparison notwithstanding, the Committee of Seven report, researched and compiled between 1898 and 1920, focused its suggestions on the goals of positive participation in political life, training to be a good citizen, and patriotism when making recommendations for a course of study in American history. The committee’s recommendation was that this course of study occur in the latter years of elementary education, specifically grade
8, and that it culminate in a study of American civil government and political institutions. This decision makes sense in light of the fact that eight years of primary education was the norm for the majority of Americans who did not matriculate into high school in large numbers until the first decade of the 20th century.

Between 1900 and 1910, the AHA conducted two additional studies. Both reports were simply a revisiting of the program of studies for elementary and secondary grades recommended in 1893, 1895, and 1900. By 1905, however, an analysis of the conversations between committee members and the AHA recommendations reveal a new focus on the ability of a program in American history to “Americanize” the foreign born. This focus corresponds with the number of immigrants entering the United States, which peaked between 1905 and 1910 before it began to slow with the onset of World War I. Before the heightening of political and military tensions that eventually led to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, American educators and social activists had begun to formulate a plan for the assimilation of immigrants into American culture and they viewed the public school as the tool for Americanizing immigrants. One of the first articulations of this plan was the U.S. Bureau of Education’s Bulletin #51 entitled: The Education of the Immigrant. In this Bulletin, a collection of papers read before the New York/New Jersey Committee of the North American Civic League for Immigrants, a diverse group of educators articulated their view on the many problems ethnic diversity was causing in the United States and they devised solutions to educate and in their view—necessarily assimilate the many ethnic groups into American society. P.P. Claxton, Federal Commissioner of Education, suggests in the introduction to the bulletin that “the proper education of these people is a duty which the nation owes to itself and to them. It can neglect this duty only to their hurt and to its own peril” (United States Bureau of Education, 1913, p. 6). This worry about how to
integrate the many disparate groups of immigrants into American society translated into several plans for educating them to not only learn to write and speak English, but also to be imbued with patriotic American fervor. John Haaren, Associate Superintendent of the New York Public Schools, is recorded in this document as having suggested that:

the school must of necessity assume the duty of instructing the immigrants in the languages, customs, and political ideals of our country. It does not take much reflection to conclude that the problem is not merely one of language teaching.

(United States Department of the Interior, 1913, p. 20)

For Haaren, as for other practitioners in education, there was a real worry about these immigrants’ loyalty to the United States in an era where America was on the rise as a global industrial and political power. In an era where political and economic uprisings both at home and throughout the world made many fear that western style capitalism was under attack and that the wholesale reorganization of economic life could be visited upon the United States, educators and politicians communicated the need to teach American history and civil government as matter of domestic security and to bring order to chaos.

This urgency was again communicated in the United States’ Bureau of Education’s Bulletin #23: *The Teaching of Community Civics*. In this document, educators and politicians articulated a plan to teach civics and American history to immigrants within the context of how these newly arrived Americans could contribute to their own community. The document can be viewed as a reaction to the nationalism and imperialism/anti-socialism of World War One era America. Bulletin #23 is an attempt to teach what it means to be a participating citizen through civics, but also with the foundations of American history for the vast majority of newly-arrived Americans was would not matriculate to high school. The document provides a definition for a
good citizen as one “who has the point of view that progress is essential in order that he may do as well by civilization as did his father before him” (United States Department of the Interior, 1915, p. 9). While the document does concern itself explicitly with the study of sociology, civics, and political science, it draws heavily on themes related to teaching American history and the transmission of American cultural values through that history.

Bulletin #23 was reimagined the following year in the United States Bureau of Education’s *Social Studies in Secondary Education* report. This report, which relied heavily upon previous work done by both the NEA and the AHA, stressed the teaching of community civics, but it also touched upon the teaching of American history as a way of inculcating patriotism. Indeed, the document specifies that the primary aim of teaching history is “to develop a vivid conceptions of American nationality, a strong and intelligent patriotism, and a keen sense of the responsibility of every citizen for national efficiency” (United States Department of the Interior, 1916, p. 39). The entire document, which is a plan for the reorganization of history and social studies teaching at the high school level, stresses that students be made aware that cooperation and service to their country are the highest goals they can achieve through studying history. This is not surprising given the socio-political context of nation on the brink of war within a world that had already been at war for several years. In that context, this document can be seen as the government attempting to directly influence instruction in public schools out of a perceived need to amass its human resources in a fight against counter-American principles.

As World War I ended, the United States Bureau of Education once again enlisted the help of the NEA in developing a framework for guiding social studies education. That framework, which became known as the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, is a seminal document in history pedagogy. As a set of curriculum guidelines rooted in a specific
time-frame, the National Education Association’s (NEA, 1918) *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* represent an articulation of the goals of secondary education in America as well as the field of history and social studies that has been recognized as an important cultural and historical inheritance of the late 19th and early (R. W. Evans, 2004; Kliebard, 1995; Nelson, 1994; William J. Reese, 2011). The *Cardinal Principles* represent a systematic attempt to provide guidelines for secondary educators in a society deemed as rapidly changing and in need of new direction. Furthermore, one of the document’s stated goals is to develop “in the individual those qualities whereby he will act well his part as a member of neighborhood, town or city, state, and nation, and give him a basis for understanding international problems” (NEA, 1918, p. 13). In other words, the Committee on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, the authors of the *Cardinal Principles*, saw citizenship education as a vital part of the mission of public high schools. The document’s authors prescribe the social studies curriculum of the day (at this point the study of history was being subsumed under the moniker of social studies) in Bulletin 28, published in 1916 (also known as the CSS Report). Bulletin 28 represents a vital shift in social studies education and curriculum making. Indeed, it represents a direct focus on citizenship education as being more than just the study and mastery of areas of study such as civics, economics, and history, but instead the new curriculum calls for the study of social problems and proposing solutions. The CSS report places history as the driving force behind the curriculum, and in doing so, its provisions and suggestions have remained remarkably intact in classrooms across the United States today (Nelson, 1994). However, conversations about the ability of curriculum in American history to promote patriotism and civic responsibility were not just crafted on the national level and sponsored by government agencies. Often, this work was
promulgated by scholars in history and teachers working together and publishing their work in the premier journals of the day.

**Conversation 3: journals and other scholarly conversations.** In 1898, E.C. Warriner published an essay in *The School Review* espousing the need to embed American history into all courses in the high school. His essay was an argument for a hyper-focus in the high school curriculum on both American History and the teaching of democratic principles. In his essay, he both directly quotes and reiterates the tenets of Nicholas Butler Murray’s speech before the NEA convention that year suggesting that “the public education, then, of a great democratic people has other aims to fulfill than the extension of scientific knowledge or the development of literary culture. It must prepare for intelligent citizenship” (Butler in Warriner, 1898, p. 102). In this essay, Warriner argues for the widespread extension of American history into the entire high school curriculum as a means of indoctrinating students into American political culture and allegiance to American democratic institutions and ideas. Three years later, Bolton (1901) espoused many of the same ideas when he celebrated the fact that American history now had a much more prominent place in the high school curriculum. He further noted that the nation’s current problems, which were civic, economic, and social in nature could be solved throughout a recognition of the need to teach American history in “intelligent and considerable ways” (pg. 525). To be certain, the teaching of intelligent citizenship and patriotism through American history would be a sentiment reiterated throughout the early decades of the 20th century.

In 1917, Fred Traner would again pick up this theme when he suggested that schools *socialize* history. His essay is a good representation of the social efficiency movement in education which sought to reform curriculum in ways that would sort students into their future function or place in society. While Traner’s essay is partially an advertisement for a course he
was offering at the Nevada State Normal School, it is also a philosophical statement in which he advocates for the study of history for a “higher cause.” Traner (1917) stresses that progress has been borne out of a grueling process where individual citizens make sacrifices and devote themselves to a common cause. He suggests that “a realization that progress is always made in just this way and that it is our obligation to continue this progress for the future ought to be a most potent factor in making history function for better citizenship” (p. 718). Here, Traner reinforces the notion among many scholars in history and practitioners in education that history education should be used to produce a citizenry capable of perpetuating a democratic society.

The idea that a program of study in American history could be used to inculcate patriotism and teach citizenship is also taken up by Gosling (1920) who conducted a case study on the use of citizenship education programs within history classes at the high school level. In teaching history, Gosling stresses that the chief aim of the program should be “inculcate the doctrine that individual attainments are to be valued chiefly for the service they render to the state” (p. 59). Gosling continues by stressing that not only should the chief aim of history be to promote citizenship education, but that this is indeed the only way to “build an ideal America” (p. 60). Gosling says that the problems of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization that have plagued the United States can only be solved by an informed citizenry who knows how to use their vote in intelligent and honest ways. He then lays out an entire program of study which mixes elements of historical study with social sciences such as sociology and political science. His work is typical of that produced by scholars in the first decades of the 20th century as the United States grappled with a post-World War I world in which they were now a dominant political player. As both geo-political and socio-political problems continued to dominate the landscape, both scholars in history and public school educators looked for ways to craft a
program of study that would honor past traditions, promote patriotism, and also promulgate the knowledge needed to address societal ills.

A popular forum for offering ideas on how to craft a program in history that would be useful to students and serve the nation’s needs was the History Teacher’s Magazine. This magazine has changed names twice over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Known as the History Teacher’s Magazine from 1909 to 1917 and Historical Outlook from 1918-1925, it is now known simply as Social Studies. The History Teacher’s Magazine provided a forum to discuss and inform its subscribers of recently released NEA/AHA and government sponsored reports. For example, in 1916 the magazine featured a number of articles reporting positively on the 1916 Social Studies in Secondary Education Report. The article suggests revamping programs in American history to teach community civics. Interestingly, between 1917 and 1925 it was edited in cooperation with the National Board of Historical Service which was an all-volunteer committee of historians and educators who wanted to craft a program in history to inspire patriotism during America’s involvement in World War I and to address perceived socio-economic concerns such as: the rise in socialism around the globe, integration of minority and immigrant groups throughout the nation, and to craft a program of study useful to students in a newly-industrialized economy. Because it was co-edited in this way, the magazine became a tool for patriotic and nationalistic sentiment.

A review of the magazine’s contents demonstrates that there is very little disagreement between authors about how or what to teach in terms of method or content in American history. This is certainly not surprising for an era where homogenization of ethnicities as well as political and economic sentiments was a highly-prized goal of American history education. In 1912, Andrew Draper, New York Commissioner of Education, summer up the patriotic sentiment of
many practitioners in education when he suggested that students should receive a type history that they can “assimilate, and get it at times and in forms and quantities that will be good for their patriotic health” (Draper, 1912, p. 73). A year later, C.A Sprague commented that history could serve a good purpose if we were to make its chief instructional goal that of producing socially efficient youth capable of solving the vexing political and social problems of the day. Sprague (1913) continued by suggesting that “while education may not now aim to make youth socially desirable; it must aim to make youth socially efficient” (p. 222). This plea for teaching informed citizenship would continue as America decided whether or not to engage in World War One.

In 1916, as the Europe continued to be ravaged by the implements and inventions of modern warfare, Carl Russell Fish espoused the need to add diplomatic history to the program of studies in the modern American high school. Fish (1916) suggested that this was necessary because “the function of the public school is to produce a good type of citizenship. There is no other sanction for the existence of the public school” (p. 39). Fish continued by lamenting the existence of “boss or political machine” rule in big cities and suggested that an intelligent and informed citizenry could solve the problems of corruption caused by this type of governance. He concluded by suggesting that spread of democracy was something all too necessary in the larger world which was at war. Later that same year, Reston (1916) suggested that teaching recent American history could produce an informed and patriotic citizenry. Reston urged the radical re-teaching of America’s imperialistic position among nations, immigration policies and the reason for them, our desire for international peace, and the need to conserve our national resources. Unsurprisingly, he also urged the teaching of heroic personages for the time period. One assumes
that this teaching of heroic historic figures would not only promote patriotic sentiment, but it would also offer a counterbalance to the controversial material explicated above.

As American involvement in World War One drew closer, the History Teacher’s Magazine was filled with impassioned cries from educators about teaching a type of patriotism that would not necessarily involve us in the war, but help to bring peace. In 1916, Andrew McLaughlin lamented the rampant spread of nationalism throughout the world and suggested instead that:

we must teach patriotism, but we must stand in daily fear of the development of narrow-minded nationalism; for the menace of the world today is the presence of nationalistic spirit, strengthened and deepened by commercialism, each nation striving to get the advantage of the others in the field of trade and diplomacy. (McLaughlin, 1916, p. 261)

Later that same year, the History Teacher’s Magazine featured more articles on the teaching and purpose of American history than any other subject under its purview. Historians and teachers of history in the public schools wrote voluminously about American liberties and freedoms and how they were in danger around the world. Knowlton (1916) advocated for the teaching of American history to “trace the progress and make clear the struggle for liberty” (p. 343). He commented further by listing all of these freedoms (religious, economic, political) and drew comparisons between these freedoms in America and the tendencies of the rest of the world. Articles such as Knowlton’s above would be followed by even more explicit cries for teaching patriotism as America entered the war in April of 1917. Ames (1917) counseled educators to avoid history that was overly patriotic, but simultaneously suggested that “one must be proud of his country’s history and devoted to its ideals and institutions, if he is loyally to respond when called upon to maintain and defend them” (p. 188). Ames suggests that programs in history must
promote patriotism and that teachers of American history and civics have a special duty to do so while also promoting American history among immigrant groups. He specifies a course of study in American history and concludes his essay with a call to arms suggesting that the United States entered the war with the “loftiest ideals that ever inspired a nation in arms” (p. 191).

As American involvement in World War One helped to end the stalemate in Europe, the *Historical Outlook* offered a number of curricular suggestions for celebrating America’s victory. In January of 1919, the magazine featured articles ranging from what topics in American history could be stressed during Victory Day celebrations to a step-by-step guide to putting on your own school victory day parade. Other articles suggested the judicious use of pictures from the war in order to excite students’ imaginations while others argued for more concentration on the teaching of democracy in order to avoid future hesitancy towards engaging in global conflicts. H.B. Wilson, Superintendent of Schools in Topeka, Kansas suggested that now teachers of history have an even more important duty to craft a program of study in American history. One surmises that speaking from experience, Wilson (1919) claimed that educators now realize that a more coordinated program of study in history and civics should have been in place so that the nation would have quickly leaped into World War I and not waited to be convinced by the President and Congress. He further claims that Americans needed convincing because they did not know enough about democracy vs. autocracy. Quite literally, he suggests that Americans (at least prior to 1917) did not understand why they needed to act (p. 83). While Wilson’s suggestion may seem absurd from a modern perspective, it is evident that educators and historians ran the gamut in their reactions to the start and end of World War I, but all looked to a strengthening of American history curriculum to serve the nation’s patriotic purposes or the need to perpetuate American-style democracy. The same call to strengthen the course of study in American history
in order to *Americanize* immigrants and to teach a common cultural heritage can be found in professional development materials from this time period as well.

**Conversation 4: methods texts and professional development materials.** Methods’ texts and professional development materials represent a 4th medium of conversation between historians and educators. In many ways, they can be seen as the most direct link or product of meetings between educators and historians seeking to craft a coordinated and useful program in American history. Indeed, Saxe (1994) has suggested that methods texts were particularly useful for teachers who had little or no training in history content and pedagogy. To be certain, that was the case for the majority of American public school educators who did not teach in large urban areas, but instead taught multiple classes in rural communities to many different age levels. These conversations and the materials they produced often encouraged the teaching of patriotism and citizenship. In 1897, Burke Aaron Hinsdale, Professor of Education at the University of Michigan and a well-known national lecturer on topics related to the study of history and civics, published a manual of advice on how to teach and study the history of the United States. In the goals and purpose section of his book, Hinsdale (1897) suggests that:

> of late much attention has been paid to teaching patriotism in the schools of our country.  
> In the long run, the great means of teaching patriotism must be history and literature.  
> Study of the times that tried men’s souls tends to form souls that are capable of enduring trial. (p. 46)

Hinsdale’s suggestion that the indoctrination of patriotism be a goal of history education did not stop with a simple philosophical statement. Rather, Hinsdale suggested lists of patriotic songs, recitations of poems, and teaching geography as an aid to patriotism. Hinsdale even observed “that the teacher of history be a person whose heart is full of patriotism, and beats strongly for
truth, right, and duty” (p. 87). He shared his assertions that patriotism was an important student learning outcome with other authors and educators such as Channing & Hart (1896), Fling & Caldwell (1897), and Hart (1899).

By the dawn of the 20th century, patriotic fervor was still present in methods’ texts for history teachers. Bourne (1902) suggested that:

the essential purpose of history is to given an idea of individual and national worth, and the means by which they have developed, so that the child knowing these may be persuaded to do the things and to live the life that will make for the welfare of himself and the state (p. 42).

As was espoused in periodicals of the time period, nationalistic fervor and citizenship education as a desirable outcome of instruction in United States history only continued to grow as the United States navigated the second decade of the 20th century and debated whether or not to enter World War One. These iterations of nationalistic fervor ran the gamut from William Bagley and Harold Rugg’s (1916) investigation into nationalistic and patriotic elements within United States history textbooks in use in seventh and eighth grade classrooms to brochures and other teaching materials about World War I released by the United States Office of Education and the Committee on Public Information in 1917. The latter materials were designed to help educators understand why the United States had entered the war. As teaching tools they provided a singular perspective on the outbreak of war in Europe. The brochure entitled: How the War Came to America explained that World War I took the United States by surprise. It further suggested that “the peoples of Europe had had at least some warnings of the coming storm, but to us such a blind, savage onslaught on the ideals of civilization had appeared impossible” (Committee on Public Information, 1917, p. 6). How close that assertion is to the truth is of little
consequence, the goal of the document was to provide one national story to America’s youth and to provide justification for our involvement in the war to the many students who might soon be drafted. The United Bureau of Education’s instructional program on how to teach the war entitled: *Lessons of the Great War in the Classroom*, warned against blind patriotism and it advised the reader to “see things as they actually are”, but its prose was nonetheless interspersed with language such as:

> when war comes with its demand for heavy sacrifice, even of life itself, in defense of national ideals, success or failure for the Nation may turn very largely on the proportion of its citizens in whom this essential historical conception of their membership in a continuing community, more important than their own individual fortunes, has become a real motive force. Here is the common ground on which history and patriotism meet.

(p. 3)

As one might imagine, the end of World War One did not usher in a change in the concept that patriotism is a vital instructional goal of history. That concept remains important today, but the end of World War I saw some authors become more critical of patriotism as the primary or even sole goal of instruction in American history. Both Bobbitt (1918) and Johnson (1922) criticized patriotism and remarked that while it is an important instructional goal, it should not be the most vital goal of education. For these educators, the study of American history bestowed upon the learner distinct thinking skills and mental abilities. This, along with mental preparation for college and life after high school (which was the increasing norm for students after World War One) were more vital than patriotic indoctrination. To be certain, this type of preparation has long been a concern among history teachers, especially those at the secondary level. Today, that tradition continues as history teachers debate the learning objectives students should master by
studying history. In the past, these skills were often referred to as mental capacities and a focus on them as a set of instructional goals provides at least a partial lens through which to view the development of the teaching of American history and why it is integral to the public school curriculum today.

Teaching American History as College Entrance Requirement and for other Skills

Conversation 1: the annual conference proceedings of the AHA and NEA. At the 1893 meeting of the NEA in Chicago, G.N. Carmen of the Morgan Park academy at the University of Chicago asked a question that public school educators still ponder today: Is there a course of study that at the same time is the best preparation for life and for college? (Carmen, 1893). For Carmen, as for many others, increased immigration and the mechanization of the economy forced educators to consider not only the societal function of the public school, but also what subjects were still appropriate for a (soon to be) 20th century populace. Could public schools meet the challenge of preparing students for college? Even though the proportion of students who matriculated to high school let alone college in 1893 was relatively small, their number was on the rise and the skills colleges expected their entering freshmen to have were also changing. In the late 19th century, the typical American high school provided a curriculum that had undergone relatively few changes since the end of the Civil War. Although high schools were rapidly redeveloping their curricula and specialty schools were popping up in large cities (i.e. mechanical trades schools, commerce schools focused on business training), the true “people’s college”—a term used to describe the American high school was still far from a realization. The average American high school still offered a traditional curriculum focused heavily on Latin and Greek. Ancient history was a major focus area and the study of American History, mathematics, and some natural sciences was also fairly widespread. However, Carmen’s
question necessitated a discussion that was at the heart of debates over recommendations made by the Madison Conference’s history subcommittee. This NEA committee found that American history and the time devoted to it, which was not common across the schools surveyed, was relatively short and that Ancient history was more common because it was required for entrance to many colleges (NEA, 1892, p. 174). The Committee of Ten’s recommendations for a program of study in history, which many high schools throughout the United States would emulate for the next 20 years, focused on the need to offer a more diverse course of study in history—specifically in American history and that the subject should be tested by colleges as a prerequisite for admission.

The AHA took up a similar conversation in 1897 at their annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Lucy Salmon, who had surveyed the course of study in primary and secondary schools in Germany, England, and France offered the following sentiment in reference to questions about the need to changed American history curricula for all students regardless of their future life path:

this conclusion must follow: The work in history in American schools will never be on a rational basis until, as in Germany, it recognizes the double purpose that history in these schools is to serve; until it is so organized as to give the boy or girl who does not go to college a well-rounded conception of the epoch-making events in the world’s history; until it plans its college-entrance requirements in history with reference to the college work in history; until it makes the course in history in the schools identical for those who do and for those who do not go to college; and until it correlates the work done in history with the work of every other subject in the school. (Salmon, 1897, p. 88)
Salmon’s words were also the concern of the AHA’s previously established Committee of Seven. The Committee, which Salmon served on and which was established in 1896 and published in report: The Study of History in Schools in 1898 suggested a reorganization of the program of study in history to include 4 years of study (4 blocks) which would culminate in the study of American history in the senior year. The committee, chaired by Andrew McLaughlin, asserted that the study of history in public schools already far outpaced that of colleges and universities. The committee had stern words of warning for colleges suggesting that “if colleges do not discern the signs of the times and the requirements of American citizens and civic leaders, so much the worse will it be for the colleges and their graduates” (McLaughlin, 1898, pp. 4-5). How widespread the study of American history in general in public schools is a matter of some debate. By the turn of the 20th century, the documentary record of the AHA, NEA, and research into the work of scholars cited throughout this chapter shows that American history had become firmly established as part of the core curriculum. However, the length of the study and where it was placed within the curriculum was different (as it is today) depending on the school district’s size and its material as well as human resources. To be sure, Salmon’s directive was a tall and largely unrealized order. As the 20th century eclipsed the 19th century, American history curriculum underwent a great many changes. Likewise, generations of scholars since Salmon’s time have studied and written about the proper learning outcomes for students in history. However, the level of cohesion that Salmon dictates, especially between the secondary and university levels, is a goal schools still work towards today.

The goal of creating a cohesive program of study in history and the growing importance of the study of American history (with a special focus on civil government) would continue to be a topic of debate at the NEA’s Annual Meeting in St. Louis, Missouri in 1904. Here, J.J.
Sheppard, Principal of the Commerce High School of New York City, argued that the traditional high school course of study needed to be revitalized in order to meet the needs of a growing number of students who would enter the workforce, not the university. Sheppard (1904) contends that American history should be the focus of study at the high school level because “American history not only contributes to an understanding of the main current of our civilization, but throws light upon the economic and commercial change in the nation and in this period” (p. 118).

For Sheppard, as for other proponents of vocational/business or practical programs of study, American history was a useful and practical tool to give students a sense of economic history.

The goals and cohesion of a program of study in American history was again discussed at the AHA’s 1906 conference in Providence, Rhode Island. Here, the debate surrounded James Alton Jones’ *Report of the Teaching of History in Elementary Schools*. The program was met with some debate over the form and function of American history and civics. An analysis of the convention proceedings shows the debate lacked any real logical order other than an overarching mandate that the:

student of American history and civics must be led to understand that American civilization and institutions has their beginnings under European surroundings, and that the problems of our national life, even to the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, were, in a large measure, closely connected with European problems. (Jones, 1906, pp. 64-65)

The debate, moderated by Jones, continued for the entire first day of the conference. It culminated in a Jones’ statement, reminiscent of Salmon’s work a decade earlier, that “it matters little whether we be teachers of history in elementary or secondary school, in college or university, we are each of dependent on the work of the other” (Jones, 1906 p. 65). The
conference debate continued in other sessions and was concerned primarily with the goals of teaching American history in the sixth through eighth grades. Those involved in the conversation pondered whether or not there was too much emphasis placed on American history and whether or not that knowledge should be connected with the history of Europe (Sullivan, p. 99 in Jones, 1906). Both the AHA and the NEA would continue to take up these questions, along with other questions related to the specific learning outcomes for students of history as the first decades of the 20th century wore on.

Learning outcomes for students of American history was featured in the conference program at the NEA’s 1907 annual meeting. Here, C.I. Miller, professor of history at the California State Normal School, suggested that history has five primary outcomes: 1. to develop thinking skills in other disciplines, 2. History helps to create character and moral values, 3. History teaches culture, 4. History teaches patriotism, 5. History touches many interests and helps to keep students interested in learning (Miller, 1907, pp. 694-695). Miller’s paper was discussed at length by the NEA’s Roundtable Meeting in History and an analysis of the conversation reveals that the discussion participants felt that American history developed critical thinking skills that students could use not only in other content areas, but also in their interpretation of past and present phenomenon. Likewise, the AHA’s annual meeting in 1908 featured a lengthy discussion of how history was being taught with respect to its effect on student’s learning outcomes. Continuing to chair the conference on history in secondary schools, McLaughlin moderated a conversation on American history instruction. While there were a variety of opinions, often straying off topic, many discussants agreed with the opinion of J. Herbert Low, teacher at the manual training school in Brooklyn, NY who suggested that history be taught for cultural as well as mental aims. Low indicated that history was good for:
the development of the intellectual power and to inculcate the doctrine that truth cannot be obtained without exactness of information and sincerity of deduction, and more and more history is being taught thus, from what I might call the mathematical view point (Low, 1908 in McLaughlin, 1908, p. 70).

Low’s commentary reflected a growing sentiment that history should be taught from a scientific and logical point of view or in the service of logic in order to give the student a sense of history’s reason and purpose. Although this method of studying history was not new and can be dated to the early to mid-19th century, it was, within this forum, a new debate for educators looking for a way to justify the study of American history within a curriculum that was crowded and upon which many different parties exerted external demands. Here, it also worth noting that Low’s commentary and the discussion itself took place within the context of larger and ongoing discussion about the need to test American history as a college entrance subject.

The commentary above is again reflected in discussions at the NEA annual meeting in 1909. In a discussion led by V.K. Froula, Principal of Central High School in St. Paul, Minnesota, participants debated the intellectual functions of historical study finding that history helps one to develop judgment, imagination of the past, and studying American history develops and informs the student’s view of his country and government (Froula, 1909, p. 507). Further discussion led to a debate concerning which teaching methods were best suited for producing the results listed above. Participants debated the need to teach memorization of facts—a topic still debated today. In 1913, the AHA would once again debate whether or not American history instruction should strive to teach analytical thought or memorization skills. In 1909, there was a heavy emphasis laid upon the teaching of memorization, but by 1913 it appears that scholars and educators had turned away from route memorization skills and were placing much more
emphasis on honing students’ abilities to think critically and analyze past events. This discussion, led by Nathanial Stephenson, was again part of a larger debate asking the questions: Why is history in the curriculum at all and what is it expected to do? (Stephenson, 1913, p. 101). This would be a question repeatedly discussed throughout the early 20th century, as educators and historians struggled to find their place in a curriculum that placed new demands on the subject area.

**Conversation 2: official reports and government sponsored studies.** In 1895, the NEA Committee of 15 on Elementary Education concluded their report on the value of teaching history stating: “history supplies information concerning man’s experiences and achievements’ by continually exercising the pupil’s mind” (National Education Association, 1895, p. 175). The report continued by suggesting that the true value of history lies in the subject matters’ abilities to develop not only a student’s knowledge of his country, but also the habits of critical and analytical thinking. To historians and educators, these were two of the learning objectives students could master through historical study. As has been mentioned above, both the joint AHA/NEA Madison Conference on History/Committee of Ten and the AHA’s Committee of Seven reconfirmed these objectives in their proposed programs of study between 1892 and 1900. By 1905, both the AHA and the NEA in various committees (namely the AHA Committee of Eight on the Teaching of History in Elementary Schools), had altered course somewhat and were now focused on teaching European history as background knowledge for later courses in American history. However, the learning objectives remained the same. The 1905 Committee of Eight report, while mainly concerned with creating a program of study in history for the 8 years of primary education under its charge, did consider important questions such as: “What is meant by American history? What is the aim of American history teaching for today’s youth”
(American Historical Association, 1905, p. 137). The surviving documentation from this report records 25 pages of debate between public school educators and historians over the form and content of elementary school historical study. Much of the debate concerns the students’ mental abilities to truly study history at such a young age, but couched within this debate is another discussion about the purpose of studying American history. Mabel Hill, a vocal participant in the debate, sums up the discussion perfectly. She suggests: “personally, the psychological and pedagogical value of this syllabus does not appeal to me as so necessary as does its broader point of view, its strong argument that history shall be taught fairly” (Hill in American Historical Association, 1905, p. 140). Hill’s statement of opinion represents a current of thought that runs throughout the documents: that students should be taught American history in such a way as to provide them with an objective lens through which to view both the past while making judgments in the present as well as the future as both citizens and consumers. This theme is repeated at the Roundtable Discussion of History at the 1905 NEA meeting in Ashbury Park and Ocean Grove, New Jersey. At this meeting, the group took up eight major points of discussion with regard to elementary school history instruction. The fourth point of discussion, “that students should be able to arrive at conclusions about the relative values of different parts of a text and can evaluate historical circumstances” appears to coincide with the discussion a year earlier about the need to promote judicious and fair thinking as learning objectives in history classes (McCurry, 1905, p. 404).

Thinking skills instead of the memorization of facts and in particular—the ability to think judiciously and assign weight to judgments based on circumstance and context would remain a key element in debates and discussions about the study of American history in public schools through the publication of the AHA’s 1910 paper: *The Study of History in Secondary*
**Schools-Committee of Five Report.** The report is significant, even though it is primarily a reconsideration of the AHA’s 1900 publication: *The Study of History in Schools*, because it refocused debate on two topics within the theme discussed here: 1. That Latin, Greek, and Ancient History were now less important for matriculation to the university level than American history, economics, and the close study of writing/literature and 2. Devotion to a broad knowledge that fostered memorization of facts as a skill was not as important as learning how to think deeply about history (American Historical Association, 1910, p. 209).

Between 1910 and 1920, scholarly discussions about the form and function of American history curriculum did not generally include much discussion of learning objectives tied either to college admission or critical thinking skills. As the Social Studies Movement gathered significant backing and favor among educators, this discussion of learning objectives/thinking skills was certainly not abandoned, but it reconstituted itself in the form of a discussion about making American history practical and usable for students. In none of the major reports of the AHA and the NEA between 1910 and 1920 (and there were 4 such reports at that time), is any other kind of debate about American history discussed. With the onset of World War One, as has been discussed, the language used to describe learning outcomes in American history could be characterized as more patriotic or civic in nature and less cerebral or knowledge-based.

As the second decade of the 20th century progressed, the study of American history came under fire from proponents of social studies education who believed that the study of social sciences or history mixed with the study of namely—political science, sociology, and economics was more useful for students who were about to enter the workforce or the university. Both the NEA and the AHA, in both their conference proceedings and the official reports they produced in concert with the United States Bureau of Education would attack the work of earlier educators
claiming notably that the four traditional units of historical study in secondary schools created by the AHA Committee of Seven in 1895 and published in 1900 were now useless in the modern world and ill-adapted to the current needs of the American high school (United States Department of the Interior, 1916, p. 40). This claim was part of the necessarily evolving nature of any area of study, but it would continue to vex both public school educators and historians who were concurrently trying to meet different and often conflicting educational and socio-political goals.

**Conversation 3: journals and other scholarly conversations.** In 1895, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) published an extensive article in *The School Review* which reached the general conclusion of the Madison Conference the year before. NEASC suggested that more American history should be taught in schools and less emphasis placed on ancient history as a college entrance requirement. In keeping with the general recommendations of the Madison Conference, NEASC (1895) further suggested: “that satisfactory written work done in the secondary school, and certified by the teacher, should constitute a considerable part of the evidence of proficiency required by the college” (p. 470). In concert with historians and educators of the day who were debating the need to test American history for college entrance and to inculcate real historical thinking skills in public school students, the NEASC committee “insisted that rational historical knowledge, rather than mere empirical acquaintance with facts furnishes the real test of the candidate’s capacity” (p. 480). This recommendation was corroborated three year later by Thatcher (1898) who in outlining the four popular methods of teaching history (the discussive, authoritative, cramming, and natural methods), suggested that the discussive method offers students an opportunity to write at length about their opinions in history and history’s effect upon the present. However, Thatcher (1898)
found that often students wrote papers in complete agreement with the teacher’s perspective (what Thatcher called the pedagogical imperative) and he found that this was particularly true for American history classes “in which the opinions of the entire class are found to be warped into conformity to some political or economic hobby of the teacher” (p. 85). Thatcher called on instructors to stop influencing their students so blatantly and he demanded a complete stop to the cramming method or the recitation of simple facts in favor of teaching students to reason and critically think in order to awaken their imaginations. It seems as though Thatcher’s call may have fallen on at least somewhat “deaf ears” since the memorization of facts rather than the teaching of critical thinking skills/historical thinking skills would continue to be a hotly debated issue well into the 20th century. Moreover, my fifteen years of teaching and administrative experiences in public schools suggests that discussions about how much American history instruction should focus on factual knowledge versus the development of critical thinking, writing, and reading skills continues to be debated as an instructional practice today.

In 1900, McManis also commented on the testing of history as a college entrance requirement suggesting that “a study of the questions used in these examinations reveals the fact that they require only the most formal memory work” (p. 538). In his commentary, McManis echoed educators and historians who advocated for instruction in history that would spark students’ interest in the subject and help them develop the skills necessary to think deeply about history and its impact on the present. McManis’ call was further strengthened by Knight (1902) who continued the familiar argument that history was not about memorizing facts, but rather about discussing great ideas, principles, and the institutions which embody American democratic ideals. In 1904, W.H. Heck wrote that history, especially in the elementary grades, had the power to spark both imagination and creativity. Heck went a step further by suggesting that because
history has this ability, all subjects should be taught from a historical perspective so that students can understand the world, their country, and how that world came to be. He argued, as many would do and continue to do so today, that the only way to deaden the study of history was through consistent use of a dry and boring textbook and through a teacher who had exercised little of the imagination that the study of history offered. In suggesting that history permeate all subjects, Heck was drawing from a line of thinking about the teaching of history in public schools that goes back well into the 19th century. This line of thinking or methodology suggested that history could also be taught through teaching students to read and write—two of the basic skills all public schools were charged with achieving for adolescents in their care. With the rise in immigration, particularly in the early decades of the 20th century, the literacy rate in the United States plunged. The United States Bureau of Education, citing the 1910 census report, suggested that “in only one state was the percentage of illiteracy among the foreign-born less than five percent” (United States Bureau of Education, 1913, p. 5). If one considers that in three other states, 25% of the foreign-born population was illiterate, than one can deduce at least one reason why literacy skills through the American history content was advocated for and discussed widely in the early 20th century. As has been mentioned, discussions about learning objectives in American history did not completely disappear during the first two decades of the 20th century. But, they were affected by a growing intellectual trend to form course curricula in American history and to discuss the nature of learning American history from a social efficiency perspective.

Traner (1917) discusses the need to “socialize history” and in doing so his work here is in the vein of the social efficiency theory of the curriculum. Traner goes a step further by suggesting that American history courses be taught from the perspective of local history. That is,
he suggests a focus on the study of local politics, elections, city governments and bureaucracies as well as industries and other workplaces. Traner’s suggestions inform our modern notions of classes in local history and civics in so much that he was an advocate for participatory American history classes where students could actually do something rather than simply recite boring facts with little connection to everyday lived experiences. Traner’s suggestions along with those interested in “testing history” would continue to influence the formation of American history curriculum. By 1920, Griffith had published an analysis of a popular test in American history with a suggestion that it be radically redesigned. Contrary to the notion that history could be treated as an exact science and fighting the social science movement, Griffith suggested that teachers should teach reasoning and thinking skills and that on any test in American history “reasoning should be given at least equal value with memory if we are to follow our aim, that the outcome of history study is ability to solve present-day problems” (p. 700). Griffith represented a necessarily critical and growing group of historians and educators who doubted the ability of pre-made, pencil and paper, “objective item” tests to truly quantify learning outcomes for students in American history classes.

Griffith and others were bolstered by the work of educational psychologists around the issues of testing in American history. Bell & McCollum (1917) studied various testing methods in American history for quite some time and concluded significantly that the “aims of studying history are often so vague and ill-conceived or defined that it would be difficult to subject these to scientific examination” (p. 1). This was the first problem these two authors encountered, that goals and learning objectives in history classes they surveyed in Texas had ill-defined or no clear learning objectives. Although they admit that the development of historical skills or abilities, a skill set they suggest is highly prized in the early 20th century workforce, would be interesting to
examine, they doubt the ability to do it at present. The authors further submit that their test, modified at different levels and administered to students in elementary through professional/university-level schools, only elicited a “confused tangle of an account of a series of events in their causal and consequential relationships” (p. 18). While the authors are able to deduce quite a bit from their results about the quality of the exam itself and about the importance of learning objectives in American history classes, the ability of the test to measure distinct skills and knowledge is inconclusive at best. Bell and McCollum’s work was followed by both Myers (1917) and Sackett (1919) who initiated tests and created rating scales to measure the ability of students to memorize factual knowledge. But these tests did little to capture and quantify elusive learning objectives such as critical thinking and reasoning which remained at the core of what American history educators believed their subject should do for students.

*The History Teacher’s Magazine* was consistently concerned with reporting the findings of various committees established under the auspices of the AHA and the NEA to the wider-community of history teachers. In doing so, the magazine helped to communicate recommended teaching practices from both the NEA and the AHA. Echoing the Committee of Eight recommendations on the study of history in elementary schools, the magazine published an article in 1913 by Burnett Howe which proudly proclaimed that “history is not taught so that we can learn facts only, but rather so that we can interpret our culture and guide our students towards the type of work they need to do in college” (p. 71). The magazine continued the trend of reflecting public schools educators’ and historians’ debates about the form and function of American history curriculum. Between 1910 and 1913, every issue of the magazine, which was published 10 months out of the year, featured an article about learning American history through the lens of European history. This closely followed the debates discussed above between
participants at both AHA and NEA conferences. The magazine gave particular attention to the results of the College Board’s 1913 examination in history. Fiske (1913) lamented the poor scores, with only 38.1% of students passing the exam as compared to 54.8% for all other testing areas (p. 256). The College Board examiners, Fiske being the lead proctor, also lamented the poor writing ability generally seen among the participants and suggested the universally low scores would give “additional ammunition to the persons who would sacrifice history in order to gain time either for the studies possessing greater disciplinary value, or for those which will impart knowledge of immediate practical value” (p. 256). This lamentation certainly followed the trend in the nation-wide curricular debate about the place of history in the school curriculum. Fiske blamed the haphazard teaching of history, particularly American history which the exam tested heavily, and placed blame with school administrators and others who did not give history a significant weight within the curriculum.

The magazine’s alignment to current debates among historians and educators stretched even to a reflection on the 1916 Social Studies in Secondary Education Report. In a reported speech by Jessie C. Evans, teacher at the William Penn High School for Girls in Philadelphia, PA, the author focuses her remarks on the social efficiency movement suggesting that:

there is a growing danger that the traditional history course will only be permitted to the college preparatory student and that the new definitions of culture and the new demands for efficiency are causing very severe tests to be applied to any subject that would hold its own in our schools. (p. 18)

Evans’ remarks here were further corroborated by successive issues of the magazine which published regular updates during World War I from the National Board for Historical Service. The board communicated consistently about the need to teach a curriculum in history and social
studies that was useful for student life after school (Harding, 1919; National Board for Historical Service, 1919). To be sure, professional publications such as *The History Teachers’ Magazine* and scholarly journals reflected much of the debate concerning the usefulness of American history and historical study in general to matriculate to college as well as the thinking skills or learning goals/objectives students should obtain from studying history in public schools. However, the professional development literature from this time period also provides another lens through which to view the conversation concerning the study of American history.

**Conversation 4: methods texts and professional development materials.** Channing and Hart’s (1896) *Guide to the Study of American History* explained that studying history was useful in that it “trains the memory by steady practice in the use of materials, excises the judgment, and sets before the student’s mind a high standard of character” (p. 7). The authors appear to be in agreement with their contemporaries when they explain that American history should be more carefully studied in the public school and that “logical reasoning is as well applied to the growth of the United States as to the growth of Rome; and accurate knowledge, the foundation of good judgment, is much easier to attain” (p. 8). Channing and Hart’s guide is a prime example of the type of literature used to train history teachers or to supplement a teachers’ knowledge when few teachers had specific training in the study of history. The authors suggest that the primary method for studying history: the research, analysis, recording, and reporting of information from primary source documents and other materials is a necessary life skill for understanding modern society and it is critical to student’s preparation for college-level work. Indeed, the authors make a special point of suggesting that:

*the first thing that is needed for American history in schools is the conviction that it is a serious subject, not studied for mere information, or simply to make good citizens, but as*
a valuable means of training the mind to collect materials, to distinguish between truth, probability, and falsehood, and to assemble and analyze the materials for forming an opinion. (p. 23)

Here, the authors mention two of the three themes discussed throughout this chapter and in doing so they highlight the importance of each in the debate about the place of American history in the public school curriculum at the turn of the 20th century. Their special mention of the subject indicates that the teaching of American history was growing in significance as a subject necessary for student’s mental training for adulthood.

Hinsdale (1897) echoed his contemporaries’ work when he suggested that that the study of history has instrumental, practical, disciplinary, and cultural uses. He further defines each category and suggests that the instrumental and practical uses were the most important. Meaning that American history in particular furnishes the students with usable knowledge to understand the world around them as well as practical skills that they would need for college and to lead a successful, professional life. Hinsdale, who was perhaps the most prolific of his contemporaries, producing many professional development books, studies, and critiques of American history teaching in a career that spanned over forty years and included consistent participation in both NEA and AHA annual meetings and committees, specifically suggests that American history “allows the student to embrace to a great extent the principles on which the everyday life of the world around us is being conducted” (p. 14). Hinsdale suggests that these are more important learning objectives than simple memorization or the recitation of facts and in communicating this through his work here, he speaks directly to his audience of public school teachers and administrators. Fling and Caldwell (1897) corroborate Hinsdale’s assertions when they speak directly to teachers suggesting that teachers need more and specific training in the source method
of history (the use of primary and secondary sources) in order to transmit more than simple facts and knowledge to students, but rather a practical and useful way of uncovering information and talking with authority about current political and economic events.

As public school educators reached the turn of the 20th century, Bourne (1902) also reminded educators and historians that American history should hold a more important place in the public school curriculum. Bourne sensed, as did others that American history was growing in prominence because it was now being tested as part of matriculation to college, but also because American history provided those useful thinking and analysis skills described above. Bourne (1902) suggested further that “a little work in history in the college is not enough. More must be done to strengthen and align the program in history in the public schools to that of the college and the normal schools” (p. 76). In this recommendation, Bourne joined his colleagues arguing for the better teacher training in historical study. He admitted (later his work), that public school training was even more important because the vast majority of students didn’t go to college, but still needed training in critical thinking and analysis skills for life after school (p. 85). Bourne’s recommendations would continue to be asserted, although altered, by the other research as the first decades of the 20th century continued.

Although much of the professional development and pedagogical materials of the second decade of the 20th century focused heavily on teaching citizenship and patriotism, Bobbitt (1918) suggested that studying American history could reach other goals. Bobbitt asserts that education must change dramatically to meet the needs of 20th century learners. In the introduction section of his book, *The Curriculum*, he remarks that the present educational system was conceived in the slower-paced 19th century and that it needs updating. He cites his own research in the Chicago and Cleveland Public Schools as proof that American history education is almost
without a universal form and function, but is truly necessary to informing our knowledge of how “large group consciousness” is formed (pg. 146). By “large-group consciousness”, Bobbitt is referring to the process of civic and social life, such as voting, school attendance, community activities, business and other economic processes. He proposes that a course of study in American history is vital if students are able to participate in society and understand the world around them while thinking critically about these phenomena and processes.

From 1890 to 1920, the learning objectives and goals of a program of study in American history were discussed with great excitement. In 1890, the discussion concerned not only making the study of American history more universal and strengthening it within public schools, but doing so in order to align it with the requirements of university-level work. This often involved other conversations about the usefulness of traditional subjects such as Latin, Greek, and Ancient History and as the 20th century began—fewer schools would continue to offer these classes which were not deemed as useful as American history, mathematics, or science. As American history grew in prominence and became a more significant feature of the K-12 curriculum from 1910 to 1920, the goals of American history education took the form of a debate between the usefulness of history versus the necessity of social studies. As social studies advocates—those who wished to see American history subsumed into a larger field of study with sociology, economics, and political science, gained prominence, debates over the goals of learning history included fewer arguments about the subject’s ability to prepare students for college level work and more conversations and literature were published concerning the “civic uses” of American history. Although, as has been discussed, advice and discussions about the mental training afforded to students through a course of study in American history was never fully abandoned. Throughout the time period under examination here, another theme concerning these
conversations was the ability of American history to provided ethical training and impart character-building lessons to public school students.

Ethics and Character-Building through American History Education

**Conversation 1: the annual conference proceedings of the AHA and NEA.** In 1892, at the NEA’s annual meeting in New York City, New York, Walter Edwards of the Rockford, IL School Committee addressed a meeting of educators and professionals in history stating: “this I believe to be the chief aim of history study in the public schools, the inculcation of a broad and intelligent human sympathy” (p. 349). With this remark, Edwards added his own voice to another thematic current in discussions between the NEA, AHA, and others working or interested in public education and American history. That current of thought, that history education could serve, especially in the primary grades, to give students a “moral grounding” and to teach lessons in virtue, was a theme that would also pervade the scholarly and professional conversations about the role(s) and goal(s) of American history in the public school curriculum.

The following year, the NEA convention in Chicago featured Miss Catharine Spence, a primary school teacher in Adelaide, South Australia, who echoed the sentiments of her colleagues calling for learning history and order to teach students the virtues of: frugality, honesty, and noble character. Spence added her own advice on where to find source material, suggesting that teachers in the primary grades teach hero stories of great presidents and other leaders so that young children might grow up to be ethical citizens (Spence, 1893). In 1896, at the AHA’s annual meeting in Washington, D.C., Herbert Adams, reporting on his recent survey of history teaching in Great Britain, echoed Spence’s earlier commentary and suggested that history be used to teach a “common moral lesson to the great many ethnic groups that inhabit America by teaching them to tell the difference between truths and falsehoods” (p. 258).
Unwittingly or not, Adams was espousing a sentiment growing among some professional educators and fueled by racist sentiments that the disparate ethnic groups entering the United States at current could not be trusted or had not learned American values such as thrift, honesty, and hard work. While Adams did not blatantly espouse this idea, he touched upon a current of thought in turn of the 20th century America that intersected with educators looking to inculcate values as well as patriotism into the foreign-born they were charged with educating.

That same year, as the NEA held its annual convention in Buffalo, New York, J.F. Millspaugh, addressed a group of elementary educators suggesting that the careful study of morality and the careful teaching of historical lessons related to upholding sound moral character would lead students to act correctly, as long as those lessons had meaning for them (Millspaugh, 1896). These were sentiments that would be repeated throughout the remainder of the 19th century and into the early 20th century at annual meetings of both the NEA and AHA. In 1902, an analysis of multiple records from the NEA convention shows that the conversation became slightly more concrete as educators and historians began offering specific advice and crafting programs of study with lists of resources for learning about heroic stories in the primary grades. These programs of study sought to connect lessons in morality with civic education in the latter years of primary school and into high school. Suggestions included the use of literature and biographical works such as: The Christian Bible, Biographies of Washington and Lincoln, as well as Pilgrim’s Progress. At the NEA’s 1902 meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Emerson (state school superintendent in Buffalo, New York) took American history education a step further. Not only did he suggest that history helped students to learn moral lesson and virtues, but he recommended that the school reach out to the home in order to build moral discipline and character (Emerson, 1902, p. 192). Emerson’s suggestion were followed by a list of
organizations throughout the country that were started to help schools and families established this type of partnership for adolescent’s moral training. To help in this cause, lists of books were furnished for all grade levels and this was reiterated at the NEA convention in 1908 as high school educators decided best how to teach moral lessons appropriate for students at their grade levels. E.I. Miller touched on this subject briefly when he suggested that American history could help students to build character and moral values that they would need as participating members of civil society and as employees engaged in any industry (Miller, 1907). However, as the 20th century progressed and American involvement in World War One loomed as a possibility and then a certainty, debates over morality and character building through a course of study in American history also changed.

The ability of a program of study in American history to provide students with solid moral background did not disappear between 1910 and 1920. Rather, the argument changed as geo-political conflicts began in Europe and threatened to engulf the United States as well. In 1917, less than a year before the United States entered World War One, Herbert Johnson commented on the 1916 Social Studies in Secondary Education Report, at the NEA annual meeting suggesting that “personal convictions, morals, personal emotions, even the love for truth, must blend in one harmonious, overpowering, stern will to victory” (Johnson, 1917, p. 222). Johnson and other participants in the discussion turned their attention to calling for a program of study that would provide students with the “virtues and characteristics of spirit” that would help the world find peace and lead the United States to victory. The dialogue analyzed in this meeting, as was much of the written material from this era, was extremely hyperbolic owing to its purpose in rousing emotions and stirring a sense of moral necessity to act and teach students their moral responsibilities as citizens. As both the NEA and the AHA (often working
together) crafted programs of study with the idea in mind of inculcating moral values to American adolescents, the United States Bureau of Education also published reports that included a call to teach valuable moral lessons to students.

**Conversation 2: official reports and government sponsored studies.** With the publishing of the NEA’s *Committee of 15 Report on Elementary Education* in 1895, the organization and the committee articulated a proposition that students in the primary grades should study history in order to learn the “laws and morals which uphold the common good of all men” (p. 63). Although this document was more of a philosophical statement that also had roots in inculcating patriotism to elementary-aged students, the authors made a point of repeatedly mentioning the usefulness of history to perform such acts as: “judging the high aims of society” or to develop in men “judicious and fair-minded thinking.” Such wording permeates almost every page of the documents and in doing so relates an obvious message that educators and historians believed that one purpose of American history education was to give students a developed sense of right and wrong. The same wording permeates the AHA’s 1905 *Committee of Eight Report on the Teaching of History in Elementary Schools*. Just as Mabel Hill made a passionate plea to study American history through literature, she also contended that American history should provide students with a knowledge which “out of this there will come an ethical influence we have they can assimilate into our culture which makes an individuality of service to the world—the final aim of our education” (Hill, 1905 in American Historical Association, 1905, p. 140). In its final determination, the AHA’s Committee of Eight decided that one of the chief goals of historical instruction in elementary schools is to help the child realize what others are doing through *voluntary action* to help the child reach his own goals. To accomplish these goals, the committee suggested that American history be taught incrementally and in concert with other
subject matter such as English and philosophy. By doing this, the authors of the 1905 Report suggested that students would have “a correct attitude toward later history” (p. 252). As the second decade of the 20th century approached, the dictum laid out in 1905, that of having the correct attitude and knowledge of history, increasingly meant falling into line with the mainstream culture of public schools and learning American history in such a way as to be able to participate, without suspicion from peers, in your community’s civic and social life.

Through both the *Teaching of Community Civics* (1915) and *The Social Studies in Secondary Education* (1916), the United States’ Bureau of Education promoted the idea that American history could be subsumed into a larger course of study concerning how American communities function and how the citizens in those communities rely on one another. Although these documents have a strong and overt patriotic theme running through them, implicit in them is also the idea that American students should use their country’s history as a lesson for how to cooperate with one another. Indeed, the 1916 *Social Studies Report* suggested that its third aim was to teach students so that “they recognize their civic obligations, present and future, and to respond to them by appropriate action” (p. 23). To be certain, this could not be done without first teaching lessons in morality and character-building.

Although the 1916 Report made altruistic claims for the promotion of an “internationalist spirit” and to the eradication of hatred between groups of people, which is not surprising given that it was produced in midst of World War One, it also suggested what Americans can do to help foreigners. Namely, it proposed that public schools adopt a vision of these people that focuses on how we can assimilate them into mainstream American society. In calling these groups “backwards and of small present achievement”, the authors suggested that native-born Americans are superior and have a moral obligation to assimilate other groups. Again, this is not
surprising given the climate of hysteria over immigration during World War One. This call to assimilation may seem like a dramatic characterization of this time period, but as the analysis of literature (much of it official government reports) has shown, professionals in history and public school educators found themselves increasingly “caught-up” in the nationalistic fervor of the moment which they confounded and inter-twined with issues of morality and character in their call for a coordinated program of study in American history. Journals and other scholarly documents from this time period reveals a similar strand of thought.

**Conversation 3: journals and other scholarly conversations.** In 1898, E.C. Warriner, quoting Nicholas Butler Murray’s speech in that same year before the NEA convention, advocated for “a type of American history teaching that would lead students to a fuller appreciation of what human institutions really mean and what tremendous moral issues and principles they involve” (p. 102). In making this “call for morality”, Warriner was adding his voice to a current thread in the debate over what goals American history education in public schools should attain. In 1903, Frederick Moore Vanderbilt, in a speech before the Southern Educational Association, lamented the death of great American heroes and the teaching of morality through American history. He claimed that history too often destroyed national heroes and he called for a renewal of this type of teaching. In examining the documentation from the time period, it appears as though Vanderbilt’s declaration may have been a little premature if not overly dramatic. Although calls to teach American history to provide students with moral guidelines and character education were fewer in number as America moved into the 20th century, they did not disappear, especially for those discussing history in the elementary grades. Heck (1904) reiterated this sentiment when he suggests that the primary aim of American history education in the primary grades would be to give students the ability to judge the fairness and
justice of social institutions and democratic processes. Heck was picking up on the earlier work of educators who lectured and wrote professional development materials that stressed moral teachings.

In 1909, Lotta Clark writing in *The School Review*, suggested that American history could provide students not only with the training necessary to get a job, but also with “morals, a sense of obedience, helpfulness, self-reliance, respect for the law and for their fellow-man” (p. 256). In definitive prose, Clark even suggested that any school that does not teach these things was a failure. Later in the 20th century, even Traner (1917) who made impassioned calls for American history to teach students applicable thinking skills, also suggested that American history should serve a *higher cause*. With specific reference to the negative consequences of industrialization and urbanization, Traner lists not only the modern conveniences of everyday life, but also the social-ills of sweatshops and tenement houses. He suggests the American history classes teach that “all the privileges and comforts of our modern life, have been bought by the devotion and sacrifices of individuals and organizations, in spite of hardship, persecution, and the constant opposition of sinister forces” (p. 718). A similar sentiment appears in Gosling (1920), who advocated for a curriculum in citizenship and American history that would focus on emotional connections rather than solely on intellectual ones. He suggested that there was a disproportional balance between intellectual issues and emotional issues which many students lived through every day. Citing an increase in the “social-ills of city life”, but also the eradication of disease and neglect in other areas, Gosling called for a curriculum that would teach these lessons and celebrate the real-life victories over poverty and disease (p. 65). In this sense, the call to teach morality through American history was an attempt to provide students, especially those who lived in the slums of cities, with a historical framework for making sense out of the
unjust world around them and to teach them to work towards justice and economic equality. Although this was not a far-reaching sentiment, as any call to do this would have been rather radical in the history/education community at this time, it is a sentiment which underlies the discussion of morality as a goal of American history education.

Calls to teach history with imagination and enthusiasm tended to often include a rather unsubtle request to teach American history with morality in mind as well. In 1912, George L. Burr asked teachers to teach a history that could impart passion to students and one that focused on “the study of human life itself, of life on its personal, suffering, dramatic, rejoicing, heroic side’ of its sin and holiness, its error and its strength, its struggle and its grief” (p. 98). Likewise, Sprague (1913) called on American history curricula to give students the skills necessary to live a satisfactory moral and virtuous life. He suggested that society calls upon students to make choices out of a sense of justice and a knowledge of social values. He concludes that students cannot do that properly without a course of study in American history that can give them these skills (p. 235). As America’s involvement in World War One seemed more imminent, historians and educators also called upon educators to teach American history so as to instill in students a sense that:

in the great world of realities the eternal enmity is not between men, but between the ideas or the principles which guide them, and that, if principles are the same and human duties the same, conflict is the most abject of follies. (McLaughlin, 1916, p.263)

In 1917, the Northwestern Association of Schools and Colleges, in a committee report concerning the objectives of a course of study in history, reiterated McLaughlin’s call above by suggesting that any program of study in American history should teach a student about the great social experiences of the modern world so that students could not just learn right from wrong,
but also know how to evaluate turbulent geo-political situations with eye towards working for peace. To be sure, as the negative side-effects of rapid industrialization and urbanization were slowly overcome for some, but not all Americans and as America entered the first decades of the 20th century as a growing global power, the idea that America’s history should provide students with instruction on moral lessons did not disappear. Rather, the call to focus American history on moral teachings morphed into an argument for using American history to teach students the difference between a just and unjust war as well as how nations could maintain peace. Methods texts and other professional development materials published between 1890 and 1920 suggests the same evolution of thought.

Conversation 4: methods texts and professional development materials. Hinsdale (1897) suggested that historical knowledge was akin to moral knowledge in so much as teachers could give students a sense of right and wrong by teaching them to about the past. Hinsdale further suggested that it was necessary to teach about heroes and the actual actions of men, because they could cement the weight of a creed or idea in students’ minds. Echoing Hinsdale’s claims, Fling and Caldwell (1897) suggested that the highest aim of historical study was to give a students a love of his country and ability to seek justice, truth, and liberty wherever he might find them challenged. Although Fling and Caldwell’s work might seem to be more about patriotism or nationalistic in tone, undergirding this entire conversation is the idea of teaching morals and values so that students could be effective citizens. Bourne (1902) also reiterates previous works by suggesting that there are other altruistic reasons why students should study American history. Primarily, that it teaches morals and ethics within a framework of patriotism, concurrently embedding within a student both a love for his country and an ability to seek truth and justice. Wayland (1914) suggests much the same when he says that the teacher of history must “not only
know history and love history, he must also perceive its bearing upon human life and human welfare in order to give students an appreciation of values” (p. 12). All of the authors offered advice that had long been a common objective in American history curriculum in public schools.

Russell (1914) suggested that moral training for students through historical study has a very long history going back at least to Benjamin Franklin’s chartering of a public school system in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1743. Surveying key school curricular documents and textbooks, Russell concludes that programs in American history were conducted specifically to shed light on the moral questions of the day by providing direct examples students could not only relate to, but also remember for use in future actions. This idea of “history as a guide for the future” was not a new one, but Russell (1915) adds a moral lens to the issue which helps us to understand American history curricular goals within the context of early 20th century America. The United States Bureau of Education (1917), in concert with Committee on Public Information, the NEA and the AHA, further emphasizes this lens. Its two major instructional pamphlets produced during World War One, *How to teach the Great War* and *How the Great War came to America*, can be seen a propaganda documents. Their language is suggestive, using words such as: “America: the great Patriot” and suggesting that America must do whatever it can, as it had done in the past, to ward off threats to liberty and the proper functioning of a democratic society (pg. 2). Again, both documents are full of the language of patriotism and democracy, but they are in effect advocating for teaching current American history through a moral lens by bluntly indicating that Germany and the Central Powers were “wrong and bad” while the United States and its allies were “just, correct, and inherently good.” As a more objective view of history would suggest, the identification wasn’t so clear cut. Nonetheless, this is the goal of history that is advocated for because it is seen as necessary to give students both a
moral compass and to promote support for the war effort through the one institution that could reach the majority of American youth. Johnson (1922) carried this notion past the World War One era, when he suggested that moral training was one of the most frequently made claims for the value within the American history curriculum. He even suggests that the study of history “makes for a sound basis upon which to build and live one’s religion” (p. 167).

Clearly then, between 1890 and 1920, one persistent goal of instruction in American history was the propagation of moral training. The focus on moral training for history students in public schools became less overt as American public schools revised their curriculum into the 20th century, but it never disappeared and it is used even today to teach lessons in character building and morality in the elementary grades and to examine opposing viewpoints in the middle and secondary grade levels. We have certainly removed the obvious references to religion and moral training in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but modern courses in American history and modern textbooks still seek to teach students about patriotism and democracy by first teaching students lessons in right versus wrong.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, three themes have been identified and discussed in the literature relating to conversations between professionals in history and public school educators. Those three themes: teaching history to inculcate patriotism or a celebration of American democratic institutions, American history’s ability to provide critical thinking skills/access to college, and teaching moral or character building lessons through American history have all been embedded in four contexts or what have been referred to as four distinct conversations. The four different types of documents in which those three themes appear also represent a wide variety of contexts that span 30 years of American history and take place throughout the country. Often, the same
document or record of a conversation represents several different themes at once. To be sure, professionals in history and public school educators were never singular in their purpose or advocacy for American history education. The widespread geographical transmission of the same message shows that despite not have any type of common program of study or standards in American history, that many schools and their advocates espoused much the same message and focused their attention on the three themes suggested above. How important is this finding? I would submit that it is extremely important since knowing what the goals of the proposed curriculum are gives one a sense of not only the form and structure of the program, but also a knowledge of why it was deemed important for students to know. Knowing this, one comes closer to ascertaining another dimension of human culture and the experience of being an American citizen and student between 1890 and 1920. Knowing that these were common objectives within the context of a country quickly industrializing, urbanizing, and teeming with immigrants looking for new economic opportunities illuminates and partially explains the cause-effect relationship between these societal phenomena and the form as well as structure of the curriculum. Knowing these three themes also helps us to understand why American history is part of the core curriculum today because what is part of the “core” is what information/content is generally considered the most important for our students to know. Still, the question remains: How do these themes actually work out in a real life school district and in the classroom. Although a definitive answer is not possible, we can begin to answer this question by examining the school committee documents and American history curriculum of the Boston Public School System (BPS). Between 1890 and 1920, BPS was one of America’s most centralized school districts. Importantly, it was also a school system very much engaged in conversations between scholars and practitioners about the form and delivery of American history curricula.
Chapter 6: Curriculum Debates in the Boston Public Schools 1890-1920

Introduction

Writing in the now defunct educational journal: *The Forum*, Joseph Mayer Rice, early historian of American public schools and other educational institutions, suggested that no history of public schooling in the United States and that indeed, no history of the United States within the then modern era would be complete without including the Boston Public Schools (Rice, 1893, p.141). His suggestion is one heeded here, because the Boston Public Schools do indeed represent one of the earliest and most transformative social/educational institutions in American history. Public schooling in Boston has existed since the founding of the Boston Latin School in 1635, making the Boston Public Schools (BPS) the oldest continuous public school district operating in the United States (L. A. Cremin, 1970). This distinction, along with the fact that Boston has long been a city brimming with scholars and scholarly conversation due to the high number of universities, colleges, and other research institutions that make Boston their home, has made BPS a center for educational conversation and pedagogical debate as well as innovation.

With reference to BPS, I will focus mainly, but not exclusively on the high school aged population since more documentation survives pertaining to this group of teachers and students than any other. However, there is some documentation pertaining to elementary schools that will be referenced and analyzed in order to provide information that spans students’ experiences in history classes in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Between 1890 and 1920, the city of Boston and thus, BPS also underwent a radical population shift, increasing its population in both amount and diversity of ethnicity and socio-economic status. In 1890, BPS boasted a high school population of 3,465 students with 10 common high schools and 2 public Latin schools (Boston Public School Committee, 1890b, p.
11. The common high school was the forerunner of the manual training school and was a school that offered a program of study that prepared students for the working world. The Latin High School was a college-preparatory institution and it continues today as the nation’s oldest high school. It was not until 1972 that the two Boston Latin schools (separated by sex), started offering co-educational classes and the same curriculum (William J Reese, 1999). By 1920, BPS was brimming with newly-arrived immigrants all clamoring for a seat in its public schools. That year, the school department records show that BPS operated 15 high schools (1 mechanical arts, 2 Latin, and 12 common high schools) serving a total population of 15,632 students (Boston School Committee, 1920, p. 8). BPS, like many urban school districts at the time, was faced with a number of difficulties not the least of which was how to house and teach so many students. BPS’ curriculum in history, in turn, was greatly affected by the forces of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization that forced upon it not just more students, but the need to educate students for a rapidly modernizing world.

A review of BPS records and publications such as the Boston Teacher’s Club Newsletter and Educational Standards both of which were printed in Boston and contained news from both inside and outside the Boston Public Schools system, but were meant for the Boston educational-practitioner audience, show that teaching American history in Boston closely followed national trends. While teaching American history had been mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts since 1857, students who attended Latin High Schools (college-preparatory institutions) were much more likely to experience the classical 4-year course in history recommended by both the Madison Conference in 1892-1893 and the AHA’s Committee of Seven in 1899. Students in the Commerce High Schools, Grammar schools, and other elementary or intermediate grades were taught a uniform syllabus in history, but far fewer instructional years
in history were required in these schools. In the Commerce High Schools especially, American history was taught with a focus on economic and business history owing to the fact that these schools prepared students for life in the newly emerging corporate organizations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Boston Public School Committee, 1893, p. 27). Because the course of study and the suggested instructional materials in American history were very well aligned to currents of thought in the nation-wide conversations, BPS provides a local context through which to view how the themes illuminated in chapter five and discussed between historians and educators actually played out in the real world or outside of the so-called ivory tower.

**Curricular Themes in the Boston Public Schools**

The themes discussed in chapter five: patriotism or a celebration of American democratic institutions, teaching history as a college entrance requirement, and ethics/character building in history classes, are present in documents analyzed and pertaining to the Boston Public Schools. In uncovering these themes the following sets of BPS documents were reviewed for the years 1890 through 1920: school committee annual reports and meeting notes, annual statistical records, Courses of Study in History and specifically—American History, lists of supplies and American history textbooks authorized for use by BPS, curriculum guidelines for the Boston Normal School, the *Boston Teacher’s Club Newsletters*, and *Educational Standards*-a journal of educational matters printed by BPS and authored by its teachers and administrators. Just as the documents in chapter five were sorted into these thematic categories, so too were these documents. As the documents were analyzed and categorized, it became clear that discussions and debates about American history curriculum and instruction in the Boston Public Schools followed the national trend from 1890 to 1920. As the records will demonstrate, these debates were particularly well-recorded in the Boston Public Schools, which regularly reviewed their
American history curriculum and instructional practices often integrating these discussions with how to improve teacher training through their in-house normal (teacher-prep) school. The Boston Public Schools were also one of the first schools districts (along with Philadelphia and New York City) to include American history in the core curriculum in 1857. The reason for including American history was cited in BPS’ *Report of the Board of Supervisors-Courses of Study-Primary and Grammar Schools* (1900) and is stated as:

the establishments of the new manufacturing industries had attracted to the State a large foreign population, and the unsuccessful revolutions throughout Europe in 1848 had swelled the number to 200,000 in 1850. These people were ignorant of the history and traditions of their new home, and they needed and desired to be enlightened. At the same time the country was in the throes of the anti-slavery struggle, and great constitutional questions were at issue. The appeal on both sides was to the opinions and acts of the forefathers—to history. The public discovered that a knowledge of the history of the country had become an essential of popular education, and they declared their opinion by statute. (p. 11).

Although the quote above cites governance and educational issues related to sectionalism in the United States, both industrialization and patriotism or the need to *Americanize* newly arrived immigrants figure as major causes for mandating that American history be part of the core BPS curriculum. To be sure, this reasoning followed the nation-wide trend (as seen in chapter five) of justifying the need to teach American history as the need to promote Americanization. As the nation-wide debate unfolded and changed between 1890 and 1920, the Boston Public Schools changed as well. Seen in this manner, a review and analysis of BPS documents is offered as a single case study view of these thematic debates. However, it is also important to note that there
is a limit on what can be claimed to have actually occurred within history classes in the Boston Public Schools. The documents examined here certainly offer proof that these curriculum themes existed, but lesson plans and other documents not examined here would paint a different picture. Therefore, the claims staked here and the conversations discussed should be interpreted to have occurred at the administrative level of the Boston Public Schools only, not necessarily at the classroom level. Again, while there is certainly proof that these themes penetrated to the classroom level, it is highly unlikely that all teachers had a universal understanding of the curriculum priorities and were in lock-step teaching an identical curriculum in American history.

Teaching patriotism in the Boston Public Schools. The Boston Public Schools cited the need to inculcate patriotism in their students in their 1890 course review of American history. The school committee report, printed in 1891 and entitled The Course of Study in the Latin Schools suggested that senior students at the high school level should be regularly required to take field trips around Boston to the various historical sites in order to produce a “sense of national awe and patriotic inspiration which students should record through both oral and written reports on our nation’s history and Boston’s role in it” (p. 58). The issue of patriotism was again at the forefront of the Boston Public School Committee’s 1896 review of programs in American history currently being taught at the elementary school level. At the meeting, committee members stressed that the chief outcome of a program of study in American history was to “fix permanently in the mind of our youth the most important steps in the development of the nation in order that it should stimulate an intelligent patriotism and promote patriotic citizenship” (Boston Public School Committee, 1896, pp. 129-130). As has been noted in chapter five, teaching American history as a way of promoting and in many ways—creating a patriotic citizenry, became of more overt and a more often cited reason at the turn of the 20th century as
waves of immigrants filled American cities. In response, BPS changed their reasoning for teaching American history thereby submitting to larger political and social pressures to use classrooms as the vehicle through which to Americanize immigrants.

Patriotism and the teaching of values related to citizenship continued to be a hallmark of programs of study in American history in the Boston Public Schools into the 20th century. In 1903, the *Recommended Course of Study for Evening Elementary Schools*, common at this time since many children worked in factories during the day and overcrowded schools meant that some students attended during the day and others at night, suggested that the reading and oral lessons in United States history should stress the rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizens. The course of study further recommended that the state and local government be studied and compared with the federal government in order to connect the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ bureaucratic structures with that of the United States Federal Government. Patriotism was further advocated for in 1910 by Franklin B. Dyer, Superintendent of Schools, when he suggested that:

> to send pupils out of the elementary schools without some knowledge of the history of our country and its method of government would be to fail to recognize the relation that the public schools of a democracy bear to the problems of good citizenship. (p. 20).

Dyer (1910) continued his opening speech before the school committee by suggesting that the program in American history at the elementary level which continued throughout high school, was purposed to promote “patriotic duty, a love of one’s country, and a respect for the law” (p. 20). According to the record, the school committee responded with applause and praise calling Dyer’s speech and the teachers’ efforts both “noble and in the best interest of our democratic institutions” (Dyer, 1910, p. 21). As is the one of the duties of the superintendent today, Dyer
was simply promoting his educational programs and his teachers, which seemed to work as the adulation of the school committee members would suggest.

As the second decade of the 20th century continued, BPS reiterated a call to study history for patriotic purposes through publishing and critiquing multiple grade-level syllabi in history. In 1914, the school committee considered the Evening High School syllabi whose primary audience were students who could only attend at night, immigrants looking for an education, and students who could not secure a place in the city’s crowded schools during the day. The *Provisional Course of Study for Evening High Schools* for 1912 suggested that three separate courses in history be taught for students over a three year period. The first history course would provide students with a knowledge of Western Civilization. This course would consist of a historical survey of Ancient Greece and Rome with an emphasis on the foundations of western-style democracy. The second history course would describe western and Anglo-Saxon/British history while making connections to the early American colonies in order to give students a sense of their own early-American history. The third (junior-level) course in history focused on the great social and political problems of modern America in order to develop within students “the ability to solve problems of citizenship successfully and know how to face them in the coming years” (p. 44). This proposed course of study closely resembles both the 1892-1893 Madison Conference Report (what is also known as The Committee of Ten suggested course of study) and it is an altered form of the 1899 AHA-sponsored Committee of Seven suggested course of study.

It resembles neither exactly because it calls for a three year period for studying history for night school students instead of the recommended four-year course of study (which was followed exactly at both Latin Schools) and it omits the study of Medieval European History that was advocated for by both previous committees. However, its abbreviated form is possibly as
result of the audience it is directed at—night school students for whom college admission was not an expectation. Because BPS followed NEA and AHA prescriptions so carefully in other grade levels, it is doubtful that BPS was simply ignoring the AHA and NEA prescriptions. Rather, from programs of study surveyed nation-wide in chapter five, it seems as though the Boston Public Schools were more in agreement with both the AHA and NEA when it came to proposing and supporting courses of study in American history. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the course of study proposed for the night school at the high school level stresses purely the Anglo-Saxon roots of American history while wholly ignoring other groups’ contributions. This may simply be a discrimination based on the need to remove some areas of study because of the shortened length of course requirements or it may be a method of inculcating one cultural message directed especially at newly-arrived immigrants. To be sure, the recommended course of study could constitute a carefully crafted message to educate Boston’s students in a mono-cultural fashion.

This mono-cultural programming through the lens of American history persisted throughout the second decade of the 20th century. In 1916, the Syllabus for a Course of Study for 4th Grade, suggested that history be taught at this level “to inculcate a knowledge of the simpler historical facts concerning Boston and its vicinity, and an appreciation of the sturdy character and ideals of the early settlers” (p. 19). The following year, the Boston Public School Committee approved its Syllabus for the Fifth Grade which suggested that students should study European explorers, their discoveries and settlements along the Atlantic Coast, and the lives of great American leaders (Boston Public Schools, 1917b). Objective standards for study in American history, a forerunner of the content and skill-based standards used in today’s classrooms, were cited throughout this syllabus and they were reiterated in the school
committee’s (1917a) *Outline for Work in Geography and History for the Intermediate Grades.* Of particular note was Objective Standard One which suggested that teaching efforts be directed at “preparing the pupil to make clear the story of America, so that the boys and girls will know about the country of which they are citizens and appreciate its wonderful growth and ideals” (Boston Public School Committee, 1917a, p. 16). To be sure, both syllabi were packed with both local history and the purposeful promotion of patriotic fervor. This is not surprising as the United States moved towards involvement in the First World War and patriotic fervor was at an all-time high (as was described in chapter five). At this time, the Boston Public Schools also used American history, at least to some degree, to promote patriotic duty among its students. However, the promotion of patriotism was not limited to Boston Public School Committee documents, meeting records, and suggested courses of study; it also permeated teacher’s publications.

The *Boston Teacher’s Club Newsletter* which was a publication of the Boston Teacher’s Association, a forerunner of their eventual labor union, regularly published newsletters which included information about professional development opportunities, classes at local universities, meeting minutes, advertisements from local retailers that provided discounts for teachers, and it published essays, pedagogical suggestions and editorials related to the political or popular events of the day. Patriotism or teaching American history to Americanize students was a popular topic of conversation. Within the context of this narrow view of the newsletter, Lotta Clark-Head of the Department of History at the Boston Normal School, was also the newsletter’s most frequent contributor and essayist. Beginning in 1916, the newsletters regularly published advertisements for workshops on Americanization and Clark was noted for writing several essays on how to spread Americanization through dramatic presentations. Under her direction, students would
perform a number of plays concerning significant events in American history (i.e. the First Thanksgiving, Battle of Bunker Hill) for immigrant groups in order to educate them and also to entice them to attend evening or day-training schools (Clark, 1917). This was repeatedly advocated for and Clark even reported it to the NEA in her participation on the 1917 Roundtable in History at the annual convention in Portland, Oregon. She suggested repeatedly that American history be utilized to provide students with real skills that could help them contribute to the perpetuation of a democratic society.

In 1919, Lotta Clark published a suggested list of topics for teaching current events history entitled: *Teaching the World at War*. The list suggests only the following causes for the War:

1. The autocratic nature of the German government by which great power is placed in the Kaiser and very little power is given to the people and their representatives
2. The character of the Kaiser
3. The establishment by the German government of a mighty army and navy and the development of powerful militaristic class
4. The formulation by the German government of plans for the domination of the world by Germany
5. The constant instilling into the minds of the German people by the German government of ideas which made them willing tools of their leaders.

(Clark, 1919, p. 9).

This list above demonstrates a certain level of curricular control the normal school had on the Boston Public School system since most of Boston’s public school teachers were trained at the Boston Normal School. Again, it’s important to note that this curricular control is no way
interpreted to be complete, but it is still present at the district-administrative level. Importantly, the list was also reproduced at the 1917 meeting of the NEA and was in use in the New York City Public Schools which demonstrates that this type of propaganda was in somewhat widespread use throughout the northeastern United States. However, I would suggest that the list is truly important because of the one-sided information it provides students. Every cause for the war places blame with Germany. If this was indeed widely taught than it appears as though the previously multidimensional lens of BPS American history syllabi, which were described above, was abandoned at least during this period of war-time hysteria.

Clark’s sentiments were reiterated in the midst of World War One and through an editorial in the newsletter by Superintendent Franklin Dyer who suggested that:

as teachers, we have daily opportunities to develop the spirit of loyalty in many susceptible hearts and through them in many homes. We should see that our children are thoroughly instructed in what democracy stands for, why we are in this war, what our government wants of us today, how we should conserve and why—in short, what service we can render” (Dyer, 1917a, p. 3).

Here, Dyer among many others was following what he believed was his civic duty to call upon teachers, themselves civil servants, to do their part to keep America safe for democracy. This call was at least in part an effect of war propaganda of which the Pro-Americanization movement was certainly an integral part. This movement can be characterized as movement for more positive patriotic duty, but it had a restrictive or dark-side as the government moved, through the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, to curtail free speech and the publishing as well as circulation of what it considered “anti-American or anti-democratic” materials. As has been discussed, instructional materials, programs of study, and other pedagogical documents
from the time period reflect these sentiments as they continually suggest working together and through the mono-cultural lens of the “Ideal American Community”. This was the topic of discussion in Alexander Whiteside’s speech to the Boston Normal School. The text of Whiteside’s speech was reprinted in the newsletter in 1919. In the speech, Whiteside, then chief legal counsel for the City of Boston, suggested that Americanization required three distinct pieces of knowledge that teachers could deliver:

One, a knowledge of the English language. Second, understanding of our institutions, history, and development to the end that those seeking American citizenship may be prepared to assume its responsibilities. Third, understanding on the part of Native Americans of our various immigrant races, and on the part of these races of each other, and union of our immigrant races with each other and with Native Americans in the spirit of good will, united purpose, and common action. (pp. 6-7).

Both Dyer and Whiteside joined Clark and a list of other proponents for education through the lens of Americanization as involvement in World War One continued and even after the war as the United States began to emerge as a world power.

Indeed, advocacy for Americanization and thus teaching American history for patriotic ends did not end with the war, but continued into the 1920s. In the Boston Teacher’s Club Newsletter, Michael J. Downey rather bluntly suggests that we must Americanize our youth, but also the illiterate immigrant masses. He was advertising the Boston Public Schools’ program in citizenship for recent immigrants or those who could not speak English and wanted to know more about the country’s history. He suggests that “the purpose of the class is to train the immigrant for efficient and intelligent American citizenship—not merely to impart information on political machinery” (p. 10). As has been mentioned, teaching history through the lens of
Americanization did not allow for a multiplicity of opinion. Advocacy for Americanization did claim at least one victim in the Boston Public Schools. In 1920, Orren H. Smith, history teacher at the Girl’s Latin School, was vilified in the local papers and in the newsletter for teaching “unpatriotic lessons” or in this case—the history of the Communist Revolt in Russia which begin in 1917 (Boston Teacher’s Club Newsletter, 1920). Even though he was defended in print by his students, he was still removed and dismissed from his job, demonstrating that teaching history was controversial during this period of time. Within the Boston Public Schools, advocating for teaching American History to promote patriotism or through the lens of Americanization wasn’t confined only to the Boston Teacher’s Club Newsletter.

Rather, Educational Standards—an educational journal published by the Boston Public School Department, regularly featured articles on teaching American history and Americanization. In June, 1917, Superintendent Dyer announced the passage of a piece of legislation throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which required that training in citizenship be added as distinct course of study. This legislation followed the recommendations laid out in both the Social Studies in Secondary Education (1916) and the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (1918). Both documents call for a separate course of study in citizenship and government. With the onset of World War One and the anti-democratic, anti-immigrant hyperbole that followed, the state of Massachusetts moved to arm itself against un-democratic ideology by using its public schools as its first line of defense. Dyer’s argument was taken up the following year by Will Starr Myers (1918), Professor of History at Princeton University, who suggested that the Boston Public Schools follow the recommendations of the AHA and NEA who had suggested courses in Community Civics. Myers suggested that this type of course would “broaden the sympathies, and thus break down the spirit of group exclusiveness which is
all too characteristic of our public life today” (pg. 52). Myers’ call for a program in Community Civics is not just a reiteration of the NEA or AHA’s suggestions, but rather a promotion of teaching American history to inculcate unity and patriotism. Again, on the face of the issues, this is seemingly innocuous until one considers how exclusive that type of history teaching could be and perhaps how this type of teaching would hardly be attainable by those who had just arrived to America and were facing concurrent discrimination in housing and in the workplace.

Both the official publications of and the records for the Boston Public schools show the American history was considered an ideal tool for inculcating patriotism. Furthermore, the records have shown that the Boston Public Schools used this type of teaching to advocate for a very narrow view of American history through the lens of Americanization. Although Americanization, as has been suggested above, was often discussed in print and was disguised in the language of cooperation and unity, it clearly also had the distinct ability to discriminate. BPS documentation also demonstrates that its own internal debate about how to teach American history within the context of the frenetic political and social environment of World War I America mirrors the national debate very closely. Indeed, Boston can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger national debate. Although it should be noted that the Boston Public Schools had many singular differences and advantages, not the least of which were political and economic in nature, that make clean and easy transposition with the national debate impossible. This notwithstanding, the Boston Public Schools also mirrored the national debate over American history curriculum in the sense that the course of study was often viewed as a necessary prerequisite for college study and for the idea that when it was properly taught—it bestowed on students specific and necessary critical thinking skills.
Teaching American history for college admission and other skills in the Boston Public Schools. Just as patriotism, the celebration of American democratic institutions, and the Americanization of the foreign-born was advocated for as a reason to teach American history, so too did educators and historians stress that American history was a necessary requirement for college admission. The BPS records and other publications by educators in Boston also show that many believed American history to be a field of study uniquely capable of endowing students with a certain set of thinking skills useful in their civic and economic life. As will be discussed in chapter seven, these unique thinking skills have many correlations to a theory of historical understanding which provides a lens through which to view the learning outcomes that exposure to American history curriculum provides. In 1890, as BPS published its Annual Report of the Board of Surveyors, it included an assessment of the methods and meanings that underlie instruction in American history. Specifically, the document suggests that the study of history has 4 purposes, two of which are linked to critical thinking skills: “(1). to acquire a knowledge of the principal historical events and their causes and (2). To broaden and liberalize the mind” (p. 4). These high-minded goals are significant and they carry through in subsequent documents which address the ability of history to connect to written literature in order to aid students understanding of vocabulary and build reading skills. The following year, the history subsection of the 1891 Review of the Course of Study in Latin Schools suggested that:

there should be, of course, no attempt to load the memory with unimportant facts and dates. The main purposes should be to train the pupils to grasp mentally the leading events in order and to arouse an interest in historical reading. (p. 5).

Even from an early date, practitioners in education and historians suggested continuously that American history should not be taught to simply memorize facts and dates, but rather to instill
higher-ideals or what modern day practitioners would call higher-order thinking skills such as: analyzing, evaluating, and creating new information from a close reading of the historical record.

In 1896, the Boston Public Schools analyzed the study of history in grammar schools and suggested six points of emphasis for teachers. Four of these objectives concern linking the study of American history to the study of other subjects such as: literature, geography, English history, and civics. When considering the skills students should acquire, the report suggested that American history “should train (students) to group and generalize, to take broad, comprehensive views. It should train to judge, compare, to reason and it should train to read, to search, to gather materials and to combine” (Boston Public School Committee, 1896, p. 130). Other learning objectives were concerned with the inculcation of patriotism and also morality or character building. This focus on thinking skills such as reason, comparison, and analysis demonstrates that educators and administrators in the Boston Public Schools viewed American history as a way to teach distinct thinking skills. To be sure, they were informed in this view by debates occurring at the national level, but also by relationships by BPS’ sustained and consistent self-review of their own programs of study in American history.

Well into the first decade of the 20th century, the Boston Public Schools continually reviewed its courses of study in American history repeatedly suggesting that students should be trained to recall great leaders and those leaders’ actions. However, by 1909, BPS focused its Provisional Course of Study for Elementary Schools on three distinct levels of thinking and skill development. In grades one through three, it was suggested that students learn to read great stories concerning national history (i.e. The Plymouth Plantation, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln). In grades six through eight, students were expected to “develop the conception of connected historical events, the power to comprehend historical growth and to
develop the power to see cause and effect; the ability to appreciate the larger relations of nations in history, and a taste for a variety of historical reading” (pp. 70-73). By grade eight, the learning objectives for students moved from language that described simplistic thinking skills such as: “compare and contrast-grade 4” to “analyze, comprehend, relate, and develop—grade 8”. The content studied in grade eight was focused on a survey of current events all within the context of the United States as an emerging world power. In this sense, the course of study in American history was not only informed by larger debates at the national level and by scholarly debates, but also by emerging social, political, and economic forces all of which informed instruction in American history. To be sure, Boston Public Schools’ walls were quite permeable and outside thought appears to have trickled in to affect the form and delivery of American history curriculum.

Almost on the eve of the start of World War One in Europe, the Boston Public School Committee considered changes to its course of study for night schools. These schools, serving primarily immigrants and day laborers seeking additional educational opportunities, proposed a three year course of study in history that would help students realize that “from the study of history we are better fitted to solve the political, economic, and social problems of the present” (Boston Public School Committee, 1912, p. 44). Contrary to the curriculum of Americanization that would follow it and dictate a mono-cultural view of history, this curriculum suggested that students learn about all of the various ethnic groups that had come to America in order to understand how they developed and why they had chosen to move to the United States. While the focus still remained on the traditional American historical narrative (i.e. emphasizing the stories of great leaders and European conquest over Native Americans), this type of “pseudo-immigrant history” course showed that the Boston Public Schools were willing to entertain (at
least prior to 1916) different notions of the content students should learn through a course of study in American history.

As Europe plunged into war and as it looked like the United States would soon become embroiled in the conflict, suggested changes to courses of study in American history and debate within the Boston Public Schools was frequent. However, BPS never lost focus on stressing the methods for obtaining learning objectives even though political tensions undoubtedly vied for administrators’ and teachers’ attention. By 1917, the suggested activities for students in an American history course had remained virtually unchanged since 1890. The Syllabus for the Fifth Grade (1917b) suggested that students engage in oral and written recitation and reproduction of biographies and stories, narrate stories of national importance, and dramatize stories in the classroom where necessary and possible. The syllabus also stressed group discussion and what are termed “interpersonal learning skills” today. In this way, the syllabus looks much like a typical modern American history syllabus since today’s teachers employ many of the same tactics to grasp and hold students’ enthusiasm for history.

The theme of training students to develop distinct thinking skills as a result of a course of study in American history was not found as frequently as the theme of patriotism in either the Boston Teachers’ Club Newsletter or Educational Standards. However, the theme of critical thinking skills and the skills needed for successful matriculation to college or life after school was also not wholly absent from a review of these documents. In her article, Testing History, Clark (1920) advocated the use American history for testing purposes in order to matriculate to college. She also suggested that tests in American history should be developed to further solidify the relationship between the public school system and the surrounding universities. Clark proposed that tests in American history be developed which would assess students’ ability to
summarize historical facts (interesting since many previous BPS publications suggested avoiding this practice), test students’ ability to imagine and judge historical events, and assess students’ ability to see cause and effect relationships, write eloquently, and incorporate others’ views into their own opinions which suggests a post-World War One broadening of perspective. Clark’s suggestions, while not a radical departure from past practice, do follow lines of popular political and curricular thought which are encapsulated in the Social Studies in Secondary Schools Report (1916) that stressed the need to teach American history with a focus on relationships between individuals and larger community structures and organizations. In this sense, the Boston Public Schools and their educators were continuing to follow national trends closely and they were indeed an integral part of debates on a national scale about the purpose of American history education. Like the two themes discussed above, the theme of moral training and character building also permeates the Boston Public Schools’ documentary record.

**Teaching Ethics and character-building through American history curriculum in the Boston Public Schools.** Along with citing patriotism and teaching American history to provide students with the necessary thinking skills to matriculate to college, the Boston Public School Committee, educators, and administrators in the school system regularly touted the usefulness of American history for building students character and sense of morality. In its 1890 subcommittee report entitled: *The Methods of Studying History*, the self-study committee suggested methods of teaching American history which would teach students to “form the habit of sifting the true from the false, of keeping the mind unprejudiced, unbiased, always ready to receive the truth” (Boston Public School Committee, 1890b, p. 7). The report also suggests that teachers themselves must always be of the highest moral character and that they should strive to teach American history in a way that promotes students’ moral character as well. As has been
mentioned, teaching American history for moral/character-building purposes was an often-cited reason for including it in the school curriculum, especially in the students’ formative years in elementary school. Early on, BPS engaged in some debates about the treatment of certain groups and the moral issues at play in textbooks. An 1890 report to the Committee on Textbooks in History in the High Schools shows a spirited debate about *Myer’s General History*, and *Sheldon’s General History* with committee members asking for the books to be removed from the school and no further books purchased because both were seen as partisan and anti-Catholic. This is perhaps not surprising given that due to large waves of Italian and Irish immigration from 1830-onward, Boston was a majority-Catholic city by 1890. However, the minority committee did not mention the cities’ demographics. Rather, they objected to the use of the books because they believed that they violated the spirit of the Commonwealth Law for Public Schools. They further noted that these books would be acceptable in a private, sectarian, school, but not a public school (Boston Public School Committee, 1890c). When considering this third goal of American history education, it appears as though the trend towards open-mindedness and the inclusion of multiple perspectives persists in this early period under examination.

In 1896, the Boston Public School Committee’s *Annual Report* included suggestions for methods of instruction and educational goals in American history in the grammar schools. Among its many suggestions related to the first two themes discussed above was a point of emphasis which proposed that American history should “make the personal element prominent. Not merely what men did, and how they did it, but at what personal sacrifice it was achieved. This will make an excellent study in personal and moral character” (Boston Public School Committee, 1896, p.129). More than a decade later, morality was stressed in the school committee’s (1907) *Course of Study for the Girls’ High School of the Practical Arts* which
suggested that American history be taught in the third and fourth years. The committee further recommended that students read a small number of modern biographical studies of famous women and men in order to ascertain knowledge of current events and to see how individuals, acting correctly, can contribute to the civic and social good. By 1909, BPS was consistently stressing the need to teach elementary students the “heroic deeds and legends of America’s forefathers” (Boston Public School Committee, 1909, p. 70). Recommendations for the fourth and fifth grades specifically mandated that the purpose of American history was to “develop an understanding of the significance of individual achievement in relation to great historical events and their moral contribution to society” (p. 72).

Although this was not specifically directed at American history classes, a corollary to the moral prescriptions in the elementary American history curriculum exists in the BPS documentation at the secondary level. The 1911 Course of Study for Latin Schools prescribed the following guidelines for moral training:

- a part of the time assigned to the opening exercises will be used in giving instruction in morals and manners. Teachers will at all times exert their best endeavors to impress on the minds of children and youth committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety and justice, and a sacred regard for truth, love of their country, humanity, and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, moderation, and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornaments of human society, and the basis upon which a republic constitution is founded. (p. 5).

Clearly then, moral training and character building were concerns for BPS educators. With regards to the Latin Schools, course curricula in American history (typically taken during the third and fourth years) included a mixture of moral lessons, hero stories, and indoctrination in a
set of American-style virtues. That these virtues were such a conspicuous part of a course of study for a public high school is perhaps no surprise as those virtues listed above are commensurate with the traditional American/Protestant Work Ethic for which educators advocated throughout American history (Weber, Baehr, & Wells, 2002).

This moral training extended to suggestions for the type of relationship a pupil should have with their government. In 1917, the Boston School Committee suggested in its *Suggestions for Work in Geography and History for the Intermediate Grades* that American history should help students develop a sense of their relationship to all forms of government and their relationship to their community. The school committee further noted that teachers’ should strive to help students live this relationship with honesty and efficiency. One can compare this view on the virtue of efficiency to the 1916 Social Studies in Secondary Education Report which suggested repeatedly that students should be taught history, economics, geography, and civil government with a lens towards how American efficiency in business and government led to our position as a world power. This focus on morality in the social sphere of life or what I suggest are “American-style social mores” is increasingly found in history curriculum documents from 1916 onward.

Within both the *Boston Teacher’s Newsletter* and *Educational Standards*, very little language was found to correspond to the theme of teaching American history in order to instruct students in lessons on morality or build character. Often, the works of Lotta Clark, Michael Downey, and general announcements by the Boston Public Schools included suggestions to teachers to train students in honest representation of American ideals over the memorization of facts (Downey, 1920, pg. 12). However, the newsletter was printed at such a late date in the time period considered here that most of the language mixes elements of Americanization, patriotism,
and morality. Therefore, a clear thematic picture does not emerge. Certainly, from their other writings we can deduce that these same leaders within the Boston Public Schools advocated for moral training and believed that popularly accepted moral virtues should be taught as part of the American history class. In *Educational Standards*, Myers (1918) wrote about the need to teach American history for many reasons, including the fact that American history “furnishes ideals for practical and efficient living” (p. 52). To be sure, the popular cultural-mores of the day along with the socio-political environment of a post-World War One world penetrated the Boston Public Schools and it is reflected in both the curriculum in American history and discussions about pedagogy in this subject area.

**Conclusion**

An examination of publications from the Boston Public Schools has included the following types of documents: school committee statistical reports, official school committee reports and appendices which included courses of study, suggested book lists, course syllabi, school committee meeting notes, speeches by educators and administrators within the Boston Public School system, course curriculum from the Boston Normal School, and the professional magazines and journals applicable to the Boston Public Schools between 1890 and 1920. The review and analysis of the documentation shows that the same three themes: patriotism, studying history to learn distinct thinking skills, and moral training/character building that persisted in the documents analyzed in chapter five persist throughout these documents as well.

As has been suggested, the thematic debate over the form and purpose of American history curriculum in the Boston Public Schools closely mirrored the national debate between 1890 and 1920. The degree of thematic unity between BPS and the national organizations (specifically, the NEA and AHA) is perhaps not surprising given the resources of the school
district, its age, and its geographic proximity to major research institutions and other institutions of higher learning. The Boston Public Schools also enjoyed a certain amount of educational prestige as a high-functioning and high achieving school district. Many of its leaders, such as Lotta Clark and Franklin Dyer were prominent in educational circles on a national scale. Certainly, they brought these innovations home with them and they served as conduit of continuous information to ensure BPS’ unity with prevailing curricular ideas on the national stage. In the final chapter, chapter 7, I will reiterate the importance of the three themes stressed throughout chapters five and six. I will elaborate on some curricular recommendations and implications for American history teachers today while also making connections between the findings here and the theoretical framework-A Theory of Historical Understanding. Last, I will cite some limitations of this work and suggest ideas for further research in this area.
Chapter 7: Findings, Connections, Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion

Discussion of Findings: The importance of curriculum themes on a national level

In Chapter 5, I reviewed and analyzed literature on a national scale. I organized this literature into four different conversations: Conversation 1-the meeting notes and speeches from the NEA and AHA, Conversation 2-Government publications and Reports related to programs of study and curricular suggestions for American history, Conversation 3-professional journal articles, Conversation 4-methods texts and other professional development materials for American history teachers. This was a natural way of organizing the conversations and responding directly to the research question which scrutinizes the importance of these conversations for past and present practitioners in education and history. Through an analysis of the documentary record, the following three themes emerged: 1. American history has been taught to inculcate patriotism is a celebration of American democratic institutions. 2. American history has been viewed as an essential course of study for entrance to college and has been a way to imbue students with other higher-order thinking skills (i.e. the ability to read complex texts, analyze historical literature, evaluate source materials, create an original argument/thesis from historical records). 3. American history has been used to teach lessons in morality and character-building. From the analysis of these four conversations, the three major themes also provide meaning for the key findings of this thesis. In their totality, the themes are an answer to the question: why teach American history? This existential question about the inclusion of American history in the “core curriculum” both in the past and the present is an important one as it informs and provides validity to the work of countless educators and historians over the past 200 (plus) years.
The themes themselves are important because they demonstrate how politics and the changing economic and ethnographic landscape affect educational practices. Certainly, we have much to learn from this today. For example, from 1900 until 1920, the conversations on a national level focus heavily on teaching American history in order to inculcate patriotism. As was discussed in Chapter 4, this coincides with a period of marked increase in immigration and political worries on a national scale about the “foreign element” and newly-arrived Americans’ effects on national culture. With the outbreak of World War I and certainly before then, the conversations between educators and historians turned to how to use American history in order to inculcate a national culture of adherence and reverence for western-style democratic institutions. Although I do not overtly stake this claim, many researchers cited here have suggested that American history was taught to imbue students with Anglo-Saxon and Protestant cultural values and diminish any cultural values that were viewed as in conflict with Anglo-European ways of governmental and social organization. Before 1900, this theme is not as apparent (although it is present) in the literature encompassing the four distinct conversations. The more apparent theme in the literature from 1890 to 1900 is how American history teaches thinking skills and is a necessary pre-requisite for college entrance. This finding is appropriate for an era which just precedes the revolution in high school curriculum and attendance as the American high school transformed itself from an elite institution for the college bound to the “people’s college”.

These findings have important implications for practitioners in education and historians today. With the rise of the Common Core State Standards, a focus on informational (non-fiction) texts, and a hyper-focus on developing students’ abilities to analyze, synthesize, critique, and create original work, an analysis of the effects of past political and social forces on education is
more appropriate than ever. Although the dictates encapsulated in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are no longer the law in many states, these same mandates have been replaced with similar laws through the Race to the Top (RTTT) funding initiatives sponsored President Barack H. Obama through the Federal Department of Education. The question remains, with a hyper-focus on standardized testing and quantifying student achievement (not to mention teacher performance as a derived indicator of student achievement) in Mathematics, Science, and English-Language Arts, what are the sacrifices that schools must make to their program of study? The analysis here shows that there has long been a strong relationship between political events/popular social-cultural forces and American history education. Thus, how will American history education be changed by the current political atmosphere within the context of NCLB and RTTT mandates? A clear answer cannot be given, because as a theory of historical understanding would dictate: we cannot absolutely define the experiences of the past and posit them directly on to the present and the future. However, we can use the lessons of the past to inform the present and the future.

As has been discussed, similar forces that were present at the turn of the last century are present today. In today’s educational climate, like in the past, educational governing-bodies, researchers, and the supposed professional “in-the-know” prescribe sets of standards and broadly worded programs of study. A theory of historical understanding has helped to highlight the fact that these broad programs are often handed down with little explanation and even less practical guidance. This leads to confusion among educators “on the front lines” as to how to integrate these new standards. Whether we are addressing the concerns and work of the 1892 AHA Committee of Ten on History in Secondary Schools or the 2010 Common Core Standards for English-Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies Literacy Committee—the same outcome
appears to perpetuate: standards and advice are handed down, with few examples and little advice which in turn creates a void for conversation. Inevitably, educators are left “holding the bad” and asking the question: *what exactly am I now expected to teach?* Indeed, it appears that today there is plenty of official communication, but little real conversation. Therefore, what is both apparent and necessary to know from this examination of the past is that fostering real and substantial conversations between historians and educators at all levels is more important than ever.

Other key findings from the analysis of four nation-wide conversations support the notion of continued conversations between professionals and educators. For example, despite a nation-wide program of study or a highly centralized bureaucracy for education at the national level, there was widespread coherence, albeit not exact, in history programs in individual schools throughout the country between 1890 and 1920. I assert that this level of national cohesion in a program of study for American History was the result of officials from both the NEA and AHA working together in congress with the Federal Office of Education. These people were often the authors’ of multiple reports for their respective organizations and the government. Certainly, national professional organizations are important contributors or effectors upon pedagogical practices. Even in the absence of a strong bureaucracy, they had and still do have an important role to play in informing masses of practitioners about “best practices.” The relationship between the researcher and the practitioner is an important one that should be facilitated and strengthened whenever possible as the historical record demonstrates here that this relationship has positive results for engaging students.
Discussion of Findings: The themes actuated in the Boston Public Schools

In Chapter 6, an analysis of documents from the Boston Public Schools related to American history curriculum and programs of study suggests several findings in relations to the research question. Between 1890 and 1910, BPS prescribed a rather liberal education in American history which called for the inclusion of multiple perspectives on American history and allowed for a certain multiplicity of opinion. This follows recommendations at the national level and the official reports of the AHA and NEA. But, between 1910 and 1920 the Boston Public Schools underwent a dramatic shift in the types of recommendations it made which is consistent with the national debate about the form and structure of American history curriculum. Namely, this shift led to a hyper-focus on patriotism and Americanization (especially between 1913 and 1919). Other shifts include more of a focus on integrating American history with the social studies or the examination of individuals’ relationship to social institutions and their role in the community. I would argue that this new focus led to a narrowing of the way American history was taught because it did not allow for the previous inclusion of multiple views and perspectives on history.

Second, just as with conversations and documentation analyzed at a national level, themes in the Boston Public Schools’ American history curricula wax and wane. However, patriotism remains the most vibrant or most often referred to reason why American history should be taught. Between 1910 and 1920, elements of patriotism are mixed with the thinking skills that are suggested as necessary for learning history and patriotism is mixed with elements of morality and the development of a set of American-style social and cultural mores.

Third, during the entire thirty year period examined here there is a repeated call to stop teaching American history as just the memorization of facts and dates. To be sure, this call persists in the pedagogical literature today (Gary Nash & Crabtree, 2000; Nash, 2009;
Zarnowski, 2003). However, no course of study examined for the Boston Public Schools included much more than a list of topics, dates, and perhaps a few sentences of explanation. It is of little wonder then that teachers with little training in history could do much more than teach a simple timeline of basic facts even though the teaching of specific historical-thinking skills were consistently emphasized. This fact notwithstanding, the suggested methods for teaching American history also remain constant during this time. Suggested syllabi and analyses of programs of study consistently recommend the following: oral and written recitations, dramatic productions of historical events, group-discussions, simulations of government organizations (i.e. senate meetings, city council meetings), written reports with analysis of contemporary events and their historical origins, interdisciplinary learning to connect history with geography, economics, literature, and art, using maps and showing pictures and slides (considered new technology at the time) and using primary resource documents. There is very little variation in the methods of study suggested and the pedagogical devices used in classrooms, although the curricular and existential themes informing these methods consistently change. I assert that with the exclusion of modern-day technology (i.e. video, SMARTBoards, and interactive maps), one would be hard pressed to find different instructional methods occurring in modern-day American history classes.

Again, these findings would indicate that a persistent and close relationship between practitioners in history and education existed and informed American history curriculum in the Boston Public Schools. As has been noted, curricular trends and debates in American history education closely followed the national trend. This would suggest that collaborative work and action research in real classrooms is more important than ever. It is also a reminder that no classroom is insulated from outside political forces, be they positive or negative, and that being
an informed and involved practitioner who actively learns and utilizes the newest and most appropriate pedagogical and content knowledge sources is important for growing knowledge about how and what is important to teach our youth.

**Discussion of the Findings in relation to a Theory of Historical Understanding**

From the documentary analysis in chapters five and six, several points of discussion relate to a theory of historical understanding and they reveal the helpfulness of this theory for guiding an analysis of the past as well as how students learn history. First, I posit that adherents to a theory of historical understanding would be critical of teaching history for patriotism or moral/character-building (see Nora, 1996) because this type of history would be very subjective and exclusive to one view or memory of American history. As has been noted, (see Traille, 2007) this has been a persistent problem in the past as students often feel unrepresented if not completely excluded from the “Grand Narrative of American History”.

The changing themes over time also demonstrate how history is learned through different lenses and that the same historical events can be interpreted in different ways showing that as a theory of historical understanding explains, no one has ownership over the past. Indeed, no singular view of history can be deemed objectively true. Therefore, the entirety of the past cannot be completely explained. Evidence from the documentary record of the NEA, AHA, and the Boston Public Schools continually showed that both educators and historians stressed to teachers the need to “discover history” rather than memorize sets of data and facts. Educators and historians, in line with a theory of understanding, continuously decried the memorization of facts instead suggesting that students read and write multiple types of documents and uncover history as a process of learning a certain body of knowledge in order to understand the moral and political forces which perpetuate throughout history. This finding relates to Peter Seixas’ (1996)
claim that six elements: significance, epistemology and evidence, continuity and change, progress and decline, empathy and moral judgment, and historical agency are revealed through the utilization of a theory of historical understanding. Applying the theory to the documents and seeing how the themes change over time with the rise and fall of popular political/social forces has been a useful way to view the evolution of American educational culture as well. A theory of historical understanding allowed me to posit findings from an analysis of the documents within the context of their time. More important, it guarded against projecting the past upon the present as if history repeats itself with no consideration for modern contextual forces.

**Discussion of the Findings in relation to the Literature Review**

This work is a small contribution to the literature reviewed in Chapter 3. By examining American history curriculum through conversations between professionals and educators which has to a large extent been ignored in the current literature, I have uncovered some significant findings which inform our knowledge of how curricular themes originate and are acted upon by popular cultural and political/social forces. Again, this type of documentary analysis has not recently been conducted although studies of national organizations and reports have been undertaken since the 1970s. However, since that time, there has been more focus about content and subject specific fields and less about pedagogical practices. Wars over content and nomenclature such as “The social studies vs. history wars or what do we call our field?” have perpetuated throughout the literature. In light of recent political events, such as the rise of the Common Core Standards and implications surrounding Race to the Top funding, this research has the power to inform the context through which modern American history curriculum is made and delivered.
Furthermore, this work adds to an already well researched time period (see authors: Ravitch, Reese, Tyack, and Cremin). These authors have all written about changes wrought upon schools by urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, but they haven’t focused solely on professional organizations or changes in American history specifically. This work and the themes uncovered here strengthen the work of these historians listed above. While strengthening the work of past historians, this work also adds to the body of knowledge surrounding the formation and delivery of American history curriculum. It does this by focusing on cultural transmissions in American history learning and their change or continuity over time by using a theory of historical understanding to guide the work and inform the thematic analysis.

**Limitations of this Research Project**

This research is only a small contribution to the existing literature. I hope that it adds an additional layer of understanding to how curriculum is made and transmitted to students. Furthermore, I believe that this research aids in our modern understanding of how the forces of politics, and cultural and social norms inform the complex process of curriculum-making in American history. To be certain, a better understanding of this process can help us make more suitable decisions on behalf of our students—those we serve and are entrusted to educate. These hopes notwithstanding, the research project has several limitations. In terms of its scope, the research project was limited to a thirty year time period and it largely reviewed the work of two major professional organizations, and one school district. Thus, the conclusions drawn here cannot in any way be used to create a generic and universal picture of American public school education at the turn of the 20th century. Quite on the contrary, the results have certainly shown that a common picture of American public school education has never and still does not exist. Although generalization to the larger population is not the goal of a qualitative or
documentary/historical analysis, it is appropriate to warn against any use of this work to make sweeping claims of any kind.

Also, this analysis makes no claims to objectivity, but rather to explaining only the subjective experiences of those involved in the conversations documented throughout this work. By utilizing a theory of historical understanding, I have sought to guard against threats to validity and reliability in my interpretation and analysis of the documents. However, as the theoretical framework would suggest: I have simply attempted to explain the lived experiences of those engaged in these conversations in order to inform our work in the present as is suggested in the research question. Also, this work cannot claim to be comprehensive. The documentary analysis was selective in order to engage in a deep analysis of the ways in which historians and educators communicated with one another. In order to achieve this level of analysis, some documents and conversations were omitted or not analyzed at all because of the reasons mentioned above and a need to focus on a very content-specific set of themes. Also, textbooks—a major source of teaching were not analyzed. Again, the time necessary to read these volumes was not available and even though many volumes can be readily procured in electronic form, this type of document was excluded because textbooks are so dense that they could easily serve of the focus of a separate doctoral thesis. Again, these limitations notwithstanding, it is my hope that this research project will add to our current understanding of the relationship between the forces that act upon American history within the context of the process of making American history curriculum.

**Implications for Future Research**

As is noted above, the research project here includes some limitations which could spur future research. Namely, future research should include the use of textbooks as a level of
analysis in the form and delivery of American history education. Between 1890 and 1920, textbooks would have been a very important “written conversation” between historians and educators since few teachers had college training in American history as is suggested by NEA and AHA conference meeting notes as well as BPS documents that show a need for teachers to have this type of discreet training. The time period under review also precedes the era when public school educators were required to have college degrees and secondary school teachers to have majored in the subject they teach. Also, there were no very strict licensing guidelines and the state played only a cursory role in licensing teachers. For school districts that were desperate to hire teachers for a burgeoning student population and especially rural school districts that did not have the same access to a pool of qualified candidates, textbooks would have been the primary tool for an educator thrust into teaching an unknown and unpracticed content area.

I hope that this research project may serve as at least a partial basis for future historical works in education that analysis conversations between content professionals in history and educators. This under-researched area is ripe with opportunities to explore the important consequences of their communication and their relationship with one another on student learning. Research here shows that political, social, and economic forces in the past had a great influence on the content of American history and the pedagogical practices employed in the delivery of that content. Indeed, the institutions that represent political and social arrangement in America (i.e. social class structure, the federal government, and churches as well as other social organizations) and American public schools have long had a very closely intertwined relationship. This should be explored further in the modern context and although research in this time period and in the modern context continues {i.e. (T. Fallace & Fantozzi, 2013; Irwin, 2013; Ravitch, 2013a)}, more research is necessary to truly understand how these context and time-
bound political and social forces exert influences on curriculum making in elementary and secondary schools.

**Conclusion**

This work calls into question how social, political, and economic forces affect the delivery of American history curriculum. There is nothing novel about the tactics employed in analyzing the documentation, but if history is to serve as any kind of caution---this work should give professionals and educators pause to examine modern political, social, and economic forces and the effects they have on the modern curriculum and thus on the classroom. To be sure, there is no shortage of issues that fill our modern political and educational agendas. The implementation of the Common Core State Standards, increased immigration, modern political/partisan rancor in Washington, D.C., the obsession with quantifiable results for teachers and students (i.e. the Accountability Movement), and the possibility that we are indeed over-testing our children are just a small sampling of the issues that face us in the modern day. At its core, this work looks to the past to answer the research question as one way of partially answering a much larger question: *what are the costs of all of these debates and their influence to the integrity of our curriculum and thus to our children’s development and knowledge?* Furthermore, what are the costs to our collective knowledge or the cultural knowledge of our society that many (myself included) deem sacred. Lastly, what is the damage to our collective “American” culture when we allow these types of forces to have almost limitless effects on our curriculum and pedagogy? Through an historical analysis, this research offers some insights on the type of damage that can be done. Resources cited throughout this paper demonstrate that the damage and effect may be very pervasive.
This work is also a reminder to “keep the conversation going” between educators and historians or professionals in content fields and educators because these are important and vital links in the transmission of knowledge from one generation or to another. Although professional organizations may seem antiquated, they are important actors in shaping modern debate especially when they are shaped by knowledgeable professionals and practitioners. As the research has hopefully shown, practitioners in education and history are not free from the subjective forces of politics and the larger society in which they exist, but rather they are uniquely armed with a set of knowledge and skills that allows these groups of professionals to shape curricular debates and programs of study by working together. Indeed, these professionals are perhaps the best suited for debating the study of the past in informed and significant ways that perpetuate our shared culture and validate students’ knowledge of themselves and their role in a democratic society.
Afterword

As afterword, I greatly appreciate this opportunity to share my own ideas and agenda in an indirect way regarding this research study since I attempted to avoid any subjective interpretation of the documentary record as I pursued this inquiry. I came to this project and this topic as a former history teacher and now a curriculum director at the K-12 level. To be sure, I approached this topic with my own ideas in mind about its importance, but also the importance of curriculum and public education as a whole. I have always believed that education, especially public education, is sacred work. In particular, I have viewed history as important not only for teaching students important and critical literacy skills, but also for passing down the collective cultural knowledge of the human race (albeit only a small piece of that knowledge). I take this work very seriously and I view it as one of the most important types of work in which one can engage. Having been always “on the front lines” of teaching, but also with my hand on the “ivory tower of research,” I became and am still concerned with how we get these two important pieces of the same endeavor to work together for the betterment of students.

Through this research, I believe that I’ve highlighted where persistent communication has occurred but also where real conversation has been lacking – and thus very little true understanding. Herein lies the true problem I believe we must find a way to address. I believe that we will not be able to address some of the very real problems we have in our public schools today unless we bridge the gap between the academic and the practitioner. Problems such as: the appalling levels of poverty among our children aged 5-18; inadequate financial, human, and physical resources in many communities for education; and a willingness to de-politicize the issues surrounding education will continue to plague our efforts to carry out this sacred work.
In order to move forward, what I have learned in carrying-out this research is how much popular political and demographic forces have and continue to affect our ability to have a healthy and effective discourse on curriculum, teaching, and learning. I experience my biggest “take-away” from this study every day in my job as an administrator. As an educator, and now as a scholar-practitioner, I’m charged with being a part of the national and state conversation on all of these challenges in education. I take the content of that conversation, convey it to my faculty members, and then we work together to craft a program and a curriculum that we believe will be effective for our students within the context of their lives. To this end, I engage with my counterparts in higher education and at the state-level in order to bring the best ideas to the table. I’ve found this work to be challenging and I’m not always certain that I’m doing the right thing. But, when I review the work I’ve completed here and when I engage in these conversations with my university-level and state-level peers – I know I’m on the right track to providing Stoughton’s students with the best possible education and thus the best chance at a brighter future.
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