

Transformations in Schooling

Historical and
Comparative
Perspectives

Edited by Kim Tolley



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TRANSFORMATIONS IN SCHOOLING

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Introduction: Historical and Comparative Perspectives on Transformations in Schooling

Kim Tolley

Do state-supported systems of schooling contribute to social inequalities, or do they disrupt them? Do community-based schools facilitate increased social mobility, or do they simply contribute to a growing divide in wealth and social status between the rich and the poor? What are the conditions under which educational systems change? Such questions have surfaced recently in current policy debates about the likely effect a free market would have on modern schooling. Critics of highly centralized, state-supported schools argue that education would respond to free market incentives with increased innovation, higher academic achievement, and stronger community relations, all of which would lead to increased social mobility among previously disenfranchised groups.¹ On the other hand, their opponents argue that free markets have never served as vehicles of equity, and that both publicly and privately funded schools would suffer from the effects of increased choice and competition.² These are perennial concerns. Since 1776, when Adam Smith discussed the “Education of Youth” in *The Wealth of Nations*,³ policymakers have argued over the extent to which highly centralized educational systems either enhance or inhibit social inequalities.

Periods of early national schooling in different geographic areas of the world provide fascinating sites for the investigation of such questions. The transformation from colony to nation has often accompanied nascent efforts at school building or school reform. In many societies, such periods brought emerging state-supported systems of education into competition with market-based and church- or community-sponsored schools. Such periods bring into focus conflicts and collaborations between members of different social classes and ethnic groups. They also highlight tensions and outright conflicts between the state’s effort to promote a national identity and the attempts of local communities to preserve unique and separate cultures. These struggles can express themselves through the forms of schooling supported by local communities as alternatives to the educational systems funded and supported by the state.

In simplest terms, this book explores two related questions: One, during periods of early national educational transformation, what factors have enabled various groups to renegotiate power in both state-supported and market-based systems of schooling? Two, how has the hegemony⁴ of powerful classes or political groups renewed or reasserted itself during the early process of nation building, and how has it been, in the words of Raymond Williams, “resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures not at all its own”?⁵

One of the questions that social historians have addressed recently is why systems of education developed at different rates and in different forms across countries. Even in countries with similar colonial origins, such as Canada, the United States, and Australia, institutional structures and policies have evolved in dissimilar ways. In the past several decades, several theories of the relation between education and state formation have emerged to account for such differences.

Margaret Scotford Archer formulated the first theoretical frame of reference for the development of educational systems. In *Social Origins of Educational Systems*, she presented a historical and structural comparison of the educational systems in France, Denmark, England, and Russia. Archer theorized that changes in educational systems arise as a result of group interactions that are conditioned or influenced, but not determined, by prior structural or social factors. For Archer, such interaction includes group conflict, the development of political alliances, and the elaboration of effective ideologies. “Change occurs because new educational goals are pursued by those who have power to modify previous practices.” Archer theorized that two forms of challenge to the state are possible: *substitution*, a process whereby groups create rival institutions to ensure an educational provision compatible with their needs and wants, or *restriction*, a process whereby groups gain access to national legislative machinery. Archer argued that in all systems, education becomes increasingly integrated with the state over time, but in different ways. She distinguished between centralized and decentralized systems, arguing that systems with restrictive origins tended to become highly unified and systematized, whereas systems with substitutive origins tended to develop with weak forms of unification and strong forms of differentiation and specialization.⁶

In *Education and State Formation*, Andy Green argued that the development of public education systems could only be understood in relation to the process of *state formation*, “the historical process by which the modern state has been constructed.” According to Green, because the intervention of the state affects the formation of national education systems, it is therefore the nature of the state that explains the particular national forms and timing of the development of school systems in different countries. After comparing national systems of schooling in England, France, and the United States, he concluded that the formation of national systems developed more swiftly in countries where the process of state formation was most intensive, either as a result of (1) military threats or territorial conflicts, (2) revolution or successful struggle for national independence, or (3) state-level motivation to embrace educational reform to escape from relative economic underdevelopment. Green concluded that centralized states created centralized educational bureaucracies, whereas more liberal states, such as the United States, created more decentralized systems. In all

states, regardless of their degree of centralization, class relations determined the purposes of schooling, because “the different forms of hegemony operating between the dominant and subordinate classes... was ultimately responsible for what schools did, for who they allowed to go to what school and for what they taught them when they were there.”⁷

Scholars agree that broad theories of the relationship between education and state formation must be tested against close-grained studies of schooling in local contexts. Margaret Archer has argued for a “continuous interplay between the theoretical and the comparative analysis of social structure,” noting that the act of constructing social systems a priori and then fitting comparative data to the systems will never contribute much to our knowledge of social structures.⁸ The historians of American education Carl Kaestle and Maris Vinovskis have criticized “one-to-one models of history” that have attempted to relate education to a single aspect of social change, including claims that factory production caused educational reform, urbanization promoted school bureaucracy, capitalism caused increased enrollments, or that modernization resulted in increased literacy. They have urged social historians to give more attention to issues of localism, to try to understand the difference in schooling patterns in rural and urban areas, and to explore relations among various communities in different geographical areas and within differing social groups.⁹ In a similar vein, the critical theorist Michael Apple has urged scholars to “think contextually.” Noting that the real relations of hegemony in society require close-grained empirical study on multiple levels, he recommended that researchers examine specific relations of power at each level and consider the ways that relations of economy may interact with culture.¹⁰

This book brings together a group of scholars with the aim of “thinking contextually” about specific periods of transformation in education history. The historians and sociologists whose work is collected here do not subscribe to one particular theoretical perspective or ideological belief: this is a diverse group. What binds them together is their critical appreciation of context and their quest to understand the complex interactions that have given rise to varying forms of schooling in different parts of the world.

In the following chapters, contributors from Australia, Canada, South Africa, Taiwan, and the United States consider a number of questions: What factors influenced the evolution of different forms of school governance and funding in some of the former colonies of the Spanish and British empires? In cases where schooling became accessible to women and ethnic minority groups, what factors contributed to increased access and participation? How can we interpret the transformations of varying kinds of educational practice in these different countries? Some authors investigate the interrelation of the state and local communities in the creation and support of systems of education. Others investigate the access and entry of women and ethnic minorities to schoolrooms and the teaching profession during different historical periods and in varying geographic areas. Several scholars analyze the way that various ethnic groups have struggled with the state to define their identity. Although their chapters draw from a number of theoretical perspectives, each addresses issues concerning the state, community, identity, and access to formal schooling.

The book is organized into four sections. The chapters in the first section, “Education and State Formation,” pay close attention to the way that local economic, social, and political contexts shaped the emergence of early national systems of schooling in Australia, Singapore, India, and Colombia. The chapters in the second section, “Politics, Ideology, and Policy,” explore the ideological and political context in which education policy evolved in Canada and South Africa. The chapters in the third section, “The Market, the State, and Transformations in Teaching,” explore the gender shift in teaching that occurred during early national periods in Australia and the United States. The chapters in the final section, “Culture, Identity, and Schooling,” investigate the means by which the transformation from colony to nation entailed reinterpretations of culture and social identity, transformations that affected access to schooling in different regions of the United States.

Education and State Formation

The transformation from colony to nation has often included school building or school reform. The chapters in this section investigate early national schooling by paying close attention to issues of localism and relations among various communities, classes, and political constituencies.

Middle-Class Formations and the Emergence of National Schooling: A Historiographical Review of the Australian Debate

Geoffrey Sherington and Craig Campbell review the Australian historiography on the origins of national schooling, focusing on class formation and schooling in the Australian colonies. As is often the case in the asking of new questions, the present school choice behaviors of the Australian middle class draws their attention to the nineteenth century.

Drawing on a rich array of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical studies, Sherington and Campbell argue that the dominant interpretations of the emergence of “national” schooling in Australia have tended to neglect or deal unsympathetically with the emergence and continuing presence of the “private” school sector, whether those schools were private-venture academies and colleges, or whether they were church- or state-supported grammar schools. Yet these schools were the overwhelmingly dominant providers of anything that might be thought of as secondary or “higher” education in the nineteenth century. Very often their purposes and practices produced a powerful and competing vision of both “nation” and “national” education.

Education and State Formation Reconsidered: Chinese School Identity in Postwar Singapore

Ting-Hong Wong defines *state formation* as the “historical trajectory through which a governing regime builds or consolidates its dominance.”¹¹ What distinguishes his theoretical approach from that of earlier scholars is his emphasis on

the dialectical nature of this process. Wong argues that state formation is never a unitary project, because ruling authorities must deal with contradictory demands as they attempt to build national identity, win support from subordinated groups, and outmaneuver powerful political opponents. As a result, state educational policy can have unanticipated results.

Wong argues that some scholars have underestimated the relative autonomy of public school systems in some states and have failed to consider the extent to which a ruling group can establish its dominance by incorporating the cultures of subordinated groups. Because such acts of incorporation ultimately influence the nature of the state itself, Wong theorizes that state formation and education are related in an interactive, dialectical, and recursive manner.

State Schooling in the Raj: Disengagement and Resistance

Tim Allender's broad survey of nineteenth-century colonial education efforts in India examines the consequences of the imposition of systemic state-directed schooling. He postulates that as the century progressed, the increasingly active hand of the state in education contributed to its own disengagement from the broader Indian population. His chapter investigates the means by which greater state supervision over Indian education to ensure the teaching of English in most government-funded schools resulted in the marginalization of thousands of language and religious indigenous schools. Allender argues that state government in India became an unintentional agency for the stimulation of stimulating national resistance narratives and activist anti-British organizations such as the Arya Samaj.

Struggles for Schooling after the Independence Wars in Colombia, 1820–1830

Poverty and other factors contributed to the conflicts over the implementation of a national school system in Colombia. In the first decade of Colombian independence, the new government sought to implement a policy in which local towns financed their own schools while the state trained teachers in provincial capitals. The early national government insisted that local towns make every effort to ensure that boys and girls of every class and race could enroll in public schools. In this chapter, Meri L. Clark demonstrates that local communities resisted this policy for a number of reasons. By the 1830s, powerful private associations had emerged and had assumed responsibility for maintaining both public and private schools. Clark concludes that various pressures on state resources constrained the first decade of school formation, leading the state to shift many obligations to private hands.

The cases in Clark's chapter reveal the diffusion of the Enlightenment ideal that universal access to primary education could improve society. Nevertheless, local conflicts over which children could attend school, what they would study, and how their schools would be funded provoked the creation of powerful private associations. By the early 1830s, the government began to allow these associations to assume responsibility for maintaining public schools and establishing private ones.

Politics, Ideology, and Policy

Historic Equity and Diversity Policies in Canada

In their study of historic diversity and equity policies in Canada, Reva Joshee and Lauri Johnson argue that policies such as the Royal Proclamation and the Quebec Act laid the foundation for the development of a discursive framework that ultimately helped to create policies and programs that addressed diversity and equity in education. However, Canada's diversity policies were not simply a top-down creation of the state. Noting that most nongovernmental organizations have been ignored in previous histories of the development of Canadian policies for diversity in education, Joshee and Johnson demonstrate that government officials, community activists, and educators worked together to shape and reshape the web of policies surrounding and supporting diversity in education.

Although the role of most nongovernmental organizations has been ignored in accounts of the development of Canadian policies for diversity in education, archival evidence indicates that labor organizations worked alongside religious and ethnocultural groups and civil liberties organizations to protest educational segregation and exclusion, to introduce intercultural education programs, and to lobby for diversity and equity policies. Educational organizations worked with community groups and government agencies to conduct antidiscrimination seminars, produce and distribute curriculum materials, and organize conferences to explore issues of diversity. Joshee and Johnson argue that through these processes the policy actors helped to create an enduring public commitment to diversity that has not erased the long-standing systems of oppression but has the power to disrupt them.

The Development of a Conference and Policy Culture: The New Education Fellowship and British Colonial Education in Southern Africa

Peter Kallaway's chapter explores the political and ideological context from which British colonial education policy arose in the interwar era. In the context of the Depression and the rise of totalitarianism in Germany, Italy, Japan, and the USSR, Kallaway traces a clear shift in emphasis at the conferences of the New Education Fellowship (NEF), from Progressive-Era pedagogy of personal and individual development to a hardnosed appraisal of policies that promote economic growth and social development in a democratic context.

By analyzing changes in educational policy in Africa, Kallaway attempts to monitor the emergence of alternative voices at international conferences by the mid-1930s. His sources include documents related to the conferences of the NEF, British Colonial Office policy, the conferences of the International Missionary Council (IMC), U.S. foundations, and other significant networks of educational policy debate. Kallaway charts the place and role of South African participation in these events in the context of the rise of political opposition to imperialism following World War I and the establishment of the League of Nations.

Education Markets, the State, and Transformations in Teaching

Two chapters in this book consider issues of gender in the transformation of schooling within different geographical regions in Australia and the United States. They focus on the following questions: In cases where schooling became accessible to women, what factors contributed to increased access and participation? Both chapters emphasize the importance of local communities, economic contexts, education markets, and state policy in restricting or enhancing men's and women's access to various forms of schooling.

The Teaching Family, the State, and New Women in Nineteenth-Century South Australia

Kay Whitehead's chapter explicates the construction of teaching as gendered work in the context of changes in patriarchal relations in nineteenth-century South Australia. It explores the notion of the "teaching family" prior to state intervention in schooling, identifying men's, women's, and children's social and economic contributions to the family unit, and explains that the teaching family comprised husband-and-wife teaching teams, various combinations of parents and children, and all-female families.

Under the 1851 Education Act, the teaching family was co-opted by the state to accommodate the demand for sex-segregated schooling. Governing authorities upheld the patriarchal household by granting most licenses to male teachers as household heads and principal breadwinners in the family economy, thus protecting their positions. With the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1875, however, the state as employer began to employ teachers individually and differentiate their wages on the assumption that the men would marry and that the women would be single. In effect, the state substituted the teaching family with married men and single women, and marginalized married women.

Whitehead argues that although the reconstruction of teaching as waged labor shored up the patriarchal household by constructing men as sole breadwinners, women were not entirely disempowered as teachers. Indeed, she demonstrates that the individuation of wages facilitated the economic and social conditions for single women teachers, discursively positioned as "new women," to individually and collectively contest the established gender order by the end of the nineteenth century.

Transformations in Teaching: Toward a More Complex Model of Teacher Labor Markets in the United States, 1800–1850

From the eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, school teaching in the United States transformed from a predominantly male occupation to a predominantly female occupation. Nancy Beadie and I undertake a comparative study of this transformation, focusing on developments in New York, a northern state, and North Carolina, a southern state. Unlike other studies that have focused on the interactions between the state and local communities in an attempt to

explain why education systems change over time, this chapter examines the shift from male to female teachers that occurred from 1800 to 1850, a period that preceded the expansion of large public school systems in the United States.

We investigate the role of the education marketplace in facilitating the entry of women to the occupation of teaching. We conclude that supply and demand in the education market played a role in facilitating the access of women to teaching positions during the early national period. Although most studies of teacher wages and the so-called feminization of teaching in the nineteenth century focus exclusively on state-funded teaching in common schools, Beadie and I demonstrate that teaching in academies and other voluntary schools was significant for structuring female participation in the occupation. By the time large state-funded education systems developed in the later nineteenth century, the question of whether women would teach in public schoolrooms had already been resolved. In many cases, the state appropriated the structures and processes developed in community-based, private, and voluntary schools. Our findings contribute to the possibility of developing a more nuanced model of teacher labor markets in the antebellum era.

Culture, Identity, and Schooling

To varying degrees, the transformation from colony to nation entailed reinterpretations of culture and social identity. In this book, the term *colonial education* refers to educational practices in the context of any colonial encounter. As such, colonial education includes informal and formal schooling practices in French New Orleans in 1727, in Los Angeles in 1825, or in eighteenth-century South India. The term *early national*, as defined here, refers to the period in which the various cultures and social groups within specific geographic regions renegotiated and redefined their identities and social relations as members of a new political entity.

The chapters in this section analyze the influence of the state on national and local policies and the ways that ethnic groups experienced, resisted, and in some cases influenced such policies. To varying degrees, they attempt to consider culture in flexible ways: as fluid, contested, and rooted in traditions and practices as well as beliefs and values. This definition of culture stands in contrast to older, more homogeneous views in which various social groups have often been categorized on the basis of their distinct—and presumably static—“cultures.”

Perspectives on the Southwestern Latino School Experience, 1800–1880

As Victoria-Maria MacDonald and Mark Nilles demonstrate, the various cultural groups in the American Southwest experienced several periods that might be conceived respectively as “colonial” or “early national” with regard to schooling: the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries under Spanish rule, the early nineteenth century as part of the Mexican Republic, and the mid-nineteenth-century transition to statehood in the United States.

Drawing on legislative reports from the Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. governments; annual reports of schools; and letters and documents from missionaries,

teachers, and other involved parties, MacDonald and Nilles provide a richly detailed picture of Latino educational experience in the early nineteenth century. Their work explores the contrast between stated official roles and governmental ideals of public schooling and the actual forms of schooling as they evolved in practice. Additionally, their study challenges traditional understandings of what constitutes “colonial” and “early national” schooling.

Cultural Categories, Hegemony, and the Schooling of the Lumbee Indians in Nineteenth-Century North Carolina

Heather Kimberly Dial explores issues of hegemony and culture from the historical perspective of the North Carolina Lumbee Indians. Today, the Lumbee is a tribe of nonreserved, nonfederally recognized Indians and the largest nonfederally recognized tribe east of the Mississippi, with a legacy of mysterious and unclear origins. As such, they experience a continuous need to convince others of their identity, particularly in their home state of North Carolina. As a member of the Lumbee community, Dial brings to her study of Lumbee history a keen understanding of its contemporary consequences.

In her review of the literature, Dial surveys a wide range of secondary sources to investigate the historical experience of the Lumbee as a specific cultural group living in a society that acknowledged and recognized only two categories: “black” and “white.” Drawing on new theoretical frameworks from the field of historical anthropology, she shows how dominant groups have used such restrictive and static categorizations to relegate the Lumbee to a nonentity status, and she argues that the Lumbees’ struggle for recognition as Native Americans was linked to their quest for their own schools during the time of segregation.

Dial argues that the Lumbee culture has been shaped by early European contact and the Lumbees’ subsequent adaptations for survival and success. For the Lumbee, culture is both a unifying aspect that binds them as a tribal people and a limiting categorization that has been used by the state to deny them recognition as a tribal people.

Conclusion

Reflections on the Historicity of Education Systems and the State

What factors contribute to transformations in schooling? While some theoretical concepts in the secondary literature have sufficient power to explain the range of case studies in this book, others do not. One of the benefits of the case-study approach is that it allows the researcher to test a broad theory against the historical development of social processes in a specific context. The chapter begins by analyzing the diverse case studies in this book in light of the following concepts from the secondary literature: (1) the role of origins in influencing the evolution of centralized or decentralized systems of schooling and (2) restriction, substitution, and cultural incorporation as factors in educational transformations. Several of the authors in this book identify additional factors in

educational transformation, including: (1) the influence of international policy networks, and (2) the co-option of market-based structures and processes by the state.

Taken as a whole, the chapters in this book suggest that social inequalities can persist in both highly centralized and decentralized systems. In highly centralized systems, groups with the greatest political power can prevail over others in establishing educational structures and processes that best meet their own class interests. In highly decentralized systems, subordinate groups may succeed in establishing alternative forms of schooling through acts of substitution, but such acts can have the unintended consequence of ultimately reinforcing the hegemony of more powerful groups. In all systems, power is always contested and recreated, but the outcomes of such interactions are far from predictable.

This chapter concludes by arguing that educational systems are more changeable than has been portrayed in the past. Over time, highly decentralized systems can become more centralized in the face of financial restraints or in response to internal or external political pressures; highly centralized systems can become decentralized to accommodate the culture of subordinate constituents or the class interests of dominant groups. This lack of continuity has been obscured by a traditional focus on large, state-funded education systems in Western states, a focus that has produced an illusion of long, enduring historicity.¹²

Notes

1. For an overview of this argument in the context of schools in the United States, see Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education," in *Economics and the Public Interest*, ed. R. A. Solo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 123–144; John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, & America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1990); Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *School Choice* (Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation, 1992); J. Merrifield, *The School Choice Wars* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001); H. J. Walberg and J. L. Bast, *Education and Capitalism: How Overcoming Our Fears of Markets and Economics can Improve America's Schools* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2003).
2. For an overview of these debates in several Western countries, see Peter W. Cookson, ed., *The Choice Controversy* (Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, 1992); Michael Engel, *The Struggle for Control of Public Education: Market Ideology vs. Democratic Values* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). For a discussion of the impact of choice policies on urban Catholic schools in Great Britain, see Gerald Grace, *Catholic Schools: Missions, Markets and Morality* (New York: Routledge, 2002). For an analysis of the impact of increased competition among schools in New Zealand, see E. B. Fiske and H. F. Ladd, *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).
3. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Modern Library, 1994).
4. *Hegemony* is defined as the ability of dominant groups to shape political agendas and social policy. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

5. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 112.
6. Margaret Scotford Archer, *Social Origins of Educational Systems* (London: Sage, 1979). The quote is on page 2.
7. Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France, and the USA* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990). The quotes are on pages 77 and 311, respectively.
8. Margaret Scotford Archer, "The Theoretical and the Comparative Analysis of Social Structure," in *Contemporary Europe: Social Structures and Cultural Patterns*, ed. Salvador Giner and Margaret Scotford Archer (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 1–27. The quote is on page 24.
9. Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
10. Michael Apple, ed., *The State and the Politics of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 221.
11. Ting-Hong Wong, "Education and State Formation Reconsidered: Chinese School Identity in Postwar Singapore," in this volume. The quote is on page 41.
12. The term *historicality* is derived from Andrew Abbot, "The Historicality of Individuals," *Social Science History* 29 (Spring 2005): 1–13.

PART I

Education and State Formation

Middle-Class Formations and the Emergence of National Schooling: A Historiographical Review of the Australian Debate

Geoffrey Sherington and Craig Campbell

The shopkeepers include some who appear well to do, and others whose stock-in-trade falls below five pounds in value. The clergymen, lawyers and doctors whose child attend National Schools are not of necessity wealthy men, and of the opulent classes not more than four in a hundred are to be found . . . When a system of checks has been devised to secure thoroughness in all the teaching, thoroughness in the discipline, and thoroughness in the testing of results, it cannot easily be perceived where there is room for pretence. It occurs to me, however, that the efforts of the Board to provide a comprehensive education for children of all the various classes attending National Schools may have provoked the remark that they were attempting more than was necessary, and thereby too much “show”. Or it may be that undiscerning visitors to the school, seeing the children have concluded that their parents were rich. So far is this from being the case, that one of the cleanest, neatest and most pleasing is the child of a letter carrier in Sydney.

William Wilkins—Secretary to the National
Board of Education, New South Wales, 1865

In *Education and State Formation*, Andy Green provided an account of the rise of national education systems in England, France, and the United States. Rejecting earlier views based on either a “Whig” view of progress or other more functional or economic explanations, Green has argued that the key issue in the timing and development of education systems is the nature of the state and state formation. Centralized states such as post-1789 France created centralized

bureaucracies; decentralized states such as the United States created more decentralized public systems, often based on local communities. Allied to the forms and content of education was the nature of class relations in different national contexts. Green sees the case of England as representing the relative weakness of state or public forms of education. The English retained a “Liberal Tradition” that delayed and then limited state intervention.¹ As a result, England retained a genitified and antiquated system of secondary education dominated by the English public schools, while more genuine middle-class schools emerged in Europe and the United States.

From such a comparative theoretical framework it is useful to reflect upon the development of “public” educational systems in those colonial societies of settlement that became part of the British Empire. Specifically, we need to understand how concepts of “national” and then “public” education developed in a colonial settler context and how they related to the changing nature of communities and class formations.

The early historiography of Australian education was written predominantly in terms of the changing relationships between the state and the various Christian churches. There was a particular concentration on the administration and financing of educational endeavors. The process whereby the colonial state first supported the efforts of religious denominations only to withdraw financial aid in order to create a public education system administered by a central bureaucracy was seen as a natural evolution. The “free, compulsory and secular” acts, which established public education under State Departments of Public Instruction in all the Australian colonies in the two decades from the 1870s, were analyzed as both a necessary response to the problem of establishing universal schooling in a vast continent with a small population as well as a prescription for the proper role for the state guided by the principles of nineteenth-century liberalism in creating opportunities for all. The expertise of a central state bureaucracy running a system of schools staffed with trained teachers would eventually help create a “ladder of opportunity” for all children, whatever their social background.²

The only major opposition to this interpretation came from Catholic historians of education. Instead of seeing the creation of public education in Australia as a natural process, they portrayed the withdrawal of aid for church-run schools as a way of denying social justice to the Roman Catholic community, who made up almost one-third of the nonindigenous population. The emergence of the liberal state was associated with the rise of secularism as part of a general movement in Western society with particular implications for colonial Australians. Rather than public education in Australia being seen as an expression of agreement among the colonial population, the “secular” acts were seen at best as a form of common Protestantism and at worst as a means of proselytizing, to turn Catholic children away from their faith. Instead of participating in the centrally administered and bureaucratic public education system with a lay teaching force, the adherents of the Catholic Church increasingly withdrew to create their own schools based on local parishes and staffed by religious orders.³

Such were the two “heroic” and overlapping “myths” that had emerged in the historiography by the end of the 1950s. While these “stories” of Australian education shared some of the issues associated with the emergence of school systems in Britain, Europe, and North America, they also had features peculiar to the Australian colonial past. Whereas in Britain and much of Europe the state continued to support the educational efforts of the churches, in Australia, from the late nineteenth century the difference between public and Catholic schooling was one of the major social and cultural divides. And in contrast to the United States, and even to Canada, where state support for church schools also continued, after a period of some local community involvement from the 1850s to 1870s, the neighborhood public school in Australia came to be provided and controlled by the central state administration, with little regard to the claims of local parent and citizen groups.

By the 1970s, these older interpretations of the history of education were being supplanted. A new generation of historians, influenced in part by the then revisionist and New Left movement in the United States and Britain, challenged the view that the nineteenth-century Australian liberal state had acted in the interests of all social classes. Rather than the creation and development of a public education system that served all, it had divided the society, sustaining differences based on class, gender, and race. Centralization prevailed over local communities in the interests of allowing the development of a capitalist state. The working class, rather than being seen as welcoming the actions of the state, appeared to resist the intrusion of the educational bureaucracy and oppose measures that compelled their children to attend school.⁴ There was also the question of the persistence of the racial divide between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Some historians pointed out that public education had only been for whites; until the mid-twentieth century, the aboriginal and indigenous populations of Australia were often either excluded from public schools or educated in inferior institutions.⁵

This new view of public education tended to exclude issues associated with the question of state-church relations. But matters concerning religion and culture remained difficult to ignore. Beginning in the 1960s a new generation of Catholic historians drew attention to the close relationship between religion and ethnicity. The nineteenth-century Catholic episcopacy in Australia was influenced not only by the views of the papacy toward the nation-state but also by the changing social and political situation in Ireland, where an austere and authoritarian form of Catholicism had begun to develop by the mid-nineteenth century. The Irish-born bishops in Australia increasingly took a hostile view of public education, seeing it as a form of English imperial Protestantism. With increasing influence over the laity, the Catholic bishops appealed to traditions of faith and culture among a Catholic population drawn overwhelmingly from Ireland.⁶ At the same time, other historians have drawn attention to the climate of anti-Catholicism that marked much of the political debate and discussion in the Australian colonies in the 1860s and 1870s, when loyalties divided along sectarian lines.⁷

By incorporating gender into the analysis later versions of revisionist history also gave a new place to religion in an interpretation of state formation and

patriarchy,⁸ as did forms of post-revisionism in the history of education. On the basis of slight empirical evidence one account challenged the inherent social-control thesis based on class relations that was contained in much of the revisionist agenda. Instead, a new alliance between church and state was presented in which the spiritual guidance of religious pastors molded future citizens in the interests of a new form of social governance. In this account, the Protestant churches at least worked with a state “pastoral” bureaucracy.⁹

The new interest in questions of cultural formation and religion has been matched by a revived interest in the middle class in Australia. The major text on class structure in Australian history has questioned the very existence of a “middle class” when the concept is examined in terms of occupational and economic change.¹⁰ A more recent account suggests that that the middle class is best understood as “a projected moral community whose members are identified by their possession of particular moral qualities, political values and social skills.”¹¹

It is also important to recognize the relationship between the formation of the Australian colonial middle class and the political ideology of liberalism. An educational agenda was crucial to the British middle-class immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century who helped to carry forward ideals of a free press and universal male suffrage as well as being the leaders of representative government in the colonies. Such men believed in the autonomous, self-sufficient individual acting in a rational and moral way.¹²

More generally, the study of the relationship between the individual and the state has been an ongoing feature of the historiography of Australian liberalism.¹³ One recent account suggests that a form of “cultural liberalism” focusing on the autonomy of the individual and his or her right to liberty had emerged in Australia by the late nineteenth century. This cultural liberalism was also associated with a faith in the power of reason and a belief in human evolution and social progress, often through the agency of the state.¹⁴

This chapter takes the discussion of liberalism back to the early to mid-nineteenth century to understand a generation of men who were still committed to a religious interpretation of the world. It seeks to reinterpret the creation of state-supported education in the mid- to late nineteenth century by examining the views and role of four male middle-class immigrants who arrived during the 1830s and 1840s in New South Wales, the first Australian colony to be set up and where the early colonial forms of intellectual liberalism were established.¹⁵ Over four decades following the 1830s, each of these nineteenth-century liberals played a major role in constructing and redefining the role the state should play in education in a British settler environment.

Visions of National Education

In the three decades following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the colony of New South Wales was transformed from a penal establishment into a British settler society. Beginning in the second decade of the nineteenth century, government regulations created a new class of emancipated convicts who were granted, or soon acquired, land. Many of the original indigenous inhabitants

were displaced as the new settlers pressed inland from the coast. During the 1830s, these “emancipists” had been joined by new immigrant settlers from Britain and Ireland. Chains of migration formed across the seas as the settlers moved into urban and rural areas, bringing with them their cultural and religious traditions. New South Wales soon became a young country with new family formations and high birth rates. By mid-century, couples marrying in the Australian colonies could expect to have five or six children.¹⁶

The new settlers brought new ideas often formed in the period of discussion of political reform in Britain prior to and in the wake of the 1832 Reform Act. In New South Wales British liberal radicalism was transformed into an engagement with such issues as political authority, land policy, convict transportation (finally ended in the 1840s), religion, and education. All such issues raised questions about the proper role of the colonial state.¹⁷

The historiography has long recognized that the administrative and military state had been crucial in the early years of the penal colony of New South Wales. Its role included provision for the education of the children of the convicts, undertaken principally by the few clergy of the established Church of England.¹⁸ From the early nineteenth century there was also a variety of private venture schools that catered principally to the small commercial and landed elite in the colony. By the 1820s the educational landscape was very diverse, with a variety of church-supported and private schools. Middle-class academies and grammar schools had even been established in the capital, Sydney.¹⁹

Much of the early historiography focused not on middle-class education but on the early efforts to provide “schools for the people.” Certainly, the transformation of New South Wales into a British-settler society with many different religious faiths challenged the primacy of the established church. During the 1820s, the efforts of the Church of England to form a church and schools corporation supported by land grants foundered on the opposition of both Roman Catholics and other Protestant denominations.²⁰ This failure created the context for the politics of state support for education that would be played out over the following five decades.

An early solution that was proposed to the problem of providing schools in a settlement of different religious faiths came from Ireland. Richard Bourke, the governor of New South Wales from 1831 to 1837, was an Irish landowner of Whig sympathies. A communicant of the Church of Ireland, he favored Catholic emancipation and was fully aware of the controversies over the establishment of schools in Ireland. He was also a strong supporter of the Irish National System of schools, introduced with state funds in 1831, whereby children of Catholic and Protestant faiths would attend a common school but with provision for access by clergy and priests. Bourke proposed such a scheme for New South Wales soon after his appointment as governor. However, firm opposition from the Anglican bishop of Sydney blocked the proposal.²¹ More generally, it has been argued that Bourke’s proposals failed because they were essentially a form of liberal paternalism from above that lacked popular support while most of the gentry class and senior officials in the colony were also opposed to them.²²

The ideal of the Irish National System would continue to influence many middle-class immigrants who arrived in New South Wales following Bourke's departure. Its cause was advanced by Robert Lowe, the future English politician who was later responsible for the introduction of the notorious "payment by results" system for English elementary schools when he was Vice President of the Committee of the Council of Education in the 1860s. A graduate of Oxford University, Lowe came to Sydney as a young immigrant. During his short stay in New South Wales from 1842 to 1850 he became a major force on the Legislative Council of New South Wales, the body created prior to the establishment of a full representative government in 1856. Lowe opposed the effort of the British government to renew convict transportation to the colony. He was a major advocate for constitutional change although he opposed the introduction of universal male suffrage. He also played a significant part in forming government policies toward education. He chaired a select committee of the Council in 1844 that surveyed the provision of schools in New South Wales. The recommendations of the committee would eventually lead to the introduction in 1848 of a Board of National Education to support schools based on the principles of national education and offering a Christian-based but nondenominational curriculum. At the same time, a Board of Denominational Education was established to administer education grants to specific religious denominations.²³

Support for "national education" was part of what has been described as the emergence of a faith in "moral enlightenment" in the Australian colonies. Growing from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, this new faith merged elements of early nineteenth-century liberalism and romanticism. Through education in particular, all colonists could become "good, wise, prosperous and responsible."²⁴ It was a faith that motivated many of the promoters of "national schools."

William Augustine Duncan

Born in Scotland in 1811, William Augustine Duncan migrated to New South Wales in his mid-20s. The son of a Scottish farmer whose family faced financial difficulties following his death, Duncan was a brilliant school student who converted to Roman Catholicism. He took preliminary training to enter the Benedictine Order but soon quarreled with his teachers. In the early 1830s, he became a bookseller and publisher in Aberdeen. With a growing interest in politics, he was a strong advocate of the 1832 Reform Act. When his business failed, he took up teaching and journalism. Learning of and approving Governor Bourke's proposals for national education, he came to New South Wales in 1837 to take up employment as a teacher in one of the first Catholic schools.²⁵

After a short stint as a teacher, Duncan became the founding editor of the Roman Catholic *Australasian Chronicle*. As editor and publicist, Duncan championed the rights not only of his church but also of small farmers and workers, and opposed the large landowners and their claims to be a colonial aristocracy.

Against such claims he argued for the growth of representative government.²⁶ As an erudite scholar and a Scottish convert to Catholicism, Duncan found that he had little in common with even the wealthier members of the colonial Irish Catholic community. As he later wrote in his autobiography, many of the leading adherents of the church were “of the emancipated class and though supposed then to be men of great wealth, were extremely illiterate and to the last degree unprincipled.”²⁷

Duncan was initially a supporter of J. B. Polding, the English Benedictine bishop of Sydney from 1834 to 1877. This support brought him into conflict with Sydney’s leading Irish Catholics, who engineered his removal as editor of the *Australasian Chronicle*. Duncan then established his own *Duncan’s Weekly Register of Politics, Facts and General Literature*, appealing to the small but growing circle of liberal intellectuals and literary figures in Sydney in the 1840s. He continued to oppose the dominance of narrow class interests, extending his criticism to the new “squattocracy” comprising those who had acquired their large holdings by simply “squatting on” or taking over large parcels of crown land, displacing the local Aboriginal populations. Emphasizing the compatibility between liberalism and Catholicism, and thereby reflecting many of the elements that marked the liberal Catholic movement in Europe in the two decades before the 1848 revolutions, Duncan deplored and opposed those who promoted the alienation of Catholics from the rest of the community. In particular, he took issue with the Roman Catholic Church’s opposition to national education.²⁸

In 1846, following the closure of his *Register* on financial grounds, Duncan moved to Moreton Bay near the settlement of Brisbane, which was then still part of New South Wales. He now became customs officer for the colonial government. Pursuing his literary interests, he became the founding president of the Brisbane School of Arts, continuing to support and argue for the establishment of schools based on the principles of national education. In 1850, he published a *Lecture on National Education*, the first pamphlet ever printed in Brisbane.²⁹ The ideas reflected in this pamphlet provide a specific perspective on a representative of liberal Catholicism in the mid-nineteenth century when the Australian colonies were on the verge of a major population expansion following the discovery of gold.

Duncan began his *Lecture* with the assertion that “the subject of Public Education is one, the importance of which has been felt and admitted by the wise and good of all ages and nations.”³⁰ As with other nineteenth-century liberal proponents of universal education, he claims that it is an “undisputable fact” that in those nations where education is “generally diffused” the population is “most industrious” as well as “most orderly in their manners.” With his knowledge of history he also asserted that in the ancient past and particularly among the Jews and early Christians, education was not necessarily placed with the “priesthood.” The dominant role that the clergy and religious orders came to play in education during the Renaissance was due to the fact that they were the only groups in Europe who possessed the necessary literary education. The predominance of the churches continued, so that lay teachers came under